The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner

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THE RACIAL THINKING

OF

RICHARD WAGNER

"My baton will yet become the scepter of the future."

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Leon Stein

INTRODUCTION

The Wagner literature is already so voluminous that any new addition must particularly justify itself. It may come as a surprise to many musicians as well as laymen that Wagner did much thinking on race at all; this by itself would warrant the present study. But there are more important justifications. It is the author's belief that up to the present, Wagner's racial tenets have not been clearly understood either in their content or their influence. Since the implications of these tenets have been made manifest only within the past decade, any previous appraisal must necessarily prove wanting. Finally, it is only in the recent past that an objective scientific investigation of race and racial factors has been established. In the light of such investigation we are not only justified, we are compelled to consider those tenets of Wagner which are based on or derive from his theories of race.

The controversy originally excited by Wagner's music has become a matter of past history; by a consensus of popular and educated opinion Wagner has been accorded a place among the most important composers. Any reappraisal of his music at this time would be warranted only on the basis of a radical reassessment of facts and opinions, of a revaluation in terms of a marked change of taste (a possible metamorphosis, but by no means an immediate probability).

Wagner's music represents a culmination—a culmination and the close of a period, a century, and even an art-form. For with him, the opera as Music-Drama does not begin—it concludes. At some future date the form may be revived, but from the standpoint of composition, opera as music-drama has been an almost dormant form for the past half century It is self-

evident that no completely achieved style-structure, be it the Fugue of Bach, the Symphony of Beethoven or the Music-Drama of Wagner can ever be reproduced as a creative pattern. This is not to say that the fugue, symphony or music-drama are exhausted forms; what is meant is that specific stylistic aspects of these forms are not recurrent except in more or less pedantic imitations.

But if Wagner's art—from the standpoint of the music-drama as a form,—leads to a kind of *cul-de-sac,* there is one aspect of his writing and thinking which, partly continuing and partly initiating a number of associated beliefs, has exerted a pronounced and profound influence not only on musical judgments but on the social thought of the Western World, in the broadest sense of the term: this aspect is his racial thinking. Both in his own time and later, the direction of Wagner's thinking, the content of his ideas were not too well understood and even less appreciated in their total implications. As we shall see, Wagner himself, in one instance, turned away from an action that merely implemented and made concrete one of the measures for which he had been clamoring. It is only when ideas which seemed to be discrete and dissociated aesthetic theories, therefore "harmless," "impractical," "artistic," not really connected with "real life"—suddenly, explosively, tragically become manifest in overt action, that any accurate notion of what they were, to begin with, becomes at all possible.

To come directly to the point—Wagner's racial thinking culminates and reaches its apogee in Hitler, Goebbels, Rosenberg and the Third Reich. Under no circumstance is it suggested that Hitler and Nazi Germany owe their existence to Wagner. But only in Fascist Germany and not until then, do the racial tenets of Wagner finally achieve their logical destination and conclusion. Consequently, no pre-Hitler appraisal of Wagner's thinking could be entirely accurate or sufficiently comprehensive, and no evaluation of his *ideas* that did not take into account their concretion in Nazi culture and behavior could be valid. Some individuals have a vague notion of Wag-

ner's racial concepts, from a chance reference, or a cursory familiarity with the composer's anti-Christian or anti-Semitic bias. But comparatively few have gone to either the German original or the Ellis translation of Wagner's collected writings. The writer has come upon library copies of both the German and English versions, which, after some fifty years of apparent circulation, still had uncut pages. It may seem that these uncut pages might indicate a lack of interest in or influence of Wagner's writings; this is a mistaken impression. One has but to reflect on how comparatively few people have actually read Gobineau or Karl Marx, and then compare this factor with the enormous influence of these writers. However, as in the case of Wagner, these authors exert their influence through an exegesis by writers, scientists, politicians, and statesmen, rather than through a direct effect on large numbers of readers. Many individuals have been content with the modified or expurgated texts by historians or editors who obviously wished to avoid the distasteful or the controversial. Few outside of Germany have any notion of the scope, virulence and intensity of Wagner's social and racial tenets. Had these tenets remained the peculiar property of Wagner and of his time alone, this study would not have the meaningful significance it possesses for us of the present.

In the racial outlook of Richard Wagner we are confronted with concepts of "Volk," language, "Kultur," anti-Christianity, anti-Semitism, anti-Mendelssohnism, that resolve themselves into one complex, with reciprocal interrelationships—all oriented around music, yet extending into every aspect of life, German life in particular. That music could provide such a focus, that considerations fanning out from this center could so profoundly influence German thought, is the result of its place in German life. For in that culture it was the most highly developed art, and regarded with a jealous possessiveness. Nineteenth and twentieth-century Germany represented one of our civilization's most highly developed cultures. Consequently, judgments rooted in music or music aesthetics, particularly associated with the forceful self-righteous propaganda of one who even in his own

lifetime was acknowledged as a great composer, exercised an effect not only national but literally world-wide in scope. One factor which has contributed to the deep and wide-spread influence of these judgments is that it seemed possible to take one or another of the Wagnerian ideas, without necessarily subscribing to the whole package of assorted and associated notions. Wagner was against so many different things that most individuals could find at least one point of agreement with him. To these individuals the concept "Wagner" represented the one point on which there was some kind of mutual understanding or agreement. Such individuals could say they agreed with "Wagner" by which they meant that aspect of Wagner's thinking with which they were in accord. Often, there existed an ignorance of what the *totality* of Wagnerian thinking actually was. This becomes an extremely important consideration in any explanation involving the spread and continuity of Wagner's racial tenets, for in the end all of his ideas were accepted and propagated. Unquestionably, no one individual, excepting Wagner himself, ever believed in all his various theories and hypotheses. Though most people rejected some ideas while accepting others, eventually each of his many theories found some advocate or some support in one quarter or another.

In this fashion, some individuals have accepted Wagner's appraisal of Mendelssohn, without being aware of, or being affected by Wagner's anti-Christianity. Or, some might accept his anti-Christian tenets and reject his criticism of Mendelssohn. A Protestant might be attracted by Wagner's anti-Catholicism and yet not accept his anti-Christian affirmations. Vegetarians might agree with Wagner's dietary theories, and animal lovers with his stand against vivisection. Despite the fact that the ideas may seem separable in their respective categories, they are inseparable in their interrelationship. Even vegetarianism is mixed with attacks on the Old Testament and with anti-Semitism. Wagner's ideas do not each rest in a little receptacle, apart from and independent of one another; they brush on one another, one fertilizing the other, and each can only be understood in its proper relation to the whole complex. That this interrela-

tionship of music, culture, religion, personalities, and social thought existed not alone in Wagner's writings, but was an active reality in the minds and hearts of later Germans becomes increasingly evident and tangibly manifest in such work as Rosenberg's "Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts," Grunsky's "Wagner und die Juden" and in Hitler's "Mein Kampf." Because the racial ideas which we are considering neither began with Wagner nor ended with Hitler, we have an added reason for considering them in relation to their origins, validity, and effect.

Were there no more to Wagner's racial arrogations and disparagements than a mere personal or temperamental expression, the situation would not merit a consideration other than that of a passing reference to a curious but not unprecedented instance; an example of that kind of perverseness of genius that we are wont to dismiss with an understanding smile and a tolerant nod as just another instance of how wide of the mark the artist turned critic and political thinker might be.

There is, however, a unique quality here that is unprecedented not only in music history, but in general history. The pattern created by the number and complexity of factors and motives underlying Wagner's racial thinking is an intricate one. As we have suggested, were we dealing with something which occurred and remained in the past, the inquiries involved, though interesting, would have a museum aspect, of more limitedly academic than of current general interest. But the attitudes involved are not merely "personal," not of the dead past, and certainly not "historical" in the sense of representing achieved and long finished matters. In origin and effect, Wagner's social theories represent a phase of thought which is profoundly ingrained in the German concept. Many individuals, musicians and non-musicians alike, accept and promulgate these theories with little notion of either their origin or their validity. The one word, race, which should have been defined, was for almost a century taken for granted; that which should have been proved was accepted as an axiom.

The problem of Wagner's racial thinking has been approached in a somewhat cursory and peripheral manner in most biographical and critical works. To the writer's knowledge, no intensive and exclusive study has hitherto been made of this important subject. Jacques Barzun and Friedrich Hertz, though concerning themselves with certain aspects of this topic, have considered it in a somewhat limited fashion. Such instances as the oblique references in W. A. Ellis' biography of Wagner (itself based on Glasenapp) or in the same writer's references to the translations of the *Gesammelte Schriften,* or even the quite frequent allusions to Wagner's racism in Newman's excellent biographical works cannot give one a proper sense of the significance and import of the composer's racial theories. Such an awareness can only come from a thorough consideration of Wagner's thinking in terms of its backgrounds, its contents, and its influences.

Concerning Wagner's attitude towards Mendelssohn, there are deeply personal motivations which have most often been ignored or slighted. The remarks of Wagner in his autobiography and in his letters provide the principal clues to his innermost feelings in this matter, even when his words are contradicted by the known facts. Writers have been well enough aware of certain external aspects of the relationship, and the American critic, Finck, sensed the profound personal perturbation of Wagner in his relation to Mendelssohn. But here, too, no detailed study has been made, despite the fact that the various constituents were clearly discernible and all that had to be done was merely to assemble these constituents in order to achieve a complete pattern of thought and behavior.

Because of the conflicting expressions in Wagner's literary works, it is not surprising to find the popular concept of Wagner's Christianity inconsistent with the actual facts. A sentence in one essay will seem to express not only a deep Christian feeling, but even a tolerance for Catholicism, whereas a sentence in another essay would seem to imply a final and immutable anti-Christian attitude. Many still see in *Parsifal* an apparent reconcilia-

tion with Christianity, and are unaware that it continues important lines of the "Ring" myth within a series of transmuted symbols.

The most confused thinking, however, has resulted from the attempts to defend or attack Wagner's attitude toward Jews in general and Judaism in music in particular. The possibility that, through Geyer, Wagner himself might have been of Jewish extraction increased the intensity and rancor of the controversy. In all the clamor, with often but a rampant emotionalism prevailing, the truly basic questions were ignored: What is meant by "race"? Is there actually a Jewish race? If not, what does being a Jew involve, and more particularly, what are the cultural correlatives of the Jewish composer?

Contentions and conflicting opinions have merely served to engender more errors and misconceptions. Lazare Saminsky and Charles V. Stanford find "inherently" Jewish traits in Wagner's music; Carl Engel and Barzun, on the other hand, detect a predominant "Fascist" or proto-Nazi content. Richard Eichenauer, racist music historian of the Third Reich, is somewhat troubled by the whole problem, finally compromising by accepting some Wagnerian traits as purely Nordic, while indicating others as instances of racial mixture.

The most direct sources of information concerning Wagner's racial thinking are to be found in his essays and polemics collected as the "Gesammelte Schriften" and available in English in the translation of W. A. Ellis. Except in such instances where I felt that Ellis had missed an important shade or inflection, I have used this translation. In these instances I referred to the original, or attempted my own translation. Changes made by Wagner in various versions or editions of his essays which have significance for this study have been indicated. Besides the "Gesammelte Schriften" and Wagner's autobiography, works which contain valuable first hand information, such as Schemann's "Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner", yielded important material. For biographical data I have depended on New-

man, Bekker, Wallace, Chamberlain, Glasenapp, Ellis and Dannreuther.

Critical and historical works by contemporary German musicologists which reveal the particular impress of Wagner are those of Grunsky, Moser, Eichenauer, and Mersmann.

Hitler's "Mein Kampf,". Rosenberg's "Mythus," the Goebbels "Diaries," and the critical works of Kolnai, Gurian, Weinreich and Karl Barth provided the background for an understanding of the cultural and philosophic basis of the Third Reich.

Concerning the scientific aspect of the race problem, I have based my conclusions on the data of Klineberg, Boas, Kroeber, Ashley-Montagu, Hertz, Radin, Von Luschan, Morgan, Hooton and Hogben.

In order that each department of this inquiry be kept clear, I have considered it best to approach the subject from the viewpoints of (a) the sources of Wagner's racial thinking, as revealed by direct and circumstantial evidence; (b) its expression in Wagner's attitude towards Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, Jews in general, and Christianity; (c) its effects on contemporary and subsequent writers and thinkers; and finally, (d) an evaluation of his theories.

PART I

The Racial Ideas of Wagner

"We cannot withhold our acknowledgment that the human family consists of irremediably disparate races, whereof the noblest well might rule the more ignoble, yet never raise them to their level by commixture, but simply sink to theirs . . . . . The qualities of the German spirit may be brought to a manifestation such as is possible to no other people."

. . . . Richard Wagner.

CHAPTER I

VOLK, KULTUR, LANGUAGE AND MUSIC

BY RACE Wagner seems to have meant a group joined by nationality, blood, and language, inherently separate from other groups of mankind. To this notion he joined the belief in the innate superiority of one group and the innate inferiority of other groups. It must be pointed out that in no single book or essay of Wagner's are the various musical, linguistic, social and broadly cultural aspects of his hypotheses actually combined and systematically presented in some organized manner. Rather it is in the separate essays ranging from his first contribution to the Parisian "Gazette Musicale" in 1840 to his last contribution to the *"Bayreuther Blaetter"* some forty years later that one finds the expression of those ideas, which despite an occasional contradiction, still allow themselves to be integrated into a consistent theory.

The specific tenets of Wagner's racial thinking are:

1. The German race is superior to all other races.
2. Language in general and the German language in particular is an attribute and indication of racial integrity.
3. Music is the particular province of the German people, achieving its highest expression among them, and deteriorating when it is cultivated by other peoples.
4. The continued pursuit of music as a separate art, after

Beethoven, betokens imitation, sterility, and a lack of racial integration.

5. Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular have been detrimental influences on the German Volk and German culture.
6. The Jews have exercised a harmful effect on German culture and music, both in general and through the specific works of composers like Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer.

What were the origins of Wagner's racial concepts? We must answer this question from two viewpoints. It will be necessary first to determine the origins of the ideas in themselves, and then to find the means whereby these ideas reached Wagner. It is evident that an individual's opinions, viewpoints, and conclusions are not, in their specific forms, self-generated. A pre-disposition, an inherent inclination will usually incline a person in a particular direction, but specific expressions and attitudes are the results of environmental influences, the temper of the time and its general cultural background. Most particularly is this true of Wagner, an avid reader, extremely sensitive, and whatever his own interpretation might be, fully aware of currents and trends. In tracing the sources of those influences which affected his thinking on national, racial and kindred subjects, we shall meet with a situation as paradoxical as it is recurrent, one most particularly peculiar to German thought of the nineteenth century. This paradox is the frequency with which an ostensible influence results in a concept or an overt action directly opposite or contradictory in nature to that initial influence. Thus the cosmopolitanism and culture-dominance theory of Herder becomes a source of the most rampant nationalism which ultimately denies culture and true "Weltanschauung." Similarly,

the philosophy of Hegel leads to Marx in one direction, and to Hitler in the other. Nietzsche, arch enemy of Junkerism, Prussianism, and German nationalism in general becomes the philosophic god of the Third Reich. Wagner, whose aesthetic theory had demanded the "*Vernichtung des Staates,*" is deified in a system wherein the State is supreme, and individual liberty almost entirely destroyed.

The paradox to which we have alluded springs partly from the tendency of nationalistic Germans to anthropomorphize and localize the universal aspects of the thinking of their own philosophers. The Will of Schopenhauer, the *Ich* of Fichte, the Need (*Noth*) and Necessity (*Bedurfniss*) of Feuerbach are thus transformed from the universal abstract to the local-specific and, to use a phrase of Wagner's, are comprehended—Germanly.

It must be emphasized, therefore, that the suggestion or statement that a particular individual or writing is responsible for one of Wagner's concepts should not be taken to indicate, automatically, a necessary congruity between the source and the derivation. Individuals will, as a rule, find what they seek or wish to see, in a certain viewpoint and will often distort, interpret, or misinterpret this viewpoint in order to corroborate their feeling, or strengthen a conviction or prejudice. Thus Rousseau's idea of patriotism as an emotion necessarily and exclusively centered in one nation, contributed much to the German concept of nationalism; this concept is intensified throughout the nineteenth century in the thoughts and actions of Fichte, Wagner, Bismarck, von Treitschke, the Pan-German League, the Hohenzollerns, and finally leads to the Third Reich — a creation diametrically opposed to Rousseau's conception of state and individual.

Since we are to be concerned with one specific direction of German culture, there will necessarily be an almost exclusive emphasis on this particular aspect. Because of this, there is the danger of assuming that this one aspect represents either the whole, or the overwhelmingly predominant trend in German culture. Fortunately, this is not so, and we will take the appropriate occasion to establish at least the existence of contrasting currents.

The determinants of Wagner's racial theories are derived from or related to the following sources and influences:

(a) The Romanticism of nineteenth-century Europe.
(b) German reflections on "Volk," "Kultur," and on the ordained destiny of the German people.
(c) Theories of language as a racial determinant.
(d) Racial or political doctrines; Schopenhauer, Gobineau, Bakunin, Frantz, and Jahn.
(e) Theories of the place of music in the German national racial complex.
(f) The anti-Christian literature of previous German writers.
(g) The anti-Semitic literature of previous German writers.

The last two categories will be considered more specifically in the chapters on Wagner's attitude toward Christianity and Judaism respectively.

