



The Case of Wagner,
Nietzsche Contra Wagner,
and Selected Aphorisms

Friedrich Nietzsche

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PRESS

The Case Of Wagner

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Translated by Anthony M. Ludovici

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Nietzsche wrote the rough draft of "The Case of Wagner" in Turin, during the month of May 1888; he completed it in Sils Maria towards the end of June of the same year, and it was published in the following autumn. "Nietzsche *contra* Wagner" was written about the middle of December 1888; but, although it was printed and corrected before the New Year, it was not published until long afterwards owing to Nietzsche's complete breakdown in the first days of 1889.

In reading these two essays we are apt to be deceived, by their virulent and forcible tone, into believing that the whole matter is a mere cover for hidden fire,—a mere blind of æsthetic discussion concealing a deep and implacable personal feud which demands and will have vengeance. In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, many people still hold this view of the two little works before us; and, as the actual facts are not accessible to every one, and rumours are more easily believed than verified, the error of supposing that these pamphlets were dictated by personal animosity, and even by Nietzsche's envy of Wagner in his glory, seems to be a pretty common one. Another very general error is to suppose that the point at issue here is not one concerning music at all, but concerning religion. It is taken for granted that the aspirations, the particular quality, the influence, and the method of an art like music, are matters quite distinct from the values and the conditions prevailing in the culture with which it is in harmony, and that however many Christian elements may be discovered in Wagnerian texts, Nietzsche had no right to raise æsthetic objections because he happened to entertain the extraordinary view that these Christian elements had also found their way into Wagnerian music.

To both of these views there is but one reply:—they are absolutely false.

In the "Ecce Homo," Nietzsche's autobiography,—a book which from cover to cover and line for line is sincerity itself—we learn what Wagner actually meant to Nietzsche. On pages 41, 44, 84, 122, 129, &c, we cannot doubt that Nietzsche is speaking from his heart,—and what does he say?—In impassioned tones he admits his profound indebtedness to the great musician, his love for him, his gratitude to him,—how Wagner was the only German who had ever been anything to him—how his friendship with Wagner constituted the happiest and most valuable experience of his life,—how his breach with Wagner almost killed him. And, when we remember, too, that Wagner on his part also declared that he was "alone" after he had lost "that man" (Nietzsche), we begin to perceive that personal bitterness and animosity are out of the question here. We feel we are on a higher plane, and that we must not judge these two men as if they were a couple of little business people who had had a suburban squabble.

Nietzsche declares ("Ecce Homo," p. 24) that he never attacked persons as persons. If he used a name at all, it was merely as a means to an end, just as one might use a magnifying glass in order to make a general, but elusive and intricate fact more clear and more apparent, and if he used the name of David Strauss, without bitterness or spite (for he did not even know the man), when he wished to personify Culture—Philistinism, so, in the same spirit, did he use the name of Wagner, when he wished to personify the general decadence of modern ideas, values, aspirations and Art.

Nietzsche's ambition, throughout his life, was to regenerate European culture. In the first period of his relationship with Wagner, he thought that he had found the man who was prepared to lead in this direction. For a long while he regarded his master as the Saviour of Germany, as the innovator and renovator who was going to arrest the decadent current of his time and lead men to a greatness which had died with antiquity. And so thoroughly did he understand his duties as a disciple, so wholly was he devoted to this cause, that, in spite of all his unquestioned gifts and the excellence of his original achievements, he was for a long while regarded as a mere "literary lackey" in Wagner's service, in all those circles where the rising musician was most disliked.

Gradually, however, as the young Nietzsche developed and began to gain an independent view of life and humanity, it seemed to him extremely doubtful whether Wagner actually was pulling the same way with him. Whereas, theretofore, he had identified Wagner's ideals with his own, it now dawned upon him slowly that the regeneration of German culture, of European culture, and the transvaluation of values which would be necessary for this regeneration, really lay off the track of Wagnerism. He saw that he had endowed Wagner with a good deal that was more his own than Wagner's. In his love he had transfigured the friend, and the composer of "Parsifal" and the man of his imagination were not one. The fact was realised step by step; disappointment upon disappointment, revelation after revelation, ultimately brought it home to him, and though his best instincts at first opposed it, the revulsion of feeling at last became too strong to be scouted, and Nietzsche was plunged into the blackest despair. Had he followed his own human inclinations, he would probably have remained Wagner's friend until the end. As it was, however, he remained loyal to his cause, and this meant denouncing his former idol.

