

# ART AND POLITICS

Richard Wagner

TRANSLATED BY  
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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



WITH the present volume we reach a complete turning-point in the author's outer career. At Vienna, where the last essay in Volume III. was written, it appeared as though no hope remained of Richard Wagner's ever being able to bring the works of his artistic maturity before the public; from that city he took refuge with some friends of many years' standing, the Willes, at Zurich; at the end of April 1864 he left them, without a prospect in life and prepared to meet the worst, to abandon his art for which there seemed no haven in this world, perhaps to abandon life itself. No one can ever plumb the depth of his sufferings in those days, sufferings that leap for a moment into lurid light in his private correspondence, revealing glimpses of untold abysses, but are promptly smothered by the convulsive smile of the heroic man who bites his lips to mask his pain. But two days after Wagner had left Mariafeld (the Willes' home) King Ludwig's envoy was sent in search of him, and on the fourth of May occurred the first meeting of the artist and the noble prince who was to rescue him from at least the squalor of a life from hand to mouth and bestow on him a priceless friendship. Much more would Ludwig II. of Bavaria fain have done for the man in whom he recognised the personification of German genius, but the jealousy of courtiers and paltry politicians, of all that swarm of narrow-hearted people who are eternally at war with the world's great sons, very soon succeeded in driving Richard Wagner once again to shake from his feet the dust of crowded cities. A turning-point had arrived, indeed, but no secured position; until quite the close of his life, our author had still to wage a fierce battle with the world; and perhaps the most important outcome of his intercourse with the Bavarian King was the widening of his political horizon, as shewn in the two remarkable essays with which this volume opens—though "widening"

may not be quite the word to express that deeper, clearer insight into human affairs afforded by his proximity to the throne of a high-souled ruler. One cannot but feel that much in *Parsifal* itself may be directly traced to Wagner's having been brought so close to the "fortune and the fate of Kings."

In December 1865 he turned his back on Munich, much against the King's own wish, but in the King's immediate interest. One has only to read the German newspapers of that time, to see how impossible for him was any further sojourn amid such sordid surroundings as those so sedulously heaped up for him by the Munich leaders of "Public Opinion." A letter of his (his only public protest, I believe) will sufficiently clear up the point. In the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* of February 14, 1865, there appeared an unsigned paragraph: "In the *Neueste Nachrichten* of the 12th inst. a correspondent, evidently inspired by the party concerned, characterises as totally without foundation the very widespread rumour that Richard Wagner has fallen into disgrace with His Majesty the King. I, however, can assure you positively that Richard Wagner has wholly forfeited the favour so richly bestowed upon him by our Monarch, and in such a fashion that it is only to be hoped it may not have awoken in the good and noble heart of our youthful King a distrust of men in general. I hear, moreover, that Herr Wagner has left Munich." To this was appended an editorial footnote: "From other sources we have received accounts in detail, about Richard Wagner and his comrades, that more than justify this decision of the King." The next day (Feb. 15) quite at the end of the literary supplement to the *Allg. Ztg.* there appeared, among the Miscellaneous Items, the following: "Whilst Munich letters, from several different sources, maintain that a serious change has taken place in the personal position of Herr Richard Wagner towards the Royal Court, we are in receipt of the following disclaimer from that gentleman: 'Simply to ease the minds of my friends elsewhere, I declare that the reports about myself and friends here, in a Munich paragraph of yesterday's issue of the *Allg. Ztg.*, are false.—Richard Wagner.'"

In the generality of civilised communities this flat denial would have ended the matter, but not so in Munich, not so with the chief daily paper of all Germany, the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Whether Wagner's enemies believed in the rumours of a rupture

between the King and himself, or not, they were determined to do all they could to make such a rupture inevitable; so the *Allg. Ztg.* of Feb. 19 came out with an article a page and a half long (three broad columns), signed by a mere ".|.", entitled "Richard Wagner and Public Opinion," and filled with nothing but a collection of the pettiest *on dits*. The tone of this article, in which Richard Wagner is not once accorded the customary "Herr," is most offensive; but the editor deliberately shut his eyes to the spitefulness of its nature, and once more added a footnote: "This article comes to us from a man who does not belong to musical circles, so that there can be no possible question of his taking sides for or against" [a particularly ingenious argument, but in the case of *Wagner's* enemies an absolutely fatuous one]. "His whole position authorises him, however, in a matter that touches such delicate and serious interests, to give an opinion; which opinion at the same time perfectly agrees with other reports that have reached us. Should an answer be sent us by Herr Richard Wagner or one of his friends, an answer as moderate in its form of expression as this article itself, we shall be most happy to publish it."—How "moderate the form of expression" in that article was, will transpire from a few of the details quoted in Wagner's reply. This reply, "In refutation of the article, 'Richard Wagner and Public Opinion' in No. 50 of the *Allg. Ztg.*" appeared in the supplement of that journal for Feb. 22, 1865, as follows:—

"Summoned to Munich by the generosity of His Majesty the King of Bavaria in order that, after severe struggles and endeavours, I might reap the fruits of a laborious artist-life in the undisturbed enjoyment of peace and leisure for my work; in the greatest retirement, and heeding nothing but the commands of my exalted patron, I suddenly find myself dragged from my retreat by attacks on my person, by a storm of public accusations such as make their way into the papers only in the case of legal proceedings, and even then with a certain traditional reserve.

"In London and Paris, in days gone by, I have had the papers making remorselessly merry over my artistic aims and tendencies, my works trodden in the dust, and hissed upon the stage; that my person, my private character, my social qualities and domestic habits should be given over in the most dishonouring fashion to public contumely—this I was to experience first where recognition

is accorded to my works, where my aims and endeavours are allowed the meed of manly earnestness and high intention. What lesson may be derived from this alas! by no means rare occurrence among us Germans, I leave to those who feel called to educate and elevate the people. For myself, I must be content for now with recording this mournful experience as gone through in my own person, and with publishing the needful declarations in contradiction of the charges brought against me; declarations intended for the *tranquillising of Public Opinion* and prompted by regard for the Bavarian nation, in whose midst I suddenly find myself denounced as a public danger.

"Before I descend to the very distasteful task of contradicting my accuser's charges point by point, I believe it my duty, but solely for the aforesaid reason, to furnish a positive statement of the character of my situation here.

