

Hannu Salmi

Imagined Germany

Richard Wagner's
National Utopia

Second Edition

German Life and Civilization

Richard Wagner (1813–1883) has often been regarded as a symbol of “Germanness.” Despite this view, few studies have been undertaken regarding his nationalistic thinking. *Imagined Germany* focuses on Wagner’s idea of *Deutschtum*, especially during the unification of Germany, 1864–1871. Salmi discusses how Wagner defined Germanness, what stereotypes, ideas, and sentiments he attached to it, and what kind of state could realize Wagner’s national ideals.

“Salmi makes an important contribution to our understanding of one of the most fascinating artistic figures in German politics and culture, particularly his political role.”

Michael Meyer, California State University, Northridge

“Salmi lays forever to rest the myth, propagated by some of Wagner’s older apologists and by many of his more recent critics, that there existed a communality of interests between Wagner and Bismarck, as well as between the new ‘Reich’ and the Wagnerian cultural enterprise. Salmi shows, more clearly than anyone has done thus far, how Wagner at first styled himself as the ‘most German of Germans’ only to realize, in the end, that he had been crucified ‘am Kreuz des deutschen Gedankens’.”

Hans Rudolf Vaget, Smith College

Hannu Salmi is Professor of Cultural History at the University of Turku in Finland. He has published numerous articles on the history of music in Finland and Germany, but is also known as a historian of film and popular culture.

Imagined Germany

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Acknowledgments

Richard Wagner is surely one of the most debated personalities of the nineteenth century. He is also one of the most thoroughly investigated figures of European history. When Barry Millington started his Wagner biography in 1984, he remarked that “the necessity for a new book on Wagner is to this day regularly and rightly questioned”. Why to write on Wagner? I believe that Wagner is constantly under scholarly scrutiny just because he embodies the European dilemma. In his thinking and art, Wagner encapsulated the opposite sides of European identity. He was an ardent advocate of nationalism and, simultaneously, a spokesman for universalism. He trumpeted for “the purely human”, but was an extreme racist. He took part in the Dresden revolution 150 years ago, only to become later regarded as a conservative, even as an epitome of Nazism.

The political side of Wagner has intrigued me since the late 1980s. In 1993, I wrote my dissertation on his political adventures under the title “*Die Herrlichkeit des deutschen Namens ...*” *Die schriftstellerische und politische Tätigkeit Richard Wagners als Gestaltnationaler Identität während der staatlichen Vereinigung Deutschlands*. The book at hand is a condensed and rewritten version of this academic work.

During the last decade, I have received assistance and encouragement from several scholars. First, I would like to thank Professor Kalervo Hovi (University of Turku), who supervised my work in the late eighties and

early nineties. He encouraged me to visit the German archives, a plan finally realized in 1988–89 when I was awarded a scholarship by the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). I am also grateful to Professor Otto Dann, who guided my work at the University of Cologne. In the course of my research, I have had valuable feedback from Professor Dieter Borchmeyer (University of Heidelberg), Professor Frank B. Josserand (Southwest Texas State University), and from Professor Eero Tarasti (University of Helsinki). In Germany, I would also like to thank the Wagner Archives in Bayreuth—I owe a debt of gratitude especially to the librarian, Günter Fischer, and to the former director of the archives, Manfred Eger, whose help in scrutinizing Wagner’s original manuscripts was invaluable.

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January 1999

Hannu Salmi

Introduction

In August 1876, on his way to Leipzig, Karl Marx passed through the small northern Bavarian town of Bayreuth, where a musical event devoted to Richard Wagner's operas was being held. In his letter to Friedrich Engels, Marx described the festival as "the state musician's clown feast."¹ Marx saw Wagner primarily as a supporter and advocate of the state. This image of Wagner has also been widely shared subsequently, not least because in the 1930s he was raised as the epitome of the Third Reich.

Wagner has thus increasingly been seen as a statist, although his life also offers standpoints for other kinds of interpretation, even for opposite ones. The embarrassing complexity of Wagner's character is the main reason for his being subject to continual research and reassessments. His personality is associated with surprisingly many nineteenth and twentieth century cultural and social trends. Besides his work as an opera composer, Wagner wrote articles and books, critical surveys and philosophical treatises, poems and short stories. His ideological world has been connected with anarchism, socialism, and fascism, depending on the perspective of the observer. For Robert W. Gutman, Wagner was merely a milestone on the way from Jahn to Hitler, whereas for George Bernard Shaw he was a great socialist who leant more towards Proudhon and Bakunin than to Jahn.² We should certainly dismiss the notion that there is only one Wagner, who can be classified in any single category. During the Dresden years (1842–49), Wagner was an

anti-statist anarchist and participated with his friends Michael Bakunin and Gottfried Semper in a local uprising in May 1849. In the 1860s and 1870s, however, he turned his back on the barricades and strove directly to influence key political actors, and in May 1871 even met Otto von Bismarck.

It is no coincidence that Karl Marx labelled Wagner as the state musician. Without doubt, Wagner would have been flattered if he had been given the status of an official composer, but he never achieved this within his lifetime. Instead, Wagner, and more particularly his ardent supporters, emphasized in their speeches and writings the German ideal (*Deutschtum*), and argued that Wagner was an advocate of the German people. Wagner himself stressed that he was following the same lines as the political leaders of the new unified Germany, which was established in 1871.

The “spiritual proximity” between Wagner and Bismarck was often accentuated in the incendiary speeches and powerful writings of the Wagnerians. As late as 1924, August Püringer stated: “Bismarck and Wagner strove for common goals, which were as inseparable as the activity of the heart and the lungs, or the bodily functions of the heart and the brain.”³ At the time Marx passed through Bayreuth, Wagner was so commonly associated with the cause of the unified Germany that Marx’s misinterpretation of Wagner is fully understandable.

Wagner has consequently been classified as a statist, but similarly also as “the most German being,” even a kind of prototype of *Deutschtum*. It is undeniable that particularly in the 1860s and 70s Wagner believed that he knew what *Deutschtum* actually meant. Besides, his political activity was thoroughly infused with nationalist features. The purpose of this book is to deconstruct Wagner’s ideas of *Deutschtum*: that is, to define what he really meant when he wrote or spoke about this concept. It must be remembered that prior to 1871 Germany was a politically disintegrated area. Already by 1865 Wagner was claiming that the goal of his artistic function was the cultural greatness of Germany, which in the course of time would mature into political greatness. It is thus relevant to pose the question: “What would this future Germany be like, the Germany in which his idea of nationality could be realized?”

In 1864, when the German Wars of Unification started, Wagner settled in Munich, having been invited there by King Ludwig II of Bavaria. At this time, he began to dream of a community which would be led by a royal patron of arts. In this community his art would be allowed to flourish undisturbed and give guidance to the soul of the German people. As the conflict between Austria and Prussia became more and more intensified,

Wagner was driven to seek political support from Prussia. The connection of these political turns with Wagner's ideological function, with his ideas of Germany and *Deutschtum*, offers an interesting perspective on the general intellectual history of the period. Accordingly, it is central to the questions which will be treated in this study to examine Wagner's engagement in politics at the practical level, and how he strove to fulfil his dream of the future Germany. It might be argued that Wagner's involvement in the political arena is already well-known, and that his life has been recounted many times before. I believe, however, that bringing together his intellectual and political sides can generate new insights into German cultural and political history during the nineteenth century.

On the whole, Wagner's political thinking has been investigated fairly thoroughly, particularly, his antisemitism, for instance, by Paul Lawrence Rose in *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (1992), and Marc A. Weiner's study *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (1995).⁴ Wagner's relationship with the Jews seems to stimulate a never-ending debate which continually produces new interpretations. More comprehensive views of Wagner's political ideas have been written by, for instance, Maurice Boucher, Eric Eugène and Andrea Mork⁵, but no deeper historical analysis concerning Wagner's political project on the eve of unification has yet been made. Frank B. Josserand's study *Richard Wagner: Patriot and Politician* (1981), which could be characterized as a biographical description of Wagner as a nationalist, comes close to my own views.⁶ The work comments on Wagner's life through the theme of nationality. The problem with this book, however, is its biographical nature; the exploration of the wider cultural context remains unattained. Another work on Wagner's political project is Verena Naegele's book *Parsifals Mission*, which concentrates on the relationship between Wagner and Ludwig.⁷ Astonishingly, it is based only on printed sources, although there are many archival documents available. Furthermore, Naegele examines only the beginnings of Wagner's project. For the focus of my study, however, it is crucial that Wagner continued his activities after his close cooperation with Ludwig; especially significant is his relationship to Bismarck, which has not been sufficiently touched upon in previous Wagner literature.

In the following study, I shall deal with Wagner's concept of nationality, but also with his ideological and political function during the period 1864–1871, since it is precisely through these activities that his ideas are revealed. The limits of the period investigated derive from Wagner's second phase of involvement in political functions, beginning in 1864, after the

break caused by his revolutionary activities in Dresden. This time Wagner aimed at indirect influence, having found a patron for himself and his art on the Bavarian throne. In 1871, his attempts to obtain support from the summit of the political hierarchy were consistent with his Bayreuth project, for which he later sought support directly from the people, as no official support from Berlin was forthcoming. The three wars (against Denmark, Austria, and Prussia) which led to the birth of a unified Germany also occurred during 1864–1871.

The leitmotif of this study is to observe an artist as a politician. This angle has been surprisingly unusual both in the study of art and in research on political history. In historical research, past events have often been explained from the perspective of a political game, economic necessity, or social movements, but cultural factors have been marginalized or minimized to no more than the legitimation of social phenomena or needs. This particularly applies to the tradition in German political history. For instance, the tradition of the diplomatic-military interpretation of German unification continued broken as late as the 1960s, when Helmut Böhme, in his *Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht* (1966), described the process as a chain of events mainly steered by economic interests. Böhme does not present any cultural basis for unification: everything is mere dialogue between politics and the economy.⁸

The combination of art with politics is interesting for many reasons. Of course, artists have been exploited for the justification of many operations. International artists have been used for political purposes, even as real agents (for example, Ignace Paderwski and Emma Destinova). There is also evidence that, for instance, the composer and pianist Franz Liszt, when circulating in the European salons, acquired information for the use of his son-in-law, Emile Ollivier, who was the French Prime Minister. When stress is placed on this type of relationship between art and politics, the primary basis for the scrutiny of historical events is typically located in politics.

In general, politics has been understood as a mode of realism, dictated by the gravity of situations, rather than an act of imagination striving for better living conditions. Art, or creative activity more widely, on the other hand, relies on potential, hypothetical worlds. This peculiarity alone makes the effect of art unique in the discovery of new horizons. In the scrutiny of Richard Wagner, it is essential to keep in mind that he was constantly striving to demolish completely the borders between art and politics; as he wrote in 1851: “No one now can poetise, without politising.”⁹ In the following, I shall treat Wagner’s nationalist thinking and political action in the

context of his theoretical understanding of art: these concepts form a unity which can justifiably be called a national utopia. Although Wagner's dream remained unfulfilled, it is significant as an interpretation of the expectations and demands projected on the united Germany. Shortly before his death, Wagner intended to move to the United States. Like many of his contemporaries, he was disappointed with the fact that the new German Empire did not fulfil national expectations.

During the years preceding unification, Richard Wagner's nationalism grew into a project which incorporated the idea of a national utopia and a programme for the activities leading to its fulfilment. I have, to some extent, based my study on the process of communication. Firstly, I shall deal with the media through which Wagner moulded his thoughts, that is, the texts and their message. Finally, I shall look for a political framework for this thinking in Wagner's concrete activity during 1864–1871. The last phase in the process of communication is thus the destiny of the utopia, the German people's and the politicians' relationship with the concept of nationality as represented by Wagner.

Even though Richard Wagner is essentially known as a composer, the primary sources of my study are his writings, not his compositions. The investigation of a composer's ideological world is difficult, for artists seldom express their thinking in literary form, except in correspondence. For Wagner, the situation is eased by the fact that his literary output was vast. This unusually active literary function was largely due to the fact that the success of Wagner's operas was at the beginning relatively modest, and he chose to approach the public through other means. William Weber has pointed out that in the first stages his writings contributed much more to the spread of his reputation than did his music. As an artist, Wagner was thus unusual: at first he created a theory of art and then through this theory the possibilities for the reception of his works. It is uncertain how long Wagner's operas would have been ignored by the public if he had not first written his theoretical treatises and articles on art. Composing usually involves some kind of theoretical shaping, but seldom have these reflections reached the public. In the romantic period, those artists who strove to ensure their audience of their spontaneous genius, wanted to give an inspiration-centred picture of their creative work. There was a clear striving to conceal the crafted features in the making of art, and this covertness also applies to the theorizing underlying their art.¹⁰

Richard Wagner, accordingly, thought highly of the literary function in creating a communicative relationship with the audience. The composer's

task was not only limited to “tunes in music.” It is no wonder that Wagner strove to control the kind of image of himself which his texts gave. He even seems to have written his letters with an eye to their possible future publication.¹¹

In his writings, Wagner set out to create an image of *Deutschtum*. Benedict Anderson’s idea of a nation as an “imagined community” has been a starting-point for my work. According to Anderson, all communities “larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these)” are based on contract-bound, imagined bonds.¹² In the German situation, it can be argued that the demand for unification was justified through the creation of “a fictitious unity,” the German nation, which would then subsequently develop into a political unit.

I see ‘nationality’ here as a construction comparable to myth: not as a subconscious, irrational phenomenon, but as a concept similar to the definition of myth represented by Claude Lévi-Strauss: to the members of a community, myth is a form of rational communication, a means to solve internal basic contradictions, but besides this, it is also a means to control external reality (for instance other communities). This takes place through social concepts and notions conveyed by the myth.¹³ Following Lévi-Strauss’s ideas, we could interpret the German myth as a communication for a community constituted by the German people. Its function could be to solve the grave dilemma in the life of the community, the problem of German disintegration (for instance, through the accentuation of the greatness of the German spirit, which would grow into political greatness). Through the social concepts which this myth conveys, it would create an identity for the community, and make it recognizably distinct from the surrounding communities. If we combine Lévi-Strauss’s and Anderson’s ideas, it can be argued that myth is not only addressed to a community: it participates in creating a sense of community, and thus creates bonds that form a nation.

The most important contemporary material used as primary sources in this study are Wagner’s writings which date back to 1864–1871: *Über Staat und Religion* (1864), *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* (1867–1868), *Beethoven* (1870), and the diary entries written to Ludwig II on 14th–27th September 1865. The notes which Wagner wrote when he was sketching out his writings, and which are preserved at the Wagner Archives in Bayreuth, have also provided useful and interesting material for this investigation.¹⁴ In addition to these texts, this study also relies on Wagner’s other prose

writings: on *The Brown Book*, the autobiography *Mein Leben*, and on his correspondence.

Wagner often wrote about philosophical subjects, but the clarity and plain logic required by philosophical topics were seldom characteristic of his style. Even as a prose writer, Wagner has often been classified as a poet, striving for aesthetic effect, who moulded his style into burning passions and into rebellious, glowing, high-blown overstatements. He frequently resorted to romantic overwhelming ornamental diction, and seasoned his texts with clusters of dashes and exclamation marks. A characteristic sample of Wagner's style is the following passage from a letter to August Röckel, written in 1854:

One thing counts above all else: freedom! But what is "freedom"? is it—as our politicians believe—"licence?"—of course not! Freedom is: *integrity*. He who is true to himself, i.e. who acts in accord with his own being, and in perfect harmony with his own nature, is *free*.¹⁵

All his life, Wagner displayed an enthusiastic interest in fiction and poetry. Thus he himself wrote the librettos for all his operas, and the text of *Wieland der Schmied*, for which he never composed the music. In addition, Wagner wrote short stories (*Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven* 1840 and *Ein Ende in Paris* 1840–41), poems, and the play *Die Kapitulation* (1870), the purpose of which was to disparage the French. Wagner was at his best when he was writing in a free and informal style. Heinrich Heine commented on Wagner's short stories written during his Paris years: "Hoffmann would have been incapable of writing such a thing!"¹⁶

Wagner's relationship to writing is easier to understand in the light of his unshakeable belief in his own genius. Wagner believed that he was a genius—a kind of *l'uomo universale* of the arts, able to master any specific area of art.¹⁷ He believed that he was capable of creating a fusion of all arts (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), in which all the constituent elements supported each other. This strong belief in his own abilities was, of course, projected on to his texts. He allowed his thoughts to flow freely, since any thought produced by a genius was valuable. These thoughts he was prepared to give as a gift to his people. It is hardly surprising that by 1868, he was planning to bless the German people with his collected literary works.¹⁸

From the works relevant from the perspective of this study, only *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* and *Beethoven* were published before 1871. *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* first appeared as a series of

articles in the paper *Süddeutsche Presse*, between 24th September–19th December 1867. Wagner had originally planned to include 15 articles in the series, but publication was discontinued; Wagner's fanatically nationalist line was too much for Ludwig II, who decisively influenced the ban on the articles.¹⁹ Despite the ban, as a result of vigorous action, Wagner published his texts as a book in the following year, 1868.

Wagner wrote his text *Über Staat und Religion* immediately after his arrival in Munich in 1864. Ludwig II had requested from him a clarification of the changes in his thinking since 1849–1851. This exposition was not published until 1871–73, in the edition of Wagner's completed works. The differences between the published version and the original manuscript are slight.²⁰ In the following, I refer to the manuscript only where it differs from the published version.

Of much more interest is the relationship between the original diary entries written to Ludwig in 1865, and the published version. On the basis of the diary entries, Wagner wrote an abridged article *Was ist deutsch?* which was published in the *Bayreuther Blätter* (2/1878). In the Wagner literature, references are often made to this published version as if it had been written in 1865. This is, however, a methodological mistake in the use of primary sources, because the differences between the diary entries and the published article are striking. The observation of this difference is significant from the perspective of my study, because during the period 1865–1878, significant changes took place in Wagner's way of thinking.

In the reformulation of the diary entries for publication, seven different phases can be identified: the first version was written by Wagner with a lead pencil, which eased the corrections in the text. After that, he rewrote the text in ink over the text written in pencil.²¹ The third phase was copying, which was carried out by Cosima.²² This version was sent by Wagner in instalments, as supplements to his letters to Ludwig. After this, Wagner did not treat his text for several years, though he modified the same ideas in his *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*. Wagner took these diary entries very seriously, and he presumably thought that they could contribute to German self-understanding. When he was sketching a plan for his collected works, he included the article *Was ist deutsch?*, which was based on the diary entries in the plan (the title was thus already decided upon).²³ When the collected works were finally published in 1871–73, the article *Was ist deutsch?* was excluded; Wagner had evidently not been able, after all, to modify the material in the diary in the way he desired. In his diary entries, Wagner, among other things, had denigrated the Prussians with venomous

turns of phrases, and in the year 1871 such a derogatory text could by no means be published any more: the Prussians were now leading Germany.

Wagner was still a great believer in the ideas of nationality which he had put forward in the diary entries. At regular intervals, he returned to this text, and thought about its content.²⁴ He did not set out to produce a revised version, however, until 1878, and even then he was still cautious.²⁵ At first, he only wrote the preface and the epilogue to the text (the fourth phase).²⁶ This text was copied by Cosima (the fifth phase)²⁷; then followed the typesetting of the text. The original ideas were thus advanced through changes in proof-reading (the sixth phase).²⁸ At this point, Wagner suddenly switched to a much more radical approach to the text. The article was abridged to less than a third of the original length. When the article *Was ist deutsch?* was finally published in the *Bayreuther Blätter* (the seventh and the last phase) as a result of ardent support from Hans von Wolzogen, editor-in-chief of the journal, it was lacking in all direct political references.²⁹ Two subjects, in particular, were totally blue-pencilled by Wagner in the revision sheet. The first related to a political and cultural critique of Prussia; the references to French-Jewish degeneration in Berlin and to the un-German nature of Prussian policy were drastically revised. Another sensitive subject related to the detailed cultural-political programme which Wagner wanted to propose to Ludwig, including the foundation of a Wagnerian newspaper and a music school. Through such operations, he believed, Bavaria could become a significant cultural state.

The various phases of the entries in the diary are thus part of the thematic approach of this study. When Wagner wrote his text in 1865, he dreamt of a Germany where the artistic power of his works would be connected with the political power of Ludwig II. By 1878, however, the situation had decisively changed.

One of the most striking stylistic features of Wagner's texts is the range of rhetorical devices. Before my actual historical analysis, I would like to focus some attention on this rhetoric, especially on its tendency to use contrasts. This rhetoric, based on oppositions, already tells us much about his idea of *Deutschtum*.

The rhetorical features of Wagner's texts derive in part from the fact that his texts emulate the characteristics of speech. Wagner's style is discursive and far from concise. Cornucopious outbursts of emotion and a conspicuous use of high-flying wordiness was characteristic of Wagner's literary style, to such an extent that his texts could give the reader an impression of aggressiveness. Nietzsche remarked that Wagner was always writing as if he

were fighting face to face with his enemy.³⁰ The manuscripts show that Wagner did not make many alterations to his first versions, which were written with a lead pencil. He poured his thoughts on to the paper without inhibition, and did not later bother about self-criticism. The speechlike characteristics of Wagner's style were also due to the fact that he often dictated his writings to Cosima (for example, the whole of *Mein Leben*).

There is some evidence of the accuracy with which Wagner planned his works. Often he drew up a brief preliminary sketch of his ideas; such sketches can be found, for instance, in *The Brown Book*, which contains, amongst other things, synopses of about two or three pages in length relating to his essay *Beethoven* and to the play *Eine Kapitulation*.³¹ Two other sketches are also preserved among Wagner's manuscripts. These drafts indicate that Wagner tended to make a conceptual analysis of his subject before the essential process of writing. One such outline, found in the material relating to *Über Staat und Religion*, is, in fact, a matrix of draft concepts. A set of sub-concepts, grouped in conceptual lines, have been placed under the basic concepts (*Staat, Religion, Kunst*) listed in the upper section of the matrix. Unfortunately, Wagner has later blotted the paper with other notes so badly that it is impossible to decipher everything that has been encoded in the table. The words *Stabilität* and *Conservatismus* are listed under the concept *Staat*, the expression *Aufhebung des Staates* etc. under the concept *Religion*, and the word *Heiland* under the concept *Kunst*.³² A similar draft can be found inserted in the manuscript of *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*. Here Wagner has also listed some of his essential concepts as binary oppositions, including the following: Realismus/Idealismus (realism/idealism), Nachahmung/Nachbildung (imitation/interpretation), Franzosen/Deutschen (French/German), Affen/Menschen (monkeys/humans).³³

The use of contrasted oppositions as basic elements in the process of narrative is one of the strategies frequently employed in the art of rhetoric, and clearly appealed to Wagner. The unconditional binary contrast of Wagner's texts during 1864–1871 was the opposition “deutsch/undeutsch” (German/un-German), sometimes also in the form “deutsch/nichtdeutsch” (German/non-German). It is interesting that this opposition appears to be less prominent in the texts which were written prior to 1864. It is important to remember that Wagner's texts before 1864 are characterized by a very strong emphasis on theories of art. He set out to create a new theory of opera and drama, which would lay the foundations for the understanding of his works. Consequently, Wagner's texts prior to 1864 were not based on

the deployment of conceptual contrasts to the same extent as the later writings. The intensification of polemic style was particularly appropriate to the nationalist project.

Wagner sometimes replaces his basic concept “deutsch” with the deeper “urdeutsch” or “grunddeutsch.”³⁴ The binary opposition “German/un-German” was sometimes expressed even within a single syntactic unit: “... the disastrous conflict of the German spirit with the un-German spirit.”³⁵ In the diary entries written to Ludwig, Wagner also stated: “I have no hesitation in describing all subsequent revolutions in Germany as completely un-German ...”³⁶ A similar binary opposition appears in the passage:

It was Germany’s incalculable misfortune that at about the time that the German spirit had reached a point of sufficient maturity to be finally able to confront the challenge that faced it in that sublime field, the German peoples’ legitimate state interests were entrusted to the counsels of a prince to whom the German spirit was utterly alien, a man who was the most perfect embodiment of an un-German, Romance concept of the state.³⁷

The concept “ausserdeutsch” (“extrinsically-German”, cultures that are not German),³⁸ signifying everything that was not German or was situated outside Germany was thus in practice similar to the concept “undeutsch.” In the historical excursions in his diary, Wagner wrote:

Curiously enough, our historical memory of the splendour of the German name dates from a period that was so harmful to the German character, namely, the period when the Germans ruled over non-German (ausserdeutsche) peoples.³⁹

“Ausserdeutsch”, to Wagner, covered all the nations outside Germany. “Germanness” was something unique, “something wonderful.”⁴⁰ The fusion of everything that was “extrinsically-German” into one category is typical of Wagner’s use of language. For instance, he associates the concept “französisch” (French) with the concept “jüdisch” (Jewish).⁴¹

In the world situation of the 1860s, both the French and the Jewish civilizations represented cosmopolitan supranational cultures, the fruits of which had spread throughout Europe. The opposition “kosmopolitisch/national” was used as a term in Wagner’s writing *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*: “‘German,’ ‘German,’ so tolls the bell above the cosmopolitan synagogue of the ‘now-time’.”⁴² As this quotation shows, cosmopolitanism was associated with the present whereas “the splendour of the German name”, “die Herrlichkeit des deutschen Namens,” remained in

the distant past. Thus the binary opposition “kosmopolitisch/national” was associated with “Gegenwart/Vergangenheit” (present/past). On the other hand, Wagner foresees a change which is to take place in the future and will return *Deutschtum* to its former glory: the Chimes of Midnight will toll for the supranational civilizations. This looking to the future is part of a utopian strategy, in which ‘utopia’ is represented in opposition to and as a negation of the present.⁴³ The past, however, is also a negation of the present and can therefore be associated with the desired future (utopia).

According to Wagner, France is characterized by expressions such as “formal elegance”⁴⁴, “shameless fashion”⁴⁵ and “gallantry”⁴⁶. As was seen in the draft for *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, Wagner associated with each another the conceptual oppositions “Franzosen/Deutschen” and “Nachahmung/Nachbildung” (imitation/interpretation). The borderline between imitative copying and producing an object was equated by Wagner to the distinction between a monkey and a human: a monkey is only able to imitate, in contrast to man, who has the ability to produce something new.⁴⁷ This distinction, according to Wagner, was analogous to the difference between German and French artists: the French have always been content to imitate whereas the Germans have created real art.⁴⁸

The opposition “Nachahmung/Nachbildung” was also associated in Wagner’s texts with conceptual pairs such as “Civilisation/Cultur” and “Materialismus/Idealismus.” These contrasted combinations were deployed by Wagner in a range of expressions. He identified an on-going struggle “between French civilisation and the German Spirit.”⁴⁹ Civilization was connected with “the most sordid materialism”⁵⁰ and “mechanical imitation”,⁵¹ whereas real culture was filled with “idealism”⁵² and “aesthetic moulding”⁵³. This categorization was rendered value-bound by connecting it with the binary opposition “verfallen/edel” (decadent/noble).⁵⁴

Wagner also connected the concepts of creativity and originality with the concept of *Deutschtum*. This can be seen with particularly poignance in the lexis used in his diary:

The Italian assimilated all those aspects of antiquity that he could imitate and reproduce, while the Frenchman, in turn, borrowed from this reproduction whatever might flatter his national sense of formal elegance; only the German recognised antiquity in all its purely human originality and as something that enjoyed a significance which, totally remote from utilitarian concerns, was uniquely suited to reproducing the purely human.⁵⁵

Originality and ‘Germanness’ thus belonged together. All that was non-original and imitative was therefore linked in Wagner’s texts to un-German elements. The original and the genuine were therefore unquestionable attributes of *Deutschtum*. This idea was pointedly expressed by Wagner in the libretto of *The Mastersingers*: “Was deutsch und ächt, wüsst’ keiner mehr.”⁵⁶ In the preface to the libretto of *The Ring* (1863), Wagner wrote: “We thus at last should have the prospect of seeing the German Spirit’s most characteristic excellence brought yearly forward in a new work—if possible—of a special class essentially belonging to ourselves; and thus at last would come the time when, at least in one highly significant branch of art, the German would begin to be *national* through first becoming *original*—a quality in which alas! the Italian and the Frenchman are long ahead of him.”⁵⁷

Wagner also readily employed political terminology; indeed, *Über Staat und Religion* and *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* principally dealt with politics and social questions. The combination “Königtum/Demokratie” (monarchy/democracy) was, in this respect, a significant conceptual opposition.⁵⁸ A ruling monarch, who could serve as a role model for the whole nation, would be most suitable for Germany:

Here, however, it is not a question of saying anything, or of serving notice or of causing any inopportune fuss, but of acting promptly and proving oneself a boundlessly popular prince, an example to the German people.⁵⁹

The monarchy was thus categorized as German whereas democracy was classified as an “import”: “‘Democracy’ in Germany is purely a translated thing.”⁶⁰

The above analysis thus suggests that the binary oppositions deployed in Wagner’s texts generate recognizable structures. Wagner seems to link the binary contrasts to each other. The emerging conceptual structure could be represented in tabular form thus:

deutsch		undeutsch
urdeutsch	–	nichtdeutsch
grunddeutsch		ausserdeutsch
national	–	kosmopolitisch
Königtum	–	Demokratie
Cultur	–	Civilisation
Idealismus	–	Materialismus
Nachbildung	–	Nachahmung
Originalität	–	Epigontum
ächt	–	falsch
edel	–	verfallen
Vergangenheit	–	Gegenwart

The concepts in the table relate positively on the vertical axis, and oppositionally on the horizontal. It is, of course, difficult to estimate to what extent this definition of concepts was specifically characteristic of Wagner: it is clear that in his texts Wagner expressed something that was typical of the whole period. For instance, Norbert Elias has pointed out that the binary opposition “Cultur/Civilisation” has a long history, and that the significance conveyed by the German concept “Civilisation” is crucially different from the meaning of the cognate terms in English and French.⁶¹ Wagner’s employment of the words “Cultur” and “Civilisation,” “the twin sisters” as he wrote⁶², is perfectly compatible with Elias’ argument, and it shows that Wagner was far from deviant in relation to the prevailing mode of thinking in nineteenth-century Germany.

There are references which provide clear evidence that Wagner consciously constructed his vision on rhetoric devices. In his letter to a French gentleman, Gabriel Monod, written on 25th October 1876, Wagner claimed that he used rhetoric expressions only as a means. He had become famous for his continual denigration of the French, and evidently now wished to improve his reputation in French eyes. In his letter, he implies that his polemic language had only been *a means to make the Germans themselves create authentic culture*:

Remarques que tout ce que j’ai écrit au sujet de l’esprit français, je l’ai écrit en allemand, exclusivement pour les Allemands: il est donc clair que je n’ai pas eu l’intention d’offenser ou de provoquer les Français, mais simplement de détourner mes compatriotes de l’imitation de la France, de les inviter à rester fidèles à leur propre génie, s’ils veulent faire quelque chose de bon.⁶³

Wagner’s claims must be treated with some reservation. The letter has been dated just after the first Bayreuth Festival, in a period when Wagner was aiming for the consolidation of his reputation and art. Naturally, at that time he was not seeking enemies, in France or anywhere else, and therefore wanted to explain his earlier utterances in a more favourable light. On the other hand, the letter shows that Wagner very clearly understood the significance of literary activity and the creation of a myth. He argues that was possible for him to write “exclusivement pour les Allemands,” for the German public, without the intention of “d’offenser ou de provoquer les Français.” Wagner thus argues that he had used powerful rhetorical devices appropriate and effective only in relation to a specific purpose. The myth of ‘Germanness’, with all its additional features, was directed only towards the

community constituted by the Germans, and only served the internal needs of this community.

The mythical aspect of national identity does not belong to the main questions of this study, but it does help us to understand Wagner's ideas and function as a modeller of national self-understanding. There is full reason to speak of utopia in the context of Wagner's national thinking, for this theorizing included a vision of an ideal community, the future Germany. Utopia suggests an imagined world which is represented as possible and which will be realized once certain circumstances have been established, and which is located either in the future or in a geographically distant setting. Utopias also often perform a critical function with regard to the existing society: accordingly, utopia is often represented as a reverse picture in which the present social conditions are arranged in the opposite order.⁶⁴

On the whole, nineteenth-century utopian thinking was directed towards the future. It is widely considered that the novel *L'an 2440* (1770), written by the Frenchman Louis Sébastien Mercier, launched the genre of utopias set in the future, whereas earlier utopias had typically been visions set in remote places or far-off times.⁶⁵ Wagner's national utopia, as will be discussed later in this study, appears at first as a utopia of the future; to Wagner, however, 'the future' meant above all a return to the past, to the lost harmony of German culture. Therefore, in Wagner's thinking, myth and utopia are moulded onto one another; his utopia seems to exist outside the scope of history.

In his *Utopia and the Ideal Society* (1981), J.C. Davis has divided the ideal societies of utopias into four categories on the basis of their ability to solve the problems of collectivity. The first possibility is that of a social context where a harmony of limited pleasures and unlimited human desires can be fulfilled. According to the second category, human desires remain unlimited, but material satisfaction increases and becomes equal to the human desires. The third alternative incorporates the device that a 'miraculous' force, outside the existing establishment, changes the balance and function of society. The last category launches the idea that some essential regeneration could take place in human nature.⁶⁶ Even though this categorizing originates from Davis' study of English utopian writing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it may also be suitable as a primary framework for the scrutiny of Wagner's national utopia, considering that for Wagner, as for many other nationalists, the problem of collectivity was a crucial question. What kind of community did the Germans really constitute, and how should this community be developed or how should it develop? In

Wagner's utopian, imagined Germany, myth and reality were entwined together in an inseparable whole: according to Wagner, in the course of time the Germans would discover a collective harmony, their true selves and a genuine national character.

In the following I shall treat the content of Wagner's nationalist thinking, his ideas of Germany and 'Germanness', from the standpoint of intellectual history, from three perspectives. First, I shall discuss Wagner's idea of the past of the German people, for a consciousness of history is significant in relation to the understanding of nationality (see the binary opposition "Vergangenheit/Gegenwart"). I shall then examine how Wagner defined the concept of 'Germanness' in relation to the people (*Volk*), the nation (*Nation*), the state (*Staat*), and the spirit (*Geist*), for example, in the binary oppositions "national/kosmopolitisch", "Königtum/Demokratie". Finally, I shall examine *Deutschtum* in relation to art (*Kunst*): Wagner believed that Germany would rise to be a significant cultural power similar to Ancient Greece, if art were given an important position in the *possible* future Germany. Wagner's national utopia was crystallized by these perspectives.

Notes

- 1 Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels August 19, 1876. Marx-Engels 1931, 441.
- 2 Gutman 1968, XIV, XVII; Shaw 1913, 27–34.
- 3 Püringer 1924, 177. In German: "Bismarcks und Wagners Trachten gehörten untrennlich zusammen, wie Herz- und Lungenätigkeit, oder wie Herz- und Hirnarbeit eines Leibes."
- 4 Rose, Paul Lawrence, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992); Weiner, Marc A., *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
- 5 Boucher, Maurice, *Les idées politiques de Richard Wagner. Exemple de nationalisme mythique* (Paris, 1947); Eugène, Eric, *Les idées politiques de Richard Wagner et leur influence sur l'idéologie allemande (1870—1945)* (Paris, 1978); Mork, Andrea, *Richard Wagner als politischer Schriftsteller. Weltanschauung und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1990).
- 6 Josserand, Frank B., *Richard Wagner: Patriot and Politician* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981). Josserand's book is based on his dissertation *A Study of Richard Wagner's Nationalism*. Diss. (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas, 1957).
- 7 Naegele, Verena, *Parsifals Mission. Der Einfluss Richard Wagners auf Ludwig II. und seine Politik* (Köln: Dittrich-Verlag 1995).

- 8 Böhme, Helmut, *Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht. Studien zum Verhältnis von Wirtschaft und Staat während der Reichsgründungszeit 1848–1881* (Köln/Berlin, 1966).
- 9 Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, PW II, 178. In German: “Keiner kann dichten, ohne zu politisieren.” Wagner s.a., 153.
- 10 Salmi 1992a, 113–121.
- 11 When Theodor Uhlig died in 1853, Wagner asked his widow to return his letters. The publication of Wagner’s letters began very soon after his death: his correspondence with Liszt was published in 1887; the letters to Uhlig a year later. By 1912, the remaining huge body of letters, which constituted 15 volumes, had been published, although selectively, as the Bayreuth Circle censored out all the unpleasant letters. See *Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt*. Edited by F. Hueffer (Leipzig, 1887); *Richard Wagners Briefe an Theodor Uhlig, Wilhelm Fischer, Ferdinand Heine*. Edited by Hans von Wolzogen (Leipzig, 1888); *Richard Wagners Briefe in Originalausgaben*. 17 Vols. (Leipzig, 1900–1912).
- 12 Anderson 1991, 6.
- 13 Lévi-Strauss 1967, 207–214, 226–227. See also Salmi 1986, 72–75.
- 14 These notes can be found among the pages of the manuscripts *Über Staat und Religion* and *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, B II c 7 and B II c 16a, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 15 Wagner, *Selected Letters* 1987, 301. In German: “Eines steht über allem: die Freiheit! Was ist aber ‘Freiheit’? Etwas—wie unsre Politiker glauben—‘Willkür?’—Gewiss nicht! Die Freiheit ist: Wahrhaftigkeit. Wer wahrhaft, d.h. ganz seinem Wesen gemäss, vollkommen im Einklang mit seiner Natur ist, der ist frei.” Wagner, *Sämtliche Briefe* VI, 60.
- 16 Wagner 1994, 233. “So etwas hätte Hoffmann nicht schreiben können!” Wagner 1976b, 201.
- 17 Cf. Wagner to Ludwig II October 10, 1864, KLRW I, 28–29.
- 18 Wagner 1975a, 156–158.
- 19 Josserrand 1957, 298. See also Wagner to Lorenz von Düfflipp December 15, 1867, Korrespondenz Richard Wagners mit Lorenz von Düfflipp (1867–1877) 1970, 793.
- 20 In the Wagner Archive in Bayreuth, there are actually three versions of the text, *Urschrift*, *Abschrift* and *Reinschrift*. The first was written down by Richard himself, the two latter versions by Cosima. Cf. *Über Staat und Religion*, B II c 7 (Urschrift), B II c 8 (Abschrift), B II c 9 (Reinschrift), Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 21 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen Wagner für König Ludwig II 14.–27.9.1865 (“Wagner’s diary entries to Ludwig”, Urschrift), B II c 11, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 22 Tagebuch Richard Wagners 14.–27.9.1865 (Abschrift), Kabinettsakten König Ludwig II Nr. 126, Abt. II: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.
- 23 Cf. “Anordnung der Gesamtausgabe meiner Schriften 26.4.1868”, Wagner 1975a, 156–158.
- 24 Cf. Cosima’s diary entries June 18, 1869 and August 30, 1870, Wagner 1976a, 112, 279.

- 25 See closer Cosima's diary entry February 4, 1878, Wagner 1976a, 43.
- 26 The preface and the epilogue are enclosed in the *Urschrift* of the diary recordings, B II c 11, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 27 "Was ist deutsch?" (Abschrift), Hs 94/1/22, Richard-Wagner-Gedenkstätte der Stadt Bayreuth.
- 28 The changes are included in "Was ist deutsch?" (Abschrift), Hs 94/1/22, Richard-Wagner-Gedenkstätte der Stadt Bayreuth.
- 29 Cf. Wagner 1878, *passim*.
- 30 Westernhagen 1979b, 342.
- 31 Wagner 1975a, 210–211, 216–220.
- 32 This sketch can be found between pages 2 and 3 in the manuscript of *Über Staat und Religion*, B II c 7 (Urschrift), Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 33 This sketch can be found between the parts VII and VIII of the manuscript, *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, B II c 16a, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 34 See e.g. Wagner 1868, 13, KLRW IV, 25.
- 35 Wagner, *What Is German?*, PW IV, 157. In German: "... *Widerstreit des deutschen Geistes mit dem undeutschen Geiste.*" KLRW IV, 18.
- 36 KLRW IV, 28. Cf. PW IV, 166. In German: "*Ich stehe nicht an, die seitdem vorgekommenen Revolutionen in Deutschland als ganz undeutsch zu bezeichnen.*" Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 25. Sept. 1865.
- 37 KLRW IV, 18. Cf. PW IV, 156. In German: "*Das unermessliche Unglück Deutschlands war, daß um jene Zeit, als der deutsche Geist für seine Aufgabe auf jenem erhabenen Gebiete heranreifte, das richtige Staatsinteresse der deutschen Völker dem Verständnisse eines Fürsten zugemuthet blieb, welcher dem deutschen Geist gänzlich fremd, zum vollgültigsten Repräsentanten des undeutschen, romanischen Staatsgedankens berufen war.*" Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 20. Sept. 1865.
- 38 William Ashton Ellis translates this word "non-German". Cf. PW IV, 153.
- 39 KLRW IV, 15. Cf. PW IV, 153. In German: "*Eigentümlicherweise tritt uns aus geschichtlichen Erinnerung die Herrlichkeit des deutschen Namens gerade aus derjenigen Periode entgegen, welche dem deutschen Wesen verderblich war, nämlich der der Macht der Deutschen über ausserdeutsche Völker.*" Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 19. Sept. 1865.
- 40 Wagner 1975a, 86; Wagner 1980b, 73.
- 41 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen ... (Urschrift), B II c 11, p. 31, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung. Cf. KLRW IV, 28.
- 42 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 55. In German: "*'Deutsch', 'deutsch', so tönt die Glocke laut über die kosmopolitische Synagoge der 'Jetztzeit' hin.*" Wagner 1868, 27.
- 43 Mähl 1985, 274.
- 44 KLRW IV, 17. Cf. PW IV, 155. In German: "*Eleganz der Form*" Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 20. Sept. 1865.
- 45 Wagner, *Beethoven*, PW V, 126. In German: "*freche Mode*". Wagner 1870, 73.

- 46 KLRW IV, 23. Cf. PW IV, 162. In German: "... lächerlich nachahmte französische Galanterie". Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 23. Sept. 1865.
- 47 Wagner 1868, 53–56.
- 48 Wagner 1868, 32.
- 49 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 42. In German: "Kämpfe zwischen französischer Civilisation und deutschem Geiste". Wagner 1868, 14.
- 50 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 58. In German: "geistloses Materialismus". Wagner 1868, 31.
- 51 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 84. In German: "mechanische Nachahmung". Wagner 1868, 58.
- 52 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 80. In German: "Idealismus". Wagner 1868, 54.
- 53 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 84. In German: "ästhetische Nachbildung". Wagner 1868, 58.
- 54 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 58. Wagner 1868, 31.
- 55 KLRW IV, 17. Cf. PW IV, 155. In German: "Der Italiener eignete sich von der Antike an, was er nachahmen und nachbilden konnte, der Franzose eignete sich wieder von dieser Nachbildung an, was seinem nationalen Sinne für Eleganz der Form schmeicheln durfte: erst der Deutsche erkannte sie in ihrer reinmenschliche Originalität und der Nützlichkeit gänzlich abgewandten." Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 20. Sept. 1865.
- 56 Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, SS VII, 270.
- 57 Wagner, *Preface to the "Ring" Poem*, PW III, 281. In German: "Endlich aber hätten wir so die Aussicht, das Eigenthümlichste und Gelungenste des deutschen Geistes jährlich in einem - wenn möglich - neuen Werke besonderer, uns wesentlich angehörender Gattung, hervorgebracht zu sehen; und endlich träte so der Zeitpunkt ein, wo, wenigstens in einem höchst bedeutungsvollen Kunstzweige, der Deutsche dadurch anfangen **national** zu sein, daß er zunächst **original** würde ..." Wagner 1863, XX.
- 58 Wagner, *On State and Religion*, PW IV, 12. In German: "... in der Person des Königs erreicht der Staat zugleich sein eigentliches Ideal." Wagner, *Über Staat und Religion*, SS VIII, 10.
- 59 KLRW IV, 33. In German: "Hier gilt es aber nichts zu sagen, nichts anzukündigen, kein unzeitiges Aufsehen zu erwecken, sondern zur That zu schreiten, zu der That, ein grenzlos geliebter Fürst, ein Vorbild des deutschen Volkes zu sein." Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 27 Sept. 1865.
- 60 Cit. Rose 1992, 105. In German: "Die 'Demokratie' ist in Deutschland ein rein übersetztes Wesen." KLRW IV, 28.
- 61 Elias 1939, 1–10.
- 62 Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, PW I, 55.
- 63 Wagner to Gabriel Monod October 25, 1876, *Revue politique et littéraire* 7/1883 (17. Février 1883). This letter has also been published in German in *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Zeitung* 9/1883 and *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 5/1884.
- 64 See also Mähl 1985, 274.

65 Koselleck 1985, 1–14.

66 Davis 1981, 36–37.

Part I

“WHAT IS GERMAN?” WAGNER’S NATIONALIST WRITINGS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW GERMANY

Chapter One

Wagner's Concept of the German Past

On the Birth of the Romantic Sense of History

The orientation of history, the relationship with the past, is often considered one of the characteristics of nationalist thinking. The vision of the past is important also for the scrutiny of Wagner, since in his nationalist texts he combined the contrasts “German/un-German” and “past/present;” that is, the dimension of time had significance in relation to the definition of *Deutschtum*. All German cultures were to define themselves in relation to the past. Wagner's national utopia also needed a tradition, a certain natural continuation. Wagner established the importance of history in his *Oper und Drama*: “We shall not win hope and nerve until we bend our ear to the heart-beat of history, and catch the sound of that sempiternal vein of living waters which, however, buried under the waste-heap of historic civilisation, yet pulses on in all its pristine freshness.”¹

The fact that Wagner stressed in his writings the idea of history, and the necessity of historical observation, was by no means unusual during the romantic age. There is thus every reason to begin the analysis from the time during which the consciousness of history originated, since these periods are seen as transparent strands in nineteenth-century German thinking. Before the romantic age, in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the concept of time was Newtonian and mechanistic. Events, historical phases of development, were seen to follow each other uninterruptedly in the same way as expanding

circles on the surface of water. This mode of thinking was represented by Voltaire, who in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764) spoke of a long 'chain of events' (*chaîne des événements*). The language employed by Voltaire took its characteristic material from the past, but much more striking is the fact that the character of history was mainly illustrated by referring to natural phenomena.²

During the Enlightenment, historical changes were seen in terms of inevitability and not as teleological phenomena. This was mainly due to the French and English Enlightenment, however, for in the German *Aufklärung*, the consciousness of history took different forms. Peter Hans Reill, in his study on historicism and historical scholarship, concludes that interest in the past was much more widespread in the German area than in France or in England, and unlike the exoticism-oriented curious inquisitiveness of the more Western forms of the Enlightenment, the German interest in history was deeper and more cultural in character. There was little interest in the Middle Ages in France and in England, and the whole medieval period was essentially seen as a dark age. By contrast, in Germany there was a strong tradition of medievalism, influenced by Bodmer, amongst others.³ The Middle Ages were not, after all, 'discovered' by Wagner and the other romantics.

In contrast to the French and English writers of the Age of Reason, the exponents of the *Aufklärung* shared a feature which later was to become a significant standpoint of the historicists: the idea of 'individuality', the uniqueness of a given historical era.⁴ To the nineteenth-century historicists, history was a genetic process in which every level was unique and was permeated by itself. Each level was necessary in relation to the past and the forthcoming periods. At first sight, this may not seem to differ much from Voltaire's world of thinking. After all, Voltaire was in the same way speaking of a genealogical tree of the events of the world.⁵ He argued that the present springs from the past, and the future from the present. There is, however, a difference between these two worlds of thought. To Voltaire, the individual links in the chain of events did not have the unique and coherent character attributed to them by the German Enlightenment and by the later historicists. In this concept of 'uniqueness', the *Aufklärung* owed much to the philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who was fiercely opposed by Voltaire.⁶

One of Leibniz's most significant thoughts was the doctrine of the 'monad', which derived from earlier theory of atoms. According to Leibniz, the monad was the basic unit of the universum.⁷ Each monad was individual

and self-sufficient, and constituted not merely a fragment of the universum, as the atom was, but from a certain perspective each monad was itself a universum.⁸ This mode of thinking was applied to the scrutiny of culture by the thinkers of the German Enlightenment, who often saw different periods and cultures as perspectives of history, as unique levels, as bridges between the past and the future.⁹

The problem in Leibnizian thinking was that the theory of the monad did not provide an adequate basis for the understanding of historical change. How did the different periods of cultures follow each other, and how did they emerge from each other? What mechanisms lead to a new perspective in world history, to the appearance of a new unique whole? The fatalist element was thus already present in Leibniz's theory. For instance, according to Voltaire, it follows from Leibniz's thought that the existing world is the best of all possible worlds. Voltaire's *Candide* was a direct polemic attack against this form of fatalism.¹⁰ Thus Leibniz's concept of history had its own consequential effects: the world being the best possible of all worlds, any attempts to change the world were predestined to fail, since changes could make conditions even worse than the present ones. Leibnizian thinking allowed each cultural period to see the universum such as it was.

Even though there were indisputably problems relating to Leibnizian philosophy, its functioning can be found in the eighteenth-century German world. Peter Hans Reill argues that the advantage of the monad theory was that it saw historical periods as coherent wholes which could be explained: it was possible to find a rational dispensation in the events of the past. The past could be understood in its own terms. When Voltaire was writing about exotic cultures and lost times, his perspective was always the perspective of a Parisian cynic. The French Enlightenment believed in the universality of reason. When the German thinker Bodmer focused on medieval culture, he did not follow a universalist approach, however; his standpoint depended on the conceptual system of the period which he was scrutinizing.¹¹

Wagner sets out to deal with this problem in his *Publikum und Popularität* (1878), arguing that there were "two varieties of the critical mind, two methods of the science of comprehension." He compares Voltaire's and Schiller's descriptions of Jeanne d'Arc with one another:

The great critic Voltaire, that idol of all 'free minds', judged the Maid of Orleans on the testimony of the historical documents of his own day, and accordingly felt justified in the view set forth in his filthy poem on the 'Pucelle'. Before Schiller there lay no other documents: but either another, presumably a faulty mode of

criticism, or that Inspiration so decried by our free-spirits, led him to recognise in this maid of France ‘humanity’s all-noble type.’—not only did his poetic canonisation of the heroine bestow upon the Folk an infinitely touching and e’er-loved work, but it also anticipated Historical criticism, hobbling after, which a fortunate discovery has at last put in possession of the rightful documents for judging a marvellous phenomenon.¹²

As a historian, Voltaire was a critic who felt justified in judging people of the past from the perspective of his own time. Schiller, on the other hand, tried to understand Jeanne d’Arc by admitting that the present is not necessarily better than the past. Of course, Schiller was an artist who, by means of his inspiration, could catch the uniqueness of the forlorn past. This seems to have a strong resemblance to the general development of historical thinking, although historical reasoning did not allow pure inspiration, which was possible for the artist.

This stress on an “anti-Voltairean” historical reason was probably of some significance in the disintegrated German world, which was full of clashes of divergent interests. The resolution of these conflicts (for instance, political versus cultural integrity, pietism versus rationalism) was not possible through judgment and criticism, but only through historical understanding. A kind of meeting place of geneticism and the theory of the monad was the concept *Lokalvernunft*, which aimed at the solution of local problems, not so much by an appeal to universal facts, but rather by means of local historical indicators.¹³ It is quite another matter, after all, that the Leibnizian way of thinking motivates merely to understand culture, not to solve the problems that culture presents.

From the perspective of the eighteenth-century German consciousness of history, it is interesting that the influence of the French Revolution was amalgamated into the Leibnizian tradition. The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 seemed to prove that the advance of history was not a harmonious continuity, but it could also include sudden breaks and ruptures. Reinhart Koselleck has treated the concept of breaks in his work *Kritik und Krise*. Central to Koselleck’s idea is that the French Revolution revealed not only a point of historical discontinuity, a historical change, but it also indicated that the course of history could be influenced by means of social activity.¹⁴

Thus the consciousness of history was linked to political action. In the period of romanticism and nationalism, this had evident consequences. Historical knowledge was instrumentalized, and could now be used for the

legitimation of actions performed in the present. It is easy to recognize this aspect of legitimation in the writings of many cultural nationalists, including Wagner, whose relationship to history clearly had this character. Wagner was more interested in the way the past explained the present: in this way, the historical tradition could be used as a kind of obligation which could lead to the future which was desired. In his *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde* (1851) Wagner reveals this openly:

As though to get down to its root, I immersed myself in the primal element of Home, which meets us in the legends of a Past which attracts us the more warmly since the Present repels us with its hostile chill. To all our wishes and warm impulses, which in truth transport us to the *Future*, we seek to give a physical token by means of images from the Past, and thus to win from them a form the modern Present never can provide.¹⁵

Even though this discussion of the process of intellectual history is expressed in generalized terms, it is apparent that within the German area there was an incongruity concerning historical understanding. This dichotomy was connected with the fact that the historical perspective, on the one hand, had a genetic aspect, which perceived historical periods in the perspective of their own origin; on the other hand, there was an inevitable awareness of the political utilization of history.

Wagner and the History of Germany

According to Curt von Westernhagen's description, Wagner's library was vast and contained works both of fiction and history. Wagner used to read Carlyle, Droysen, Gibbon, and Niebuhr.¹⁶ The historical excursions which Wagner, at regular intervals, composed, give evidence of his view of the past. Wagner's historical reviews of the past could be seen as manifestations of a dichotomy generated by the collision of Leibnizian genetics-centred patterns of thought with the rise of the interest in legitimation around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Almost without exception, Wagner filled his texts with avalanches of historical material, whether the question was of the essence of *Deutschtum* and the opera, or of an analysis of artistic taste. In Wagner's opinion, phenomena could be scrutinized in a historical perspective by following "the path of History."¹⁷

One of the most interesting historical excursions is found in the diary for 1865. This begins with an ambiguous and obscure conceptual analysis:

an etymological examination of the word “deutsch.” Instead of focusing his attention on the Indo-German root of the word “deutsch” (which is “theudisk”¹⁸), he is driven to quasi-scientific quibbling in trying to argue a connection between the words “deutsch” and “deutlich.”