"Joyful Wisdom," "Thus Spake Zarathustra," "Beyond Good and Evil," "The Genealogy of Morals," "The Twilight of the Idols," "The Antichrist"—all these books were but so many exhortations to mankind to step aside from the general track now trodden by Europeans. And what happened? Wagner began to write some hard things about Nietzsche; the world assumed that Nietzsche and Wagner had engaged in a paltry personal quarrel in the press, and the whole importance of the real issue was buried beneath the human, all-too-human interpretations which were heaped upon it.

Nietzsche was a musician of no mean attainments. For a long while, in his youth, his superiors had been doubtful whether he should not be educated for a musical career, so great were his gifts in this art; and if his mother had not been

offered a six-years' scholarship for her son at the famous school of Pforta, Nietzsche, the scholar and philologist, would probably have been an able composer. When he speaks about music, therefore, he knows what he is talking about, and when he refers to Wagner's music in particular, the simple fact of his long intimacy with Wagner during the years at Tribschen, is a sufficient guarantee of his deep knowledge of the subject. Now Nietzsche was one of the first to recognise that the principles of art are inextricably bound up with the laws of life, that an æsthetic dogma may therefore promote or depress all vital force, and that a picture, a symphony, a poem or a statue, is just as capable of being pessimistic, anarchic, Christian or revolutionary, as a philosophy or a science is. To speak of a certain class of music as being compatible with the decline of culture, therefore, was to Nietzsche a perfectly warrantable association of ideas, and that is why, throughout his philosophy, so much stress is laid upon æsthetic considerations.

But if in England and America Nietzsche's attack on Wagner's art may still seem a little incomprehensible, let it be remembered that the Continent has long known that Nietzsche was actually in the right. Every year thousands are now added to the large party abroad who have ceased from believing in the great musical revolutionary of the seventies; that he was one with the French Romanticists and rebels has long since been acknowledged a fact in select circles, both in France and Germany, and if we still have Wagner with us in England, if we still consider Nietzsche as a heretic, when he declares that "Wagner was a musician for unmusical people," it is only because we are more removed than we imagine, from all the great movements, intellectual and otherwise, which take place on the Continent.

In Wagner's music, in his doctrine, in his whole concept of art, Nietzsche saw the confirmation, the promotion—aye, even the encouragement, of that decadence and degeneration which is now rampant in Europe; and it is for this reason, although to the end of his life he still loved Wagner, the man and the friend, that we find him, on the very eve of his spiritual death, exhorting us to abjure Wagner the musician and the artist.

Anthony M. Ludovici.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION[1]

In spite of the adverse criticism with which the above preface has met at the hands of many reviewers since the summer of last year, I cannot say that I should feel justified, even after mature consideration, in altering a single word or sentence it contains. If I felt inclined to make any changes at all, these would take the form of extensive additions, tending to confirm rather than to modify the general argument it advances; but, any omissions of which I may have been guilty in the first place, have been so fully rectified since, thanks to the publication of the English translations of Daniel Halévy's and Henri Lichtenberger's works, "The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche," [2] and "The Gospel of Superman," [3] respectively, that, were it not for the fact that the truth about this matter cannot be repeated too often, I should have refrained altogether from including any fresh remarks of my own in this Third Edition.

In the works just referred to (pp. 129 *et seq.* in Halévy's book, and pp. 78 *et seq.* in Lichtenberger's book), the statement I made in my preface to "Thoughts out of Season," vol. i., and which I did not think it necessary to repeat in my first preface to these pamphlets, will be found to receive the fullest confirmation.

The statement in question was to the effect that many long years before these pamphlets were even projected, Nietzsche's apparent *volte-face* in regard to his hero Wagner had been not only foreshadowed but actually stated in plain words, in two works written during his friendship with Wagner,—the works referred to being "The Birth of Tragedy" (1872), and "Wagner in Bayreuth" (1875) of which Houston Stuart Chamberlain declares not only that it possesses "undying classical worth" but that "a perusal of it is indispensable to all who wish to follow the question [of Wagner] to its roots." [4]

The idea that runs through the present work like a leitmotif—the idea that Wagner was at bottom more of a mime than a musician—was so far an ever present thought with Nietzsche that it is ever impossible to ascertain the period when it was first formulated.