"After the generosity of His Majesty the King had provided me with means sufficient to enable me to settle in Munich and devote myself untroubled to my labours—labours reckoned moreover for earning me an income from outside—His Majesty entrusted me last autumn with the special commission of completing the music for my Nibelungen-work, a cycle of four entire musical dramas, each of them equal in compass and importance to one of my earlier operas. This commission necessitating the laying aside for some years of any kind of work\* that might have brought me immediate payment through its circulation among the German theatres, in the name of His Majesty and under a definite contract certain grants were made me, not exceeding what Bavarian kings had already made in like cases of commission for works of art and science. As I thus have the right to consider myself no Favourite, but an artist well-paid in direct ratio to his labour, I hold myself unaccountable to anyone for the expenditure of my earnings; were I to render such an account, it would be tantamount to an apology for having found for my labour the same substantial reward as painters, sculptors, architects, men of learning, and so forth, have repeatedly and often found before me. How high, however, I rate the unexpected fortune of having found precisely here the magnanimous patron to recognise the value of the most daring of my artistic projects, may be gathered from my at once begging His Majesty the King

\* *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.—Tr.

to grant my naturalisation as a Bavarian, and handing in the necessary papers. Though German Art can never be Bavarian, but simply German, yet Munich is the capital of this German Art; here, under shelter of a Prince who kindles my enthusiasm, to feel myself a native and member of the people was to me the homeless wanderer a deep, a genuine need. Accustomed from old to the greatest seclusion from public life, mostly ill in health and suffering from the after-effects of many years of trouble, in the first months of my sojourn here I must needs defer for a while the fulfilment of my heartfelt wish to make friends with a larger circle, and thus to fully realise my purposed naturalisation in Bavaria.

"What a mare's-nest has been spun from this my attitude and situation, veraciously described above; what a bugbear has been raised to-day to scare the Opinion of the Public, whilst I was waiting for the natural progress of my resolution, will be evident if I enter more minutely on the charges contained in the article of Herr .|. of Munich.

"Their refutation I can leave to none of my friends, since the advantage of an anonymous correspondent sailing under the special recommendation of the editorial staff must be met by at least the weight of the name of the accused himself, and on the other hand it was to be feared that any friend of mine would have the effect of his rejoinder weakened in advance by his contemptuous introduction as '*one of my comrades*.'

"First of all, then, I have to tell my unknown accuser that he has written his article not *sine ira*, but *sine studio*. A little diligence would have shewn him the great confusion into which he has fallen, for all his semblance of acumen, in his comparative criticism of the dates of a former report and my 'laconic' reply thereto. He thinks he may reckon that I needed *two whole days* to think over my reply, which appeared in the supplement of this journal for Feb. 15 and referred to a report in the principal sheet of Feb. 14; from this calculation he tries to draw the conclusion that within that period I myself believed in the calamity which fills him with 'moral satisfaction.' To collect further proofs in support of this hypothesis appears to him of special weight. He finds them chiefly on my demeanour during the performance of Tannhäuser (Sunday, Feb. 12th), when, so he says, I 'waited in vain for the King's box to be lit up.' In

his opinion 'the same belief was entertained by that portion of the audience which, with the manifest purpose of a demonstration, vociferously called the composer on to the stage at the opera's close.' One has only to compare herewith the report of the Allg. Ztg. itself as to the character of this performance and its reception by the public, there described as warmer than anything ever experienced before; if one passes then to my accuser's subsequent assertion that the Munich public has greeted 'with a general feeling of moral satisfaction' the news of my downfall, one will know how to explain the one statement or the other. As to my disappointed expectation of the King's box being illuminated, I feel the great difficulty—not very handsomely taken advantage of on the other side—of a personal position which makes me deem it quite impermissible to discuss certain exalted questions which my opponent handles roughly enough; in this instance, however, I believe I may state without indiscretion that the reasons why His Majesty the King attended neither that performance of 'Tannhäuser,' nor the preceding one of the 'Flying Dutchman,' were known to me beforehand. Perhaps those reasons may dawn on my accuser too, when he some day hears under *what* characteristic circumstances His Majesty the King will distinguish performances of these operas with his presence at another time.

"Upon that selfsame Sunday my accuser 'was informed in various quarters' of my disaster. The contradiction of similar rumours contained in the *Neueste Nachrichten* of that very day was not regarded by him; had he inquired into the source from which that contradiction flowed, he would have known that, even were I previously in doubt, I had not to wait three or four days from then to be relieved of my uncertainty. Let him go for his information, however, to that 'informant best-accredited by his position' who retailed him the fable of the portrait by Pecht, for which I am said to have handed in [to the King] a bill of 1,000 guldens. I assure my accuser that this gentleman, regarded in the most favourable light, must have been a self-deceiver; for there is not *one* word of truth in the whole story, as the court-officer concerned will himself convince him; the fact, at bottom of this fiction, is capable of none but an uncommonly honouring interpretation.

"That my accuser is either ill-informed or intentionally perverts

the truth, not only on the points alluded to but on all the rest, is obvious from his statements about my esteemed friend Semper, for instance, whose audience with His Majesty the King during a recent visit to Munich is audaciously denied by the correspondent of the Allg. Ztg. I, on the contrary, can assure him that the plans of His Majesty are as little known to him, in this matter also, as it is unallowable for me to forestall the Monarch's decisions by defining them.

"It quite peculiarly rejoices me to be placed by my accuser in the position of seeing the composer of 'Tannhäuser' and 'Lohengrin' accorded in the Allg. Ztg. a praise more flattering even than my old friend Pecht allowed himself to bestow in that 'Byzantine' article to which this gentleman alludes: it is regrettable, on the other hand, that, extolling my earnestness as artist, he thinks good to represent me as a frivolous and flighty *man*. In Paris things went otherwise: there my art and its tendencies were dubbed 'détestables,' but personally I was pointed to as the model of a man who for sake of his serious artistic convictions, and without a moment's flinching, threw willingly away his immediate and most favourable chances of making a quite remarkable 'fortune'; a man who thus condemned himself to a lot which so worsened during a three years' entirely helpless sojourn in his German fatherland, that a year ago he was on the point of abandoning all hope of performing his later works, and therewith all hope of further practice of his art itself, and was resolved to completely vanish from the scene.