One of the spiritual fathers of nineteenth century romanticism was Jean Jacques Rousseau. In his writings we encounter many of the thoughts adopted and sometimes radically adapted by the succeeding generation of German nationalists. His tenet that the most concrete and tangible expression of a universal and embracing love which an individual might possess is to be found in

the patriotic fervor for one's fatherland was eagerly assimilated by German writers. His important reservation that only liberty and equality could nurture true patriotism was disregarded. Rosseau felt Christianity to be incompatible with true patriotism because of its inclusive nature and content. More particularly was he opposed to Catholicism as a state within a state and as a religious creed that transcended national boundaries. As such, it made for divided loyalties; to the extent that one was true to its doctrines, the less strongly was he devoted to his fatherland. This supra-national viewpoint of religion finds utterance in a medieval writer who declared:

> What is fettered by the fatherland is still weak; strong is he who regards every country as his fatherland; perfect is he to whom the whole world is a place of exile.[1]

Two other influences, more directly concerned with the music of Wagner, stem from Rousseau:—the notion of love and the theory of language. The Romantic conception of love represents a confusion of the spiritual, the religious and the carnal. As Joubert wrote, "Rousseau had a voluptuous mind. In his writings the soul is always mingled with the body and never distinct from it. No one has rendered more vividly the impression of the flesh touching the spirit and the delights of their marriage." But Joubert spoke without knowing Wagner, without knowing "Tristan." It was the confusion of the planes of being that led to what Ernest Newman terms the "voluptuous religiosity" of Wagner's later works.

In his essay on the origin of language, Rousseau had written, "Language and music are one and at the same time poetry."[2] The blending of the arts in an aesthetic synthesis was a conception that grew out of the Roman-

tic tendency towards association and fusion. Wagner found a partial justification for one aspect of this synthesis, that of language and poetry, in a primitive Ur-melody, a kind of expression in which language and poetry were one. In his letter on French music (1753) Rousseau had stated that all national music must derive its principal characteristics from the language. This was a hypothesis which Wagner as librettist and opera composer was to develop in great detail. Whether or not the thoughts of Rousseau were as directly influential as were the writings of Schopenhauer or Gobineau it is difficult to determine; but in view of the widespread effect of Rousseau's works, it would seem to be a reasonable assumption.

One of Rousseau's most direct heirs was Johann Gottlieb Herder. The latter's "abandonment of reason for feeling and personal experience..." stems from Rousseau's thesis that feeling and instinct are more to be trusted than reason.[8]

Kant, profound influence on all subsequent German thought, derives in principle from the natural-rights doctrine of Rousseau whom he termed the "Newton of the moral world." An avid reader of Rousseau, his thinking shows the impress of such works as *"Emile"* (1762) which contains the *"Confession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar."* In this "Confession", innate feeling was adjudged superior to reason in relationship to religious experience. However, Kant differs from Rousseau in the greater emphasis he places on the purely ideal significance of the concept of the social contract. Reinterpreting Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of the will, and revising the individualistic version of the social contract, Fichte's philosophy developed towards the principles of socialism on the one hand and the Fascist State on the other. Hegel's doctrine of world history develops and expands

the principles formulated in Kant's "*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte.*" (1784). Hegel departs radically from Kant by substituting the positive law of the state for Kant's natural law, and above all, by making the state the basis of ethics instead of ethics the basis of the state.

In addition, Schiller, Goethe, Schelling and Schopenhauer all reflected the influence of the Sage of Koenigsberg. Schelling more especially transmitted certain of the philosophical abstractions of Kant into more immediately accessible emotional values. Subsequently, though Kant's original ideas were distorted or much modified, they nevertheless helped determine the direction of German romanticism, particularly in seeming to provide a philosophic basis for the exaltation of feeling over reason.

As given expression in the works of early German romantic writers, instinct and feeling are associated with a warm and cosmopolitan humanitarianism. Later this exaltation of instinct and feeling was put to use in the justification of a limiting and exclusive national-racial attitude. But at the turn of the century, Herder, Schiller, Wieland, Goethe, Lessing, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Novalis and the Schlegels put their faith in an instinct which was a unifying rather than a dividing factor, and which became the basis for a liberal outlook stemming from their belief in the ideals of the French Revolution. The cosmopolitan viewpoint of this group is exemplified in the words of A. W. Schlegel, written in 1803:

> Whenever the highest interest of human nature, the development of its most noble forces is concerned, for example, in art and learning, I should think it would be more German not to ask whether something was German or foreign, but merely,

whether it was genuine, great, or excellent, and not to worry whether liberal recognition of foreign achievements would not dim the glory of the home bred. Universalism, Cosmopolitanism is the true German characteristic.[4]

A similar viewpoint is revealed in the words of Goethe:

The poet as a man and citizen will love his native land; but the native land of his *POETIC* powers and action is the good, noble, and beautiful which is confined to no particular province or country and which he seizes upon and forms wherever he finds it. —And then, what is meant by love of one's country? What is meant by patriotic deeds? If the poet has employed a life in battling with pernicious prejudices, in setting aside narrow views, in enlightening the minds, purifying the tastes, ennobling the feelings and thoughts of his countrymen, what better could he have done? How could he have acted more patriotically?[5]

This liberal cosmopolitan outlook has always been a counter-balance to the autocratic chauvinism of Prussian Germany. But after the middle of the nineteenth century its influence rapidly declined, and the opposite viewpoint, so significantly finding expression in Wagner, gained the ascendancy. The mere listing of the names of Hegel, Fichte, Wagner, Treitschke, Bismarck, Chamberlain, Ludendorff, Wilhelm II, and Hitler is a tangible evidence of the growth and intensification of racial national thinking during the past century. Napoleon's victory at Jena in 1806 stimulated a patriotism that in the beginning was neither virulent nor aggressively bitter. In addition, there was still a prevailing sentiment much influenced by the ideals, if not the actual results, of the French Revolution. But after the failure of the Revolution of 1848, there was a mass exodus of over one million of the more liberally minded citizens from Germany; for

the rest, there was the inevitable reaction in the direction of autocracy and submission to authority. Just as the reaction after the French Revolution, successful though it was, led to Napoleon, so did the reaction after the Revolution of 1848, which was unsuccessful, lead to Bismarck. Thereafter a kind of inevitability defines Germany's future course. The voices of individuals like Wagner become stronger in proportion as the others become weaker, weaker in number and in volume. The fact that the latter, those maintaining a more cosmopolitan outlook, have always made their influence felt is evidenced in the unceasing attacks made on them by writers from Wagner, who accused them of being Judaized, to Jaensch, twentieth century German scientist, who classified them as an "antitypus."

One of the first important philosophers to foster and support an extreme nationalism was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Three aspects of Hegel's thinking in particular were to find an echo in Wagner's work. One was the belief that the German peoples were destined to be the leaders of civilization; the second that the teaching of Jesus was corrupted by Judaism and by the Catholic Church — these representing the grafting of an *oriental* influence on Western culture; the third was the exaltation of Greek culture.

The political aspects of Romanticism must not be overlooked in any attempt to understand the background against which Wagner's thoughts were to develop. In the writings of Adam Muller,[6] a most important exponent of political and economic theory,[7] there is a crystallization of the concept of state and nation as a spiritual organism, a notion which Wagner develops from an artistic and aesthetic viewpoint. Napoleon's domination had the natural and compensatory effect of stimu-

lating an exaggerated patriotism, and a host of writers, including Arndt, Kleist, and Koerner, extolled the German virtues and German national feeling. Thus, political as well as literary romanticism led to greater self-awareness of the national character. To emphasize and preserve specific German traits, the Christian Germanic club was formed in 1811, numbering among its leading members Heinrich von Kleist, Clemens Brentano, Fichte, Marwitz, Adam Muller, and the officer, Leopold von Gerlach. Its program, avowedly anti-Semitic and anti-liberal, sought to use German romanticism as a means of strengthening the German national spirit.[8] The "Ich" of Fichte was gradually transformed from an ideal to a physical entity.

Political as well as literary romanticism was against classicism, the classicism of measure, proportion, and reason. Pascal had written that "the imagination is mistress of error and falsity, a proud power hostile to reason." Schlegel, on the contrary, wrote that he would "abolish all the laws of the rationally proceeding reason, and plunge us once more into the ravishing confusion of fantasy, the original chaos of human nature." This "once more" of Schlegel recalls Rousseau, and anticipates the "Ur" notion of Wagner. It is this kind of emotionalism commingled with the mysterious and the metaphysical that leads to the abstract notion of "Volk." This notion in itself is still not so remote from the thinking of the early Romanticists; but when the German "Volk" becomes a mystic and *excluding* factor with overtones of inherent racial superiority, its relationships with the "people" of these earlier writers becomes distant and attenuated. As more and more emphasis was put on the personal, individual, and national concept, on the history of the German people and their legends, the trend away

from an international or cosmopolitan viewpoint, the true "Weltanschauung" of Goethe and Schlegel was intensified. The notion of separateness from other groups quite naturally led to a sensitiveness of what was imagined to be alien within the "Volk" group itself, and one culmination of this feeling is to be found in Wagner's "Judaism in Music."

Among the threads woven into the pattern of Wagner's thoughts on Volk and religion are those drawn from the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach. The influence of Feuerbach dates from about the autumn of 1849, between Wagner's writing of "Art and Revolution" and the "Art Work of the Future." Besides certain characteristics of literary style, Wagner derived from Feuerbach the notion of the separation of the essence of Christianity (Love) from its institutionalization (Faith), and the concepts of Want (*Noth*), Necessity (*Nothwendigkeit*), and Need (*Bedürfniss*) as abstract compulsions. In Wagner, the separation of Faith and Love becomes transformed into an attack on institutional and particularly Catholic Christianity as a corruption of German *Volksthum,* and as a wedge to separate Christ from a Judaic extraction. Want, Need, and Necessity become nationalistic-racial attributes which serve to separate the true Germans, who sense these urges, from aliens, who do not.

Emphasis on Volk-personal and fatherland-national becomes the philosophical basis for antagonism to both Catholicism and Judaism. Protestant groups are each self-contained autonomous units; there is nothing in Protestantism exactly corresponding to the Papacy and the College of Cardinals, the latter representing a central body of international membership. The Papacy signifies a kind of supra-national viewpoint, and this perspective

affects the general Catholic attitude. As for the Jews, their thousands of years of dispersion and exoduses have given them a historical perspective which delimits extreme nationalism.

Catholicism and Judaism are thus two creeds which transcend national and temporal boundaries. As such, adherence to these beliefs would eventually arouse the antagonism of ultra-nationalists. By the nineteenth century, opposition to Catholicism or Judaism on a religious basis was felt to be not quite civilized, but an opposition rooted in nationalism satisfied a long established tradition of antagonism. By the middle of the nineteenth century, racial doctrines further substantiated and corroborated this antagonism.

There is one other aspect of Romantic thought which forms the background for specific projections of Wagner's thinking. Romanticism tends to emotional extremes. In a political sense it can lead to the excesses of either autocracy or revolution; it destroys kings on the one hand, or the people on the other. It is thus consistent despite an apparent contradiction — one extreme or another may be taken. Wagner is a revolutionist in 1848, and a ward of King Ludwig later in life. To political romanticism of the extreme right or the extreme left, liberal democracy is least congenial; it is moderate and it involves compromises. On an aesthetic plane, the antagonism of romanticism to democracy may assume the aspect of a struggle against the middle classes or against what is felt to be a calculating commercialism. Somewhat of this is revealed in Wagner's thinking. Philistinism and commercialism are attacked as symbols of insensitiveness and degeneration. These subsequently are associated with "Jewish domination" in commerce and culture; for as we shall see, "Jewish" became a kind of expletive for Wagner, an adjective which he prefixed

to every condition or thing he found evil or undesirable. Similarly in his writings we will note how the ideas of liberal democracy and internationalism, so repugnant to later Romantic thinkers (not only Germans - Carlyle, for instance, being a good example among the English) becomes associated with the "racial" aspects of Judaism.

The Teutomania of early nineteenth-century Germany soon became associated with malevolent anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. Friedrich Ruhs, professor of history at the University of Berlin, pointed to the Jews as causes of the German decline during the centuries of foreign domination. J. F. Fries, professor of natural sciences at Heidelberg, published a tract in the summer of 1816 in which he urged the expulsion or total extermination of the German Jews. In November of 1819 the inflammatory pamphlet of Hartwig Hundt, "The Mirror of the Jews," advocated the slaughter of the Jews, holding such slaughter "neither a sin nor a crime." "That they may not increase," he added, "the men should be emasculated and their wives and daughters be lodged in houses of shame."[9]

In an attempt to negate, or at least minimize the Hebraic antecedents of Christianity, the cleric, Schleiermacher, repudiated the connection between Jesus and Judaism.[10] Wuerzburg, Luebeck, Frankfort, Darmstadt, Bayreuth, all experienced periods of violent unrest and disturbance. It was against this background that Wagner's youth was spent, and the direct evidence of his familiarity with, and the influence of such writers as those above mentioned, is manifested in passage after passage in the composer's literary works.

We have indicated that the concept of a nation as a kind of spiritual organism may be traced back to Rousseau. But the specific adoption of that concept joined to

a mystic transfiguration of the "Volk" is a product of nineteenth-century German thinkers that results in an unprecedented political and cultural arrogation. National pride and the tendency of a people to assume a noble ancestry and a great mission — these are common to most nations.[11] Certain music historians of each of the various nations have attempted to establish the primacy of their particular country. [12] Under exceptional stresses, such as some conflicts or crises, an expression may be given to an intense patriotism — exemplified by Kipling's or Tennyson's glorification of war as a blessing — which does not express the normal, predominant feeling. Such expressions are exceptional, much as a cry of extreme pain or anger is exceptional for the individual.

But there is a pronounced difference between the national arrogation of nineteenth century Germany and that of other countries — a difference not only in degree but in kind. The political and economic frustrations and disappointments of early nineteenth century Germany led to the over-compensating expressions of pride, vaunting pretension and thrasonic self-praise.

A self-intoxication resulted in which writers suddenly and fanatically believed what they had written, and a series of magic incantations swept the land. "Manifest destiny," "world-leadership," "cultural dominance" became words and terms which Germans felt they alone could understand. One of these fanatic shibboleths is *Kultur*. Most frequently this has been translated in English by our word *Culture*. Culture in its popular connotation is associated with the behavior of nations showing a high degree of development, or enlightenment and refinement of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training. In its broader sense (divested of associated and derived notions of values) "... it includes all the capa-

bilities and habits acquired by an individual man as a member of a particular society . . .[13] the total complex, in other words, of distinctive attainments, beliefs and traditions.

But neither of these definitions fit the German sense of the word. Kultur is a German and only German possessed attribute. Except by dilution and indirection it is not accessible to the rest of humanity. Even Schiller was not unaffected by this viewpoint. In his unfinished poem, *"German Greatness"* (1801), he extols the German spirit as alone attuned to the universal and eternal.

Concerning the great men and spiritual heroes of Germany, Wagner wrote, "we have no need to trouble whether fashioners of foreign fatherless civilizations are able to prize and understand them."[14] As Wickham Steed has pointed out, many Germans regard their Kultur as,

> . . . an intimate union between themselves and the natural forces of the universe whose action they alone are capable of apprehending and as a tribal discipline designed to turn those forces to account.[15]

It is this attitude which Wagner reflects when he writes, "... how the qualities of the German Spirit may be brought to a manifestation such as is possible to no other people."[16] A similar attitude is taken by Fichte, Schlegel, (who, however, treats the idea of cultural leadership in a benign rather than aggressive sense), Paul de Lagarde (whose true name was Botticher), List, Treitschke, Chamberlain and Stefan Georg, finally becoming an official tenet of the State-Kultur of the Third Reich. Cultural and political arrogation is paralleled by the military, from von Clausewitz' "On War" to Ludendorff's "Total War." Here the reasoning followed was

that war is the noblest expression of man's activity and that the Germans were best endowed to exercise that activity.

In his "Addresses to the German Nation" (1807-1808) Johann Gottlieb Fichte pointed to the German character as one of the highest and noblest manifestations of humanity, a sentiment frequently echoed by Wagner. Fichte's writings offer some contradictions if we compare his earlier with his later works. While a careful reading of his works reveals an often surprising refinement of feeling, that portion of his writings which encourages aggression and extreme nationalism has been most influential.[17] This section dates from 1806 on, and includes the famous "Addresses." Fichte's belief that morals are corrupted by trade, which leads to social inequality and eventually undermines the community, finds expression again in essay after essay of Wagner. A philosophic extension and adaptation of this viewpoint reappears in the "Birth of Tragedy" wherein Nietzsche asserts that the Greek art manifestations, the Dionysian and Appolonian, succumb to the utilitarian-nationalistic as symbolized by Socrates. Besides the direct influence of Fichte on Wagner, that influence becomes manifest also as filtered through the intellect of Schopenhauer, student of Fichte. The racial purity of the German "Volk" and the unique virtues of the German language were Fichte's two other important contributions to Wagner's thinking. "Only a primitive folk," wrote Fichte, "who have kept their native independence, resisted conquest and defied absorption, can call themselves a nation. Only the Germans are such a primal people." He spoke of the Germans as "the people metaphysically predestined, which has the moral right to fulfill its destiny by every means of cunning and force." In the same vein, Wagner

conjures up the "ideal lines" that might have occurred to Friedrich I.