In Nietzsche's wonderful autobiography (*Ecce Homo*, p. 88), in the section dealing with the early works just mentioned, we find the following passage—"In the second of the two essays [Wagner in Bayreuth] with a profound certainty of instinct, I already characterised the elementary factor in Wagner's nature as a theatrical talent which, in all his means and aspirations, draws its final conclusions." And as early as 1874, Nietzsche wrote in his diary—"Wagner is a born actor. Just as Goethe was an abortive painter, and Schiller an abortive orator, so Wagner was an abortive theatrical genius. His attitude to music is that of the actor; for he knows how to sing and speak, as it were out of different souls and from absolutely different worlds (*Tristan* and the *Meistersinger*)."

There is, however, no need to multiply examples, seeing, as I have said, that in the translations of Halévy's and Lichtenberger's books the reader will find all the independent evidence he could possibly desire, disproving the popular, and even the learned belief that, in the two pamphlets before us we have a complete, apparently unaccountable, and therefore "demented" *volte-face* on Nietzsche's part. Nevertheless, for fear lest some doubt should still linger in certain minds concerning this point, and with the view of adding interest to these essays, the Editor considered it advisable, in the Second Edition, to add a number of extracts from Nietzsche's diary of the year 1878 (ten years before "The Case of Wagner," and "Nietzsche *contra* Wagner" were written) in order to show to what extent those learned critics who complain of Nietzsche's "morbid and uncontrollable recantations and revulsions of feeling," have overlooked even the plain facts of the case when forming their all-too-hasty conclusions. These extracts will be found at the end of "Nietzsche *contra* Wagner." While reading them, however, it should not be forgotten that they were never intended for publication by Nietzsche himself—a fact which accounts for their unpolished and sketchy form—and that they were first published in vol. xi. of the first German Library Edition (pp. 99–129) only when he was a helpless invalid, in 1897. Since then, in 1901 and 1906 respectively, they have been reprinted, once in the large German Library Edition (vol. xi. pp. 181–202), and once in the German Pocket Edition, as an appendix to "Human—All-too—Human," Part II.

An altogether special interest now attaches to these pamphlets; for, in the first place we are at last in possession of Wagner's own account of his development, his art, his aspirations and his struggles, in the amazing self-revelation entitled *My Life*; [5] and secondly, we now have *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's autobiography, in which we learn for the first time from Nietzsche's own pen to what extent his history was that of a double devotion—to Wagner on the one hand, and to his own life task, the Transvaluation of all Values, on the other.

Readers interested in the Nietzsche—Wagner controversy will naturally look to these books for a final solution of all the difficulties which the problem presents. But let them not be too sanguine. From first to last this problem is not to be settled by "facts." A good deal of instinctive choice, instinctive aversion, and instinctive suspicion are necessary here. A little more suspicion, for instance, ought to be applied to Wagner's *My Life*, especially in England, where critics are not half suspicious enough about a continental artist's self-revelations, and are too prone, if they have suspicions at all, to apply them in the wrong place.

An example of this want of *finesse* in judging foreign writers is to be found in Lord Morley's work on Rousseau,—a book which ingenuously takes for granted everything that a writer like Rousseau cares to say about himself, without considering for an instant the possibility that Rousseau might have practised some hypocrisy. In regard to Wagner's life

might easily fall into the same error—that is to say, we might take seriously all he says concerning himself and his family affairs.

We should beware of this, and should not even believe Wagner when he speaks badly about himself. No one speaks badly about himself without a reason, and the question in this case is to find out the reason. Did Wagner—in the belief that genius was always immoral—wish to pose as an immoral Egotist, in order to make us believe in his genius, of which he himself was none too sure in his innermost heart? Did Wagner wish to appear "sincere" in his biography, in order to awaken in us a belief in the sincerity of his music, which he likewise doubted, but wished to impress upon the world as "true"? Or did he wish to be thought badly of in connection with things that were not true, and that consequently did not affect him, in order to lead us off the scent of true things, things he was ashamed of and which he wished the world to ignore—just like Rousseau (the similarity between the two is more than a superficial one) who barbarously pretended to have sent his children to the foundling hospital, in order not to be thought incapable of having had any children at all? In short, where is the bluff in Wagner's biography? Let us therefore be careful about it, and all the more so because Wagner himself guarantees the truth of it in the prefatory note. If we were to be credulous here, we should moreover be acting in direct opposition to Nietzsche's own counsel as given in the following aphorisms (Nos. 19 and 20, p. 89):—

"It is very difficult to trace the course of Wagner's development,—no trust must be placed in his own description of his soul's experiences. He writes party-pamphlets for his followers."