The word “deutsch” is also found in the verb “deuten” (to make plain): thus “deutsch” is what is plain to us, the familiar, the wonted, that which was inherited from our fathers and springs from our very own soil.¹⁹

Wagner’s essential survey of the matter begins with a general description of the medieval period, but then passes over to the Holy Germanic Roman Empire, regarded by Wagner as the first period of prosperity in German culture. In his opinion, this golden age gives evidence that German culture could only flourish if it dominated the other cultures which surrounded it,²⁰ a view reinforced by Wagner by means of the opposition “deutsch/ausserdeutsch.” For Wagner, this remote period in the past represented an era of glory when political and cultural power in Germany went hand in hand.²¹

The different periods in the history of the German people were full of traumatic events. One such phase, believed Wagner, was the Empire of Charles V (1519–1556). Charles V had ascended to the throne of Spain and gradually built a vast empire “upon which the sun never set.” In the course of time, Charles had expanded his empire into the German area, which created a tense political situation, for Charles’ most dangerous enemy and political threat to his empire was France. In rising to domination of the world, Charles, argued Wagner, used the German area merely as a means to strengthen his despotism. The German *Volksgeist* could—according to Wagner—never be humiliated before a foreign power.²² In this respect, Wagner followed the idea presented by Ernst Moritz Arndt in his work *Germanien und Europa*, which had appeared in 1803. According to Arndt, the German national spirit and German history were characterized by a continuous spiritual and political struggle for independence, which also meant a fight against cosmopolitan and other external forces.²³

These interpretations could easily be connected with German political disunity. Wagner’s tendency to project disunity on to the history of Germany in a specific way makes it possible to see the *whole* historical development as a continual striving for cultural and political integration which could be interpreted as a legitimation of the struggle for independence. Wagner followed these outlines, despite the fact that the historical world situation of the sixteenth century differed drastically from that of the nineteenth century.

Even though Wagner realized that an understanding of the present would require an examination of the history and the genesis of its phenomena, he did not define how the German situation had changed through the centuries; he was more interested in explaining the present situation as a result of a number of occurrences in the past. In Wagner's perspective, the Reformation originated basically as an extrication from the centralized Catholic Church, and a step towards a more honest German identity.²⁴

Wagner saw Johann Sebastian Bach as an embodiment of the German spirit in the gloomy seventeenth and eighteenth century period of German history. The art of composing in this period, with its conservative forms (the fugue, the sarabande, Allemande, etc.) was boring, strict, and pedantic, but, despite this, Bach was able to create universal and incredibly fresh music:

Bach's spirit, the German spirit, emerged from the sanctuary of the most wonderful music, the place where it was reborn. When Goethe's *Götz* appeared, a cry of joy went up: "That's German!"²⁵

Besides Bach, Wagner also thought very highly of Goethe:

He showed the world what antiquity is, he showed the human spirit what Nature and the world are. These deeds the German spirit brought forth by itself from its inmost desire to become conscious of itself. And this consciousness told it what it was the first to proclaim to the world, namely, that the beautiful and the noble came into the world not for the sake of profit or even for the sake of fame and recognition, but that everything done in the spirit of this teaching is "German", and that is why the German is great; only what is done in this spirit can contribute to Germany's greatness.²⁶

Thus Wagner's historical survey culminates in a key concept, in the light of which all the matters discussed above should be examined. His historical excursion was motivated by a demand for "Germany's greatness." Even though Wagner stressed at regular intervals the idea that the best way to understand phenomena was the investigation of their history, he nonetheless constructed from the historical details a totality which pleased him and which was best adapted for the legitimation of the goals of German policy (and especially his own goals at that time). Volker Mertens has come to the conclusion that a 'supra-historical' quality was most important for Wagner: "In the historical Wagner looked for the supra-historical, and in the national he looked for the human."²⁷ As an example of this, he takes Wagner's poem *Die Sarazenin*, which was originally intended as the libretto for an

opera describing the historical characters Frederick II and his son Manfred. According to Mertens, Wagner always faced difficulties in the treatment of historical material, and therefore he made Manfred the protagonist of the poem, because the description of his destiny allowed the use of a more ample imagination.²⁸ The employment of historical material would have limited and narrowed the characterization of the protagonist. Besides, Wagner could now freely emphasize the supra-historical, immutable characteristics of Manfred's fate. In the historical setting of a drama, all devices are of course permitted, but as has been pointed out before, Wagner was liable to use historical facts freely to serve his purposes.

The legitimating function of Wagner's historical excursions is also revealed in the entries in his diary. He mentions the revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848, which had shaken Europe and which constituted clear points of discontinuity in history. These revolutions had shown that the course of events could be effectively influenced by political action.²⁹ In Wagner's view, the evidence suggests that the time to change the course of the German people into a new direction had come. This process of change had already started in the late eighteenth century, when "the glorious movement of German literature"³⁰ had come into being. The new culture had essentially intensified German national emotion:

The birth of the new German spirit brought with it the rebirth of the German people: the German War of Liberation of 1813, 1814 and 1815 suddenly familiarised us with this people.³¹

Spiritual and political change could now move hand in hand. The vision of Germany's past created by Wagner was to a large extent formulated through this hope for change. On the other hand, Wagner's concept of the past was not constrained by historical detail; myth also played an important role.

Mythical Germany

In Wagner's production the concept of the past was largely formulated through myths. The mythical dimension existed both as a heritage of Classical Antiquity, and as German mythology. Although Wagner was potentially interested in all mythologies, it is the connections with German myths which are particularly of interest. From the Oedipus myth, later explored in depth by Sigmund Freud and Claude Lévi-Strauss, Wagner concluded in his work *Oper und Drama*:

Today we need only faithfully to expound the myth of Oedipus according to its inmost essence, and in it we win an intelligible picture of the whole history of mankind, from the beginnings of Society to the inevitable downfall of the State. The necessity of this downfall is, in the mythos, merely foreshadowed: it is the part of actual history (die wirkliche Geschichte) to accomplish it.³²

Wagner sees the classical ancient myths as the collective experiences of mankind amalgamated into a symbolic narrative. The Oedipus myth was formulated in the context of Ancient Greece, but becomes part of universalized history, eternally relevant. The narrative of the myth therefore contained a microcosm of history; that is, the idea of history.³³

To Wagner, Classical Antiquity represented a global overview that comprehended the whole of mankind. In scrutinizing *Deutschtum*, however, he did not concentrate only on the Classical Period, as the eighteenth-century classicists had done; the basic idea of German history was to be found in German myths: knowledge of the ancient Germanic period could also assist in the solution of practical problems in the nineteenth century.

As a composer, Wagner made use of ancient German sources. After the disillusionment of his Paris years, in 1839–42, his aesthetic vision turned away from current international fashion to the sources of ancient German history. Moreover, his early, 'international' works also incorporated mythic features which were more fully revealed in his mature production.

Like the topics of his compositions, the concept of the past found in Wagner's writings is characterized by myth. His disengagement from the present seems to correlate directly with his deployment of historical and mythical motifs. From this point of view an illustrative example was his writing *Die Wibelungen. Weltgeschichte aus der Sage*, written in 1848.

The title of this text shows that Wagner sets out from an assumption that German fairy-tales, stories and myths had a historical background. Initially, he describes what society, in his opinion, had been like, and what it probably should be like. Tribal community had been strictly patriarchal: the father acted as teacher and adviser to his children. The idea of monarchy was based on the power structures of this society. The King was a father; his subjects were his children.³⁴ The King was a primary educator and teacher of society. The emphasis on this educational aspect is apparently connected with Wagner's social utopia, which was being modelled at the same time and in which education and art were of central significance.

His central focus here is on the mythical-religious story of the Nibelungs. *Das Nibelungenlied*, argues Wagner, was important from the

point of view both of its "material" and of its "ideal" content.³⁵ The material element was constituted by Wagner's belief that the Nibelungs were a tribe that had historically existed.³⁶ The Siegfried of *Das Nibelungenlied* was none other than the historical character, Frederick Barbarossa. Frederick was thus a reincarnation of the pagan figure Siegfried. The ideal level embraced the fact that the tale of the Nibelungs contained a religious dimension which, like Christianity, returned to a kind of natural religion. Wagner associated Siegfried with Christ, the Saviour: "In the German Folk survives the oldest lawful race of Kings in all the world: it issues from a son of God, called by his nearest kinsmen Siegfried, but Christ by the remaining nations of the earth."³⁷ The Nibelung hoard was associated by Wagner with the mythical chalice of the Holy Grail, in which Joseph of Arimathea received the last drops of Jesus' blood at the Cross. Wagner returned to the Grail motif in his last opera, *Parsifal*; before that, he had treated it in *Lohengrin*. In Wagner's opinion, the German myths, like the Christian ones, spoke a universal language telling universal truths; Frederick, like Siegfried, was a divine figure.³⁸

The text *Die Wibelungen. Weltgeschichte aus der Sage* was extremely obscure. Myths and historical subjects were twined into a tangle not easily unravelled. The amalgamation of myths and historical elements could be interpreted as evidence that Wagner saw no incongruity between myth and history: a myth was not to be equated with fiction, and history could not be equated to fact. In principle, the opposite could be valid. A myth was generated by the collective will of a people, and was therefore true, whereas (written) history had been formulated by individuals in their writing, apart from the tradition which had been preserved unbroken at the level of myths.³⁹ A myth, like history, could tell the truth, but the truth told by a myth was different in character: a truth concerning the past which sprang from the dimension of time across the centuries.⁴⁰

These points lead to an essential question concerning Wagner and romantic thinking: "What is the Subject, the 'truth' of history, which in fact moves through the dimension of time?" In combining mythical and historical elements, Wagner, typically for the Romantic period, believed in the self-mobility of the spirit.⁴¹ The German spirit had moved through mythical and historical periods. Wagner accepted a Leibnizian vision that the periods of the past were coherent, and not merely linking phases in a development from past to future; nonetheless, he did not think that individual periods were unique, as the historicists claimed.

The events of German history, in Wagner's view, were marked by a dualism between the German spirit and "non-German" forces. Wagner concluded that the *true* history of Germany would begin only when the German spirit finally succeeded in pushing the non-German spirit of decadence aside. In this situation, myth and history would amalgamate in society into a resplendent whole. Wagner could have repeated Hegel's words: "The German spirit is the spirit of the new world."⁴²

The Past as Building Material for National Identity

As mentioned earlier, in Wagner's texts national identity, myth and history are inseparably fused. In Wagner's view, myth and history should be amalgamated together because they represent two different sides of the same matter. Dagmar Ingenschay-Goch has come to the same conclusion, that myth and history form a unity, in her analysis of Wagner's librettos.⁴³

Contrary to Wagner's concepts of history and myth, his ideas of the past and the present generate clear oppositions. At regular intervals, he associates the past with nobility, welfare, and harmony with the German spirit. He describes this harmony with the expression "die deutsche Herrlichkeit." By contrast, the present was associated with *undeutsch*, imitation of a pompous French civilization, and a spiritual decline from which Germany should be released. Through his mythical-historical excursions, Wagner evidently hoped to contribute to Germany's rise out of this spiritual depression.⁴⁴ He strove to recover the German people's lost glory, which could be raised as a goal for the future.

The concept of the past is a significant factor in his attempts to define *Deutschtum*. Wagner's central standpoint in his definition of *Deutschtum* was a binary contrast "past/present", which he combined with the oppositions "interpretation/imitation", "true/false" and "noble/decadent". The Germans had to find their true selves, their noble nature, by recovering their past. The German of the past was to be the German of the future.

Wagner's concept of the past could be illustrated by Maurice Boucher's term "theoretical nationalism", the strategy of which was first to create a myth, and then to argue that this myth did not yet correspond to reality.⁴⁵ Wagner's "theoreticalness" can be recognized in the fact that he claimed that everything negative in the present would later transform itself into a German victory. A change for the better was also to take place in the French-influenced decadence in Germany, because "the true fountain of continual renovation has remained the German nature."⁴⁶

Wagner's concept of the past and the historical development seems to indicate that he was really creating a myth in the sense of the dualism discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss. In this construction of myth, historical material had a significant role. In his diaries, when Wagner explores his ideal of *Deutschtum*, he resorts to sources which are mainly historical. He saw the whole of German history as a continual struggle for independence. He moulded the past into forms which were relevant for his perspective of *Deutschtum*. According to Wagner, it was not necessary to follow mere truth or "historical documents". Historical drama had made it clear "that even the Romance could only reach its appointed height, as an art form, by sinning against the truth of history."⁴⁷

It seems to be apparent that Wagner exploited the past as material for the construction of his concept of national identity. In this respect, he was certainly no exception among nineteenth-century nationalists. Thomas Nipperdey has argued that the nation was a myth for the national movement. The nation strove to create a relevant picture of the past, and this trend was even followed by historians: "Among scholars there was a tendency to distil from history a pre-existent national character, as it were, and elevate it to an immutable, universal explanatory principle, thus endowing the historical nation with an almost natural character."⁴⁸

To Wagner, the past was important, not only as a concept which could be used for the definition of the nation, but also as a kind of driving force propelling the creation of a state of values suitable for the achievement of utopia. Interestingly, Wagner had no scholarly interest in history. In 1878, he wrote very critically about the work historians did in the Academy: "Poor History" had been "reduced to such a pitch of dullness that one found oneself moved to enliven it with all kinds of piquant frivolities, as in the newest portraits of Nero and Tiberius, where cleverness has already gone somewhat too far."⁴⁹

One could say that the past in Wagner's thinking had a twofold purpose. It was primarily a resource for national identity, which characterized true *Deutschtum*, but it was also functional and moralizing in its tendency to change the past into an obliging combination of myths and history. In Wagner's writings the past is not only regarded as descriptive, characterizing a mythical concept of true *Deutschtum*, but also as narrative in character, illustrating the past as a story which was continuing and which was to lead to the national utopia.

Notes

- 1 Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, PW II, 374.
- 2 Voltaire 1786a, 445–448.
- 3 Reill 1975, 213. See also Dann 1976, 386–415; Vierhaus 1986, 264–275.
- 4 Reill 1975, 213–214. Cf. Krieger 1986, 248–252.
- 5 Voltaire 1786a, 447. Voltaire writes: “*Il y a un arbre généalogique des événemens de ce monde.*”
- 6 See e.g. Voltaire 1786a, 446. See also Dilthey 1927, 247; Reill 1975, 215; Krieger 1986, 249–252. Cf. Meinecke 1936, 480–650.
- 7 Leibniz 1986, 13.
- 8 Leibniz 1986, 13–35. See also Krieger 1986, 249–252; Cassirer 1932, 32.
- 9 Reill 1975, 215.
- 10 See e.g. Voltaire 1786a, 446; Voltaire 1786b, 278. See also Voltaire: *Candide ou l’optimisme* (A Lille 1793).
- 11 Reill 1975, 215.
- 12 Wagner, *Public and Popularity*, PW VI, 79.
- 13 Knudsen 1986, 324–343. The concept “Lokalvernunft” was applied by e.g. Bodmer, Dütter, Gatterer, Schlözer and Semler. Cf. Reill 1975, 215.
- 14 Koselleck 1973, 105, 156–157.
- 15 Wagner, *A Communication to My Friends*, PW I, 357.
- 16 Westernhagen 1966, 84–113. During his Dresden years, Wagner was following “a settled course of self-education.” He read not only ancient classics, but also historical studies on the Greek and Roman cultures. Soon, his interest started to move towards German history and mythology: “I consequently turned my attention from the historical studies, which seemed to be my own peculiar province, and in which department Droysen’s history of Alexander and the Hellenistic period, as well as Niebuhr and Gibbon, were of great help to me, and fell back once more upon my old and trusty guide, Jakob Grimm, for the study of German antiquity.” Wagner 1994, 416.
- 17 Wagner, *What Is German?*, PW IV, 152. In German: “*auf geschichtlichem Wege*”
- 18 Berbig 1985, 17–20; Valentin 1965, 40–42.
- 19 KLRW IV, 14. Cf. PW IV, 152. In German: “*Wort ‘deutsch’ findet sich in dem Zeitform ‘deuten’ wieder: ‘deutsch’ ist demnach, was uns deutlich ist, somit das, Vertraute, uns Gewohnte, von den Vätern Ererbte, unsrem Boden Entsprössene.*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 18 Sept. 1865.
- 20 KLRW IV, 15.
- 21 KLRW IV, 16.
- 22 KLRW IV, 18.
- 23 See for more detail Kemiläinen 1964, 86.
- 24 KLRW IV, 18.

- 25 KLRW IV, 24 Cf. PW IV, 163. In German: “*Bachs Geist, der deutsche Geist, trat aus dem Mysterium der wunderbarsten Musik, seiner Neugeburtstätte, hervor. Als Goethe ‘Götz’ erschien, jubelt ees auf: ‘das ist deutsch!’*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 23 Sept. 1865.
- 26 KLRW IV, 24. Cf. PW IV, 163. In German: “... *Er entdeckte der Welt, was die Antike sei, er zeigte dem menschlichen Geiste, was die Natur und die Welt sei. Diese Taten vollbrachte der deutsche Geist aus sich, aus seinem innersten Verlangen, sich seiner bewusst zu werden. Und dieses Bewußtsein sagte ihm, was er zum ersten Male der Welt verkünden konnte, daß das Schöne und Edle nicht um des Vorteils, ja selbst nicht um des Ruhmes und der Unerkennung willen in die Welt tritt: und alles, was im Sinne dieser Lehre gewirkt wird, ist ‘deutsch’, und deshalb ist der Deutsche gross; und nur, was in diesem Sinne gewirkt wird, kann zur Grösse Deutschlands führen.*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 23 Sept. 1865.
- 27 Mertens 1986, 21. In German: “*Wagner sucht (...) im Historischen das Überhistorische und im Nationalen das Menschliche.*”
- 28 Mertens 1986, 21.
- 29 KLRW IV, 27–28. Cf. Koselleck 1973, 105, 156–157.
- 30 KLRW IV, 9. In German: “*die herrliche Bewegung der deutschen Literatur*”. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 15 Sept. 1865.
- 31 KLRW IV, 9. In German: “*Die Geburt des neuen deutschen Geistes hat die Wiedergeburt des deutschen Volkes nach sich gezogen: der deutsche Befreiungskrieg in den Jahren 1813, 14 u. 15 hat uns plötzlich mit diesem Volke bekannt gemacht.*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 15 Sept. 1865.
- 32 Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, PW II, 191. In German: “*Den Ödipusmythus brauchen wir auch heute nur seinem innersten Wesen nach getreu zu deuten, so gewinnen wir an ihm ein verständliches Bild der ganzen Geschichte der Menschheit vom Anfang der Gesellschaft bis zum notwendigen Untergange des Staates. Die Notwendigkeit dieses Unterganges ist im Mythos vorausempfungen; an der Wirklichen Geschichte ist es, ihn auszuführen.*” Wagner s.a., 165. See also Rather 1979, 47ff.
- 33 Cf. Borchmeyer 1992, 9.
- 34 Wagner 1850b, 6–7.
- 35 Wagner 1850b, 50. See also Wagner, *The Wibelungen*, PW VII, 284–285.
- 36 In this interpretation, Wagner was inspired by Karl Wilhelm Götting’s *Nibelungen und Gibelinen* (1816) and Franz Joseph Mone’s *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Heldensage* (1836). See closer Borchmeyer 1992, 6.
- 37 Wagner, *The Wibelungen*, PW VII, 289.
- 38 Wagner 1850b, 50–68.
- 39 Cf. Boucher 1947, 33; Feldmann 1969, 11–14; Hübner 1987, 242–246.
- 40 Cf. Borchmeyer 1992, 9–10, 14. See also Rather 1979, 42–43.
- 41 Cf. Hegel 1920, 36–37; Herder 1940, 38–39; Grimm 1936, 62–65. See also Dahlhaus 1980, 80–82; Feldmann 1969, 51–54.
- 42 Hegel 1919, 763. In German: “*Der germanische Geist is der Geist der neuen Welt*”
- 43 Ingenschay-Goch 1982, 151–154.
- 44 Cf. Boucher 1947, 106–107.

- 45 Boucher 1947, 136–137.
- 46 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 58. In German: “*der wahre Quell fortwährender Erneuerung blieb das deutsche Wesen*”. Wagner 1868, 31.
- 47 Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, PW II, 174.
- 48 Nipperdey 1987, 102. In German: “*In der Wissenschaft gab es die Tendenz, aus der Geschichte einen quasi prä-existenten Nationalcharakter heraus zu destillieren und zum unwandelbaren und universalen Erklärungsprinzip zu erheben, die geschichtliche Nation gewinnt dann fast naturalen Charakter.*”
- 49 Wagner, *Public and Popularity*, PW VI, 74–75.

Chapter Two

The Home of the German Spirit

Germany before Unification: 'An Atomistic Chaos'

Before the unification of 1871, the German area had been in dissolution for centuries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this was experienced as a trauma: the disharmony between political and cultural reality was felt to be confusing and contradictory. Friedrich Nietzsche characterized the German question with the words: "We live in a period of atoms, an atomistic chaos."¹ In Nietzsche's view, Germany was still in a kind of natural state; Chaos had not yet established itself as a Cosmos. The real history of Germany lay in the future.

Demands for the unification of Germany found support in the nationalistic movements, and the rise of German Nationalism was influenced by the new thinking of the French Revolution and by the political situation which existed in Germany during the Napoleonic Wars.² Germany, which was described by Hegel with the words "a political non-entity"³, was at last seen to be politicized. Wagner himself wrote that "the War of Liberation" would lead to "the arousal of the Folk-spirit."⁴

The roots of the 'German Movement' (deutsche Bewegung) can, however, be traced to the eighteenth century. This movement was cultural-political in nature. Gottfried Ephraim Lessing had already attempted to resist the pernicious influence of French literature, in the same way as Wagner did a century later; Justus Möser stressed the significance of German

customs and traditions; Friedrich Gottfried Klopstock praised the noble features of patriotism.⁵

The anti-Enlightenment movement *Sturm und Drang* emerged in Germany in the late eighteenth century (during the 1760s-1790s). The name of the movement came from a play by Max Klinger, using ideas which dated back both to Pietism and to the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Sturm und Drang* wanted to replace the rationalism emphasized by the Enlightenment with freedom of emotion, and it stressed the significance of understanding Germany's past. The movement was characterized by a strong belief in a creative genius.⁶

One of the most important centres of the Storm and Stress movement was the Strasbourg circle of the young Goethe, Friedrich Schiller and Johann Gottfried Herder. In his book *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Herder supported the idea of a national spirit (*Volksgeist*) which was the creative force of the nation and which was crystallized especially in the national tradition: in folk songs and in fairy-tales.⁷

Gradually, the cultural consciousness of the German Movement took on a political aspect. In writing his plays *Jungfrau von Orleans* (1801) and *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), Schiller was describing the state of the German people as under French dominion. Hölderlin spoke metaphorically of the free people of Greece, representing the German nation, and of the glory of dying for one's native country on the battlefield. Johann Gottlieb Fichte was inspired in his lectures *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807-08) to stress the significance of freedom of thought and national rebirth. Heinrich von Kleist's play *Hermanns Schlacht* (1808) was perceived as a model for nationalistic literature.⁸ Kleist's play was a direct attack against the political power of France, and this view was more openly discussed in the journal *Rheinischer Merkur*, which was probably the most aggressive of the anti-Napoleonic papers.⁹

The national movement soon incorporated the creation of political and economic unity into its programme. The phrase "A new birth must come", frequently repeated by Ernst Moritz Arndt in his work *Geist der Zeit* (1806), came to be the movement's maxim.¹⁰

The development of the unification of Germany did not, however, take place through miraculous regeneration; on the contrary, the events proceeded slowly and through many phases. After the defeat of Napoleon (1814), Germany consisted of a loose confederation of 39 independent states. The Frankfurt National Assembly was a meeting of the representatives of the 39 states, established in Frankfurt am Main in 1816, but it had little influ-

ence.¹¹ A year before the establishment of this embryonic national Parliament, the first gymnastic societies (*Burschenschaften*) were founded, mainly on the initiative of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, in Jena. These athletic clubs called for “glory, freedom, and the mother country” and took as their own symbolic colours—instead of the Prussian black and white—the black, the red, and the golden-yellow, which according to Jahn, symbolized the path from the black night of slavery through bloody struggle towards the golden dawn of freedom.¹²

The German Zollverein (customs union) which was established mainly under Prussian leadership in 1834 played an important role in the development towards unification. Initially, the Zollverein consisted of a core area including Prussia, Bavaria, and Württemberg, but this expanded considerably with the accession of Hanover (1854) and Mecklenburg (1867).¹³ This union led not only to political and economic unification, but also to rapid industrialization. The customs union made it possible to build a railway network, which proved of crucial value when Prussia started three politically strategic wars, first against Denmark in 1864, then against Austria in 1866, and finally against France in 1870. By 1871, as a consequence of these wars, Germany was essentially unified.

Political unification proceeded slowly, and often seemed to be interrupted by chaotic political situations. Prussia’s strong grip also aroused many fears. In the mid-nineteenth century there were many who regarded the situation as hopeless. The political thinker and writer Paul de Lagarde, who was greatly admired by Wagner, stated in his lecture *Über die gegenwärtigen Aufgaben der deutschen Politik*, given in November 1853, that the Germans actually possessed neither the capability to solve their problems nor the logic required for long-term political projects.¹⁴ Many contemporaries thought, as Nietzsche did, that Germany around the mid-nineteenth century was no more than an ‘atomistic chaos.’ In part, the grounds for this pessimism lay in the prevalence of so many divergent opinions as to what the word ‘Germany’ really meant.

The State, the Nation or Culture

In the study of Wagner’s concept of *Deutschtum*, it is important to remember the painful background of German unification: Wagner predictably reiterated that Germany could be united and then would become a great national state.¹⁵ It is also important to examine how the concept of *Deutschtum* was defined in relation to the concepts ‘people’, ‘nation’, ‘state’, and ‘culture’.

In the table of binarisms (see p. 13 above), these concepts clearly reveal the meaning of *Deutschtum*, which is most clearly shown, however, by the relation of the concepts 'nation' to the opposition 'national/kosmopolitisch', 'culture' to the contrast 'Cultur/Civilisation,' and 'state' to the pair 'Königtum/Demokratie.'

To Wagner, as to many other German romanticists, the unconditional requirement for art was the people. This was pertinently asserted in the subtitle of Wagner's work *Das Kunstwerk der zukunft*: "The Folk as the Force conditioning the Art-work".¹⁶ This form of thinking stems from Herder, who concluded that the primary unifying force of the people was not constituted by language, shared customs, geographical territory, or racial characteristics, which were all secondary factors; the most significant force that created cohesion was the Folk Spirit (*Volksgeist*), which was not only a catalyst for art but for human functioning in general.¹⁷ Wagner also saw the *Volksgeist* as the coherent unifying force of the nation. The concepts 'Volk', 'Nation' and 'Geist' were the cornerstones of his theory of art.

The national spirit could free itself and channel itself into expression through the work of individual artists. Wagner concluded that the writer or composer was in the end not an individual artist but the Folk itself. He was impelled to write about his own opera project *Wieland der Schmied*: "O sole and glorious Folk! This is it, that thou thyself hast sung. Thou art thyself this Wieland!"¹⁸

The romanticists saw the national spirit as a latent hidden force, realized in the various phases of the nation's life. To a large extent, the nationalists followed a similar line in defining their own standpoint. A nation was not born at the instant when people recognized its existence as one undivided entity, but was seen to have a long history of its own; nor had the *Volksgeist* emerged in the eighteenth century, but it was seen as having existed as long as the nation herself. In a way, the nationalists also saw nationalism as a latent force, even though it was a logical consequence of a new social dispensation. From ancient times, the phases of the nation were seen to have been characterized by a striving for the realization of the idea of a nation, the *Volksgeist*.

The fact that the nation was a natural constituent of a perpetual typology, regulated by God/Nature, was often deployed to stress the latent characteristics of the *Volksgeist*.¹⁹ Herder had shown that "a folk is just a plant in nature, like a family" and that "for a state nothing else is better than natural order."²⁰ At regular intervals, Herder repeated the term 'the natural state' (*der natürliche Staat*). In romantic thinking deriving from Herder,

nature and culture were placed in the same category of continuity. In this same tradition was also Wagner's aphorism, with which he began his work *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*: "As man stands to Nature, so stands Art to Man."²¹

According to Ernest Gellner, "nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."²² In other words, it strove for a condition in which the state (Staat) and the nation (Nation) could be a single integrated unity. Herder particularly emphasized the idea that "a natural state is a folk with a national character."²³ The most serious trauma or dysphoria was the fact that Germany had not reached this 'natural state': the current state of political dissolution was in disharmony with the posited cultural cohesion. In 1853, Paul de Lagarde wrote: "Germany can be united only through common work, provided that the whole nation takes responsibility for the accomplishment."²⁴ The German nation was in truth already in existence, but not its counterpart, 'All Deutschland'. This situation was illustrated by Schiller in the comment: "The German Reich and the German nation are two separate things."²⁵

Friedrich Meinecke examined the German concept 'Nation' in relation to the assumption that it was based on geography (the *Vaterland*).²⁶ In Germany, the concept 'Nation' was often based on territory, though common origins or race, common language, laws, and shared customs were also seen as significant factors.²⁷ Meinecke distinguishes between the concepts 'Kulturnation' and 'Staatsnation', of which the first would be similar in meaning to Lagarde's term 'Nation'. A common culture (language, literature, and religion) was characteristic of a 'Kulturnation', whereas the features of 'Staatsnation' were a common social order, politics, and history. According to Meinecke, both Italy and Germany were first 'Kulturnationen'; only later did they become 'Staatsnationen'.²⁸

Friedrich Meinecke's thinking is based on the idea of a real unified cultural area which constituted the 'Kulturnation'. In more recent investigations, the nature of the term 'Nation' as a conceptual construct has been stressed. Thomas Nipperdey has characterized the concept 'Nation' as a myth created for a national political purpose.²⁹ In the same way, Johannes Willms has seen the whole of nationalism as a historical myth which has benefited specific minorities within society. The idea of the 'Nation', in Willms' view, remained an unattainable myth: thus nineteenth-century German history was labelled as "Nationalismus ohne Nation".³⁰ It is true that bourgeois intellectuals (*Bildungsbürgertum*) gave prominence to the culture of folklore

(folk music, poems, and fairy-tales) in order to emphasize the idea of Germany as a true 'Kulturnation'.³¹ Attention was especially focused on popular artistic creativity, and professional artists enthusiastically imitated folk poems and songs (for instance, Arnim's and Brentano's series of poems *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*). A conscious coherence, in which the real and the fictional were inseparably entwined, emerged from the image of the 'Kulturnation'. In Benedict Anderson's terms, the German intellectuals and artists were engaged in the process of creating an 'imagined Germany'.

There is also certainly reason to discuss the concept 'race' (Rasse) in connection with Wagner's concepts of 'people' and 'nation'. On the whole, the word 'race' occurs extremely infrequently in Wagner's original texts (in fact, the word appears only a couple of times in Wagner's latest writings),³² but it is used considerably more frequently in William Ashton Ellis' translations of Wagner's prose. Ashton Ellis' version of Wagner's prose works thus projects a more racist image of Wagner than the original German texts!

Although Wagner has subsequently, as a consequence of the actions of the Bayreuth Circle and Nazi ideology, been interpreted as a forerunner of antisemitic racial theories, his writings during the 1860s and early 1870s do not offer clear evidence of this kind of thinking, and it is difficult to claim that the idea of race was fundamental to his nationalism during the years of unification. Paul Lawrence Rose studied Wagner's antisemitism in his book *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (1992), arguing that racial traits can already be seen in Wagner's revolutionary thinking during the 1840s. It is revealing, however, that the chapter that deals with Wagner's activity during the 1860s and 1870s consists of 17 pages only!³³ It could be argued, of course, that the political project pushed aside an essential element which subsequently resurfaced, and that Wagner did not want to divide people into categories when a unified Germany was at stake. Furthermore, it is possible that Wagner's ideas and feelings were channelled into his art, although he did not explicate them in his public texts. Marc A. Weiner has tried to trace how Wagner's operas—through associations—were linked to a set of values and beliefs about the Jews.³⁴

Chronologically, Wagner's life straddles the middle ground between the traditional anti-Jewish movement and modern antisemitism. The late 1870s are usually considered a turning-point. The term 'antisemitic' was first coined in 1879, in Wilhelm Marr's *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentum*. In the 1880s Wagner became acquainted with the work *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, written by Count Gobineau; this treatise

greatly influenced racial theories in Germany during this decade. Wagner clearly wanted to distance himself from this wave of antisemitism and 'Aryanism'.³⁵ Wagner himself employed the term Aryan only once, in his essay *Heldenthum und Christenthum* (1881): "Nowhere in history do these root-qualities of the Aryan race shew forth more plainly than in the contact of the last pure-bred Germanic branches with the falling Roman world."³⁶ The term was frequently employed, however, by Hans von Wolzogen, editor of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, who regarded Wagner's art as "Aryan art" *par excellence*.³⁷

During the unification period, the most significant concepts in Wagner's political thinking were the people and the nation. Similar patterns can be seen in most German writers on cultural policy. Cultural integrity was emphasized in pursuit of the legitimation of political demands. After the presentation of evidence showing that the German nation had really existed, it was natural to demand the transformation of a national culture into a national state. It was no wonder that German idealism placed so much stress on the idea of the state, the missing link in its chain of argument. According to Immanuel Kant, man was an animal which needs a master (the state) to direct him towards true freedom.³⁸ Hegel, as a loyal Prussian government official, regarded the state as the highest level of human life, the mere existence of which signified the reality of moral principles. Hegel wrote in his *Geschichte der Philosophie*: "... the Prussian State is a State constituted on principles of intelligence."³⁹ This statist thinking inspired by Kant and Hegel is later recognizable in the texts of many German nineteenth-century historians: in general, though not in all cases, one could argue that the subject of the late nineteenth-century German interpretation of history was the state itself.

Wagner, too, has been classified as a supporter and advocate of statism. For instance, George C. Windell simply regards Wagner as a supporter of the 'Machtstaat'.⁴⁰ A completely opposite view is represented by the writer Thomas Mann, however, who claimed that Wagner's thinking was dominated by "an anarchist indifference about the state".⁴¹ Both these standpoints are extreme and too crudely formulated. Wagner's relationship with the state was more ambivalent. Major changes took place in Wagner's thinking about the state over the years, and it cannot be analysed as a single coherent whole. Two different phases can be identified in the development of his concept of the state. During the Dresden period this concept was clearly different from that of the Munich-Triebschen years.

In the texts from the Dresden period, particularly in the pamphlet *Die Kunst und die Revolution* (1849), in the articles *Der Mensch und die bestehende Gesellschaft* (1849) and *Die Revolution* (1849), Wagner was openly anti-statist. He considered the state an artificial convention, stiffened by dogmas, full of unnecessary obligations and prohibitions. The destruction of the state was necessary, because it denied individuals their freedom and autonomy.⁴²

Wagner's close relationship with the anarchists explains the anti-statism of his Dresden years (1842–1849). He was personally acquainted with Michael Bakunin, and through literature with the French thinker P. J. Proudhon, whose attitude towards the state was even more negative than Bakunin's. In 1849, Proudhon wrote in his work *Mélanges*: "Il n'y a rien, absolument rien dans l'Etat, du haut de la hiérarchie jusqu'en bas, qui ne soit abus à réformer, parasitisme à supprimer, instrument de tyrannie à détruire."⁴³ The same idea was expressed by Wagner in his unfinished writing *Künstlertum der Zukunft. Zum Prinzip des Kommunismus* (1849): "...art is true and upright,—the state entangles itself in lies and contradictions."⁴⁴

Wagner's negative attitude towards the state was apparently not only from the anarchists, but also from his great idol Schopenhauer, to whom the state was a necessary evil. In Schopenhauer's opinion, the state does not deserve any token of gratitude, except for the fact that it protects property and enables the people to concentrate on their own problems. Schopenhauer also maintained that misery could not be abolished through political change; only philosophy and art could bring freedom to man.⁴⁵

The reading of Schopenhauer could not have directly influenced Wagner's texts during the Dresden period, because there is evidence that Wagner did not read *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* until 1854.⁴⁶ Many German revolutionaries in the period 1848–49 were influenced by Schopenhauer, despite his dismissal of political change. Wagner had probably become familiar with Schopenhauer's thinking in modified forms at the meetings of the Dresden Vaterlandsverein, but he discovered Schopenhauer properly through the guidance of the revolutionary activist Georg Herwegh.⁴⁷

The influence of Schopenhauer is not seen in the definition of the concept 'state' in the texts of the Dresden period. Wagner followed anarchist models and looked down on the state, but he regarded the existence of society as a necessity. In *Der Mensch und die bestehende Gesellschaft*, he states: "We have seen that Society is nothing accidental, arbitrary, voluntary; we have seen that without Society man is no longer man, no more distin-

guishable from the beasts: we accordingly see that Society is the necessary condition of our manhood."⁴⁸ In Wagner's thinking 'society' was equivalent to Schopenhauer's concept of the 'state'. Society was necessary for social life, but the term 'state' was associated for Wagner with social inequality, which should not be tolerated.

Wagner's active anti-statism can be connected with his revolutionary activities before 1849. According to Ronald Gray, a remarkable change took place after these years: Wagner moved from a Marxist-like materialism towards the Hegelian spirit.⁴⁹ Following the complete failure of his revolutionary activities, Wagner became increasingly oriented towards the state, particularly a unitarian German *Reich*.

Gray's view turns out to be relevant only to the extent that in the early 1860s the state took on a more significant position in Wagner's philosophy. He gradually started to see things from a different perspective, and to believe after all, in the birth of a state, the nucleus of which would be art and which would develop through natural growth.

In his texts written after 1864, Wagner seems to return to a Herderian idea of the state. This state was more a 'Staatsnation' than a 'Machtstaat'; it would soon come into being as a necessary consequence of the fact that Germany was already a coherent cultural whole; only when this phase of development was reached could the Germans find their true nature, their true *Deutschtum*.⁵⁰ Otto von Bismarck also believed in this kind of natural development of the state towards national unity.⁵¹ These lines were followed by Wagner's friend Constantin Frantz, who later wrote in his work *Die Naturlehre des Staates* (1870) that the state was a product of nature (*Naturprodukt*).⁵²

Wagner's relationship with the state thus became more favourable, but it still did not constitute an unconditional basis in his thinking: he was more inclined to stress the people and culture. After receiving the invitation to Munich in the spring of 1864, Wagner apparently began to realize that the state was something that could benefit him, particularly, if the state and before all, those who wielded power in the state, felt sympathy for culture. In *Über Staat und Religion*, which was completed in 1864, he gave for the first time a positive significance to the concept of the state. The state was to guarantee stability and legal security.⁵³ Apparently, Wagner employed the concept 'Staat' under the influence of Schopenhauer: as is known, he had already read the work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* during his exile. To put this another way, he now gave the concept 'state' the same meaning as he had earlier given to 'society': Eric Eugène has interpreted this

conceptual change by referring to two sub-concepts ‘natural state’ (l’état nature) and ‘political state’ (l’étatpolitique): “L’Etat naturel résulte de l’équilibre atteint par l’homme spontané qui se laisse conduire par la loi de la nécessité, alors que l’Etat politique procède des impératifs de la raison qui fige les relations humaines par des lois impersonnelles et des conventions arbitraires.”⁵⁴ After 1864, Wagner apparently believed that Germany could change into a natural state. Herder had already maintained that every nation had ‘die natürliche Regierung’, a natural government.⁵⁵ What should this natural state then be like? In the mid-1860s Wagner repeatedly expressed his contempt for Prussia. Many other political thinkers also criticized both Prussia’s petty-German policies, and the strict Prussian social order; Paul de Lagarde, for example, called Prussia a conservative coercive political order which needed to grow to match its German mission.⁵⁶ Wagner was even more uncompromising, and claimed that Prussia represented all that was evil in Germany.⁵⁷ To Wagner, Prussia after all meant a typical ‘political state’ which was misgoverned by arbitrary conventions and rules.

Even though Wagner heavily criticized Prussia, he was ready to re-evaluate his judgements, if it benefited his art. In 1866, after the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War, Wagner was forced to accept Prussia’s policy, because it seemed to be the only way to achieve independence.

Before the unification of Germany, Wagner had already accepted Prussia’s goals, although his dream of an ideal state conflicted with the Prussian bureaucracy. As has been pointed out previously, one of the most frequently employed oppositions in Wagner’s texts from 1866 was the binary contrast ‘Königtum/Demokratie’. In this dichotomy he clearly leaned on monarchy. At the more conceptual level, he associated monarchy with *Deutschtum* and genuineness. Democracy was classified as being completely foreign.

During the different periods of his life, Wagner was never in his inner self a convinced advocate of democracy, even though he participated in the democratically-oriented Vaterlandsverein. In those days, Wagner called for a radical change, a revolution, “Man’s fight against Established Society.”⁵⁸ Wagner was aiming for the emancipation of all mankind. He clearly supported a kind of democratic ideology, but the community which he dreamt of, would not be ruled by democratic government, that is, by the power of the majority.

Even though Wagner rose to the barricades in May 1849, he distrusted the democratic movement, since he did not believe that he would find any spiritual affinity among the supporters of democracy. This suspicion is

descriptively revealed in the memoirs of Friedrich Uhl, which were published in the Viennese newspaper *Fremdenblatt* in 1891. According to Uhl, Wagner visited Vienna in July 1848 to meet the Viennese revolutionaries and to obtain support for his renovation of opera. Uhl therefore took Wagner to a meeting of the local activists:

Since Wagner would not desist, but demanded to make the acquaintance of the Democrats on the Danube, one evening I took him to the inn called 'The Roman Emperor' in the Renngasse, where the 'Democratic Association' was holding a meeting. We took our places. The President took the chair at the head table, and embarked upon a confused speech. As he proclaimed, "A republic is the ideal form for the state!", I looked at Wagner, who laughed sadly; I asked: "Have you had enough?", to which he replied "Yes!", and we took our leave. Thereafter, Wagner and I rarely spoke of politics ...⁵⁹

This illustrates that Wagner was not, after all, so interested in the activities of the local democrats; he dismissed the idea of a republic as an ideal form of government: democracy (in the sense of equality) was needed, but a leader was also necessary.⁶⁰

In June 1848, in his speech at the meeting of the Vaterlandsverein, Wagner had tried to build a bridge between the republicans and the monarchists, setting out to demonstrate that the King could be a true interpreter of the people's interests (*Volksache*). Wagner appealed to Rousseau's thinking, and proclaimed to the meeting that the King was "the first and most sterling Republican of all", "the genuine, free Father of his Folk"⁶¹. One of the strange paradoxes in Wagner's thinking is that in his Dresden years, despite royalist sentiments such as these, he was an ardent advocate of antistatism, for which he was under the threat of being sentenced to death by the King of Saxony: this paradox could be explained by the fact that even then he viewed the monarchy from an unrealistic ideal perspective, which had little to do with actual politics. It was not surprising that the democrats tended to regard Wagner as a royalist, whereas the Royal family of Saxony saw him as a revolutionary rebel.

Presumably even in his Dresden years Wagner realized that his ideas were different from those of Bakunin and other advocates of the revolution. Friedrich Uhl's description doubtlessly reflects Wagner's estrangement from political activity. The result of this was a break of fifteen years in Wagner's political involvement. Not until Ludwig had contacted him did he again devote himself to his political dreams.

In *Über Staat und Religion* (1864), Wagner again began to speculate with monarchism, and argued that the state achieved its ideal essence through the personality of the King.⁶² The role of the King was to guarantee and take responsibility for the functioning of society. Central to this idea was the doctrine that the King was above party politics and specific interests, and was therefore able to maintain a coherent whole and the common good:

Stability is therefore the intrinsic tendency of the State (...) The embodied voucher for this fundamental law is the *Monarch*. In no State is there a weightier law than that which centres its stability in the supreme hereditary power of one particular family (...) Personally he has naught in common with the interests of parties, but his sole concern is that the conflict of these interests should be adjusted, precisely for the safety of the whole. His sphere is therefore equity, and where this is unattainable, the exercise of grace (Gnade). Thus, as against the party interests, he is the representative of purely-human interests, and in the eyes of the party-seeking citizen he therefore occupies in truth a position well-nigh superhuman.⁶³

It has been argued by Andrea Mork that the grounds for such monarchism are in conflict with the concepts of natural law concerning the birth and nature of the body politic. Wagner's concept reminds one more of the implications of Schopenhauer's philosophy, in which the ruling monarch is seen as an embodiment of the ideological world.⁶⁴ Contrary to Mork's assumptions, however, Wagner's thinking cannot be explained by the influence of Schopenhauer, since his royalism had already demonstrated idealistic characteristics during the Dresden period.

On the whole, Wagner subscribed to the idea that the King had to occupy "a position well-nigh superhuman". He was primarily a political leader, but this was not enough: there was also a need for a spiritual leader, that is, an artist. Art remained in a central position in Wagner's thinking. In 1868 he wrote, in the libretto for *The Mastersingers*: "Though the Holy Roman Empire should depart, Holy German Art will still remain with us."⁶⁵ German art would perpetually survive, as a joy of the people: the work of geniuses would be everlasting, even though the state be crushed into ruin.

*'The Spirit of the Genuine, True, Unadulterated':
The National Stereotypes*

In a letter to Franz Liszt in December 1849, Wagner drew a sharp distinction between the international and the national. He also saw this distinction between himself and Liszt: "You will not understand this, being at home in

all Europe, while I came into the world in a specifically Teutonic manner."⁶⁶ The word 'germanisch' (translated above as 'Teutonic') occurs extremely rarely in Wagner's letters and writings: he was usually content to state that he was 'deutsch'. When, in his letter to Liszt, Wagner accidentally stressed his *Deutschtum*, this was largely a response to Liszt's emphasis on *Lohengrin* and the projected opera *Siegfrieds Tod* as "essentially German".⁶⁷

The choice of words employed to signify *Deutschtum* is far from insignificant, especially in the case of public writings. The textual analysis carried out for this study reveals a clear tendency to associate certain values with the idea of *Deutschtum*, and by weaving them together to construct an 'ideal type'. This construction was not merely an answer to the question as to the nature of *Deutschtum*, but also served Wagner's idea of the utopia as a whole. In his use of language, Wagner cultivated a range of characterizations of *Deutschtum*: he describes the concept of 'nationality' with epithets, often superlatives, the purpose of which was to place stress on the unique features of *Deutschtum* and which could also be used in a more general way. Thus Wagner asserts: "the German is brave"⁶⁸, "universal"⁶⁹, "solid"⁷⁰, "true"⁷¹, "honest and free"⁷², "genuine, true, unadulterated"⁷³, "something wonderful"⁷⁴, "purely human"⁷⁵.

Stereotyped adjectives were also sometimes used conversely, to stress things that were not German: "The German is not obsessed with the idea of conquest, therefore, and the desire to rule over foreign peoples is un-German".⁷⁶ In addition to this, Wagner exploited German stereotypes of other nations, mainly the French, the denigration of whom Wagner never tired of. The creation of these stereotypes was most prominent in the diary entries addressed to Ludwig II, and in *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*. Wagner even claimed that the French had been forced to admit that "the Germans are a nation of high-souled dreamers, and deep-brained thinkers",⁷⁷ a quotation from Madame de Staël.

In his stereotypes, Wagner consciously creates oppositions: "Ever since the regeneration of European Folk-blood, considered strictly, the German has been the creator and inventor, the Romanic the modeller and exploiter ..."⁷⁸ "The wondrous individuality, the strength and meaning of the German spirit" could not be compared to the "imitations of French gallantry".⁷⁹ As a consequence of the French fashion of frivolity, the Germans had forgotten their important motto 'German honesty', 'German freedom', 'German morality'.⁸⁰

Wagner's literary remains suggest that this application of stereotypes to the description of the French reached its culmination in the 1860s, the period

when he was striving to create his national myth and direct the German people towards Euphoria. His anti-French attitude is strongest in the diary entries addressed to Ludwig in *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, and in the pamphlet *Beethoven*. During his revolutionary years in Dresden, his attitude towards France had not been unambiguously negative, even when he failed to get support for his opera projects in Paris before his arrival in Dresden. As late as 1848, he proposed in a letter to Prof. Franz Jacob Wigard that the Germans should form an alliance with France (“Schutz- und Trutzbündniss mit Frankreich”)!⁸¹ Prof. Wigard was a member of the Frankfurt National Assembly, whose deliberations Wagner tried to influence through his letters. He even subscribed to the idea that there was no obstacle to the formation of a political alliance between the German states and France. The cultural gap between Germany and France had not yet turned into a political one. In the 1860s-1870s, such a proposal would have been completely out of the question. Especially after the fiasco of *Tannhäuser* in Paris in 1861, Wagner had difficulties in making positive comments on France.

Besides the French, Wagner also created stereotypes of the Prussians and the Jews. The Jews were particularly disparaged, for Wagner believed they represented false cosmopolitan values, not national ones; and the Prussians deserved some of the blame, because they had abandoned German culture and surrendered to the snares of whimsical French fashions. The nexus of the disparagement of true *Deutschtum* was Berlin, the capital of Prussia, “the city with its originally Brandenburgian population, which, dull, slow-witted and brutal, was despised for that very reason by Frederick the Great”.⁸² The Jews, on their behalf, were not only “cosmopolitisch” but also “commerziell”⁸³ and “speculativ”⁸⁴, “ein reines Metaphysicum”, a pure Metaphysicum.⁸⁵

In his articles and pamphlets from the 1860s-1870s, Wagner was fully aware of the verbal character and rhetorical significance of these stereotypes. In his diary, he sets out to give proof that the Germans excelled in the national virtues far more than the French or the English:

It is very common for the patriot to quote his country’s name in a spirit of total veneration. The more powerful a people, however, the less store it seems to set by referring to itself with such a degree of reverence. I have no doubt that it is far less common in public life in England and France for people to speak of ‘English’ and ‘French virtues’, whereas the Germans frequently refer to ‘German depth’, ‘German seriousness’, ‘German fidelity’ and so on.⁸⁶

The German habit of linking epithets to their own nation had, of course, originated in the fact that the political and cultural position of Germany was entirely different from that of the English and the French. The use of language was significant in the creation of national emotion.

Wagner’s skills in rhetoric became known to many of his contemporaries. A good example of this is a forged inscription, probably engraved during April or May in 1863 on the wall of a pavilion at the edge of the Imatra waterfall in Finland, a famous attraction for travellers in nineteenth-century Europe. In this text, written in French, ‘Wagner’ expresses his valediction to the “noble and intelligent Russian nation” who had appreciated his works, and once again he also expresses his contempt for Paris and the French.⁸⁷ During March and April 1863, Wagner had really been in St. Petersburg and he could well have visited Imatra. There is, however, no mention of such a visit in his autobiography, correspondence, or any other literary remains. In addition to this, the inscription includes details that demonstrate it to be a forgery.⁸⁸

Whoever the perpetrator of this inscription was, he or she knew a lot about Wagner’s disillusionment in Paris in 1861. Paris was a “centre de l’ignorance”, because the Parisians had been unable to understand the music and noble creations of the German Meister. The writer of the inscription was aware of Wagner’s extreme egotism, since Wagner is described as a person eager to praise his own compositions. The Russians were a “noble et intelligent nation” only because they had applauded Wagner’s works during his visits to Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The debate on the standing of Wagner’s operas had started earlier, but the fact that Wagner’s persuasive rhetoric and his use of stereotypes was already known in such a peripheral part of Europe as Finland in 1863 shows that Wagner had successfully spread his artistic self-image. He intended to take up his role as a German genius and to promote the idea of the German spirit wherever he happened to move.

The German Genius and the Mission of German Culture

Romanticism and romantic thinking stressed above all art as the crystallisation of fantasy and feelings. It frequently emphasized the autonomy of art; an artist created his work as an individual, and thus the voice of the individual speaks more forcefully in works of art than the voice of the community. The extreme statement of this view was the French idea of *l’art*

pour l'art, which had originated from a lecture given by Victor Cousin in 1818, and which became known through Théophile Gautier's writings.⁸⁹

In German romantic thinking, the relationship between art and community was seen as being much more complex. The Germans did not regard art as an activity in the sphere of fantasy, but—in Peter Bürger's expression—rather as a kind of category which united the factual (the birth of art in practical life) with the fictional (the creation of a hypothetical world).⁹⁰ The link between the artist and the community was constituted through the fact that the artist did not express himself merely as an individual (his own uniqueness), but also simultaneously acted as an embodiment of the national spirit. The *Volkgeist* spoke through the artist.

The worship of art during the romantic period was heavily focused on the cult of genius. The first version of a philosophical theory of genius was formulated by Immanuel Kant in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), which later was to have great significance in the romantic theory of art. Kant characterized genius in the following way:

Genie ist das Talent (Naturgabe), welches der Kunst die Regel giebt. Da das Talent, als angebournes productives Vermögen des Künstlers, selbst zur Natur gehört, so könnte man sich auch so ausdrücken: Genie ist die angeborne Gemüthsanlage (ingenium), durch welche die Natur der Kunst die Regel giebt.⁹¹

Central to Kant's vision was the idea that the genius acts as an intercessor between nature and art; but Kant did not recognize any social function here. Only after Kant did romantic philosophy grant the individual genius a key position in society. This was only possible after the rejection of Kant's assertion that aesthetic experience did not include any rational (cognitive) content, and that art operated only at the level of subjective feeling.

In Schopenhauer's thinking, the transformation of the genius into something more community-orientated was clear. Schopenhauer sees the Genius as possessing a capability of knowledge (die erkennende Fähigkeit) which was more developed than the observance of the will (der Dienst des Willens); this additional intelligence could be utilized only in the service of mankind.⁹²

As a heritage of Immanuel Kant's philosophy, the idea of genius was grafted on to the trunk of romantic thinking in such a way that artists became conscious of their own identity. The influence of the cult of genius could now be seen in the artists' changed relationship to their own work.

Considerable changes took place in Richard Wagner’s own self-image during the 40s-60s, even though by the end of his revolutionary Dresden period he had already stated that he was an artist of the future and identified his own art with the goals of the German nation.⁹³ It seems that during the 1850s, Wagner reformulated his self-image as an artist to incorporate the concept of a genius as a spontaneous shaman who ignored strict rules. In an interesting letter to Franz Liszt on 14th October 1849, Wagner illustrated his ideas of creative work:

Creative power in music appears to me like a bell, which the larger it is the less able to give forth its full tone, unless an adequate power has set it in motion. This power is internal, and where it does not exist internally it does not exist at all. The purely internal, however, cannot operate unless it is stimulated by something external, related to it and yet different. Creative power in music surely requires this stimulus no less than does any other great artistic power; a great incitement alone can make it effective.⁹⁴

In this phase, Wagner still appears to relate himself to creative work in a disciplined manner; the creative force could only be made productive through strict discipline and with high morals at work. During the post-Dresden Wanderjahre, Wagner had difficulties in finding the right working rhythms, partly because he had constantly to change his place of residence due to his enormous debts. When co-operation with Ludwig II began in 1864, the “great incitement” returned to Wagner’s life. After 1864, he was able to compose on a regular basis. The entries in Cosima’s diary reveal that Wagner had a regular daily working rhythm, and used to work every day in his study, to the detriment of other obligations.⁹⁵ In public, however, Wagner concealed the craft-like features of his work, preferring to be seen as a genius who could not be forced into regular working hours.⁹⁶

Wagner’s self-image as an artist was evidently considerably influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, in which the writer analyses the connections between dreams and creative work.⁹⁷ This influence is recognizable in a passage in *Mein Leben*, where Wagner tells of the birth of the *Rhinegold* overture:

Returning in the afternoon, I stretched myself, dead tired, on a hard couch, awaiting the long-desired hour of sleep. It did not come; but I fell into a kind of somnolent state, in which I suddenly felt as though I were sinking in swiftly flowing water. The rushing sound formed itself in my brain into a musical sound, the chord of E flat major, which continually re-echoed in broken forms; these broken chords

seemed to be melodic passages of increasing motion, yet the pure triad of E flat major never changed, but seemed by its continuance to impart infinite significance to the element in which I was sinking. I awoke in sudden terror from my doze, feeling as though the waves were rushing high above my head. I at once recognised that the orchestral overture to the *Rheingold*, which must long have lain latent within me, though it had been unable to find definite form, had at last been revealed to me. I then quickly realised my own nature; the stream of life was not to flow to me from without, but from within.⁹⁸

The *Rheingold* overture was composed in 1853,⁹⁹ and there is proof that Wagner did not read Schopenhauer's work until the end of the following year.¹⁰⁰ This description, therefore, is a Schopenhauerian reconstruction of the creative event, produced when Wagner dictated his autobiography.