"Because the generous summons of the magnanimous Prince—whom my accuser now would gladly furnish with annoyances of 'moral indignation'—set free this artist from such a plight and restored him to cheerfulness, to his art, and to his justifiable hopes, that accuser by dint of inflammatory innuendoes exaggerates the royal sacrifice (which, for that matter, was not unconditional, but subject to the stipulation of repayment from the later returns of my labours elsewhere) into liquidation of debts and so on. This friendly style of—insolence comes tripping to his tongue, notwithstanding that in an earlier sentence he himself deplores the 'non-exercise of the beautiful princely privilege' of liberality to artists, whereby 'our greatest German geniuses have so often alas! been forced to suffer bitter want.' I can only assume the insincerity of this lament, for he certainly is more sincere when he expresses his

indignation that an artist, whom he himself rates very high as such, should be paid for his work sufficiently well to furnish himself a comfortable house. Instead of procuring himself a little knowledge and understanding of the special needs of an artist of my stamp, as here was possible to him through one example, my accuser prefers to raise what is generally left to idle gossips into a subject for public impeachment of a man ranked high by him as earnest artist; and he actually is so fortunate as to win the testimony of the able editoriate of the *Allg. Ztg.* to his being 'fully authorised to give an opinion in a matter that touches such delicate considerations and serious interests.'

"If I can only express my wonder at the total lack of breeding and propriety in the reproaches laid at my door, I have the more earnestly to meet the imputation of my contempt for musical affairs in Munich. What opinion I have formed of modern *German* musical affairs, the public will shortly have the opportunity of learning; \* what hopes I set on Munich's prime assistance in their raising, will then transpire as well; and it will be seen how advantageous I must think the results of our highly estimable Generalmusikdirektor Franz Lachner's labours, as, not being an inexperienced phantast, I have based my hopes on just the groundwork of those same results.†

"Now, what can be the object of these charges, as inconsiderate, to put it mildly, as easily refuted? Is it the nominal aim of preventing 'an ever darker cloud from coming between the heartfelt love of the Bavarian people and the lofty image of its youthful King' by reason of 'his illustrious name being constantly mixed up, and in no very worthy fashion, with all these true and lying rumours'?—But the *true* rumours of my real relations with His Majesty the King, as my accuser himself admits [by inference], can only tend to his honour. Who is it, then, that brings the *lying* rumours into unworthy contact with the King's illustrious name? Plainly those persons whose eager interest it must be to cast up dust to form that cloud of darkness. And what is the actual effect of this cloud-raising upon the veritable Folk? If one subtracts the operations of spite and envy on vulgar natures at all

\* See the article "A Music-school for Munich," p. 171 et seq.—TR.

† See pp. 181 and 215; that Wagner found reason to modify his estimate of Lachner's work, as may be seen in the article on "Conducting," is due to later experiences.—TR.

times and under any circumstances, from all circles of society there come to me the most friendly and unprejudiced views of the generosity of His Majesty the King towards myself. If, however, it is the desire of *all* parties to correct the most extravagant rumours of my so-called too great influence with His Majesty, why have I not been interviewed in person? For I could only feel myself injured by such utterly untrue assumptions, and never, never lend colour to the false idea of their being justified. If Public Opinion was being led astray in the foolishness of fashions, why add to its misleading by endeavouring to make it believe that this position of Favourite, which never really existed, had suddenly terminated? Why not simply come to me for the true story of my personal relations, both now and from the first, with His Majesty? Why proceed, instead, to public threatenings of woe against the heartily beloved Prince?

*"Not to me, to Public Opinion my accuser owes the answering of these questions."*

"Munich, February 20, 1865.

RICHARD WAGNER."

To complete the history of this incident, the editor accompanied the publication of the above letter also with a foot-note: "We give this reply verbatim, leaving further discussion to the author of the first article. At any rate, room is open to him for a reply. Herr Richard Wagner must himself be glad to have a matter capable of so many interpretations removed from the atmosphere of rumours and gossip and brought to speech in such a manner that no impartial person will dispute the good intentions and interest in morals (*Sitte*) and justice which inspired our contributor." The editor having thus revealed his own idea of "impartiality" and "morals and justice," Herr ·|· is allowed a "final answer" of a column and a half, containing not one word of apology, but merely saying that the charges brought by him were matters of common report, and ridiculing the notion of going to Richard Wagner himself for enlightenment upon what is "the talk of the town;" further, the old cry of Wagner's "belittling his great forerunners" of course resumes its accustomed place.

And this was the manner in which Richard Wagner was attacked, both overtly and covertly, during the remainder of his stay in Munich; so that the King at last was obliged to abandon his scheme of building a "Model-theatre" after Wagner's own heart

in that city; an undertaking which Munich *now* would give anything to have seen carried out, now that a little town like Bayreuth has shewn it what it has lost—not only in prestige, but also in municipal pocket.

But more than the new theatre was doomed to stay abortive. That Music-school upon whose draft of organisation the master was engaged, by order of the King, at the very time his enemies were spreading every kind of disingenuous rumour,—that Music-school never came to birth, at least never in the sense its promoter had sketched out; and all Germany thus lost a chance which it has not yet recovered. We know what wonders Richard Wagner worked with the singers at the two Bayreuth Festivals that he himself was spared to see; most of us are old enough to recognise the change in the whole spirit of “conducting” that arrived with the public appearance of men who had come under his immediate influence, and one at all events—the late Hans von Bülow—under his personal *tuition*: it therefore is indisputable that a Music-school of the kind he suggested, and benefiting by his direct co-operation, would have turned out something very different from even the best German dramatic singers of nowadays. Here is a loss that may never be replaced, whereas the transference of the model-theatre to a far smaller town is quite in accordance with the original intentions of the author of the preface to the *Ring des Nibelungen*.