> In the German Volk survives the oldest lawful race of Kings in all the world: it issues from a son of God, called by his nearest kinsmen *Siegfried,* but *Christ* by the remaining nations of the earth. The nearest heirs of his (Siegfried's) great deed, and of the power won thereby are the Nibelungen, to whom the earth belongs in name, and for the happiness of every nation. The Germans are the oldest nation, their blue-blooded king is a "Nibelung" and at their head he claims world leadership.[18]

There is much here that is turgid, a mixture of myth, history, folk-lore and sacrilege. But for a nation hungry for assurance there are the basic shibboleths—"to whom the earth belongs" — "the Germans are the oldest nation" — "world leadership." Though Wagner himself was against war, sensing that spiritual values were lost in the lust for power and conquest, the military inferences and incitements of his ideas were unavoidable.

Fichte had written, "Should ye fall, the whole of mankind falls, without any hope of future restoration."[19] Half a century later, and in a similar vein, Wagner writes,

> Genius and the German people have a certain something in common.[20]
> Woe unto us and the world if the "Volk" should be preserved, but the German spirit disappear from the earth.[21]

This was written in 1848; less than a decade later Gobineau was to declare,

> . . . Everything great, noble and fruitful in the works of man

> on this earth, in science, art, and civilization derives from a single starting point, is the development of a single thought. It belongs to one family alone, the different branches of which have reigned in all the civilized countries of the universe.[22]

In the twentieth century this thought finds utterance again in Adolf Hitler:

> Everything that today we admire on this earth — science and arts, technique and inventions — is only the creative product of a few peoples and perhaps originally one race. On them now depends also the existence of this entire culture. If they perish, then the beauty of this earth sinks into the grave with them.[23]

In Wagner's "What is German?"[24] we are told that the unselfish and literally priceless creation of the beautiful was an attitude discovered for the world by German artists. The German wills to understand "Germanly," even that which is borrowed from another nation, and "Germanly" is synonymous with the true essence. The inference is that any other conception falls short of this true essence. Lest there be any doubt that this is precisely what is meant, Wagner points out that the Germans have saved for the literature of the world what might otherwise have become merely literary curiosities; this was accomplished by adapting and representing the particular works — Germanly. For example, he writes, consider Parsifal or Tristan. Even further,

> one may say without exaggeration that the antique would have stayed unknown in its now universal world-significance had the German spirit not recognized and expanded it.[25]

Here he refers to the work of Lessing and Winckelmann,

and one recognizes in these a source of his veneration and idealization of Greek art and culture.

The perfect counterpart of her spouse, Cosima could say, "The race most capable of culture is the German which on that account is destined to dominance."[26]

One of the favorite terms of Romantic German nationalists of the nineteenth century is "Volk." Clothed in a mystic veil of oracular obscurity, it becomes conveniently inclusive or exclusive as circumstances warrant. It represents a constellation of national plus racial plus cultural identities (or genius). Wagner defined "Volk" as "the epitome of all those men who feel a common and collective want (*gemeinschaftliche Noth*)."[27]

Obviously it is very difficult to determine by objective means such a subjective quality. But in the Wagnerian application of this definition as a means of appraisal, this problem does not even arise. Instead of endeavoring in some way to determine *whether or not* there is this feeling on the part of a person or group, Wagner simply says that *since* there is not this feeling of a collective want, a particular person or group is not part of the "Volk."[28]

But we must not make the mistake of confusing the Wagnerian "Volk" with "the people" in a democratic sense, or worse yet, with "folks." "Volk" has an ethnic rather than a popular or democratic significance; it concerns the *inherent* racial substance of a nation. When we discuss the tangible effects of his racial thinking on his music, we shall note that there is very little true "folk-music" in Wagner's music. Were his concern with "Volk" related to "people" and "people's music" we would find a much closer relationship to and awareness of folk-material. But this "Volk" is an abstraction, and when he rails against the degeneration of the German

people of his own time, it is in terms of a separation from and betrayal of their true "Volksthum." The contemporary poet Stefan George clarifies the term, divesting it of some of its ambiguity. The "Volk" becomes a circle of satellites and worshippers rather than a free society of men, a unit of feeling engendered by and focused on a godlike central ruler or authority. Gundolf, a student of Stefan George writes of his mentor, "He reveres the people as the dark womb of growth, not as a source of public opinion."

The "Volk" finds its expression in language, not only in a direct obvious sense, but in a metaphysical sense. The very word, language, becomes weighted with connotations and symbolical significance. Rousseau, Herder, Schlegel, and Fichte believed that the soul of a people resided in the mother tongue. As the notion of race developed, language assumed an important part, particularly for the romantic writers, in substantiating a unity of feeling through a community of expression.

In 1859, the same year that Darwin's "Origin of Species" appeared, there was published what is perhaps the most representative monument of nineteenth-century Aryan race-belief. This was a two volume work "Indo-European Origins," or "The Primitive Aryans," an essay in "Linguistic Paleontology" by the Swiss writer Adolph Pictet. The thesis established in the introduction is that the Sanskrit roots lead directly back to the history of peoples. Among these there "is a race destined by providence some day to dominate the entire globe... privileged by the beauty of its blood and the gifts of its intelligence," and these are established by the "richness, vigor, harmony and perfection of form of its language." The common race is established by the use of the same language: "There must have been originally a pre-

historic Aryan people, pure and unmixed."[29] Many of Wagner's essays written before 1859 anticipated some of the hypotheses of this work; on the other hand there is some evidence to link this work with Gobineau, and since many of Wagner's later articles show the distinct influence of Gobineau the connection is noteworthy.

Basing his conclusions on Jacob Grimm's etymology, Wagner wrote,

> Deutschland . . . denotes those people, who, remaining in their ancestral seat, continued to speak their Ur-mother tongue, whereas the races ruling in Romantic lands gave up that mother-tongue.[30]

> What unmeasured happiness, he writes in another essay, to recognize in one's mother tongue the speech of one's Ur-father. Through such a tongue one's feelings and beholdings stretch right back to early man himself . . . we feel ourselves one kin with pristine man's creative beauty . . . no more a race, no mere variety of man, but one of mankind's primal branches.[31]

In "Opera and Drama" he wrote,

> We have had to recognize *speech* itself as the indispensable basis of a perfect artistic expression . . . the German alone possesses a language whose daily usage still hangs conspicuously together with its Roots. . . . Of all the modern operatic dialects, the German alone is fitted to re-liven Art's Expression in the manner we have recognized as needful.[32]

Several years earlier,[33] before his operatic destiny had clearly beckoned, he had expressed the opinion that the highest expression of the art was in instrumental music, and that in this branch the Germans particularly ex-

celled, both because of a certain "bent... and the lack of fine voices..."[84] Having seen that his talent lay not in pure instrumental music but in German operatic music, it became imperative to establish language as a necessary basis for artistic expression; since his language was German, the German language, would, of necessity, be the best.

Language being thought to have a mystic-racial significance, it would obviously be impossible from Wagner's viewpoint, for any non-German to think or write significantly in German. It is easy to understand, then, the repellence which extreme nationalists would feel in hearing their language spoken aloud by foreigners. From this standpoint Wagner's revulsion towards Yiddish, which is a combination of medieval German and some Hebrew, and which was hardly considered a legitimate language a century ago, becomes the more emphatic. Speaking of Meyerbeer, he wrote, "As a Jew he owned no mother tongue, no speech inextricably entwined among the sinews of his inmost being..."[85] It must be again emphasized that language is classed by Wagner as an *inherent* attribute, one that cannot be acquired or learned by those not of the "Volk" by birth. This is the significance of the fact that the essay on "Judaism in Music" begins with a lengthy section on language, rather than on music itself.[86]

While Kultur in general was a matter of parochial pride among the nationalists, the one art which was felt to be a particularly German province was music. Among the first of the Germans to establish the kinship of Germandom with music was the young nineteenth-century writer, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. Music, which he described as the "Art of the arts" was by the middle of the nineteenth century commonly accepted in Germany

as the dominant art of Romanticism.[37] In the beginning of the century, we may note the first efforts of German music historians to counter-balance the common assumption that music was transplanted to Germany from other European centers. It was found necessary to either alter the conclusions deriving from the obvious record of musical development, or to adduce information which would lead to other conclusions. Direct historical evidences could lead to but one judgment concerning the mutual relationship of German and European music.

Italy, France, Belgium and England had each been predominant in music centuries before Germany, in the periods from the Baroque through the Romantic, had become established as a leading musical nation. With few exceptions, the important movements and great figures of Romanesque, Gothic and Rennaisance music are not German.

Four stages may be noted in the attempt to either revise interpretations or to accomplish a transvaluation of values in favor of German music. The first stage is marked by a kind of defensive approach — an attempt to show that, rather than borrowing or assimilating the music of others, Germany had an always extant potential of musical expression. Thus an early nineteenth-century German historian wrote,

> . . . there has always been a pure German music. The first goal of a *German History of Music* should be to establish this idea—that the live spark of music is our own particular heritage, and not a strange plant on foreign soil. However, we have formed the habit of thanking the Greeks and Romans for music as for all the other arts.[38]

The writer is correct in calling attention to the existence

of native German music, in demanding a revised estimate of the influence of the Greeks, and in suggesting that all European music was not derived from Roman (Gregorian) plain chant. If we paraphrase this passage, saying that there has always been a genuine French music, and that "we French" have an innate feeling for music that does not depend on "foreign" influence, it may seem that there is a kind of reasonableness not unmixed with an inoffensive chauvinism in this particular approach. But this is precisely the same mistake that generations of Europeans and Americans have consistently made—that of not accepting such statements at their face value, of making modifying reservations that destroy utterly the feeling and intent of the particular thought. Stoepel means literally a *pure German music,* a music in other words unmixed with and unaffected by the transfer and diffusion of other musical styles, trends, idioms, and treatments. When he writes that "the divine spark of music is our own peculiar heritage" he does not mean that the German should feel that he, *too,* has a musical heritage, but rather that he *alone* has it, that music is an art peculiar to the German race, and their *particular* province.

In terms of Stoepel himself, this may seem far-fetched; it might seem that we are merely reading an interpretation into the passage. But subsequent historical and critical surveys by German writers leave not the least doubt as to the actual intent and direction of Stoepel's thinking. However, as we have indicated, this first approach is one wherein German music is considered as being somewhat on the defensive. The second step involves a reconsideration of the musical values of previous centuries. Since German music does not assume *first rate* importance until the eighteenth century, chauvinistic

German historians tended to deprecate the music of the preceding centuries. Sometimes, writers without any propagandistic intentions came to the same conclusions; preoccupied with the tremendous importance of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, whose works represented a culmination, particularly in instrumental music, they were inclined to disregard or undervalue the work of preceding centuries. One aspect is to be noticed in the consideration of music before a key person or important period as "preparatory" to the music of that individual or period. Instead of being considered in their own terms, the content and style of particular periods were forced into a mold of arbitrarily established "progressive" or "relative" patterns. This basic error is made by Daniel Gregory Mason in "Beethoven and His Forerunners." Excellent though the book is in its details, the essential approach, revealed even in the title, is wrong. The ignoring of sixteenth and seventeenth-century vocal music until the last few decades is another symptom of this approach; this music, instead of being thought of in terms of its own content and values, as performable music, had been considered museum specimens, of interest only as a stage in the "evolution" of music to its culmination in classic and romantic masterpieces. This normal tendency of nineteenth-century thinking was given further support by German writers, either directly or indirectly, who attempted to establish not only the pre-eminence of German music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (this was after all, a self-evident fact) but the basic pre-eminence of Germany in all music. This latter then becomes the third stage in the attempted accomplishment of a transvaluation of values. The arrogation of German Kultur both strengthens and is strengthened by the in-

clusion of and association with music. Historians and aestheticians become not only justifiably proud of the achievements of German music, but develop an attitude of condescension towards the music of other nations. Finally, in this stage the racial viewpoints of extreme nationalists result in a protective attitude towards the music which is the sacred trust of the German genius and an aggressive attitude towards those who presumably are either betraying that trust (if they are Germans) or degrading the art (if they are "aliens").

All four stages which we have noted, and the combination of Kultur arrogance with racial attitudes, are manifested in Wagner's writings. Page on page could be quoted; the whole of "Judaism in Music," and whole sections of "On Conducting" are but expressions of those attitudes of protection and aggression to which we have just made reference.

How completely Wagner felt music to be the essential art of Germandom is evidenced by his declaration that, "Should we lose the sense of truth in this one art, we should lose our ultimate self-identity."[39]

As for deprecation of other nations, there are constant references to the flippancy, the superficiality and artifices of the French; the English are "shopkeepers;" the Italians are concerned with theatricals and outer form. In an early and comparatively moderate essay he writes,

> The Italian is a singer, the Frenchman a virtuoso, the German—a musician.[40]

In the same essay he writes,

> Intrumental music is—the exclusive property of the German—it is his life, his own creation.[41]

The feeling that the art of music, entrusted by destiny nto German hands must be protected from abasement and debilitation is behind the question raised in the essay "On Conducting" (1869),[42]

> But now, what becomes of our great and glorious German music? It is the fate of our music that really concerns us... there is every reason to beware of suspicious persons who set themselves up as the trustees and conservators of the 'true German Spirit', of our inheritance.

The obvious and by other inferences, unmistakable reference is to Mendelssohn and his group. But how should one preserve this music from such "conservators"? Wagner gave one answer in the last paragraph of "Judaism in Music." But the actual implementation of that suggestion was to wait almost a century.

In the works of the writer Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) one encounters the nationalistic — racial theories adopted by Wagner and combined with his artistic theories into a new Kultur — nationalistic amalgam. Jahn's *"Deutsches Volksthum"* (1810) and *Merke zum deutschen Volksthum* (1833) present the following sentiments, theories and beliefs that subsequently found an amplified echo in Wagner:

The Greeks and the Germans were the great leaders of humanity. Blood and soil, racial purity—these were the attributes of a great Volk. The French, immutably inimical to German culture, were to be hated completely and unreservedly by their German neighbor. A pronounced anti-Semite, Jahn yearned for a strong leader, a Führer who should reveal to the Germans their manifest destiny. He saw in Prussia the State destined to lead and glorify Germany, and to dominate through her all of

Europe. Not until the Prussian victories over Austria and Bavaria in 1866 was Wagner prepared to accept this view of Prussia; before then he had nothing but hatred and contempt for her tradition of warfare and domination; after 1867 he was prepared to accept Prussia's role in the establishment of a greater Germany.

The Volksthum of Jahn is,

> that which the Folk has in common, its inner being, its life and soul, its power of propagation and capacity for expansion ... folkic in thinking and feeling, loving and hating, joying and sorrowing, hoping and longing ... intuition and faith.[43]

This is the *gemeinschaftliche Noth,* the common want of Wagner, which included the "true Germans" and excluded the racial aliens.

The antipathy of Jahn toward the French is echoed by a contemporary of Wagner's in whose works Wagner found a corroboration of his own feelings. In his "Inquiry into the European Balance of Power" (1859) the political writer, Konstantin Frantz declared that it was the German mission to replace the "materialistic civilization" of France with a "nobler culture." In the first of his series of articles for the newly founded *Süddeutsche Presse,* (1867), Wagner established the same thesis, quoting directly from this work.[44] Two years later Wagner dedicated to Franz his new edition of *Opera and Drama.* The thesis of the inferiority of French music and culture also occupies a prominent place in the essay on *Beethoven* (1870).

Many of the influences which we have noted involved a background of feeling or opinion which constituted the cultural climate of Wagner's formative years. While it would be reasonable to assume he had read many of the

authors or the actual passages quoted, the evidence of such contact must remain circumstantial, as compared with the direct evidence we have of the influence of several other writers, including Schopenhauer and Gobineau, on his thinking. By direct quotations in his works, and by references to these writers in his letters and essays, there is left no doubt as to the actual contact with specific works. It is these specific influences which we will now consider. However, in using the word "influence" we must be careful to avoid a superficial assumption. Wagner was affected by thoughts and feelings to which he was emotionally and intellectually predisposed, that to which he was receptive. "Influences" then, assumes not so much the aspect of persuasion, pressure, or force, as corroboration, reinforcement of opinions and emotions, with reasoned premises and conclusions. In many instances, where there appears in Wagner's writings a thesis seemingly typical of Schopenhauer or Gobineau, we find that the passage was written years before he had even read anything of either of these authors. Since, in such instances, these authors seemed to offer a philosophical or scientific basis for a previously held opinion, he openly avowed his debt to them.