During the moment of artistic rapture, the genius achieves a mythical connection with nature and with his people. In the 1860s, Wagner openly proclaimed that he was "der huldvolle Genius",¹⁰¹ whose task was to serve his people: the only German artist who had found access to that which was truly German. This is clearly revealed in a passage of prose which is included in the *Brown Book* and which was inspired through seeing a picture of Parson Riemann, a leading nationalistic figure in the Burschenschaft movement:

Then came the *Burschenschaft*. The League of Virtue was founded. All so fantastic that no human being could grasp it. But I have grasped it. Now it is *me* whom no one grasps. I am the most German being. I am the German spirit. Question the incomparable magic of *my* works—compare them with the rest and you can for the time being say no differently than that—it is *German!* But what is this *German?* It must be something wonderful, mustn't it, for it is humanly finer than all else?—Oh heavens! It should have a soil, *this German!* I should be able to find my people! What a glorious people it ought to become. But to this people only could I belong.¹⁰²

This fragment is very revealing. Wagner considers himself the most German of all the Germans; he not only stresses his knowledge of the essential spirit of Germany, but even claims that he himself *is* the German spirit. He regards his own art as the focus of *Deutschtum*, and states that his art—like all good German art in general—is from the human perspective more beautiful than anything that exists.

In his *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, which appeared in 1868, Wagner presented an interesting particularization of his definition of *Deutschtum*: Germany was the home of the most genuine, *purest* art, and the

basic tendency of the German mind was *universality*: “Universal as the mission of the German Folk is seen to have been, since its entrance into history, equally universal are the German spirit’s aptitudes for Art.”¹⁰³

Placing stress on universality was not unusual in the romantic way of thinking. The romantic concept of history can be well seen as countering the confusion of nations, and thus also as a never-ending quest for universality.¹⁰⁴ In the romantic period music was considered the most universal form of art. Arthur Schopenhauer concluded that all art was related to the will (*Wille*). Music, however, was in the closest relationship with the will; music was in its essence a kind of direct objectivizing of the will. The will spoke through music.¹⁰⁵ Wackenroder, Schumann and Friedrich Schlegel had also earlier expressed similar ideas.¹⁰⁶ Wagner, however, claimed that Schopenhauer was the first thinker to understand the true significance of this point:

(...) it was *Schopenhauer* who first defined the position of Music among the fine arts with philosophic clearness, ascribing to it a totally different nature from that of either plastic or poetic art. He starts from wonder at Music’s speaking a language immediately intelligible by everyone, since it needs no whit of intermediation through abstract concepts (*Begriffe*); which completely distinguishes it from Poetry, in the first place, whose sole material consists of concepts, employed by it to visualise the *Idea*.¹⁰⁷

Even though the dichotomy between the national and the universal was central to romantic thinking, the genius was seen to be acting simultaneously in both spheres. The genius not only interpreted the feelings of his nation, but also represented something that was essential and relevant to all people throughout the world.¹⁰⁸ The two-dimensional role of the genius was later interpreted by Wagner’s son in law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, in his description of his famous father-in-law: “Wagner is a German in the essential meaning of the word, and is also a purely human epitome of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁹

In *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, Wagner’s belief that German art could have something universal to say could be seen as his most extreme statement in this respect. He concluded that German culture was like a refreshing spring, to which the peoples of the world gathered for a rebirth: “By a most natural instinct the nations turn back to the fount of their renewing; and, strange to say, they there find the German *Reich* itself ...”¹¹⁰ All human culture, for Wagner, had been corrupted by French-oriented epigonic culture, from the grasp of which only German culture could save

mankind. The message of German culture should therefore spread beyond all borders, for the prosperity of all mankind.¹¹¹ The expansive aspect of this thinking reminds one of Fichte, who in his speeches *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, given in Berlin in 1807–08, stated that every nation had her own ideas, and the idea of Germany was to benefit all mankind.¹¹² Only a little earlier Fichte's standpoint had been that all the nations shared a striving for universality, and that the French, the Germans, and the Russians all wished to make their thinking global.¹¹³ In his *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, however, Fichte argued that the Germans—as the only original people (*Urvolk*) who had survived—were the only people to achieve this universality.

In point of fact, the idea of the missionary task of the German people existed long before Fichte. Aira Kemiläinen has dealt with this question in her thesis *Auffassungen über die Sendung des deutschen Volkes um die Wende des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (1956). She shows that the idea of the universality of German culture appears in the writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Adam Müller, and Ernst Moritz Arndt.¹¹⁴ From this, Kemiläinen infers that the question was of an emphasis on the sense of unity in German culture, especially longed for in Germany under Napoleon's domination (Fichte's political reflections belong specifically to this context). This was, however, a sign of "the conquering of the world in the field of culture or spirit" the purpose of which was basically "unpolitical".¹¹⁵

Even though these ideas were originally not political in nature, they could be deployed in the legitimation of the political function at the beginning of the struggle against Napoleon, and again in the drawing-up of the Nazi Party programme in the 1930s.

Wagner's emphasis on the mission of German culture could be related to political goals, as a contribution to the drive for German unity. In this interpretation, Wagner's main sources were Constantin Frantz's works *Untersuchungen über das Europäische Gleichgewicht* (1859) and *Die Wiederherstellung Deutschlands* (1865), the influence of which on the text of *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* is apparent. Frantz maintained that Germany had a universal political task:

The ancient Hellenes believed in their mission to Hellenize the Orient; they Hellenized it. The Romans believed in their mission to achieve world domination; they subjugated the world. Today, the Russians believe that they have been called to rejuvenate the dying lands of Europe by conquest; and it will depend upon

Germany, whether the Russians are to fulfil this mission, or to be persuaded of the folly of their ideas, and admit their status as schismatics (...) Germany has always been a universal land; the great difference between historical periods lies therein, that since the Reformation, this universality has been expressed only in a passive fashion, since the German nation has become too inert to state its claim to universality in an active manner, as it had done formerly.¹¹⁶

It is clear that the Frantzian text, “*Odysee des deutschen Geistes*”, influenced Wagner’s thinking. Frantz especially stressed the role of the self-understanding of the nation: “The clarity of vision with which it recognizes its mission, and the strength of conviction with which it holds firm to it, will thus determine its policies, and become the turning-point of its renaissance.”¹¹⁷ Apparently, Wagner took up the task of the illumination of this faith, in which art could have a prominent instrumental position.

Wagner’s ‘universal thinking’ has often been referred to as if this constituted the very foundations of the Nazi ideology. This is, however, a misrepresentation, considering that Wagner’s thinking was part of a vast and continuous tradition of mission. For his own part, he evidently contributed to this tradition by providing it with new emphases, but he cannot be classified as its originator or even as one of its architects.

The idea of mission already occurs in Wagner’s texts in the Dresden period. In the speech “*Wie verhalten sich republikanische Bestrebungendem Königstum gegenüber*”, given to the members of the *Vaterlandsverein* on 14th June 1848, Wagner wove this tradition together with the pompous words:

Then let us sail across the sea, and here and there found a young Germany, let us fructify it with the products of our toil and striving, and let us beget and bring up the noblest and most godlike children: but let us do better than the *Spanish*, who turned the New World into a papal slaughterhouse, and better than the *English*, who have turned it into a shop. Let us make it German and glorious; from its rising to its setting, the sun shall look down upon a beautiful, free Germany, and on the borders of the daughterlands, as upon those of their mother, no down-trodden, unfree people shall dwell, the rays of *German freedom* and *German gentleness* shall warm and transfigure the Cossack and the Frenchman, the Bushman and the Chinese.¹¹⁸

This text, which was originally published anonymously, differs from his later messianic ideas inasmuch as he subsequently avoided the presentation of his thoughts as overt manifestations of expansionism. In this fragment, Wagner really seems to support the imperialistic conquest of the world, seeing the German mentality as better equipped for the domination of the world than the English or Spanish.

Wagner emphasized the significance of this mission more clearly in his diary entries written to Ludwig II, and in his *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, the purpose of which was to propagate this way of thinking among the German people. The missionary work in these writings was, however, more spiritual than political in character. Wagner put forward an impassioned interpretation of the missionary tradition in his pathetic over-statement: “‘German,’ ‘German,’ so tolls the bell above the cosmopolitan synagogue of the ‘now-time’.”¹¹⁹ Wagner’s antisemitism is clearly revealed in this phrasing. The Jews constituted an unusually cosmopolitan group during the age of nationalism, and the nationalists, therefore, especially directed their hatred against them. It is important to differentiate between cosmopolitanism and universality. The concept ‘universality’ means something that is relevant to all people and nations, something generally human, whereas ‘cosmopolitanism’ represents an artificial non-nationalism which has nothing to offer mankind. The cornerstones of romantic thinking were the People and the Nation. In Wagner’s view, ‘cosmopolitanism’ (lacking a home and nation) meant a rejection of the People’s own origin, and a sign of the inability to establish a true culture.

Although Wagner had been active in the Dresden Revolution, his ideas of bringing prosperity to the world, during the time he wrote *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, meant not an external, but an internal revolution. His thinking had shifted from social to internal regeneration.

The world revolution (*die Weltrevolution*), the idea of which occurs in Wagner’s texts from the Dresden period, was one of the great illusions of the romantic period. The term ‘world revolution’ was probably used for the first time by Robespierre (*révolution mondiale*). The concept was introduced to the German-speaking area in 1842, by Heinrich Heine and Moses Hess, from whom it was adopted by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel had also spoken of the beginning of a new era in the world. Novalis introduced the concept ‘Weltstaat’ (world state).¹²⁰ On the other hand, the concepts of the *Weltrevolution* employed by Marx and Engels differed considerably from the romantic idol of the global revolution, according to which the *Weltrevolution* was not only external but also internal. This double meaning is conveyed in the term “*die grosse Menschheitsrevolution*” employed by Wagner in his *Die Kunst und die Revolution* (1849); the term signifies here both mankind (external reality) and humanity (internal reality).¹²¹ The main problem was: which should be changed first, man or society? During the post-Dresden years, Wagner tended to emphasize spiritual rather than social change. Because ‘internal’ change

was seen as largely taking place through art, Wagner was, in a way, aiming for a kind of *Bildungsgesellschaft*, an idea widely discussed among the romantics; in this society, education through art would play an important role. Such a community had already been outlined, for instance, by Friedrich Schiller in *Die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*.¹²²

Paul Lawrence Rose deals with the problem of Wagner’s revolutionary thinking in *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, where he writes that “the German Revolution was above the politics of sectional interests and parties”.¹²³ This is absolutely true, but Rose sees this revolution not only as ‘internal’, but essentially as racial. This interpretation oversimplifies the romantic concept of inner revolution. For many German romantics, revolution meant a change in the human mind, and this should not be interpreted from the perspective of the later *Rassenlehren*.

Wagner’s concept of revolution was, in my understanding, closer to the general romantic idea of a ‘world revolution’ than to racial regeneration. Even though the Dresden revolution, in Wagner’s case, ended in a catastrophe, he did not lose his belief in the idea that the world could change; now the barricades would simply be replaced by art, by *his* art. In this respect, a particularly revealing text is a letter written to Theodor Uhlig on 12th November 1851, where Wagner sets out his thinking about *The Ring of the Nibelung*, and argues that the performance of *The Ring* would only be possible after the revolution, but he could teach people the significance of revolution through his art:

A performance is something I can conceive of only *after the Revolution*; only the Revolution can offer me the artists and listeners I need. The coming Revolution must necessarily put an end to this whole *theatrical business* of ours: they must all perish, and will certainly do so, it is inevitable. Out of the ruins I shall then summon together what I need: I shall then find what I require. I shall *then* run up a theatre on the Rhine and send out invitations to a great dramatic festival: after a year’s preparations I shall then perform my entire work within the space of *four days*: *with it* I shall then make clear to the men of the Revolution the meaning of that Revolution, in its noblest sense. *This audience* will understand me: present-day audiences cannot.¹²⁴

This letter is interesting in many respects. Although Wagner was under threat of capital punishment after the Dresden events, he was unwilling to relinquish the idea of revolution. As late as 1851, he still speaks of an external revolution as necessary before his art could be received. Only revolution would bring the public to his art. By the 1860s, the demand for

an external revolution was replaced by the demand for a united Germany, and internal revolution for the German people took on greater importance. If 'external', social changes occurred, they should be accomplished from above, from the top of the hierarchy. This concept was implied in Wagner's attempts (which will be treated in detail below) to seek political support, first from the Bavarian King Ludwig II, and then from the Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck. The most important goal, however, was an internal, spiritual change, which could finally mean the rebirth of all mankind.¹²⁵ In *Utopia and the Ideal Society* (1981), J. C. Davis has put forward a typology of utopian communities, according to which Wagner's thinking can be classified as a solution to the problem of collectivism: an essential change and regeneration which is to take place in man's needs and character.¹²⁶

Wagner's diary entries and his *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* were characterized by an unshakeable belief in the universal mission of German culture. This mission should not be regarded as striving for a physical conquest, as is often presented. Derek Watson, for instance, argues that it is only a short step from Wagner's messianic thoughts to the thinking of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.¹²⁷ This view has been dismissed by Maurice Boucher, however, who holds that Wagner's concern is not with the conquest, but the ennoblement of the world.¹²⁸ The German Will would create world prosperity, but not necessarily world dominion. Moreover, in his operas, especially in *The Ring*, Wagner addresses the corruption of power. After the completion of *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, Wagner continued his analysis of the role of genius in *Beethoven* (1870), which closes with the words: "... for the benefactor of a world may claim still higher rank than the world-conqueror!"¹²⁹ It was thus much more important to be a *Weltbeglückter*, a benefactor, than a *Welteroberer*, a conqueror of the world. More important than the sceptre was a real work of art, which could be given to the world by genius.¹³⁰

In the scrutiny of Wagner's concept of *Deutschtum*, it is pertinent to observe that Wagner obviously wanted to define it in a way that would render it possible to use his own art and ideology as a kind of measure of true *Deutschtum*. The ideological goal, the education of mankind for art, would take place under the guidance of the German genius; and this genius would be Wagner. To support this aesthetic, true German education ("national-sittlichen Geistesbildung"), Wagner tried to spread his own ideal art, which would lead the Germans to create their own authentic culture.¹³¹ The achievements of this culture could in their brilliance compete with the achievements of the ancients.

Notes

- 1 Nietzsche 1919, 71. In German: "*Wir leben die Periode der Atome, des atomistischen Chaos.*"
- 2 Chadwick 1945, 20; Grebing 1986, 86–87; Winkler 1985, 5–6. Cf. KLRW IV, 9.
- 3 Hegel 1919, 907. In German: "*eine politische Nullität*".
- 4 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 59.
- 5 See e.g. Erbe 1985, 59–60; Kinder, Hilgemann 1978, 32–33.
- 6 Hauser 1977, 106–114; Stybe 1961, 303–308; Bürger 1982, 69. Cf. Kant 1974, 241–257.
- 7 Hauser 1977, 115–116; Kinder, Hilgemann 1978, 32–33. Cf. Herder 1821b, 155–157.
- 8 Valentin 1965, 316–321, 385–387; Valentin 1977a, 257; Schnerb 1983, 129–132; Kinder, Hilgemann 1978, 32–33, Ziegler 1901, 99–101.
- 9 Kinder, Hilgemann 1978, 32; Grebing 1986, 87.
- 10 Arndt 1807, 14. In German: "*Eine neue Geburt muss werden.*"
- 11 Chadwick 1945, 134; Nipperdey 1983, 96–97.
- 12 Newman 1933, 61–62; Nipperdey 1983, 279–280; Raff 1988, 58–59.
- 13 Wehler 1987, 125–139.
- 14 Lagarde 1920, 18–19.
- 15 See e.g. KLRW IV, 24, 27. Cf. Wagner 1850a, 219–220; Wagner 1975a, 86.
- 16 Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, RW I, 77. In German: "*Das Volk ist bedingende Kraft für das Kunstwerk*". Wagner 1850a, 15.
- 17 Herder 1821b, 155–157; Herder 1940, 38–39. Cf. Hegel 1920, 36–37; Dahlhaus 1980, 81; Kemiläinen 1956, 29–35.
- 18 Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, PW 1, 213. In German: "*O einziges Volk! Das hast Du gedichtet, und Du selbst bist dieser Wieland!*" Wagner 1850a, 233.
- 19 Gellner 1983, 48–49.
- 20 Herder 1940, 20. In German: "*ein Volk ist sowohl eine Pflanze der Natur, als eine Familie*", "*dem Staat keine andre die beste ist, als die Naturordnung*".
- 21 Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, PW I, 69. In German: "*Wie der Mensch sich zur Natur verhält, so verhält die Kunst sich zum Menschen.*" Wagner 1850a, 1.
- 22 Gellner 1983, 1.
- 23 Herder 1940, 20. In German: "*der natürliche Staat ist ein Volk mit einem Nationalcharacter.*"
- 24 Lagarde 1920, 23. In German: "*Deutschland kann nur einig werden durch gemeinsame Arbeit, vorausgesetzt, daß diese Arbeit die ganze Nation in Anspruch nimmt.*"
- 25 Cit. Meinecke 1922, 296. In German: "*Deutsches Reich und deutsche Nation sind zweierlei Dinge.*"
- 26 Meinecke 1922, 2–3.
- 27 Kemiläinen 1964, 37–38.

- 28 Meinecke 1922, 2–3, 6.
- 29 Nipperdey 1987, 102–103.
- 30 Willms 1983, 10–11.
- 31 Bausinger 1987, 137. On the concept “Bildungsbürgertum” see Kocka 1987, 30–31.
- 32 See e.g. Stuart Tirrell 1952, 75.
- 33 Cf. Rose 1992, 102–118.
- 34 Weiner 1995, passim, esp. 13.
- 35 Borchmeyer 1986, 137–161; Salmi 1994, 489–490.
- 36 Wagner, *Hero-dom and Christendom*, PW VI, 278.
- 37 Cf. Hans von Wolzogen: “L’art aryen”, *Revue wagnérienne* III 1886 (8. avril 1886).
- 38 Kant 1967, 45–46.
- 39 Hegel 1974, XII.
- 40 Windell 1962/63, 479.
- 41 Mann 1935, 152. In German: “eine anarkische Gleichgültigkeit gegen der Staatliche”.
- 42 Wagner 1849, 40–49.
- 43 Proudhon 1871, 18.
- 44 Wagner, *Artishood of the Future*, PW VIII, 347. In German: “Die Kunst ist wahr und aufrichtig, der Staat verwickelt sich in Lügen und Widersprüche ...” Wagner 1974b, 127.
- 45 See also Schopenhauer 1844a, 376–395. On the role of art, see Schopenhauer 1844b, 405–410, 446–457.
- 46 Wagner to Emilie Ritter December 25, 1854, Wagner 1986, 133.
- 47 Gray 1979, 38; Watson 1979, 136.
- 48 Wagner, *Man and Established Society*, PW VIII, 230. In German: “Wir sehen, daß die Gesellschaft nicht etwas Zufälliges, Willkürliches, Freiwilliges ist, wir sehen, daß ohne die Gesellschaft der Mensch kein Mensch ist, sich nicht mehr von dem Thiere unterscheiden würde; wir sehen somit, daß die Gesellschaft die Nothwendige Bedingung unseres Menschenthums ist.” Wagner, “Der Mensch und die bestehende Gesellschaft”. *Volksblätter* February 10, 1849.
- 49 Gray 1979, 38.
- 50 KLRW IV, 27.
- 51 Becker 1958, 556.
- 52 Frantz 1870, 10.
- 53 Wagner, *Über Staat und Religion*, SS VIII, 9–10.
- 54 Eugène 1978, 57–58.
- 55 Herder 1821a, 364.
- 56 Lagarde 1920, 6–7. Cf. Prugel 1969, 56–71.
- 57 See e.g. KLRW IV, 26.
- 58 Wagner, *Man and Established Society*, PW VIII, 227.

- 59 Fremden-Blatt December 6, 1891. Cf. Wagner’s letters to Minna Wagner July 11, 12 and 15, 1848, Wagner 1908a, 46–52. In German: “*Als Wagner nicht nachließ und durchaus darauf bestand, die Demokraten an der Donau kennen zu lernen, führte ich ihn eines Abends in das Hotel ‘zum römischen Kaiser’ in der Renngasse, wo der ‘Demokratische Verein’ eine Sitzung hielt. Wir nahmen Platz. Der Präsident stellte sich als Vorstand an den beherrschenden Tisch und begann eine konfuse Rede. Als er den Satz recht vernehmlich sprach: ‘Der Republik ist das beste Staatsform!’ sah ich Wagner an, er lächelte traurig, ich sprach: ‘Haben Sie genug?’; er antwortete ‘Ja!’ und wir gingen (...) Fortan wurde zwischen Wagner und mir Politik kaum berührt ...*”
- 60 Cf. Wagner to Minna July 11, 15 and 18, 1848 and to Eduard Devrient July 18, 1848, Wagner 1970, 608–618.
- 61 Wagner, *What Relation Bear Republican Endeavours to the Kingship?*, PW IV, 141–142. In German: “*der erste und allerechteste Republikaner*”, “*der echte, freie Vater seines Volkes*” Wie verhalten sich republikanische Bestrebungen dem Königthum gegenüber, Dresdener Anzeiger, Sonderbeilage 14 June 1848.
- 62 Wagner, *Über Staat und Religion*, SS VIII, 10.
- 63 Wagner, *State and Religion*, PW IV, 11–12. In German: “**Stabilität** ist daher die eigentliche Tendenz des Staates (...) Die verkörperte Gewähr für dieses Grundgesetz ist der **Monarch**. Es gibt in keinem Staate ein wichtigeres Gesetz, als welches seine Stabilität an die erbliche höchste Gewalt einer besonderer; mit allen übrigen Geschlechtern nicht verbundenen und nicht sich vermischenden, Familie heftet (...) Erpersönlich hat mit den Interessen der Parteien nichts mehr gemein, sondern ihm liegt nur daran, eben zur Sicherung des Ganzen den Widerstreit dieser Interessen ausgeglichen zu wissen. Sein Walten ist daher Gerechtigkeit, und wo diese nicht zu erreichen, Gnade auszuüben. Somit ist er, den Parteiinteressen gegenüber, der Vertreter des rein menschlichen Interesses, und nimmt daher vor dem Auge des im Parteiinteresse befangenen Bürgers eine in Wahrheit fast übermenschliche Stellung ein.” SS VIII, 9–10.
- 64 Cf. Mork 1990, 121–123.
- 65 In German: “*Zerging in Dunst das heil’ge röm’sche Reich, uns bliebe gleich die heil’ge deutsche Kunst.*”
- 66 Wagner to Liszt 5 December 1849, Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt I 1969, 56. In German: “*Das wird Dir nicht begreiflich sein: dafür bist Du aber ein europäisches weltkind, wogegen ich ganz speciell germanisch zur weit gekommen bin.*” Wagner 1975a, 187.
- 67 Liszt to Wagner 28 October 1849, Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt I 1969, 51. In German: “*ausschliesslich germanisch*”. Wagner 1975a, 187 (note 1).
- 68 Wagner, *Beethoven*, PW V, 126. In German: “*der Deutsche ist tapfer.*” Wagner 1870, 72.
- 69 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 44.
- 70 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 60.
- 71 KLRW IV, 33.
- 72 Wagner, *What Is German?*, PW IV, 166.

- 73 KLRW IV, 33. In German: “*der Geist des Ächten, Wahrhaften, Unverfälschten.*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 27 Sept. 1865.
- 74 Wagner 1980b, 73.
- 75 Wagner, *What Is German?*, PW IV, 155.
- 76 KLRW IV, 30. In German: “*Somit ist der Deutsche nicht eroberungssüchtig, und die Begierde, über fremde Völker zu herrschen, ist undeutsch.*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 26 Sept. 1865.
- 77 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 53. In German: “*die Deutschen sind ein Volk hochsinniger Träumer und tiefsinniger Denker*” Wagner 1868, 25.
- 78 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 58. In German: “*Genau betrachtet war seit der Regeneration der europäischen Volkerblutes der Deutsche der Schöpfer und Erfinder, der Romane der Bildner und Ausbeuter ...*” Wagner 1868, 31.
- 79 Wagner, *What Is German?*, PWIV, 162. In German: “*Die wunderbare Eigenthümlichkeit, Kraft und Bedeutung des deutschen Geistes*”, “*die lächerlich nachahmte französische Galanterie*” KLRW IV, 23.
- 80 KLRW IV, 28. Cf. PW IV, 166. In German: “*Deutsche Redlichkeit, deutsche Freiheit, deutsche Sittlichkeit*”. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 25 Sept. 1865.
- 81 Wagner to Professor Wigard May 19, 1848, Wagner 1970, 589–591.
- 82 KLRW IV, 26. In German: “*die Stadt mit einer ursprünglich schwerfälligen, trägen, brutalen, und deshalb von Friedrich d. Gr. Verachteten märkischen Bevölkerung*”. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 24 Sept. 1865.
- 83 KLRW IV, 20.
- 84 KLRW IV, 21.
- 85 Wagner to Friedrich Nietzsche October 24, 1872, IBg-33 (Abschrift), Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 86 KLRW IV, 14. Cf. PW IV, 151. In German: “*Es ist dem Patrioten sehr geläufig, den Namen seines Volkes mit absoluter Verehrung anzuführen. Je mächtiger ein Volk ist, desto weniger scheint es jedoch darauf zu geben, seinen Namen mit dieser Ehrfurcht zu nennen. Es kommt gewiss im öffentlichen Leben England’s und Frankreich’s bei weitem seltener vor; dass man von “englischen” und “französischen Tugenden” spreche; den Deutschen ist es dagegen sehr geläufig, sich auf “deutsche Tiefe, Ernst, Treue”, etc.— zu berufen.*” Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 18 Sept. 1865.
- 87 The text was published in Borgå Bladet December 3, 1863 and Åbo Underrättelser August 14, 1869.
- 88 See for further detail Salmi 1998a, 154–160.
- 89 Hauser 1977, 184–187.
- 90 Bürger 1982, 63.
- 91 Kant 1974, 241–242. In German: “*Genie ist das Talent (Naturgabe), welches der Kunst die Regel giebt. Da das Talent, als angebornes productives Vermögen des Künstlers, selbst zur Natur gehört, so könnte man sich auch so ausdrücken: Genie ist die angeborne Gemüthsanlage (ingenium), durch welche die Natur der Kunst die Regel giebt.*”

- 92 Schopenhauer 1844b, 376–380.
- 93 Wagner 1850a, 229–233.
- 94 Wagner to Liszt October 14, 1849, CWL 1897, 46–47. In German: “*Die musikalisch schaffende kraft dünkt mich wie eine glocke, die—je umfangreicher sie ist—ihren vollen ton erst von sich giebt, wenn sie durch die gehörige kraft in vollen schwung gesetzt ist: diese kraft ist eine innerliche, und wo sie nicht als innerliche vorhanden, da ist sieg arnicht vorhanden: das rein innerliche wirkt aber nicht eher, als bis es durch ein verwandtes und doch unterschiedenes von außen her erregt wird. Die musikalisch schöpferische kraft bedarf dieser anregung wahrlich nicht minder als jede andere künstlerische: große kraft wirkt aber nur durch große anregung ...*” Wagner 1975a, 134.
- 95 Cosima’s diary entries May 28, 30, 31, June 15, 1869 and October 15–17, 1873, Wagner 1976a, 99–101, 109, 740–741.
- 96 Salmi 1993, 113–121.
- 97 Schopenhauer 1844b, 367–398.
- 98 Wagner 1994, 603. In German: “*Am Nachmittage heimkehrend, streckte ich mich todmüde auf ein hartes Ruhebett aus, um die langersehnte Stunde des Schlafes zu erwarten. Sie erschien nicht; dafür versank ich in eine Art von sonnambuleum Zustand, in welchem ich plötzlich die Empfindung alsob ich in ein stark fliessendes Wasser versänke, erhielt. Das Rauschen desselben stellte sich mir bald im musikalischen Klange des Es-dur-Akkordes dar; welcher unaufhaltsam in figurierter Brechung dahinwogte; diese Brechungen zeigten sich als melodische Figurationen von zunehmender Bewegung, nie aber veränderte sich der reine Dreiklang von Es-dur; welcher durch seine Andauer dem Elemente, darin ich versank, eine unendliche Bedeutung geben zu wollen schien. Mit der Empfindung, als ob die Wogen jetzt hoch über mich darinbrausten, erwachte ich in jähem Schreck aus meinem Halbschlaf. Sogleich erkannte ich, dass das Orchester-Vorspiel zum “Rheingold”, wie ich es in mir herumtrug, doch aber nicht genau hatte finden können, mir aufgegangen war; und schnell begriff ich auch, welche Bewandnis es durchaus mit mir habe: nicht von aussen, sondern von innen sollte der Lebensstrom mir zufließen.*” Wagner 1976b, 511–512.
- 99 Breig 1986, 408–409, 421.
- 100 Wagner 1986, 133.
- 101 Wagner to Ludwig September 7, 1865, KLRW I, 174.
- 102 Wagner 1980b, 73. In German: “*Da kam die Burschenschaft dran. Da ward der Tugendbund gestiftet. Alles so phantastisch, daß kein Mensch es begreifen konnte. Aber ich hab’ es begriffen. Jetzt begreift mich kein Mensch: ich bin der deutscheste Mensch, ich bin der deutsche Geist. Fragt den unvergleichlichen Zauber meiner Werke, haltet sie mit allem übrigen zusammen: Ihr könnt für jetzt nichts anderes sagen, als—es ist deutsch. Aber was ist dieses Deutsche? Es muss doch etwas wunderbares sein, den nes ist menschlich schöner als alles Übrige?—O Himmel! sollte ich mein Volk finden können! Welch herrliches Volk müsste das werden? Nur diesem Volke könnte ich aber angehören.*” Wagner 1975a, 86.
- 103 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 63. In German: “*Universal, wie die Bestimmung des deutschen Volkes seit seinem Eintritte in die Geschichte such*

- zu erkennen giebt, sind die Anlagen des deutschen Geistes auch für die Kunst." Wagner 1868, 35.
- 104 Eugène 1978, 166–167; Boucher 1947, 54.
- 105 Schopenhauer 1844b, 446–457. Cf. Schopenhauer 1844a, 289–302.
- 106 Gray 1979, 48.
- 107 Wagner, *Beethoven*, PW V, 65. In German: "Mit philosophischer Klarheit hat aber erst Schopenhauer die Stellung der Musik zu den anderen schönen Künsten erkannt und bezeichnet, indem er ihr eine von derjenigen der bildenden und dichtenden Kunst gänzlich verschiedene Natur zuspricht, er geht hierbei von der Verwunderung darüber aus, daß von der Musik eine Sprache geredet werde, welche ganz unmittelbar von Ideen zu verstehen sei, da es hierzu gar keiner Vermittlung durch Begriffe bedürfe, wodurch sie sich zunächst eben vollständig von der Poesie unter schiebe, deren einziges Material die Begriffe, vermöge ihrer Verwendung zur Veranschaulichung der Idee seien." Wagner 1870, 5–6.
- 108 Cf. Hauser 1977, 110–112.
- 109 Chamberlain 1933, 161. In German: "Wagner ist ein Deutscher im ausschliessenden Sinn des Wortes, und er ist zugleich Allmensch nach dem Vorbild Jesu Christi."
- 110 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 58. In German: "So wenden sich (...) die Völker zum Quell ihrer Erneuerung zurück, und merkwürdiger Weise treffen sie da das deutsche Reich selbst ..." Wagner 1868, 31.
- 111 Wagner 1868, 46–49. Cf. Boucher 1947, 107–108.
- 112 Fichte s.a., 108–110, 170. Cf. Stybe 1965, 306; Kemiläinen 1956, 195–207.
- 113 Kemiläinen 1956, 198.
- 114 Kemiläinen 1956, 114–195.
- 115 Kemiläinen 1956, 274–275. In German: "eine Weltoberung im Bereich der Kultur oder des Geistes".
- 116 Frantz 1859, 353–354, 401. In German: "So glaubten die alten Hellenen an ihren Beruf den Orient zu hellenisiren, und sie haben ihn auch hellenisirt. Die Römer glaubten an ihren Beruf zu Weltherrschaft, und sie haben auch die Welt erobert. Heute glauben sich die Russen dazu berufen, das absterbende abendländische Europa durch seine Eroberung zu verjüngen, und es wird grade von Deutschland abhängen, ob die Russen diesen Beruf wirklich erfüllen, oder ob sie über das Irrige ihrer Vorstellungen aufgeklärt werden sollen, und sich als Schismatiker bekennen müssen (...) Immer ist Deutschland ein universales Land gewesen, der große Unterschied der Zeiten aber der, daß diese Universalität seit der Reformationen nur in **passiver** Weise zur Erscheinung kam, weil die deutsche Nation zu schlaff, geworden war, um ihren universalen Beruf in **activer** Weise geltend zu machen, wie sie vordem gethan." Cf. Frantz 1865, 416.
- 117 Frantz 1859, 353. In German: "Die Klarheit, mit welcher sie diesen Beruf erkennen, und die Stärke des Glaubens, mit welcher sie daran festhalten, bestimmt dann ihre Politik, und wird ein Hebel ihres Aufschwunges."
- 118 PW IV, 140. In German: "Nun wollen wir in Schiffen über das Meer fahren, da und dort ein junges Deutschland gründen, es mit den Ergebnissen unsres Ringens und Strebens befruchten, die edelsten, gottähnlichsten Kinder Zeugen und erziehen: wir wollen es besser machen als die **Spanier**, denen die neue Welt ein pfäffisches

Schlächterhaus, anders als die Engländer, denen sie ein Krämerkasten wurde. Wir wollen es deutsch und herrlich machen: vom Aufgang bis zum Niedergang soll die Sonne eine schönes, freies Deutschland sehen und an den Grenzen der Tochterlande soll, wie an denen des Mutterlandes, kein zertretenes unfreies Volk wohnen, die Strahlen deutscher Freiheit und deutscher Milde sollen den Kosaken und Franzosen, den Buschmann und Chinesen erwärmen und verklären.” “Wie verhalten sich republikanische Bestrebungen dem Königthum gegenüber?”, *Dresdener Anzeiger*, Sonderbeilage June 14, 1848. Cf. SS XII, 224.

- 119 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 55. In German: “‘Deutsch’, ‘deutsch’, so tönt die Glocke laut über die kosmopolitische Synagoge der ‘Jetztzeit’ hin.” Wagner 1868, 27.
- 120 Heer 1964, 112–113.
- 121 Wagner 1849, 39.
- 122 Schiller s.a., 15–103, esp. 100–101.
- 123 Rose 1992, 2.
- 124 Wagner to Theodor Uhlig November 12, 1851, Wagner 1987, 234. In German: “An eine Aufführung kann ich erst nach der Revolution denken; erst die Revolution kann mir die Künstler und die Zuhörer zuführen. Die nächste Revolution muß nothwendig unsrer ganzen Theaterwissenschaft das Ende bringen: sie müssen und werden alle zusammenbrechen, dies ist unausbleiblich. Aus den Trümmern rufe ich mir dann zusammen, was ich brauche: ich werde, was ich bedarf, dann finden. Am Rheine schlage ich dann ein Theater auf, und lade zu einem großen dramatischen feste ein: nach einem Jahre Vorbereitung führe ich dann im Laufe von vier Tagen mein ganzes Werk auf: mit ihm gebe ich den Menschen der Revolution dann die Bedeutung dieser Revolution, nach ihrem edelsten Sinne, zu erkennen. Dieses Publikum wird mich verstehen: das jetzige kann es nicht.” SB IV, 176.
- 125 Wagner 1868, 31.
- 126 Davis 1981, 36–37.
- 127 Watson 1979, 234–235.
- 128 Boucher 1947, 108.
- 129 Wagner, *Beethoven*, PW V, 126. In German: “Denn dem Weltbeglückter gehört der Rang noch vor dem Welteroberer!” Wagner 1870, 73.
- 130 Wagner 1868, 32.
- 131 Wagner 1868, 42.

Chapter Three

The Gesamtkunstwerk and the Future Germany

The Rebirth of Antiquity

Richard Wagner planned his art to be an instrument through which the German people could reach their state of prosperity, a harmony of German values. He did not see art as the creation of emotions, but rather as a coherent social experience, natural art *par excellence*, the purpose of which was, above all, to find the way to the lost German ideal and to contribute to political greatness.

In Wagner's world view, art should not be regarded merely as a means for pursuing political intrigues; primarily art promoted social coherence, and was in this sense also political. In this respect, Wagner did not deviate from the main outlines of German romanticism. Many artists and philosophers saw art as a coherent phenomenon which could gradually lead to social change, which would spring from man's internal rebirth.

In this connection, it is relevant to view nineteenth-century artists' relationship to Classical Antiquity in a wider perspective. The culture of Ancient Greece was seen as an inspiring paragon, in the sense that during the classical period, instead of many arts, there had been only *one* art which functioned as a coherent social experience.

It is commonly, but mistakenly, assumed that the height of the worship of the antique was in eighteenth-century classicism, and that in the nineteenth century national cultures were preferred. In fact, many nineteenth-century

artists laid major emphasis on the significance of the classical period: there was indeed a consensus that the classicists had misunderstood the true character of classical antiquity, and had been content to imitate the merely external forms of antiquity. As has been argued by Eduard Stemplinger and Hans Lamer in *Deutschtum und Antike in ihrer Verknüpfung* (1920), although many romantics agreed in rebelling against classicism, the relationship with the antique was not broken: for example, the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, and Hölderlin.¹ Stemplinger and Lamer even suggest that an understanding of classical antiquity was a criterion for the understanding of national identity: "To understand the modern, German essence, one must know antiquity, because the German ideal originates from the antique ..."²

The classicists favoured the deployment of antique mythology, the classical poetic metre, and the formal language of classical architecture in their own production. The romantics of the following century, on the other hand, did not believe it possible to achieve universality of art through *imitation*. Instead of form, one should pay attention to more essential considerations. To the German romantics, the social aspect was peculiarly significant. Art today should be given a position similar to the position of art in the classical period.

Richard Wagner's cultural environment incorporated a strong tradition of classical orientation. The writings of Winckelmann and Lessing had been crucial influences in the birth of eighteenth-century neo-humanism.³ Winckelmann's influential theories of art, moreover, contributed to the historical orientation of the German Enlightenment, which also incorporated Bodmer's medievalism, Michaelis' interest in Hebrew culture, and Schlözer's recognition of Phoenician civilization.⁴ During the *Aufklärung*, there had already been a move towards escaping from ancient mythology. Whereas for instance Christoph Willibald Gluck obediently took the subjects of his operas from antique mythology (e.g. *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart moved in other directions: *The Marriage of Figaro* was based on Beaumarchais' bourgeois comedy; *The Abduction from the Seraglio* cultivated exoticism in the style of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*.⁵

The break from classical mythology did not mean a break from the classical period, however, but a changed relationship. During the first years of the nineteenth century, Ernst Moritz Arndt crystallized the principles which can later be recognized as basic features of German romantic response to the antique. Arndt's most important works were *Geist der Zeit* (1806) and *Einleitung zu historischen Charakterschildrungen* (1810). Arndt was

concerned about “die traurige Gegenwart”, the disastrous situation of his country:⁶ the fact that Germany was still an ‘atomistic chaos’. He regarded this as parallel to the question of the political fragmentation of Ancient Greece.⁷

Another peculiarly interesting side to Arndt’s thinking is bound up with the relationship of the later romantics to antiquity. In *Einleitung zu historischen Charakterschildrungen*, Arndt describes art as the purest mirror of the nation’s life and feelings.⁸ Behind this statement, one can trace Herderian thinking. Arndt’s concepts of ‘art’ and ‘nation’ were organically connected to each other, and he applies national borders to aesthetics: “The Greek art is characterized by its ideal nature, Italian art by its spirituality, Dutch art by its naïveté.”⁹ To a large extent, the romantics saw classical art through a filter; the nation revealed its true character in doing something creative. Art was thus regarded as an essential element of nationality, the character of the nation. The ancients were considered an ideal people, whose culture achieved the highest status in the field of arts and sciences;¹⁰ the ancient Greeks’ achievement was seen as having originated in the central position of art in their society.

One of the most enthusiastic advocates of Classical Antiquity among the early German romantics was Friedrich Hölderlin, whose language was often extremely figurative (for example, in describing Immanuel Kant as the “Moses of Germany”). Hölderlin maintained that Greece was the homeland of all positive revolutions of mankind, and saw Ancient Greece as reborn in the Germany of his own time.¹¹

Hölderlin’s view was taken up by Friedrich Hebbel, who elevated Aeschylus to the position of the highest art of all time.¹² Similarly, Richard Wagner considered Aeschylus one of the greatest artists of mankind, who had discovered the true Greek ideal and described the people of Greece “in its highest truth and beauty.”¹³

In his autobiography *Mein Leben*, Wagner states that his admiration for Classical Antiquity began at the age of six, when the news of the Greek War of Independence aroused his interest:

... the newspaper accounts and monthly reports of the events of the Greek War of Independence stirred my imagination deeply. My love for Greece, which afterwards made me turn with enthusiasm to the mythology and history of ancient Hellas, was thus the natural outcome of the intense and painful interest I took in the events of this period.¹⁴

Wagner became more seriously acquainted with antique culture at the Kreuzschule in Dresden during the years 1822–27. His tutor was Karl Julius Sillig, a teacher of Latin who had translated Catullus and Pliny.¹⁵ Later, Wagner described to Nietzsche his enthusiasm for the classics, and claimed that no other boy of that age had done his Greek and Latin homework more enthusiastically.¹⁶ (In *Mein Leben*, however, he reveals that classical grammar had been a painful and troubling burden.¹⁷)

The teaching of classical civilization came to an end when the Wagners moved to their new hometown, Leipzig, in 1827. On the other hand, he now had now much to do with his uncle Adolf Wagner. Adolf was an enthusiastic student of literature, who had, for example, edited a lengthy anthology, *Parnasso Italiano*, which included German translations from the works of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso. Under his uncle’s guidance, Richard became acquainted with classical tragedy.¹⁸

Following his childhood years, there was a break in Wagner’s interest in classicism. When he began lessons in Greek from Samuel Lehrs, during his Paris years 1839–42, this reveals the advent of a new enthusiasm in the composer’s life.¹⁹ Particularly in the late 1840s, Wagner read Aeschylus’ tragedies, Aristophanes’ comedies, Plato’s dialogues, and studies of Classical Antiquity by J. G. Droysen, B. G. Niebuhr, and Edward Gibbon.²⁰ It is not surprising that the classics were given prominence in Wagner’s significant works on aesthetics, *Die Kunst und Revolution* (1849), *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849), and *Oper und Drama* (1850–1851).²¹ In his references to antiquity, Wagner often specifically meant the Periclean age; for Wagner, Euripides signified a decadence which later came to fruition in the barbarian culture of the Romans.²²

The link between Wagner’s orientation towards antiquity and his operas has been perfectly pointed out by Michael Ewans in his study *Wagner and Aeschylus* (1982). The result of Ewans’ research (showing Wagner’s use of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* Tetralogy as a model for *The Ring*) is confirmed by Friedrich Nietzsche’s comment that Aeschylus was one of the most significant dramatic models for Wagner.²³ Wagner himself even attempted to continue Aeschylus’ work, when he began to plan a drama *Achilleus*, based on Aeschylus’ lost play as reconstructed by Droysen in 1832.²⁴

The reflection of the Greek ideal is indisputably characteristic of Wagner’s operas. Wolfgang Hildesheimer writes: “Wagner’s characters are unfree: as in Greek tragedy, they both suffer and fulfil their individual destiny of which they cannot rid themselves ...”²⁵ This observation resembles

Wagner's own self-image as a genius, a *heros* who encountered only misunderstanding.²⁶

Even if we regard Wagner as an advocate and reviver of German self-understanding, his orientation towards antiquity cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Like Hölderlin, Wagner regarded Germany as a regeneration of antiquity—not historically (which would have to be based on systematic comparisons), nor merely metaphorically, but as a belief that Antiquity could *really* arise from the ruins of German disunity.²⁷

Wagner was convinced that the German nation, if it only understood its true self, had something to give to the whole world. In *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, Wagner saw two principal factors in the history of mankind: firstly, an affinity between nations, but on the other hand, also a continual striving for universality: “Two *cardinal moments* of his development lie clear before us in the history of Man: the *generic national*, and the *unnational universal*.”²⁸ These perspectives combine together in an argument which Wagner repeats in various contexts, according to which the German spirit represented the principle of regeneration for all mankind.²⁹ Wagner believed that German culture would create a cultural heritage which could be as colossal as the Ancient Greek tradition.³⁰

Like other nineteenth-century romantics, Wagner dismissed the use of direct loans from the Antique like those employed by eighteenth-century classicists in their over-enthusiasm for the classical period. The classicists were regarded as eclectics who dressed up their words in the decorum of the hexameter, propped up their houses with Corinthian columns, and preferred discussing Greek mythology rather than what was happening around them. Wagner maintained that the classicists had been interested only in the forms of antiquity and had ignored its content. Antiquity was useful as a model, but new forms should be created on the basis of the content. In his diary entries written to Ludwig II, Wagner argues that the antique world view should be used for the construction of new forms.³¹ This view of the world also predicated that art held a key position in society. Wagner saw art as the essence of man's fundamental nature. In Maurice Boucher's interpretation, Wagner saw man as a superior manifestation of natural life; art should stem from man through an inevitable process of expansion which was similar to the process through which man himself had originated.³²

Wagner actually refers to the ‘use’ of the antique conception of the world: “Anwendung der antiken Auffassung der Welt”. Pure man, fundamental human originality, had been crystallized in the essence of the ancients (“die reinmenschliche Originalität, das Reinmenschliche, das Allgemein-

menschliche”).³³ As he had argued in *Kunst und Klima* (1850): “... here was the first *true Man* begotten.”³⁴ Antiquity, for Wagner, no longer meant a specific historical epoch, a unique era, but above all a basic human way of relating to the world. He saw Classical Antiquity more as a myth than as a time-specific objective culture.

Wagner therefore did not see an emphasis on the classical understanding of the world as being in conflict with an advocacy of the German ideal. The ancients—as Ernst Moritz Arndt had argued—were an ‘ideal people’, who had discovered the fundamental essence of humanity. The discovery of this ‘natural man’ was equally necessary in the quest for the *true* German ideal. In his diary entries, Wagner emphasized that the Italians and French had not discovered this originality; the French epigones, for instance, had turned to mere plagiarism and had lost man’s original relationship to nature and art:

The Italian made as much of the Antique his own, as he could copy and remodel; the Frenchman borrowed from this remodelling, in his turn, whatever caressed his national sense for elegance of Form: the German was the first to apprehend its purely-human originality (...) Through its inmost understanding of the Antique, the German spirit arrived at the capability of restoring the Purely-human itself to its pristine freedom; not employing the antique form to display a certain given ‘stuff’, but moulding the necessary new form itself through an employment of the antique conception of the world.³⁵

Furthermore, Classical Antiquity was also a significant element in Wagner’s definition of the German ideal. In the binary schema set out on page 13, above, Classical Antiquity was linked with ideas such as the ‘pure German ideal’, ‘genuineness’, and ‘originality’. Antiquity was a means for achieving the oneness of original art, society, and the nation. This would be the true German ideal; then Germany herself *would be* antiquity.³⁶ One way to achieve this oneness was through Wagnerian art, a fusion of arts, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which would be comparable in its totality and cultural significance to the works of ancient classical art.

Wagner’s Theory of Art and the Gesamtkunstwerk

Wagner’s theory of art owes much to the Ancient Greeks; Plato had argued that art had a significant role in education, a view whole-heartedly supported by Wagner.³⁷ During the classical period, the forms of art had not yet become separate from each other: art was in organic connection with practical life.³⁸

In setting out to arouse interest in a return to the original unity of the arts, Wagner presented ideas that already had a footing in Germany. The fusion of arts was closely connected with the German 'Bildungsideal'. Thus the composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was famous for his water-colour paintings, the composer Carl Maria von Weber wrote a novel. The poets Wackenroder and Jean Paul were also composers.³⁹ The idea of a single form of art was seen not only in theory or in an interest in various forms of art, but also as the production of concrete works of art uniting different forms of expression. According to the original idea, for instance, Franz Liszt's symphonic poem *Die Hunnenschlacht* (1857) was planned to be part of a musical cycle of pictures "Weltgeschichte in Bildern und Tönen von W. Kaulbach und F. Liszt".⁴⁰ On the whole, therefore, it is no surprise that during German romanticism those genres of music flourished which resulted from interaction between different arts; that is, opera, lied, programme music, and symphonic poems.

An outstanding exemplar of this 'Bildung' in German romanticism was E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), who was not only a writer of romantic horror stories but also a composer, a conductor, and a caricaturist. According to Linda Siegel, Wagner became acquainted with Hoffmann's stories through his uncle, Adolf Wagner, who had known Hoffmann personally.⁴¹

E. T. A. Hoffmann subscribed to the idea that opera should be a product of an individual (a genius), and not a collective work.⁴² This idea was followed by Wagner, who himself wrote the librettos for all his operas. In 1811, Hoffmann had discussed with Carl Maria von Weber his plans for the opera *Aurora*, which was to be a meeting-place of all the arts, "die grosse romantische Oper".⁴³ Together with Hoffmann's *Undine* (which followed it), *Aurora* became one of the cornerstone works of German romantic opera, admired by Beethoven, Marschner, Spohr, and Weber.⁴⁴

Hoffmann wrote the librettos for his operas himself: he painted the scenery, and often conducted the performances. Nonetheless, Hoffmann emphasized the status of music in this fusion of arts. The theme of music, according to him, was eternity, the mysterious language of nature.⁴⁵ Hoffmann's works reflect the idea of *Naturmusik*, characteristic of the German romantic composers. In *Undine*, Hoffmann anticipated onomatopoeic painting with sound colours which imitated the voices and sounds of nature. This novel feature greatly influenced Weber's *Freischütz* and Wagner's operas. Wagner owed Hoffmann much in many other respects. Hoffmann was a pioneer in the use of the Leitmotiv technique and took the subjects of his operas from medieval legends and fairy-tales.⁴⁶ Loans from Hoffmann's

ideas are particularly apparent in Wagner’s early works, but are also recognizable even in *Tannhäuser*, the paradigm for which could have been Hoffmann’s *Kampf der Sänger*.⁴⁷

In shaping his idea of the fusion of the arts, *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Wagner thus took inspiration from Hoffmann, but of equal importance were the models of antiquity. The first total artist, for Wagner, was Aeschylus, whose works represented poetic thinking at the highest level, and were characterized by a richness in rhythm which incorporated the genesis of music.⁴⁸ Homer was seen by Wagner not as an individual artist, but rather as a superhuman collective force.⁴⁹

Classical art, in Wagner’s view, was characterized by a religious-like reception in which the reception of art had not become specialized and separated from the normalcy of life. The fusion of poetry, music, and art created not merely an ephemeral aesthetic experience, in the classical sense, but it was related to the experience of man’s position in society and in the cosmos. Similarly, this should be the objective of the German *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It would mediate to the recipient not only the experience of ‘beautiful emotions’, but also a consciousness of a certain situation in German culture—and of being an individual human being amongst other humans. The purpose of Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, argues Walter Vetter, was to release man from his alienation, and to restore to him his social framework.⁵⁰ Wagner’s art was therefore inescapably political in character, because it had a social mission:

Only on the shoulders of this great social movement can true Art lift itself from its present state of civilised barbarianism, and take its post of honour. Each has a common goal, and the twain can only reach it when they recognise it jointly. This goal is *the strong fair Man* ...⁵¹

Wagner believed that real drama could be achieved only through the fusion of different forms of art:

True Drama is only conceivable as proceeding from a *common urgency of every art* towards the most direct appeal to a *common public*. In this Drama, each separate art can only bare its utmost secret to their common public through a mutual parleying with the other arts; for the purpose of each separate branch of art can only be fully attained by the reciprocal agreement and co-operation of all the branches in their common message.⁵²

The real creator of a work of art, in Wagner's theory, was the people, speaking through the artist:

Who, then, will be the *Artist of the Future*? The poet? The performer? The musician? The plastician?—Let us say it in one word: the *Folk*. *That selfsame Folk to whom we owe the only genuine Art-work, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restorations; to whom alone we owe all Art itself.*⁵³

For the romantic way of thinking, the centre of Wagner's writings on art theory was the Nation, the social context in which the artist was consistently situated. Therefore, Wagner placed stress on the social significance of art, and emphasized its total character. Works of art only excited emotions, but also helped to comprehend through emotion.⁵⁴ Wagner believed that a work of art aroused in the recipient a direct impulsive understanding, an emotional intelligence.⁵⁵ This emotionally orientated understanding has often been regarded as a paradox in Wagner's aesthetic theory: the concept of *Gefühlsverständnis* has been linked with the great importance that Wagner, after all, attached to music. This incongruity may derive from Schopenhauer's emphasis on music as the only fully acceptable form of art.⁵⁶ In *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, Wagner treated music more widely, though he also stressed the significance of all forms of art in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁵⁷ In his essay on Beethoven, Wagner also directs the reader to understanding music, in its uniqueness, as something entirely different from other forms of art. Music was able to express the true inner character of phenomena. Appealing to Schopenhauer, Wagner argues that music is not conveyed through concepts contrary to spoken language; thus music is the artistic medium most suitable for the conveying of pure ideas.⁵⁸

In general, however, Wagner was more cautious as far as music was concerned, and started from a wider perspective. Sound and movement expressed emotion; speech and written language, on the other hand, expressed rational (cognitive) activity. Wagner's theory was based on the hypothesis that the original connection of the body and the mind had been broken,⁵⁹ and the purpose of the fusion of arts was to restore this natural balance,⁶⁰ to represent man in his unspoilt nature. According to Edward Arthur Lippman, this idea derives from a powerful vision of evolution which combines Hegelian reason with Darwinism. Lippman sees in Wagner's theory a linear continuity from nature to life, from life to man, from man to art, that is, a continuity in which the biological and cultural evolutions are constituents of a larger course of evolution. The purpose of the work of art

is to represent human nature as a whole with the inclusion of man's natural environment, social relationships, and his national background.⁶¹ Wagner often refers in his theoretical writings to art and nature.⁶² He defines nature not simply as the antithesis of the cultural, that is, biological, geological, and other similar systems. For Wagner, nature was something closely bound up with 'originality', a unique and fundamental principle from which all reality, including the human, was to spring.