To return to that letter of Feb. 1865 for a moment, it is pitiable to see a great genius obliged to defend himself against such petty accusations as those he alludes to,—disappointment at the King's absence from the theatre, a portrait (of Wagner) painted by one of Wagner's friends and the bill sent in to the King, his carpets and curtains *et id genus omne*; but it must not be forgotten that these charges at like time implied a slur on King Ludwig himself, and, even if Richard Wagner was not instructed by the King to reply—as is very probable—it was his obvious duty to contradict slanders involving their mutual relations. As to expressions such as “an artist of my stamp” (“*eines Künstlers gerade meiner Art*”), which will be found here and there in other public utterances of Wagner's—in the later pages of this volume, in fact—some people may consider them egoistic and overbearing; but, remembering Goethe's “*nur die Lumpe sind bescheiden*,” we must also remember that Wagner had a perfect right to speak of

himself in this strain. Who among the creative or administrative artists flourishing in his day can possibly be compared with him? Yet these were asserting an equal, nay, a superior right to authority. It was high time they were taught their place, as taught they were in no mild terms in the “Notices” and the essay on “Conducting.” Wagner *as man* was kindness and humility itself—a point on which Mr Houston S. Chamberlain has insisted, upon very good evidence, in his recent splendid volume “*Richard Wagner*”; but he held his art in far too high a reverence to be afraid of appealing to its only living exponent, the one great artist alive,—himself.

Another point of interest in this letter, and one of my main reasons for reproducing it, is the fact that it was a reply to an article entitled “Richard Wagner and *Public Opinion*.” The precise application of this formula in the essay on “State and Religion” becomes evident at once, and I am strongly inclined to believe that the date of that essay, “1864,” must therefore not be taken quite too strictly; at least a portion of it must surely have been written after, probably immediately after, this worrying newspaper controversy. In that case we may trace the first 224 pages of the present volume (with the exception of the Vaterlandsverein speech and the letter to Lüttichau) to the year 1865; and when we reflect that Wagner was at the same time preparing for the production of *Tristan und Isolde* (Munich, June 1865), making the rough draft of *Parsifal* (the poem) and working at the music of *Siegfried* and *Die Meistersinger*, we shall have sufficient ground for astonishment not only at his enormous energy, but also at his power of rising above surrounding molestations. True that *German Art and German Policy* did not appear till 1867, but the author's prefatory note to *What is German?* shews that this series of articles was founded on a mass of manuscript from the year 1865. Moreover on turning to the Allgemeine Zeitung for the year last-named, one finds a clue to Wagner's association of ideas; in the shape of reviews of books, we have the following topics touched upon in that journal: Louis Napoleon's *César* and Frantz's *Resurrection of Germany*, March; Grimm's *Book of German words* and Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, April; Napoleon the Great's letters to his brother, May; R. Huguenin's *Histoire du Royaume Merovingien d'Austrasie*, G. Bornhack's *History of the Franks*, and P. A. J. Gérard's *Histoire des Francs d'Austrasie*



(reviewed together), also Dr Ernst Wagner's *On English Schools*. June; further articles deal with the Dante Jubilee and the Spanish Inquisition in May, and with the Peerage question in June. It was almost an accident that I lit upon these reviews &c., in searching through the Allg. Ztg. of 1865 for another purpose, but their occurrence appeared to me to throw no little light on Wagner's train of thought at the time.

As for the actual contents of the present volume, they correspond with those of Vol. viii. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*, with two minor exceptions in the way of omission, and two in the way of addition. The 1869 portion of the *Judaism in Music* essay I had already printed in Vol. III., and the short preface to the second edition of *Oper und Drama* in Vol. II., for obvious reasons. Partly to establish an approximate equality in the size of my volumes, but chiefly to bring Wagner's more important *national* utterances into the same book, I have taken from vol. x. of the *Ges. Schr.* the article *What is German?* and accompanied it by the Vaterlandsverein speech of 1848—one thus obtains a thirty years' survey of Wagner's thought in the political direction, for the last three pages of *What is German?* were written in 1878. When volume ix. of the *Ges. Schr.* appeared (the last that was published in his lifetime) Richard Wagner had no intention of publishing that article at all, otherwise he would certainly have included it in vol. viii.; further information with regard to its genesis will be found on pages 150 and 151. As to the Vaterlandsverein speech, it was republished in 1883, very soon after Wagner's death, by one of his really intimate friends, W. Tappert, and we may therefore presume that it was a course he himself would have sanctioned. Much capital, however, has been made (by, to say the least, a *not* so intimate "friend") of the non-republication of the speech by Wagner himself; unfortunately the originator of this outcry did not content himself with a merely senseless charge, but embodied in his book of compilations an English so-called translation of the speech. Now, that translation is so preposterously 'free' that not only does it entirely destroy the simple eloquence of Wagner's sentences by running them into one another and punctuating at will, but in several places it gives the direct opposite of the author's meaning. If for this reason alone, then, it was necessary to print a faithful English rendering of the

original. In verification of my statement I give the following passage in the original German, followed by Praeger's version (from *Wagner as I knew him*):—

"Nein, in dieser Zeit erkennen wir auch die Nothwendigkeit der Entscheidung: was Lüge ist, kann nicht bestehen, und die Monarchie, d.h. die *Alleinherrschaft* ist eine Lüge, sie ist es durch den Constitutionalismus geworden. Nun, wirft sich der an aller Aussöhnung Verzweifelnde kühn und trotzig der vollen Republik in die Arme, der noch hoffende lenkt sein Auge zum letzten Male prüfend nach den Spitzen des Bestehenden hin. Er erkennt, dass, gilt der Kampf der Monarchie, dieser nur in besonderen Fällen gegen die *Person des Fürsten*, in allen Fällen aber *gegen die Partei* geführt wird, die eigennützig oder selbstgefällig den Fürsten auf den Schild erhebt, unter dessen Schatten sie ihren besonderen Vortheil des Gewinnes oder der Eitelkeit verfißt. Diese *Partei* also ist die zu besiegende: soll der Kampf ein blutiger sein? Er muss es sein, er muss Partei und Fürsten zu gleicher Zeit treffen, wenn kein Mittel der Versöhnung bleibt. Als dieses Mittel erfassen wir aber den Fürsten selbst," &c., &c.—

"No; at the present moment we clearly perceive the necessity of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and monarchy as the embodiment of autocracy is a falsehood—our constitution has proved it to be so.