"It is extremely doubtful whether Wagner is able to bear witness about himself."

While on p. 37 (the note), we read:—"He [Wagner] was not proud enough to be able to suffer the truth about himself. Nobody had less pride than he. Like Victor Hugo he remained true to himself even in his biography,—he remained an actor."

However, as a famous English judge has said—"Truth will come out, even in the witness box," and, as we may add in this case, even in an autobiography. There is one statement in Wagner's *My Life* which sounds true to my ears at least—a statement which, in my opinion, has some importance, and to which Wagner himself seems to grant a mysterious significance. I refer to the passage on p. 93 of vol. i., in which Wagner says:—"Owing to the exceptional vivacity and innate susceptibility of my nature... I gradually became conscious of a certain power of transporting or bewildering my more indolent companions."

This seems innocent enough. When, however, it is read in conjunction with Nietzsche's trenchant criticism, particularly on pp. 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 of this work, and also with a knowledge of Wagner's music, it becomes one of the most striking passages in Wagner's autobiography, for it records how soon he became conscious of his dominant instinct and faculty.

I know perfectly well that the Wagnerites will not be influenced by these remarks. Their gratitude to Wagner is too great for this. He has supplied the precious varnish wherewith to hide the dull ugliness of our civilisation. He has given to souls despairing over the materialism of this world, to souls despairing of themselves, and longing to be rid of themselves, the indispensable hashish and morphia wherewith to deaden their inner discords. These discords are everywhere apparent nowadays. Wagner is therefore a common need, a common benefactor. As such he is bound to be worshipped and adored in spite of all egotistical and theatrical autobiographies.

Albeit, signs are not wanting—at least among his Anglo-Saxon worshippers who stand even more in need of romanticism than their continental brethren,—which show that, in order to uphold Wagner, people are now beginning to draw distinctions between the man and the artist. They dismiss the man as "human—all-too-human," but they still maintain that there are divine qualities in his music. However distasteful the task of disillusioning these psychological tyros may be, they should be informed that no such division of a man into two parts is permissible, save in Christianity (the body and the soul), but that outside purely religious spheres it is utterly unwarrantable. There can be no such strange divorce between a bloom and the plant on which it blows, and has a black woman ever been known to give birth to a white child?

Wagner, as Nietzsche tells us on p. 19, "was something complete, he was a typical *decadent* in whom every sign of 'free will' was lacking, in whom every feature was necessary." Wagner, allow me to add, was a typical representative of the nineteenth century, which was the century of contradictory values, of opposed instincts, and of every kind of inner disharmony. The genuine, the classical artists of that period, such men as Heine, Goethe, Stendhal, and Gobineau, overcame their inner strife, and each succeeded in making a harmonious whole out of himself—not indeed without a severe struggle; for everyone of them suffered from being the child of his age, *i.e.*, a *decadent*. The only difference between them and the romantics lies in the fact that they (the former) were conscious of what was wrong with them, and possessed the will and the strength to overcome their illness; whereas the romantics chose the easier alternative—namely, that of shutting their eyes on themselves.

"I am just as much a child of my age as Wagner—*i.e.*, I am a *decadent*," says Nietzsche. "The only difference is that I recognised the fact, that I struggled against it" [\[6 \]](#)

What Wagner did was characteristic of all romantics and contemporary artists: he drowned and overshadowed his inner discord by means of exuberant pathos and wild exaltation. Far be it from me to value Wagner's music *in extenso* here—this is scarcely a fitting opportunity to do so;—but I think it might well be possible to show, on purely psychological grounds, how impossible it was for a man like Wagner to produce real art. For how can harmony, order, symmetry, mastery, proceed from uncontrolled discord, disorder, disintegration, and chaos? The fact that an art which springs from

such a marshy soil may, like certain paludal plants, be "wonderful," "gorgeous," and "overwhelming," cannot be denied; but true art it is not. It is so just as little as Gothic architecture is,—that style which, in its efforts to escape beyond the tragic contradiction in its mediæval heart, yelled its hysterical cry heavenwards and even melted the stones of its structures into a quivering and fluid jet, in order to give adequate expression to the painful and wretched conflict then raging between the body and the soul.