Wagner planned his *Gesamtkunstwerk* to be something that would have a concrete status both for German and for universal culture. It was from this perspective that he developed his idea of the *Festspiel*. A large operatic theatre was to be built, devoted to the art of the future. Music festivals, offering the best facilities for the reception of new opera, would be arranged in this theatre. As early as 1863, Wagner began to seek a patron for the construction and costs of this theatre, in the preface to the poem of *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. At the same time, he proclaimed that the new German art would excite emotion equal to those aroused by the art of Classical Antiquity.⁶³ In fact, the idea of a theatre devoted to true German art, Wagner's art, had emerged much earlier, at the same time as the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In his letter to Theodor Uhlig of 12th November 1851, Wagner wrote that he intended to establish a theatre of his own in which his forthcoming opera tetralogy could be performed. He hoped to establish a base on the Rhine and then to make his plans public within a year.⁶⁴ It took longer than one year for this project, however: the first Bayreuth Festival was not held until 1876.

Wagner had thus been developing his project for a considerable time. He wished to create the best possible facilities for the performance of his works, where his supporters, the most German of Germans, could gather to enjoy true German art. This 'gathering' could also provide the religious-minded reception which had been characteristic of classical ancient art. The *Festspielhaus* would become a place of pilgrimage for all Germany: a place where people could visit and leave with a newborn mind.

A Possible Germany

Wagner's concept of the state and the appropriate form of government for German culture has been treated earlier. It is important, however, to raise this question once more, for the *Gesamtkunstwerk* had enormous significance in Wagner's social utopia. The Germany of the future would not only be a union of King and Artist; it would be a society the nucleus of which would

be “die heil’ge deutsche Kunst”. The fusion of art and politics would mean an internal revolution, Germany’s spiritual rebirth. This was one of the most central of Wagner’s intellectual political ideas.

As has been previously pointed out, Wagner’s political thinking was extremely anti-statist in the late 1840s, but in the sixties his view of the state became more positive, and he openly began to support the monarchy. It is interesting that the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* emerged during Wagner’s anarchist period, but later he adapted his theory of art better to match the new political situation. A belief in art focusing on man’s inner regeneration, closely linked with a religious vision of art’s function, would be in harmony with the principle of monarchy.

Wagner’s concept of a possible Germany was constructed on a division of power between spiritual control (art, religion) and earthly (the state). This is especially clear in *Über Staat und Religion*, in which the totality of life is seen as comprising both an internal and an external element. One should remember that this text was specifically addressed to Ludwig II, a Royal Patron discovered only a short time before the writing of the text. Wagner does not here directly propose a union between a worldly and a spiritual leader (King and Artist), since he evidently did not dare to elevate himself to equality with his patron. Instead, he posits that Ludwig had a ‘superhuman status’, in which he could act simultaneously as a source both of external and spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being, of course, required the support and validation of the artist, but this is left to be inferred by the royal reader.⁶⁵

An idea of a monarchy which patronizes art and where both King and Artist could fulfil their common goals seems to underlie this discourse. Wagner later attempted to explain these goals to Ludwig II more explicitly. In Wagner’s national utopia, art was to become a source of spiritual strength, comparable to religion. Since his very first writings, Wagner had combined religion and art. For instance, the novella *Ein Ende in Paris*, which was completed in 1841, ends in the expressive words:

I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven, and likewise their disciples and apostles;—I believe in the Holy Spirit and the truth of the one, indivisible Art;—I believe that this Art proceeds from God, and lives within the hearts of all illumined men;—I believe that he who once has bathed in the sublime delights of this high Art, is consecrate to Her for ever, and never can deny Her;—I believe that through Art all men are saved ...⁶⁶

Here there is the foundation of a fusion of art and religion, the kernel of which was to be the opera festival. The regenerating influence of art took on an increased emphasis in Wagner’s thinking after revolutionary activities had lost their meaning. Carl Dahlhaus has called this a turning-point, from which after 1864 Wagner consciously began to use the existing establishment as instruments for his purposes: an activity termed by Dahlhaus as utopian post-revolutionary (“utopisch nach-revolutionäre”).⁶⁷ If the alliance with the King succeeded, art could be given a religious position, and the operas of the national artist would become holy shrines for the German people.

The *Gesamtkunstwerk* would, of course, have a dominant role in Wagner’s social utopia: it was not only a cultural artefact, but also a potential ceremonial element in the national culture. Andrea Mork suggests that Wagner’s social utopia is crystallized in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, because it has—or at least should have—essential significance for the nation’s identity.⁶⁸ In this respect, however, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a paradox, for it seems to become identical with the nation. Wagner argues that the nation is the central maker of art, though it uses genius as its instrument; yet at the same time, art moulds the identity which is necessary for the nation. Thus the nation constitutes art, and art (ideal art) the nation.

Wagner sometimes stresses the instrumentality of art, and sometimes its inherent value. It seems to be irresolvable whether the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or art in general, is needed once the utopia has been achieved. Will art become an irrevocable part of the national identity, or will it merely be an instrument for the discovery of identity?

In his writings, Wagner seems to stress the trinity of the artistic society. The artist will be authorized by the King, but also inevitably by the nation. The artist is to create the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but indirectly it is also created by the nation speaking through the artist. Moreover, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* will provide the kernel of a new society which will fundamentally reconstitute the nation, and also constitute the fundament upon which the status of the artist arises. In Wagner’s national utopia, therefore, the artist, art and the nation form ‘a holy trinity’, protected by the superhuman status of the King. Wagner began to implement this national utopia when he embarked on co-operation with the young King of Bavaria in 1864.

Notes

- 1 Stemplinger, Lamer 1920, 93–94.
- 2 Stemplinger, Lamer 1920, 15. In German: “*Um modernes, um deutsches Wesen zu kennen, muß man Antikes kennen, weil das deutsche sich vom antiken herleitet ...*”
- 3 Riikonen 1983, 9.
- 4 Reill 1975, 213. See also Dilthey 1927, 247; Erbe 1985, 58–61; Grebing 1986, 811–812.
- 5 Leibowitz 1970, 153.
- 6 Arndt 1810, VII; Arndt 1807, 191.
- 7 Arndt 1807, 153.
- 8 Arndt 1810, 125.
- 9 Arndt 1810, 125. In German: “*Der Charakter der griechischen Kunst ist Idealität, der italischen Geistigkeit, der niederländischen Naivetät.*”
- 10 Cf. Hauser 1977, 122–123, 130–133.
- 11 Heer 1964, 182–183, 186; Gray 1979, 37.
- 12 Stemplinger, Lamer 1920, 107.
- 13 Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, PW I, 33. In German: “*in seiner höchsten Wahrheit und Schönheit*”. Wagner 1849, 6–8.
- 14 Wagner 1994, 4–5. In German: “*... die Zeitungs- und Kalenderberichte über die Vorgfälle des gleichzeitigen griechischen Befreiungskampfes drastisch aufregend auf mich wirkten. Meine Liebe für Griechenland, die sich späterhin mit Enthusiasmus auf die Mythologie und Geschichte des alten Hellas warf, ging somit von der begeisterten und schmerzlichen Teilnahme an Vorgängen der unmittelbaren Gegenwart aus*”. Wagner 1976b, 12.
- 15 Westernhagen 1966, 12; Müller 1986, 8–9. Cf. Wagner 1976b, 21–22.
- 16 Ewans 1982, 15.
- 17 Wagner 1976b, 20–21.
- 18 Westernhagen 1966, 12.
- 19 Riikonen 1983, 11–12.
- 20 Westernhagen 1966, 84–113; Riikonen 1983, 12.
- 21 See e.g. Wagner 1849, 5–10; Wagner 1850a, 35–37.
- 22 See e.g. Wagner 1849, 10–13. Cf. Stemplinger, Lamer 1920, 108.
- 23 Westernhagen 1966, 18. Cf. Nietzsche 1895c, 539.
- 24 Westernhagen 1966, 23; Müller 1986, 8, 12.
- 25 Hildesheimer 1977, 160. In German: “*Wagners Gestalten sind unfrei: Wie in der griechischen Tragödie sind sie gleichzeitig die Erleidenden und Volstrecker ihres individuellen Schicksals, dem sie nicht entrinnen können und das sie dauernd motivisch begleitet.*”
- 26 See e.g. Wagner 1974a, 214, 220; Wagner 1975a, 85–86.
- 27 Wagner 1868, 47–49.

- 28 Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, PW I, 89. In German: “Zwei **Hauptmomente** der *Entwicklung der Menschheit* liegen in der *Geschichte* deutlich vor: der **geschlechtlich nationale** und der **unnationale universelle**.” Wagner 1850a, 34.
- 29 See e.g. Wagner 1849, 40–49; Wagner 1850a, 36; Wagner 1868, 31, 35; Wagner 1878, 38–39.
- 30 Wagner 1868, 30–35, 47–49.
- 31 KLRW IV, 17. Cf. Wagner 1878, 33.
- 32 Boucher 1947, 53.
- 33 KLRW IV, 17; Wagner 1878, 33.
- 34 Wagner, *Art and Climate*, PW I, 253. In German: “*Hier ward der wahre Mensch erst geboren*”. Wagner 1911/16b, 209.
- 35 Wagner, *What Is German?*, PW IV, 155–156. In German: “*Der Italiener eignete sich von der Antike an, was ernachahmen und nachbilden konnte; der Franzose eignete sich wieder von dieser Nachbildung an, was seinem nationalen Sinne für Eleganz der Form schmeicheln durfte: erst der Deutsche erkannte sie in ihrer reinmenschliche Originalität (...) Durch das innigste Verständniss der Antike ist der deutsche Geist zu der Fähigkeit gelangt, das Reimenschliche selbst wiederum in ursprünglicher Freiheit nachzubilden, nämlich, nicht durch die Anwendung der antiken Form einen bestimmten Stoff darzustellen, sondern durch die Anwendung der antiken Auffassung der Welt die nothwendige neue Form selbst zu bilden.*” KLRW IV, 17. Cf. Wagner 1878, 33.
- 36 See e.g. Wagner 1868, 105–112; Wagner 1878, 38–39. See also Wagner 1850a, 43–50.
- 37 Vetter 1953, 113.
- 38 Borchmeyer 1982, 68–69; Kunze 1983, 154–155.
- 39 Siegel 1965, 604.
- 40 Kunze 1983, 102.
- 41 Siegel 1965, 597.
- 42 Siegel 1965, 605.
- 43 Siegel 1965, 603.
- 44 Dahlhaus 1986, 70; Siegel 1965, 600. Cf. Orrey 1972, 137–140.
- 45 Siegel 1965, 601.
- 46 Kunze 1983, 158–160; Siegel 1965, 601–604.
- 47 Westernhagen 1966, 15; Mertens 1986, 22.
- 48 Vetter 1953; Westernhagen 1966, 39. See also Wagner 1849, 6–7.
- 49 See e.g. Vetter 1953, 113; Schadewaldt 1984, 238–240.
- 50 Vetter 1953, 124. Cf. Borchmeyer 1982, 40–48, 68.
- 51 Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, PW I, 56. In German: “*Aus dem Zustande civilisierter Barbarei kann die wahre Kunst sich nur auf den Schultern unserer großen socialen Bewegung zu ihrer Würde erheben: sie hat mit ihr ein gemeinschaftliches Ziel, und beide können es nur erreichen, wenn sie es gemeinschaftlich erkennen. Dieses Ziel ist der starke und schöne Mensch ...*” Wagner 1849, 44.

- 52 Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, PW I, 184. In German: “Das wahre Drama ist nur denkbar als aus dem **gemeinsamen Drange aller Künste** zur unmittelbarsten Mittheilung an eine **gemeinsame Öffentlichkeit** hervorgehend: jede einzelne Kunstart vermag der gemeinsamen Öffentlichkeit zum **vollen Verständnisse** nur durch gemeinsame Mittheilung mit den übrigen Kunstarten im Drama sich zu erschließen, denn die Absicht jeder einzelnen Kunstart wird nur im gegenseitig sich verständigenden und verständnißgebenden Zusammenwirken aller Kunstarten vollständig erreicht.” Wagner 1850a, 186–187.
- 53 Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, PW I, 204–205. In German: “Wer wird demnach aber der **Künstler der Zukunft** sein? Der Dichter? Der Darsteller? Der Musiker? Der Plastiker?—Sagen wir kurz: **Das Volk; dasselbige Volk, dem wir selbst heut zu Tage das in unserer Erinnerung lebende, von uns mit Entstellung nur nachgebildete, einzige wahre Kunstwerk, dem wir die Kunst überhaupt einzig verdanken.**” Wagner 1850a, 220.
- 54 See e.g. Wagner 1849, 17, 44; Wagner 1850a, 15–17, 183–185, 220. Cf. Lippman 1958, 209.
- 55 Wagner s.a., 183. See also Dahlhaus 1983, 89.
- 56 Schopenhauer 1844a, 289–302; Schopenhauer 1844b, 446–457. See also Gray 1979, 42; Lippman 1958, 215.
- 57 Wagner 1850a, 51–128 passim.
- 58 Wagner 1870, 5–6.
- 59 Wagner 1850a, 36–37, 43–50.
- 60 Wagner 1850a, 33–37, 196. See also Wagner 1849, 42–44.
- 61 Lippman 1958, 210.
- 62 See e.g. Wagner 1974b, 124–125; Wagner 1850a, 1–5, 33, 43.
- 63 Wagner 1863, VI–XXIII.
- 64 Wagner to Theodor Uhlig November 12, 1851, Wagner 1986, 108.
- 65 Wagner, *Über Staat und Religion*, SS VIII, 3–29.
- 66 Wagner, *An End in Paris*, PW VII, 66–67. In German: “Ich glaube an Gott, Mozart und Beethoven, ingleichem an ihre Jünger und Apostel;—ich glaube an den Heiligen Geist und an die Wahrheit der einen, unteilbaren Kunst;—ich glaube, daß diese Kunst von Gott ausgeht und in den Herzen aller erleuchteten Menschen lebt (...) ich glaube, daß alle durch diese Kunst selig werden ...” Wagner 1982, 77.
- 67 Dahlhaus 1989, 595.
- 68 Mork 1990, 105.

Part II

“TOWARDS THE POWER OF GERMANY”: WAGNER’S POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY, 1864–1871

Chapter Four

Wagner in Munich, 1864–1865

Looking for a German Community

The guiding principle in the previous analysis of this study was to throw light on the foundations of Wagner's concept of the German ideal from the perspective of cultural and intellectual history. This national myth clearly incorporates a striving from political disunity towards unity, "zur Grösse Deutschlands".¹ This objective is also recognizable in the conceptual structures of Wagner's texts, where positive political features and emotions are constantly connected with a lost past, the present being conversely beset by un-German decadence. These structures could be interpreted as a strategy the purpose of which was to reveal the deterioration of the German spirit and to proclaim a new national renewal. In view of this, it appears that the purpose of Wagner's ideological and literary activities was to reduce and alleviate the breach between political dissolution and cultural integrity. At the same time, the creation of a German national identity would facilitate the analysis of the domestic native culture, and provide a new means to re-examine "the reality of nationalities". From this angle, it became a "weapon" against the other national identities, with the goal of helping the German nation to rediscover its lost state of happiness, "die deutsche Herrlichkeit".

As has been pointed out, Wagner regarded his own art as true German art, through which the German people could understand their own identity.²

In his writings, Wagner constantly intertwined his own art with the fate of Germany. This was explicitly stated in a letter to Count Karl von Enzenberg, dated 15th June 1866:

I have long been convinced that my artistic ideal stands or falls with Germany. Only the Germany that we love and desire can help us achieve that ideal.³

A little earlier, Wagner had used almost the same words in his letters to Constantin Franz (19th March 1866), Julius Fröbel (11th April 1866), and to King Ludwig II (29th April 1866).⁴ In these letters, the idea of an inseparable connection between Wagner's art and the destiny of Germany is represented as a climax. The significance of this idea is seen in his constant employment of the same lexical items in his letters, as if they were the cruxes of his entire thinking.

Since the defeat and victory of Wagner's ideal art was thus linked to Germany's destiny, only a propitious political system and a cultural administration favourable to art could make the cultivation of his art possible. Without a firm collective establishment, true Wagnerian art could not exist. This collectivity is self-evident in the light of Wagner's total theory of art; only art as a total experience could transform Germany into the new realm of Classical Antiquity.

Ever since the Dresden period, Wagner had attempted to achieve social conditions more favourable to his art. At the Dresden Court Theatre, Wagner had to abandon his reformist programme, and from this he concluded that it was impossible to change the structures of the institution of opera without changing the structures of the entire society, and he rose to the barricades alongside Michael Bakunin, August Röckel, and Gottfried Semper. After 1849, however, Wagner's political activities came to a halt for fifteen years. "His brave participation in the struggle of May"⁵—as *The Meyer Encyclopedia* stated in 1852—would have ended in capital punishment, but a quick escape saved his life. Despite this, Wagner did not give up his interest in politics. On returning to the political stage in 1864, he limited himself to acting behind the scenes. The time of open struggle was over. Already, well after the 1848 revolution had ended, Wagner had written to Liszt that he would no longer seek publicity without the certainty of a favourable and collective response: "I cannot seek publicity, and my artistic salvation could be brought about one day only by publicity seeking me."⁶

Even at a later date, Wagner's circle of acquaintances included many revolutionaries from 1848: not only Röckel and Semper, but also Lothar

Bucher, Julius Fröbel, Georg Herwegh, and Mathilde von Meysenbug. The revolutionary explosion forced Wagner and Herwegh to flee to Switzerland; Bucher and Meysenbug fled to England, and Fröbel to the United States. In the 1860s, all of these expatriates were allowed to return to German soil. At the same time, the nature of their political activities clearly changed. Lothar Bucher was to come to Berlin, where he became the right hand of Otto von Bismarck, whereas Julius Fröbel acted as a political adviser to the government of the Austrian Empire, and in the 1860s–70s as a consul of the German Empire. The revolutionaries were integrated into society, as also happened with Wagner. On receiving Ludwig's invitation in 1864, Wagner raised no objections.

It is interesting to try to identify the period of Wagner's life in which this political re-evaluation took place. It is a particularly relevant question, as the later parts of this study will concentrate on a scrutiny of Wagner's life after 1864. A decisive step in Wagner's thinking was *Über Staat und Religion*, dedicated to Ludwig II and published in July 1864. His idea of a national utopia is further illuminated in the entries in his diary, and in his series of articles *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* (1867/68). As has been pointed out, Wagner's world view during these years forms a coherent whole: it was principally his relationship to political power that changed, as his ideological attention turned from Bavaria to Prussia. It would be a mistake, however, to see Wagner as an anti-statist anarchist prior to his arrival in Munich. Signs of the change in his thinking can already be found in the earlier period. Another cause contributing to the shift in his thinking was his migratory life, which seemed to have brought him to a dead end. Wagner, after all, longed to find a distinguished patron for his work. The dream of a free relationship between the artist and the people evoked by the Dresden period no longer appeared possible. During the spring of 1863, a new perspective emerges in the preface to the libretto for *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which shows that Wagner was coming to terms with the idea of being employed by a wealthy prince.⁷ There is clear evidence supporting the hypothesis that even before his arrival in Munich, Wagner had moulded his thinking into a new faith, notwithstanding the frequently repeated misconception that it was the sudden appearance of Ludwig II that made the chameleon change its colour. On the contrary, it was the previous change in Wagner's thinking which made it possible for him to seize the opportunity offered. It is also evident that Wagner could not be satisfied merely by an ideological reorientation; *die deutsche Herrlichkeit* could be achieved only through an

active influence. This was the project which Wagner consciously undertook during 1864–1871.

The preface to the libretto for *The Ring* shows that Wagner was already a monarchist before he came to know Ludwig II. According to Frank B. Josserand, Wagner was never interested in the ordinary political games; his goals always surpassed the narrow views of politicians.⁸ Wagner's thinking was integrally related to his function as an artist: he engaged in politics solely because he was an artist, and because he was dreaming of a world where the artist would be given special status. He wrote to Count Enzenberg that artists could advise the monarchs far better than diplomats: "... may our princes see them as such; far better than all their diplomats, the bard will be able to address their appeal to the people."⁹

After May 1849, therefore, although Wagner no longer rose up on the barricades, he did not relinquish his political influence; it was the nature of his influence that changed. He was writing much more, and attempted to give his political thoughts a literary form. Prior to 1864, his literary activities were mainly focused on art, on the political nature of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), and on revolution; after 1864 on politics, in a wider and a more reformist sense. At the same time, he increasingly set out directly to influence the decision-makers.

The change needed in society was no longer to begin bottom-up from the barricades, but from the very summit of the hierarchy. Wagner hoped that his own thinking and art could contribute to the future unification of Germany and to the administration to be established for the newly created state. Again we find that Wagner, like other romantic thinkers, was strongly committed to Herder's concept of the people (*Volk*) as the standpoint of all theorizing and the unconditional spiritual foundation for all art. None of the composers preceding Wagner had deliberately demanded that the people should be the primary recipients of art. Joseph Kerman has interpreted Wagner's theory of art specifically as a means to contact a public that had previously been excluded from canonized art.¹⁰ The romantic intellectuals (*Bildungsbürgertum*) had deliberately raised the common people and their folk art to prominence, aiming to create an elitist popular culture. Wagner, however, showed no interest in folk music in the way most national romantic composers did, and never imitated folk tunes. What interested him, more than folk music, was a national music: he wanted to make his operas into national art.¹¹ Through a system of social distribution, this art could be disseminated for the enjoyment of all the people.¹²

Wagner's thinking and writing were dominated by a strong social orientation, though he often—probably unconsciously—called the utopia of the bourgeois intellectuals by the name *true folk*. Anyway, Wagner repeatedly wished to find his way to his national context. In September 1865 he wrote in his diary: "If only I could find my people!"¹³

In the following section of this study, I will deal with Wagner's political activities on a concrete level: how did Wagner act to realize the imagined Germany, and to make the German people "a refreshing spring" to which other peoples could come in the hope of rebirth? What political activity did he utilize to "find" his people?

The Invitation to Munich

After the Dresden period, Wagner's return to German soil would have ended in his execution. Officially, he was not pardoned until 22nd July 1860.¹⁴ Until his pardon, Wagner was constantly on the move, living in Vienna and Zurich. He also toured as a conductor, visiting Paris, London, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Venice.¹⁵ During this period he was heavily in debt. He could not stay for long in any one place, being hounded by creditors, and moved in stealth from one place to another.

The Viennese Journalist Friedrich Uhl, in his memoir, gives a vivid description of Wagner's departure from Vienna at the beginning of 1864. Wagner notified Dr. Josef Standhartner of his departure, but did not tell his closest friends Karl Tausig, Peter Cornelius, and Friedrich Uhl. Wagner had already acquired a residence in Penzig, near Vienna. Tausig was to be responsible for the furnishing of wallpapers for the house. Suddenly, it occurred to Wagner to move to Zurich. Tausig was of course furious: "Think about it, Wagner is gone, without telling me anything!"¹⁶ Apparently the reason for Wagner's unexpected departure was his need to escape his creditors: otherwise he would not have left in such a secret fashion.

Since 1851, Wagner had been dreaming of a music festival to be devoted to the performance of his own operas.¹⁷ Not until 1876, twenty-five years later, was his dream fulfilled. The years spent in exile made Wagner reconsider his position and assess the practical (that is, economic) means needed for the fulfilment of his dream. The ideas expressed in his letter to Uhlig were further developed in the preface to the libretto for *The Ring*. Here, he put forward two alternative methods for the acquisition of the resources needed for the project: the founding of an art-lovers' society, for men and women, who would provide the required financial resources; or the

appearance of a German ruling monarch who would be ready to support the national art. Wagner finished with a rhetorical question: "Will this Prince be found?—'In the beginning was the Deed.'"¹⁸

In 1863, Wagner found himself in a situation where he could do nothing but make an appeal to the German monarchs. His challenging words did not fall on deaf ears. Just after the preface was completed, the young king of Bavaria, Ludwig II offered a helping hand to the debt-stricken composer. Ludwig II was born on 25th August 1845, in the same year that Wagner finished his opera *Tannhäuser*. When the prince was one-year old, Bavaria suffered a serious political crisis. Ludwig I, the child's grandfather, had been ensnared by the adventuress Lola Montez so that the management of the affairs of the state ground to a halt. Finally, Ludwig I was forced to abdicate in favour of his son Maximilian, who reigned for sixteen years until his death on 10th March 1864. Ludwig, the Crown Prince was to succeed him, even though he had not yet celebrated his nineteenth birthday.¹⁹

Even as a child, young Ludwig had shown interest in German mythology. The Crown Prince's imagination was greatly affected by the environment of his adolescence, above all, by the Bavarian castles, the walls of which were studded with romantic paintings which illustrated the German folk heritage. In Hohenschwangau Castle, he was deeply inspired by a cycle of frescoes that depicted mythical swan knights. The painting had been commissioned by Maximilian II, whose favourite bird was the swan.²⁰

In 1848, Wagner had finished his opera *Lohengrin*, which was a story of swan knights. At the age of thirteen, Ludwig read the libretto of the opera for the first time, and two years later, in 1861, he saw the work at the Munich Court Theatre.²¹ It was apparent that he actually identified himself with the swan knight, because he was often dressed in the fashion of the knights in purple.²² Ludwig even learned the lines of *Lohengrin's* part from the libretto by heart.²³

Ludwig had already acquainted himself with Wagner's theoretical writings. At the age of twelve, he hastily read *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* and "*Zukunftsmusik*", which he found on the grand piano during a visit to Duke Maximilian.²⁴ In March the following year, he borrowed *Oper und Drama* and was greatly inspired by it.²⁵ Ludwig was thus a Wagnerian long before he met Wagner. He is also supposed to have read the poetic version of *The Ring*, in the preface to which Wagner wrote that he was in search of a ruling monarch who could support him. The artist and his princely patron were, in a way, communicating before they had even encountered each other.

Ludwig and Wagner shared an interest in mythology, both were fantasists and utopians, who dreamt of a community where art was to have a key role. Ludwig's fantasy, however, turned into an escapism that alienated him from reality, as is clearly seen in his fascination with his fairy-tale castles; rather than live at his administrative Munich residence, he spent his time at Hohenschwangau, Linderhof or at Herrenschiemsee. His last building project, the Castle of Neuschwanstein, was to symbolize his own Wagnerism—a romantic longing that was never satisfied.²⁶

In his article on the relationship between Wagner and King Ludwig, Manfred Eger has pointed out that Ludwig's influence on Wagner was extremely significant; without Ludwig, *The Mastersingers* and *Parsifal* would never have come into existence, and the enormous *Ring of the Nibelung* would never have been completed. Without Ludwig's economic support, the organization of the Bayreuth Festival would have been impossible, and the arrangements for the opening festival would have been deferred to an uncertain future.²⁷ During his *Wanderjahre*, Wagner had drifted into a state of chaos in which an influential patron was clearly needed as a solution to his many problems. During Wagner's visit to St. Petersburg and Moscow, he became so enamoured with the generosity of the Russians that he started planning regular tours to Russia, and even thought of settling permanently in St. Petersburg.²⁸ Under the care of the Russians, he would have been able to devote himself to composing and completing his projects. This idea, however, he dismissed long before the emergence of a true German patron. Wagner's art had been planned for the Germans: Russia might fill his life with material satisfaction, but it would have led to the rejection of his national utopia. Wagner continued his desperate wanderings. On 8th October 1864, he wrote to his friend Peter Cornelius:

Some light must show itself: *Someone* must come forward and *help* me *now* with his energetic support,—only **then** shall I still have the strength to repay him for his help: otherwise, I feel it will be impossible!²⁹

In less than a month, such an “energetic person” entered Wagner's life.

Ludwig's father, Maximilian II, died on 10th March 1864. At the age of eighteen, Ludwig succeeded him and became the crowned head of Bavaria.³⁰ One of his first actions as king was to send the Cabinet Secretary, Franz von Pfistermeister, to seek out Wagner.³¹ Pfistermeister went first to Vienna, because Wagner was rumoured to be in Austria.

Pfistermeister arrived at Penzig, where Wagner had just acquired a new residence and found only Wagner's servants Franz and Anna Mrazek in the empty house. Only moments before, Wagner's creditors had repossessed all the furniture. One hundred bottles of champagne, however, were found in the cellar. Evidently the creditors assumed that a man as poverty-stricken and in such heavy debts as Wagner could not possess so many bottles of champagne, and therefore left the champagne untouched.³² Unfortunately, the Mrazeks could not tell anything about Wagner's disappearance or his destinations. Pfistermeister continued his quest.

Friedrich Uhl has given a vivid description of Wagner's departure in his memoirs:

Days after—it was in March 1864—Herr von Pfistermeister, the Cabinet Secretary from Munich, visited me (...) "Think", he shouted, after having presented himself, "I come at the King's request to bring him Richard Wagner; but the man is gone, and nobody knows where!"—"I can perhaps help you. Wagner has travelled to Zurich. If you go to the Villa Wesendonck, designed by Semper, they let you immediately know in which hotel Wagner is staying." Herr. v. Pfistermeister thanked me, left me immediately and travelled to Zurich the same evening.³³

Uhl is wrong in stating that Pfistermeister travelled straight to Zurich; first, he wrote to Ludwig and informed him that Wagner had left Austria for Switzerland. Ludwig sent a quick reply: "My decision is soon made, you should follow R. Wagner as soon as possible."³⁴ On 20th April, Pfistermeister returned briefly to Munich to report in person to Ludwig, but was sent off again to continue his search.³⁵

Pfistermeister arrived in Zurich to discover that Wagner, always ahead of his creditors, had learned how to move quickly. On 29th April Pfistermeister met Dr. François Wille, whose estate had been Wagner's residence. Wagner had left for Stuttgart two days earlier. Wille, who had returned from Constantinople, made it clear that Wagner, whom Wille's wife had allowed to reside at their estate, was no longer welcome.³⁶

Since 30th April Wagner had been living at the Hotel Marquard in Stuttgart, where he had come to meet his friend, the conductor Karl Eckert. He was to experience a pleasant surprise, when Eckert told him that the Intendent of the Stuttgart Court Theatre had accepted *Lohengrin* for the theatre's repertoire.³⁷

Not until 2nd May did Wagner know of Pfistermeister's pursuit of him. Wagner was spending the evening with Eckert, when a visiting card with the text "Secrétaire aulique de S. M. le roi de Bavière" was handed to him.³⁸

Wagner was alarmed at the idea that someone had found his new place of residence so quickly. After returning to the hotel, he was told that a gentleman from Munich wished to meet him at 10 o'clock. Wagner slept restlessly that night, afraid of a possible confrontation with his creditors.³⁹

In the morning Wagner met Pfistermeister in his hotel room. Pfistermeister told of his repeated failures to locate the maestro, and established his identity by showing him a letter which Ludwig had written to be delivered to Wagner. Pfistermeister gave Wagner a ring and a portrait of the King as gifts. In addition, he presented him with an invitation to come to Munich, and asked Wagner to reply to the King without delay by telegram.

Wagner did not hesitate in replying in the affirmative. He immediately wrote a letter of thanks which was full of praise:

My dear and gracious King,

I send you these tears of the most heavenly emotion in order to tell you that the marvels of poesy have entered my poor loveless life as a divine reality!—And this life, with its final outpouring of verse and of music, now belongs to you, my gracious young King: dispose of it as you would of your property!

In the utmost ecstasy, faithful and true

Your subject Richard Wagner⁴⁰

At five o'clock that afternoon, Wagner travelled with Pfistermeister to Munich. Before his departure, he did find time to dine with the young composer-conductor Wendelin Weissheimer and Karl Eckert. During the meal, Eckert received a telegram informing him that Wagner's old opponent Giacomo Meyerbeer had died in Paris. This was considered by Wagner to be a happy coincidence. Meyerbeer, who had fiercely resisted Wagner and his music, had expired on the emergence of the bright rays of sunlight at the dawn of Wagner's new life.⁴¹

In high spirits, Wagner boarded the train in the company of Pfistermeister. His rescue had come at the last moment. A few days earlier, 30th April, he had written to Wendelin Weissheimer: "I am collapsed—I have no strength left—I must disappear anywhere from the world; could you save me from this!"⁴² The constant moving from one place to another, together with the fear of his creditors, had brought Wagner to the verge of a nervous breakdown. His royal guardian angel appeared just before he was about to

collapse. The composer's incredibly large debts were about to be cleared by a generous patron who had ascended the Bavarian throne.

Ludwig II and Richard Wagner

Wagner arrived in Munich accompanied by Pfistermeister, and a reception with the King was immediately arranged. On the same day, Wagner wrote to Eliza Wille: "He (Ludwig) loves me with the inwardness and warmth of young love: he knows everything about me and understands me as I understand my own soul."⁴³ On the following day he wrote to Mathilde Maier: "He offers me everything that I need to live, to create, and to perform my works."⁴⁴

Ludwig's enthusiasm greatly impressed Wagner. He wrote to Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld that the King knew his works better than any other person. It seemed that Ludwig was prepared to do everything possible for his art.⁴⁵ From their very first encounter, Wagner thus understood how he had irrevocably overwhelmed Ludwig. From the King, he was to get all he desired.

To Eliza Wille, Wagner wrote that Ludwig was glowing with the heat of first love. According to Wagner, the first meeting of the patron and the composer was "a great never-ending love scene".⁴⁶ From the very beginning the relationship was based on strong emotions. The correspondence between Ludwig and Wagner (approximately 600 letters) is full of romantic and overwhelming flowery language. In this respect, even the opening phrases of the letters reveal a lot: "Light of my life, my only friend", "Ultimate! Supreme! Most beautiful gift of my life! Wondrous King!", "Lofty, glorious being", "Your most serene Highness, most mighty King and Lord", "My noble, glorious friend! My beautiful will, my loving providence", "My most beautiful, highest—my only consolation"⁴⁷

In the literature on Wagner there has been a lot of discussion concerning the character of the relationship between Wagner and Ludwig. Some of the authors have interpreted the many confessions of love in their correspondence as being clear signs of a physical relationship.⁴⁸ There is ample evidence that Ludwig had homosexual tendencies.⁴⁹ As for Wagner, there is no proof of his experiencing a sexual attraction to men. In his *Brown Book*, in fact, Wagner expresses his inability to comprehend a physical and loving relationship between men, referring to the Ancient Greeks: "What we cannot ever or in any language understand about the Greek way, is what wholly separates us from it, e.g. their love—in—pederasty."⁵⁰

For the present study, the question of homosexuality in the Wagner-Ludwig relationship is irrelevant. The many emotional outbursts in their correspondence can be discounted as instances of the overpowering romantic wordiness typical of the period.⁵¹ For Wagner, the relationship was not only emotionally significant, but of even greater economic and political importance.

In a letter to Ludwig dated 10th October 1864, Wagner compared himself with Columbus, who with the backing of Queen Isabella of Castile undertook an unprecedented voyage that was to become a significant event in world history. For Columbus, it was enough to feel that one ruling monarch believed in him; with the Queen's trust in his ideas, Columbus achieved his goals.⁵² Similarly, Wagner, too, was an explorer sailing on the ocean of art, boldly undertaking his demanding expedition under Ludwig's favourable patronage. The support provided for Wagner by Ludwig certainly surpassed the funding that Columbus received from Queen Isabella. On his arrival in Munich, Wagner was perilously saddled with debt, and therefore Ludwig immediately presented him with 4,000 florins to cover the worst of his debts. This was a generous gift, considering that an average medium-income family's annual cost of living was approximately 320 florins.⁵³ The debts were enormous. Wagner was also informed that he would receive an annual salary of 4,000 florins. In addition, Ludwig presented Wagner in June 1864 with a further 20,000 florins. It was furthermore agreed that Ludwig was to buy the performing rights of Wagner's forthcoming operas, for which in October 1864 Wagner was given an advance of 15,000 florins. At the same time, Wagner received 40,000 florins as a personal gift from the King (paid from the King's private purse and not from the Bavarian State Treasury). During the first year, Wagner also obtained 75,000 florins for furniture and other miscellaneous expenses.⁵⁴ During that one year, Ludwig thus presented Wagner with a considerable fortune.

Thanks to Ludwig, Wagner could continue his extravagant life style. First, he settled his debts. On 11th June, he travelled to Vienna, using the 20,000 florins which he had received on his first day in Munich, to pacify his creditors.⁵⁵ Previously, he had managed his money affairs by letter, with the assistance of Heinrich Porges, who had assisted him in the payments of overdue bills of exchange.⁵⁶ On 14th June, Wagner returned to Munich with his domestics, the Mrazeks, to settle in the Villa Pellet on Lake Starnberg close to Ludwig's summer residence, the Castle of Berg, and it was now therefore possible for Ludwig and Wagner to meet on a daily basis.

In the September of 1864, Wagner received lodgings for his personal use in Munich, in Biener Street. The new house was to be the birthplace of his forthcoming great operas.⁵⁷

Wagner stated that he would dedicate his life and art to the King: "From now until my death I belong to my King and to no one else: everything I do and write belongs exclusively to him and to no one else any longer."⁵⁸ Once he had settled in Munich, he drew up a schedule for the following decades in his life. Though short-spanned in certain matters, as an artist Wagner was able to carry out long-term projects. As is now known, he had already started *The Ring Tetralogy* in the 1850s, although it was not completed until two decades later.

On 1st June 1864, in a letter to the conductor Hans von Bülow, Wagner put forward a detailed plan of all that he intended to accomplish under the favourable patronage of Ludwig. This programme was to be finalized in 1873:

1864	Summer (during the Court's period of mourning) "Scenes from the Nibelungs" at the piano, with H. v. Bülow. Late autumn, "Grand Concert of extracts from my works."
1865	Spring. Tristan and Isolde (with Schnorr & Tietjens). Beginning of winter. Mastersingers.
1866	Tannhäuser (new) Lohengrin (complete) with Schnorr, etc.
1867–68	Grand performance of the entire "Ring of the Nibelung."
1869–70	"The Victors."
1871–72	"Parzival!"
1873	Final <i>beautiful death</i> and redemption of the votary.

And so, tell them, one and all, high and low, to expect no more of me,—I'll be finished!—⁵⁹

Wagner had thus created a lifelong programme. By 1873, he thought, it would be possible for him to retire and live a quiet life. The essential would by then have been accomplished. In the event, this programme was extended by ten years: the first night of *Parsifal* did not take place until 1882, and in 1883 the composer's career came to a close through his departure from this world. *Die Sieger* (The Victors) remained unfinished, with the exception of a few fragmentary passages of text.

In the January of 1865, Wagner presented this programme (with a few alterations) to Ludwig II. In this plan, the first performance of *The Master-*

singers was postponed from 1865 until 1867. *The Ring* was to be premiered at the new festival theatre in August 1867—and to be performed again in 1868 and 1873. Noticeably, this plan ended with the remark that the schedule certainly included all that Wagner had planned to do. The foundation of German art would thus have been laid by 1873: “Then—would the others come!”⁶⁰

Together, Ludwig and Wagner drew up a plan for the building of a new Munich opera-house, intended to become a sanctuary for true German art. The theatre was to serve Wagner’s art, that is, it would create the facilities necessary for Wagner’s works, which were to be of enormous size and could not be accommodated in many German theatres. Gottfried Semper, the famous theatre designer, whom Wagner had already met in Dresden in the 1840s, was chosen as the architect. (In the Dresden period, Semper had experimented with the construction of barricades.⁶¹) The new theatre was to rise on the banks of the River Isar within six years. The estimated total budget was about 5 million Gulden.⁶² The project was finally set in motion on 13th December 1864, when Wagner wrote to Gottfried Semper in Switzerland, asking him to start the work.⁶³

The implementation of this ambitious programme was far from realistic, however. From the outset, the performance of *The Ring*, which was to take place in 1867, was a problem, as by then the theatre would not yet be finished. This problem was to be resolved by building a temporary theatre, which would later become the glass wing of the completed theatre.⁶⁴ This building was never to rise on the Isar either; Wagner and Ludwig had to abandon their project.

The planning of a Wagner theatre reflects the attempt to institutionalize the composer’s position in the German world of art. This is also reflected in the many letters Wagner and Ludwig wrote to each other. In September 1865, Wagner stated: “Only through this theatre shall the world learn to understand the sanctity that can inhere within a dramatic performance—if that performance is given entirely as I want it.”⁶⁵

Together, Wagner and Ludwig wished to bring spiritual light to the German people. Ludwig was to be the political leader, and Wagner a spiritual one. Unlike the Prussian politicians, who had given their people only cosmopolitan and un-German doctrines, Ludwig II would lead his people towards true art: “Unlike that Prussian Frederick II and his Voltaire, Ludwig the German shall be a shining example to his people!”⁶⁶ Together Wagner and Ludwig would give their gift to the German people: “Let us

present this wonderful work to the German nation and show both them and other nations what “*German art*” is capable of!”⁶⁷

Ludwig, famous as “the theatre king”, was prepared to shoulder the burden of the enlightenment of his people. In fact, the education of the public had already been on his mind for some time.⁶⁸ Although he was not directly influenced by Wagner in this matter, the idea that Ludwig could be the political driving force, which would create a new Germany, was originated by Wagner. Under the leadership of “Ludwig the German”, Bavaria could be made to be seen as a model for the other German states: “In order to fulfil His calling in terms of world history, my royal friend has only one thing that he must do now: make His land, His beautiful Bavaria the most envied German land.”⁶⁹ Wagner’s final objective was, however, a unitarian, greater Germany, as he later revealed to Ludwig (in September 1865).⁷⁰

Even before meeting Wagner, Ludwig had read all the Wagner texts available. When Wagner at last came to Munich, Ludwig was convinced that they belonged together: “Boundless is my trust in our strength: let us rejoice (...)! We have finally found one another.”⁷¹ Ludwig was now prepared to begin his work. In June 1865, he wrote to Wagner and asked him to clarify all his points of view: “Tell me everything, explain your system to me in every detail, reveal your line of thought to me, your *current* views on *art* and *life*.”⁷² It was necessary to define the ideas for which “the helpmates in the battle” would act. Only when these ideas were on paper, and only then, could action begin.

Wagner was not unwilling to follow Ludwig’s proposal. He had already, in July 1864, written the text *Über Staat und Religion*, where—as has been previously pointed out—he pledged his unconditional support for monarchy. *Über Staat und Religion* was not originally written for publication, but to be presented privately to Ludwig II. On 17th July, Wagner started the dictation of his autobiography, which was not intended for publication either.⁷³ *Mein Leben* was to describe what Wagner had been doing before his arrival in Munich. The end of the autobiography describes how the noble king’s invitation had freed the composer from his aimless wandering.⁷⁴

In September 1864, Wagner continued to communicate his thoughts to Ludwig. In diary entries for 14th–27th September, he explained to the King his views on the German ideal and on the policies that should be followed in Germany.⁷⁵ At the same time, he recorded his ultra-nationalist views in

his *Brown Book*. His spirit of nationalism was at that time rising to its peak.⁷⁶

In the Wagner literature, there has been much debate concerning Wagner's real political influence on Ludwig. Wagner apologists tend to argue that their relationship was strictly "artistic"; this is the approach followed, for instance, by Derek Watson and Curt von Westernhagen.⁷⁷ Watson maintains that it is mistaken to assume that Ludwig allowed Wagner to interfere in the execution of his duties:

Another error is the notion that he allowed his devotion to Wagner to influence the practical responsibilities of his office (...) On matters concerning artistic ideals, he and Wagner were of one accord, but at no time did Wagner's political views sway him, except perhaps when Wagner exhorted him to have courage or, in friendly wise, urged him not to lose faith in himself.⁷⁸

In this theory, there is, however, a false conclusion or rather an incorrect projection of history about there being a clear borderline between the artistic and the political. In the Wagnerian world philosophy, which represents romantic thinking par excellence, there was no clear distinction between the concepts of the artistic and the political. What was artistic was also political. After all, hadn't Ludwig on his part contributed to the improvement of the position of Wagner's art by making political decisions?

An entirely different position, opposed to that shared by Watson and Westernhagen, has been taken up by Bertita Paillard and Emile Haraszti, who see Wagner's activities and motives as primarily political. They go so far as to speak of a silent conspiracy of historians, deliberately concealing Wagner's *Grossdeutschland* beliefs.⁷⁹ The diction used by Paillard and Haraszti is highly polemic. The derivation of the idea of *Grossdeutschland* from Wagner's texts is difficult, however; what he openly argued for was German unification.

As will later be shown more specifically, Wagner regularly offered the king advice on politics.⁸⁰ Wagner became anxious, at this time, about the fact that Ludwig was often dressed in the spectacular theatrical costumes of his operas, and seemed to be more interested in daydreaming than in devoting his time to politics. Respectfully, Wagner requested Ludwig to pay more attention to politics and the execution of his duties.⁸¹ It is apparent that Wagner's possible influence was widely acknowledged, as is confirmed by the many references to Wagner found in the reports of the Austrian ambassadors.⁸²

It is therefore, obvious that Wagner gave Ludwig advice on politics: both for a general frame of reference (*Über Staat und Religion*), and in the shape of concrete instructions (the advice given in their correspondence). For Ludwig, Wagner's words carried weight. Robert W. Gutman claims that Ludwig, whenever an occasion presented itself, quoted Wagner's texts to his ministers (if he was able to understand their somewhat obscure content).⁸³

In the light of Wagner's texts written in the 1860s, it appears that it was during his Munich years that Wagner's concept of himself became more extreme, and he came to see himself as a German genius committed to the achievement of a sacred cause: "Oh, may Heaven arm me with the strength and serenity of mind to offer the noblest fruits of my creative efforts to my gracious guardian angel as a thanks offering!"⁸⁴ It is, therefore, no wonder that Wagner's diary during the Munich years is full of secular self-reflections. Wagner enters into a dialogue with his own artistic soul. If the weather happened to be bad, he would write: "Now, soul, create sun and warmth for me! *You* shall be my climate, my atmosphere!" Or he would start the day by greeting himself with the words "My soul, good morning!"⁸⁵

As has been shown above, during his Munich years Wagner started to explicate the artistic and political objectives associated with his own interpretation of the German ideal. These links have previously been described in the scrutiny of Wagner's concept of *Deutschtum*. Both the concept, and the policies which it led to, Wagner attempted to impart not only to Ludwig, but to the entire German people. In Wagner's project, Ludwig had a prominent role as the spearhead of unification. Bavaria (after Prussia) was the second largest German state, whose King had political influence. Ludwig was to become the ideal political leader of the German people, as Wagner wrote to Eliza Wille in September 1865: "Then the German nation shall finally have the exemplar that it needs - a different one from Frederick II."⁸⁶

The Political Gauntlet and Deportation from Munich

It is supposed that Wagner's time in Munich was initially successful, since the Munich politicians did not oppose him. Many of them saw it as positive that the king, living most of his time in a fantasy world, was distracted by other things and was thus unable to control his ministers' actions.⁸⁷ It was, however, noticeable that the king had been so completely ensnared by his idol that the politicians (among others, Pfistermeister, Prime Minister

Pfordten, Baron Johann von Lutz and Secretary of the Court Julius von Hofmann) saw that their positions were under threat.

It is, therefore, no surprise that Wagner soon acquired enemies in Munich. Ludwig had donated to his composer astronomical sums of money, and even promised to build a theatre dedicated to his art for no less than 5 million Gulden. The assets of the Bavarian State Treasury were almost exhausted, and this waste of money had to be stopped.

All the leading politicians, led by Pfistermeister and Pfordten, started to oppose the building of the festival theatre.⁸⁸ The King's abuse of funds worried the state authorities to such an extent that clashes of divergent interests could no longer be avoided. The following series of events characterizing the situation occurred in the summer of 1865: in March the King had commissioned a statue from the sculptor Heinrich Ruf, but when Ruf presented an estimate to the King's secretary, Hofmann refused to accept it. Ruf received a further commission on 17th June. The artist presented his new bill to Hofmann, who reacted in the same fashion. Finally, Ruf turned to Pfistermeister, but received the same treatment.⁸⁹

As can be seen from the above examples, Hofmann and Pfistermeister were tired of the King's extravagances. They were also concerned that the king had lost his sense of relativity through his worship of art. Ludwig was becoming more and more alienated from reality, and seemed to live only in his dreams.⁹⁰

Wagner himself was soon considered to be one of the most influential causes of his alienation. On 1st December 1865, the Prime Minister, Pfordten, sent a nine-page letter appealing to Ludwig to consider what he himself really wanted. Pfordten concluded his letter with the decisive words: "Your Royal Highness stands at a decisive crossroads and has to choose between the love and honour of His loyal people and the friendship of Richard Wagner."⁹¹ Ludwig—so argued Pfordten—therefore had to make a choice.

A violent polemic controversy over Wagner's position had already started at the beginning of 1865, when on 12th February, the Munich newspaper the *Neueste Nachrichten* reported that Wagner was no longer in the King's favour. The same report was published two days later in an Augsburg newspaper, the *Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁹² Wagner's reply appeared in a short letter in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of 15th February, where Wagner was happy merely to state that the facts of the article were incorrect.⁹³

Nevertheless, the rumour of Wagner's downfall spread, for on 5th February the King refused to receive him. Evidently, this temporary breach

was due to the intervention of the Cabinet Secretary Pfistermeister. What in reality happened was that Wagner had commissioned a portrait of himself by his old friend Friedrich Pecht. Pfistermeister had convinced the King that Wagner had demanded the sum of 1,000 florins for the commission. Furthermore, when Wagner had requested an audience to present the portrait to the King, he had in the presence of Pfistermeister broken Court etiquette by referring to the King as "my boy". When Pfistermeister told the King about Wagner's insult, the audience was immediately cancelled.⁹⁴

The conflict between the patron and the artist did not, however, last long. On 17th February, Wagner was granted the audience that he had requested.⁹⁵ The polemic, however, continued, as the *Allgemeine Zeitung* continued its hostile stance in an article "Richard Wagner und die öffentliche Meinung" on 19th February: initially anonymous, but later shown to be the work of the poet Oskar von Redwitz.⁹⁶ In this lengthy article, Redwitz directly attacks Wagner's personality, and describes him as an insatiable "Mr. Compliant" who was ready to accept the role of a "modern Croesus", a greedy, ungrateful arrogant Vampire, who was abusing the young King's patronage. Wagner, the "former barricade man", had made a transformation from adventurer to composer, because it was advantageous to him. The article ended with the sincere wish that no one should continue to stand with such destructive effect between the King and his Bavarian subjects: "We have to treasure the day when Richard Wagner with his friends will be driven away from our beloved loyal city of Munich, and the whole of Bavaria will turn its back on them."⁹⁷

Wagner's reply was published under the title "Zur Erwiderung des Aufsatzes 'Richard Wagner und die öffentliche Meinung' in Nr. 50 der All. Ztg." on 22nd February. Wagner claimed that the financial support he received was moderate, and that his relationship with the King, contrary to what Redwitz had written, was faultless.⁹⁸

This polemic increased Wagner's prejudice against the press. He recognized the influence of the press, and often used it himself, but in the course of time, he believed, the press had become too influential. Wagner commented to Ludwig: "We have the entire press against us." He also came to the conclusion: "Everyone in power in this world, from the highest to the lowest, has his representatives, his organs in the press."⁹⁹

Since the press had taken up opposition to Wagner and his art, there should be retaliation in a similar fashion. Wagner thus proposed that Ludwig should purchase a newspaper, which would then become an organ of Wagnerism: "We must found an organ in the daily press."¹⁰⁰ His old friend

Julius Fröbel, who had played an active role in the movement of 1848, was envisaged in Wagner's scheming as the editor.¹⁰¹ The acquisition of the newspaper came to nothing, as Pfistermeister and the Chief of Police, Pfister, both vehemently opposed its purchase—particularly, as they were aware of Fröbel's political background.¹⁰² Although the planned newspaper purchase failed, Fröbel moved to Munich in 1867 to work as a journalist on the *Süddeutsche Presse*.¹⁰³ It was no coincidence that Wagner's *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* was immediately published in the *Süddeutsche Presse* on Fröbel's appointment to the post.

The polemics that took place in February 1865 show that Wagner's position in Munich had taken on a more overtly political aspect. The Bavarian politicians had recognized Wagner's political influence, and were now committed either to integrating him into the existing political system, or to excluding him entirely from the King's inner circle.

In February 1865, a tempting proposal was put to Wagner, which combined a political and financial interest. Two representatives of the Duke Maximilian von Thurn und Taxis offered him political and financial support, in return for his political assistance. The Duke was planning the establishment of a puppet kingdom incorporating part of Rhineland-Westphalia with Belgium, to be presented as a gift to his eldest son. Thurn und Taxis had already contacted Berlin, to ensure Prussia's non-intervention, and a similar guarantee was now also being sought from Bavaria. On 12th November, Councillor of State Klindworth from Brussels and Baron Gruben from Augsburg, on behalf of the Duke, presented Wagner with the tempting offer of almost limitless bank credit facilities, on condition that he gave his assistance to the dismissal of Pfistermeister.¹⁰⁴

The Duke of Thurn und Taxis had been promised the support of the Bavarian conservatives, provided that a suitable cabinet could be formed. The reactionaries' aim was to restore the Bavarian constitution to what it had been before the 1848 wave of democratization.¹⁰⁵ Wagner declined the offer, pretending (as he later revealed to Mathilde Maier) not to understand it.¹⁰⁶ Wagner was unwilling to become involved in such political scheming: he had his own objectives, which were not in line with the intrigues of the Munich politicians.