"All who despair of a reconciliation throw yourselves boldly into the arms of the republic; those still willing to hope, lift their eyes for the last time to the points of existing circumstances to find a solution. The latter see that if the contest be against monarchy, it is only in isolated cases against the person of the prince, whilst everywhere war is being waged against the party that lifts the monarch on a shield, under the cover of which they fight for their own selfish ends. This is the party that has to be thrown down and conquered, however bloody the fight. And if all reconciliation fail, party and prince will simultaneously be hit. But the means of peace are in the hands of the prince," &c., &c.—

The strictest possible translation of this passage will be found on page 142 *infra*; a comparison with that just given will prove the truth of my previous assertion. But a still more flagrant instance of perversion is presented by the rendering of "Würde hierdurch nun der Untergang der *Monarchie* herbeigeführt? Ja! Aber es würde damit die *Emanzipation des Königthums* ausge-

sprochen" into "Does it appear to you that by this proposition, *monarchy would be altogether abolished? Yes, so it would!* But the kingdom would thereby be emancipated." (Cf. p. 144 infra.) Upon a previous occasion when I pointed out the stultification of Wagner's words effected by this same compiler—to whom I trust I may never need to refer again—the latter's spiritual heirs advanced the ridiculous plea that Wagner employed provincialisms such as would only be understood by a fellow-provincial, the compiler or his recent advocate, in fact; in this instance the "provincialism" plea would fall through once more, for we find "*Königthum*" translated a few sentences later as "royalty." Nor would the argument be worth a moment's notice, were it not that it affords me the opportunity of insisting upon a fact well-known to all students of Wagner's writings in the original, namely that he *never* uses a purely German word in a sense not strictly justified by its etymology; with him the philological sense is acute and ever present, and, though we often meet with a homely metaphor in the midst of a serious disquisition, not once do we meet with a slipshod or "provincial" employment of a native German term.

It will thus be seen that a correct translation of that important speech of Wagner's was an absolute necessity, and nowhere could it more properly be introduced than immediately after a series of articles dealing once again with "Kinghood." To add to it the letter of explanation, addressed to a court official, was a simple corollary that needs no comment saving that I now find (from a facsimile reproduction of the letter, in Mr Chamberlain's German work above referred to) that the allusion to "Austria" on page 148 should read "Berlin," the earlier transcriber, R. Proelss, apparently having altered the text for some reason of international politics.

And now I must leave the volume in my readers' hands, with the one remark that it is wellnigh the most important in the whole series of Wagner's prose-writings.

CHRISTMAS, 1895.

WM. ASHTON ELLIS.

## TO THE KINGLY FRIEND.

(Summer, 1864.)

My King, thou rarest shield of this my living !  
Of bounteous good, thou overbrimming hoard !  
I seek in vain, at goal of all my striving,  
To match thy favouring grace with fitting word !  
Both tongue and pen are hush'd in sore misgiving,  
And yet o'er many a record have I por'd  
To find the word, the only word, to bear thee  
The thanks that deep within my heart I wear thee.

What thou hast wrought, still fills me with amazement,  
When I look back on what I was before.  
Erst shone no star but left me in abasement,  
No hope's last ray but dwindled evermore :  
A prey to all the chance of world's appraisalment,  
A toy to haggling peddlers given o'er ;  
What in me strove for freeborn artist's action,  
I saw downtrodden in the rout of faction.

Who once His bishop's wither'd staff commanded  
To deck itself with quick'ning leaves of green,  
E'en though, bereft of hope, life's vessel stranded,  
He bade me yield up all that might have been,  
One thing around my inmost heart He banded,  
Faith in myself, in what my soul had seen :  
And promis'd, if I held that faith unshaken,  
So should the wither'd staff once more awaken.

What erst in lonely silence I had hidden,  
Behold ! it liv'd within another's breast ;  
With what the elder's mind so sore was ridden,  
Behold ! a young man's heart with joy it bless'd :  
And what that youthful heart had sweetly bidden  
To move towards a goal all unconfess'd,  
The Spring it was, in gladness overpowering,  
The Spring that woke our double Faith to flowering.

Thou art the gentle Spring that leaf-bedeck'd me,  
That fill'd each branch and twig with quick'ning sap,  
Thine was the call that out of darkness beck'd me,  
Set free my powers from chill of Winter's lap.  
Blest with thy regal promise to protect me,  
That scatter'd ev'ry cloud of sorrow's hap,  
I tread fresh paths, in pride of lightsome burden,  
Through Summer-lands aglow with kingly guerdon.

How could one paltry word contain the measure  
Of all the plenitude thou art to me ?  
Scarce dare I call my soul my scanty treasure,  
Whilst thou art thou and all that hangs from thee.  
So comes to blissful rest in thy good pleasure  
My round of work fulfill'd and yet to be :  
And since no shade of fearing thou hast left me,  
The very seed and root of Hope thou'st reft me.

Thus am I poor, with but one sole possession,  
The Faith whereto belief of thine is wed :  
'Tis that, the bulwark of my proud confession,  
'Tis that, whereby my Love is steel'd and fed ;  
Yet shared, lo ! mine is but a half-possession,  
And wholly lost to me, should thine have fled.  
So but from thee my strength to thank is taken,  
Through thine own kingly Faith of strength unshaken.

## ON STATE AND RELIGION.

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### Über Staat und Religion.

(1864.)

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*The article on "State and Religion" was written at the request of King Ludwig II. of Bavaria, in the same year in which Richard Wagner was summoned to his intimate companionship. It does not appear to have been printed, at least for public circulation, until nine years later (1873), when it was included in Vol. viii. of the Gesammelte Schriften. Undoubtedly to its intimate character we owe those deeper glimpses into Wagner's inmost thought, such as we meet so often in his private correspondence.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.



HIGHLY-PRIZED young friend desires me to tell him whether, and if so in what way, my views on *State* and *Religion* have changed since the composition of my art-writings in the years 1849 to 1851.