Wagner first became acquainted with Schopenhauer's works in the autumn of 1854[45] through the poet Georg Herwegh. By direct and indirect reference there are specific evidences of the composer's having read "The World as Will and Idea,"[46] the "Parerga," the "Paralipomena" and the "Fundamentals of Morality." When it is recalled that many of his thoughts which might seem to have been influenced by Schopenhauer, such as occur in "Judaism in Music" (1850), in the reflections on European Christianity in "The Wibelungen" (1848), or the section "Of Death" in Jesus of Nazareth (1848-49) ap-

peared in print *before* 1854, the like thinking of the two is emphasized. Schopenhauer, however, did, clarify and certify Wagner's thoughts. For the composer, the philosopher seemed to cast the light of reason on beliefs which had previously been illuminated by the reflected heat of feeling and sentiment. The place which music occupied in the philosophy of Schopenhauer would in itself have been an important attraction for Wagner. To the philosopher music was the most important of all the arts; unlike painting or sculpture which consisted of representation and imitation, or literature, where words were the *medium* of communication, the musical content was the idea in itself. As such, he averred, it came closest to absolute creativity. In his essay on Beethoven, Wagner had written that "Schopenhauer was the first to recognize and designate with philosophic clearness the position of music with reference to the other fine arts." As for Schopenhauer's philosophy in general, Wagner considered it the "most lucid of all philosophic systems."[47]

From the standpoint of the present study, the important influences of Schopenhauer may be divided into the following categories:

(a) Pessimism
(b) Immutability of character and innate capacities
(c) Anti-Semitism

An instance of the actual anticipation of and predisposition towards Schopenhauer's philosophy of the will may be observed in the following excerpt from Opera and Drama (1850-51),

> The true woman loves unconditionally because she must. She has no choice, except where she does not love. But where she must love, there she experiences a vast constraint (Zwang) which withal develops for the first time her will.[48]

Writing of his first meeting with Wagner, Nietschze tells of their common admiration of Schopenhauer, and Wagner's avowal of "how much he owed to him." In a letter to August Rockel of January 1854,[49] Wagner writes,

> . . . my life experiences have brought me to the very point where nothing but Schopenhauer's philosophy could have wholly satisfied and influenced me . . . it was the only one to answer my deeply suffering feelings of the essence of the world.

Elsewhere he speaks of "the great revolution which Schopenhauer finally affected in my rational apprehension." The nature of this revolution is made manifest in a letter to August Rockel written the twenty-third of August, 1856:

> His reading of Schopenhauer had made clear what he had intuitively realized as an artist. The true tragedy of the Flying Dutchman, Tannhauser, and Lohengrin was in renunciation. He had been misled by his conscious reason to the erroneous conclusion of a false optimism in evaluating for himself the essence of these works. His reason had finally been made to coincide with what his intuition had sensed and created previously — the tragedy of renunciation.

The personal stresses experienced during the middle period of his life inclined Wagner the more to Schopenhauer's belief of the essential self-seeking and will-to-power of man, and the concomittant evil resulting from those drives. The pessimistic concept of life as an evil dream becomes bound up with his anti-Semitism. In reply to Rockel's criticism of Schopenhauer's works (Wagner had sent him the books to read), the composer wrote that "friend Schopenhauer has simply helped by

his enormous power to drive away the last Judaic heresy." Part of this Judaic heresy, from Wagner's viewpoint, is manifested in European Christianity, and on this point the composer and the philosopher had thought alike before the acquaintance began.

An interesting instance of Schopenhauer's virulent anti-Semitism may be observed in the following passage from "The Fundamentals of Morality":

> The assumption that animals have no rights, the idea that our conduct toward them is without moral significance, or that there literally is no such thing as duty to animals is an absolutely revolting barbarism whose source resides in Judaism.

But such passages as Exodus XXIII, 12; Deuteronomy XXII, 4; Isaiah I, 3; the 23rd Psalm (The Lord is my Shepherd); Job, I-II completely refute this calumny. That Wagner was familiar with this essay is evidenced by his Open Letter to Ernst von Weber (the founder-president of an anti-vivisection society) written at Weber's request in order to gain support for the anti-vivisection movement.[50] The statement that "pity is the only true foundation of morality" is taken directly from Schopenhauer's essay. Apparently, however, this was a thesis limited only to man's relationship to animals — certainly it would not apply to Catholics, Jews, or to other composers. That the anti-vivisectionists appealed to him for such aid is a concrete evidence of his importance and influence in Germany at that time.

In "The World as Will and Idea" Schopenhauer had propounded the theory of the "immutability of the empiric character."[51] Each man, he wrote, finds he is not free but governed by necessity; he finds that his conduct

does not alter, in spite of all his resolutions, and from the beginning to the end of his life, he must carry out the same character, even though he disapprove of it, and play the role, once undertaken by him, to its finish. He also speaks of the "stark immutability of every individuality."[52] Transferred to the racial sphere, this notion of individual immutability is joined to the idea that the individual character is not a unit in itself, but is a type manifestation of the group (or race). In essence this is the basis of one of Wagner's objections to Jews in music and to Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer in particular — not being of the "Volk," they could feel no "collective want;" because of their racial descent they could not participate in an evocative musical expression and (since music was the personal property of the German Genius) they were predestined to an incomplete and sterile expression. No *true* German could find any meaningful content in such music; if any Germans were under the illusion they did find in it any significant content it was an evidence that they were not *true* Germans.

"*Judaism in Music*" was first published in 1850; in 1869 it was reissued in an amplified form. This was Wagner's way of saying he was "more sure of what he thought was true," and the crystallization of certain racial concepts was certainly due in large part to the influence of Schopenhauer with whose writings he had become intimately acquainted in the intervening years.

Opposed to what he termed Judaic-Christianity, Wagner, following Schopenhauer, found in the oriental beliefs of Brahmin Buddhism, and their negation of Will, a superior creed.[53] He was intrigued for a while, by the notion of "*Seelenwanderung*," or metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls. (Wagner did not know, of course, that this was also an essential tenet of Cabbalistic lore,

and of the eighteenth-century creed of Hassidism.)[54]

Almost as important as the effect of Schopenhauer in helping to corroborate and define Wagner's ideas was the influence of Gobineau. The composer first met the latter in Rome in 1876. Their real frindship began in 1880 in Venice. It was thereafter that Wagner began a serious study of Gobineau's *"Inegalité des races humaines."* In the May-June issue of the Bayreuther Blatter for 1881, he recommended to his readers Gobineau's "Ethnological Resume of the Present Aspect of the World."[55] In 1881 Gobineau was a guest of Wagner's for four weeks. Each found in the other some degree of confirmation: Wagner, a "scientific" assurance for his own tentative expressions on race and "blood;" Gobineau, a corroboration of his belief in the superiority of the German race in the heroes and Gods of "The Ring."

Each held the other in high esteem. On June 3, 1881, Wagner presented Gobineau his set of collected writings, inscribing therein:

> Das ware ein Bund
> Normann und Sachse
> Was da noch gesund
> Dass das bluehe und wachse.

The essay which most clearly shows the direct impress of Gobineau is that on "Herodom and Christendom", first published in the Bayreuther Blatter, September 1881.[56] Gobineau's thesis of racial disjunction and inequality, Wagner writes, "appeals to us with the most terrible force of conviction." The particular attributes of the Aryan[57] stock he outlines as preponderance of intellect over animal will, a proud obedience and a consciousness of suffering.[58]

> We cannot withhold our acknowledgment that the human family consists of irremediably disparate races, whereof the noblest well might rule the more ignoble, yet never raise them to their level by commixture, but simply sink to theirs.

He declares the yellow and colored races to be inferior. Consequently he finds "the noblest race's rulership and exploitation of the lower races... quite justified in a natural sense." The "purblind lumpishness of our public spirit" he attributes to "a vitiation of our blood, not only by a departure from the natural food of man, but above all by the degeneration brought about by the mixing of the hero-blood of the noblest races with that of one-time cannibals now trained to be the skilled business leaders of society." There is here an interesting constellation of ideas: As a vegetarian he finds a partial explanation of the public's obtuseness in their change from an assumed natural vegetable diet to a diet of flesh. But this vitiation is also to be explained by the "mixing of bloods." Since a diet of meat made a man a "cannibal," and since this was evil, it was quite evident that the descendants of cannibals who had become "trained business leaders of society" were—Jews. Thus Fichte's allegation that society degenerated when commerce and utility replaced aristocracy and feudalism, is joined to Gobineau's theory of inferior and superior races, and to Wagner's theory of the influence of diet on "blood" and temperament. The occurrence of the word "cannibal" is another instance of Wagner's skillful use of invective, of words which were so weighted, that their employment in connection with peoples or beliefs colored and affected associated reactions. It was such an aberration that prompted Ernest Newman to write, that

by 1881 "there was little that mattered left in him but his music."[59]

It may seem obvious that such racial thinking as is revealed in the essay on "Herodom and Christendom" is a contradiction of the tendencies of the apparently democratic and liberal revolutionist of 1848. In truth there is no contradiction, for in policies or politics, Wagner was neither truly democratic nor liberal. Wagner regarded the social aspects of revolution merely as the means to the achievement of an artistic millennium. His association with the revolutionist Michael Bakunin, intimate of Marx and Engel, with August Rockel, editor of the revolutionary "Volksblatter," and his reading of Proudhon were bound up with a conception of commerce and utilitarian civilization as symbols of cultural decay. In his mind the theory of the Gesammtkunst had already taken firm root. In the essay on "Art and Revolution" (1848)[60] he asserted that

> Each of the single arts nursed and cultivated luxuriously for the entertainment of the rich, has filled the world lavishly with its products. ... but the perfect art-work ... has not been reborn. It must be born *anew*, not born again.
>
> Only the great Revolution of Mankind can win this art for us, an art that shall bring back a profound sense of beauty to all.

But by the great "Revolution of Mankind" Wagner did not mean the use of any such anarchistic devices as Bakunin would have employed. Despite the marked influence of the latter as a personality on Wagner, and his possible association in Wagner's mind with the hero

Siegfried, the composer decried and contemned Communism.[61]

In August Rockel's short-lived "Volksblaetter," two articles on "Man and Established Society" and "The Revolution" were published.[62] Apparently written by Wagner, these reveal a kind of feverish excitement, a vehemence, an ebullience, and a very generalized attack on the evils of "Society" that can only be swept away by a "Revolution." But at no time did he have faith or belief in the people as such. Whether he disdained them for their taste, criticized them for their lack of appreciation and comprehension (of him), sought an excuse for their obtuseness in their diet, or found an explanation for their decline in their submission to non-German elements, the end result was that actually he had little confidence in the collective will or opinion of the people.

The first edition of the "Art Work of the Future" appeared in 1850 with a dedicatory letter to Ludwig Feuerbach in which the composer gratefully acknowledged the instruction received from the philosopher's works. Subsequently, this dedication was cancelled. However, certain aspects of style and terminology remain as indubitable evidences of Feuerbach's influence in helping to shape and formulate the theory of the "Gesammtkunst" as opposed to the possibility of the continued functioning of the independent arts.

Wagner's attacks on wealth as a subvention of music, and on the cultivation of each of the *separate* arts by itself, tend toward a common focus after 1850.

One particular composer becomes his target, and no opportunity is ever lost to tear down or destroy a rival reputation and a body of music whose continued survival mocked the validity of his theories and tenets. That composer was Mendelssohn, his reputation that of one con-

sidered the greatest living composer, and his music of a kind that still adhered to classic and early-romantic patterns.

1—See Victor of Beauvais quoting Hugo of St. Victor. F. Hertz, *Nationality in History and Politics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1944 p. 104.

2—Rousseau's hypothesis is partially confirmed by the investigations and findings of Otto Jesperson, who states that "there was once a time when all speech was song, or rather, when these two actions were not yet differentiated," "Language," p. 420. In "Mankind... from a Linguistic Point of View," p. 5, he states "the earliest language was a sort of half-way house between singing and speech." This theory is most fully developed by J. Donovan in "The Festal Origins of Human Speech" in the Journal, "Mind," 1891-2, Vol. XVI, p. 498-506 and Vol. XVII, p. 325-339.

3—In 1749 the Academy of Dijon offered a prize for the best answer to the question: "Has the progress of the sciences and the arts contributed to corrupt or to purify morals?" Rousseau's essay was awarded the prize, and it is in this essay that the idea of the superiority of feeling over reason as a guide to behavior is first set forth in this writer's works. His "La Nouvelle Heloise" (1761) established the same principle.

4—Hertz, F. *Op. cit.*; p. 356.

5—Goethe, W., "Conversations with Eckermann", N. Y. and London, M. Walter Dunne, 1901, p. 393.

6—Muller, Adam, *Vom Geist der Gemeinschaft*, Friedrich Bulow, 1931.

7—Hertz, F., *op. cit.*, p. 358.

8—Valentin, Veit, *The German People*, tr. by Olga Marx, A. A. Knopf, (New York, 1946), p. 341.

9—Graetz, H., *History of the Jews*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, (1895) Vol. V, Chapt. XIII, pp. 510-535.

10—*Ibid.*, pp. 426-427.

11—Hertz, F., *op. cit.*, p. 19.

See also, Allen W. D., *Philosophies of Music History*, American Book Company, (New York 1939) pp. 159-171.

12—French: Gabeaud, Alice, *Historie de la Musique*, Larousse, (Paris 1930). Italian: Torrefranca, Fausto, *Le origine italiane del romanticismo musicale* Bocca (Turin, 1930). Pecchai, Pietro, *Occore rirare la storia della musica*, Pacini Mariotte (Pisa, 1933). One may also point to the current trend in Soviet Russia to elevate the relative importance of Russian music, while deprecating that of other nations.

13—Klineberg Otto., *Race Differences*, Harper and Bros. (New York 1935) p. 225.

14—Wagner, Richard, Prose Works, tr. W. A. Ellis, Kegan, Paul, Trench Trubner and Co. (London) *Know Thyself*, Vol. VI, p. 273.

15—Kolnai, A., *War Against the West*, Viking Press (N. Y. 1938) p. 7.

16—Prose Works, *Shall We Hope?* Vol VI, p. 121.

17—See Engelbrecht, H., *Fichte*, A study of his political writings (1931) for a moderate view.

Also, Hertz, F., *op. cit.*, p. 336-344.

It is but one of a series of similar paradoxes that the very brutality which Fichte himself so strongly opposed uses his writings as a kind of justification.

18—Prose Works, *The Wibelungen*, Vol. VII, p. 289.

Wagner is not consistent in his concept of the "Nibelung". In the above quotation, "Nibelung" has a connotation of nobility, whereas in "The Nibelungen Myth," Wagner writes, "From the womb of Night and Death was spawned a race that dwells in Nebelheim — Nibelungen are they called." Prose Works, Vol. II, p. 301.

19—Wenn ihr versinkt, versinkt die ganze Menschheit mit, ohne Hoffnung einer Künftigen Wiederherstellung.

20—Prose Works, Vol. IV, p. 64.

21—Ges. werke, *Was ist Deutsch?*, Vol. X, p. 67.
Wehe uns und der Welt, wenn diesmal das Volk gerette waere, aber der Geist aus der Welt Schwaende."

22—Gobineau, Artur de, *The Inequality of Races*, tr. by Adrian Collins. William Heinemann, (London, 1915) p. xv.

23—Adolf Hitler, "Mein Kampf"—Reynal & Hitchcock, (N. Y., 1939) p. 396.

24—Prose Works, Vol. IV.

25—*Ibid.*, p. 150.

26—Newman, Ernest, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, Vol. III, A. A. Knopf, (New York, 1941) p. 517.

27—Prose Works, *The Art Work of the Future*, Vol. I, p. 75.

28—It is this reasoning which becomes one of the principal arguments against Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer.

29—Quoted in Barzun, J., *Race*. Harcourt Brace (New York 1937) p. 135.

30—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. IV, p. 152.

31—Prose Works, *Know Thyself, Vol.* VI, pp. 272-273.

32—Prose Works, Vol. II, p. 357-8.

33—In the article "On German Music," published 1840 in the Parisian *"Gazette Musicale."*

34—Prose Works, Vol. VII, p. 90.

35—Prose Works, *Opera and Drama*, Vol. II, p. 87.

36—In view of this language fetish, it is ironical that on the margin of the poem of the "Ring" sent to him by Wagner in 1854, Schopenhauer, struck by the solecisms and individual constructions, wrote, "The gentleman seems to think the language his serf . . . He has no ears, the deaf music maker." Ellis, W. A., *Life of Richard Wagner*, Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner Co., (London) Vol. IV, pp. 440-446 .

37—Brendel, Karl Franz. "Music is the dominant art of the present." *Geschichte der Musik*, (Leipzig, 1852) 8th edition, Mathes, Leipzig, 1938.

38—Stoepel, Franz, *Grundzüge der Geschichte der modernen Musik*. Dunker and Humbolt (Berlin, 1821).

39—Bayreuther Blätter (1880), "Könnten wir den Sinn für das Echte in dieser einzigen Kunst verlieren, so hätten wir unser letztes Eigen verloren."

40—Prose Works, *On German Music*, Vol. VII, p. 85.

41—*Ibid.*, p. 91.

42—Prose Works, Vol. IV. Also frequently reissued as a separate publication.

43—Quoted in Newman, E., *op.* cit., Vol.. IV, p. 97.

44—Issued in book form in 1868. The final two articles did not appear because of the objections of King Ludwig. The latter possibly feared aggravating the already tense relationships of Bavaria and France.

45—Wagner and Schopenhauer never met, but Wagner sent Schopenhauer his poems of the "Ring". It seems that the philosopher did not have too much familiarity with and understanding of the composer's music. It should be pointed out that by 1853, the composer had already written Rienzi, the Flying Dutchman, Tannhauser, and Lohengrin.

46—Prose Works, Vol. V, "Beethoven," pp. 65-68. In pp. 81-32 of this essay Wagner quotes directly from "The World as Will and Idea".

47—Prose Works, Vol. VIII. "*What Boots This Knowledge?*" p. 256. (first published December 1880 in Bayreuther Blätter).