That Wagner, too, was a great sufferer, there can be no doubt; not, however, a sufferer from strength, like a true artist, but from weakness—the weakness of his age, which he never overcame. It is for this reason that he should be rather pitied than judged as he is now being judged by his German and English critics, who, with thoroughly neurotic suddenness, have acknowledged their revulsion of feeling a little too harshly.

"I have carefully endeavoured not to deride, or deplore, or detest..." says Spinoza, "but to understand"; and these words ought to be our guide, not only in the case of Wagner, but in all things.

Inner discord is a terrible affliction, and nothing is so certain to produce that nervous irritability which is so trying to the patient as well as to the outer world, as this so-called spiritual disease. Nietzsche was probably quite right when he said the only real and true music that Wagner ever composed did not consist of his elaborate arias and overtures, but of ten or fifteen bars which, dispersed here and there, gave expression to the composer's profound and genuine melancholy. But this melancholy had to be overcome, and Wagner with the blood of a *cabotin* in his veins, resorted to the remedy that was nearest to hand—that is to say, the art of bewildering others and himself. Thus he remained ignorant about himself all his life; for there was, as Nietzsche rightly points out (p. 37, *note*), not sufficient pride in the man for him to desire to know or to suffer gladly the truth concerning his real nature. As an actor his ruling passion was vanity, but in his case it was correlated with a semi-conscious knowledge of the fact that all was not right with him and his art. It was this that caused him to suffer. His egomaniacal behaviour and his almost Rousseauesque fear and suspicion of others were only the external manifestations of his inner discrepancies. But, to repeat what I have already said, these abnormal symptoms are not in the least incompatible with Wagner's music, they are rather its very cause, the root from which it springs.

In reality, therefore, Wagner the man and Wagner the artist were undoubtedly one, and constituted a splendid romanticist. His music as well as his autobiography are proofs of his wonderful gifts in this direction. His success in his time, as in ours, is due to the craving of the modern world for actors, sorcerers, bewilders and idealists who are able to conceal the ill-health and the weakness that prevail, and who please by intoxicating and exalting. But this being so, the world must not be disappointed to find the hero of a preceding age explode in the next. It must not be astonished to find a disparity between the hero's private life and his "elevating" art or romantic and idealistic gospel. As long as people will admire heroic attitudes more than heroism, such disillusionment is bound to be the price of their error. In a truly great man, life—theory and life—practice, if seen from a sufficiently lofty point of view, must and do always agree, in an actor, in a romanticist, in an idealist, and in a Christian, there is always a yawning chasm between the two, which, whatever well-meaning critics may do, cannot be bridged posthumously by acrobatic feats *in psychologics*.

Let anyone apply this point of view to Nietzsche's life and theory. Let anyone turn his life inside out, not only as he gives it to us in his *Ecce Homo*, but as we find it related by all his biographers, friends and foes alike, and what will be the result? Even if we ignore his works—the blooms which blowed from time to time from his life—we absolutely cannot deny the greatness of the man's *private practice*, and if we fully understand and appreciate the latter, we must be singularly deficient in instinct and in *flair* if we do not suspect that some of this greatness is reflected in his life—task.

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

London, July 1911.

THE CASE OF WAGNER: A MUSICIAN'S PROBLEM

A LETTER FROM TURIN, MAY 1888

"RIDENDO DICERE SEVERUM..."

Preface

I am writing this to relieve my mind. It is not malice alone which makes me praise Bizet at the expense of Wagner in this essay. Amid a good deal of jesting I wish to make one point clear which does not admit of levity. To turn my back on Wagner was for me a piece of fate, to get to like anything else whatever afterwards was for me a triumph. Nobody, perhaps, had ever been more dangerously involved in Wagnerism, nobody had defended himself more obstinately against it, nobody had ever been so overjoyed at ridding himself of it. A long history!—Shall I give it a name?—If I were a moralist, who knows what I might not call it! Perhaps a piece of *self-mastery*.—But the philosopher does not like the moralist, neither does he like high-falutin' words...