In a letter dated 16th December, Wagner revealed to Röckel the true identity of the reactionaries' agent at the court of the King of Bavaria: Baron von Lutz, who had unashamedly and openly requested Wagner's consent to the Duke's proposal on meeting him at Hohenschwangau:

Look! As soon as the Jesuits found out about my invincible power over the King, they immediately smoothed my path to everything I desired, so that I have actually betrayed my own artistic ideal by not being more accommodating. Prince Taxis made me a singular offer of funds in the form of free shares in a great financial undertaking, an offer communicated to me by two agents whom he sent to my home from Brussels and Regensburg during the first cabinet struggle last winter; Pfistermeister, whom the Prince wanted removed, then bid against him by offering me the music school, the Semper theatre, the purchase of my house and all the credit I wanted—all for the definite assurance that I would help the party of reaction. Then—at the very last moment—Lutz had to approach me at Hohenschwangau with the open request that I would support their reactionary plans (plans that they spelt out to me in detail) and that I would do so, moreover “out of my love for the King, whose elevated position of power is, after all, at stake”.—Well, you must be familiar with my entirely natural indifference, indeed, my contempt for our liberals & democrats: I need only come into contact with such a person for me to know, in every fibre of my being, that I have nothing in common with them. How easy it would have been for me to say “Yes, yes—fine!” for the sake of peace and quiet and the great advantages that it would have meant. The fact that I did not say this but simply advised the King to speak to honest men was bound to strike people as a covert case of democratic subversion, since they could not bring themselves to regard me as simply stupid.¹⁰⁷

Wagner, therefore, had no interest in any political plotting behind Ludwig’s back. He now came under attack by the reactionaries, while the democrats were suspicious of his monarchist views. Although Wagner’s life, and some of the decisions he made, have been interpreted simply as the pursuit of wealth and social esteem, it is noteworthy that his reaction to the Duke’s offer provides evidence of entirely different motives. Evidently the idea of fulfilling a national utopia with the support of the Bavarian King was of such significance that other offers were not tempting at all. The Duke would have provided unlimited resources for Wagner’s art, but Wagner’s goals were not merely artistic but also political, and only Ludwig could be the right patron. In addition, Maximilian von Thurn und Taxis would have reduced Wagner to a state of political dependency, as the Duke’s goals were supported by the Bavarian conservatives.

Politically, Wagner remained an individualist: he wanted to follow his own line, without committing himself to others’ political ends. He submitted a statement of his own aims to Ludwig in the form of a diary, compiled between 14th and 27th September. The ideas expressed in the diary concerning the concept of nationality have already been treated in the first part of this study. Originally, the entries in the diary were meant to be read

only by Ludwig and by Wagner's old revolutionary friends August Röckel and Julius Fröbel.¹⁰⁸

In a letter, Fröbel describes Wagner's text as a plan, thus exactly hitting the point.¹⁰⁹ In the diary, Wagner put forward his national-political programme, a project by means of which the Germans could find their spiritual rebirth, their true national character, and through which it would be possible to create a new united Germany. In 1878, on the basis of this text, Wagner composed his article *Was ist deutsch?*, and his nationalist politics were transformed into a project from which the concrete political issues were deleted.¹¹⁰

Wagner believed that national rehabilitation required more than pure art; other means were also needed. In February, Wagner had already experienced, with bitterness, the power of the press. Retaliation should occur in two forms. A weekly magazine supporting Wagner's views should be established without delay, the founding of which would require 3,000 florins, but being subscription-based the magazine would thereafter be self-supporting.¹¹¹ In addition, Ludwig should purchase one of the larger southern German newspapers for his use, since—as Wagner pointed out—“of course, everything “public” is nowadays venal.”¹¹²

Besides these manipulations, there was an urgent need for artistic reorganization and renewal, which should be started as soon as possible. The Court Theatre should be replaced by a National Theatre, the repertoire of which should be varied, but German.¹¹³ The founding of a music school was also of great importance, as Wagner's art required from both musicians and singers far more than traditional opera. For the performance of Wagner's massive works, the singers needed something different than the mellifluous Italian *bel canto* technique.¹¹⁴

In his diary, Wagner unambiguously states as his aim the greatness of Germany, which could only be achieved via a spiritual rebirth.¹¹⁵ Besides artistic innovation, other measurements were needed. In Wagner's opinion, one of the most significant reforms would be the formation of a Swiss-style militia (*Volkswehr*), which would greatly increase combat readiness. This “people's army” would instil a greater sense of patriotism among the citizens, and would improve military morale.¹¹⁶

Wagner also argued that Bavaria should claim a leading role within the German world. Both Austria and Prussia had misunderstood the essential of the German ideal. Wagner saw Berlin as a perennial nexus of French-Jewish degeneration in Germany.¹¹⁷ Following 1865, Germany needed a role model which others could use as an example for change. Bavaria should be

developed into the ideal German state, where the true and genuine features of German virtue would flourish. All that was required was decisive action:

Here, however, it is not a question of saying anything, or of serving notice or of causing any inopportune fuss, but of acting promptly and proving oneself a boundlessly popular prince, an example to the German people.¹¹⁸

Having turned his back on politicians' plots, Wagner had after all created his own political programme. It is, therefore, no wonder that public opposition to Wagner increased, to such an extent that his position in Munich became endangered. The relationship between Wagner and Ludwig was compared to that of Ludwig's grandfather, Ludwig I, with Lola Montez, which had evolved from a love affair into political influence. Wagner was the new Lola who had ensnared the King.¹¹⁹

An article published on 26th November in the Munich newspaper *Der Volksbote* was a sign that the end was in sight. The article reported that Wagner had in the course of the year received from the Bavarian State Treasury 190,000 Gulden, and that he had even demanded a further 40,000 Gulden. All his requests, despite the vehement resistance of Pfistermeister, had been fulfilled.¹²⁰ It is evident that *Der Volksbote*, in publishing such detailed information concerning the amounts Wagner had received, was relying on Pfistermeister.

The *Nürnberger Anzeiger* had on 13th November published a long article, “Ein freies Wort an Bayerns König und sein Volk über das Cabinetssekretariat”, criticizing the cabinet, above all attacking Pfistermeister and Lutz. Pfistermeister was accused of exercising unconstitutional power during the King's absence (the article did also mention that the King was absent from Munich for seven months of the year). The King and the people of Bavaria should therefore demand that this abuse of power be halted.¹²¹

The article in the *Nürnberger Anzeiger* was unsigned, and there is no clear proof as to the identity of its writer. The *Volksbote*, however, hinted that the attack on the cabinet could not have originated from anyone other than Wagner, or at least from one of Wagner's supporters.¹²² It was no coincidence that immediately after the article was published on 27th November, Wagner suggested to Ludwig that he should dismiss Pfistermeister and place Max von Neumayr in the vacant post.¹²³ Wagner was apparently aware of the identity of the writer of the *Nürnberger Anzeiger* article, and may indeed even have written it himself. It is also probable that

he knew that Pfistermeister was both the source of information and political protector behind the article in the *Volksbote*.

The controversy did not end here. Wagner, inflamed by the *Volksbote* article, wrote a reply published in the *Neueste Nachrichten* on 29th November. Here Wagner claimed that he had only applied to the King for living expenses and a house with a peaceful garden. At the end of this article, Wagner urged that the King should dismiss at least two or three persons: “I dare assure You that by dismissing two or three persons that do not enjoy the slightest respect among the Bavarian people, the King and the Bavarian folk would, at one blow, be freed from this anxiety.”¹²⁴

This open political criticism was too much for the Bavarians. By this time, anti-Wagnerian criticism was spreading from ministers and authorities into other areas of society. In December 1865, three petitions demanding Wagner’s deportation from Munich were being circulated in the city; the longest of the three, which included the signatures of more than 800 Munich residents, was submitted to Pfistermeister on 8th December.¹²⁵

The opposition of the Munich people was channelled into numerous letters and caricatures in the press. Wagner’s political influence on the young King was considered a dangerous and intolerable threat. Soon Ludwig had no alternative, and on 7th December he was forced to issue a decree requiring Wagner to leave Munich immediately.¹²⁶

At 5 o’clock on the morning of 10th December, Wagner boarded a train accompanied by his old dog and servants, the Mrazeks: for the immediate future, at least, Munich was to be avoided. Cosima von Bülow, Peter Cornelius and Heinrich Porges were at the station to bid him farewell.¹²⁷ Cornelius described Wagner’s departure as a dream evaporating into thin air; the dream of a marriage between politics and art had thus come to an end: “When his carriage disappeared beyond the pillars, it was like the fading of a vision.”¹²⁸

Notes

- 1 KLRW IV, 24.
- 2 Wagner 1975a, 86.
- 3 Wagner to Karl Graf von Enzenberg June 15, 1866, Wagner 1987, 697–698. In German: “*Mir ist es längst zur Überzeugung gekommen: mit Deutschland steht oder fällt mein Kunstideal. Nur das Deutschland, das wir lieben und wollen, kann mein Ideal verwirklichen helfen.*” Wagner 1912, 462.

- 4 Wagner to Constantin Frantz March 19, 1866, KLRW IV, 134–135; Wagner to Julius Fröbel April 11, 1866, Wagner 1912, 461; Wagner to Ludwig II April 29, 1866, KLRW IV, 27.
- 5 In German: "*Seine tapfere Teilnahme an dem Maikampf*".
- 6 Wagner's letter to Franz Liszt October 14th, 1849, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* (Vol. I), p. 48. "Die öffentlichkeit kann ich nicht suchen, meine einzige künstlerische erlösung könnte einst nur dadurch vollbracht werden, daß die öffentlichkeit *mich* suchte."
- 7 Wagner 1863, XXI–XXIII.
- 8 Josserand 1981, 305–306.
- 9 Wagner to Karl Graf von Enzenberg June 15, 1866, Wagner 1987, 697–698. In German: "... möchten die Fürsten sie begreifen; Besser, als ihre Diplomaten wird der Sänger ihren Ruf an das Volk auszurichten wissen." Wagner 1912, 462–464.
- 10 Kerman 1962, 144–145.
- 11 Cf. Carl Friedrich Glasenapp, "'Nationaltheater' und 'nationale Kunst'", *Bayreuther Blätter* 7/1878.
- 12 Wagner 1863, VI–XXIII.
- 13 Wagner 1980, 73. In German: "*Sollte ich mein Volk finden können!*" Die Tagebuchaufzeichnung Wagner 11. Sept. 1865, Wagner 1975a, 85.
- 14 Westernhagen 1979a, 572.
- 15 Jullien 1886, 113–116; Westernhagen 1979a, 571–572; Gregor-Dellin 1980, 442–500.
- 16 Erinnerungen von Friedrich Uhl, *Fremden-Blatt* 6 December 1891. In German: "*Denken Sie, Wagner ist fort, ohne mir etwas zu sagen! Und ich bin Bürge bei dem Tapezirer.*"
- 17 Wagner to Theodor Uhlig November 12, 1851, Wagner 1986, 108.
- 18 Wagner, *Preface to the "Ring" Poem*, PW III, 282. In German: "*Wird dieser Fürst sich finden?—Im Anfang war die That.*" Wagner 1863, XXIII.
- 19 Watson 1979, 195–196; Westernhagen 1979a, 312–315; Hommel 1980, 40–42.
- 20 Eger 1986b, 162; Westernhagen 1979a, 314–315. See also Hommel 1980, 41–42.
- 21 Eger 1986b, 162; Hommel 1980, 46–47.
- 22 Kapp 1918, 84.
- 23 Watson 1979, 195.
- 24 Petzet 1970, 12; Hommel 1980, 46.
- 25 Watson 1979, 195–196; Hommel 1980, 46.
- 26 Bauer 1987, 166–180.
- 27 Eger 1986b, 162.
- 28 Wagner to Eliza Wille March 14, 1864, Wille 1982, 57.
- 29 Wagner to Peter Cornelius April 8, 1864, Wagner 1987, 582. In German: "*Ein Licht muß sich zeigen: Ein Mensch muß mir entstehen, der jetzt energisch hilft,—dann habe ich noch die Kraft, die Hilfe zu vergelten: sonst nicht—das fühle ich!*" Wagner 1912, 372–373.

- 30 Watson 1979, 196.
- 31 The Newspaper *Augsburger Abendblatt* laconically gave an account of the matter: “*Der zur Zeit noch als Kabinettsvorstand fungierende Hofrat v. Pfistermeister hat heute eine Reise nach Wien angetreten.*”
- 32 Watson 1979, 196; Petzet 1970, 12.
- 33 Erinnerungen von Freidrich Uhl, *Fremden-Blatt* 6 December 1891. In German: “*Tags darauf, es war im März 1864, besuchte mich Herr von Pfistermeister, Kabinettssekretär aus München (...) “Denken Sie”, rief er, nachdem wir uns begrüßt hatten, “ich komme im Auftrage des Königs, um ihm Richard Wagner zu bringen; der Mann ist aber fort, und Niemand weiß wohin!”—“Da kann ich dienen. Wagner ist nach Zürich gereist. Wenn Sie sich in der von Semper gebauten Villa Wesendonk vorstellen, werden Sie sofort erfahren, in welchem Hôtel Wagner wohnt.” Herr v. Pfistermeister dankte, verließ mich bald und fuhr noch Abends nach Zürich.*”
- 34 Cit. Petzet 1970, 12. In German: “*Mein Entschluß ist schnell gefaßt, reisen Sie möglichst rasch R. Wagner nach, wenn es irgend ohne Aufsehen geschehen kann.*”
- 35 Petzet 1970, 12.
- 36 Watson 1979, 197; Petzet 1970, 12; Westernhagen 1979a, 310–311. Cf. Wagner 1976b, 753–754.
- 37 Wagner 1976b, 754. Cf. Petzet 1970, 12.
- 38 Westernhagen 1979a, 312. Cf. Wagner 1976b, 754.
- 39 Wagner 1976b, 754–755.
- 40 Wagner to Ludwig May 3, 1864, Wagner 1987, 600. In German: “*Theurer huldvoller König!// Diese Thränen himmlischer Rührung sende ich Ihnen, um Ihnen zu sagen, daß nun die Wunder der Poesie wie eine göttliche Wirklichkeit in mein armes, liebebedürftiges Leben getreten sind!—Und dieses Leben, sein letztes Dichten und Tönen gehört nun Ihnen, mein gnadenreicher junger König: verfügen Sie darüber als über Ihn Eigenthum! Im höchsten Entzücken, treu und wahr! Ihr Unterthan Richard Wagner*” KLRW I, 11.
- 41 Wagner 1976b, 755.
- 42 Weissheimer 1898, 281–282. In German: “*Ich bin am Ende—ich kann nicht weiter—ich muß irgendwo von der Welt verschwinden; können Sie mich davor nicht bewahren!?”*
- 43 Wagner to Eliza Wille May 4, 1864. In German: “*Er (Ludwig) liebt mich mit der Innigkeit und Glut der ersten Liebe: er kennt und weiß alles von mir; und versteht mich wie meine Seele.*” Wille 1982, 75.
- 44 Wagner to Mathilde Maier May 5, 1864, Wagner 1987, 600. In German: “*Er bietet mir Alles, was ich brauche, zum Leben, zum Schaffen, zum Aufführen meiner Werke.*” Wagner 1986, 262.
- 45 Wagner to Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld May 20, 1864, Wagner 1986, 264.
- 46 Wagner to Mathilde Maier May 5, 1864, Wagner 1986, 262.
- 47 Ludwig to Wagner December 11, 1864. Wagner to Ludwig December 31, 1864, February 27, 1865, March 12, 1865, March 21, 1865, June 13, 1865, KLRW I, 42, 44, 65, 74, 76, 106. In German: “*Leuchte des Lebens, einziger Freund!*”, “*Letztes! Höchstes! Schönstes meines Lebens! Wundervoller König!*”, “*Hohes, herrliches*

- Wesen!*”, “*Allerdurchlauchtigster König! Grossmächtigster König und Herr!*”, “*Mein edler, herrliches Freund! Mein schöner Wille, meine liebende Vorsehung!*”, “*Mein schönster, höchster—mein einziger Trost!*”
- 48 Newman 1941a, 237; Gutman 1968, 248–253. Cf. Watson 1979, 199; Westernhagen 1979a, 314.
- 49 See e.g. Watson 1979, 166; Eger 1986b, 164. See also Lutz to Pfistermeister November 14, 1865, Nachlass Pfistermeisters Nr. 19, Abt. III: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.
- 50 Wagner 1980, 194. In German: “*Was wir am Griechischen Wesen nie und in keener Sprache verstehen können, ist was uns gänzlich von ihnen trennt, z.B. ihre Liebe—in—Päderastie.*” Wagner 1975a, 232.
- 51 See e.g. Newman 1941a, 237; Watson 1979, 199; Westernhagen 1979a, 331.
- 52 Wagner to Ludwig October 10, 1864, KLRW I, 28–29.
- 53 Salmi 1993, 166.
- 54 Watson 1979, 203. Cf. Millington 1998, 75.
- 55 Watson 1979, 202.
- 56 See e.g. Wagner’s letters to Heinrich Porges May 4–7, 1864, Wagner 1912, 387–396.
- 57 Eger 1986b, 164.
- 58 Wagner to Pfistermeister June 6, 1864, KLRW IV, 38. In German: “*Ich gehöre fortan bis an meinem Tod meinem König an, und Niemand anderem: mein Schaffen und Wirken gehört ausschliesslich Ihm, und keinem andren mehr.*”
- 59 Wagner to Hans von Bülow June 1, 1864, Wagner 1987, 609. In German: “*1864 Sommer (während der Hofrauer) “Scenen aus den Nibelungen” am Clavier mit H. von Bülow. Spätherbst. “Grosse Musikaufführung meiner Fragmente”./ 1865 Frühjahr. Tristan und Isolde (mit Schnorr u. Tietjens). Anfang Winter. Meistersinger./ 1866 Tannhäuser (neu) Lohengin (vollständig) mit Schnorr etc./ 1867–68 Grosse Aufführung des gesammten “Ring des Nibelungen”./ 1869–70 “Die Sieger”./ 1871–72 “Parzifal!”./ 1873 Letzter schöner Tod und Erlösung des Votanten./ Also, sage ich ihnen, Allen und Jeden, Hohen und Niedern, mit mir wäre nichts mehr,—ich wäre fertig!—*” Wagner 1986, 266.
- 60 Wagner to Ludwig January 6–11, 1865, KLRW I, 49. In German: “*Dann—mögen Andre kommen!*”
- 61 See e.g. Wagner 1976b, 409, 413.
- 62 Eger 1986b, 165. 1 gulden = 1 florin.
- 63 Habel 1970, 299.
- 64 See e.g. Ludwig’s letter to Wagner September 16, 1865, KLRW I, 182. Cf. Eger 1986b, 165; Habel 1970, 302.
- 65 Wagner to Ludwig September 16, 1865, KLRW I, 185. In German: “*Erst durch dieses Theater soll die Welt begreifen lernen, welche Heiligkeit einer dramatischen Aufführung—ganz nach meinem Sinne—beiwohnen kann ...*”
- 66 Wagner to Ludwig March 11, 1865, KLRW I, 72. In German: “*Anders, als jener preussische Friedrich II mit seinem Voltaire, soll Ludwig der Deutsche seinem Volke vorleuchten!*”

- 67 Ludwig to Wagner October 7, 1864, KLRW I, 28. In German: “... *dies wundervolle Werk wollen wir der deutschen Nation zum Geschenk machen und ihr sowie den anderen Nationen zeigen, was ‘deutsche Kunst’ vermag!*”
- 68 See e.g. Ludwig’s letter to Wagner November 8, 1864, KLRW I, 35–36.
- 69 Wagner to Ludwig September 7, 1865, KLRW I, 173. In German: “*sein schönes Bayern zum beneidetsten deutschen Land zu machen*”.
- 70 KLRW IV, 24; Wagner 1878, 38.
- 71 Ludwig to Wagner October 7, 1865, KLRW I, 191. In German: “*Gränzlos ist mein Vertrauen auf unsre Stärke: freuen wir Uns ... Wir haben Uns endlich gefunden ...*”
- 72 Ludwig to Wagner June 21, 1865, KLRW I, 109. In German: “... *theilen Sie mir Alles mit, erklären Sie mir vollständig Ihr System, thun Sie mir Ihren Geistesgang kund, Ihre jetzige Absicht über die Kunst, das Leben!*”
- 73 Wagner to Ludwig July 21/22, 1865, KLRW I, 129.
- 74 Wagner 1976b, 755.
- 75 See e.g. Wagner’s letter to Ludwig September 16, 1865, KLRW I, 184. Cf. KLRW IV, 5–34.
- 76 Cf. Wagner 1975a, 86.
- 77 Cf. Watson 1979, 198; Westernhagen 1979a, 312–344 *passim*.
- 78 Watson 1979, 198.
- 79 Paillard, Haraszti 1949, 399.
- 80 See e.g. Wagner’s letter to Ludwig November 27, 1865, KLRW I, 231.
- 81 Wagner to Ludwig September 7, 1865, KLRW I, 174.
- 82 Erlass an den Grafen Blome in München 2.1.1865, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1937, 495; Privatschreiben des Grafen Blome an den Grafen Mensdorff 19.2.1865, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1937, 564; Privatschreiben des Grafen Blome an den Grafen Mensdorff 20.5.1866, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938b, 725; Bericht des Freiherrn von Werner 26.5.1866, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938b, 779–780; Privatschreiben des Grafen Blome an den Grafen Mensdorff 29.5.1866, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938b, 803.
- 83 Gutman 1968, 241.
- 84 Wagner to Ludwig August 9, 1864, KLRW I, 16. In German: “*O, möge mich der Himmel mit Kraft und heiterem Muthe rüsten, die edelsten Früchte meines Schaffens und Wirkens dem huldvollen Genius meines Lebens als Dankopfer darzubringen!*”
- 85 Wagner 1980, 40. In German: “*Guten Morgen, meine Seele!*” Wagner 1975a, 45.
- 86 Wagner to Eliza Wille April 31, 1865, Wille 1982, 89. In German: “*Dann endlich hat die deutsche Nation einmal das Vorbild, dessen sie bedarf—ein anderes als Friedrich II.*”
- 87 Watson 1979, 197.
- 88 Habel 1970, *passim*.
- 89 Neueste Nachrichten July 15, 1865.

- 90 See e.g. Pfordten to Pfistermeister June 5, 1865, Kabinettsakten König Ludwig II, Nr. 233, Abt. III: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv. See also Lutz to Pfistermeister November 14, 1865, Nachlass Pfistermeisters, Nr. 19, Abt. III: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.
- 91 Pfordten to Ludwig December 1, 1865, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Abt. III: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Kabinettsakten König Ludwig II., Nr. 233. In German: “*Euere Königliche Majestät stehen an einem verhängnißvollen Scheidewege, und haben zu wählen zwischen der Liebe und Verehrung Ihres treuen Volkes und der Freundschaft Richard Wagners.*”
- 92 Neueste Nachrichten February 12, 1865; Allgemeine Zeitung February 14, 1865.
- 93 Allgemeine Zeitung February 15, 1865.
- 94 See e.g. Watson 1979, 209; Westernhagen 1979a, 323.
- 95 KLRW V, 187.
- 96 KLRW IV, 47 (note 1); Watson 1979, 209; Petzet 1970, 38; Westernhagen 1979a, 323; Kühnel 1986, 582.
- 97 Allgemeine Zeitung February 19, 1865. In German: “*Sonst müßten wir wahrlich den Tag preisen an welchem Richard Wagner sammt seinen Freunden, wirklich ‘gestürzt’, unserer guten treuen Stadt München und ganz Bayern den Rücken kehren würde.*”
- 98 Allgemeine Zeitung February 22, 1865. Cf. Jossierand 1981, 192–194.
- 99 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 14 Sept. 1865, KLRW IV, 6. In German: “*Wir haben die ganze Presse gegen uns (...) Alle Gwalther der Welt, von den höchsten bis zu den niedrigsten Mächten, haben ihre Vertreter, ihre Organe in der Presse.*”
- 100 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 14 Sept. 1865, KLRW IV, 6. In German: “*Wir müssen uns ein Organ in der Tagespresse gründen.*”
- 101 See e.g. Fröbel to Wagner November 1, 1865, KLRW IV, 100–103. Cf. Westernhagen 1979a, 338–339.
- 102 See e.g. Westernhagen 1979a, 338–339.
- 103 Watson 1979, 323.
- 104 See e.g. Wagner’s letter to Röckel December 16, 1865, KLRW IV, 116–118.
- 105 Wagner to Dr. Schanzenbach January 17, 1867, Wagner 1912, 468–478.
- 106 Westernhagen 1979a, 339–340.
- 107 Wagner to August Röckel December 16, 1865, KLRW IV, 116–17. In German: “*Sieh! die Jesuiten, die nun einmal meine unbezwingliche Macht über den König erfahren, haben mir die Wege zu Allem was ich nur begehrte so eben gelegt, dass ich eigentlich einen Verrath an meinem Kunstideal begangen habe, nicht irgend wie mich gefügig zu stellen. Der Fürst Taxis bot mir durch zwei Agenten, die er mir während des ersten Cabirietskampfes vorigen Winter von Brüssel u. Regensburg in’s Haus schickte, auf ganz sonderbare Weise—durch unzubehaltende Actien auf ein grosses Geldunternehmen—Capitale an; im Wetteifer gegen ihn, der an Pfistermeister’s Nachfolger dachte, bot dieser dann Kunstschule, Sempersches Theater, Hausverkauf, Allen Credit, den ich nur wollte: nur etwas bestimmte Erklärung, ob ich gehörig zur Reaction mithelfen wollte. Jetzt—in der zwölften Stunde—musste Lutz in Hohenschwangau mit der offenen Bitte an mich herausrücken, ihre genau*

mir bezeichneten Reactionpläne “aus Liebe zum König, dessen erhöhte Machtstellung es ja gelte” zu unterstützen.—Nun musst Du dagegen meine ganz natürliche Gleichgiltigkeit, ja Verachtung vor unsren Liberalen u. Demokraten kennen: ich brauch’ nur mit einem solchen mich berühren, so weiss ich bis in meine Fusszehe, dass ich nichts mit ihnen zu thun habe. Wie leicht wäre es mir gewesen, um Ruhe und grosser Vortheile, “ja ja—schön!” zu sagen! Dass ich das nicht sagte, und dafür dem König einzig zu ehrlichen Leuten rieth, mussten die Menschen offenbar für verkappte demokratische Wühlrei halten, denn sie konnten sich nicht ent-schliessen, mich einfach für dumm anzusehen.”

- 108 See e.g. Wagner’s letter to Röckel October 26, 1865, KLRW IV, 97–99. Cf. Fröbel to Wagner November 1, 1865, KLRW IV, 100–103.
- 109 Fröbel to Wagner November 1, 1865, KLRW IV, 102.
- 110 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen... (Urschrift), B II c 11, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung. Cf. Wagner 1878, passim. See also “Was ist deutsch?” (Abschrift), Hs 94/I/22, Richard-Wagner-Gedenkstätte der Stadt Bayreuth.
- 111 KLRW IV, 6–7.
- 112 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 15 Sept. 1865, KLRW IV, 7. In German: “*käuflich ist zwar Alles ‘Öffentliche’ unsrer Zeit*”.
- 113 KLRW IV, 11–13.
- 114 Bericht über eine Musikschule (1865, Urschrift), B II c 10, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 115 KLRW IV, 24; Wagner 1878, 38.
- 116 KLRW IV, 30–31.
- 117 KLRW IV, 26.
- 118 Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 27 Sept. 1865, KLRW IV, 33. In German: “*Hier gilt es aber nichts zu sagen, nichts anzukündigen, kein unzeitiges Aufsehen zu erwecken, sondern zur That zu schreiten, zu der That, ein grenzenlos geliebter Fürst, ein Vorbild des deutschen Volkes zu sein.*”
- 119 See e.g. Eger 1986b, 167.
- 120 Der Volksbote November 26, 1865.
- 121 Nürnberger Anzeiger November 13, 1865.
- 122 Der Volksbote November 26, 1865.
- 123 Wagner to Ludwig November 27, 1865, KLRW I, 231.
- 124 Neueste Nachrichten November 29, 1865. In German: “*Ich wage, Sie zu versichern, dass mit der Entfernung zweier oder dreier Personen, welche nicht die mindeste Achtung im bayerischen Volke geniessen, der König und das bayerische Volk mit einem Male von diesen lästigen Beunruhigungen befreit wären.*”
- 125 Three petitions in: Nachlass Pfistermeisters, Nr. 16, Abt. III: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.
- 126 Lutz to Wagner December 7, 1865, KLRW IV, 111. Cf. Ludwig to Wagner December 8, 1865, KLRW I, 238. Cf. Gutman 1968, 259.
- 127 Westernhagen 1979a, 344; Eger 1986b, 167–168; Pourtales 1932, 311.

- 128 Cit. Westernhagen 1978, 364. In German: *“Als der Waggon hinter den Pfeilern verschwand, war es wie das Zerrinnen einer Vision.”* Westernhagen 1979a, 344.

Chapter Five

A Political Outcast between Bavaria and Prussia

Wagner's and Ludwig's Relationship during the Triebtschen Years

Originally, Ludwig thought of Wagner's enforced departure from Munich as only temporary. This, however, was not to be: Wagner, after 1865, was never again to settle permanently in Munich. The reason for this was not due to Ludwig and his ministers. The political events of the late 1860s (mainly the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War in 1866) made it clear to Wagner that Bavaria was after all not an ideal model for the other German nations. Through its vigorous power policies, Prussia elevated itself to a more prominent role in the solution of the German question.

The enforced departure from Munich was a serious setback for the goals Wagner was hoping to achieve. The close collaboration with the King had been dissolved just as it was coming to fruition. Even so, Wagner departed from Munich in a state of calm: after all he had been familiar with a migratory life before coming to Munich. There had also been a fundamental improvement in his situation, for within a few years Wagner had cleared his debts and was, in fact, a wealthy man. For Ludwig, however, Wagner's departure was felt more deeply.

Ludwig wrote on the eve of his departure that no words could describe the suffering he felt at the composer's departure, and swore that he would never forget Wagner's art and world philosophy. His co-operation with

Wagner and his contribution to the Wagnerian world view would never end, even though circumstances were to separate the friends.¹

After his enforced departure from Munich, Wagner spent a few months travelling. Initially, he spent two nights at Berne, and on 12th December proceeded to Vevey and from there to Geneva, where he settled for the remainder of the year. After Sylvester’s Day 1865, he began to travel in southern France, making short trips to Lyon and to Marseilles.² On 8th January Wagner wrote a long letter to Ludwig, revealing his bitter feelings towards both Pfistermeister and Pfordten. In this letter Wagner asks Ludwig to make it clear to his ministers that Wagner had not left because of the political situation, but of his own accord. This was a shrewd act on Wagner’s behalf, considering his future. Wagner also advised Ludwig to consider who the traitor in his court was, constantly acting against the King and the people of Bavaria. The question was answered by Wagner himself: “the Cabinet Secretary, Pfistermeister!” If Ludwig dismissed Pfistermeister, he would soon see his problems come to an end.³ Wagner concludes this letter by once again stating his support for the monarchy, but adding that there was still much to do to remedy the Bavarian constitution:

I am of the opinion that there is something unhealthy and sterile about the very nature of our constitution, and that in the long run it will undergo many changes. I am a royalist through and through. Only the King can will change and make it happen: only the German princes can save Germany. But it is for the most part a question here—as I believe—of honest, upright men: and it is these men whom you need.⁴

Wagner therefore wanted to assure Ludwig that he was still a monarchist. However, a serious fault with the monarchy was that false advice could lead to its downfall; Ludwig should therefore keep a strong grip on power, and should accept the role of the leader as urged by Wagner: “Upon you rests the hope, the ultimate hope of Germany!”⁵

On 28th January 1866, whilst in Marseilles, Wagner wrote a prose poem for Ludwig based on the French epic the *Chanson de Roland*, metaphorically describing the relationship between Wagner and Ludwig. In this story a false adviser, Ganelon, makes Charlemagne believe that the blast from Roland’s horn is not a sign of danger, but is only the sign of a harmless hunting horn. Roland is captured, and meets his death at the hands of his enemies; Charlemagne realizes too late that he has been deceived, and in a state of fury, he has the traitor executed and 300 towns burnt to the ground. The prose poem closes with the question: “Why did Charlemagne

not listen to his inner voice, knowing that Ganelon and Roland strongly hated each other?”, “Why did he follow the traitor’s advice?”⁶

The message within the prose poem is clear. Roland was Richard Wagner, who had now suffered great and unjustified personal injury. Charlemagne was clearly Ludwig, who had put his trust in a traitor rather than in his best warrior; Ganelon symbolized Pfistermeister, who had constantly given false information to his King, and who had destroyed a relationship based on trust. By writing such an insinuating text, Wagner showed how disappointed he was with Ludwig’s conduct. In an awkward situation, Ludwig had abandoned his faith in their mutual goals. Wagner was clearly irritated by Ludwig’s failure to dismiss Pfistermeister, which Wagner had demanded as early as November 1865.

Even though the relationship between Wagner and Ludwig remained formally cordial, and though they still contrived to convince each other of their never-ending mutual love, Wagner’s enforced departure from Munich had created a gradually widening chasm between the artist and his patron. Alienation was inevitable. Their lively correspondence still continued after the separation. Prior to Wagner’s departure from Munich, their output of letters during the period 3rd May 1864 through 10th December 1865 amounted to 187, whereas in 1866 their correspondence fell to 135 letters, and in the following year below 100. After 1867, Ludwig and Wagner seldom wrote to each other.⁷ As can be seen from these figures, 1866–67 marked a decisive change in their relationship. Wagner no longer based the future of his art on Ludwig, but decided to put his life on a new footing.

After leaving Ludwig and Munich, it took Wagner some time to settle on a new place to live. On his return from Berne on 20th March 1866, in the company of Cosima (who had recently moved to be with him), Wagner found a beautiful house situated between Lake Lucerne and the Alps, which they decided to rent as soon as possible. The house was called Tribschen, and it was there that Wagner lived until 1872, when he moved to Bayreuth, having found better accommodation—and a new asylum.⁸

At the same time, Wagner gradually distanced himself from Munich. Ludwig continued his daydreaming, as was noted, for example, by the Austrian observers. Count Blome remarked to Count Mensdorff from Vienna:

What is talked about the young King here, goes beyond all comprehension. Among the people he is called “Wagnergesellen” (an apprentice of Wagner).⁹

Count Blome implies that it was time for the King to redeem the trust of his subjects and cease ignoring politics by focusing his attention on the sphere of the arts.¹⁰ The worst, however, was that "the decisions of the young King, who is disturbed by so many inner and outer influences, are difficult to estimate beforehand."¹¹

In 1866, when political tension between Austria and Prussia was worsening, Ludwig made occasional visits, incognito, to Wagner at Triebtschen.¹² On 22nd May 1866, Ludwig paid what was evidently a politically significant visit; he now had the opportunity to discuss the international situation with his idol.¹³ Shortly before, Ludwig had in fact telegraphed Wagner about his proposal to abdicate the throne in order to remain forever in Wagner's company.¹⁴ The proposal horrified Wagner, who urged the King to be patient and to continue to execute his duties to his subjects.¹⁵

This encounter between Ludwig and Wagner took place shortly before the impending political crisis, in which Bavaria could not avoid involvement. Both Ludwig and Wagner sensed that changes were coming. In June 1866, Wagner put forward his advice to the King in a short "political programme" outlining Bavaria's possibilities in the midst of the pressures arising from the Austro-Prussian problem.¹⁶ Wagner's "political programme" was intended for the King's eyes only, and was a part of his attempt to place his King in the role of a policy-maker, even though Ludwig was more reluctant than ever to take political action. Right down to the outbreak of war, Wagner still believed in Bavaria's possibilities.

The influence of Constantin Frantz can be clearly seen in Wagner's "political programme." In January, Wagner had already been inspired by Frantz' work *Die Wiederherstellung Deutschland* (1865), which he had recommended to Ludwig, suggesting that the King should meet the author.¹⁷ In *Untersuchungen über das Europäische Gleichgewicht* (1859), Frantz had already proposed that a reformed German Confederation (Bund), could ease the tension between Austria and Prussia. It would then be possible for Prussia and Austria to form a coalition that could counterbalance Russian and French interests, and Germany would become an important factor in the European status-quo.¹⁸

The idea of developing the German Confederation had considerable political support in Bavaria. The Prime Minister, Count von Pfordten, was known as an ardent advocate. Count Mensdorf commented in a memorandum addressed to Count Blome in January 1865:

Since the establishment of the German Confederation, the King's government in Bavaria has steadfastly demonstrated its decisive commitment to these pan-German policies; a policy which is dependent above all upon the close collaboration of the two most powerful members of the Confederation. The Court in Munich stands as firmly as we do by the idea that the German Confederation, with Austria and Prussia at its head, should constitute a closely allied bloc; and Baron von der Pfordten is personally a staunch supporter of this idea, so fundamental for any German patriot.¹⁹

In his "political programme" Wagner also favours renewing the German Confederation. He was convinced that an outbreak of war between Prussia and Austria would result in the irrevocable dissolution of Germany, after which the possibility of unification would for ever be lost. Only Bavaria was capable of averting this situation: "To Bavaria's hand alone is it given to decide the fate of Germany and to give a completely new direction to European politics."²⁰ Wagner believed that Bavaria should take on the leadership of the German Confederation, in accordance with Frantz' proposals. United, the German monarchs would form a military might that could not be underestimated by Prussia or Austria. Negotiations with the other German states should be started under Ludwig's leadership. Bavaria, which Wagner named the Guardian Spirit of Germany ("*Schutzgeist Deutschlands*"), would thus become the centre of the new Germany.²¹

Wagner thus wished the German states, led by Bavaria, to act at first together, excluding Prussia and Austria. In this respect his views differed from those of Pfordten and Frantz. Only later would it be possible for Prussia and Austria to join the alliance, after which Germany could finally dominate the European political field.²² Wagner thus believed that a treaty between Prussia and Austria would be possible, if the political will was there, and if their goals were in accord. Frank B. Jossierand has termed Wagner's policy a "policy of actively peaceful leadership within the framework of neutrality".²³ Unfortunately, this peaceful solution proved impossible. Bavaria could not provide "a solution on the middle ground", and the conflict between Prussia and Austria was unavoidable.

A gradual shift in Wagner's thinking about Prussia can be seen in his writings, as he abandons his earlier criticism of Prussian politicians' un-German inexhaustible aspiration to power, and became convinced that it would be possible to persuade Prussia to accept the united German policy led by Bavaria.

As the "political programme" states, even in early 1866 Wagner had still believed in Bavaria's leading role in the solution of the German

question. But now Wagner no longer held this view. As relations between Prussia and Austria began to cool, Wagner understood that the young King of Bavaria had no options whatsoever.

On the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War, Wagner wrote to his friend Count Karl Enzenberg that the solution to the question of a united Germany was also the moment of truth for his art. Unfortunately, the monarchs did not understand what the gift of German art would have been to the people of Germany. Therefore the situation had drifted to the verge of catastrophe: “Days of extreme danger are at hand.”²⁴

The Austro-Prussian War: Wagner’s Changing Relation to Prussia

The Austro-Prussian or the Seven Weeks’ War broke out on 14th June 1866. The day before, Wagner had written to Count Enzenberg. As the complex political situation evolved, Wagner apparently saw that the time of change had begun. In the conflict, Bavaria sided with Austria. The decision proved to be fatal. The war, which was unequalled in its brevity, ended with the bitter defeat of Austria, and Bavaria was therefore now on the losing side.

In the peace negotiations, Prussia’s treatment of Bavaria was not harsh, but from July 1866 onwards Prussia politically outweighed all the other German states. It was no longer of any use forging a future based on Bavaria. Both in theory and in practice, the country had lost all possibility of assuming the leading role in the German movement in the way Wagner had wished.

After the Austro-Prussian War, the relationship between Ludwig and Wagner changed completely. The dream of an alliance between the German genius and the German monarch evaporated, and Wagner began to seek support elsewhere: Ludwig the German had suffered a personal defeat.

Even as early as February 1866, Wagner had come to accept that Munich could no longer provide a base of support for his art. On 20th February Wagner had written to Hans von Bülow that he had been fascinated by Nuremberg, which he felt was a genuine German centre of art, and moreover a Protestant town. Wagner closes his letter with the wish that Ludwig would buy a castle in Bayreuth for his use.²⁵

Distancing himself even further from Munich was now necessary. Prior to the new situation of 1866, Wagner had repeatedly demonstrated his sympathies for Bavaria by denigrating the Prussians. Entries in his diary through 14th–27th September 1865 show that he regarded the Prussian policy as in conflict with the idea of the German spirit.²⁶ Throughout

history, he avers, Berlin had been a nexus of un-German culture;²⁷ the Prussian kings had without exception forgotten what was best for the German people. Wagner criticized in particular Frederick the Great, who had tried to implant the French culture of the Enlightenment on German soil.²⁸

His antipathy for the Prussians runs through his correspondence. On 29th April 1866, he wrote to Ludwig that Bismarck was playing despotically with the emotions of the greatest and noblest nation in the world, describing Bismarck as an “ambitious Junker” and Wilhelm I a “weak-willed King” unable to discipline his chancellor: “With what chilling frivolity is sport now being made with the fates of the noblest and greatest nation on earth: see how an ambitious Junker betrays his imbecile of a King in the most brazen manner, forcing him to play a dishonourable game which would appall the honest monarch if only he could see what was happening ...”²⁹ Wagner’s denigration of Bismarck continued, and in a letter to François Wille dated 20th June, he describes the Iron Chancellor as an “inferior copy of the un-German character”.³⁰

Wagner’s negative attitude towards Prussia is understandable, in light of the policies pursued by Prussia at that time. The political programme written by Wagner in June 1866 reveals that he favoured federalism (an alliance of the German monarchies) rather than the political centralism advocated by Prussia.³¹ In the background of Wagner’s political preference (Bavaria before Prussia), one can see a change in his entire concept of politics. This is evident in Wagner’s letter to Ludwig on 29th April, in which he expresses his inability to comprehend the policy-making of diplomats:

... how, in order to save the nation and prevent any harm from befalling the brazen sinner whose fortunes are now being told by the great Gallic intriguer³² it is not the princes of this nation—the natural protectors of the people and the ones most directly affected by all that has happened—who have come together to consult with each other and reach a speedy agreement in order to take steps worthy of princes; no, it is the diplomats, “German diplomats” (what an absurdity!) who sit around, no longer able to tell the difference between what is honest and what is deceitful, since their sole concern is the game itself, a game which they assure their masters to be fearfully difficult and to require both skill and experience if others are to be allowed to join in—be it for profit or for loss! Even at best I see only half-heartedness, speciousness and inadequacy in place of all that is right and whole, and, as a consequence of that, I see boundless confusion setting in, of a kind that no prince will finally be able to combat but to which will be added mass chaos—the chaos of a brutal mass in need of help; and then—I see my “Germany” perish—for ever!³³

Wagner had been shocked to realize that diplomats had replaced ruling monarchs in policy-making. Diplomats, professionals in politics, could not differentiate between a just and an unjust policy, as their purpose had not evolved from an honest world of values in regards to the people. Wagner’s concept of politics derived from a romantic idea of the monarchy, an out-of-date ideal in late nineteenth-century Germany. Prussia was dominated by a new political culture, in which politics had been established as a distinct domain, far from the artistic utopia favoured by Wagner and Ludwig.

In the summer of 1866, as Prussia proved superior to the other German states from a position of strength, Wagner could not avoid the conclusion that the Prussian political order was also superior in efficiency. It is interesting that Wagner, shocked at the outcome of the Austro-Prussian War, was ready for a drastic reorientation, despite his repeated criticism of the political games which Bismarck pursued. Even during the war, he had written to August Röckel, on 23rd June 1866:

My friend, if you still insist on engaging in politics, stick to Bismarck and Prussia. So help me God, I know of no alternative.³⁴

Wagner no longer saw any other alternative to Prussia: one had to accept Bismarck, if one desired political influence. Wagner could only hope that Prussia would not crush the other European states under its iron boot: “Germany cannot become a centralized state: the Prussians will soon enough discover that only federalism is possible in Germany.”³⁵

Historians have paid very little attention to the fact that Bismarck contacted Wagner in June 1866, soliciting his support in persuading Bavaria to side with Prussia in the impending war.³⁶ Bismarck had evidently heard of this curious composer who had ensnared the young King of Bavaria, and believed that Wagner could be employed as a political tool. Bismarck contacted Wagner secretly, and Wagner remained silent about this, not mentioning it in his correspondence with Ludwig, nor even to his closest friends. In the annal he wrote in July 1866, one finds only the ambiguous entry: “Dr. Wille (Bismarck)”.³⁷

Wagner’s old friend Dr. François Wille, who was politically pro-Prussian, and knew Bismarck personally, acted as the Chancellor’s agent. Wille had been Bismarck’s friend at Göttingen during their student years.³⁸ At Bismarck’s request, Wille went to see Wagner and asked him to persuade the King to adopt a positive position towards Prussian policy. Wille’s wife Eliza later recorded in her memoirs:

At the height of the summer, Wille travelled to Lucerne, where Wagner was then residing and Semper was showing him the drawings for the proposed theatre. He met the gentlemen together, and urged Wagner to exercise his influence upon the King of Bavaria to remain neutral, and to offer to mediate between Austria and Prussia. Wagner, irritated by Bismarck and Prussia, declined; he stated that he had no influence at all over the King in political matters; should Wagner turn to speak of politics, the King would “look upwards and whistle”!³⁹

Interestingly enough, little attention has been paid to the information from Eliza Wille’s memoirs in the Wagner literature; possibly Wagner scholars have failed to recognize the entire significance of this attempt to use Wagner to influence Ludwig. There is, however, good reason to consider this as the initial step in Wagner’s reorientation towards Prussia, even if he refused to co-operate at first.

We may also, of course, suspect the accuracy of Eliza Wille’s report. She claims that Wagner had already given a clear reply in Lucerne, but still considered it necessary to state his standpoint declining the request in written form on 20th June:

It is no longer possible to influence the young King of Bavaria except by appealing to his enthusiasms: but I fail to see how even your most eloquent recommendation could inspire him with any enthusiasm for the policies of Herr von Bismarck (...) In no circumstances will I allow the young King of Bavaria to take a sympathetic interest in those policies, and even if I did so, the advice, in whatever form, would be rejected, even if it came from a man who is an honest friend of mine and to whom I am obliged in all seriousness. In any case, do not forget that my young friend’s entourage is currently constituted in such a way that I can communicate with him, even by letter, only in the most open manner: your reception by the King would be prevented in every imaginable way.⁴⁰

Wagner had thus again refused to become involved in the political game, as a year earlier when he had declined the offer from Maximilian von Thurn und Taxis. Wagner also argues that any influence on Ludwig would have been impossible, as this would have immediately been prevented by the Munich politicians.

Bismarck’s private approaches to Wagner were thus rebutted, only one week after the beginning of the Austro-Prussian War. At that time, Bavaria’s position still appeared undecided. But Wagner’s view soon changed: only three days after his reply to Wille, he advised his friend August Röckel to direct his political hopes towards Prussia.⁴¹

Frank B. Josserand has explained Wagner’s sudden conversion as a reaction to the statement by the Bavarian Landtag (Constitutional Assembly). On the same day that Wagner wrote his pro-Prussian letter to Röckel, 23rd June 1866, the Landtag expressed support for the Prime Minister, Pfordten, an advocate of pro-Austrian policies. According to Josserand, Wagner saw this decision as a vote against the King and the German Confederation.⁴² The decision caused a thorough turnaround in Wagner’s political plans.

The pro-Austrian attitude of Pfordten and the other Bavarian politicians was, of course, well-known in Prussia. Bismarck’s and Wille’s approach to Wagner was intended to introduce a pro-Prussian politician into the Bavarian administration. Wagner would have been a means to the end. Bismarck’s trustee in Bavaria would have been the Duke of Ratibor and Korvei, Chlodwigzu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst, who later became the German Ambassador to Paris (in 1874).⁴³ When Wagner finally realized that the struggle against Prussia was futile, he humbled himself and put to the King Bismarck’s request, proposing that Ludwig should immediately replace Pfordten as Prime Minister by Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst, known for his pro-Prussian leanings. On 26th July 1866, when the outcome of the war was still uncertain, Wagner wrote to Ludwig urging him to announce the appointment of Duke Hohenlohe as soon as possible: “Appoint Prince Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst at once,—discuss the matter in detail with him, and seek his advice.”⁴⁴ This request was repeated by Wagner the following day. He wrote that he was on his knees praying that the King would make the change. All those who opposed Hohenlohe were enemies, whom Ludwig should eschew:

New people! New people! You are lost if you do not do this. Simply regard everyone as your enemy who tells you not to appoint Prince *Hohenlohe*. In God’s name, do not allow any personal antipathy to enter into it. The Prince is a distinguished, independent, deeply cultured, liberal man: at all events, a man who has an *opinion* (...) I entreat you: receive the Prince in person. And cultivate *personally* all the people you need.⁴⁵

When the formation of the new Bavarian cabinet began, Ludwig’s attitude towards Wagner’s proposal was reserved. Although Wagner had claimed that his candidate was impartial, the enemy’s flag still seemed to be fluttering just behind Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst, and the King therefore decided to give Pfordten one more chance. Paul von Thurn und Taxis reported the result to Wagner on 9th August:

Prince Hohenlohe did not gain His Highness's trust during recent sittings of the chamber. His political orientation is too black and white.⁴⁶

Ludwig was suspicious of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, and realized that the appointment of the Duke would mean a conscious submission to the Prussian leash. While Ludwig was making this decision, the conflict between Prussia and Bavaria was still unresolved, and the peace treaty was not signed until 23rd August in Prague.⁴⁷

The quick ending of the war was the result of prompt and arrogant policies pursued by Prussia. Thomas Nipperdey describes the Prussian policy as "a resolute initiative, exactly calculated", whereas in the Austrian policy there was something helpless.⁴⁸ This was probably one of the reasons why Wagner, making his choice between Prussia and Austria, was now inclined towards Prussia's determined stance; Austria, being Catholic and ultra-conservative, could not provide an acceptable solution to the German question.⁴⁹

Once the war was over, Wagner realized that the alternatives were few. According to the terms of the peace treaty, Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg were allowed to maintain their independence, as Prussia was apparently unwilling to provoke opposition from the Bavarians. Outright suppression was out of the question: Bavaria was to be persuaded to side with Prussia by political means, of which one of the most significant was the appointment of suitable persons to the leading posts in Bavaria.⁵⁰ This policy later proved to have been a wise move, for at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Bavaria automatically remained on the Prussian side. In fact, this relationship had been agreed upon immediately after the Treaty of Prague, in a secret treaty which guaranteed that in a state of war the Bavarian troops would join the Prussian forces.⁵¹

Paul von Thurn und Taxis had already, in his letter to Wagner, stated that Pfistermeister and Pfordten would soon lose their footing in the administration of the Bavarian state.⁵² This occurred. On 5th October, Pfistermeister, the Cabinet Secretary, resigned in favour of Max von Neumayr.⁵³ Pfordten's turn came soon after. On 16th December, Ludwig wrote to Cosima: "I am now seriously thinking of replacing Pfordten with Prince Hohenlohe."⁵⁴ In this situation, Pfordten had no choice but to submit his resignation, on 19th December 1866. The new Prime Minister assumed his duties on 31st December.⁵⁵ Through persistent effort, Prussia had succeeded in having her own supporters appointed to the leading positions in Bavaria. The decision had been taken by Ludwig, after lengthy

reconsiderations, but Wagner had worked closely in changing Ludwig's state of mind. This was revealed by him in a letter to August Röckel: "On the other hand, I have confirmed him in his intention of replacing Pfordten with Hohenlohe."⁵⁶

Wagner's role in the election of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst is therefore clear. Bismarck had achieved his goals and had succeeded in persuading Wagner to come over to his side. The significance of Wagner's political role in light of the events of 1866 has been assessed in Berita Paillard's and Emile Haraszi's article "Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner in the Franco-German War of 1870" (*The Musical Quarterly* 35, 1949) as being of major importance.

Paillard and Haraszi's most significant sources are the memoirs of the Hungarian pianist, Cornélien Abrányi, which were published in the Budapest journal *Magyar Szalon* in 1887. Abrányi was a student of Chopin, Kalkbrenner, and Halévy, and also close friends with Franz Liszt. According to Abrányi, at the beginning of the 1860s–1870s Franz Liszt acted as an international agent, conveying information from Germany to political circles in France, the reason for this being that Liszt's son-in-law, Emile Ollivier, was the Minister of Justice in the Second Empire and was also from January 1870 Prime Minister of France.⁵⁷

Abrányi's information stems from Liszt, who in his latter days spent a lot of his time in Abrányi's company relating anecdotes from his past. Liszt talked extensively about his own and Wagner's political role. According to Abrányi, Liszt related the following account:

The Prussian diplomats were quite well aware of the enormous influence of Richard Wagner on the young and unstable king, who idolized him: they knew how to use him to attain their ends. There was no need to exert much pressure on Wagner to get him to accomplish the task that the Prussians expected of him.⁵⁸

In this, Liszt had hit upon the kernel of the matter: Bismarck was aware of Wagner's influence on Ludwig, and used this knowledge to attain his goals.

Bismarck's arch-enemy in Europe was France, which Wagner had also frequently attacked. Bismarck considered it important that Bavaria and Prussia should become allies, as a conflict with France was unavoidable. After the election of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst, Wagner was not left in peace; he was repeatedly requested to continue his influence with the King for a lasting alliance between Prussia and Bavaria to be established.

At the beginning of January, Wagner was planning a visit to Munich, but both Ludwig and Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst regarded the plan as a serious political threat. The new cabinet was just being formed, and neither the King nor the Prime Minister wished the press to believe that Wagner's visit was related to the negotiations which were taking place at that time.⁵⁹ Therefore, on 6th January, the King asked Wagner to postpone his visit.⁶⁰ On the same day, Wagner also received a letter from Dr. Schanzenbach, the physician in ordinary to Duke Hohenlohe, who also requested Wagner to postpone his journey to Munich so as not to disturb the negotiations.⁶¹ Both of them were worried about the possible disclosure of Wagner's role as a mediator between Prussia and Bavaria. This cautious attitude clearly confirms Wagner's significant role in these events.