As a few years ago, at the instigation of a friend in France, I was persuaded to re-survey my views on Music and Poetry, and assemble them in one concise synopsis (namely the preface to a French prose-translation of some of my opera-poems\*), so it might not be unwelcome to me to clear and summarise my thoughts upon that other side as well, were it not that precisely here, where everyone considers he has a right to his opinion, a definite utterance becomes more and more difficult the older and more experienced one grows. For here is shewn again what Schiller says: "*ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst*" ("Life is earnest, Art is gay"). Perhaps, however, it may be said of me that, having taken Art in such special earnest, I ought to be able to find without much difficulty the proper mood for judging Life. In truth I believe the best way to inform my young friend about myself, will be to draw his foremost notice to the earnestness of my artistic aims; for it was just this earnestness, that once constrained me to enter realms apparently so distant as State and Religion. What there I sought, was really never aught beyond my art—that art which I took so earnestly, that I asked for it a basis and a sanction in Life, in State, and lastly in Religion. That these I could not find in modern life, impelled me to search out the cause in my own fashion; I had to try to make plain to myself the tendence of the State, in order to account for the disdain with which I

\* See Volume vii., "*Zukunftsmusik*,"—Richard Wagner.—Volume III. of the present series.—Tr.



found my earnest art-ideal regarded everywhere in public life.

But it certainly was characteristic of my inquiry, that it never led me down to the arena of *politics* proper; that is to say, the politics of the day remained as entirely untouched by me, as, despite the commotion of those times, they never truly touched myself.\* That this or that form of Government, the jurisdiction of this or that party, this or that alteration in the mechanism of our State affairs, could furnish my art-ideal with any veritable furtherance, I never fancied; therefore whoever has really read my art-writings, must rightly have accounted me unpractical; but whoever has assigned me the rôle of a political revolutionary, with actual enrolment in the lists of such, manifestly knew nothing at all about me, and judged me by an outer semblance of events which haply might mislead a police-officer, but not a statesman. Yet this misconstruction of the character of my aims is entangled also with my own mistake: through taking Art in such uncommon earnest, I took Life itself too lightly; and just as this avenged itself upon my personal fortunes, so my views thereon were soon to be given another tinge. To put the matter plainly, I had arrived at a reversal of Schiller's saying, and desired to see my earnest art embedded in a gladsome life; for which Greek life, as we regard it, had thus to serve me as a model.

From all my imaginary provisions for the entry of the Artwork into Public Life, it is evident that I pictured them as a summons to self-collection (*Sammlung*) from amid the distractions of a life which was to be conceived, at bottom, merely as a gladsome occupation (*heitere*

\* "Gewiss war es aber für meine Untersuchung charakteristisch, dass ich hierbei nie auf das Gebiet der eigentlichen *Politik* herabstieg, namentlich die Zeitpolitik, wie sie mich trotz der Heftigkeit der Zustände nicht wahrhaft berührte, auch von mir gänzlich unberührt blieb." In confirmation of this statement, which has been disputed by Wagner's enemies and by one so-called "friend," the late Ferdinand Praeger, I may refer to the facts collected in my little brochure "1849: A Vindication," published in 1892 by Messrs Kegan Paul & Co.—Tr.

*Beschäftigung*), and not as a fatiguing toil. Hence the political movements of that time did not attract my serious attention until they touched the purely social sphere, and thus appeared to offer prospects of the realisation of my ideal premises—prospects which, I admit, for some time occupied my earnest thought. The line my fancy followed was an organisation of public life in common, as also of domestic life, such as must lead of itself to a beauteous fashioning of the human race. The calculations of the newer Socialists therefore lost my sympathy from the moment they seemed to end in systems that took at first the repellent aspect of an organisation of Society for no other purpose but an equally-allotted toil.\* However, after sharing the horror which this aspect kindled in æsthetically-cultured minds,† a deeper glance into the proposed condition of society made me believe I detected something very different from what had hovered before the fancy of those calculating Socialists themselves. I found to wit that, when equally divided among all, actual *labour*, with its crippling burthen and fatigue, would be downright done away with, leaving nothing in its stead but an *occupation*, which necessarily must assume an artistic character of itself. A clue to the character of this occupation, as substitute for actual labour, was offered me by Husbandry, among other things; this, when plied by every member of the common-

\* "Nicht eher nahmen daher die politischen Bewegungen jener Zeit meine Aufmerksamkeit ernster in Anspruch, als bis durch den Übertritt derselben auf das rein soziale Gebiet in mir Ideen angeregt wurden, die, weil sie meiner idealen Forderung Nahrung zu geben schienen, mich, wie ich gestehe, eine Zeit lang ernstlich erfüllten. Meine Richtung ging darauf, mir eine Organisation des gemeinsamen öffentlichen, wie des häuslichen Lebens vorzustellen, welche von selbst zu einer schönen Gestaltung des menschlichen Geschlechtes führen müsste. Die Berechnungen der neueren Sozialisten fesselten demnach meine Theilnahme von da ab, wo sie in Systeme auszugehen schienen, welche zunächst nichts Anderes als den widerlichen Anblick einer Organisation der Gesellschaft zu gleichmässig vertheilter Arbeit hervorbrachten." As I have been compelled to slightly paraphrase the first of these sentences, and as there are minor difficulties in the other two, I give all three in the original.—Tr.

† Cf. Vol. I., 30-31.—Tr.

alty [or "parish"—*Gemeinde*], I conceived as partly developed into more productive tillage of the Garden, partly into joint observances for times and seasons of the day and year, which, looked at closer, would take the character of strengthening exercises,\* ay, of recreations and festivities. Whilst trying to work out all the bearings of this transformation of one-sided labour, with its castes in town and country, into a more universal occupation lying at the door of every man,† I became conscious on the other hand that I was meditating nothing so intensely new, but merely pursuing problems akin to those which so dearly had busied our greatest poets themselves, as we may see in "Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre." I, too, was therefore picturing to myself a world that I deemed possible, but the purer I imagined it, the more it parted company with the reality of the political tendencies-of-the-day around me; so that I could say to myself, my world will never make its entry until the very moment when the present world has ceased—in other words, where Socialists and Politicians came to end, should *we* commence.‡ I will not deny that this view became with me a positive mood (*Stimmung*): the political relations of the beginning of the bygone 'fifties kept everyone in a state of nervous tension, sufficient to awake in me a certain pleasurable feeling which might rightly seem suspicious to the practical politician.