48—Prose Works, Vol. II, p. 111.

49—Quoted in Ellis, W. A., *Life of Richard Wagner*, Vol. VI, p. 23.

50—Prose Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 195-210. First printed in Bayreuther Blätter October, 1879.

51—Vol. I, No. 23.

52—Vol. V, No. 41. A similar viewpoint is manifested in the essay on "Character";—a man does not alter—he must play out the part which he has received without the least deviation from the character—neither experience nor philosophy, nor religion can affect or improve his character." "Essays" tr. by T .B. Saunders (New York, 1942) Willy Book Co.

53—Ellis, W. A., *Life of Wagner*, Vol. VI, p. 27.

54—See Leon Stein, "Hassidic Music," Jewish Forum magazine, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1943; also the play "The Dybbuk" by S. Ansky and "The Transmigration of a Song" (Das Gilgul fun a Nigun) by I. L. Peretz.

55—Prose Works, Vol. VI, pp. 38-40.

56—Prose Works, Vol. VI, pp. 275-284.

57—The use of the term "Aryan" as a racial designation appears in Wagner's writings only after his acquaintance with Gobineau.

58—This "consciousness of suffering" recurs in Wagner's writing and thinking from his very early creative years.

59—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 654.

60—Prose Works, Vol. I.

61—See the "Vaterlandsverein Speech" delivered by Wagner in Dresden in 1848. Prose Works, Vol. VIII.

62—These were published respectively February 10 and April 8, 1849. They are reprinted in the Prose Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 226-238.

CHAPTER II

WAGNER CONTRA MENDELSSOHN

WERE it not for Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, it is conceivable that "Judaism in Music" might not have been written. This opinion in no way minimizes nor overlooks Wagner's almost pathological anti-Semitism; it merely emphasizes the fact that in striking at these composers, Wagner was attacking two of his most important contemporaries and competitors. The cloaking of an antagonism, whether personal or aesthetic, in a grandiloquent and embracing cosmological attitude is characteristic of Wagner. Among artists differences in temperament are inevitable, and the critical distortions that may result from a one-sided creative approach are very frequent in music and art history. With Wagner, however, differences had to be rationalized in terms of broad cultural and national welfare in order to convince the composer himself, as well as the public, of his own complete rightness and the complete error of those who differed from him. In the case of Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, their descent provided a ready foil by means of which detailed analysis of particular works could be avoided. A wholesale and complete condemnation of Jewish composers having been once established, it would follow that neither of these composers could possibly create significant music. Where a scientist would come to certain conclusions inductively on the basis of mar-

shalled and organized data, Wagner reverses the process by "slanting" specific examples in such a way to corroborate a pre-determined conclusion.[1] Documentation or research were ordinarily repugnant to him. A significant exception is to be found in his review of the "Recollections of Mendelssohn" by Eduard Devrient.

He reached conclusions as he wrote his music, on emotional impulse organized into formal significance by his mind. Paradoxically, his music exhibits a more consistent logic than does much of his reasoning. It is significant that in the matter of becoming acquainted with Schopenhauer and Gobineau, he was delighted because he felt he had found philosophical and scientific confirmation for his *already formed* conclusions. His liking for what Glasenapp naively calls a "hypothesis of genius" seems harmless enough, and even has a certain colorful and attractive imaginativeness about it. But this "hypothesis of genius" is not in the same category as the intuition of a great scientist or philosopher. In Wagner's case it is rooted in "right feeling," in the ethnocentric concept of a "collective want;" suddenly this "right feeling" becomes in all actuality a substitute for processes of law, for legal and human rights.

The attitude of Wagner towards Mendelssohn is of a much more subtle complex than that towards Meyerbeer. The American critic, Finck, once characterized Wagner as the "Mendelssohn-tormented genius."[2] Although Mendelssohn was not an operatic composer, all of the factors which entered into Wagner's antagonism towards Meyerbeer are included in his attitude towards Mendelssohn. In addition, because of the unique position of Mendelssohn in German music, several other factors are manifested. For the purpose of this study, we will find it desirable to consider the case of Mendelssohn,

rather than that of Meyerbeer. The music of the latter is not considered great or important by present standards,[3] and in instances where the music itself might allow performances there are such violations of taste in the plot or libretto as would militate against revivals. One might be led to conclude, therefore, that Wagner's attacks on Meyerbeer could be attributed to a finely developed judgment, a prescience that subsequent opinion has confirmed, and to excuse his excesses as merely opinions uttered in the heat of a controversial exchange. Such a possibility existing, the background, means, and objectives of Wagner's attacks might easily be mistaken, disguised, or obscured.

On the other hand, though Mendelssohn's reputation is not that of his lifetime, it has substantially survived and his works are still played and studied. As a consequence, the true nature of Wagner's attack and antagonism can be much more clearly observed against the background of a music literature with which most are familiar.

It is quite generally agreed that composers are not the most competent or judicious critics in appraising their contemporaries. Occasionally, to be sure, they manifest a flash of intuition, a sudden keen insight; still more rarely, a Schumann, penetrating and prophetic in his evaluations, will appear on the musical scene. Generally, however, those very characteristics which tend to make an individual a first rate creator also tend to make him a poor critic.[4] True creativeness involves a necessary dogmatic certainty about one's outlook, one's idiom, and one's technique; despite any attempt or pretense of artistic "tolerance," the creative artist who has the profound conviction of the rightness of *his* way can tolerate no other outlook, no other idiom, and no other technique.

The more a composer is committed to a certain style by temperament, the more any other current style becomes to him quite literally unthinkable. In most instances, however, the composer turned critic will strive for some kind of objectivity, consciously or tacitly realizing at least the possibility of some other viewpoint. But Wagner did not write as a music critic in the ordinary journalistic sense of the word. He wrote to further a particular objective, and to propagandize his own viewpoint.

There may at first be the inclination to place the whole of Wagner's anti-Mendelssohn criticism in the same category as Tschaikowsky's rejection of Strauss, or Gounod's criticism of Franck. It is true that a difference in temperament accounts for part of the conflict, but only for a small part.

Wagner had not always been a detractor of Mendelssohn. In 1843 he had written an appreciative notice of the *St. Paul* oratorio. Its marked contrast to his later attitude toward the music, the conducting, and the personality of Mendelssohn justifies extended quotation:

> Last Palm Sunday's concert was signally brilliant, and left a deep impression on its particularly numerous audience. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy had been invited to conduct his oratorio Paulus, and through his readiness in accepting the invitation he afforded us a pleasure of unwonted kind, namely the opportunity of hearing a classical work produced under the personal direction of its author. Two public performances which must be described as thoroughly successful had made us acquainted with his masterpiece; yet it seemed as if we had not aimed at a right understanding until the immediate personal superintendence of the master filled every one of the executants with a special fervor, inspiring them to such a de-

> gree that the merit of the performance almost reached the level of the work itself . . . showed us in all perfection a work which is a witness to the highest bloom of art, and fills us with just pride that it should have been fashioned in the age wherein we live.
>
> The only thing to be regretted, is that such an oratorio cannot be wholly grafted on our Protestant church service, as that would be the only way for its true meaning to pass into the heart of all believers . . .[5]

In "Mein Leben," writing of the same composition Wagner asserted,

> . . . the knowledge I thus acquired of this work pleased me so much that I made a fresh attempt to approach the composer with sincere and friendly motives.[6]

In commenting on his own early career, Wagner even makes a comparison—so rare for him—that is somewhat self-disparaging:

> At the very time that I, in Madgeburg, was attempting to make my reputation as a musical conductor by thoughtless submission to the frivolous taste of the day, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was conducting the Gewandhaus concerts and inaugurating a momentous epoch for himself and the musical taste of Leipzig.[7]

In these early days he had, as Newman points out, "a sincere admiration for Mendelssohn's talent; his letters to him are couched in a tone not only of courtesy, but of genuine respect."[8]

"The Hebrides" overture was long a favorite of his, prompting him to declare that

> Mendelssohn was a landscape painter of the first order and the "Hebriden" Overture is his masterpiece. Wonderful imagination and delicate feeling are here presented with consummate art... "Meerestille und glueckliche Fahrt" also is beautiful, and I am very fond of the first movement of the Scotch Symphony. No one can blame a composer for using national melodies when he treats them so artistically as Mendelssohn has done in the scherzo of this Symphony.[9]

In the 1869 addition to the original essay of "Judaism in Music," there is a peculiar sentence which reveals an almost unwilling concession to Mendelssohn's achievements, immediately mitigated by an oblique attack on the non-German result of those achievements:

> In consequence of the many years of rightly and deservedly honored work which Mendelssohn had spent in Leipzig that city had received a virtual Jewish baptism of music: as a reviewer once complained, the blond variety of musician had there become an even greater rarity..."[10]

On the whole, however, even grudgingly complimentary remarks such as those quoted above are exceptional, and after 1850 became increasingly rare in Wagner's writings. A virulent antagonism becomes more and more manifest, so that by the time he wrote his autobiography there are even distortions of fact made to suit and justify this developed attitude. This attitude stems from one or a combination of the following factors:

(a) difference in temperament
(b) the fact that Mendelssohn did not evince sufficient interest in Wagner's work or career
(c) the conception of Mendelssohn as a rival composer
(d) Mendelssohn's cultivation of music as a separate art
(e) the Jewish descent of Mendelssohn.

If we accept Nietschze's distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, Mendelssohn is as clearly exemplary of the former as Wagner is of the latter. The urbanity, polish, proportion and poise of the former's music is in marked contrast to the intensity, urgency, and non-symmetrical architectonics of Wagner. Consequently, it is not surprising that as a result of content and temperament each would tend to be distrustful of the other. Mendelssohn's references to Wagner are infrequent. To him, Wagner was the not yet arrived composer, and unquestionably this attitude, to which the younger man could not but be sensitive, was a galling feature of their relationship.[11]

A revealing instance of the difference in temperaments is provided by Wagner's reaction to the Leipzig of the Gewandhaus concerts. These concerts directed by Mendelssohn had established the classics as the essential part of the orchestral repertoire. Wagner produced his "Columbus Overture" at a benefit concert.

> But to my amazement, he wrote, I found that the taste of the musical public in Leipzig had been given a different bent, which not even my rapturously applauded overture with its brilliant combination of six trumpets could influence. *This experience deepened my dislike of everything approaching a classical tone.*[12] (The italics are mine.)

Another aspect of the difference in temperament is evidenced in the marked difference in tempo conception of the two composers as conductors. Mendelssohn's tempi, from the references made by Wagner, seemed to have been faster than the latter's, so of course they were wrong. On one occasion when Mendelssohn, after apparently agreeing that the usual tempo of the third movement of

Beethoven's Eighth Symphony was too rapid, seemed to approve a performance in this selfsame rapid tempo, Wagner wrote,

> I was so amazed by this complete absence of feeling on the part of the famous musician that I was struck dumb, and thenceforth my own particular *opinion of Mendelssohn gradually* matured . . .[13]

This figure "gradually matured" really means that thenceforth Wagner found more and more musical "reasons" and excuses to justify a conclusion already reached on racial grounds. It must be remembered that by the time Wagner was writing his biography his opinions, racial, musical, and critical had already crystallized. His position was assured, the direction of his work completely determined. Consequently, throughout his autobiography, events and opinions are cast in such a light as to justify and rationalize them not only as they occurred, but from the standpoint of fitting them as consistent pieces in a pattern subsequently achieved.

The same instance, involving the third movement of the Eighth Symphony is discussed at greater length in his essay "On Conducting."[14] A considerable portion of this essay is devoted to a detraction and a violent condemnation of Mendelssohn.[15] Wagner amplifies the reaction described in "Mein Leben," writing, "I fancied I was peering into a veritable abyss of superficiality, an utter void." The phrase "complete absence of feeling" and "abyss of superficiality" have a connotation above and beyond their direct meanings. These are symbolical terms in Wagner's rationale, fraught with far-reaching racial and cultural implications and indicating not as much a musical as a Volk-cultural deficiency.

The quality of a musical performance, solo or orchestral, is ephemeral. Any attempt to recapture its spirit or identity is limited to some kind of a verbal reproduction. When we consider changes in styles and standards, the problem of recapturing the essence or feeling of a particular performer's style becomes the more difficult. With these reservations in mind, it is nevertheless interesting to compare Wagner's criticism of Mendelssohn's "absence of feeling" with a contemporary's report of Mendelssohn's conducting.

> What he accomplished as a conductor is worthy of admiration. Not a single refinement or beauty of the work in hand escaped him; his demeanor was free from all posing: but, though the eye of every member of the orchestra was fixed on his baton, he directed and inspired them more with his glances than with his motions. He never allowed a work to be played down to the pendulum swing of a metronome, but he led unnoticeably into his fine shades of tempo; he never permitted himself to indulge in the arbitrary breaking up of tempos, or in similar means of effect which became the fashion later. It was a pleasure to be present at his rehearsals and see how everything was cleaned up and the spirit put into it, and to wonder at his sharp ear and his fineness of feeling.[16]

From other contemporary reports and from the known attitude of Mendelssohn towards performance and interpretation it is reasonable to assume that this composer belonged among those objective conductors of whom Toscanini is today the outstanding exemplar. In his own conducting and in his critical approach to the conducting of others, Wagner sought a subjective approach, which not only justified, but demanded tempi and dynamic inflections not specifically indicated in the score. He sets up concepts of a "naive" and a "sentimental"

allegro, the former for the main theme of the classic Sonata-Symphony, the latter for the second, traditionally more lyric theme. It was not enough for Wagner to consider the differences between Mendelssohn's performance concepts and his own as merely musical. He repeatedly uses the instances which supposedly reveal Mendelssohn's ineptitude and lack of feeling as tangible evidence that this alien-in-blood did not truly understand "our music."

Another instance of Wagner's deliberate confusion of a personal-temperamental difference with a cultural-national viewpoint is expressed in the essay "On Conducting":

> Germans are stiff and awkward when they want to appear mannerly, but they are noble and superior when they grow warm. Are we to suppress our fire to please these reticent persons? In former days, whenever I met a young musician who had come in contact with Mendelssohn, I learnt that the master had admonished him not to think of effect when composing and to avoid everything that might prove meretriciously impressive . . . Everything was governed by the fear of exaggeration . . . The spirit of their shyness which originally served to conceal their own impotence now attempts the defamation of other people's potence.
>
> The principal ingredient, however, is an apparently judicious caution in the presence of that which one happens to be incapable of, together with a detraction of that which one would like to accomplish.[17]

Behind the obvious meaning of the words there is an appeal to German racial-exclusiveness, the implication of an impotence on the part of Mendelssohn which is not only bad in itself, but which actually threatens the fer-

tility of "other people." By other people, Wagner means not other individuals but another people — the "true Germans."

Lang's remark that, "it was against (the) pseudo-romantic school, and not against Mendelssohn that the neo-German school led by Liszt and Wagner declared war,"[18] is contradicted by the repeated inferences of the inclusion of Mendelssohn (and Hiller) in the group that Wagner himself termed "the good-natured ones."[19] While Wagner never termed Meyerbeer or Mendelssohn Philistines, there is the repeated suggestion that the groups from which they sprang, and which yielded their numerous and staunch supporters, included the "Phillistines."

When Mendelssohn died in 1847, Wagner was thirty-four years of age. His works written and performed to this time included "Rienzi," "The Flying Dutchman" and "Tannhaeuser." Several early overtures, choral works, a "Symphony in C," "Das Liebesverbot" and "Die Feen" had also been written. The music of the "Ring," "Tristan," "Meistersinger" and "Parsifal" had not yet been composed.

On the eleventh of April, 1836, Wagner (as revealed in his letter of that date dispatched from Madgeburg) sent Mendelssohn as a present the score of his first Symphony, a product of his eighteenth year. He asked Mendelssohn to read it at his leisure. The latter never performed the work. When Wagner saw him several years later, he writes,

> I made no inquiry about the fate of the score of my great Symphony performed at Leipzig in earlier days, which I had more or less forced upon him so many years ago. On the other hand, he did not betray to me any signs of remembering that strange offering.[20]

Wagner later expressed the opinion that Mendelssohn must have destroyed the score, "perhaps because he detected in it a talent that was disagreeable to him."[21] Newman concurs in this opinion,[22] since the Symphony was not found among Mendelssohn's papers after his death. However, in view of the fact that the work was the unsolicited composition of an unknown composer, and in view of Mendelssohn's extensive travels, it is quite possible that it might have been carelessly left or misplaced at one town or another. To think that the conductor would deliberately destroy the work indicates a consciously perverse misreading of his habits and character.