Wagner was not permitted to visit the King until March of that year.⁶² Apparently, political negotiations continued during his visit. On 12th March, Wagner also met Duke Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst, who explained his own political views. Of this meeting there are two descriptions. On 25th April, Wagner wrote to Ludwig and informed him of the discussion, in which all parties had reached a mutual understanding:

When Prince Hohenlohe visited me recently in Munich, I informed him of my thoughts as outlined above: a normally unemotional man, he became quite animated; there was a light in his eyes that I liked very much. He will help you in an understanding way, but you, you, my lofty friend, must *will* it, you must clearly and emphatically will it. Pursue the alliance with Prussia with the utmost energy and show Bavaria's help and participation to be uncommonly valuable.⁶³

The Duke has described the same meeting in the following way:

Wagner first presented himself at my house the day before yesterday, but thereafter has once sent his apologies, since he had fallen ill. I wrote to him today to invite him to visit me this evening. He came at half past 6. Initially he was somewhat occupied; he spoke of many matters, and begged to be excused, for he had no right to call upon me. I brought him into a more genial mood, by remarking that we had two points in common: we were both hated by the same Party, and were also united in our profound respect for the King. He then became more communicative, and spoke of the way in which the King had been ill-treated; indeed he had twice written to him, urging him to abdicate; he expressed his regrets, that he could not take pride in having recommended myself to the King as Minister. Thus he came to speak of the mission of Bavaria as a German State: that her people combined the adroitness of the Franks, with the imagination of the Swabians and the natural strength of the Bavarians; that the King was precisely the right man to govern this

German State, and to realize the German ideal. Thus he also came to speak of his artistic inclinations, of his experiences in this place, of his plans for the erection of an Art School; of the hindrances that had been put in his way; and thus, at length, of the Cabinet. He remarked in passing that it was essential that I should remain in the Ministry; to which I rejoined, that this was a matter not in my hands. I could not answer for it that the confidence of the King in me would not be undermined; all the less, since the King, following the traditions of the Royal House, communicated with me not directly, but always through the mediation of the Cabinet. To this he responded that things could not continue in this manner; but I drew his attention to the great danger entailed in entering into a conflict with the Cabinet, as he should well know. He spoke something of my political programme, concerning which I then explained some details.

Finally he expressed his hope that the King would never lose his confidence in myself.⁶⁴

Neither of the descriptions gives a full account of what really happened at the negotiations. The point is, however, that soon after this, Wagner was able to encourage Ludwig to be more co-operative with Prussia. On 25th April, he also presented Ludwig with a straightforward claim: “... resolutely and honourably, an alliance with Prussia.”⁶⁵ Day by day France was becoming a greater threat to Germany, and therefore Bavaria and Prussia had to remain in close alliance:

France’s impertinences and threats impugn Germany’s honour: the whole nation longs to defend itself. The most popular war is imminent: he who plays a decisive role in it will be revered above all else by the German people. Now or never! Call on your powerful Bavaria: pour all your energies into preparing for war. Order one thing alone, this one thing alone: place the Bavarian armed forces on a state of the highest alert, and do so at once, as quickly as possible. For God’s sake, do not allow yourself to be pushed around by Prussia. Onwards! Onwards! It is now a question of throwing Bavaria into the scales in order to counterbalance Prussia: in this way you will make yourself the leader of Southern Germany.⁶⁶

Wagner thus demanded that Ludwig should accept an alliance with Prussia, but also promised that Ludwig would become the leader of Southern Germany. Evidently Germany was to be divided into spheres of interests between Prussia and Bavaria, with the area north of the River Main under Prussian control, whereas Germany south of the Main would be controlled by Bavaria.⁶⁷ It is also of interest that Wagner urged Ludwig to prepare his country for war, since a conflict with France was highly likely: in the course of time the states of Germany as a whole would be “forced” to defend themselves against French nationalism, and not only by means of art, but

with weapons! This belligerent goal suited Wagner well; in his perspective, the struggle between German and French civilization had been going on for a long time. The war could provide a means of allowing the German people to discover their real identity. This impending war would really mean a fight for “holy German art”, for Wagner saw his own art essentially connected with the German national identity. In Wagner’s view, the French had always hated both German art and the German national spirit: therefore, a war with France would mean a victory for both Wagner and the German people.

German Art and German Politics

At the beginning of 1867, a distinct change can be recognized in Wagner’s activities. During his stay in Munich, his political activity had mainly been concentrated on attempts to influence Ludwig. Although Wagner understood that Prussia could no longer be ignored in political planning, it was also evident that the German people as a whole could not be ignored either. He now decided to write for the *Süddeutsche Presse* an extensive series of articles on *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, through which he set forth his own standpoint on the current situation and on the role of art in the future Germany.

Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik constituted fifteen parts, of which only thirteen were published, during the relatively short period of 24th September to 19th December 1867. The Munich paper *Süddeutsche Presse* gave Wagner ample column space, for the editor was no other than his old friend Julius Fröbel.⁶⁸ During November and December, however, Ludwig had had enough of Wagner’s polemics. On 19th December 1867, he instructed the paper immediately to cease publication of these articles.⁶⁹ Apparently Fröbel was also relieved by this, for he had become irritated by Wagner’s interference in the newspaper’s editorial policies.⁷⁰

Wagner was not alarmed that his cycle of articles was to be discontinued. He still believed in the significance of his message. By preventing the publication of the last articles of the cycle, however, Ludwig had demonstrated his own loss of interest in Wagner’s philosophy. It is no wonder that Wagner now embarked on the publication of the articles in book form. He had completed the manuscript by Easter of the following year,⁷¹ and *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* came out during the same year. In the preface, Wagner explicitly states the conceptual framework: he believes that he has struggled for years toward the fulfilment of his ideal art. The goal of this ideal art was similar to the noble goals which would end in the rebirth

of the mother country.⁷² Thus Wagner wanted to convince his readers that the German movement could find a real German national spirit through his art.

Wagner, who was later described by Hans von Wolzogen as a "Weltbild-Meister" (master of the world view)⁷³, hoped to spread his philosophy of the world to all the German peoples, and to fuse his own goals together with the future of Germany. With Germany, his art would either perish or flourish: they were inseparably linked to each other.

Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik was not only an introduction to the discovery of the German identity, but also an attack on France and the French ideal. Wagner began his work by citing his friend's Constantin Frantz' work *Untersuchungen über das Europäische Gleichgewicht* (1859), which contained similar ideas, and according to which only Germany had the opportunity to rise and resist French civilization and propaganda:

"To extricate ourselves from the tyranny of that materialistic civilisation, is therefore the only effectual dam against this propaganda. And this is precisely the mission of Germany; because Germany, of all Continental countries, alone possesses the needful qualities and forces of mind and spirit to bring about a nobler culture, against which French civilisation will have no power any more. Here would you have the rightful German propaganda, and a very essential contribution to the re-establishment of European equipoise."⁷⁴

Wagner completely concurred with Frantz. The Germans possessed sufficient spiritual and material resources to become a counterbalance to the French in Europe; in fact, German culture could have something to give to the whole world, as universality was one of its basic features.⁷⁵ This, however, required that the German monarchs should understand their national identity, as the German masters (Bach, Goethe, Schiller) had done for centuries.⁷⁶ On the day the German monarchs recognized their task, the victory of German culture would be guaranteed:

... we are bound some day to reach a point, in the contest between French civilisation and the German spirit, where it will become a question of the continuance of the German Princes. If the German Princes are not the faithful guardians of the German spirit; if, consciously or unconsciously, they help French civilisation to triumph over that German spirit, so woefully misprised and disregarded by them: then their days are numbered, let the fiat come from here or there.⁷⁷

In summoning the German monarchs to participate in the national awakening, Wagner was obviously also acting as an advocate for his own art. He saw himself as one of the German masters, who understood the meaning of the Germanic ideal. During 1868, Wagner therefore strove to promote his art both to the monarchs and to the German people. In 1868, in addition to *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, there also appeared the second edition of *Oper und Drama*, dedicated to Constantin Frantz.⁷⁸ In April 1868, furthermore, Wagner drew up a plan for the publication of his complete works. This series of ten volumes was to present the author both as a thinker and as a poet.⁷⁹ Through this literary activity, Wagner was aiming at the construction of a national self-consciousness conducive to unification.

Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik contained direct attacks on the French. Wagner went so far as to compare the difference between the creatively inventive Germans and the imitative French to the differences between humans and apes.⁸⁰ In this respect, Wagner was following Frantz's ideas. As early as 1856, Frantz had written that a conflict between the Germanic and French ideals was unavoidable,⁸¹ and that it was the mission of German culture to destroy the false French civilization.⁸² Besides Frantz's *Untersuchungen über das Europäische Gleichgewicht*, which appeared in 1859, Wagner was also influenced by his book *Die Wiederherstellung Deutschlands*, published in 1865, in which Frantz continues his discussion on the universal mission of Germany and associates the materialistic civilization of the French with imitation devoid of spirit.⁸³ Wagner's strong opinions on French civilization had clearly been formed under Frantz's influence, although similar stereotyped views of the French were also shared more widely.⁸⁴ While Frantz had concentrated only on political questions, Wagner applied these ideas to the field of culture, and set out to identify and eradicate the influence of fashionable French movements on the German culture.

Wagner's writings on cultural policy pertinently served the Prussian goals. It was no wonder that in January 1869 he proposed to send his text to Bismarck, or rather to the Chancellor's wife, in the hope that she could bring her husband to take more interest in the arts.⁸⁵ It was Bismarck, however, whose wishes were fulfilled, through Wagner persuading Ludwig to accept an alliance with Prussia and by bringing him to understand that the German states had a common enemy, rather than by writing on cultural policy.

Though as late as 1865, Wagner had sharply criticized the policies pursued by Prussia and had still believed in Bavaria's position to express the

deepest emotions of the German people, he had finally been forced to abandon this standpoint. He had now come to believe that the waves of international pseudo-civilization which originated in France and which were pouring all over Germany were a greater threat to the German people than the threat posed by the Prussian authorities.

For Wagner, national thinking was a means to comprehend German identity, and a weapon against other nationalities. It was probably useless to oppose the Prussians; after all, the German peoples were of the same family. It was most important to build an ideological shelter for the native people. This, therefore, was the goal of *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*.

The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Wagner's efforts to promote German self-awareness were not limited to political influence and publications: above all, he saw himself as a music dramatist; in the spreading of the national spirit, art would have its own significant role.

The Mastersingers is the most openly and clearly political of all Wagner's operas. It was performed for the first time in Munich on 21st June 1868. Unlike *Tristan and Isolde*, which had been premiered two years earlier (though completed in the 1850s), and which was a characteristically introvert work in a Schopenhauerian fashion, *The Mastersingers* was pure national agitation.

It is possible to examine *The Mastersingers* as a musical parallel to *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*. Both deal with excitement with the links between arts and politics. Wagner finished the score of *The Master-singers* in 1867, at the same time as the cycle of articles for the *Süddeutsche Presse*.⁸⁶ The opera was premiered in the summer of the following year, when *Deutsche Kunst and deutsche Politik* appeared in book form.

Long and thorough-going preparations with over-lapping projects were characteristic of Wagner's creative work. Thus, the first phases in the making of *The Mastersingers* go back to July 1845, when the earliest fragments of the libretto were set down. The essential opera was, however, created in the 1860s. The framework for the libretto was constructed in Vienna and Paris between February 1861 and January 1862. Wagner then composed the libretto periodically between April 1862 and September 1864. In Munich, Wagner concentrated on his central project, the accomplishment of the *Ring of the Nibelung* tetralogy. *The Mastersingers* was then shelved for some time. Probably the reason for this was that Wagner was concentrating on his

attempts to influence the young King and did not consider it relevant to continue the openly nationalistic project of *The Mastersingers*.

Wagner did not work again on *The Mastersingers* until 1866–1867, in a situation where the German question was to convey an entirely new kind of political significance than previously. Wagner rewrote the libretto at Tribschen, between December 1866 and January 1867. The composition was completed by 24th October 1867.⁸⁷ The years 1866–67 constituted the most significant phase in the project: Wagner had already composed the overture early in 1862, but he did not finish the first act until March 1866. The two following acts were then quickly completed.⁸⁸

The Mastersingers is an exceptional work in Wagner's oeuvre, since it is in the genre of comic opera. It is set in sixteenth-century Nuremberg, where a song contest and a feast have been arranged. At the beginning of the opera Eva, the daughter of Veit Pogner, the goldsmith, falls in love with a young knight, Walther von Stolzing, who is paying a brief visit to the town. Pogner has, however, decided that his daughter Eva will be the prize in the midsummer song contest. Hans Sachs, the shoemaker, proposes that the audience should choose the winner, but the proposal is rejected, and the verdict is placed in the hands of the critics. One of the critics is Sixtus Beckmesser, who is also smitten by Eva. During the night, Walther has a beautiful dream, and composes a poem as a basis for his master song, but he has already been eliminated in the singing trials, and has lost the possibility of taking part in the contest. Hans Sachs presents Beckmesser with Walther's poem, and thus offers Beckmesser the key to win the competition. In the contest, however, Beckmesser, of course, fails to win, as the song is not his own: the style is false. Sachs then proposes that Walther should be allowed to perform his song, despite his failure in the trial round. Walther sings a beautiful aria ("Morgenlichtleuchtend in rosigem Schein"), and wins the contest. He refuses to accept the title of Mastersinger, but will accept instead Eva. The opera ends with a finale in which Hans Sachs sings in praise of the German masters:

Habt acht! Uns drohen üble Streich': -
zerfällt erst deutsches Volk und Reich,
in falscher wälscher Majestät
kein Fürst bald mehr sein Volk versteht;
und wälschen Dunst mit wälschem Tand
sie pflanzen uns in deutsches Land.
Was deutsch und echt wüßt' keiner mehr,
lebt's nicht in deutscher Meister Ehr'.

Drum sag' ich euch:
 ehrt euredeutschen Meister,
 dann bannt ihr gute Geister!
 Und gebt ihr ihrem Wirken Gunst,
 zerging in Dunst
 das heil'ge röm'sche Reich,
 uns bliebe gleich
 die heil'ge deutsche Kunst!⁸⁹

The topic of *The Mastersingers* sprang from German musical history, for Nuremberg had really been a centre of mastersinging. The Mastersingers tradition is closely connected with the Minnelied, and dates back to the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Mastersingers were generally skilled poets and singers. The best-known masters were Michael Behaim, Hans Rosenblüth, Hans Folz, and—one of Wagner's characters—Hans Sachs.⁹⁰ Clearly, Wagner wanted to associate himself through this opera with the tradition of the German masters. In the same way as the Mastersingers of the sixteenth century had to fight against foreign cultural influences, Wagner also had to fight for German art. Wagner apparently identified himself with the character of Hans Sachs. This is shown by Wagner's habit of signing his letters “Hans Sachs”, especially when they dealt with matters concerning *The Mastersingers*. When the score of the opera was completed, he telegraphed Hans von Bülow: “This evening at 8 o'clock precisely the final C will be written down. Please celebrate with us in silence. Sachs.”⁹¹

In the opera, Hans Sachs proposes that instead of the critics the audience should be allowed to choose the best Mastersinger. This is in tune with Wagner's opinion of critics as irrelevant; what was relevant was how art would serve the community. Beckmesser was a caricature of a one-sided narrow-minded critic, who imitated the old traditional style, but proved himself to be ridiculously helpless. The model for Beckmesser was Eduard Hanslick, the critic of the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*. In fact, the name of the character was Hanslich in the draft libretto of 1861, and only later did Wagner change the name to Beckmesser. Dieter Borchmeyer suggests that the character also resembles the comic figure of the “dottore” in the traditional *commedia dell'arte*. When Wagner wrote the first sketches for *The Mastersingers* in 1858, Hanslick had had a positive attitude, among other things, towards the *Tannhäuser* overture; but later Hanslick became a vociferous anti-Wagnerian.⁹² Even though the character of Beckmesser in

the final opera is in the traditional style of comedy, it clearly symbolizes an attack on the institution of the critics.

The most significant feature in *The Mastersingers* was its ardent patriotism, which was likely to appeal to a German audience. Carl Dahlhaus has stressed that 1868 was a turning-point for Wagner on the road to fame; *The Mastersingers* proved to be a great success, and achieved national popularity.⁹³ It was a corner stone from which Wagner was to spread his entire production to the public. As is stated in the 1878 edition of *The Meyer Encyclopedia*: “The latter work (Mastersingers) was soon performed in all major German theatres, and Wagner gained more popularity than ever.”⁹⁴

The Mastersingers spread throughout Germany after its Munich premiere, and was performed at many opera houses on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War. The words “falsche wälsche Majestät” sung by Hans Sachs seemed to refer to the decadent influence of French civilization, against which the Germans needed to be ready to fight. France was often referred to using the words “der wälsche Erbfeind”⁹⁵. Thus Wagner’s opera was of immediate contemporary significance.

The journal *Signale für die musikalische Welt* stated in its 1869 annual review “Das musikalische Jahr 1869”:

Richard Wagner is quite simply the sole living German composer whose works for the stage, despite all the aesthetic protests and personal attacks, despite all the pamphlets and articles in the press, are steadily gaining ground and demonstrating their capacity to hold it—since their creator is a genius whose qualifications cannot be denied, and whose eminent artistic power and consistency have to be acknowledged, whether with criticism or with sympathy.⁹⁶

The journal records one of the most significant events of the German opera world in 1869 as the unprecedented triumph of *The Mastersingers*. The Munich premiere resulted in a series of numerous performances soon after the turn of the year: the opera was performed in Dresden on 21st January, in Dessau on 29th January, in Karlsruhe on 5th February, in Mannheim on 5th March, and in Weimar on 28th November. Everywhere, the reception was enthusiastic and even enraptured.⁹⁷ In the *Signale* review of the Karlsruhe performance, Wagner was lauded as an indisputable genius, and the work itself was classified as a German national opera which expressed the sovereignty of the German spirit.⁹⁸

The triumph of *The Mastersingers* reached even greater heights in 1870. During February, it was performed both in Vienna and in Hanover;⁹⁹ in

March in Königsberg, in April in Berlin, and in December in Leipzig.¹⁰⁰ In addition, *The Mastersingers* continued to be part of the Dresden, Karlsruhe, Munich, and Weimar repertoires.¹⁰¹ Wagner's other operas now also spread on the waves created by *The Mastersingers* throughout Germany: *Tannhäuser*, *The Flying Dutchman*, and even *Rienzi* were performed in numerous German opera houses.

A milestone, from Wagner's point of view, was, of course, the Berlin performance. The capital of Prussia was regarded as conservative and tradition-bound: a newcomer was always treated with exceptional criticism. Only a few months before the nation's rise to arms, *The Mastersingers* seemed to offer a feeling of nationalism which was acknowledged even in Berlin. It is no wonder the work was received with "great excitement"¹⁰² and "with glamorous success".¹⁰³

Notes

- 1 Ludwig to Wagner December 8, 1865, KLRW I, 238.
- 2 See e.g. "Richard Wagners Annalen für die Zeit vom 10. Dezember 1865 bis Ende März 1866", KLRW I, 267.
- 3 Wagner to Ludwig January 8, 1866, KLRW I, 275–282.
- 4 Wagner to Ludwig January 8, 1866, Wagner 1987, 680. In German: "*Ich bin der Meinung, daß unser constitutionelles Staatswesen etwas Ungesundes und Unfruchtbares ist, und auf die Dauer manche Veränderung erfahren wird. Ich bin durch und durch königlich. Nur der König kann wollen und wirken: nur die deutschen Fürsten können Deutschland retten. Aber, es handelt sich hier—wie ich glaube—meistens um redliche, rechtschaffene Männer: und diese brauchen Sie.*" KLRW I, 281.
- 5 Wagner to Ludwig January 8, 1866, Wagner 1987, 680. In German: "*Auf Ihnen beruht die Hoffnung, die letzte Hoffnung Deutschlands!*" KLRW I, 281.
- 6 Wagner 1975a, 101–102. See also "Tagebuch", Kabinettsakten König Ludwig II, Nr. 126, Abt. III: Geheimes Hausarchiv, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.
- 7 Cf. KLRW I-IV, passim.
- 8 See e.g. Watson 1979, 223; Gregor-Dellin 1980, 563.
- 9 Privatschreiben des Grafen Blome an den Grafen Mensdorf 20.5.1866, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938a, 725. In German: "*Wie hier über den jungen König räsoniert wird, das überzeugt alle Begriffe. Im Volke heißen sie ihn nur mehr den Wagneresellen.*"
- 10 Bericht des Grafen Blome 18.5.1866, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938a, 708–709.
- 11 Bericht des Grafen Blome 14.2.1866, Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938a, 190. In German: "*die Entschlüsse des jungen Königs, von so vielen inneren und äußeren Einwirkungen beeinflußt, schwer im voraus zu berechnen sind.*"

- 12 Cf. "Bericht des Freiherrn von Werner 26.5.1866", Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1938b, 779–780. Count von Werner comments: "*Der König [ist] nach der Schweiz geritten, um mit Richard Wagner zusammenzukommen.*"
- 13 Eger 1986b, 168; Josserand 1957, 275. Cf. Wagner to Ludwig May 15, 1866, KLRW II, 37–39.
- 14 Ludwig to Wagner May 15, 1866, KLRW II, 34–35.
- 15 Wagner to Ludwig May 15, 1866, KLRW II, 34–35.
- 16 "Preussen und Österreich", B II c 12, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung. Cf. Wagner's letter to Röockel January 29, 1867, KLRW IV, 178.
- 17 Wagner to Ludwig January 8, 1866, KLRW I, 281–282.
- 18 Frantz 1859, 353–354, 365, 423.
- 19 "Erlass an den Grafen Blome in München 2.1.1865", Quellen zur deutschen Politik Österreichs 1937, 495. In German: "*Seit es einen Deutschen Bund gibt, hat die königl., bayerische Regierung sich jederzeit als entschiedene Anhängerin einer gesamtdeutschen Politik bewährt, einer Politik, deren erste Voraussetzung in dem Zusammenwirken der beiden mächtigsten Mitglieder des Bundes besteht. So aufrichtig wie wir selbst hängt der Münchener Hof an dem Gedanken, daß der Deutsche Bund, Österreich und Preußen an der Spitze, eine eng verbundene Gesamtmacht bilden solle, und Freih. v. der Pfordten persönlich ist stets ein energischer Vertreter dieses für jeden deutschen Patrioten fundamentalen Gedankens gewesen.*"
- 20 Wagner's political programme, KLRW IV, 147. In German: "*In Bayern's Hand allein ist es gegeben, das Schicksal Deutschlands zu bestimmen und der europäischen Staatenpolitik eine vollständige neue Wendung zu geben.*"
- 21 KLRW IV, 150.
- 22 KLRW IV, 149.
- 23 Josserand 1981, 231.
- 24 Wagner to Karl Graf von Enzenberg June 15, 1866, Wagner 1987, 697–698. In German: "*Die Tage der äußersten Gefahr sind nah!*" Wagner 1912, 462–464.
- 25 Wagner to Hans von Bülow February 20, 1866, Wagner 1916, 243–244.
- 26 KLRW IV, 9.
- 27 KLRW IV, 26.
- 28 KLRW IV, 9, 26. Cf. Wagner's letter to Eliza Wille April 31, 1865, Wille 1982, 89–90.
- 29 Wagner to Ludwig April 29, 1866, Wagner 1987, 691. In German: "*Mit welcher graunhaften Frivolität hier mit den Schicksalen der edelsten, grössten Nation der Erde gespielt wird: wie dort ein ehrgeiziger Junker seinen schwachsinnigen König auf das frechste betrügt und ihn ein unehrenwerthes Spiel spielen lässt, vor dem, wenn er es erkannte, der rechtschaffene Monarch sich entsetzen würde ...*" KLRW II, 26–27.
- 30 Wagner to François Wille June 20, 1866, Wagner 1986, 298. In German: "*... Bismarck und ähnliche schlechte Kopien des undeutschen Wesens.*"
- 31 "Preussen und Österreich", B II c 12, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung. See also Matthes 1958, 2–3.

- 32 This “great Gallic intriguer” was Napoleon III, the Emperor of France.
- 33 Wagner to Ludwig April 29, 1866, Wagner 1987, 691. In German: “... *wie nun, um dem Unheil des frechen Sünders, dem der gallische grosse Intrigant die Karten legt, vorzubeugen und die Nation zu retten, nicht etwa die Fürsten dieser Nation, diese natürlichen, zunächst betroffenen Schirmherrn des Volkes, zusammentretend, sich berathen, schnell sich einigen und sofort zu fürstlichen Thaten schreiten, sondern die Diplomaten, “deutsche Diplomaten” (welch ein Unsinn!) sich zusammenhocken, sie, die gar nicht mehr wissen, was Ehrlich- und Falsch-Spielen ist, und denen es eben nur auf das Spielen ankommt, vordem sie ihren Herren versichern, es sei entsetzlich schwer; und man müsse sehr pfiffig dafür dressirt sein, wenn man, gleichviel ob auf Gewinn oder Verlust, nur mitspielen dürfte! Ich sehe das Halbe, das Scheinbare, das Unzureichende noch im besten Falle für das Rechte und Ganze eintreten, sehe in Folge dessen die grenzenlose Verwirrung eintreten, die endlich kein Fürst mehr wird schlichten können, sondern zu welcher das Chaos der Masse, der brutalen, hilfsbedürftigen Masse hinzutritt; und sehe dann-auf ewig-mein “Deutschland” untergegangen!*” KLRW II, 26–27.
- 34 Wagner to August Röckel June 23, 1866, KLRW IV, 154–155. In German: “*Freund! Willst und mußt Du noch Politik treiben, so-halte Dich an Bismarck und Preußen. Hilf Gott, ich weiß nichts andres.*”
- 35 Wagner to August Röckel June 23, 1866, KLRW IV, 154–155. In German: “*Deutschland kann kein centralisirter Staat werden: grade die Preußen werden es erfahren, daß nur Föderalismus in Deutschland möglich ist.*”
- 36 Josserand 1981, 231. Cf. Watson 1979, 224–227; Westernhagen 1979a, 356–358.
- 37 “Wagners Annalen für die Zeit vom 4. April 1866 bis Ende Dezember 1868”, KLRW II, 4.
- 38 Westernhagen 1979a, 410.
- 39 Wille 1982, 95. In German: “*In der Höhe des Sommers war Wille nach Luzern gereist, wo Wagner sich zeitweilig aufhielt und Semper ihm den Grundriß zum projektierten Theaterbau vorlegte. Er traf die Herren beisammen, als er Wagner zu bewegen suchte, durch seinen Einfluß auf den König von Bayern diesen dahin zu bringen, daß er neutral bleibe und seine Vermittlung zwischen Österreich und Preußen anbiete. Wagner, damals voll Widerwillen gegen Bismarck und Preußen, weigerte sich und sagte, er habe in politischen Dingen gar keinen Einfluß auf den König, der ‘wenn er (Wagner) von dergleichen anfangen, in die Höhe blicke und pfeife’!*”
- 40 Wagner to François Wille June 20, 1866, Wagner 1986, 298–299. In German: “*Auf den jungen König von Bayern ist erst nur noch durch Begeisterung zu wirken: wie Ihrer beredtesten Empfehlung es möglich werden sollte, ihn für die Politik des Herrn v. Bismarck zu begeistern, bleibt mir unverständlich (...)* Ich kann und will unter keinen Umständen dem jungen König von Bayern zu einer Teilnahme an jener Politik geraten wissen, und wollte ich es, so würde der Rat in jeder Form zurückgewiesen werden, selbst wenn er von einem Manne käme, der mir redliche Freundschaft bewährt und auf das Ernsteste mich verpflichtet hat. Für alle Fälle vergessen Sie aber auch nicht, daß die Umgebung meines jungen Freundes gegenwärtig noch in der Art zusammengesetzt ist, daß ich mit ihm, eben selbst brieflich, gewissermaßen nur mit offener Karte verkehren kann: Ihr Empfang seitens des Königs würde in jeder erdenklichen Weise verhindert worden sein.”

- 41 Wagner to August Röckel June 23, 1866, KLRW IV, 154–155.
- 42 Josserand 1981, 232.
- 43 See e.g. Holborn 1969, 322–324; Paillard, Haraszti 1949, 402.
- 44 Wagner to Ludwig July 26, 1866, Wagner 1987, 704. In German: “*Berufen Sie sofort den Fürsten Hohenlohe-Schilligsfürst zu Sich,–theilen Sie Sich ihm eingehend mit, berathen Sie Sich mit ihm.*” KLRW II, 81.
- 45 Wagner to Ludwig July 27, 1866, KLRW II, 83. In German: “*Neue Menschen! Neue Menschen! Sie sind verrathen, wenn Sie diess nicht thun. – Halten Sie getrost Jeden für Ihren Feind, wer Ihnen gegen die Berufung des Fürsten **Hohenlohe** spricht. Um Gotteswillen, keiner persönlichen Abneigung hier Raum geben! Der Fürst ist ein vornehmer, unabhängiger, ernstgebildeter, liberaler Mann: Jedenfalls ein Mann, der eine **Meinung** hat (...) Ich beschwöre Sie: empfangen Sie den Fürsten persönlich! Verkehren Sie überhaupt mit allen Menschen, deren Sie bedürfen, **persönlich.***”
- 46 Paul von Thurn und Taxis to Wagner July 29, 1866, KLRW IV, 157. In German: “*Fürst Hohenlohe hat sich namentlich während der letzten Kammersitzungen das Vertrauen des Erhabenen nicht erworben! Seine politische Richtung hat zuviel schwarz und weiße Färbung.*”
- 47 Bussmann 1981, 576; Böhme 1966, 226–227; Renouvin 1954, 351–372.
- 48 Nipperdey 1983, 781.
- 49 See e.g. Wagner’s letter to Röckel January 29, 1867, KLRW IV, 178–179. Cf. Wagner to Röckel February 8, 1867, KLRW IV, 181.
- 50 See e.g. Valentin 1965, 528–529; Raff 1988, 134–135; Bussmann 1981, 576; Böhme 1966, 226–277.
- 51 Raff 1988, 135.
- 52 Paul von Thurn und Taxis to Wagner August 9, 1866, KLRW IV, 156–157. Thurn und Taxis writes: “*Was Pfo, und Pfi, betrifft, so werden sie sich beide sicher noch den Hals Brechen.*”
- 53 See e.g. KLRW V, 197.
- 54 Ludwig to Cosima Wagner December 16, 1866, KLRW IV, 157. In German: “*Ich denke jetzt ernstlich daran, den Fürsten Hohenlohe an Pfordten’s Stelle zu setzen.*”
- 55 KLRW V, 198.
- 56 Wagner to August Röckel October 25, 1866, KLRW IV, 165. In German: “*Dagegen habe ich ihn in seiner Absicht bestärkt, Hohenlohe für Pfordten eintreten zu lassen ...*”
- 57 Paillard, Haraszti 1949, 386.
- 58 Cit. Paillard, Haraszti 1949, 387.
- 59 See e.g. Josserand 1957, 287.
- 60 Ludwig to Wagner January 6, 1867, KLRW II, 127.
- 61 Schanzenbach to Wagner January 6, 1867, KLRW II, 130–131.
- 62 Cf. KLRW V, 199.
- 63 Wagner to Ludwig April 25, 1867, KLRW II, 168. In German: “*Dem Fürsten Hohenlohe habe ich, als er mich zuletzt in München besuchte, in der vorstehenden*

*Weise meine Gedanken mithetheit: der trockene Herr blitzte auf; es leuchtete etwas in ihm, was mir sehr wohl gefiel. Er wird Ihnen verständlich helfen, aber Sie, Sie, mein hoher Freund, Sie müssen **wollen**, klar und bestimmt wollen. Ergreifen Sie das Bündniss mit Preussen mit der höchsten Energie, und lassen Sie Bayern Hülfe und Mitwirkung als ungemein werthvoll erkennen.”*

- 64 Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst 1906, 211. In German: “Nachdem sich Wagner vorgestern bei mir angemeldet, nachher aber wieder entschuldigt hatte, da er krank geworden war, schrieb ich ihm heute, um ihn abends zu mir zu bitten. Er kam um ½7. Anfangs war er etwas befangen, sprach von allgemeinen Dingen und entschuldigte sich, daß er überhaupt eigentlich kein Recht habe, zu mir zu kommen. Ich setzte ihn in eine behaglichere Stimmung, indem ich ihm sagte, wir hätten zwei Vereinigungspunkte, wir seien von derselben Partei gehaßt und einig in gleicher Verehrung für den König. Darauf wurde er mittheilender, sprach von der Art, wie man den König behandelt und gequält habe, so daß er zweimal ihm geschrieben habe, er würde ab danken, erzählte unter Beteuerungen, daß er sich damit nicht rühmen wolle, daß er mich dem König als Minister empfohlen habe; dann kam er auf die Aufgabe Bayerns als eindeutscher Staat, dessen Bevölkerung die Gewandtheit der Franken mit der Phantasie der Schwaben und der Naturkraft der Bayern vereinige, daß der König ganz der Mann sei, diesen deutschen Staat zu regieren und das Ideal des Deutschtums zu verwirklichen, kam dann auf seine Kunstrichtung zu sprechen, auf seine hiesigen Erfahrungen, auf seine Pläne mit der Einrichtung einer Kunstschule, auf die Hindernisse, die ihm in den Weg gelegt worden seien, und endlich auf das Kabinett. Dazwischen sprach er von der Notwendigkeit, daß ich im Ministerium bleibe. Worauf sich ihm erwiderte, daß dies nicht von mir abhänge. Ich könne nicht dafür einstehen, daß man nicht das Vertrauen des Königs in mich untergrabe, und sei dessen um so weniger sicher, als der König nach der Tradition des Königlichen Hauses nicht direkt, sondern nur durch das Kabinett mit mir verkehre. Er sagte nun, daß dies nicht so bleiben könne, worauf ich ihn darauf aufmerksam machte, daß es sehr gefährlich sei, sich mit dem Kabinett in einen Kampf einzulassen, er wisse das am besten. Mein politisches Programm erwähnte er, worauf ich auf einige Einzelheiten noch einging. Schließlich sprach er noch die Hoffnung aus, daß der König nie das Vertrauen in mich verlieren würde.”
- 65 Wagner to Ludwig April 25, 1865, KLRW II, 167–168. In German: “...fest und ehrlich Allianz mit Preussen.”
- 66 Wagner to Ludwig April 25, 1867, KLRW II, 167–168. In German: “Die französischen Unverschämtheiten und Drohungen tasten die Ehre Deutschlands an: die Abwehr ist im ganzen Volke ersehnt. Der volksthümliche Krieg steht bevor: wer entscheidenden Theil an ihm nahm, wird vom deutschen Volk über Alles hochgeehrt sein: Jetzt oder niemals! Rufen Sie Ihr kräftiges Bayern auf: höchste Energie den Kriegsrüstungen! Befehlen Sie Eines, und immer nur Eines: höchste Anspannung der bayerischen Wehrkraft, und zwar sofort, schleunigst. Um Gottes Willen lassen Sie Sich von Preussen nicht antreiben! Vorwärts! Vorwärts! Jetzt gilt es, zur preussischen Wagschale auch die bayerische zu hängen: so machen Sie sich zum Führer von Süddeutschland ...”
- 67 See e.g. Wagner’s letter to Ludwig April 25, 1867, KLRW II, 167.
- 68 Kühnel 1986, 543; Newman 1941b, 91–92.

- 69 See e.g. Josserrand 1957, 298. Cf. Korrespondenz Richard Wagners mit Lorenz von Düfflipp (1867–1877) 1970, 793.
- 70 Newman 1941b, 102–103. See also Wagner’s letter to Düfflipp December 15, 1867, Korrespondenz Richard Wagners mit Lorenz von Düfflipp (1867–1877) 1970, 793.
- 71 Wagner 1975a, 151.
- 72 Wagner 1868, V–VI.
- 73 Wolzogen 1883, 4.
- 74 PW IV, 37. In German: “*Sich der Herrschaft dieser materialistischen Civilisation zu entziehen ist darum der einzig wirksame Damm gegen diese Propaganda, und dies gerade ist Deutschlands Beruf, weil von allen Continentalländern nur Deutschland die erforderlichen Anlagen und Kräfte des Geistes und Gemüthes besitzt, um eine edlere Bildung zur Geltung zu bringen, gegen welche die französische Civilisation keine Macht mehr haben wird. Das wäre die rechte deutsche Propaganda und ein sehr wesentlicher Beitrag zur Wiederherstellung des europäischen Gleichgewichtes.*” Wagner 1868, 9.
- 75 Wagner 1868, 35.
- 76 Wagner 1868, 83.
- 77 Wagner, *German Art and German Policy*, PW IV, 42. In German: “*Denn nothwendig werden wir an den Punkt geleitet werden, wo es im Kampfe zwischen französischer Civilisation und deutschem Geiste sich um die Frage des Bestehens der deutschen Fürsten handelt. Sind die deutschen Fürsten nicht die treuen Träger des deutschen Geistes; helfen sie, bewußt oder unbewußt, der französischen Civilisation zum Siege über den von ihnen selbst noch so traurig verkannten und unbeachteten deutschen Geist, so sind ihre Tage gezählt, der Schlag komme von dort oder hier.*” Wagner 1868, 14.
- 78 Wagner 1975a, 152–155.
- 79 Wagner 1975a, 156–158.
- 80 Wagner 1868, 53–54.
- 81 Frantz 1859, 422. Frantz writes: “*Wie unvermeidlich ist darum der Zusammenstoss des Napoleonismus mit dem Germanismus!*”
- 82 “*Seine Mission ist, diese lügenhafte Civilisation zu vernichten ...*” Frantz 1859, 424. Frantz continues: “*Der Napoleonismus hat die Mission, seine Kraft an dem alten Europa zu versuchen, Deutschland hat die Mission, diese Kraft zu brechen und zu vernichten. Also ein Kampf auf Tod und Leben steht zwischen beiden in Aussicht.*”
- 83 Frantz 1865, 407, 415. Cf. Frantz 1859, 119–147.
- 84 Cf. Elias 1939, 1–10.
- 85 Cosima’s diary recording January 19, 1869, Wagner 1976a, 38.
- 86 Gregor-Dellin 1980, 580.
- 87 Cf. the different versions of the libretto: *I. Entwurf (Sommer 1845), II. und III. Entwurf (Winter 1861)*, SS XI, 344–394.
- 88 Breig 1986, 446.
- 89 Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, SS VII, 270–271.
- 90 Riemann 1894, 668–669.

- 91 Wagner to Hans von Bülow, telegram October 24, 1867, Wagner 1916, 260. In German: “*Heute Abend Schlag 8 Uhr wird das letzte C niedergeschrieben. Bitte um stille Mitfeier. Sachs.*”
- 92 Borchmeyer 1986, 159.
- 93 Dahlhaus 1979, 3–4.
- 94 Meyer’s *Konversations-Lexikon* 1878, 539. In German: “*Letzteres Werk (Meistersinger) machte bald die Runde über alle bedeutenderen deutschen Theater, und Wagner errang eine immer größere Popularität.*”
- 95 See e.g. “Gebetvor der Schlacht”, *Signale* 43/1870 (20 September 1870), 674.
96. “Das musikalische Jahr 1869. Ein Rückblick”, *Signale* 13/1870 (23 February 1870), 193. In German: “*Richard Wagner ist nun einmal jetzt der einzige, lebende deutsche Tondichter, dessen Bühnenwerke, trotz alle rästhetischen Proteste und persönlichen Angriffe, trotz aller Broschüren und Zeitungsartikel, sich immer mehr Terrain erobern und dieses Terrain auch zu behaupten wissen—weil ihr Schöpfer eben ein Genie ist, dessen Berechtigung man nicht leugnen, dessen eminente künstlerische Potenz und Consequenz man anerkennen muß, gleichviel, ob mit Widerstreben oder mit Sympathie.*”
- 97 “Das musikalische Jahr 1869. Ein Rückblick”, *Signale* 13/1870 (23 February 1870), 193.
- 98 “Die ‘Meistersinger’ in Carlsruhe”, *Signale* 16/1869 (11 February 1869), 242.
- 99 *Signale* 13/1870 (23 January 1870), 203; *Signale* 15/1870 (4 March 1870), 235.
- 100 “Opernrepertoire”, *Signale* 23/1870 (7 April 1870), 364; “Opernrepertoire”, *Signale* 24/1870 (13 April 1870), 380; “Opernrepertoire”, *Signale* 56/1870 (7 December 1870), 889.
- 101 “Opernrepertoire”, *Signale* 33/1870 (16 June 1870), 523; *Signale* 46/1870 (11 October 1870), 731; *Signale* 48/1870 (25 October 1870), 762.
- 102 Wilhelm Tappert: “Musikbriefaus Berlin”, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* April 15, 1870, 249. In German: “*grösser Spannung*”.
- 103 *Signale* 23/1870 (April 7, 1870), 360. In German: “*mit glänzendem Erfolg*”.

Chapter Six

“I Stir Them Ever to Strife ...”

The Outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War (1870)

In the years preceding the Franco-Prussian War, Wagner was constantly attempting to influence the German people through his writings. As with the opera *The Mastersingers*, these writings represented part of Wagner’s quest to be on the middle ground between Prussia and Bavaria. However, at the beginning of 1866, Wagner had already clearly taken a stand on the side of Prussia by seeking to influence the selection of Duke Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst for the post of Bavarian Prime Minister. Wagner hoped to reconcile the Bavarian and Prussian interests and did his best to pave the way towards a joint German policy.

By the summer of 1870, the relationship between France and Prussia had reached breaking-point. When the second part of Wagner’s *Ring, The Valkyrie* was premiered in Munich on 26th June, national pride was expressed through stormy applause: Brünnhilde’s war cry and Wotan’s words: “... for where bold spirits are moving, I stir them ever to strife” enflamed the public to open defiance.¹ The desire for armed conflict was palpable.

When France at last declared war on Germany on 19th July 1870, Wagner had just received French guests at Triebtschen: Mendès, Gautier, Saint-Saëns, Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, Duparc, and Joly had visited Munich for the premiere of *The Valkyrie*, and had decided also to pay a brief visit

to Switzerland.² Despite the nationality of his guests, Wagner did not conceal his joy; nor was Wagner's enthusiasm dulled by the knowledge that a declaration of war from France had been delivered by one of Cosima Wagner's relatives: Blandine, the wife of the French Prime Minister Emile Ollivier, was Cosima's sister and the daughter of Franz Liszt.

Wagner was especially delighted with Bavaria's willingness to support Prussia at the outbreak of the war: on the other hand, there was no other alternative. After the Austro-Prussian War, Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria had retained their independence, but had made a secret non-aggression pact with Prussia in which it was agreed that in the case of war their military forces were to be under to Prussian command.³ Thus the Bavarian army fought by secret agreement under the command of the Hohenzollern Crown Prince, later Emperor Frederick III. Bavaria was now openly incorporated in Prussia's plans.⁴

Describing Wagner's relief on the day war broke out, Cosima wrote: "The Bavarians, thank God, are going along with Prussia; the Austrians, disgraceful as always, with France."⁵ Wagner viewed the war mainly as a joint German conflict in which German culture would square its accounts with the spirit of decadence. Wagner's close friend, Constantin Frantz, who a few years earlier had seen French civilization as a danger to the European status quo, revised his views at the outbreak of the war. In 1870, he published a book *Die Naturlehre des Staates*, in which he expressed his suspicions regarding nationalist goals, which could easily serve an insatiable aspiration for power within the state.⁶ Wagner no longer concurred with Frantz' views. He saw the current events as free from any egoism. Although at the beginning of the war Prussia was leading the Germans politically, it was not solely to pursue its own power interests. Wagner's letter to Catulle and Judith Mendès on 12th August shows that he believed without question that the war was being waged not by Prussia but by all of Germany.⁷

The war was received with enthusiastic national fervour in German cultural circles. Volunteers, more than were needed, enrolled for service in the army. Among those who volunteered was Wagner's friend, Friedrich Nietzsche, who was soon hospitalized, having caught dysentery and diphtheria at the front.⁸ Wagner himself planned to participate in the war, but was, in the end, content to engage in propaganda.

The war against France created a wave of propagandist culture in Germany. Many composers penned pompous battle songs and put patriotic poems to music. Choral songs for the male voice suddenly became very popular, and the interest in "musical war literature"⁹ also soared. Examples

of this were seen in September 1870, which witnessed the publication of numerous compositions: amongst others, Friedrich Wilhelm Sering's *Vorwärts! Marsch!* for male choir, Carl Reinecke's *On 3rd September 1870 (Am 3. September 1870)* for a male choir with four parts with orchestra, J. Zech's cantata *Krieg und Frieden* for male voices with orchestra, Friedrich Kücken's cantata *Gebet vor der Schlacht* for male choir and brass, and Franz Abt's cycle of songs *Hoch Deutschland!*, the first song of which was "Deutschland über Alles".¹⁰ The demand for these songs was unbelievably high. For instance, during the war the Cologne publisher M. Schloß published twelve patriotic songs for male voice under the title *1870*, which sold altogether more than 10,000 copies. The cycle included amongst others Carl Wilhelm's song "Wache auf, Deutschland!" which had become well-known for its refrain, which referred to defence: "Kein Fuss breit von dem deutschen Land soll je französisch werden (No foothold of German soil shall become French)."¹¹

As a composer, Wagner did not take part in this jingoism: he considered himself mainly as an opera composer and did not wish to digress from this path. In his letter to Catulle and Judith Mendès, he wrote that he was convinced that Paris would soon be bombarded to ruins, and that Paris as a centre of art would be soon at an end.¹² Wagner denigrated the Parisian art life in his comedy *Eine Kapitulation*, which was set in Paris during the siege of 1870. The war with France inspired him to write the play. Wagner wanted to parody the superficiality of French art life and hoped that Hans Richter would compose the music for the play in a style which would ridicule Jacques Offenbach.¹³ He himself had no desire to compose the music for the play, although he did record in his *Brown Book* suitable musical ideas for this topic.¹⁴

Shortly before the outbreak of the war, Wagner had begun to plan to write about Beethoven. The name of the work started out as *Beethoven und die deutsche Nation*, but it was later shortened to just *Beethoven*. Wagner sketched his text during 3rd-19th July in his *Brown Book*.¹⁵ The manuscript was completed by the beginning of September.¹⁶

This text became an eulogy of national art. In Wagner's opinion, the truth can be told only by means of music: "Sculptors and poets give nation what it would like to seem, the musician what it really is."¹⁷ This idea stems from Schopenhauer, who thought that music could describe *ideas*.¹⁸ Therefore the composers, the geniuses of music, were of particular significance to the nation: music could provide the people with the way to

national self-consciousness, for through national music, it would be possible for the listeners to understand their own identity.

Wagner’s text dealt with Beethoven, but through this he analysed the social significance of genius. Undoubtedly, Wagner saw himself as one of the German masters; Bach, Beethoven, Wagner ... Now that the fight against the nexus of supernational culture had started, the national culture could be realized.¹⁹ After this purge, national culture would be needed more than ever before. This was the ‘hidden agenda’ running through the entire text. He stressed Beethoven’s significance for German identity—and simultaneously he made it clear that he himself was Beethoven’s successor. Thus Wagner became sanctified by history, as an interpreter of his people’s feelings: “a kind of German Meister.”²⁰

As has been previously argued, Wagner believed that his art and Germany’s destiny went hand in hand. Germany’s greatness was the source of life for his art, for Wagnerian art could only live in a strong, national atmosphere. As early as 1866, he had written to Constantin Frantz that without the greatness of Germany, his art would only be a dream. If one wanted to realize this dream, one should also strive for Germany’s greatness.²¹ At the outbreak of the war with France in 1870, Wagner really hoped that the way to greatness would soon be open, and that the Germans would at last truly be brothers.²² It was no wonder that Wagner was overwhelmed with enthusiasm when he heard that the German troops had defeated the French at the Battle of Sedan. Wagner received the news of this victory at the christening celebration of his son Siegfried, and according to Cosima, was moved to proclaim:

“I am bad for the Napoleons”, R. says. “When I was six months old there was the Battle of Leipzig, and now Fidi is hacking up the whole of France.”²³

This victory convinced Wagner that France was finished. Even though in August he still hoped that Paris would be burnt to the ground, his ultra-nationalist feelings were pacified soon after Sedan. The final pages of the text of *Beethoven* show a clear change in Wagner’s tone: the militant Wagner had become human. He emphasized the need to bless the world with prosperity, rather than conquering it. The Germans had to show their courage and their inner strength through dignified conduct: the victory should not be sealed in blood but with the fruits of a universal German culture.²⁴

Wagner’s belief in the birth of the new Germany was now unshakeable. The way had been opened, although this would not occur for at least four

months. Savouring the fruits of his art, he was ready to celebrate Prussia's victory as his own personal victory.

"Hail to the Emperor!": Wagner and the Unification of Germany

By January 1871, the Prussian victory over France was clear. As Eduard Baltzer argued in his booklet *Unter dem Kreuz des Krieges*, which appeared in 1871, Germany had won the first prize in the struggle, her lost mother country.²⁵ A unified Germany seemed to be nearer than ever.

This wish became reality, when the Prussian King Wilhelm I was proclaimed Emperor of a unified Germany at Versailles on 18th January 1871.²⁶ Wagner was overjoyed: "Wonderful progress is being made in establishing the new Reich!"²⁷ Overwhelmed by happiness, he wrote a poem *An das deutsche Heer vor Paris*, in which he praised the bravery and the virtues of the Germans. Now that Paris had been removed from the global map of culture, however, the German nation needed to find herself:

"A truce to victories! Your aims confine!
 Appear yourselves with modest Watch on Rhine!
 Leave us Paris, the gayest spot on earth,
 and rest contented with the fight of Wörth!"—
 But undeterr'd
 thou fightest on thy way in silent earnest,
 things ne'er yet heard
 to shape to deeds thy manly valour burnest.
 Thine own best lay
 in peace or fray,
 my glorious Folk, thou'lt ever find thee,
 tho' many a poet's fame grow faint behind thee.²⁸

It is interesting to notice that Wagner wanted Bismarck to know personally that he supported the change. He dedicated his poem to Bismarck, and sent it to Berlin to his old friend Lothar Bucher, who forwarded it to the headquarters of the German troops near Paris.²⁹ Bismarck received the poem and wrote Wagner a polite letter, on 21st of February, but made no promises to the composer, who was clearly longing for attention.³⁰

During the war, Wagner had believed in the goals of Prussia. He had even dreamt of being able to meet incognito with the Prussian leaders Bismarck and Moltke, so as to be able to understand them more clearly.³¹ Such an understanding was essential for Wagner, as he was hoping to be

appointed to an official position with responsibility for German culture; contacts with Berlin were therefore necessary. In order to flatter the leaders, Wagner decided to compose a patriotic march, the *Kaisermarsch*, which would be performed in the presence of the Emperor in Berlin. Although the idea of composing the march had originated from Dr Max Abraham, the representative of the Peters publishing company,³² Wagner soon warmed to the idea, which was evidently also to the advantage of the publisher; if Wagner were made a court musician of the new Germany, his operas would be performed more often, which in turn would mean greater profits for the publisher. The *Kaisermarsch*, which could become the national anthem of the new united Germany, would thus be a profitable investment.

Wagner started to work in January 1871, and completed the final score on 15th March.³³ On the following day he recorded in his *Brown Book* words full of praise and pomp for Kaiser Wilhelm and Germany:

Hail! Hail to the Emperor! King Wilhelm!
 Shield and bulwark of all Germans' freedom!
 Loftiest of crowns,
 how augustly it adorns your brow!
 Gloriously won,
 peace shall be your reward.
 Like the newly verdant oak,
 through you has risen up the German Reich:
 Hail to its forebears,
 to its banners
 bearing your device, which we carried
 when with you we defeated France!
 Defiance to the foe,
 protection for the friend,
 the German Reich for all peoples'
 advantage and salvation!³⁴

The score of the *Kaisermarsch* was published in April, and immediately aroused the attention of Wagner enthusiasts. A well-known Wagner sympathizer, Friedrich Stade, reviewed the score for the 21st April issue of the journal *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*. Stade began his review by claiming that of all the German artists none better than Wagner would deserve to be the symbol of a resurgent Germany: “If, among the present generation of German artists, there is any entitled to celebrate in his art resurgent Germany’s new strength and splendour, that person is undoubtedly Richard Wagner.”³⁵ Wagner, as Stade pointed out, had for decades struggled against

French art, and his art crystallized the essential characteristics of the German spirit; this same idea was conveyed in the composer's latest work, the *Kaisermarsch*: "Whereas, in Wagner's creations for the stage, we perceive the workings of the German spirit indirectly; in the *Kaisermarsch*, Wagner provides with us a vision of that German spirit, of the German character itself; a vision imbued on the one hand with strength and energy, on the other with gentleness and introspection."³⁶ According to Stade, this march cemented together the universal mission of German art, propagated by Wagner in his writings, and expressed by Stade with the words: "der Deutsche als Führer einer Sache Gottes (the German as the leader of God's work)". In Stade's opinion, the *Kaisermarsch* was a genuine national anthem, which would find its way into the hearts of the German people.³⁷

Publicly, Wagner's art and the world view he represented were linked to the political changes that had taken place. Wagner himself was also aiming for the same objectives, in taking advantage of the unification of Germany. On 20th and 21st April, whilst rehearsing for a concert in Leipzig on 26th April, Wagner experimentally conducted the *Kaisermarsch*, the first public performance of which was to take place in Berlin. The Leipzig music journal *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* gave an account of the event, flatteringly describing the composer as the "Kaiser of the new German Music" (*Kaiser der neudeutschen Musik*).³⁸

The *Kaisermarsch* was officially premiered on 5th May 1871, at a concert in the Berlin Opera House. Wagner conducted the work in the presence of the Emperor and the Empress.³⁹ In composing the work, Wagner had added to the score an instruction to be followed at the premiere; the work ended with a choral finale, but the chorus should not be on the stage, but was to be among the audience, which would give the work a spontaneous character, allowing the audience to join in the singing.⁴⁰ Through this strategy, one can see a miniature of the Wagnerian utopia: with the assistance of the German genius, the entire nation could experience its national unity through music. In fact, music constituted the unity, the experience of being part of a nation which, thus, was "imagined", consciously constructed. Accompanied by Wagner's music, the united Germany could find the bonds linking her to the German national spirit. Thus, in the performance of the *Kaisermarsch*, Wagner's art helped the people to discover the scope of patriotic emotions and values that they had longed for. The obstacle to the achievement of happiness is openly named as France. After the enemy had been vanquished, the German people should recognize their helper and their leader: "Defiance to the foe, protection for

the friend!" In the achievement of Euphoria, the helper is, of course, the artist; the leader is the Emperor whose political power makes it possible for art to reach its public. Ludwig II had now been replaced by Wilhelm I: the alliance between the artist and the ruling monarch was now to occur; if that was what people really desired.