Now, on thinking back, I believe I may acquit myself of having been sobered from the aforesaid mood—not unlike a spiritual intoxication—first and merely through the turn soon taken by European politics. It is an attribute of the poet, to be riper in his inner intuition (*Anschaung*) of the essence of the world than in his conscious abstract knowledge: precisely at that time I had already sketched, and finally completed, the poem of my "Ring des Nibelungen." With this conception I had unconsciously admitted to my-

\* Cf. Vol. I., 58.—Tr.

† Cf. *Letters to Uhlig*, pp. 81-82, written October 22nd, 1850.—Tr.

‡ Cf. Vol. I., 24, and Vol. II., 178.—Tr.

self the truth about things human. Here everything is tragic through and through, and the Will, that fain would shape a world according to its wish, at last can reach no greater satisfaction than the breaking of itself in dignified annulment.\* It was the time when I returned entirely and exclusively to my artistic plans, and thus, acknowledging Life's earnestness with all my heart, withdrew to where alone can "gladsomeness" abide.—

My youthful friend will surely not expect me to give a categorical account of my later views on Politics and State: under any circumstances they could have no practical importance, and in truth would simply amount to an expression of my horror of concerning myself professionally with matters of the sort. No; he can merely be wishful to learn how things so remote from its ordinary field of action may shape themselves in the brain of a man like myself, cut out for nothing but an artist, after all that he has gone through and felt. But lest I might appear to have meant the above as a disparagement, I must promptly add that whatever I might have to put forward would strictly and solely be a witness to my having arrived at a full valuation of the great, nay, terrible earnest of the matter. The artist, too, may say of himself: "My kingdom is not of this world;" and, perhaps more than any artist now living, I may say this of myself, for very reason of the earnestness wherewith I view my art. And that's the hardship of it; for with this beyond-the-worldly realm of ours we stand amid a world itself so serious and so careworn, that it deems a fleeting dissipation its only fitting refuge, whereas the need for earnest elevation (*Erhebung*) has quite become a stranger to it.—

Life is earnest, and—has always been.

Whoever would wholly clear his mind on this, let him but consider how in every age, and under ever freshly-shaped, but ever self-repeating forms, this life and world

\* "Zu schauen kam ich, nicht zu schaffen"—Wotan in *Siegfried*, act ii.—Tr.

have spurred great hearts and spacious minds to seek for possibility of its bettering; and how 'twas always just the noblest, the men who cared alone for others' weal and offered willingly their own in pledge, that stayed without the slightest influence on the lasting shape of things. The small success of all such high endeavours would shew him plainly that these world-improvers were victims to a fundamental error, and demanded from the world itself a thing it cannot give. Should it even seem possible that much might be ordered more efficiently in man's affairs, yet the said experiences will teach us that the means and ways of reaching this are never rightly predetermined by the single thinker; never, at least, in a manner enabling him to bring them with success before the knowledge of the mass of men. Upon a closer scrutiny of this relation, we fall into astonishment at the quite incredible pettiness and weakness of the average human intellect, and finally into shamefaced wonder that it should ever have astonished us; for any proper knowledge of the world would have taught us from the outset that blindness is the world's true essence, and not Knowledge prompts its movements, but merely a head-long impulse, a blind impetus of unique weight and violence, which procures itself just so much light and knowledge as will suffice to still the pressing need experienced at the moment. So we recognise that nothing really happens but what has issued from this not far-seeing Will, from this Will that answers merely to the momentarily-experienced need; and thus we see that practical success, throughout all time, has attended only those politicians who took account of nothing but the momentary need, neglecting all remoter, general needs, all needs as yet unfelt to-day, and which therefore appeal so little to the mass of mankind that it is impossible to count on its assistance in their ministration.

Moreover we find personal success and great, if not enduring influence on the outer fashioning of the world allotted to the violent, the passionate individual, who, unchaining the elemental principles of human impulse under

favouring circumstances, points out to greed and self-indulgence the speedy pathways to their satisfaction. To the fear of violence from this quarter, as also to a modicum of knowledge thus acquired of basic human nature, we owe the *State*. In it the Need is expressed as the human Will's necessity of establishing some workable agreement among the myriad blindly-grasping individuals into which it is divided. It is a contract whereby the units seek to save themselves from mutual violence, through a little mutual practice of restraint. As in the Nature-religions a portion of the fruits of the field or spoils of the chase was brought as offering to the Gods, to make sure of a right to enjoy the remainder, so in the State the unit offered up just so much of his egoism as appeared necessary to ensure for himself the contentment of its major bulk.\* Here the tendency of the unit naturally makes for obtaining the greatest possible security in barter for the smallest possible sacrifice: but to this tendency, also, he can only give effect through equal-righted fellowships; and these diverse fellowships of individuals equally-entitled in their groups make up the parties in the State, the larger owners striving for a state of permanence, the less favoured for its alteration. But even the party of alteration desires nothing beyond the bringing about a state of matters in which it, too, would wish no further change; and thus the State's main object is upheld from first to last by those whose profit lies in permanence.

*Stability* is therefore the intrinsic tendency of the State. And rightly; for it constitutes withal the unconscious aim in every higher human effort to get beyond the primal need: namely to reach a freer evolution of spiritual attributes, which is always cramped so long as hindrances forestall the satisfaction of that first root-need. Everyone thus strives by nature for stability, for maintenance of quiet: ensured can it only be, however, when the maintenance of existing conditions is not the preponderant interest of *one* party only. Hence it is in the truest interest of all parties,

\* Cf. Vol. II., 186-187.—Tr.

and thus of the State itself, that the interest in its abidingness should not be left to a single party. There must consequently be given a possibility of constantly relieving the suffering interests of less favoured parties: in this regard the more the nearest need is kept alone in eye, the more intelligible will be itself, and the easier and more tranquillising will be its satisfaction. General laws in provision of this possibility, whilst they allow of minor alterations, thus aim alike at maintenance of stability; and that law which, reckoned for the possibility of constant remedy of pressing needs, contains withal the strongest warrant of stability, must therefore be the most perfect law of State.

The embodied voucher for this fundamental law is the *Monarch*. In no State is there a weightier law than that which centres its stability in the supreme hereditary power of one particular family, unconnected and un-commingling with any other lineage in that State. Never yet has there been a Constitution in which, after the downfall of such families and abrogation of the Kingly power, some substitution or periphrasis has not necessarily, and for the most part necessitously, reconstructed a power of similar kind. It therefore is established as the most essential principle of the State; and as in it resides the warrant of stability, so in the person of the King the State attains its true *ideal*.