What is the first and last thing that a philosopher demands of himself? To overcome his age in himself, to become "timeless." With what then does the philosopher have the greatest fight? With all that in him which makes him the child of his time. Very well then! I am just as much a child of my age as Wagner—*i.e.*, I am a decadent. The only difference is that I recognised the fact, that I struggled against it. The philosopher in me struggled against it.

My greatest preoccupation hitherto has been the problem of *decadence*, and I had reasons for this. "Good and evil" form only a playful subdivision of this problem. If one has trained one's eye to detect the symptoms of decline, one also understands morality,—one understands what lies concealed beneath its holiest names and tables of values: *e.g.*, *impoverished* life, the will to nonentity, great exhaustion. Morality *denies* life... In order to undertake such a mission I was obliged to exercise self-discipline:—I had to side against all that was morbid in myself including Wagner, including Schopenhauer, including the whole of modern *humanity*.—A profound estrangement, coldness and soberness towards all that belongs to my age, all that was contemporary: and as the highest wish, Zarathustra's eye, an eye which surveys the whole phenomenon—mankind—from an enormous distance,—which looks down upon it.—For such a goal—what sacrifice would not have been worth while? What "self-mastery"! What "self-denial"!

The greatest event of my life took the form of a *recovery*. Wagner belongs only to my diseases.

Not that I wish to appear ungrateful to this disease. If in this essay I support the proposition that Wagner is *harmful*, I none the less wish to point out unto whom, in spite of all, he is indispensable—to the philosopher. Anyone else may perhaps be able to get on without Wagner: but the philosopher is not free to pass him by. The philosopher must be the evil conscience of his age,—but to this end he must be possessed of its best knowledge. And what better guide, or more thoroughly efficient revealer of the soul, could be found for the labyrinth of the modern spirit than Wagner? Through Wagner modernity speaks her most intimate language: it conceals neither its good nor its evil: it has thrown off all shame. And, conversely, one has almost calculated the whole of the value of modernity once one is clear concerning what is good and evil in Wagner. I can perfectly well understand a musician of to-day who says: "I hate Wagner but I can endure no other music." But I should also understand a philosopher who said, "Wagner is modernity in concentrated form." There is no help for it, we must first be Wagnerites...

Yesterday—would you believe it?—I heard *Bizet's* masterpiece for the twentieth time. Once more I attended with the same gentle reverence; once again I did not run away. This triumph over my impatience surprises me. How such a work completes one! Through it one almost becomes a "masterpiece" oneself—And, as a matter of fact, each time I heard *Carmen* it seemed to me that I was more of a philosopher, a better philosopher than at other times: I became so forbearing, so happy, so Indian, so *settled*... To sit for five hours: the first step to holiness!—May I be allowed to say that Bizet's orchestration is the only one that I can endure now? That other orchestration which is all the rage at present—the Wagnerian—is brutal, artificial and "unsophisticated" withal, hence its appeal to all the three senses of the modern soul at once. How terribly Wagnerian orchestration affects me! I call it the *Sirocco*. A disagreeable sweat breaks out all over me. All my fine weather vanishes.

Bizet's music seems to me perfect. It comes forward lightly, gracefully, stylishly. It is lovable, it does not sweat. "All that is good is easy, everything divine runs with light feet": this is the first principle of my æsthetics. This music is wicked, refined, fatalistic, and withal remains popular,—it possesses the refinement of a race, not of an individual. It is rich. It is definite. It builds, organises, completes, and in this sense it stands as a contrast to the polypus in music, to "endless melody". Have more painful, more tragic accents ever been heard on the stage before? And how are they obtained? Without grimaces! Without counterfeiting of any kind! Free from the *lie* of the grand style!—In short: this music assumes that the listener is intelligent even as a musician,—thereby it is the opposite of Wagner, who, apart from everything else, was in any case the most *ill-mannered* genius on earth (Wagner takes us as if... , he repeats a thing so often that we become desperate,—that we ultimately believe it).