That Mendelssohn did not share Wagner's own opinion of himself is self-evident; there was between the two an estrangement and a mutual dislike involving their personalities as well as their music. Had Mendelssohn evidenced a greater interest in his music, it is possible that Wagner might have temporarily effected a closer *rapprochement*. Ultimately, however, the result would have been the same. There were too many conflicting factors in this particular relationship to have allowed this one mitigating circumstance to seriously affect the future behavior and attitude of the younger composer. Meyerbeer's personal interest and intervention in Wagner's favor did not prevent Wagner from attacking Meyerbeer at the very moment he was the recipient of these favors.[23]

What Mendelssohn's innermost feeling toward Wagner must have been we can only surmise; an attitude at once tolerant and somewhat aloof is revealed in a letter of March 31, 1843, to Ferdinand Hiller:

> I believe nothing, absolutely nothing, except what I see with

> my own eyes on the music paper, and hear with my own ears. Unfortunately, the case is almost the same with Wagner; I am afraid that a great deal becomes exaggerated in that quarter; and that just those musicians whom I know to be conscientious people, increase my fears not a little. Still, I have not yet heard any connected passages of his operas, and I think they must be better than people say. Talent he most certainly has, and I was delighted that he got that position (the post of a Hofkapellmeister at the Dresden opera) even though it won him enemies enough in the course of those few weeks as I will tell you when we meet.[24]

There is revealed here, too, the unconscious condescension of the admittedly successful musician towards a not yet firmly established and accepted composer. Unquestionably, Wagner sensed this attitude and it rankled. The disregard or even misunderstanding on the part of musicians and composers whom he did not respect he could tolerate; but the same attitude on the part of a composer of such standing as Mendelssohn he could not but find irritating. Concerning their meeting at a musicale in Leipzig, Wagner wrote:

> I could see clearly that he thought but little of a success in opera, and that merely in Dresden. Doubtless, I seemed in his eyes one of a class of musicians to whom he attached no value and with whom he proposed to have no intercourse.[25]

The implications that Wagner reads into Mendelssohn's reactions have a two-fold purpose. The first is the perhaps unconscious impulse to justify for himself and his readers the anger and resentment against Mendelssohn which, subsequent to this and other meetings, found expression in his writings. The second is to create a doubt as to the penetration and judgment of a Men-

delssohn, who so obviously did not recognize in Wagner those potentialities so fully realized in later years.

The aloofness of Mendelssohn pained Wagner, personally and musically. His ego could only overcome that pain by destroying all belief in the validity of Mendelssohn's judgment and intuition. This he did by attacking not only the music of Mendelssohn but also its very creative roots as he attempted to show that Mendelssohn, being not of the "Volk," not truly German in blood, could neither create nor think "Germanly." Consequently, not only was his music without true worth, but his judgments were similarly valueless. "Therefore," his innermost ego says to Wagner, "I need not feel badly that he did not recognize me for what I am." It is significant that Wagner's attacks on Mendessohn begin *after* the latter's death. The reason is a deeper one than the mere superficial explanation that he would not attack so respected a composer in his own lifetime; the more profound reason is that with Mendelssohn's death there was no further opportunity for Wagner to improve the older composer's opinion of him. Since that opinion could not be improved in the living, his only recourse was to destroy the belief in the opinions and the influence of Mendelssohn. Only in this manner could he help root out the pain of rejection.

This course having been taken by his Ego, his opinion of Mendelssohn "matured;" past events and attitudes are reconstructed and revaluated in retrospect, rationalized in terms of his "matured" viewpoint. Of one of his visits to Mendelssohn, Wagner writes, "In the midst of the lavish comforts of his home, he struck me as cold, yet it was not so much that he repelled me as that I recoiled from him."[26] The coldness of Mendelssohn was no doubt that aloofness and condescension

to which we have referred: Wagner will not allow himself to think that the other might have disdained him, but interprets the estrangement in terms of his own revulsion. The phrase "I recoiled from him" must be understood against similar and stronger phrases from "Judaism in Music": "involuntary repellence," "unser unueberwindlicher Widerwillen gegen Juedisches Wesen," against Wagner's "matured" opinion.

Both composers being of the same country, some feeling of rivalry was inevitable. On Mendelssohn's part that rivalry would not assume so great an importance because of his recognized standing, his background of universally esteemed achievements, and his naturally more genial character; on the other hand, Wagner had not yet "arrived" in the sense of being completely accepted, and his more egotistic and ruthless character would tend to exaggerate the aspects of any rivalry. For the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Friedrich August I, of Saxony, at Dresden on June 7, 1843, Wagner and Mendelssohn had each written a composition. Wagner modestly admits that "his simple heartfelt composition had entirely eclipsed the complex artificialities of Mendelssohn."[27] We have previously referred to the respect reflected in Wagner's letters to Mendelssohn concerning this very occasion. It is questionable if at the time of performance, Wagner actually felt the same way about these compositions as he did in retrospect when he was writing his autobiography. For at this later time, he had the confidence of his great achievements behind him. Above all, in the phrase "complex artificialities" we have another of the Wagnerians cliches, brought into play whenever music by a composer of Jewish descent was involved — such music, *a priori*, was

"capricious," "superficial" and "artificial." *It had to be*, in order to conform to Wagner's racial theories.

The feeling of rivalry which Wagner either sensed or read into Mendelssohn's reactions is revealed in his description of a meeting with Mendelssohn shortly after the success of "Rienzi" in Leipzig:

> I became conscious of the peculiar unrest and excitement with which this master of music, who, though still young, had already reached the zenith of his fame and life's work, observed, or rather watched me... My success had certain characteristic features, which gave it a more or less alarming aspect. Mendelssohn's most ardent desire for a long time past had been to write a successful opera[28] and it was possible he now felt annoyed that, before he had succeeded in doing so, a triumph of this nature should suddenly be thrust into his face with blunt brutality, and based upon a style of music which he might be justified in regarding as poor. These thoughts were dimly shaping themselves in my mind, when Mendelssohn, by a very remarkable statement drove me, almost with violence, to adopt this interpretation. On our way home together, after the joint concert rehearsal, I was talking very warmly on the subject of music. Although by no means a talkative man, he suddenly interrupted me with curiously hasty excitement by the assertion that music had but one great fault, namely, that more than any other art it stimulated not only our good but also our evil qualities such, for instance, as jealousy. I blushed with shame to have to apply this speech to his own feelings towards me; for I was profoundly conscious of my innocence of ever having dreamed, even in the remotest degree, of placing my own talents or performances as a musician in comparison with his.[29]

Another "evidence" of his rivalry is related by Wagner, this time concerning the "Flying Dutchman."

> Mendelssohn was present in a stage box during this performance. He followed its progress with a pale face, and afterwards came and murmured to me in a weary tone of voice, 'Well, I should think you are satisfied now!' I met him several times during my brief stay in Berlin . . . But never did another word concerning the "Fliegende Holländer" pass his lips, beyond inquiry as to the second performance, and as to whether Devrient or someone else would appear in it.[30]

Yet, in a letter to his wife, Minna, on January 8, 1844, concerning this very performance the composer wrote "Mendelssohn, with whom I dined once, gave me great pleasure after the performance, he came on the stage, embraced me and congratulated me most heartily." Here, by his own testimony, Wagner reveals himself as altering facts in retrospect in order to make these facts fit a pattern established subsequent to their occurrence.

But differences in temperament, Mendelssohn's lack of appreciation, and the rivalry of the two composers are not the most important reasons for Wagner's consistent and bitter antagonism. The two prime motives, closely meshed, were Wagner's theory of the Synthesis of the Arts, with music being but one in a necessary amalgam of several arts, and his racial thinking with its associated anti-Semitism. Since this latter factor will be discussed by itself, we will here be concerned with only the first motive.

As a young composer who felt his particular bent might be instrumental music, Wagner at first theorised that the ultimate achievement of the art was in that branch of music.

> If we may take it as a general principle that every art has one particular genre that represents it at its purest and most independent, this certainly may be said to be the case with Music in its instrumental genre. In every other branch a

> second element combines that necessarily destroys the unity and self-dependence of the first, and yet, as we have experienced, can never raise itself to a level with it. Through what a mass of extras from the other arts must one not wade, in listening to an opera, to arrive at the real drift of the music itself!

Even at best, any combination "must always stay inferior to the genre of higher instrumental music." Here music "gains its highest scope, its most complete development."[31]

But having discovered that his true genius resided in operatic creation, he must, of necessity, determine that only in his version of opera — the music-drama — was there any hope for the music of the future.

> In the great universal art work of the future there will ever be fresh regions to discover; but not in the separate branch of art, when once the latter—as music, by Beethoven—has already been led to universalism, but yet would linger in her solitary round.[32]

Elsewhere he wrote,

> Beethoven . . . thrust beyond Absolute Music, whose dominion he had measured and fulfilled unto its utmost frontiers—and showed us the pathway to the fecundation of every art through Music, as her only salutary broadening.[33]

Music, Wagner believed, had exhausted its potentialities as an independent art in Beethoven who, himself, stretches a giant hand to the future. Beethoven has brought music to the very verge of the new promised land; from his height he looks forward to it, without being destined to cultivate these new fields. In his Ninth

Symphony the composer has not merely added a chorus, he has shown by inference that pure instrumental music is no longer able by itself to express that depth and breadth of emotion that is called forth by the new time. Music, then, must join with the other arts to participate in this culminating Synthesis of the Arts (Gesammtkunst).

Not only was it necessary to affirm this "truth" in a positive manner; it was equally necessary to show that any other approach was not valid, resulting in a sterile, lifeless music. Any composer after Beethoven who cultivated music as a separate art was non-productive, imitative of his work, a mere parasitic growth, feeding on the corpse of a dead body from which the true living spirit had fled.[34]

> At present no art affords such plenteous possibility of talking without saying any real thing as that of music, since the greatest geniuses have already said whatever there was to say in it as an absolute separate art.[35]

Towards the end of his life, his principal works composed and his place established, Wagner could afford the recognition of pure instrumental music once again, not only accepting the dedication of Bruckner's 3rd Symphony, but even contemplating the writing of light, preclassic symphonies himself. But that was to happen in the future; with his music-dramas still to be written and forced on an often unwilling public, with a reputation to establish and an aesthetic to be rationalized, he adopted a single-minded and uncompromising attitude towards "pure music."

Mendelssohn, therefore, became the specific target of Wagner's attacks. By consensus of opinion, Mendelssohn,

during his lifetime, was regarded as one of the greatest living composers.[36] Should that opinion be allowed to prevail, it was a living tangible contradiction of those beliefs and tenets on which Wagner based his whole theory and his musical creation. For here would be a post-Beethoven composer who still successfully cultivated music as a separate art. On a purely musical ground Wagner's opposition to Mendelssohn would have been perhaps no worse than his criticism of Schumann, which could be vitriolic enough.[37] But in the case of Mendelssohn, he had at hand a weapon which, out of conviction and expediency, he used with no reservations whatever. By pointing to Mendelssohn as unchangeably a Jew by nature, and *therefore,* immutably and inevitably un-German he forged a weapon of musical assassination which he wielded unmercifully. As for those who might not agree with his viewpoint, Wagner pointed to this fact as an indication that they by that very token were "Judaized" and were perverting German culture.[38]

There is a persistent recurrence of this dual notion of the sterility of "pure" music after Beethoven, and the association of such music with an un-German and alien state of mind and being (Wesen). It is literarily possible to take passages from essays on totally different subjects, written years apart, through which these associated ideas recur like an ostinato, a leitmotif, persistent and unrelenting.

Discussing the Ninth Symphony, Wagner wrote, "A new genre, a symphony with chorus was all the dullards saw therein." After an insulting reference to Mendelssohn's "Lobgesang"[39] Wagner continues,

> Thus has Columbus discovered America for the sugary hucksters of our times. The ground of this repugnant phenomenon,

> however, lies deep within the very nature of our modern music. The art of tone set free from those of dance and poetry is no longer an art instinctively necessary to man."

Those, then, who continue to write music independent of dance and poetry are lacking in instinct. In the reasoning of Wagner, universal instinct and German-racial instinct are synonymous, for is it not in the German conception that the art of music is most truly "at home"? Consequently, it is quite obvious that those who are lacking in instinct are deficient in that attribute because they are inherently, innately un-German. It is not enough for Wagner to indicate that the sins of such are not only ones of omission—theirs are sins of commission, too. In the "Art-Work of the Future" he had written, "The 'Volk' is the epitome of all those who feel a common and collective want (gemeinschaftliche Noth)." From this point, he constructs an abstract condemnation of all those who are not of the "Volk," and who are consequently untouched by the "collective want;" the key to this abstraction is made manifest in the concrete example developed in "Judaism in Music."

> Who now are they who belong *not* to this people, and who are its sworn foes?
>
> All those who feel no want; whose life-spring therefore consists in a need which rises not to the potence of a want, and thus is artificial, untrue, and egoistic . . .
>
> Where there is no want, Wagner continues, there is no true need; where there is no true need, no necessary action. But where there is no necessary action, there reigns caprice, and where caprice is king, there blossoms every vice, and every criminal assault on nature. For only by forcing back, by

> barring and refusing the assuagement of true need, can the false and artificial need endeavor to assuage itself. But the satisfaction of an artificial need is luxury; it can only be bred and supported in opposition to and at the cost of the necessities of others.[40]

Wagner is not speaking in general, in his mind there is a specific composer towards which his apparent abstractions are directed. That this composer is Mendelssohn is confirmed beyond any doubt, when, in this same essay Wagner writes,

> Do what ye will; look right away from Beethoven, fumble after Mozart, gird you round with Sebastian Bach; write Symphonies, with or without choruses, write Masses, Oratorios—the sexless embryos of Opera!—make songs without words, and operas without texts—: ye still bring nought to light that has a breath of true life in it. For look ye—ye lack Belief, the great belief in the necessity of what ye do. Ye have but the belief of simpletons, the false belief in the possible necessity of your own selfish caprice.

The term "selfish caprice" is another favorite of Wagner's in dealing with either Mendelssohn or Meyerbeer. Like similar criticism, it springs not directly from a reaction to the music, but from a pre-established conclusion of what the music must of necessity be, since it was composed by racially alien individuals.

Throughout Wagner's writings there are often references to Mendelssohn's wealth that might easily be mistaken for envy.[41] However, the resentment expressed in this connection is not envy, but stems from the embittered reflections of one of Saturday's children. Whatever its source, this feeling was but one more acrid ingredient in that mixture of emotions with which Wagner con-

sidered Mendelssohn. He resented Mendelssohn's material circumstances and precocious ease of composition. These resentments are combined with a distortion of historic fact and a deliberate demagogic appeal to racial exclusiveness and prejudice in the following passage from the essay "On Conducting."

> But just as the Jews have stood aloof from our manual work[42] so our newer musical conductors have none of them risen from the ranks of musical craftsmen, for sheer reason of their dislike of real hard labor. No, this new-style conductor forthwith planted himself atop of the musical confraternity somewhat as the Banker on top of our world of work . . . For this he had to bring something ready in his pocket, something the step by step musician did not own, or found most hard to come by, and seldom in sufficience: as the banker, his capital, this gentleman brought his polish (Gebildetheit). Advisedly, I say *polish,* not culture (Bildung), for who so owns this last in truth can be no target for our scoffs, he towers above all others. But the possessor of polish is fair enough game.[43]

The sophistry of Wagner, whereby the refinements of a Mendelssohn are condemned as a superficial polish rather than a permeating culture, was eagerly welcomed by those "pure" Germans who resented the achievements of this alien.[44] The introduction by association of the concept of "Banker" had a two-fold function. It called attention to the wealth of the Mendelssohn family, and drew the parallel, that just as this wealth exploited the "world of work," so did Mendelssohn's resources exploit the "musical confraternity."

So pronounced did this anti-Mendelssohn complex become that it eventually included even those who might attempt to present him in a favorable light. One amazing and revealing instance of this circumstance is the article

"Herr Eduard Devrient und Sein Styl."[45] Under the pseudonym of Wilhelm Drach[46] Wagner issued this pamphlet just a few months after the republication of "Judaism in Music." On the face of it, there was no presumable reason for this article, and more particularly for its issue in pamphlet form. By this time, Wagner was recognized as one of Germany's most important composers; far from his being under any musical compulsion to write this pamphlet, it could only have resulted in an interruption of his regular work. Furthermore, Devrient at one time at least had been a "friend." Why then this pamphlet?

The explanation is simple. Devrient had made the mistake of writing on "Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy." Devrient had been associated with Mendelssohn in the preparation of the St. Matthew passion in 1829. In his own words, he had been considered by Mendelssohn as the "only man capable of writing him a good opera libretto."

Under ordinary circumstances these factors would in themselves have been sufficient to call forth a strong reaction on Wagner's part. In addition, he was in a particularly ugly frame of mind in 1869.[47] As usual, his attack on Mendelssohn begins in an oblique fashion. Devrient's "Recollections" are submitted to the most vitriolic criticism for their bad German, solecisms, poor construction—Wagner sounds like an angry pedant on a rampage. This composer who insisted he had no patience for "research" lists well over one hundred instances of grammatical error varying from single words to complete sentences, as he quite literally takes these apart. His biting sarcasm, his corrosive anger, know no bounds—one construction he labels Jew-German (though he well enough knows Devrient was not Jewish).

After having so thoroughly revealed Devrient's linguistic deficiencies, he comes to Mendelssohn's consideration of Devrient as a librettist. This is perhaps one of the principal objects of the article: What poor taste Mendelssohn must have had to even consider such an inferior writer as a librettist. Even Mendelssohn's own German, he concedes in a moment of rare magnanimity, is in its "simple way" better writing than Devrient's.

The last source of Wagner's opposition to Mendelssohn which we have noted was his anti-Semitic bias. In its content and implications this aspect represents one of the culminations of Wagner's racial thinking and will consequently be considered by itself.

1—"Scientific works with their scrupulousness in the matter of research, facts, and methods merely bored him." E. Newman, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 654.

2—Ellis, W. A., *Life of Richard Wagner*, p. 245.