On 7th May 1871, Berlin's largest newspaper, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, reported the *Kaisermarsch* concert in its Sunday Supplement. The concert had been anticipated in Berlin "with excitement". In the presence of the Emperor and Empress, Wagner had conducted an orchestra of no less than 120 musicians. The programme included the introduction and the finale of the first act of *Lohengrin*, Wotan's farewell from *The Valkyrie*, Beethoven's *Symphony in C Minor*, and the mighty *Kaisermarsch*, which was performed at the beginning of the concert and again as a finale, which the audience could now join in. The applause the audience gave to the march, was, according to the paper, "stormy".⁴¹

Cosima Wagner only laconically recorded the concert in her diary: "R. satisfied, and our dear good minister's wife beaming."⁴² The "minister's wife" was Countess Marie von Schleinitz, who was an ardent friend of Wagner's music and with Lothar Bucher Wagner's most important supporter in Berlin. This connection was, in fact, apparent to many contemporaries. In May 1871 the *Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that von Schleinitz was actively trying to find a significant position for her idol:

The Wagner cult in Berlin centres around the salons of the Hausminister, von Schleinitz, whose young, attractive and somewhat eccentric wife, née von Buch, enthuses over Wagner, and has succeeded in winning over certain journalists of the lower sort for her enthusiasm. It is a relatively small congregation (swollen by the addition of those whose dare not risk failing to appear wherever something is happening) which constitutes this "wide circle of the Maestro's admirers"; but artists of any repute are distinguished by their absence from these ovations. It is conceivable that the lady von Schleinitz hopes to see her protégé promoted to Director-General of Music; but this is quite unthinkable. Nonetheless, the anxiety thereover is so great, that even the local correspondents of the non-Berlin press have taken to warning Herr Wagner against dabbling in political intrigues in Berlin.⁴³

Apparently, this accusation did not reach Wagner's eyes, as he did not react to it; neither does Cosima Wagner's diary mention the attack by the Berlin newspaper.⁴⁴ Two years later Wagner did have to take action, when the new edition of the *Brockhaus Conversation Lexikon* referred to the same

rumours: "After the end of the Franco-Prussian War, certain influential friends at the Prussian Court undertook to have Wagner appointed to the post of Director-General of Music, unoccupied since the death of Meyerbeer ..."⁴⁵ On 25th March Wagner wrote a hurried rebuttal, in which he refuted the assumption that his friends had tried to acquire a position for him in Berlin.⁴⁶

Franz Merloff, an enthusiastic Wagnerian, described Wagner's art as a "German national drama".⁴⁷ It seemed that Wagner was hoping that the new German Empire would make his art the cornerstone of national art. This was emphasized by Wagner in a letter to Ludwig on 1st March 1871: "My aim is to call into existence a national German undertaking, the direction of which may be placed entirely in my own hands alone."⁴⁸ Wagner had promised to Ludwig that he would put forward his ideas in public in Berlin. He had already (in fact, in 1869) been elected a member of the Prussian Academy of Arts, where he was invited to give a lecture when visiting Berlin on 29th April 1871.⁴⁹

Wagner believed that his moment of destiny had come. The unitarian Germany had come into existence, and it could help him make his dreams a serious reality, at the concrete level. He no longer sought Ludwig's assistance; neither did he plan any role for Munich as a Wagnerian centre. The iron image of Bismarck glowed in his mind. What was now required was public acceptance and, above all, large financial support from the state.

Notes

- 1 In German: "*denn wo kühn Kräfte sich regen, da rat' ich offen zum Krieg*". Cf. Watson 1979, 247.
- 2 Fischer-Dieskau 1974, 73–74; Raff 1988, 141; Poschinger 1900, 290. Cf. Bussmann 1981, 601.
- 3 Raff 1988, 134–135; Bussmann 1981, 576.
- 4 Bussmann 1981, 601–602; Gutman 1968, 308.
- 5 Cosima's diary recording July 19, 1870, Wagner 1978, 246. In German: "*Die Bayern, Gott sei Dank, gehen mit Preussen, die Österreicher aber in gewohnter Schmach mit Frankreich.*" Wagner 1976a, 259.
- 6 Frantz 1870, 426–427.
- 7 Wagner to Catulle and Judith Mendès August 12, 1870, Wagner 1935, 316–320.
- 8 Fischer-Dieskau 1974, 74–75.
- 9 See "Gebet vor der Schlacht", Signale September 20, 1870, 674.

- 10 Signale September 20, 1870; Signale September 27, 1870. See also "Carl Wilhelm", Signale August 29, 1870, 631.
- 11 "Carl Wilhelm", Signale August 29, 1870, 631.
- 12 Wagner to Catulle and Judith Mendès August 12, 1870, Wagner 1935, 319–320.
- 13 Watson 1979, 249; Wagner 1975a, 216–220. See also Wagner, *Eine Kapitulation*, SS IX, 3–41.
- 14 Wagner 1975a, 216–220. Cf. Kapp 1918, 107.
- 15 Cf. Wagner 1975a, 210.
- 16 KLRW V, 215.
- 17 Wagner 1980b, 177. In German: "*Die Bildner und Dichter geben der Nation was sie scheinen möchte, der Musiker was sie in Wahrheit ist.*" Wagner 1975a, 210.
- 18 Wagner 1870, 5–6.
- 19 Wagner 1976a, 272.
- 20 Cf. Wagner 1870, 66–70.
- 21 Wagner to Constantin Frantz March 19, 1866, KLRW IV, 135.
- 22 See e.g. Wagner 1976a, 265. Cf. Bismarck's letter to King Wilhelm I November 20, 1869 ("Süddeutsche Politik und französische Gefahr"), Bismarck 1968, 365–369.
- 23 Cosima's diary recording September 4, 1870, Wagner 1978, 266. In German: "*Ich bin den Napoléons verderblich. Wie ich sechs Monate war, kam die Schlacht bei Leipzig, und Fidi manscht das ganze Frankreich zusammen.*" Wagner 1976a, 280.
- 24 Wagner 1870, 73.
- 25 Baltzer 1871, 31.
- 26 Bussmann 1981, 612.
- 27 Wagner to Alwine Frommann February 1, 1871, Wagner 1987, 780. In German: "*Der Gang der Bildung des neuen Reiches ist wundervoll!*" Wagner 1986, 338.
- 28 PW V, 2. In German: "*'Zu viel des Sieg's! Mög't ihr bescheid'ner sein:/ begnügt euch friedlich mit der Wacht am Rhein!// Lasst uns Paris, wo sich's so hübsch verschwört,/ und seid zufrieden mit der Schlacht bei Wörth!'/ doch unbethört/ in erstem Schweigen schläg'st du deine Schlachten;/ was unerhört,/ das zu gewinnen ist dein männlich Trachten./ Dein eig'nes Lied/ in Krieg und Fried'/ wirst Du, mein herrlich Volk, Dir finden,/ mög' drob auch mancher Dichterruhm verschwinden!'*" SS IX, 1–2.
- 29 Cosima's diary entry January 26, 1871, Wagner 1976a, 347. See also Josserand 1981, 258–259; Westernhagen 1979a, 409; Schieder 1978, 580; Gutman 1968, 310–311.
- 30 Bismarck to Wagner February 21, 1871, III A 11–1, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 31 Cosima's diary entry October 9, 1870, Wagner 1976a, 297.
- 32 See e.g. Wagner's letter to Alwine Frommann February 1, 1871, Wagner 1986, 338.
- 33 KLRW V, 217.

- 34 Wagner 1980b, 188–189; Wagner 1975a, 224. Cf. Richard Wagner: *Kaiser-Marsch für grosses Fest-Orchester*. C.F. Peters, Leipzig und Berlin 1871. In German: “*Heil! Heil dem Kaiser! König Wilhelm!// Aller Deutschen Hort und Freiheitswehr!// Höchste der Kronen,/ Wie ziert Dein Haupt sie hehr!// Ruhmreich gewonnen soll Frieden Dir lohnen!// Der neu ergrünten Eiche gleich/ erstand durch Dich das deutsche Reich:// Heil seinen Ahnen,/ seinen Fahnen,/ die Dich führten, die wir trugen,/ als mit Dir wir Frankreich schlugen!// Trutz dem Feind,/ Schutz dem Freund/ allem Volk das deutsche Reich/ zu Heil und Nutz!*”
- 35 Musikalisches Wochenblatt April 21, 1871. In German: “*Wenn Einer unter den lebenden deutschen Künstlern berechtigt und berufen ist, das Wiedererstehen Deutschlands in neuer Kraft und Hoheit durch seine Kunst zu feiern, so ist es gewiss Richard Wagner.*”
- 36 Musikalisches Wochenblatt April 21, 1871. In German: “*Während wir in Wagner’s dramatischen Schöpfungen mittelbar das Wirken deutschen Geistes erkennen, gibt uns Wagner im Kaiser-Marsch gleichsam ein Bild dieses deutschen Geistes, des deutschen Charakters selbst, ein Bild, dessen Grundzüge Kraft und Energie auf der einen, Milde und Innigkeit auf der anderen Seite sind.*”
- 37 Musikalisches Wochenblatt April 21, 1871.
- 38 Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung April 26, 1871.
- 39 Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung May 17, 1871. Cf. Tappert 1884, 24.
- 40 Cf. Wagner 1975a, 222.
- 41 Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung May 7, 1871 (Sonntags-Beilage).
- 42 Cosima’s diary recording May 5, 1871, Wagner 1980, 363. In German: “*Richard zufrieden, die Ministerin strahlend.*” Wagner 1976a, 385.
- 43 Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung May 17, 1871. In German: “*Der Ausgangspunkt für den Wagner-Cultus in Berlin ist in den Salons des Hausministers v. Schleinitz, dessen junge, schöne und etwas excentrische Frau, eine geborene v. Buch, für Wagner schwärmt und einige Journalisten untergeordneten Ranges zu Organen dieser Schwärmerei gewonnen hat. Eine verhältnissmässig kleine Gemeinde mit dem Appendix aller derjenigen, die nirgends fehlen dürfen, wo etwas vorgeht, bildet den ‘grossen Kreis der Verehrer des Meisters’, während Künstler von Namen bei allen bisherigen Ovationen durch ihre Abwesenheit glänzten. Möglich, dass Frau v. Schleinitz ihren Protégé zum General-Musikdirector befördert zu sehen wünschte; doch ist daran nicht zu denken. Gleichwohl ist die Furcht davor so gross, dass in Berliner Correspondenzen auswärtiger Blätter Herr Wagner davor gewarnt wird, in Berlin politische Intriguen zu spinnen.*”
- 44 See e.g. Wagner 1976a, 389–407.
- 45 Brockhaus Conversations-Lexikon 1873, 686. In German: “*Nach Beendigung des deutsch-französischen Krieges suchten einflussreiche Freunde am preussischen Hofe Wagner nach Berlin in die seit Meyerbeer’s Tode unbesetzte Stelle eines Generalmusikdirectors zu bringen ...*”
- 46 Wagner, *Protest*, SS XVI, 54.
- 47 Merloff 1873, 16.

- 48 Wagner to Ludwg March 1, 1871, KLRW II, 319. In German: *“Mein Zweck ist (...) ein deutsches National-Unternehmen hervorzurufen, dessen Leitung natürlich mir gänzlich allein in die Hände gelegt werden darf ...”*
- 49 Wagner to Ludwig March 1, 1871, KLRW II, 319. Cf. “Personalnachrichten Richard Wagner”, Archiv der Preussischen Akademie der Künste (Akademie der Künste, Berlin).

Part III

THE PATHS OF THE ARTIST AND THE STATE DIVERGE

Chapter Seven

Disappointment with the New Germany

Bismarck's Relationship with Wagner

Wagner had already earlier realized that in his relationship with Prussia he could not ignore Otto von Bismarck. The Iron Chancellor's grip on power was so strong that even the King of Prussia had been reduced to a non-entity. As a monarchist, Wagner looked down on the weak-willed Wilhelm I with some contempt. The Prussian King had voluntarily relinquished his power in favour of the ambitious "Junker".

The relationship between Wagner and Bismarck has traditionally been a sensitive question in Wagner research. The significance of the relationship has been emphasized or played down, depending upon the prevailing political situation. Wagner's court biographer, Carl Friedrich Glasenapp, described the relationship as free from problems, and even warm: an encounter of two royalties.¹ Glasenapp's biography represented the official view of the Bayreuth Circle, and therefore the emphasis on good relationship was of great importance.

Bismarck's and Wagner's spiritual unity was also stressed by Moritz Wirth in his work *Bismarck, Wagner, Rodbertus, drei deutsche Meister*. In Wirth's opinion, Bismarck and Wagner were more than just contemporaries:

They are workers engaged in one and the same great labour. Bismarck and Wagner, although their quest led them to tasks which they performed at opposed ends of our

national undertaking, nonetheless shared the same goal: to defend the heart of Germany against foreign forays. Each of them, in his own field, has strenuously repulsed the intrusions of past centuries by foreign powers, and reinstated the Germans as lords of their own domain and their own skills. Moreover, the activities of the Artist and the Statesman are complementary not merely in formal terms; they in truth each create the conditions for and promote the other. A people that wishes to have an art of its own needs for this purpose the firm foundation of its national independence.²

According to Wirth, Bismarck and Wagner acted in different fields of culture, but they had common goals, the struggle for independence and unification against other nations.

An article of special interest written by August Püringer, under the title “Richard Wagner und Bismarck”, was published in the programme booklet for the 1924 Bayreuth Festival. This was the first Festival to be arranged after the 1914–1918 War, and it became a great national occasion. The performance of *The Mastersingers* ended with the song “Deutschland über Alles”, joined in both by performers and audience (including General Ludendorff).³ It is therefore not surprising that the article stresses Wagner’s links with Bismarck: the spiritual and military forces were to go hand in hand: “The spirit of Wagner and Bismarck: these alone, in conjunction, create our German salvation!”⁴ Püringer sees these two as the leading geniuses of the German nation, united by shared goals.

A lower profile in the scrutiny of the Bismarck-Wagner relationship is represented by Curt von Westernhagen, who is notorious for his Nazi sympathies. In 1935, Curt von Westernhagen wrote in *Richard Wagners Kampf gegen die seelische Fremdherrschaft*, dedicated to German youth, that Wagner, “*der wundervolle Volksmann*” (sic!), was a great man comparable to Luther, and that Wagner’s and Bismarck’s encounter was “an important moment in the history of Germany”.⁵ After the Second World War, “the political Wagner” was in ruins, and it is no wonder that Westernhagen later played down the significance of the Bismarck-Wagner relationship. On the whole, in more recent Wagner literature this subject has scarcely been touched upon. For instance, in the *Richard Wagner-Handbuch* anthology (1986), edited by Ulrich Müller and Peter Wapnewski, which could be termed a summary of Wagner research during the 1980s, there is no article specifically devoted to the Bismarck-Wagner relationship, whereas Wagner’s relationships with Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Ludwig II have been accepted for scrutiny.⁶

For Wagner, his relationship with Bismarck was not as ideologically important as his relationship with Ludwig (contrary to what Wirth and Püringer claim), but was certainly of equal importance from a political standpoint.

Wagner's contact with Bismarck was not limited to his poem "An das deutsche Heer vor Paris" or to the Chancellor's brief reply. Wagner wished to meet Bismarck in person as soon as possible.

Through the help of Lothar Bucher and Marie von Schleinitz, he succeeded in arranging an audience during his visit to Berlin. On 3rd May 1871, two days before his successful concert, Wagner was introduced to Bismarck. During their uneventful meeting, Wagner was only able to exchange a few brief words on art and politics. According to Cosima's diary, Wagner felt that their meeting had been a success, although he had had no time in which to request support for his plans. Wagner was impressed by Bismarck's modest personality. Cosima wrote of the incident:

I return home and R. drives to see the Prince, who had invited him. He returns highly satisfied, a great and simple character having been revealed to him. When R. gives expression to his respect, Bismarck says, "The only thing that can count as an accomplishment is that now and then I have obtained a signature." And then, "All I did was to find the hole in the crown through which the smoke could rise." R. is utterly enchanted with the genuine charm of his character, not a trace of reticence, an easy tone, the most cordial communicativeness, all of it arousing trust and sympathy. "But", says R., "we can only observe each other, each in his own sphere; to have anything to do with him, to win him over, to ask him to support my cause, would not occur to me. But this meeting remains very precious to me."⁷

Although this was recorded in Cosima's diary, there is no clear proof of the time it was entered. The entry for 3rd May is barely given space in Part 3 of the diary (Cosima made her entries in separate notebooks). On the final page of the binding the text appears to be faded, but has been partly rewritten in fresh ink from the point: "R. fährt zum Fürsten ... (R. drives to see the Prince ...)". This raises the question: "When was the text rewritten, and by whom?" Martin Gregor-Dellin, editor of Cosima's diaries, comes to the conclusion that Wagner himself may have been the "culprit".⁸

The passage is in fresh ink, in an unsteady hand, and there is a lack of logic which is striking in certain characters (for instance R, d, B). Attention should, however, be paid to the fact that whoever corrected the passage has followed the imprint which can be seen beneath the new letters, in which case the penmanship of the writer is mere copying, not their natural style of

writing. It is thus also possible that Cosima herself may have rewritten the passage in an unsteady hand, as she would have had to follow the previously written letters.

Gregor-Dellin's conclusion is apparently based on the assumption that Richard's description of the meeting to Cosima may have been far more negative in character, and later he could have corrected this story by giving it a more positive tone. The revised version is exaggeratedly positive in tone, of which Bismarck himself gave an entirely different account, though there are very few differences as far as the events are concerned. Otto von Bismarck gave the following account of Richard Wagner's visit to Councillor of State Heinrich von Poschinger:

No petition (money for Bayreuth) was presented. We were taken to sit on a sofa, and he probably conceived that a duet would be played out between us; but it turned out somewhat differently. The musical Maestro failed to garner from me a sufficient eulogy; he thus declined to unbend, and went away disappointed.⁹

Bismarck therefore evidently felt that the visit was far from a success, and that Wagner had left in disappointment. It is apparent that the evidence of Bismarck's account of the meeting is considerably more credible than that in Cosima's diary. Wagner may have later felt the need to embellish his story; unfortunately, we do not know when the diary entry, strictly speaking, was written.

It is, however, in many ways irrelevant whether Richard or Cosima corrected the text; they will hardly have had differences of opinion concerning the description of the situation. It is much more important to examine whether the content has been changed during the subsequent textual revision. The best method of scrutinizing the relationship between the original and the strengthened characters in the text is to focus attention on the initials and the broadly arched characters (z, h, t, y, j, p, f, etc.). Even with the help of a magnifying glass, it is difficult to conclude anything from the small characters (for instance, a, e, i, o, u), as the new darker ink has totally covered the underlying, weaker ink. However, from the broadly arched characters one can notice the points where the pen has not been capable of following the lower imprint of the previous pen. As a result of this comparison, one can conclude that the characters tally with each other. The only exception is the first letter "g" of the word "gegenseitig" in which there is a broad rising curve, as if it had originally been an "f". As the other

letters are exactly analogous, this may originally have been a writing error.¹⁰

In summation, it seems that the content of the diary has not been changed, even though the text has been strengthened. It is therefore plausible to assume that the reason for the strengthening was practical, to ensure the legibility of the ink. The fact that during one of the most interesting passages of the diary, the supply of ink happened to be exhausted, is no more than a coincidence.

Though there is reason to examine in this connection the authenticity of the diary from the perspective of external source criticism, it would be more relevant to scrutinize the events that took place on 3rd May from an internal point of view, that is, to examine, above all, to what extent *Cosima's* diary describes *Richard's* experiences and feelings. In terms of the concrete events, Cosima's and Bismarck's descriptions are fairly similar: Richard and Bismarck conversed, but failed to connect with each other, and Richard was forced to leave empty-handed without the support he so desired for his plans. The tone of the description, however, is very different. Bismarck shows neither respect nor admiration, whereas, according to Cosima's diary, Richard feels a strong admiration for Bismarck.

Wagner's letter of 2nd July 1865 to Ludwig II reveals that Cosima's diary was meant to be a direct continuation of the autobiography *Mein Leben*.¹¹ Thus, the diary had at least some publicity value. It was by no means insignificant how the facts were shaped. We will never know what Richard really said to Cosima on the evening of May 3rd, on returning from his reception with Bismarck, but he probably confided about everything that had taken place, since in its external framework the description is similar to Bismarck's. It is probable that Richard explained what the meeting was really like, and therefore the text includes a few references to remoteness ("each in his own sphere"). In her text, Cosima presumably emphasized the positive sides of the meeting more than Richard's own account gave grounds for.

Although Wirth, Püringer, and Westernhagen have seen a kind of symbolic value in Wagner's and Bismarck's encounters, the practical advantage of the meeting was minimal. Bismarck offered a series of compliments, to which he himself attached no importance. Bismarck commented to Poschinger that Wagner did not request any financial support, although Bismarck had expected him to do so. This was also admitted by Cosima: when the opportunity had been offered, the essential had been

“forgotten”. Apparently Bismarck handled Wagner with such skill that no occasion to make his request presented itself.

After the meeting, Wagner wrote to Bismarck on two occasions, once in 1873 and again in 1875. On 24th June Wagner offered Bismarck the possibility of participation in the rebirth of the German spirit which would take place through his art. In addition, he reminded Bismarck of another great statesman, Frederick the Great, who had neglected his people.¹² Though Wagner had made it clear that he was a great admirer of the Kaiser, Bismarck did not trouble to reply to the letter.¹³

Receiving no reply, Wagner’s belief in support from the state diminished even further. It is no wonder that in her diary Cosima puts a response in the mouth of the Hungarian, Balaszky: “If B. (Bismarck) were really pursuing pan-German policies and not a specifically Prussian one, surely he would support the Wagner undertaking!”¹⁴

In December 1875, Wagner once again sought support from Berlin.¹⁵ This time he did receive a reply, although brief, in which Bismarck refused Wagner any assistance, political or otherwise; he would do better to turn directly to the Constituent Assembly, and refrain from sending letters to the busy Chancellor.¹⁶ In April 1876 Wagner attempted to write directly to Kaiser Wilhelm, but again with poor results.¹⁷

In the course of time, Wagner lapsed into disillusionment. Bismarck had proven to be as anti-cultural as he had thought him to be during his Munich years. Wagner’s ambivalent attitude towards Bismarck is mentioned in Ludwig Schemann’s *Memoirs*. According to Schemann, Wagner had been a genuine admirer of the Chancellor, but this admiration gradually diminished. Schemann tells of a series of events that occurred in December 1877, when this bitterness was revealed to him:

At that time (December 1877) I myself witnessed the eruption (to put it mildly) of one of Wagner’s bitterest and heartfelt complaints against Bismarck; i.e., that Bismarck had failed to inhibit the procreation of Jewry in the womb of the German nation. His lament over the unspeakable misery caused to our nation by the Jews culminated in a description of the state of the German farmer, who would soon own not a single sod of his own land, upon which to cultivate his sustenance. “And all this takes place under the eyes of that ‘German’, Bismarck!”¹⁸

Schemann had not noticed Wagner’s bitterness until 1877, although, without doubt, Wagner’s disbelief in Bismarck had begun much earlier, probably as early as in May 1871, soon after their first encounter.

Wagner thus came to understand that Bismarck was not to be the patron of his art. As long as Bismarck had influence, Wagner would never become the court musician of the unified Germany.

Very few remarks are to be found on the arts in Bismarck's own writings; he was more a politician than a patron of culture. If Bismarck, at times, showed an interest in the arts, his motivations were political. An interesting piece of evidence which supports this, and which has not been hitherto treated in the Wagner research, is as follows: In the autumn of 1888, five years after the death of Wagner, Cosima once again attempted to secure state support for the Bayreuth Festival, and the Emperor asked Bismarck for a comment. Bismarck stated that in his opinion the festival should not be placed under Imperial guardianship. In regard to this, Bismarck revealed his own motives concerning Wagner. From the perspective of German unity, it was extremely important to maintain Bavaria's trust in the German Empire. The relationship with Wagner, prior to 1871, had been important, since Wagner had assisted in reconciling Prussian and Bavarian interests. The subsequent situation, however, was quite different. Bismarck even suggested that personal relations with Bayreuth would lead to problems in the Reich's internal policy: "I am therefore persuaded that compliance with the request of Frau Cosima Wagner would be an act of mercy, the financial costs of which His Eternal Majesty could not evade, and that a Protectorate of His Eternal Majesty domiciled in Bayreuth would cause significant harm to the internal policies of the German Empire."¹⁹

This source illustrates how Bismarck's interest in Wagner changed in accordance with the political situation. To Bismarck, Wagner's musical endeavours were of no significance; neither did he wish to know what kind of utopia Germany would be in Wagner's vision, as a result of its ennoblement through art. Despite granting Wagner a brief audience, Bismarck refrained from any sign of favour towards the composer. Wagner's attempts to acquire a position in the capital city of the Empire had thus failed one by one.

"Without Germany's Greatness My Art Was Only a Dream ..."

As has been previously argued, Wagner wanted to combine his art with the future of Germany. His art would only thrive, if Germany became a state which favoured art and which gave art a position of significance. In April 1866 Wagner wrote to his friend Julius Fröbel the ominous words: "With Germany's birth and prosperity my artistic ideal stands or falls: only in the

former can the latter prosper.”²⁰ Wagner meant not political, but cultural greatness: “Without Germany’s greatness my art was only a dream . . .”²¹

Wagner equated “Germany’s greatness” with *die deutsche Herrlichkeit*, “the German splendour” of which he dreamt in his writings. Germany’s spiritual force was interpreted by Wagner as a return to the past, an emphasis on the original and natural, the improvement of the genuinely national elements, at the expense of cosmopolitan and fashionable phenomena, and, what was more significant, the transformation of international pseudo-ideals into German virtues. Wagner believed that his art could only achieve a significant position in German culture if such changes were really achieved. He therefore actively participated in the various phases of the *Reichsgründung*, continuously seeking support from the summit of the hierarchy.

Wagner strove for political recognition and actively followed international politics. He rejoiced at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, for this meant that the concrete battle against the nexus of “shameless fashion” had now been joined.²² When the united Germany came into being in January 1871, French civilization had been driven from German soil; the way to the establishment of genius had finally begun.

It is clear that to Wagner, the opposition to culture by Prussian politicians and especially by Bismarck was a grave disappointment. Although Cosima’s diary shows that Wagner had been enthusiastic about the meeting with Bismarck on May 3rd 1871, he was evidently aware that Bismarck’s ideas were not in tune with his own. Bismarck was a Prussian patriot: the unification had not made him a German. This interpretation of Wagner’s conclusions has been proposed by Alan David Aberbach in *The Ideas of Richard Wagner* (1984); after unification, Bismarck seemed unable to outgrow the idea of the division of the German people into Prussians and other Germans.²³

In 1871 Wagner’s position as an artist striving for cultural-political goals (and not only for the performance of his works) was still uncertain. The turning-point in Wagner’s popularity was 1868, after which he had a stable circle of faithful supporters; despite this, his popularity was not undivided. The public was divided into two camps: some worshipped Wagner, whilst others detested him. His potential audience thus consisted of two categories: Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians.

In 1871, the situation became even more tense as rumours of Wagner’s attempts to gain a position in Berlin had spread, and references to Wagner began to appear with greater frequency in the press: sometimes praised as the Emperor of German music, and sometimes criticized as a dilettante who

mixed philosophizing and composing.²⁴ Despite the opposition, the ardent Wagner enthusiasts did not remain silent. In December 1871, Peter Cornelius, one of Wagner's best friends, wrote an article in two parts for the Viennese paper *Deutsche Zeitung*, "Deutsche Kunst und Richard Wagner", which attempted—as was explained in the editor's footnote—to show that Richard Wagner and the German question were inseparably linked.²⁵ Cornelius presents Wagner as the Columbus of Art, a pioneer genius, who even when still young, had risen to fight for the holy German cause:

Wagner was born at a propitious moment, in the same year as the Battle of Leipzig, the thunder of whose artillery resounded around his cradle. While the rest of us still slept in peace, he awoke to battle; and standing alone, wrestling with his fateful life, he fought for the victory of the German cause. With an immensity of spirit, he has combined all the monumental powers of the era in his creative work.²⁶

It is interesting to note that Cornelius stresses the points which Wagner himself put forward; Wagner, too, had compared himself to Columbus and had referred to the Battle of Leipzig as the starting-point of his own national feelings, and also often complained how he had struggled alone for the German spirit.²⁷

Cornelius' article was a typical Wagnerian text: the "maestro" himself seemed to speak through it. Wagner enthusiasts diligently studied their idol's ideas. From this perspective, Ludwig II could be classified as being a Wagnerian prototype, for, having read all the available Wagner texts (more so than Wagner's music), he knew Wagner's world of thought.

The Wagnerians believed that their idol was the most German of all Germans, and that he had much to give the German nation, if only he were acknowledged as a national composer. Wagner's Germanic ideal was emphasized by Franz Merloff in his pamphlet *Richard Wagner und das Deutschtum* which appeared in 1873. Merloff set out to show that Wagner was a true pioneer of the unification of Germany, a prophet of the nation: "Richard Wagner, I would like to say, was a prophet, foreseeing the massive work of German unification which has brought together the German Houses in loyalty and unity, and thus to subsequent glory."²⁸ Merloff's association of Wagner's art with the struggle for unification clearly reflects how nationalism can be seen as a "weapon" against other nationalities: "He was the one who (...) with friendly, beautiful weapons, music and poetry, helped us to become united!"²⁹ Franz Merloff hoped that the new German Reich would finally take Wagner under its patronage.

During 1864–71, Wagner had sought political support from Bavarian and Prussian leaders. The contact with Bavaria came to nothing when it became apparent that the young King did not have enough political power. Besides, Bavaria literally seemed to be out of favour as the result of Bismarck's strict policy. Bismarck maintained contact as long as Wagner was useful to Prussia in concrete terms; once Wilhelm I had been proclaimed Emperor of the unified Germany, Wagner was no longer needed to influence Ludwig II. Bismarck did not show the slightest interest in patronizing Wagner as an artist.

In the course of time, Wagner came to understand that his co-operation with Bavaria and with Prussia had been of no help to him whatsoever. In a letter to Hans von Bülow at the beginning of June 1864, Wagner put forward a future schedule according to which his career was to reach its pinnacle with the performance of *Parsifal* in 1871–72, and believed that in 1873 he could stop composing and begin to prepare for his death.³⁰ When 1871 came, it was evident that the schedule no longer held.

In 1863, in the preface to the libretto for *The Ring of the Nibelung*, Wagner had proposed two possibilities for the accomplishment of his plan. The first was to find a monarch who would be prepared to benefit art and to finance the megalomaniac plan.³¹ Ludwig II wished to be such a monarch, but he was not, after all politically suitable for the task. The Duke of Thurn und Taxis offered Wagner support, but since at that time Wagner was still relying on Ludwig II, he did not accept the offer.

If the monarchs were not willing to devote themselves to art, one possibility remained: the bourgeois intellectuals (*Bildungsbürgertum*). Another possibility envisaged by Wagner was a joint effort by wealthy art-loving citizens, who could contribute to the fulfilment of the dream. Wagner stressed on many occasions in his writings the significance of the people.³² He really hoped for the trust of all sections of society. As for economic support, he now relied solely upon the bourgeois class.³³

During the years 1864–71, Wagner had actively been striving toward the summit of the political hierarchy, but he never forgot another channel of influence, the people. When Germany was unified in 1871, Wagner began to fulfil his dream without official support. The Emperor evidently had nothing to contribute to his dream, and the only means of achieving his goals was through gradual cultural influence. Wagner decided to put his idea of a music festival into effect without royal support. The establishment of the Bayreuth Festival, and the attempt to achieve status in the history of music

by directly influencing music historians, were both aims at acquiring a position of stability.

The third objective, probably even more important, was the establishing of a circle of loyal supporters. This was the birth of the Bayreuth Circle (*Bayreuther Kreis*), whose purpose was to interpret the master's words after his death. At the end of this study, I will deal with this institutionalization, as it was Wagner's last attempt to influence the national self-knowledge of Germany. Wagner still had the strength to hope that he would become the centre-point of this self-identification.

Notes

- 1 Glasenapp 1904, 358.
- 2 Wirth 1883, 152. In German: "*Sie sind Arbeiter am einem und demselben grossen Werke. Bismarck und Wagner, obwohl an den entgegengesetzten Enden unseres nationalen Arbeitsfeldes ihre Aufgaben suchend und lösend, hatten doch beide dasselbe Ziel: die Vertheidigung des deutschen Wesens gegen das Ausland. Beide schliessen, jeder auf seinem Gebiete, den Zustand eines mehrhundertjährigen Eingreifens fremder Mächte kräftig ab und machen den Deutschen zum Herrn seines Bodens und seiner Fähigkeiten. Auch gehen die Thätigkeiten des Künstlers und die des Staatsmannes nicht blos äusserlich neben einander her, sondern bedingen und fordern sich gegenseitig. Ein Volk, das eine eigene Kunst haben will, bedarf dazu des starken Unterbaues der nationalen Selbstständigkeit.*"
- 3 Hanisch 1986, 640; Bauer 1986, 663.
- 4 Püringer 1924, 182. In German: "*Wagners und Bismarcks Geist; nur sie zusammen schaffen uns Deutschen Heil!*"
- 5 Westernhagen 1935, 93, 111. In German: "*ein bedeutender Augenblick der deutschen Geschichte*".
- 6 *Richard-Wagner-Handbuch*. Edited by Ulrich Müller and Peter Wapnewski (Stuttgart 1986).
- 7 Cosima's diary entry May 3, 1871, Wagner 1978, 367. In German: "*Ich kehre heim und R. fährt zum Fürsten, wo er eingeladen ist. Er kommt höchst befriedigt zurück, eine große einfache Natur hat sich ihm dargestellt. Wie R. ihm seine Verehrung bezeigt, sagt Bismarck: "das einzige, was ein Verdienst genannt werden kann, ist daß ich ab und zu eine unterschrift erlangt habe." Und dann: "ich habe nur in der Krone das Loch ausfindig gemacht durch welches der Rauch durch kann." R. ist ganz entzückt von der ächten Liebeswürdigkeit dieses Naturells, keine Spur von Reticenz, eine leichte Sprache, die herzlichste Mittheilbarkeit, alles Vertrauen und Sympathie einflößend. Aber sagt R., wir können uns nur gegenseitig beobachten, jeder in seiner Sphäre, mit ihm etwas zu thun haben, ihn für mich zu gewinnen, meine Sache zu unterstützen ihn zu bitten, käme mir nicht bei. Aber diese Begegnung bleibt mir von höchstem Wert.*" Wagner 1976a, 384.
- 8 Cf. Gregor-Dellin's note in Wagner 1976a, 384.

- 9 Poschinger 1919, 264–268. In German: “*Ein Petitium (Geld für Bayreuth) hatte er nicht vorgebracht. Man setzte uns zusammen auf ein Sofa, und da dachte er wohl, daß sich zwischen uns ein Duett entspinnen würde, aber es kam anders. Der Meister der Töne erntete wohl von mir nicht genug Elogen, er kam nicht zur Entfaltung und ging enttäuscht.*”
- 10 Cosima Wagner’s diary entry May 3, 1871, “Cosima Wagner: Tagebücher”, Hs 220/III, Richard-Wagner-Gedenkstätte der Stadt Bayreuth.
- 11 Wagner to Ludwig July 21/22, 1865, KLRW I, 129.
- 12 Wagner to Otto von Bismarck June 24, 1873, Wagner 1986, 367. See also Wagner’s letter to Bismarck (Urschrift), IA 13 c, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 13 See e.g. Newman 1941b, 384–385.
- 14 Cosima’s diary entry October 9, 1874. In German: “*Wenn Bismarck wirklich große deutsche Politik triebe, keine spieziell preußische, wie würde er das Wagner’sche Unternehmen unterstützen!*” Wagner 1976a, 858.
- 15 Wagner to Bismarck December 28, 1875 (Urschrift), I A 14a, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 16 Bismarck to Wagner January 15, 1876, III A 11–1, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 17 Wagner to Wilhelm I April 1876 (undated), Wagner 1986, 392–393.
- 18 Schemann 1902, 46. In German: “*Ich selbst war einmal (Dezember 1877) Zeuge, wie eine der bittersten Beschwerden, die Wagner gegen Bismarck auf dem Herzen hatte, die nämlich, daß dieser der Großzüchtung des Judenthums im deutschen Volksleibe, zum Mindesten gesagt, nicht gewehrt habe, sich in elementarer Weise aus seinem Inneren hervorrang. Seine Klagen über das unsägliche Elend, das die Juden über unser Volk gebracht, gipfelten in der Schilderung des Schicksals des deutschen Bauern, der bald keine Scholle eigenen Bodens mehr besitzen werde, um sein Frühstück darauf zu verzehren. ‘Und das alles geschieht unter den Augen des Germanen Bismarcks!’*”
- 19 “Immediatbericht: Kein kaiserliches Protektorat über die Bayreuther Festspiele (Konzept Graf Rantzau, Auswärtiges Amt) 20. September 1888, Bismarck 1981, 661–662. In German: “*Ich glaube demgemäss, dass die Erfüllung der Bitte der Frau Cosima Wagner eine Gnade wäre, deren finanzielle Ausbeutung auf Kosten Ew. M. nicht unterbleiben würde, und dass ein in Bayreuth domiziliertes Protektorat Ew. M. die innere Politik des Deutschen Reiche snicht unwesentlich schädigen würde.*”
- 20 Wagner to Julius Fröbel April 11, 1866, Wagner 1912, 461. In German: “*... mit Deutschlands Wiedergeburt und Gedeihen steht oder fällt das Ideal meiner Kunst: nur in jenem kann dieses gedeihen!*”
- 21 Wagner to Constantin Frantz March 19, 1866, Wagner 1987, 686. In German: “*Ohne Deutschlands Grösse war meine Kunst ein Traum ...*” KLRW IV, 135.
- 22 Wagner 1870, 73.
- 23 Aberbach 1984, 158–159.
- 24 Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung April 26, 1871 and May 8, 1871.

- 25 Peter Cornelius, “Deutsche Kunst und Richard Wagner—I”, *Deutsche Zeitung* December 29, 1871. Cf. Salmi 1993, 246 (note 4).
- 26 Peter Cornelius, “Deutsche Kunst und Richard Wagner—I”, *Deutsche Zeitung* December 29, 1871. In German: “*Wagner ist ganz im rechten Zeitpunkte geboren, im Jahre der Schlacht bei Leipzig, deren Donner um seine Wiege tobten. Er ist dann, da wir Alle noch im Frieden lebten, frühe zum Kampf erwacht und hat allein stehend, mit einem schicksalvollen Leben ringend, der deutschen Sache den Sieg erfochten. Mit gewaltigem Geiste hat er alle monumentale Kraft der Zeit in sein Schaffen zusammengedrängt ...*”
- 27 Wagner to Ludwig October 10, 1864, KLRW I, 28–29; Cosima’s diary entry September 4, 1870, Wagner 1976a, 280; Richard Wagner’s diary entry, Wagner 1975a, 85–86.
- 28 Merloff 1873, 3–4. In German: “*Richard Wagner war der Vorgänger; ich möchte sagen, der ein neues Zion verkündende Prophet des deutschen Einigungswerkes, das deutsche Waffen in deutscher Treue und Einheit verbunden, späterhin glorreich besiegelten.*”
- 29 Merloff 1873, 4. In German: “*Er war es, der (...) mit friedlichen, schönen Waffen, Musik und Dichtung, uns einig machen half!*”
- 30 Wagner to Hans von Bülow June 1, 1864, Wagner 1986, 266.
- 31 Wagner 1863, XXI–XXIII. Cf. “Vorwort zur Herausgabe der Dichtung des ‘Ring des Nibelungen’ (Reinschrift), B II c 6a, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 32 Wagner 1863, XXI.
- 33 Cf. Kocka 1987, 30–34; Bausinger 1987, 137; Nipperdey 1983, 255–271; Nipperdey 1987, 101–103.

Chapter Eight

Bayreuth: Towards Immortality

The Foundation of the Bayreuth Festival

Wagner originally planned that Munich would be the focal-point of his music. After being banished from immediate contact with Ludwig II at the end of 1865, however, he switched his attention from Munich to Nuremberg, which he saw as especially appropriate for the performance of *The Mastersingers* and his other operas. Nuremberg, however, was abandoned when Wagner heard from Hans Richter that there was an excellent opera-house in Bayreuth.¹ Margrave Frederick (1735–63), who was married to the sister of Frederick the Great, Friederike Wilhelmine Sophie, had kept court in Bayreuth. The young Margravine was active in the arts, and like her famous brother was an enthusiastic composer (for example, the operas *Amaltea* and *L'Elliogabalo*), and the Margrave had an opera-house built in Bayreuth, completed in 1747. In its time it was one of the largest theatres in the world. The acoustics were exceptionally good.²

The question of performance rights made Wagner favour Bayreuth. In 1864, when short of money, Wagner had sold the performance rights of his forthcoming operas to Ludwig II. As an enthusiastic Wagnerian, Ludwig had wished to hear Wagner's music as often as possible in Munich. On Ludwig's initiative, *The Rhinegold* was premiered in Munich on 22nd September 1869, although Wagner was against the idea.³

His problems did not end there. *The Valkyrie* was nearing completion and Ludwig wanted to have it performed as soon as possible. At the same time, Wagner became more and more interested in Bayreuth: Munich no longer suited his plans. On 5th March 1870, Richard and Cosima were enthusiastic about a report in the *Brockhaus Conversation Lexicon* about Bayreuth, which suggested the idea of a possible performance of *The Ring* in the famous Bayreuth opera-house.⁴ It was no wonder that after this Wagner opposed the performances of his works in Munich. He wrote a hurried letter to Ludwig's secretary, Lorenz von Düfflipp, dated 6th April 1870, in which he stressed that Ludwig had in fact given guarantees that Wagner could perform *The Ring Tetralogy* according to his own wishes.⁵ These words were of no avail: *The Valkyrie* was premiered at the Munich Court Theatre on 26th June 1871.⁶

Wagner visited Bayreuth on his way to Berlin on 17th-20th April, and was satisfied that the town was suitable for his purposes. Unfortunately, the famous baroque opera-house proved to be technically out of date, and it could not be used for Wagner's works, which required complex equipment for the scenery. An entirely new opera-house would have to be built in the town. The city fathers were enthusiastic about the proposal, which could raise the town to its former glory.⁷ Inspired by his visit, Wagner wrote to Lorenz von Düfflipp on 20th April that he intended to choose Bayreuth as the centre for his forthcoming opera festivals.⁸

Bayreuth, the home town of the writer Jean Paul, was well suited for Wagner's purposes. It was situated close to the northern frontier of Bavaria, and was thus almost a central focal-point of Germany: a location more advantageous than Munich, which lay too far in the south, roughly in the middle of Bavaria. Bayreuth was also preferable to Nuremberg, because apart from Jean Paul and its baroque architecture, there was nothing that could compete with the fruits of Wagnerism. In 1868, in *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, Wagner had argued that theatre should be the core and focus of national education.⁹ If the Wagner theatre were established in Bayreuth, it would stand at the geographical heart of Germany, and people from all over Germany could make pilgrimages to the fountain of their spiritual rebirth.

Wagner's plans now proceeded quickly forward. On 11th May, he wrote to Dr. Carl Landgraf that he was planning to arrange a great music festival in Bayreuth within two years, in 1873. In addition to this, he stated that he intended to return to German soil, to his new home town, in order better to arrange the forthcoming cultural event.¹⁰

Wagner was constantly active in trying to get artistic support and patronage from the state. Nonetheless, he now began to plan a “reserve solution” based on direct popular support. Following his fruitless meeting with Bismarck on 3rd May 1871, he immediately embarked on soliciting popular support in concrete terms. By 12th May, he had already published a brochure, *Ankündigung der Festspiele*, publicly announcing his Bayreuth plans. The proposal was to build a large Festspielhaus in Bayreuth by the summer of 1873, when the opera-house would be opened with a performance of *The Ring of the Nibelung*.¹¹ Wagner wrote to Dr. Landgraf that he had explained these proposals to Ludwig II; the music festival was now his personal affair, and with the help of committed friends of his art, would now be implemented.¹²

Although Wagner launched his Bayreuth proposal as a private project, he was still obsessed with social acceptance. The most important task now was to get the project started, in the hope that the German nation would then eventually understand the gift it had received. This was clearly stated by Wagner to his financial adviser, the banker Friedrich Feustel: “With this building, we deliver only the outline of the true idea; which we submit to the Nation, to be fulfilled in a glorious construction.”¹³ The opera-house was to be a simple wooden building, in order to ensure funding for special equipment and decorations to create a total experience.¹⁴ The total costs of the project were 300,000 taler, of which 1,000,000 taler were reserved for the construction of the theatre, 50,000 for performance equipment, and 150,000 for the performance costs of the first festival.¹⁵

By the spring of 1871, Wagner had already started to raise money. Before his return to Tribschen in May 1871, he visited Leipzig, Frankfurt, Darmstadt, and Heidelberg to inspire his supporters.¹⁶

In the beginning, the work was greeted with great enthusiasm by his Berlin friends. One of the most active was the Polish-born pianist Karl Tausig. Tausig’s energy seemed to be inexhaustible. He made speeches on behalf of Wagnerism in the capital, where the message of Wagnerism had only partly reached people. Tausig’s sudden death of typhus at the age of 29 was a serious loss.¹⁷ After Tausig’s death, enthusiasm in Berlin weakened considerably, partly due to the realization that Wagner intended to base his festival in the distant town of Bayreuth.¹⁸

By the end of 1871, it was evident that merely waiting for the money was not enough. Wagner’s account had not increased by much: something had to be done quickly, if the first festival was to be arranged in 1873. To speed up the collection of money, Wagner decided to issue a thousand

‘patronage certificates’ (*Patronatenschein*), priced at 300 taler.¹⁹ The high price of the certificates proved problematic, however, and it became imperative to create a parallel channel for low-income Wagnerians to support the project. A useful proposal was put forward by a Mannheim music publisher, Emil Heckel, who established a Wagner society in his native town in June 1871. On Heckel’s suggestion, Wagner decided, without delay, to establish Wagner societies throughout Germany, with the purpose of arranging events and occasions for raising funds.²⁰ The societies could purchase patronage certificates on behalf of those members who could not afford to invest 300 taler.²¹ The proposal seemed promising, and the foundation of such associations guaranteed that all enthusiasts would now have the opportunity to support the project.

The foundation of the societies soon started. By the end of 1871, the Mannheim Society had sister societies in Leipzig, Vienna, and Berlin.²² Wagner drew up a written proposal, stating the main goals,²³ and affirmed that he had always striven to contribute to the “genuine Essence of the German spirit”.²⁴

In Berlin, the Academic Wagner Society published at its own expense two special supplements in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* (April and July 1872), and was hard at work raising financing for the project.²⁵ The *Wochenblatt* supplements offered introductions to Wagner’s world philosophy, expounding Wagner’s art and the significance of the music festival to the German public, summarizing the subjects of Wagner’s operas, and offering further advice on how to study the master’s thinking. The strategies used in these appeals show interesting parallels between Wagner’s art and the unification of Germany. Wagner was the Bismarck of art, who had sacrificed his life to the German cause; it was therefore incumbent upon the nation to arrange a suitable environment for Wagner’s works in Bayreuth. Germany could become a new Hellas, if only politics and art could go hand in hand:

A tragic collapse lay behind the birth of the German Empire; in the thunder of battle, where enthusiastic German youth was victorious, the noblest ambitions of many centuries came to fruition.

Today, the leadership of this completed undertaking lies in the hands of a powerful man; the burning desire for national unity has been fulfilled. With all the greater confidence, therefore, German students are now able to participate in our national spiritual and intellectual undertaking. To this spiritual arena the undersigned summon their fellow students.

In Hellas, the supreme flowering of the State went hand in hand with that of Art; so too the resurrection of the German Empire should be accompanied by a massive

artistic monument to the German intellect. In the field of politics, the German mission in the history of the world has recently enjoyed its second triumph—now its spiritual victory is to be celebrated, through the German Festival in Bayreuth.

Richard Wagner, the great poet and composer, whose unerring innovations in the field of art are the parallel to Bismarck's political achievements,—Richard Wagner, the bard of German greatness, will dedicate his lifework to the German Fatherland. It is up to the People to ensure its worthy reception.²⁶

This appeal by the Academic Wagner Society shows how clearly Wagner's goals had been grafted on to the tree of political unification. Because of his enormous efforts, the German nation *owed* this to Wagner.

During 1872, the societies rapidly spread throughout Germany. Once enough money had been collected, the essential work could begin. In summer 1871, Wagner and his family moved to Bayreuth, to be nearer the place of work and to be able to lead the project. With solemn ceremonies, the cornerstone of the forthcoming opera-house was laid on 22nd May 1872, on the hill close to Bayreuth.²⁷

Although the cornerstone had now been laid, Wagner realized that the music festival could not be arranged for the following year. Much money still needed to be raised. The design of the opera-house needed revising, and the last part of the tetralogy *The Twilight of the Gods* had not yet been orchestrated. It was probable that the festival would have to be postponed at least until 1874.²⁸

Wagner's plans were too optimistic. By the end of 1872, it had become clear to Wagner and his financial supporter Feustel that the Wagner societies, despite all their efforts, had failed to raise adequate funds, and no improvement was in sight. By the August of 1873, only a third of the patronage certificates had been subscribed.²⁹ The situation seemed to be hopeless. Wagner could do nothing but try once again to seek the support of the state. On 24th June 1873, he wrote a humble letter to Bismarck, and straightforwardly asked for financial support, but Bismarck was unbending; no money was forthcoming.³⁰

Ludwig II had from the very beginning regarded the Bayreuth project as absurd and unrealistic.³¹ Wagner was aware of this, and had therefore decided to push ahead with the project without a patron; but he now needed to relinquish this principle, and request Ludwig's assistance. At the end of January 1874 Ludwig made a grant of 100,000 taler.³²

Ludwig's support was decisive. In a letter to Lorenz von Düfflipp, Wagner estimated that the theatre would now be completed by the summer

of 1875.³³ This plan, too, however, had to be extended, and it was not until 1876 that the opera-house was ready to admit the first festival audience.³⁴

“Wagner’s iron will made it possible to realize the idea”, wrote Marie zu Hohenlohe later, in her memoirs.³⁵ Without Wagner’s iron will, indeed, the opera-house would never have come into existence. During the opening ceremonies on 13th August 1867, Wagner was able to state that the utopia had at least in part been achieved: Germany now had her national theatre.

The Bayreuth Festival was a unique cultural event in Germany, which Emperor Wilhelm I honoured with his presence.³⁶ A surprise guest to the festival was the Emperor of Brazil Dom Pedro II, who was touring Europe at that time.³⁷ Only Bismarck refused to attend.³⁸

All of Wagner’s most enthusiastic supporters came to the festival, including Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Tappert, Ludwig Nohl, Richard Pohl, Gottfried Semper, and Karl Klindworth.³⁹ Professional musicians came from all over the world, the most famous of them being Edvard Grieg from Norway and Peter Tchaikovsky from Russia. Grieg wrote a cycle of articles for the Norwegian paper *Bergenposten* and attended not only the performances, but also the rehearsals.⁴⁰

The festival started with the performance of *The Rhinegold* to an audience that filled the entire auditorium. For many Wagner enthusiasts, the experience was unforgettable.⁴¹ The Festspielhaus is still today one of the largest opera stages in the world. Wagner had designed the theatre to resemble a classical amphitheatre; the auditorium was designed in the shape of a sector, which allowed for equal visibility from every seat. No boxes were built. The Orchestra was separated from the audience by a large parapet: one could not therefore see where the music came from. In addition to this, the auditorium was solely constructed of wood, which had been shown by Semper to be the best material in terms of acoustics. The “maiden” audience thus experienced something not possible in any other opera-house. This unique feature was associated with Wagner’s idea of making his festival a ritual which resembled religion.⁴² Art could be followed in Bayreuth with a devotion peculiar to that of Ancient Greece. It was no wonder that Richard Pohl remarked: “It was a new Olympia.”⁴³

When the last performance of the festival was over, *The Twilight of the Gods*, Wagner made a short speech, the point of which will not have been unclear to any in the audience. Wagner’s last words were: “If you wish, we will have our own Art.”⁴⁴ Responsibility for continuity was now transferred to the audience, the German people. The 1876 festival was the result of the work of many years, and Wagner now realized that the arrangements for the

following festival would again be very demanding. In Wagner's inner circle the continuity of the festival was the subject of lengthy discussion. Wagner himself believed that the next festival could be held the following year, if only permanent support from the state, or at least from the societies could be guaranteed. Wagner's friends, Liszt and Bösendorfer, also believed that permanent support could be ensured. A more pessimistic view was argued by the impresario Angelo Neumann, who considered the schedule too tight,⁴⁵ and in the end Neumann proved to be right. Permanent support for the festival was not found. Not until 1882 could the Wagnerians again gather in the Festspielhaus.

Before his unexpected death in 1883, Wagner had succeeded in arranging only two festivals. Nonetheless, he had achieved his goal of a German fusion of arts (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) which he believed would guide the German nation toward her own identity; as he saw it, he had found the spring of a new rebirth which would pave the way for an entirely revitalized society. In his utopia, art and politics would be united; the marriage between Berlin and Bavaria was necessary. This union was never achieved in Wagner's lifetime; it did not come about until the 1930s, and then not in the sense that Wagner had meant, for under Nazism art was merely a means of politics.

After Wagner's death, Richard Pohl crystallized in 1884 the heritage that Wagner had left to his supporters in the words:

Richard Wagner himself built a monument for himself: it stands in Bayreuth. To continue further this festival theatre in his spirit, through devoutly performing the Master's works, must be our next goal.⁴⁶

The continuation of the festival was thus dependent on the forthcoming generations. Wagnerians had been entrusted with an enormous challenge for the future: the marriage of power and art.

A Place in History

After moving to Munich in 1864, Wagner had gathered around himself a circle of disciples, including Peter Cornelius, Emil Heckel, Ludwig Nohl, Richard Pohl, Heinrich Porges, Hans Richter, Ludwig Schemann, Karl Tausig, and Hans von Wolzogen. This circle made great sacrifices for Wagner's Bayreuth project, and continued to propagate the message of Wagnerism after the maestro's death.

A number of music scholars, particularly music historians such as Franz Brendel, Ludwig Nohl and Richard Pohl, belonged to the circle of Wagner's closest friends. Wagner was certain of his position in the history of music, and this is clearly reflected in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* and *Oper und Drama*. Wagner believed that his own works constituted a watershed in the whole history of music. In his theoretical writings, Wagner defined his place in history and justified his existence. Firstly, he explained what music had been in the past and what it could be in the future. After this, he maintained that he himself represented a new movement. Wagner thus created a new theory of opera, in order to render the reception of his own works possible.⁴⁷

One of the earliest supporters of Wagner among music scholars was Franz Brendel, who had since 1844 run the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, founded by Robert Schumann.⁴⁸ As early as 1859, Brendel argued that Wagner was one of the leading figures in the New German Movement (*neudeutsche Schule*). The term was coined by Brendel, and he categorized Liszt and Hector Berlioz as representatives of the same movement, though the former was Hungarian and the latter French-born; Carl Dahlhaus therefore suggests that for Brendel, "German" did not mean an ethnic but an ideal category.⁴⁹

In his general survey of the history of music, *Grundzüge der Geschichte der Musik* (1861), Brendel accorded Wagner a key position as a forerunner of the new German music, even though his most significant works had not at that time been composed.⁵⁰ He refers to Wagner's future intention to fulfil his dream *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which would become one of the greatest achievements of German art.⁵¹ Brendel's appreciation of Wagner was clearly based on Wagner's own theories, since he gave an important position to a work which, at that time, as yet did not exist.