And once more: I become a better man when Bizet speaks to me. Also a better musician, a better *listener*. Is it in any way possible to listen better?—I even burrow behind this music with my ears. I hear its very cause. I seem to assist at its birth. I tremble before the dangers which this daring music runs, I am enraptured over those happy accidents for which even Bizet himself may not be responsible.—And, strange to say, at bottom I do not give it a thought, or am not aware how much thought I really do give it. For quite other ideas are running through my head the while... Has any one ever observed that music *emancipates* the spirit? gives wings to thought? and that the more one becomes a musician the more one is also a philosopher? The grey sky of abstraction seems thrilled by flashes of lightning; the light is strong enough to reveal all the details of things; to enable one to grapple with problems; and the world is surveyed as if from a mountain top—With this I have defined philosophical pathos—And unexpectedly *answers* drop into my lap, a small hailstorm of ice and wisdom, of problems *solved*. Where am I? Bizet makes me productive. Everything that is good makes me productive. I have gratitude for nothing else, nor have I any other touchstone for testing what is good.

Bizet's work also saves; Wagner is not the only "Saviour." With it one bids farewell to the *damp* north and to all the fog of the Wagnerian ideal. Even the action in itself delivers us from these things. From Merimée it has this logic even in passion, from him it has the direct line, *inexorable* necessity, but what it has above all else is that which belongs to sub-tropical zones—that dryness of atmosphere, that *limpidezza* of the air. Here in every respect the climate is altered. Here another kind of sensuality, another kind of sensitiveness and another kind of cheerfulness make their appeal. This music is gay, but not in a French or German way. Its gaiety is African; fate hangs over it, its happiness is short, sudden, without reprieve. I envy Bizet for having had the courage of this sensitiveness, which hitherto in the cultured music of Europe has found no means of expression,—of this southern, tawny, sunburnt sensitiveness... What a joy the golden afternoon of its happiness is to us! When we look out, with this music in our minds, we wonder whether we have ever seen the sea so *calm*. And how soothing is this Moorish dancing! How, for once, even our insatiability gets sated by its lascivious melancholy!—And finally love, love translated back into *Nature*! Not the love of a "cultured girl!"—no Senta-sentimentality. [\[7 \]](#) But love as fate, as a fatality, cynical, innocent, cruel,—and precisely in this way *Nature*! The love whose means is war, whose very essence is the *mortal hatred* between the sexes!—I know no case in which the tragic irony, which constitutes the kernel of love, is expressed with such severity, or in so terrible a formula, as in the last cry of Don José with which the work ends:

"Yes, it is I who have killed her, I—my adored Carmen!"

—Such a conception of love (the only one worthy of a philosopher) is rare: it distinguishes one work of art from among a thousand others. For, as a rule, artists are no better than the rest of the world, they are even worse—they *misunderstand* love. Even Wagner misunderstood it. They imagine that they are selfless in it because they appear to be seeking the advantage of another creature often to their own disadvantage. But in return they want to *possess* the other creature... Even God is no exception to this rule, he is very far from thinking "What does it matter to thee whether I love thee or not?"—He becomes terrible if he is not loved in return "*L'amour*—and with this principle one carries one's point against Gods and men—*est de tous les sentiments le plus égoïste, et par conséquent, lorsqu'il est blessé, le moins généreux*" (B. Constant).

Perhaps you are beginning to perceive how very much this music *improves* me?—*Il faut méditerraniser la musique.* and I have my reasons for this principle ("Beyond Good and Evil," pp. 216 *et seq.*) The return to Nature, health, good spirits, youth, *virtue!*—And yet I was one of the most corrupted Wagnerites... I was able to take Wagner seriously. Oh, this old magician! what tricks has he not played upon us! The first thing his art places in our hands is a magnifying glass: we look through it, and we no longer trust our own eyes—Everything grows bigger, *even Wagner grows bigger...* What a clever rattlesnake. Throughout his life he rattled "resignation," "loyalty," and "purity" about our ears, and he retired from the *corrupt* world with a song of praise to chastity!—And we believed it all...