3—To some extent, this attitude stems from Wagner's criticisms. Since Meyerbeer's music is infrequently heard today, many critics and historians are content to quote previous authorities, rather than derive their opinions from a consideration of the music itself. Among the few defenders of what is left of Meyerbeer's reputation is B. van Derien. See his "Down Among the Dead Men." See also D. J. Grout "A Short History of Opera," p. 315-8.

4—Cf. Gounod on Franck's Symphony: "The affirmation of impotence is elevated to a dogma;" Tschaikovsky on Strauss: "Rarely has so much pretension been united with so little talent;" Mendelssohn's distate for Berlioz's music: etc., etc..

5—Prose Works, Vol. VIII, p. 278-279. This report, drafted as part of a letter to von Luttichau, Intendant of the Dresden Court Theater was attached to a prose sketch of "Das Liebesmahl der Apostel." It was discovered in 1898 at the Royal Library in Berlin. Although the letter (of April 27, 1843) was dispatched to von Luttichau, the above report was not included.

6—Wagner, Richard, *My Life*, Tudor Publishing Co., (New York 1936) p. 239.

7—*Op. cit.*, p. 123.

8—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. I. p. 437. Attention may also be called to Wagner's letters of the 17th of April and the 15th of May 1845, soliciting Mendelssohn's interest in the plan for a monument to Weber. "Richard Wagner's Gesammelte Briefe" herausgegeben von Julius Kapp und Emerich Kastner, (Leipzig, 1914) Vol. II, pp. 150-153.

9—Grove's, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Macmillan and Co. (New York, 1939) Third Edition, Vol. V., p. 604.

10—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 101.

11—It must be remembered that the works of Wagner written during Mendelssohn's lifetime included only Rienzi, The Flying Dutchman, Tannhauser and Lohengrin, the last not yet performed.

12—Wagner, Richard, *My Life*, p. 123.

13—*Ibid*, p. 329.

14—Prose Works, Vol. IV.

15—*Ibid.*, See particularly pp. 338-345.

16—Reinecke, Carl, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy* in *Modern Music and Musicians*, ed. by Louis C. Elson, University Society of New York, 1918, p. 160. See also Mendelssohn in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* for a similar opinion.

17—Wagner constantly stresses the fact that Mendelssohn's works did not include a successful opera.

18—Lang, Paul H., *Music in Western Civilization* (New York, 1941) W. W. Norton Co. p. 811.

19—*My Life*, p. 383.

20—*Ibid.*, p. 267.

21—Du Moulin Eckart, Richard Graf, *Cosima Wagner*, (Munich, 1921) Drei Masken Verlag.

22—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 96.

23—This he did by means of articles written under various pseudonyms.

24—From a letter to Ferdinand Hiller, dated Leipzig, March 3, 1843. *Mendelssohn's Letters*, edited by G. Selden Goth, Pantheon Books, Inc. (New York, 1945).

25—*My Life*, p. 267.

26—*Ibid.*, p. 267.

27—*Ibid.*, p. 405.

28—This of course is merely an assumption made by Wagner in order to strengthen the effect of his story. Mendelssohn had long been interested in writing an opera (his early "Wedding of Commacho" had not been too successful) for it was the only medium to which he had made no significant contribution, but it was not "his most ardent desire."

29—*My Life*, pp. 287-288.

30—*Ibid.*, p. 319.

31—Prose Works, *On German Music*, Vol. VII, p. 90.

32—Prose Works, Vol. I, *The Art of Tone*, footnote, p. 128.

33—*Judaism in Music*, Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 95.

34—*Ibid.*

35—*Ibid.*, v. 89.

36—Reinecke, Carl, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

37—In 1879 there appeared in the Bayreuther Blätter, an attack on Schumann under the ostensible authorship of Joseph Rubinstein, but obviously inspired by Wagner. Of this article Grieg wrote, "Schumann's art is by all possible and impossible means reduced to an absurdity. Not a shred of honor is left to it. The very qualities of the master, his glowing fancy, and his lofty lyrical flights are dragged into the dirt, and described as the most monstrous conventionality. His orchestral music, his piano compositions, his songs are all treated with the same contempt." *Modern Music and Musicians*, pp. 198-199.

38—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 99.

39—Of this reference Ellis writes: "The original sentence is somewhat too forcible for English notions:—'nachdem er geholfen hat,

drei vorangehende Instrumentalsätze so geschickt wie möglich zu stande zu bringen.'" *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 128.

40—Prose Works, Vol. I, *The Art Work of the Future*, p. 75-6.

41—In one instance he refers to Mendelssohn as "fortune's darling," Prose Works, Vol. IV, p. 287.

42—Wagner was here deliberately distorting historical fact; he assuredly was familiar enough with German history to know that Jews could not participate in enterprises involving manual labor because of their exclusion by guilds and associations controlling such enterprises.

43—*On Conducting*, Prose Works, Vol. IV, pp. 340-341.

44—Mendelssohn was particularly uncomfortable in Berlin, and his stay there constitutes one of the few unhappy episodes in his life.

45—First published anonymously in the *Nordeutsche allgemeine Zeitung*.

46—Wagner had used the same pseudonym in his attack on the Berlin critic, Rellstab. Written in 1833, and submitted to the *Neue Zeitschrift*, it was rejected by Schumann as being too harsh.

47—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 180.

CHAPTER III

THE ANTI-SEMITISM OF RICHARD WAGNER[1]

TO the sensitive, that content and aspect of Wagner's writing and thinking with which we are here specifically concerned will no doubt be disturbing, and perhaps somewhat depressing. There is much unpleasantness to be recorded, and it might seem that the only incentive for much detail would be a morbid one—sadistic, if one is anti-Semitic, or masochistic, if one is Jewish. Many writers and historians have preferred to ignore this aspect, assuming that it did not necessarily have significance for Wagner's music; in the casual, informative type of music history, such an assumption is somewhat justified.

But at this point we are not concerned with Wagner's music; we are concerned with his writing and his thinking. Had these latter merely been self-contained, without any continuity in subsequent thought or action, it would assuredly be best to let these concepts molder undisturbed in the silence of neglect and oblivion. But these ideas of Wagner were not self-contained, nor did they end with him; on the contrary they were not only continued, but implemented and "corroborated" by all manner of legal, "scientific," and philosophic means. Six million people lost their lives within the past few years as the direct result of the kind of thinking and the kind

of an outlook that is represented by those ideas of Wagner which we will encounter here. Lest it be thought that we are exaggerating the influence of Wagner—let alone the established effects of his viewpoints—the evidence afforded by the direct references to Wagner removes any doubt as to the great extent of that influence on the leading thinkers of the Third Reich.

There is, further, this best of all possible reasons for an exhaustive inquiry into Wagner's anti-Semitism: any discussion of either the truth or falseness of his racial viewpoints can only proceed from and be predicated on a clear and complete notion of those viewpoints.

There is the very strong inclination to attempt a psychoanalytic classification of some of the attitudes which will be discussed. The writer has determined to avoid any such classifications. "Paranoia", "persecution complex" and similar expressions of abnormal psychology are tempting terms; however, because of the variations in the diagnosis of such conditions, of the conflicting opinions of different "schools," and of the still fluid nature of psychoanalytic science, I have thought it best to simply present the factual aspects of Wagner's anti-Semitism, and let those who feel qualified derive the conclusions which seem to be indicated by that factual evidence.

In a letter to Liszt, sent from Zurich April 18, 1851, Wagner, in explaining his authorship of "Judaism in Music," writes this revealing sentence : "I have cherished a long-repressed resentment about this Jew business, and *this grudge is as necessary to my nature as gall is to blood.* An incentive came when their accursed scribblings annoyed me intensely, so at last I let fly." (The italics are mine).

It is evident that Wagner's anti-Semitism assumes the nature of an emotional purgative. In almost all his writ-

ings there are to be found remarks ranging from derogatory antagonism to the most malevolent and venomous hostility. By the time of the publication of "Herodom and Christendom" (1881) there is achieved a vicious intensity that is unsurpassed by even a Goebbels or a Hitler. Ultimately the word "Jewish" becomes an expletive epithet, associated with any movement, factor, person or condition which displeased him; this Liszt recognized, when, in a letter describing a visit to the composer at Zurich, he speaks of Wagner's general condemnation of things Jewish—"A generic term with him of the most elastic meaning."[2]

Not only was the meaning elastic; the "generic term" became part of a conditioned reaction, manifesting itself in various degrees of anger or fury. Thus Schemann tells of a discussion one December day in 1877 centering around Bismarck's comparative tolerance toward the German Jews. In a paroxysm of rage, Wagner stalked from the room into the wintry night, returning only after he had literally walked off his anger.[3]

Wagner rationalized his deepening prejudice from the viewpoint of the Jewish factor in property, the press, culture, religion, race, his persecution and social-political life.

In his article "Introduction to the Year 1880"[4] he wrote that "the Jew holds the land and goods." From his standpoint, any non-German was an alien, and any assumption by a non-German of leadership or control was an usurpation. He was convinced (in his own mind) that the source of *all* the attacks on him was an organized Jewish opposition; since so much of the press was opposed to his works or theories, this was evidence enough for him that the press was predominantly owned and controlled by Jews.

The problem of language was a doubly irritating one for Wagner. He believed that as aliens outside the Volk-community, Jews could never understand, feel, or create in German. Secondly, there was Yiddish which, to add insult to injury was an adaptation of a kind of Hebraicised medieval German, a "corruption" of the pure mother tongue. While it is true that the German Jews studiously avoided speaking this "jargon," it was nevertheless the language of the Jewish masses of Eastern and Central Europe, achieving an enduring expression in such writers as Sholom-Aleichem, Peretz, and later, Sholom Asch. Where a certain inflection was the point of departure for good-natured humor in Moussorgsky's "Schmul and Goldenberg," a similar inflection was maddening to Wagner. We have noted the mystic connotation which "pure" German had for Wagner; his anger at the "defilement" of German becomes then the more intense. The Nibelungs in the "Ring" represent, on the authority of Wagner himself, the Jews who having robbed the world of its gold, are determined to dominate it. Alberich is "swarthy, swampy, and sulphurous," while Siegfried describes Mime as "gruesome, grizzled, and gray, cramped and crooked, with hanging ears stretching, bleary eyes staring." In the drama, Wagner directs that the delivery of the Nibelungs is to be "The Jewish manner of speech—shrill hissing, buzzing, a wholly foreign and arbitrary distortion of our national idiom."

In "What is German?" Wagner had written...

> Adorable and beautiful is that foible of the German's which forbade his coining into personal profit the inwardness and purity of his feelings and beholdings, particularly in his public and political life: that a profit here, as well, was left unused, could be cognisable to none but a mind

> which misunderstood the very essence of the German nature. The German Princes supplied the misunderstanding, the Jews exploited it.[5]

This is the indirect approach to the notion that the Germans had sold their birthright; the princes' guilt in this affair is one of "misunderstanding," a culpable error, but the Jews, of course, bear the major portion of this guilt for "exploiting" the weakness of the princes. It was necessary for Wagner to reconcile the innate genius of the German Soul, its sense of ultimate value and greatness, with the rejection, by Germans, of so much of his work. Superficially, it may seem that there is a contradiction between Wagner's elevation of the German spirit, and his carping, ceaseless attack on the decline of public taste and the deterioration of music in his time. But, accepting the Wagnerian premises, there was no contradiction here at all. The taste and music which he attacked were not the true expressions of German character, he was to point out time and again; these were degenerative aspects which resulted from the influence of an "alien" aesthetic. The Germans were being misled; they had surrendered their birthright, and their senses had become so dulled by contact with bad art that there was a real danger of losing their instinct. "In art, there was the travesty of the German spirit held up before German folk as true likeness. Should the nation take the likeness for the true image one of the finest national dispositions in all the human race were done to death, perchance forever."[6] Translated into concrete terms, this meant that the Germans were being misled by Mendelssohn and his followers; the "true image" of the German spirit existed in Wagner, and unless the Germans turned

away from Mendelssohn and towards Wagner they were in danger of losing their destined genius.

Wagner speaks of the "influence which the Jews have gained upon our mental life—as displayed in the deflection and falsification of our highest culture tendencies."[7] Schumann's decline as a composer in his later years he attributes to "the influence which the alloy of Jewishness . . . has exerted on our art." Not only does Schumann sink into a passivity (Traegheit) as a result of contact with Jews, but "it becomes a burden to him to make a stand against the restless busy spirit of the Jews."[8]

The racial arrogation and exclusiveness of Wagner was literally boundless. The German genius for music was innately superior; in Germany any achievement by an "alien" was short of a fulfillment, since no outsider could possibly comprehend the German spirit; as we shall see, there was an actual resentment of any definite advance that had been made by "non-Germans" in Germany. However, when as a young man, it seemed that he conceivably might take his place in France, he evolved the theory that the greatest achievements in foreign countries were actually those of German composers.[9] Since he was still primarily concerned with instrumental music, he could afford to concede leadership in opera to another composer, but, in keeping with his national pride, it must perforce be a German composer. Thus, speaking of the newer French school of opera, he at once supports his theory of German influence outside Germany, and German pre-eminence in general, saying that "it really seems as though the German after all would rise to be its master, too."[10] To this Ellis subscribes the following amazing footnote: "Evidently referring to Meyerbeer, for the master does not appear to have

realised at this epoch that the composer of the '*Huguenots*' was not a German but a Jew."

Here Ellis follows the Wagnerian assumption that Jew and German are mutually exclusive terms. There is also the assumption that, had Wagner realised Meyerbeer was Jewish, he would not have credited him with mastery of anything. The final conclusion, then, is that such judgment is based not on the content of the music but on the descent of the composer. But there is also this possibility that is overlooked by Ellis: That Wagner's anti-Semitism had not yet reached the degree of crystallization which it was to achieve within a few years. For it is about this time (1840-43) that his remarks about not only Meyerbeer, but also Mendelssohn are so predominantly flattering. And surely, he could not but have been aware of Mendelssohn's descent. The only conclusion one may draw is that, while even at this time he had an anti-Semitic bias,[11] this bias had not yet oriented itself around music in general, and specific composers in particular.

The distinction should be made between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.[12] The first is concerned with an antagonism based on difference in religion; the latter involves an opposition based on a supposedly racial distinction and separation. With rare penetration, Wagner makes this very distinction in the first pages of "Judaism in Music." Persecution of the Jews during the time of the Inquisition was an anti-Judaic movement. With conversion, this basis of persecution was removed. On the other hand, the official attitude of the Third Reich towards Jewry represents the ultimate development of anti-Semitism.

Wagner combines both the anti-Judaic and the anti-Semitic. His anti-Judaism is, however, the result of an oblique approach. He resents Judaism not so much as

a religion in itself, but as the source of what he considers the corruption of Christianity. Thus he writes of "this more than thousand years confusion in which the Jewish God idea had plunged the whole of Christianity."[13] Also, as a vegetarian, he finds it a matter of suspicion that in Jewish legend the fall of man resulted from eating, not forbidden animal flesh, but the fruit of a tree, whereas the "Jewish God found Abel's fatted lamb more savoury than Cain's offering of the produce of the field."[14]

It is in its sheer racial aspect, however, that Wagner's antagonism towards the Jews becomes most corrosive, irrational and hate ridden. Of Munich he wrote on one occasion, "My king, that is a vile place . . . Munich is not German; its people are led or misled by Jesuits and Jews." In a letter to Liszt dating from about 1884 he wrote "Philistines, Jews, and Jesuits, . . . but never a human being."[15] "Judaism in Music" is full of such phrases as—"The disgusting peculiarity of the Jewish character." Of his later essays, those written deliberately to expound his racial anti-Semitism include "Modern," "Shall We Hope?," "Know Thyself," and "Herodom and Christendom."[16]

In order to emphasize the racial unity and persistence of Jewish traits, he points to the Jew as "the most outstanding instance of racial congruence ever offered by world history."[17] In this same essay he points to the hybridization of the Germans through intermarriage during the Thirty Years War with Walloons, Croats, Spaniards, French and Swedes. That a community as relatively stable as the German one could demonstrate such admixture in a brief period, while a wandering group dispersed over the earth for almost two thousand years remained "pure" did not apparently seem inconsistent. It was necessary to his theory from several viewpoints that

this racial "purity" of the Jews be proven. Only so could a consistent and unmitigatedly baleful influence be established. But, since there must have been some intermarriage, he must needs find an answer. "Let Jew or Jewess intermarry with the most distinct of races, a Jew will always come to birth." [18] This is of course the notion of innate and unchangeable characteristics transmitted in the germ plasm.

The Jew becomes the "plastic demon of man's degeneration," a rhetorical and meaningless phrase if one attempts to make some sense of it, but a powerful emotional stimulant for the release of hatred. Such expressions are not made to be understood; they pass, not from mind, but from emotion to emotion.

In his historical sketch "The Wibelungen" (1848-49) which became the basis for his adaptation of the Nibelungenlied, Wagner wrote of Siegfried that "the God became man, and as a mortal man he fills our soul with fresh and stronger sympathy; for as a sacrifice to his deed of blessing us, he wakes the moral motive of revenge; i. e., the longing to avenge his death upon his murderer and thus renew his deed."[19] Later he associates the figure of Siegfried with the native Stem-God, the teutonic deity, in whom "was found the striking likeness of Christ himself, the Son of God, that he died, was mourned and avenged . . . as we still avenge Christ on the Jews of today."[20] There is a complex configuration here. Siegfried becomes identifed with the German "Volk" as its symbol and also with Christ; Siegfried-Christ is slain, and there is a carry-over to the notion of the Jews as slayer of the Siegfried-Christ symbol. The guilty must be be punished; this is accomplished by the waking of the "moral motive of revenge."