For, as the King on one hand gives assurance of the State's solidity, on the other his loftiest interest soars high beyond the State. Personally he has naught in common with the interests of parties, but his sole concern is that the conflict of these interests should be adjusted, precisely for the safety of the whole. His sphere is therefore equity, and where this is unattainable, the exercise of grace (*Gnade*). Thus, as against the party interests, he is the representative of purely-human interests, and in the eyes of the party-seeking citizen he therefore occupies in truth a position wellnigh superhuman. To him is consequently accorded a reverence such as the highest citizen would

never dream of distantly demanding for himself; and here, at this summit of the State where we see its ideal reached, we therefore meet that side of human apperception (*Anschauungsweise*) which, in distinction from the faculty of recognising the nearest need, we will call the power of *Wahn*.\* All those, to wit, whose simple powers of cognisance do not extend beyond what bears upon their nearest need—and they form by far the largest portion of mankind—would be unable to recognise the importance of a Royal Prerogative whose exercise has no directly cognisable relation with their nearest need, to say nothing of the necessity of bestirring themselves for its upholding, nay, even of bringing the King their highest offerings, the sacrifice of goods and life, if there intervened no form of apperception entirely opposed to ordinary cognisance.

This form is *Wahn*.

Before we seek to gain intelligence of the nature of *Wahn* from its most wondrous phases, let us take for guide the uncommonly suggestive light thrown by an exceptionally deep-thinking and keen-sighted philosopher of the immediate past † upon the phenomena, so puzzling in themselves, of animal instinct.—The astounding aimful-

\* "Wahn-Vermögen." As the word "Wahn" is frequently used in these pages, and is absolutely untranslatable, I shall mostly retain it as it stands. It does not so much mean an "illusion" or "delusion," in general, as a "semi-conscious *feigning*" (such as the 'legal fiction'), a "dream," or a "symbolical aspiration"—its etymological kinship being quite as near to "fain" as to "feign"; but the context will leave the reader in no doubt as to its particular application in any sentence. It will be remembered that "Wahn" plays an important part in Hans Sachs' monologue in *Die Meistersinger*, act iii; the poem of that drama, containing the Wahn-monologue in a somewhat more extended form than its ultimate version, had already been published in 1862.—TR.

† Arthur Schopenhauer, in "*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*," vol. ii, cap. 27. The philosopher there compares the operations of this "animal instinct" with a case of what we now should call hypnotism, and says that "insects are, in a certain sense, natural somnambulists . . . They have the feeling that they *must* perform a certain action, without exactly knowing why." He also compares this "instinct" to the "daimonion" of Socrates, but does not absolutely employ the expression "Wahn" in this connection. Neither does the "spirit of the race" (or "species"), mentioned by Wagner



ness (*Zweckmässigkeit*) in the procedures (*Verrichtungen*) of insects, among whom the bees and ants lie handiest for general observation, is admittedly inexplicable on the grounds that account for the aimfulness of kindred joint procedures in human life; that is to say, we cannot possibly suppose that these arrangements are directed by an actual knowledge of their aimfulness indwelling in the individuals, nay, even of their aim. In explanation of the extraordinary, ay, the self-sacrificing zeal, as also the ingenious manner, in which such animals provide for their eggs, for instance, of whose aim and future mission they cannot possibly be conscious from experience and observation, our philosopher infers the existence of a *Wahn* that feigns to the individual insect's so scanty intellectual powers an end which it holds for the satisfaction of its private need, whereas that end in truth has nothing to do with the individual, but with the species. The individual's egoism is here assumed, and rightly, to be so invincible that arrangements beneficial merely to the species, to coming generations, and hence the preservation of the species at cost of the transient individual, would never be consummated by that individual with labour and self-sacrifice, were it not guided by the fancy (*Wahn*) that it is thereby serving an end of its own; nay, this fancied end of its own must seem weightier to the individual, the satisfaction reaped from its attainment more potent and complete, than the purely-individual aim of everyday, of satisfying hunger and so forth, since, as we see, the latter is sacrificed with greatest keenness to the former. The author and incitor of this *Wahn* our philosopher deems to be the spirit of the race itself, the almighty Will-of-life (*Lebenswille*) supplanting the individual's limited perceptive-faculty, seeing that without its intervention the

a few sentences farther on, occur in so many words with Schopenhauer. Nowadays for "the spirit of the race" some of us might be inclined to read "the principle of the survival of the fittest"; but the explanation of its *mode* of action, through a "*Wahn*," would hold as good to-day as thirty years ago.—Tr.

individual, in narrow egoistic care for self, would gladly sacrifice the species on the altar of its personal continuance.

Should we succeed in bringing the nature of this *Wahn* to our inner consciousness by any means, we should thereby win the key to that else so enigmatic relation of the individual to the species. Perhaps this may be made easier to us on the path that leads us out above the State. Meanwhile, however, the application of the results of our inquiry into animal instinct to the products of certain constant factors of the highest efficacy in the human State—factors unbidden by any extraneous power, but arising ever of their own accord—will furnish us with an immediate possibility of defining *Wahn* in terms of general experience.

In political life this *Wahn* displays itself as *patriotism*. As such it prompts the citizen to offer up his private welfare, for whose amplest possible ensurement he erst was solely concerned in all his personal and party efforts, nay, to offer up his life itself, for ensuring the State's continuance. The *Wahn* that any violent transmutation of the State must affect him altogether personally, must crush him to a degree which he believes he never could survive, here governs him in such a manner that his exertions to turn aside the danger threatening the State, as 'twere a danger to be suffered in his individual person, are quite as strenuous, and indeed more eager than in the actual latter case; whereas the traitor, as also the churlish realist, finds it easy enough to prove that, even after entry of the evil which the patriot fears, his personal prosperity can remain as flourishing as ever.

The positive renunciation of egoism accomplished in the patriotic action, however, is certainly so violent a strain, that it cannot possibly hold out for long together; moreover the *Wahn* that prompts it is still so strongly tinged with a really egoistic notion, that the relapse into the sober, purely egoistic mood of everyday occurs in general with marked rapidity, and this latter mood goes on to fill the