Wagner's circle of acquaintances also included Ludwig Nohl, known as an eminent Beethoven scholar.⁵² In *Gluck und Wagner* (1870), Nohl dealt with the significance of three composers in the development of German music drama: Gluck, Beethoven and Wagner. The motto of the work was illustrative: "The music drama is the German national drama."⁵³ Nohl argues that Wagner had created for the people of Germany the national drama which had been lacking. Wagner was the first composer to achieve the specific essential of *Deutschtum*.⁵⁴ In his *Allgemeine Musikgeschichte* (1880), Nohl continued this interpretation; like Brendel, Nohl looked towards the future, concentrating on Wagner's opera *Parsifal* which was premiered in Bayreuth two years later, in 1882.⁵⁵

Both Brendel's arid Nohl's historical descriptions end with an emphasis on the future. The same outlines are followed by Richard Pohl, one of the architects of the Wagner myth.⁵⁶ As Brendel had emphasized the forthcoming *Ring*, and Nohl *Parsifal*, Pohl, in turn, focused his attention on the Bayreuth festival which he saw as the essential goal of Wagner's entire project. Without Bayreuth, Wagner's art would remain a broken-winged bird unable to soar into the skies. The German people should understand the great mission of Wagner's art, and guarantee a proper setting for Wagner's works.⁵⁷

It is interesting that the music *historians* Brendel, Nohl and Pohl strongly stress the idea of *the future*, and their conviction that Wagner represents something that has not yet completely come into existence. For them, Wagner was the herald of a new era that could show the way to an entirely new world. Brendel, Nohl and Pohl thus propose arguments highly compatible with Wagner's own goal to create a community more favourable to his art.

The music historians of Wagner's inner circle were beating the drum for their idol; there, of course, were opposite views. One of the questions stirring in people's minds in the 1860s and 1870s was the heritage of Beethoven; some considered that Brahms had continued Beethoven's work in the best possible way through his symphonies; others thought this had been done by Wagner, building on Beethoven's last symphony with its use of the human voice.⁵⁸ This leads to a curious historical incongruity: the Wagnerians energetically defended the idea that Wagner had continued Beethoven's achievement, but at the same time, they stressed that Wagner represented a radically novel art of the future. The anti-Wagnerians drew attention sharply to this paradox: Wilhelm Mohr stated that the Wagnerians had forgotten to distinguish from each other what Wagner had wanted to create (the theory of art), what he had been able to create (the cultural policies and conditions), and what he had really accomplished (the concrete works).⁵⁹ In the same way, Emil Naumann called for a distinction between Wagner's ideas and his accomplishments. In *Zukunftsmusik und die Musik der Zukunft* (1877), Naumann argues that there was nothing radically new in Wagner's music of the future (*Zukunftsmusik*).⁶⁰ Wagner could be grafted on the same tree trunk with Bach, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.⁶¹ Naumann was a conventional thinker, however, who believed musical quarrels to be unnecessary. Bayreuth could remain a nexus of Wagnerism; but one should not ignore the works of Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven.⁶²

There were enough critics of Wagner amongst the music historians, although Wagner had striven to guarantee himself a place in the history of music by creating a theory for the reception of his works. Emil Naumann, for his part, did not deny Wagner's talents or even genius: he merely expressed the idea that Wagner's radicalism was unrealistic.

In addition to the musicologists, others, mainly enthusiasts, stressed Wagner's significance. This was seen in the appearance of the many articles and pamphlets which emphasized Wagner's significance for the German culture. Such texts include: Peter Cornelius' *Richard Wagner und die deutsche Kultur* (1871), Franz Merloff's *Richard Wagner und das Deutschtum* (1873), Adalbert Horawitz's *Richard Wagner und die nationale Idee* (1874), Ludwig Schemann's *Richard Wagner in seinen künstlerischen Bestrebungen und seiner Bedeutung für eine nationale Kultur* (1878), Christoph Schultz's *Richard Wagner und seine Bedeutung für das deutsche Volk* (1883), Moritz Wirth's *Bismarck, Wagner, Rodbertus, drei deutsche Meister* (1883), and Bernhard Förster's writings *Richard Wagner als Begründer eines deutschen Nationalstils* (1880), *Parsifal-Nachklänge* (1883), and *Richard Wagner in seiner nationalen Bedeutung und seiner Wirkung auf das deutsche Kulturleben* (1886).

All this literature stressed Wagner's key position in the German culture. Before 1871 Wagner had stood alone in defending the German spirit.⁶³ He had fought against cosmopolitan materialism on behalf of national art and idealism.⁶⁴ Wagner's music had crystallized the essence of *Deutschtum*: "These tones are neither French, nor Italian, they are German!"⁶⁵ Christopher Schultz wrote that Wagner was, "speaking in a straightforward way, the most national of all the artists of the past and the present time".⁶⁶ Bernhard Förster, on his behalf, expresses the idea that Wagner's art was exactly similar to *Deutschtum*: "For us, his art is the concentration of the German essence ..." And: "The German is for us the Art of Richard Wagner."⁶⁷

Adalbert Horawitz saw Wagner's art as a link which would connect the separate parts of Germany together more coherently.⁶⁸ Horawitz, like other Wagner enthusiasts, placed the composer on a pedestal, and believed Wagner would have his place in the history of the German nation and become part of the German mythology. The Wagnerians were thus striving to make their idol an officially established Genius of *Deutschtum*.⁶⁹

Wagner's supporters consequently wished to establish their leader's status in national politics. It is difficult to estimate their success. This attempt never converted the administration of the unified state, as can be seen in the

fact that no state support or official recognition was ever given to the Bayreuth Festival, though the Kaiser had in a flattering manner termed the event a “national celebration” during the first Bayreuth Festival.

One of the means for measuring the reception of Wagner’s works is to look at the German encyclopedias of the last century. The first entry dealing with Wagner can be found in the first edition of the *Meyer Conversation-Lexikon* of 1852, where he is described as an opera composer and theorist. The length of the text is only 3 column cm, but additional information is promised in subsequent supplements, to be published later.⁷⁰ From this, one can conclude that Wagner’s reputation was created by his writings during the Zurich period (1849–51). The need for treating Wagner in the encyclopedia seems to have arisen quickly, since the 1852 edition it required a reference to further detailed information to be given later. During the years 1853–54, Meyer published supplementary parts of the encyclopedia. In the sixth supplement, Wagner is treated more widely than ever before in the *Brockhaus* and *Meyer* encyclopedias. The article concerned was clearly written by an early Wagner enthusiast; it mainly concentrates on Wagner’s theory of opera and its applications when composing his music.⁷¹

In the tenth edition of the *Brockhaus encyclopedia* of 1855, the description of Wagner’s career up to that year is much briefer than in the supplements published in 1853–54. The most striking feature mentioned seems to be the fact that Wagner had divided the German musical world into two camps; Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians.⁷²

The description in the second edition of the *Meyer Encyclopaedia* (1868) belongs to the same category as the information given by the earlier *Brockhaus Encyclopedia*, and it is also clearly briefer than the description in the 1853–54 supplements. The enthusiasm aroused by Wagner’s theoretical texts was apparently exceptional and temporary in character. During the preparation of the second edition, *The Mastersingers* had not yet been completed, and Wagner’s breakthrough had not yet occurred.⁷³ It was *The Mastersingers* that raised Wagner among the most popular German composers. Whereas in the second edition Wagner was referred to only as “a famous composer of the present time”⁷⁴, in the third he was mentioned as “the most gifted poet-composer of our day”.⁷⁵ The third edition (1878) states that after *The Mastersingers* Wagner gained “ever more popularity”. It is interesting to note that in this phase Wagner’s works are said to have national significance, apparently due to the performance of *The Ring at Bayreuth*:

Wagner describes his work as a national undertaking, and not without justification, irrespective of such criticisms as might be brought against the manner of his poetic and musical treatment of his material. In any case, the fact that this major work for the theatre is built upon the national saga of the German nation endows it with a higher, more universal significance; as is evidenced in the magnificent success accorded portions of the work when performed in other German cities (e.g. in Leipzig in May 1878).⁷⁶

Compared to Meyer, the descriptions in Brockhaus are without exception more laconic and critical. In the 1855 edition, Wagner was “one of the most important contemporary composers”⁷⁷, but in the twelfth edition of 1879 he was only “a splendid musician”!⁷⁸ Apparently, the change of perspective was influenced by the fact that the contributors to the *Brockhaus Encyclopedia*, after the split in music circles, could be categorized as anti-Wagnerians. In the supplement to the eleventh edition (1873) there is a veiled reference to Wagner’s selfish attempt to secure a post in Berlin riding on the nationalism aroused by the Franco-Prussian War.⁷⁹ Neither the *Brockhaus* of 1873 nor the Brockhaus of 1879 acknowledge any national significance for Wagner; he is represented as a musical utopian unable to fulfil his dreams. The conclusion drawn by Brockhaus is clear: “In his talent, there was more versatility than profoundness”.⁸⁰

In the 1887 Brockhaus, the tone is a little more respectful, but most of the text is unchanged. The essential difference is that Wagner is now acknowledged as “the most important German opera composer of the recent past”.⁸¹ On the whole, the representation does not glorify Wagner, but only catalogues his merits.

All in all, it seems that the gap between the Brockhaus and the Meyer encyclopedias is exactly the same as the breach between Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians in musical circles more generally. Only after his death was Wagner accorded an unquestioned position. Throughout the 1870s, uncompromising clashes of divergent opinions on Wagner’s art continued, as the maestro’s supporters tried to convince doubters of his major historical significance. Wagner’s inclusion in the history of music was accepted, but his position in the history of the nation was disputed.

The Maintenance of the Wagner-Image by the Bayreuth Circle

Richard Wagner died in Venice in 1883. Having lived in Bayreuth for 11 years, he had succeeded in making the town the base for his art. The *Bayreuther Blätter*, an organ for all Wagner enthusiasts, was published in Bayreuth where people gathered at the Festspielhaus to listen to the Meister's works—although less regularly at first than the master had wished. The indisputable focus of Wagnerism was now the Villa Wahnfried, from which Wagner had guided his admirers and where the Bayreuth Circle, charged with the care of his heritage, remained to pilot the 'project' and to consolidate Wagner's position in German culture.

When Wagner died, no testament granting Cosima the right to lead the Bayreuth Festival was found among his papers.⁸² Since the 1860s, Wagner had built his life around the thought of posterity, but as far as his crucial project was concerned, he remained apparently uncertain concerning the continuity of the festival. A little before his death, on 29th September 1882, he had written to Angelo Neumann a letter which reveals that he had no idea who could continue his work:

My Bayreuth creation stands or falls with "Parsifal". Of course, this creation will pass away with my death, for I know of no one, now or in the future, who could continue my work in the spirit of its creator.⁸³

Wagner had built Bayreuth as a base for his art, but it never occurred to him that his wife, Cosima, could continue his work.

After Richard Wagner's death, Cosima immediately, in a determined manner, seized the reins, and decided to continue her husband's work with her colleagues. The Allgemeine Wagner-Verein (The General Wagner Society) was on the verge of approving a resolution to include works by other composers as well as Wagner's in the Bayreuth Festival, but Cosima immediately stopped this plan.⁸⁴ Cosima officially took charge in 1885, and set out to bring all her husband's works to the stage (with the exclusion of the works from his youth).⁸⁵ The turning-point was the 1888 performance of *The Mastersingers*, staged by Cosima herself. The performance aroused wide attention, and after this the position of Bayreuth as the Wagner theatre was no longer in doubt.⁸⁶

Under Cosima's régime, the position of the Bayreuth Circle was consolidated, taking on the role of interpreter and protector not only of Wagner's musical but also his ideological legacy. Important figures included

the editor of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, Hans von Wolzogen, and Wagner's son-in-law Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who had married Cosima's and Richard's daughter Eva. By virtue of his position, Chamberlain exercised a monopoly on the interpretation of Wagner's thinking, through which Wagner's ideas were later moulded to be more compatible with Nazism.⁸⁷ Because of Chamberlain, Hitler paid a brief visit to Bayreuth in 1923.⁸⁸

Cosima, who lived for nearly half a century after her husband's death (until 1930), devoted the rest of her life to her husband's memory. The Bayreuth Circle left an inefaceable mark on the Wagner material preserved for the posterity. Cosima and her enthusiastic helper Chamberlain felt free to adjust the historical truth, and archive-based investigation was regarded as irrelevant. Illustrative in this respect is a letter written by Chamberlain to Cosima on 13th January 1905, where he asserts that the Master's compositions are much more important than archive documents:

I am of the opinion that we all today suffer from the quest for documents and that one should be able to judge a great man according to his works and less according to some pieces of evidence, the less the better.⁸⁹

Cosima Wagner's negative attitude towards a "true" image of Wagner is also revealed in her attempts to retouch the sources. When, for instance, Wagner's letters to Mathilde Wesendonk were published in 1904, only the letters which depicted the relationship between Richard and Mathilde as platonic were included.⁹⁰

The steps taken over Wagner's autobiography *Mein Leben* were equally strong. Originally, the autobiography was written by Wagner at the request of King Ludwig II, and there Wagner was also forced to retouch his own life, for he needed to exclude his revolutionary years and his adventures with women. Wagner started to write the autobiography in July 1865, and at the same time destroyed his personal diary, the *Red Book*.⁹¹ *Mein Leben* remained the only documentation of his life prior to 1864.

Mein Leben was not completed until 1880, when Wagner finished dictating the fourth part (1861–64). The three first parts had been published during 1870–75. Wagner had the work printed privately at the Italian printing press Bonfantini in Basle, to make sure that even the printer, who knew only Italian, could not understand what was said in the work. Only 18 copies of the work were printed, and were distributed by Wagner to his closest friends. After Wagner's death, Cosima asked them to return all 18 copies, and apparently destroyed most of them. Not until 1911 did Cosima

give permission for a new edition, and proof-read the text to neutralize the strongest turns of words.⁹² Down to 1911, therefore, the information in *Mein Leben* was secret knowledge preserved and possessed by very few.⁹³

This secrecy of information remained the monopoly of the Bayreuth Circle. Only Wagner's official biographer, Carl Friedrich Glasenapp, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain were allowed access to the important sources. They were thus endowed with a role as go-betweens between Bayreuth and the rest of the world, and other investigators had to be content with referring to *Mein Leben* or to Cosima's diary and then only through Glasenapp and Chamberlain.⁹⁴ The Bayreuth Circle thus created the only available basis for a scrutiny of Wagner's life. Carl Friedrich Glasenapp's *Richard Wagners Leben und Wirken* (1876–77) (written while Wagner was still alive), and *Das Leben Richard Wagners* (1894–1911), the works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain *Das Drama Richard Wagners* (1892), and the biography *Richard Wagner* (1896) all came into being under Cosima's strict supervision.⁹⁵

The Bayreuth Circle wished to maintain control of Wagner's public image, and to silence all undesirable critique. An interesting struggle was therefore occasioned by Wendelin Weissheimer's *Erlebnisse mit Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt und vielen anderen Zeitgenossen* (1898). Wagner had met Weissheimer in Zurich in 1858;⁹⁶ they later met several times in Mainz, Biebrich, and sometimes in Munich.⁹⁷ Weissheimer documented Wagner as he had learned to know him; whimsical, saddled with debt, a perpetual complainer, far from an ideal person. Though Weissheimer was a fan of Wagner's music, he did not allow this to blind himself to the personality of the composer. This was expressed pointedly by Eduard Hanslick in a review for the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse* on 8th September 1898:

The author is known as one of the hardworking acolytes and admirers of the maestro of Bayreuth. *Nonetheless, this unusually interesting work will distress the Wagnerians*, for it includes things which throw a regrettable light upon Wagner's character ...⁹⁸

Inspired by Weissheimer's book, *Die Gegenwart* also described the ingratitude so typical of Wagner's character:

Admittedly, Wagner bears much of the responsibility for this (former) widespread, but senseless opposition. His character was not without blemish: a thoughtless daredevil, a man of unbridled feeling and a gigantic egoist, who exploited almost

all his friends, but then rejected them in his day of triumph. He was harsh and unjust against his enemies, yet among friends weak and changeable; yet also ungrateful, intolerant, and arrogant (...) Even the conductor and composer Wendelin Weissheimer (one of Wagner's most intimate followers) belongs to the company of friends whom he disappointed and betrayed ...⁹⁹

The Bayreuth Circle was displeased with the polemic concerning the negative sides of Wagner's character, and Cosima Wagner issued rebuttals. The recently completed manuscript for Volume III of Glasenapp's *Das Leben Richard Wagners (Dritter Band: 1853–1864)* was amended, especially in relation to the *Wanderjahre* of 1858–64.¹⁰⁰

In 1901, Wendelin Weissheimer published a pamphlet, *Press-Manipulationen des Wagners-Syndikats gegen Weissheimer's Erlebnisse mit Richard Wagner*, where he claimed that Glasenapp distorted the historical facts: his account was in places "rein aus der Luft gegriffen", taken from the air.¹⁰¹ Glasenapp, for instance, categorically denies that Wagner was interested in playing roulette.¹⁰²

According to Weissheimer, the Bayreuth Circle was nothing but a Wagner syndicate entrusted with manipulating the public image of Wagner. The name "Wagner Syndicate" had already been employed by Eduard Hanslick in his review for the *Neue Freie Presse*. Hanslick recalled the scandal caused by Ferdinand Präger's work *Wagner, wie ich ihn kannte* (1892):

Why, we might ask, has Mr Chamberlain—the combative bishop of the Wagner congregation—refrained from having the book pulped (like Ferdinand Praeger's "Wagner as I knew him")? That would have been the simplest, most practical method to remove from the world a source of such unfortunate, allegedly misleading information concerning Wagner. Admittedly, for a literary text this is not the most correct, or felicitous method of rebuttal, nor even the most advantageous. It would in truth have been better if the Wagner Syndicate had systematically refuted all the false information in Praeger's book, and submitted the final judgment to the public.¹⁰³

Präger's work greatly irritated the Bayreuth Circle. Chamberlain wrote a mordant review of the work in 1894, in consequence of which the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel withdrew the book from the market.¹⁰⁴ Recent research has demonstrated that Präger falsified letters he had received from Wagner, which shows that there was good cause for indignation.¹⁰⁵ The Bayreuth Circle, however, reacted to the disparagement of the master in an exagger-

ated way. It was even reputed that the ‘Wagner Syndicate’ had tried to persuade the publisher to resort to censorship.¹⁰⁶

As late as the 1880s and 1890s, the struggle between the Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians continued to rage. The Wagner enthusiasts published extensively, and the Bayreuth Circle monitored with jealous severity the untouchability of the Master’s art and ideology. It is not surprising that there were also fanatical opponents, such as Präger and Weissheimer. Weissheimer was known as an admirer of Wagner’s music, but distinction between man and art was a radical new departure, and this situation assisted distinguished anti-Wagnerians such as Eduard Hanslick to criticize the Bayreuth Circle.

Under Cosima Wagner’s régime, the Bayreuth Circle strictly concentrated on the maintenance of the Wagner myth, both for good and evil. The cases of Weissheimer and Präger show how jealously Wagner’s legacy was guarded. At the same time, the cult of genius continued in the *Bayreuther Blätter* in the same fashion as in Wagner’s time. The Bayreuth Circle beat the drums for Wagner’s ideology and stressed that Wagner still had a relevant message to give to Bismarck’s Germany. The Master’s utopia of German culture, and his vision of what Germany *could be*, were controlled by Cosima’s leadership.

Since 1864, Wagner had tried to realize his vision and politically to influence the birth of a new Germany. By the time of his death, he came to understand that this project had failed. He also knew that he had failed to obtain official support from the united German state: his vision remained only a potential, “imagined” Germany. Responsibility for the development of this possibility was bequeathed to his close associates, and became monopolized by the Bayreuth Circle. Under Cosima Wagner’s leadership, the Master’s thinking was interpreted and modified to match each new political situation. Wagner had consciously striven for a key position in the creation of German self-awareness. Apparently, it became clear to Cosima that the way to *Deutschtum* could never be achieved through Wagner’s artistic political utopia: art could be made political, but not vice versa. It was Siegfried Wagner’s wife, Winifred, who eventually arranged a marriage between the state and Wagnerism, when she managed the Bayreuth Festival during the Nazi era in 1933–1945. Under the guidance of Hitler, Wagner’s art was transformed from the spring of rebirth to a political façade: genius was pushed aside. The role of German culture was no longer to bring happiness to mankind. The bringer of prosperity to the world, *Weltbeglucker*, was replaced by the ambitious ruler of the world, *Welteroberer*.

Notes

- 1 Eger 1986a, 593. Cf. Wagner 1976a, 80–81.
- 2 See e.g. Luisa Hager, Lorenz Seelig, *Markgräfliches Opernhaus Bayreuth. Amtlicher Führer* (Bayreuth 1987).
- 3 Eger 1986a, 593.
- 4 Cosima's diary entry March 5, 1870, Wagner 1976a, 205.
- 5 Wagner to Düfflipp April 6, 1870, Korrespondenz Richard Wagners mit Lorenz von Düfflipp 1970, 804–805.
- 6 Watson 1979, 247.
- 7 Cosima's diary entries April 17–20, 1871, Wagner 1976a, 378–379. See also Watson 1979, 246–247; Westernhagen 1979a, 408–409.
- 8 Wagner to Düfflipp April 20, 1871, Korrespondenz Richard Wagners mit Lorenz von Düfflipp 1970, 808.
- 9 Wagner 1868, 42.
- 10 Wagner to Carl Landgraf May 11, 1871, Wagner 1986, 342–343.
- 11 Wagner, *Ankündigung der Festspiele*, SS XVI, 131–132.
- 12 Wagner to Carl Landgraf May 11, 1871, Wagner 1986, 342–343.
- 13 Wagner to Friedrich Feustel April 12, 1872, Wagner 1986, 354. In German: “*Wir geben mit diesem Bau nur den Schattenriß der Idee, und übergeben diesen der Nation zur Ausführung als monumentales Gebäude.*”
- 14 Wagner to Friedrich Feustel April 12, 1872, Wagner 1986, 354.
- 15 Cf. *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* April 26, 1872.
- 16 Watson 1979, 254–255. See also Cosima's diary entries May 12–16, 1871, Wagner 1976a, 387–389.
- 17 Cf. Cosima's diary entries July 18–20, 1871, Wagner 1976a, 415–418.
- 18 Watson 1979, 254–255.
- 19 Veltzke 1987, 86–103; Jossierand 1957, 325–326.
- 20 Veltzke 1987, 15–23; Eger 1986a, 594–595.
- 21 Watson 1979, 254; Westernhagen 1979a, 412.
- 22 See e.g. Wagner's letter to Richard Pohl November 7, 1871, Wagner 1986, 350–351.
- 23 Wagner 1872, *passim*.
- 24 Wagner, *Final Report on the Fates and Circumstances That Attended the Execution of the Stage-Festival-Play “Der Ring des Nibelungen” Down to the Founding of Wagner Societies*, PW V, 316. In German: “*das wahre Wesen des deutschen Geistes*”. Wagner 1872, 33.
- 25 *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* April 26, 1872; July 26, 1872.
- 26 “*Deutsche Festspiele in Bayreuth. Aufruf des Akademischen Wagner-Vereins zu Berlin*”, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* April 26, 1872. In German: “*Aus traurigem Verfall erstand das deutsche Kaiserreich, und unter dem Donner der Schlachten, in welchen Deutschlands begeisterte Jugend siegte, wurden die edelsten Bestrebungen*

langer Jahrzehnte zur That. Heute, wo die Leitung des vollbrachten Werkes in den Händen eines gewaltigen Mannes ruht, wo der glühende Wunsch nach nationaler Einheit befriedigt ist, widmet der deutsche Student mit um so froherer Zuversicht seine Theilnahme den nationalen und idealen Geistesbestrebungen. Auf eine solche geistige Arena rufen daher die Unterzeichneten alle ihre Commilitonen. Wie in Hellas mit der grössten staatlichen Blüthe die der Kunst Hand in Hand ging, so soll auch neben der Auferstehung des deutschen Reiches dem deutschen Geiste durch ein gewaltiges Kunstwerk ein ewiges Denkmal gesetzt werden. Zum zweiten Male triumphirte in diesen Tagen der welthistorische Beruf des Germanen auf politischem Gebiete—der geistige Sieg soll durch die deutschen Festspiele in Bayreuth gefeiert werden. Richard Wagner, der grosse Dichter-Componist, dessen unbeirrtes reformatorisches Wirken auf dem Gebiete der Kunst mit Bismarck's politischer Thätigkeit verglichen werden kann Richard Wagner, der Sänger deutscher Grösse, weihte das Werk seines Lebens dem Vaterlande. Das Volk soll eine würdige Aufführung ermöglichen."

- 27 Jossierand 1957, 329.
- 28 Watson 1979, 259.
- 29 Eger 1986a, 595.
- 30 Wagner to Bismarck June 24, 1873, Wagner 1912, 560–561.
- 31 Gutman 1968, 313.
- 32 Eger 1986a, 596. See also Wagner's letter to Ludwig February 3, 1874, KLRW III, 30–31, 33.
- 33 Wagner to Düfflipp January 10, 1874, Korrespondenz Richard Wagners mit Lorenz von Düfflipp 1970, 822.
- 34 Jossierand 1957, 338–339.
- 35 Hohenlohe 1938, 17. In German: "*Wagners eisernem Willen ist es gelungen, nun seiner Idee Verwirklichung verschaffen.*"
- 36 Cosima's diary entry August 12, 1876, Wagner 1976a, 998.
- 37 Cosima's diary entry August 13, 1876, Wagner 1976a, 998. See also Eger 1986a, 596.
- 38 Cf. Keudell 1901, 61–68.
- 39 Cf. Fremdenlisten 1876, A 2500 I, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 40 Bayreuth: the Early Years 1980, 61. See also Fremdenlisten 1876, A 2500 I, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung.
- 41 Cf. Schemann 1902, 15–16; Neumann 1907, 18–23; Pohl 1884, 190–191.
- 42 Wagner s.a., 178–182; Wagner, *Über Staat und Religion*, SS VIII, 19–21. Cf. Chamberlain 1902, 1797–1798.
- 43 Pohl 1884, 191. In German: "*Es war ein neues Olympia*".
- 44 Schemann 1902, 15; Wegelius 1919, 66–69. In German: "*Wollen Sie, so haben wir eine Kunst*".
- 45 Cf. Neumann 1907, 21–22.
- 46 Pohl 1884, 196. In German: "*Richard Wagner hat sich schon selbst ein Denkmal errichtet: es steht in Bayreuth. Dieses Festtheater in seinem Geiste fortzuführen,*

durch pietätvollste Aufführung von des Meisters Werken, muß unser nächstes Ziel sein.”

- 47 It is no wonder that from that time, one could characterize Wagner’s significance as a turning-point through Ludwig Köhler’s words: “there was music before and after Wagner”. See Ludwig Köhler: “Jenseits und Diesseits Wagner”, Signale March 11, 1869.
- 48 See e.g. Kühnel 1986, 521.
- 49 Dahlhaus 1986, 82.
- 50 Brendel 1861, 59–62.
- 51 Brendel 1861, 60.
- 52 See e.g. Wagner 1976b, 760.
- 53 Nohl 1870, 247. In German: “*Das Musikdrama ist das deutsche Nationaldrama*”.
- 54 Nohl 1870, 247. In German: “*das spezifisch deutsche Wesen*”.
- 55 Nohl 1880, 305.
- 56 See e.g. Wagner 1976b, 513.
- 57 Pohl 1884, 195–198.
- 58 See e.g. Dahlhaus 1986, 82–84. Cf. Naumann 1877, 30.
- 59 Mohr 1876, 1–4.
- 60 Naumann 1877, 27.
- 61 Naumann 1877, 31.
- 62 Naumann 1876, 36.
- 63 See e.g. Merloff 1873, 3–4; Horawitz 1874, 47; Schemann 1878, 134; Förster 1880, 106–107; Schultz 1883, 3.
- 64 See e.g. Merloff 1873, 2–3; Schemann 1878, 131–132; Schultz 1883, 9; Förster 1883, 11; Wirth 1883, 35, 150.
- 65 Merloff 1873, 2. In German: “*Diese Klänge sind weder französisch, noch italienisch, sie sind deutsch!*”
- 66 Schultz 1883, 9. In German: “*Nie hat ein Künstler wärmer als er die Gefühle und Empfindungen des deutschen Volksherzens zum Ausdruck gebracht.*”
- 67 Förster 1883, 11, 49. In German: “*Seine Kunst ist uns eben die Concentration deutschen Wesens*”, “*Deutsch ist für uns die Kunst Richard Wagners.*”
- 68 Horawitz 1874, 47.
- 69 Förster 1883, 38.
- 70 Meyer’s Conversations-Lexikon 1852, 602.
- 71 Meyer’s Conversations-Lexikon 1853–54, 14–21.
- 72 Brockhaus’ Conversations-Lexikon 1855, 21.
- 73 Meyer’s Konversations-Lexikon 1868, 589–591.
- 74 Meyer’s Konversations-Lexikon 1868, 589–591. In German: “*berühmter Komponist der Gegenwart*”.
- 75 Meyer’s Konversations-Lexikon 1878, 538. In German: “*der genialiste Dichter-Komponist der Gegenwart*”.

- 76 Meyer's *Konversations-Lexikon* 1878, 539. In German: "*Wagner bezeichnet sein Werk als ein nationales und gewiß nicht mit Unrecht, welche Meinungsverschiedenheiten sich auch über dasselbe hinsichtlich der Art und Weise der dichterischen wie musikalischen Behandlung des Stoffs geltend machen mögen. Auf jeden Fall gibt diesem großartig angelegten Bühnenwerk schon der Umstand, daß demselben unsere deutsche Ursache ihren Hauptzügen nach zu Grunde liegt, eine höhere, allgemeine Bedeutung, wie dies auch der gänzende Erfolg, den dasselbe bei seiner theilweise geschehenen Aufführung in anderen Städten, z.B. in Leipzig (im Mai 1878), hatte, bewies.*"
- 77 Brockhaus' *Conversations-Lexikon* 1855, 21. In German: "*einer der bedeutesten Komponisten der Gegenwart*".
- 78 Brockhaus' *Conversations-Lexikon* 1879, 262. In German: "*hervorragender Musiker*".
- 79 Brockhaus' *Conversations-Lexikon* 1873, 686.
- 80 Brockhaus' *Conversations-Lexikon* 1879, 263. In German: "*In seiner Begabung tritt mehr Vielseitigkeit als Tiefe hervor.*"
- 81 Brockhaus' *Conversations-Lexikon* 1887, 375. In German: "*der bedeutendste deutsche Opernkomponist der jüngsten Vergangenheit*".
- 82 Mack 1980, 10.
- 83 Wagner to Angelo Neumann September 29, 1882, Wagner 1987, 928. In German: "*Mit dem 'Parsifal' steht und fällt meine Bayreuther Schöpfung. Allerdings wird diese vergehen, und zwar mit meinem Tode; denn wer in meinem Sinne sie fortführen sollte, ist und bleibt mir unbekannt und unerkennlich.*" Wagner 1986, 447.
- 84 Eger 1986a, 599.
- 85 Mistler 1980, 73; Eger 1986a, 599–600.
- 86 Eger 1986a, 600.
- 87 Hanisch 1986, 643; Bauer 1986, 663.
- 88 Cf. Hitler 1935, 296.
- 89 Chamberlain to Cosima Wagner January 13, 1905, Cosima Wagner und Houston Stewart Chamberlain im Briefwechsel 1934, 680–682. In German: "*... doch bin ich der Meinung, daß wir heutzutage alle an der Sucht nach Dokumenten leiden, und daß man einen großen Mann aus seinen Werken und eher wenigen Zeugnissen—je weniger, desto besser—muß beurteilen können.*"
- 90 Cf. Wagner 1906, *passim*. The first edition of the correspondence was published in 1904.
- 91 Watson 1979, 13–14; Wagner 1976b, 2. See also Deathridge 1986, 805–807.
- 92 Watson 1979, 14; Deathridge 1986, 815–816.
- 93 See e.g. Watson 1979, 15–16; Mack 1976, 5–16.
- 94 See e.g. Deathridge 1986, 816; Watson 1979, 15–16; Mack 1976, 5–16. Cf. Richard du Moulin-Eckart, *Cosima Wagner* (2 vols., Munich 1929–31).
- 95 See e.g. Deathridge 1986, 816–817. Cf. Cosima's letter to Glasenapp June 13, 1903, Wagner 1980a, 633–635.
- 96 Weissheimer 1898, 24–29.

- 97 See e.g. Wagner 1976b, 671–672, 687, 696, 698, 701, 707, 711, 713–715, 722, 755.
- 98 Neue Freie Presse September 8, 1898. In German: “*Man kennt den Verfasser als einen der werkhätigen Anhänger und Bewunderer des Meisters von Bayreuth. **Trotzdem wird sein ungemein interessantes Buch die Wagnerianer verdrießen**, weil es Thatsachen enthält, die wieder einmal ein unerfreuliches Licht auf Wagner’s Charakter werfen ...*”
- 99 Die Gegenwart July 9, 1898. In German: “*Freilich trägt Wagner als Mensch ein gutes Theil Schuld an dieser (früheren) maß- und sinnlosen Opposition. Er war als Charakter nicht ohne Fehl, ein rücksichtsloser Draufgänger, ein ungezügelter Sinnenmensch und ein gigantischer Egoist, der fast alle seine Freunde ausbeutete und im Glück verleugnete. Hart und ungerecht gegen seine Feinde, war er im vertrauten Verkehr zwar weich und überschwenglich, aber auch undankbar, unverträglich und arrogant (...) Auch der Kapellmeister und Komponist Wendelin Weißheimer, einer seiner Intimsten, gehört unter diese Schaar der enttäuschten und verrathenen Freunde Wagners ...*”
- 100 Cf. Glasenapp 1899, VI.
- 101 Weissheimer 1901, 11. Cf. Glasenapp 1899, VII.
- 102 Glasenapp 1899, 367.
- 103 Neue Freie Presse September 8, 1898. In German: “*Warum, so fragen wir, hat Mr. Chamberlain, der streitbare Bischof der Wagner-Gemeinde, das Buch nicht einstampfen lassen, wie Ferdinand Praeger’s ‘Wagner, wie ich ihn kannte’? Das war ja die einfachste, handlichste Methode, einen Bericht aus der Welt zu schaffen, der Ungünstiges, angeblich Irriges über Wagner enthielt. Die literarisch korrekteste, nobelste Art der Widerlegung ist das freilich kaum. Nicht einmal die vortheilhafteste. Das Wagner-Syndikat hätte doch besser gethan, alle Unrichtigkeiten in Praeger’s Buch standhaft zu widerlegen und das Endurtheil dem Publikum zu überlassen.*”
- 104 Cf. *Richard Wagners echte Briefe an Ferdinand Präger*. Kritik der Präger’schen Veröffentlichungen von Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Vorwort von Hans von Wolzogen (Bayreuth 1894). See also Westernhagen 1979a, 208.
- 105 Westernhagen 1979a, 208–209. See also *Richard Wagner an Ferdinand Präger*. Herausgegeben mit kritischem Anhang von Houston Stewart Chamberlain (Leipzig 1908).
- 106 See e.g. Weissheimer 1901, 8–9.

Epilogue

“My Kingdom is Not of This World”

In the nineteenth century, the German *Bildungsbürgertum* consciously created cultural products for national political purposes. The nation's cultural capital became a construction, the purpose of which was to motivate and legitimate the striving for a unified nation state. This supports Benedict Anderson's idea that nations, in a sense, are always 'imagined communities'. Contrary to Herder and the other romantics, a nation never exists as a natural or original establishment: the nation is always constituted by factors which are based on contracts or which are even imagined. Unifying features were sought in literary language, mythology, religion, and in the ethnic origin. The German romantics were oriented towards the past, which was seen as providing the basis for the unification project. This was also, as has here been shown, realized by Wagner, who saw the whole of German history as a struggle for unification.

A wish for a united Germany was, beyond doubt, an unconditional standpoint in Wagner's national idea. His definition of *Deutschtum* and the idea of the utopian community around was dedicated to the quest for unification. The goal-orientated features of Wagner's conceptual constructions are reinforced by the activities through which he strove for practical political influence: he wished to contribute to the realization of his vision. The development of the unification of Germany apparently inspired him to

act, as Germany at that time was still searching for her ultimate shape, and it was possible to influence the definition of the nation's future direction. In this respect, it is easy to understand how Wagner's national thinking became a unity fusing art and politics.

The utopia underlying Wagner's national vision could be described as a dispensation of obligations. The new rising Germany would develop into a cultural power comparable to Classical Antiquity, provided it fulfilled certain conditions. Germany would be modelled on a united monarchy, in which the highest executive power would be given to the King; art would be given a central position in society, and the German genius would rise to be the spiritual leader of the nation: This genius would be Wagner, whose *Gesamtkunstwerk* would take its position as the channel to an understanding of the world, and *Deutschtum* would be comprehended in its original significance as genuine, creative, and universal. If all these conditions were fulfilled, Germany would be a new Hellas. "The splendour of the German name" would dawn, all the lost values and glory of the past would be restored, and Germany would attain her true political and spiritual greatness.

Wagner attempted to contribute to the realization of the new Germany through contacting political decision makers and by popularizing his vision in written form so as to make it possible for all people to apprehend his ideas. Once he had realized that he would not be able significantly to contribute to his own political success, Wagner's final project was to institutionalize his own personality. The significance of his own art he derived from historical and theoretical grounds, and strove to obtain a permanent place in the history of music, creating a festival which was devoted to his own music, and training disciples to protect his legacy. As has been previously stated, Wagner was extremely goal-orientated in artistic questions. For Ludwig II, Wagner planned a schedule to cover the rest of his life. As can be seen in this programme, even in 1864 he knew exactly what kind of operas he was intending to compose.

On the whole, the artists of the romantic period have been described according to stereotyped patterns as guided by a creative force, as spontaneous geniuses whose working was characterised by inspiration and instant impulses. This is not valid for Wagner. As an artist he was highly systematic; in fact, he represented the termination of romanticism. Instead of romantic dreaming (*Sehnsucht*), for the most part he laid stress on the fulfilment (*Erlösung*) to which his plans would lead.¹ This fulfilment was in its nature both spiritual and political, and it would be realized through his artistic and political utopia. Wagner's function in modelling national

self-understanding was connected with the formation of this fulfilment: he strove to combine his own view of the world with the essence of *Deutschtum*, in a way which made it possible for all the German people to adopt his own concept of Germany's past and future.

Wagner's project aimed at the rebirth of Germany, but his goals were also universal: The task of German culture was to bring prosperity to the whole of mankind, the result of which would also be its rebirth. A similar purpose for national culture was stressed by Dr. Bernhard Förster, who in *Parsifal-Nachklänge. Allerhand Gedanken über deutsche Cultur, Wissenschaft, Kunst, Gesellschaft* (1883) put forward a Wagnerian idea of the rebirth of Germany.² Förster, who had been converted to Wagnerism in the late 1870s, was, however, convinced that this would not be possible in contemporary Germany. After unification, Germany had followed completely wrong paths.³ True life had become impossible, and all true Germans should start to seek "a better and healthier moral atmosphere".⁴ In *Parsifal-Nachklänge*, Förster proposed the establishment of a colony called Neu-Germania, free from artificial civilization, lies, and corruption.⁵ The goal was "the rebreeding of the German race"⁶ and "the extension and rebirth of mankind"⁷. As a result of his efforts, Förster, finally founded his colony in the jungle of Paraguay, approximately 180 km north-east of Asuncion. The experiment failed: after an acute nervous collapse Förster committed suicide, on 3rd June 1889.⁸

Bernhard Förster continued Wagner's dream of a New Germany, but he interpreted this artistic and political utopia on the basis of racial theory. Art was not needed in Förster's utopia, because German culture had already discovered its moral purity.⁹ It was thus Förster who initiated the racial interpretation of Wagner's thinking, which Ludwig Schemann and Houston Stewart Chamberlain later took up with enthusiasm. The fact that art was not needed in Förster's utopia is consequently connected with Wagner's national strategy. In Förster's view, art was for Wagner an instrument through which the state of ideal German values could be reached; as art was an instrument, it was not necessary to regard it as a value in itself. Art was thus a means of reaching utopia, but in utopia art itself had no further significance. This interpretation was possible, for in Wagner's own thinking there is a certain incongruity between instrumental and inherent values.

Unlike Förster, Wagner never spoke of "the rebreeding of the German race". He was content with a union of art and politics which could lead to the rebirth of German culture. At the centre of Wagner's quest for utopia was art, and thus also German genius. Among the Wagnerians, Förster was

an exception, as there was no place for a genius in his utopia. This is interesting, because in other respects Förster's utopia seems to be a logical consequence of Wagner's vision. On the whole, the Wagnerians had adopted Hans Sachs' appeal in the final scene of *The Mastersingers*: "Honour your German masters, if you would avert disasters!"¹⁰ For the Wagnerians, Wagner was "the last master of the world view"¹¹, "a prophet of Deutschtum"¹².

The Wagnerians were convinced of Wagner's *Deutschtum* and his art as a national drama which should be given a firm position in the German community. Despite this, they did not seriously demand the realization of the *Bildungsgesellschaft* supported by Wagner. The realistic possibilities of the fulfilment of the utopia had vanished with the unification of the German state.

As has been shown in this study, Wagner actively strove to connect his own art with Germany's political welfare. He succeeded in this propagation to such an extent that many people believed that he had reached a position as the court musician of the united Germany. These outlines were followed by Karl Marx, who happened to pass through Bayreuth on his way from Nuremberg to Karlsbad in August 1876; Marx ridiculed Wagner, calling him a state musician, more an entertainer than an artist.¹³ He automatically associated Wagner's goals with the German state, even though Wagner in reality received no support from the state. This opinion apparently reflects a more widely spread misunderstanding: Wagner had succeeded in spreading his ideas to such an extent that his strivings were associated with the goals of the German state. Wagner's objective to combine his own art with nationalism had already been set forth in the third edition of the *Meyer Encyclopedia* in 1878: "Wagner characterizes his work as national ..."¹⁴ This was also seen by Thomas Mann: "Wagner was a politician enough to connect his effort with Bismarck's Reich."¹⁵

At a realistic level, the marriage between politics and art was a failure. Without doubt, Wagner realized this before his death. Because the utopia had not been reached before German unification and he had not received enough support immediately afterwards, the dream was doomed. During the 1870s, his disappointment grew. In 1875, he wrote to the New York publisher Gustav Schirmer, who had promised to acquire Wagner's texts for German immigrants in the United States: "Perhaps they understand my ideas quicker than the princes and bureaucrats of the German Reich, whose ideas of the German culture have remained mysterious to me."¹⁶

Wagner openly described his disillusionment to an American gentleman, Mr. Dexter Smith, in August 1874:

My aim was to offer the public free performances, supported solely and simply by contributions from individuals. But I did not find these thousand generous and patriotic individuals. Far worse, the press turned its back on my idea and took issue with me. No social class, be it the aristocracy, financiers or academics, wished to assist me. My entire support is to be found among the mass of the people, which has remained true to me in spite of all the calumnies and denunciations of my person and my project, and at which my ideas are uniquely directed. But since this mass has no financial means, I decided to sell seats and to reserve only 300 of them for needy musicians. I do not think that Germany can take any pride in the fact that America has had to support me.¹⁷

In this letter, Wagner, at the time preparing the first Bayreuth Festival, complained that "no social class" wanted to stand beside him. The aristocrats, the rich, and the learned had given him only modest and limited support. The masses, after all, appreciated the national art he represented, but they lacked the means to support his plan. Wagner apparently wrote these bitter words to Smith fully aware that they would be published; these words were his final attempt to obtain support from abroad. At the same time, he was forced to convince himself that he was supported by the people. If he had allowed the idea of the possible loss of the support from the all existing classes to enter his mind, the whole utopia would have lost its significance. It would no longer be possible for the German Genius to acclaim that he interpreted the *Volksgeist*.

The letters written to Schirmer and Smith show that Wagner was far from satisfied with the progress of his project. The small elite of enthusiastic Wagnerians was not sufficient: Wagner's dream required the support of a larger community.

Since the state had shown no signs of benevolence, and the support from the people was not sufficient, Wagner decided to resort to extreme measures. One of the burning questions in Germany was emigration, across the Atlantic to the United States. It is no wonder that Wagner also began to cherish hopes for a better life elsewhere. He seriously started to plan to emigrate to America. This has only been treated incidentally in the traditional Wagner literature. In the 1860s and 1870s, Wagner had fanatically spoken on behalf of German culture, but he was perhaps now ready to export his "national art" to a foreign audience.

Information concerning Wagner's plans became public for the first time in 1931, on the discovery of the memoirs of a American dentist, Newell S. Jenkins.¹⁸ During 1875–1883 Jenkins had been living in Germany, and from 1877 he had been Richard Wagner's dentist.¹⁹ In the course of the years, Wagner and Jenkins often met, and Jenkins always had something new to tell of his native country.²⁰ Gradually, Wagner warmed to the idea to such an extent that, he started to negotiate for the financial conditions of his emigration. More detailed negotiations took place in 1880, when Jenkins acted as an intermediary between Wagner and the United States Embassy. On the 8th of February 1880, Wagner gave Jenkins detailed information about his plan in written form. He wished to have his last opera *Parsifal* premiered in the United States, but he also commented: "For this, since I am no longer young, considerable advances from across the ocean would be necessary."²¹ For the fulfilment of his dream Wagner estimated a sum of one million dollars would be required. Without delay, Jenkins reacted to Wagner's plans and he promised to discuss the matter with the American Ambassador, Andrew D. White.²²

In the summer of 1880 the negotiations were still continuing, but by then Wagner's interest in the plan had begun to diminish. No letter in which Wagner rejected his plan has ever been found, nor do the entries in Cosima's diary include any clear explanation for the failure of the plan. One of the reasons was probably Wagner's weakening health. Regarding the possibility of their emigration, Cosima recorded Wagner's fear of being too old for such adventurous changes in life.²³

The idea of moving to America had clearly occurred to Wagner too late. *Parsifal* was premiered at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, where Wagner's supporters gathered without knowing that their idol, "the most German being" had been considering abandoning his admirers. During his last years, Wagner apparently tired of unconditional, strict principles. In many matters of dispute he now proved to be more moderate, and withdrew from his earlier characteristic fanatical attitudes. In the 1860s and in the early 1870s, Wagner had called the French ideal and Jewishness the worst enemies of the German spirit; but by the late 1870s, he was already amending this attitude. In 1876, he attempted to explain his former antipathies towards the French to Gabriel Monod. His own earlier hostility, he stated, had been at the time necessary for the encouragement of the Germans, and the purpose of his words had not been to offend the French!²⁴

In the same way, Wagner in the seventies became extremely cautious as far as the Jewish question was concerned. He did not want his name to be

associated with fanatics such as Adolf Stöcker (even though this happened). When Ottomar Beta wanted to dedicate to Wagner his anti-Semitic *Die semitische und germanische Race im neuen deutschen Reich*, Wagner declined this request. On 18th May 1873, Beta received a reply in which he was advised to dedicate the work to Otto von Bismarck. Wagner commended his old friend Lothar Bucher for acting as a go-between in this matter. Wagner also revealed that he could not accept the offer, as this could offend those friends of his, who had not yet decided on which stand they would take regarding the Jewish question.²⁵ In a similar way, Wagner in 1880 refused to sign an anti-Jewish petition being promoted by Bernhard Förster. Later Förster, who did not have courage to contact Wagner personally, wrote to Hans von Wolzogen several sharply worded letters the message of which was condensed in the sentence: "Please, obtain for us Richard Wagner's signature!"²⁶ These demands were a waste of time: Wagner could not be persuaded.

Wagner had thus become more reserved in his attitudes towards political questions. In 1864–1871, he had dreamt of undivided popularity amongst the people and he hoped that the German people would adopt his national vision as their guiding star. His supporters stressed that Wagner was a German *par excellence*, but they easily forgot that Wagner's concept of *Deutschtum* was, above all, a vision of the entire nation. The united Germany did not become a union of a ruling monarch and the artist as Wagner had imagined; neither did it become Schiller's "ästhetischer Staat"²⁷, nor the Theatrokratie of which Nietzsche was so much afraid²⁸: art would be kept aside in the future Germany. Wagner had attempted to model the national self-understanding of the Germans along the lines he desired, but his success had been only partial. It is impossible to estimate to what extent Wagner's national thinking expanded from ephemeral stereotypes to imagined utopias of society. Of the political decision-makers, only Ludwig II had been like-minded with Wagner. When Bavaria proved to be the wrong choice from Wagner's point of view, it was impossible to find another benevolent monarch who would be favourable to art. In Bismarck's Germany, art was given a minor, subordinate role. Instead of a national utopia, Wagner's influence on the identity of the united Germany was limited to stereotypes and national propaganda in which Wagner would, in the course of time, receive a specific position (in the Third Reich).

Before his death, Wagner realized that his vision would not survive as a whole. In September 1882, he wrote to Angelo Neumann that he devoutly wished his work to remain as authentic as possible.²⁹ It was no use thinking

of the fulfilment of the dream any longer. The dreams and reality did not meet. On his deathbed, Wagner could have repeated the words he wrote in his article *Über Staat und Religion* in 1864: "The artist, too, may say of himself: 'My kingdom is not of this world;,' and, perhaps, more than any artist now living, I may say this of myself ..."³⁰

Notes

- 1 Cf. Lion 1965, 47–48.
- 2 Förster 1883, 89–90. See also Salmi 1994, 69–87.
- 3 Cf. Förster 1881, 16, 54; Förster 1883, 52–53.
- 4 Förster 1886, 2–3. In German: "*eine gesundene und reinliche moralische Atmosphäre*".
- 5 Förster 1883, 89–90.
- 6 Bernhard Förster to Hans von Wolzogen (undated letter), Hs 100b, Richard-Wagner-Gedenkstätte der Stadt Bayreuth. In German: "*das Heranwachsen der reingermanischen Rasse*".
- 7 Förster 1886, 221. In German: "*Läuterung und Neugeburt der Menschheit - somit auch Sicherstellung der menschlichen Cultur*".
- 8 Salmi 1994, 80–84.
- 9 Cf. Förster 1883, 88.
- 10 "*Ehrt eure deutschen Meister, dann bannt Ihr gute Geister!*"
- 11 Wolzogen 1883, 4–6. In German: "*der letzte deutsche Weltbild-Meister*".
- 12 Sternfeld 1915, III. In German: "*ein Deuter des Deutschtums*".
- 13 Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels August 19, 1876, Marx-Engels 1931, 441.
- 14 Meyer's *Konversations-Lexikon* 1878, 539. In German: "*Wagner bezeichnet sein Werk als ein nationales ...*"
- 15 Mann 1935, 155. In German: "*Wagner war Politiker genug, seine Sache mit der des Bismarckischen Reiches zu verbinden.*"
- 16 Wagner to Gustav Schirmer September 8, 1875, Westernhagen 1979a, 566. In German: "*Vielleicht begreifen diese meine Ideen dann schneller als die Fürsten und Behörden des deutschen Reiches, deren Ideen über deutsche Cultur mir wiederum bis jetzt unverständlich geblieben sind.*"
- 17 Wagner to Dexter Smith, *Neue Freie Presse* August 25, 1874 (dubious authenticity). According to *Neue Freie Presse* the receiver of the letter was Dexter Smitte! In German: "*Meine Absicht war, dem Publicum unentgeltliche Vorstellungen zu bieten, einzig und allein gestützt auf die Beiträge Einzelner. Doch ich fand in Deutschland jenes Tausend freigebiger und patriotischer Personen nicht. Ja weit schlimmer, selbst die ganze Presse wendete meiner Idee den Rücken und nahm gegen mich Stellung. Keine Classe der Gesellschaft, weder der Adel noch die Finanz-Capacitäten, noch die Gelehrten wollten mir beistehen. Meine ganze Stütze liegt in der*

Masse des Volkes, welches trotz aller Verleumdungen und Denunciationen meiner Person und meines Vorhabens treu zu mir stand, und diesem allein sollen meine Vorstellungen gelten. Da jedoch diese Masse der finanziellen Mittel ledig ist, entschloß ich mich, die Plätze zu verkaufen und nur deren 300 für dürftige Musikkünstler zu reservieren. Ich glaube nicht, daß es Deutschland zum Ruhme gereicht, wenn Amerika eine Hilfe leisten mußte."

- 18 Julian Seaman, "Wagner's Proposed Migration to U.S.," *The New York Times* December 6, 1931. See also Horowitz 1994, 20–24.
- 19 See e.g. Cosima's diary entry September 21, 1877, Wagner 1976a, 1071.
- 20 Cf. e.g. Cosima's diary entries January 24, 1879, February 3, 1880, March 22, 1880, July 11, 1880; Wagner 1977, 295, 488, 509, 566.
- 21 "Wagner's Proposed Migration to U.S.," *New York Times* December 6, 1931. See also Wagner's letter to Newell S. Jenkins February 8, 1880, Wagner 1986, 429–430.
- 22 Jenkins to Wagner February 13, 1880, cit. *The New York Times* December 6, 1931.
- 23 Cosima's diary entry March 22, 1880, Wagner 1976a, 509.
- 24 Wagner to Gabriel Monod October 25, 1876, *Revue politique et littéraire* 7/1883 (February 17, 1883).
- 25 Wagner to Ottomar Beta May 18, 1873, Wagner 1912, 556–557.
- 26 Förster to Hans von Wolzogen (undated letter), Hs 100a, Richard-Wagner-Gedenkstätte der Stadt Bayreuth. In German: "Liefere Sie uns die Unterschrift Richard Wagners!"
- 27 Schiller s.a., 101.
- 28 Nietzsche 1895a, 40.
- 29 Wagner to Angelo Neumann September 29, 1882, Wagner 1986, 447.
- 30 Wagner, *On State and Religion*, PW IV, 9. In German: "Auch der Künstler kann von sich sagen: 'mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt', und vielleicht mehr als irgend ein jetzt lebender muss dies von mir sagen ..." SS VIII, 7.

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Abbreviations

- KLRW König Ludwig II. und Richard Wagner. Briefwechsel. Bearbeitet von Otto Strobel. 5 Bde. Karlsruhe 1936–39.
- PW Richard Wagner's Prose Works. Translated by William Ashton Ellis. 8 Vols. London 1893–99. (reprinted 1993–95 by the University of Nebraska Press)
- SS Wagner, Richard: Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen. Volks-Ausgabe. Sechste Auflage. 16 Bde. Leipzig 1911–16.

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