—But you will not listen to me? You *prefer* even the *problem* of Wagner to that of Bizet? But neither do I underrate it; it has its charm. The problem of salvation is even a venerable problem. Wagner pondered over nothing so deeply as over salvation: his opera is the opera of salvation. Someone always wants to be saved in his operas,—now it is a youth; anon it is a maid,—this is *his problem*—And how lavishly he varies his *leitmotif!* What rare and melancholy modulations! If it were not for Wagner, who would teach us that innocence has a preference for saving interesting sinners? (the case in "Tannhauser"). Or that even the eternal Jew gets saved and *settled down* when he marries? (the case in the "Flying Dutchman"). Or that corrupted old females prefer to be saved by chaste young men? (the case of Kundry). Or that young hysterics like to be saved by their doctor? (the case in "Lohengrin"). Or that beautiful girls most love to be saved by a knight who also happens to be a Wagnerite? (the case in the "Mastersingers"). Or that even married women also like to be saved by a knight? (the case of Isolde). Or that the venerable Almighty, after having compromised himself morally in all manner of ways, is at last delivered by a free spirit and an immoralist? (the case in the "Ring"). Admire, more especially this last piece of wisdom! Do you understand it? I—take good care not to understand it... That it is possible to draw yet other lessons from the works above mentioned,—I am much more ready to prove than to dispute. That one may be driven by a Wagnerian ballet to desperation—*and* to virtue! (once again the case in "Tannhauser"). That not going to bed at the right time may be followed by the worst consequences (once again the case of "Lohengrin").—That one can never be too sure of the spouse one actually marries (for the third time, the case of "Lohengrin"). "Tristan and Isolde" glorifies the perfect husband who, in a certain case, can ask only one question: "But why have ye not told me this before? Nothing could be simpler than that!" Reply:

"That I cannot tell thee. And what thou askest, That wilt thou never learn."

"Lohengrin" contains a solemn ban upon all investigation and questioning. In this way Wagner stood for the Christian concept, "Thou must and shalt *believe*". It is a crime against the highest and the holiest to be scientific... The "Flying Dutchman" preaches the sublime doctrine that woman can moor the most erratic soul, or to put it into Wagnerian terms "save" him. Here we venture to ask a question. Supposing that this were actually true, would it therefore be desirable?—What becomes of the "eternal Jew" whom a woman adores and *enchains*? He simply ceases from being eternal, he marries,—that is to say, he concerns us no longer.—Transferred into the realm of reality, the danger for the artist and for the genius—and these are of course the "eternal Jews"—resides in woman: *adoring* women are their ruin. Scarcely any one has sufficient character not to be corrupted—"saved" when he finds himself treated as a God—he then immediately condescends to woman.—Man is a coward in the face of all that is eternally feminine, and this the girls know.—In many cases of woman's love, and perhaps precisely in the most famous ones, the love is no more than a refined form of *parasitism*, a making one's nest in another's soul and sometimes even in another's flesh—Ah! and how constantly at the cost of the host!

We know the fate of Goethe in old-maidish moralin-corroded Germany. He was always offensive to Germans, he found honest admirers only among Jewesses. Schiller, "noble" Schiller, who cried flowery words into their ears,—he was a man after their own heart. What did they reproach Goethe with?—with the Mount of Venus, and with having composed certain Venetian epigrams. Even Klopstock preached him a moral sermon; there was a time when Herder was fond of using the word "Priapus" when he spoke of Goethe. Even "Wilhelm Meister" seemed to be only a symptom of decline, of a moral "going to the dogs". The "Menagerie of tame cattle," the worthlessness of the hero in this book, revolted Niebuhr, who finally bursts out in a plaint which *Biterolf* [8 might well have sung: "nothing so easily makes a painful impression as when a great mind despoils itself of its wings and strives for virtuosity in something greatly inferior, while it renounces more lofty aims." But the most indignant of all was the cultured woman—all smaller courts in Germany, every kind of "Puritanism" made the sign of the cross at the sight of Goethe, at the thought of the "unclean spirit" in Goethe.—This history was what Wagner set to music. He saves Goethe, that goes without saying; but he does so in such a clever way that he also takes the side of the cultured woman. Goethe gets saved: a prayer saves him, a cultured woman *draws him out of the mire.*

—As to what Goethe would have thought of Wagner?—Goethe once set himself the question, "what danger hangs over all romanticists—the fate of romanticists?"—His answer was: "To choke over the rumination of moral and religious absurdities." In short: *Parsifal*... The philosopher writes thereto an epilogue: *Holiness*—the only remaining higher value still seen by the mob or by woman, the horizon of the ideal for all those who are naturally short-sighted. To philosophers, however, this horizon, like every other, is a mere misunderstanding, a sort of slamming of the door in the face of the real beginning of their world,—their danger, their ideal, their desideratum... In more polite language: *La philosophie ne suffit pas au grand nombre. Il lui faut la sainteté...*

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