If it were possible, the anti-Semitism of Cosima ex-

ceeded even that of her husband.[21] Thus, since Henry Irving's version of "Faust" was inferior in her eyes, it was obvious that Irving was Jewish; the Boer war was instigated by the "Jew Rhodes"; "all the ills of Europe were due mainly to Jews and Catholics, mainly, however, to Jews." Joachim being Jewish, she could never forgive Joachim's daughters their father, and professed to see in a portrait of one of them all sorts of evil qualities apparent to no other onlooker.[22]

When Wagner re-issued his essay on "Judaism in Music" in 1869, it was presumably in answer to a letter he had received asking the reason for the consistent hostility of the press, despite his acknowledged achievements. This hostility he explains as the manifestation of an organized campaign, a "systematic defamation and persecution . . . the inner machinery set in motion for the inverse Jewish persecution... commenced against myself and later carried into ever wider circles." The reason for the republication is that "an insight into the inevitable downfall of our musical affairs imposed on me the inner compulsion (Nothigung) to trace the cause of that fall."[23] Professor Bischoff's attacks on his *Zukunftsmusik,* the composer attributes to the critic's friendship for Hiller, and considers it a mere front for "organized persecution."[24] Hanslick was "found accessible to Jewish propaganda through his—albeit charmingly concealed—Judaic origin." Wagner speaks, also, of this "war of persecution."[25] "We were completely barred out from the greater German Press;" he writes. To whom belongs this Press? The answer is obvious: "This knowledge is patent to every one else, for who has not had the experience for himself."[26] In Russia, where he received a good reception, this was an evidence that the press was fair. He explains that though

> the persecution put upon me by the Jews had not as yet been able to estrange the public from me . . . the persecution at all events is calculated, if not to bar my way to the public, yet to make it so difficult that on this side too, at last, the success of the enemy's effort may very well promise to become complete.[27]

He speaks of a "fully organized opposition" that serves as a "persistent hindrance" of any of his enterprises that might tend to influence the state of musical and theatrical art. [28] "The Union of German Musicians" organized by Franz Brendel, historian and editor, "failed because it came into competition with the mightiest organization of our time, with Judaism itself," wrote Wagner.

Concerning the hissing of Tannhauser in Paris in 1861, Wagner once angrily declared, "It was not the French but the German Jews."[30] He explained the following which he had among the Jewish music lovers by declaring that they appreciated him as connoisseurs or appraisers, having as merchants and trades-people acquired the instinct for value.[31]

On April 5, 1885, he wrote to Otto Wesendonck concerning the music critics of the British Press,

> I do not even care to soil my hands by taking such a paper up; whoever understands anything and really has an independent opinion never mingles with this gang of Jews.

Discussing this letter, Ellis infers that in this instance Wagner's opinion might have been influenced by Ferdinand Praeger, a German-English musician. "It is to be regretted," writes Ellis, "that he (Praeger) did not confess to Wagner his earlier association with the "gang," *which I don't believe embraced a single Hebrew.*"[32]

That Wagner had musical opponents among the Jews,

particularly those who were adherents or followers of Mendelssohn or Meyerbeer, is self-evident. But there was never any concerted or organized campaign: if anything, the numbers of Jewish followers and supporters in the theatrical audiences of the day possibly far outnumbered those who were alienated by Wagner's music or philosophy.[33] The letter to Wesendonck is symptomatic. Its refutation by Ellis is doubly significant since Ellis, ardent Wagnerite that he was, would have been the first to sustain the composer had there been any grounds for believing the antagonism of the British Press to be Jewish-inspired. Furthermore, the testimony of Ellis is, in this instance, most valuable, since he had first-hand contact with the writers and critics of the time.

Associated with Wagner in the preparation and performances of his opera were numerous Jewish musicians, among them the conductor Herman Levi, the singers Heinrich Porges and Lilli Lehman, and the impresario, Angelo Neumann. There was also Josef Rubinstein,[34] a pianist, who became so enthused about Wagner's work that he became a member of the household at Wahnfried. In a letter to Neumann (January, 1881) the composer wrote, "You have done great things for me." In another letter, June 13, 1882, Wagner wrote, "If anything on this earth would astonish me it would be you. Heavens, what restless energy, what faith, what courage." It was Neumann who worked indefatigably to popularize the Wagner operas, launching among other projects, the first performance of the Ring outside of Bayreuth. As Ernest Newman wrote, "Wagner and his heirs were indebted to Angelo Neumann for much more than a handsome income."[35] Yet, as we shall see, his attitude towards Neumann was not really one of gratitude, but rather one of condescension; granting Neumann's

efforts, these stemmed, Wagner felt, not from a true instinct for culture (for this was inherently impossible) but from a connoisseur's appreciation for the valuable.

However, such letters and Wagner's association with Jewish colleagues have led many to the conclusion that, anti-Semitic though he might have been in theory, in practice he was something else again, his anti-Semitism being a characteristic inconsistency, an excusable aberration of genius. Furthermore, it may be asked, did not Wagner have Levi (even, according to some, *insist* on Levi) as the conductor of the first performance of Parsifal at Bayreuth in 1882?

The facts are quite otherwise.

> With a combination of malice and ill breeding, which people of other nationalities find it hard to understand, he lost no opportunity year in and year out of fretting the life out of his Jewish friends and collaborators about their Judaism.[86]

It might seem not only contradictory, but even a deceitful imposition that the composer would utilise such individuals at the same moment that directly and indirectly he was maligning them with acrimonious malice. But Wagner never had any scruples of morals or taste in the use of any individuals who might serve his purpose or further his designs. As for his Jewish associates, he could even rationalize their devotion to his work as an opportunity and means for partial redemption for the sin of their descent.

The case of Levi is particularly interesting. Wagner valued his competence and devotion, but the fact that Levi was Jewish was a constant source of irritation to him. At one time when Levi was at Wahnfried the composer attempted to persuade him to be baptized. Levi,

the son of a Rabbi, rejected the suggestion. Cosima's attitude toward the conductor was that

> Though he could not get away from his extraction, and the numerous failings of his race showed themselves markedly in him, yet he distinguished himself by his great fidelity to Bayreuth, and I confess that the Jewish element in him often amused me more than it irritated me, because it showed itself with such diverting openness.

Following Wagner's death, there was little restraint in the contempt and rudeness with which the composer's family behaved toward Levi. On the occasion of a protest by Weingartner against such treatment of the devoted conductor, Cosima heard him "out quietly, and then replied that no bond between Aryan and Semitic blood was possible."

For many years it was thought that Levi's conducting of Parsifal was at the actual behest of Wagner, or at least not contrary to his wishes. Wagner's letter of September 19, 1881, addressed to King Ludwig would seem, on the face of it, to confirm this opinion:

> Notwithstanding that many amazing complaints reach me as to this most Christian of works being conducted by a Jewish Kapellmeister and that Levi himself is embarrassed and perplexed by it all, I hold firmly to this one fact, that my gracious King has generously and magnanimously granted me his orchestra and chorus as the only effective way of achieving an exceptional production of an unusual work, and consequently I accept gracefully the head of this musical organization without asking whether this man is a Jew, this other a Christian.

Actually, this letter was but Wagner's attempt to put as graceful a face as possible on a situation that he had

previously attempted to alter. For he had approached the Munich Intendanz, informing them that he would rather not have Levi, and requesting that he be allowed to choose a conductor of his own choice for Parsifal. But he was told that without the Munich Kapellmeister he could not have the Munich orchestra.[37] Wagner accepted this decision as graciously as he could and wrote the letter of September 19. In reply to this, the King answered him in a letter of the 11th of October:

> I am glad, dear Friend, that in connection with the production of your great and holy work, you make no distinction between Christian and Jew. There is nothing so nauseous, so unedifying as disputes of this sort; at bottom all men are brothers whatever their confessional differences.

This was too much for Wagner. The pent-up resentment at the rejection of his request by the Munich Intendanz, and the reaction from the unnatural strain of tolerance revealed in his first letter to the King formed an explosive mixture. In as rancorous and malevolent an expression as had ever come from his pen he excoriates those very Jews who had done him service. He prides himself, he writes, on the great patience he had to exercise in dealing with these. Neumann, he concedes, "regards it as his mission to force the musical world to recognize me." But this impulse, Wagner writes, stems not from a folk-empathy but derives from the Jewish commercial instinct for what is genuine and true. The King can afford to be tolerant; for him, Jews are only a conception; "for us, they are an experience." Despite his own magnanimity in attemping to deal in a compassionate way with several of them, it is his conviction, writes the composer, that the Jewish race is the

> born enemy of pure humanity and everything that is noble in it. It is certain that we Germans will go under before them, and perhaps I am the last German who knew how to stand up as an art-loving man against the Judaism that is already getting control of everything.

It might seem that Wagner would have welcomed the implementation or the realization of his ideas and their implication in overt action. Repudiation, expulsion, and even sterner means had been darkly hinted at and encouraged in his writings. But the answer, from which Wagner shrinks, the answer which is the only logical conclusion on the basis of his assumed premise was given by Ludwig Schemann in 1928: "The persecution of the Jews means the repudiation of Jewish Supremacy."[88]

In 1880 an anti-Semitic petition to the Reichstag was drawn up by Dr. Bernhard Forster (later the husband of Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth). This Wagner refused to sign—not out of any avowed humanitarian impulse, but, as he explained, after his unfortunate experience with the antivivisection petition he did not wish to be involved in any further public project concerned with petitions. More possibly the actual reason was that he wished to preserve at least some outward decorum—for associated with him at this time were such well known figures as Levi, Neumann, and Rubinstein.

In his 1869 addition to the original version of *Judaism in Music,* he suggested that under the leadership of certain "exceptions" the Jews might be able to cast aside their racial heritage and stigma and become one with the Germans. The alternative is simply the uprooting, expulsion, and if need be the destruction of this people. The closing sentence of *Judaism in Music* suggests only one solution—"der Untergang." Ellis translates this as

a "going under." It could also and more accurately be translated as "total destruction," or "annihilation."

But the possibility of assimilation becomes less and less possible and feasible for him. It becomes evident, as his notion of "pure blood" and race-difference crystallized and took form under the influence of Gobineau, that the possibility of assimilation is merely offered as a pretext, to be taken in the same sense as his ingenuous statements that he bears no personal enmity or ill will towards Jews.[39]

Wagner's oft expressed anger with the German people is at bottom a rationalized impatience with their indifference to his works and his genius. This resentment of the composer is cloaked in a variety of emotions ranging from bitterness to racial self-pity, wherein he attacks the German's indifference to, or downright ignorance of their responsibility to humanity as the sanctuary and repository of the most noble expression of the human spirit. But how could it be explained that these people with the innate and intuitive knowledge of the true and the beautiful, failed nevertheless to appreciate and recognize the true and the beautiful when embodied in actual creative works—or to come directly to the point—how was it they failed to appreciate *his* works? In section III of "German Art and German Poetry"[40] he answers the question: The receptivity of a nation to genius is lessened in times of lethargy. The Germans are not receptive because of this lethargy. But how could the spiritual quality of the Volk be so dulled, so unrecognizing? The answer as might have been anticipated is—the Jews. These have usurped the leadership in commerce and in the control of the arts—not of the arts themselves, for, in Wagner's mind, true creation could never be reconciled with Jewish descent. If their music is fast, it is restless; if slow, it is characterized by *Traegheit,* a favorite expression of Wagner's

and translated by Ellis, in one instance as "Oriental sloth." There is proof of this lethargy, Wagner emphasizes, in the fact that the great treasures of German art have been discovered not by Germans but by "foreigners."[41] Thus, while not actually in a condition of decay, Germans, by yielding their rightful place and functions to the "intruders," are in a state of passivity.

It is apparent from his early writings of the 1840 Parisian period that, while he had acquired and manifested a characteristic pride in music as a German expression, the anti-Semitic, anti-Meyerbeer, anti-Mendelssohn attitudes had not yet become either focused or crystallized. By 1843, however, a marked change is noticeable. What occasioned this change and why did it appear at this time?

In the physical sciences a distinction is made between a mixture and a compound, the former involving the mere juxtaposition of non-interactive materials, the latter a mutually affective interaction of separate materials which results in a new combination. The separate elements which had been potential or dormant side by side in the consciousness of Wagner are suddenly fused into a new compound after 1843, and there crystallized not only the Gesammtkunst theory, but also, associated with it, the racial theory in both its affirmative and negative aspects. These elements, which were to form this new compound, were:

(a) The latent anti-Semitism of Wagner.
(b) The anti-Semitic influence of German writers, and their cultural arrogance.
(c) The anti-Meyerbeer stand associated with Wagner's frustration.

(d) The anti-Mendelssohn stand associated with Wagner's frustration.
(e) The Gesammtkunst theory and its corollary notion of the exhaustion of pure instrumental music.
(f) An over-emphasis of anti-Semitism in order to confute any attempt to show the possible influence of Geyer's paternity in his music.

The personal frustrations and disappointments of Wagner's early life were important factors in the development of his anti-Semitism. Before him was the established reputation of Mendelssohn; contemporary with him was the phenomenal successful career of Meyerbeer. His ego and his vanity, perhaps the most exaggerated example of these qualities in the history of the arts, had suffered doubly in association with Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer. In relationships with both composers he had been placed in the position of one who had sought assistance and recognition. This he could never forgive them, even apart from the fact that neither composer was particularly helpful, though Meyerbeer did go through certain motions. Combined with and reciprocally affected by these personal emotions were his philosophical, philological, nationalistic, and social convictions. To disregard these convictions and attribute his anti-Semitism to merely personal envy and malice is short-sighted; on the other hand, to neglect the personal element in his attitude is equally wrong.

The feeling of persecution was not always associated with Jews. As Ernest Newman wrote of his state of mind in 1869 (the year of the re-issue of *Judaism in Music*) "his own view was that a world incurably evil had entered into a conspiracy against the one truly righteous man in it."[49]

The extent and intensity of Wagner's anti-Semitism were increased by a desire to anticipate and nullify any suspicion of a Jewish "racial" content in his own music. This desire would naturally follow from the belief, already widespread during his own lifetime, that Ludwig Geyer was his real father, and that Geyer was at least partially of Jewish descent. That Wagner did "protest too loudly" is felt by Richard Eichenauer, the German music historian, who cites the composer's consciousness of and constant insistence on race differences as "proof" of his own racial mixture.

The anti-Semitism of Wagner was very closely bound up with an anti-Christian, and more specifically an anti-Catholic animus. Ultimately these combine with a rejection of and opposition to liberal and democratic concepts. This was an inevitable correlate of his racial thinking, for democracy is predicated on the theory of the equality of opportunity, and equal inherent rights and privileges. Opposed to this is the notion of the racialist who insists on a hierarchy of inherent values, on a series of graduated rights and privileges determined by this hierarchy resulting from inherent traits. "Democracy in Germany," Wagner wrote, "is purely a translated theory. It exists merely in the 'press'; what this German press is one must find out for oneself." He sums up a total aversion to democracy by associating its origins with those 'alien' and therefore anti-German characteristics which he had so often and so bitingly attacked, scornfully mocking "this translated Franco-Judaic-German democracy."[48]

The Wagnerian notion of the Jew as culturally alien led to the concept of the Jew as nationally alien. The non-national was easily converted into the anti-national, the anti-national into an "enemy of the state." And what could be more self-evident than an official opposition to

what was anti-national? Thus, as we shall see, anti-Semitism was to become a definite national policy, rationalized on the basis of "superior" and "inferior" races.

Few Germans had done as much as Wagner to ready the Teutonic mind for this attitude, and none had done more.

1—The question of Wagner's descent has no particular bearing on this study. The controversy as to whether Geyer was actually Wagner's father and, if so, whether or not Geyer was Jewish is altogether irrelevant. The tragic irony of Wagner's anti-Semitism would be emphasized in the event Geyer could definitely be established as being both the true father of Wagner and of Jewish descent. On the basis of supposedly "racial" factors in Wagner's music, Lazare Saminsky and Sir Charles V. Stanford are convinced of both Geyer's paternity and Jewish descent, while Richard Eichenauer, the German music historian, inferentially arrives at the same conclusion. While these "racial" factors are without validity, a more solid basis for accepting the possibility of Geyer's paternity has been established. (See Appendix I. p. 236.) Also see *Wagner* by Wm. Wallace, Harper & Bros., (New York and London, 1925), Appendix B, "The Paternity of Wagner," pp. 279-287.

2—Ellis, W. A., *Life of Wagner*, Vol. IV, p. 128.

3—Schemann, Ludwig, *Meine Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner*, Stuttgart, Fr. Frommans Verlag (1902) p. 46.

4—Prose Works, Vol. VI, p. 33.

5—Prose Works, Vol. IV, p. 158.

6—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. IV, p. 159.

7—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 121.

8—*Ibid.*, p. 117.

9—*Ibid.*, *"On German Music."* Vol. VII, (1840).

10—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

11—Particularly on a religious basis.

12—An interesting case of this distinction, though tacitly made, may be observed in Guido M. Gatti's article on *Ernest Bloch*, Musical Quarterly, January. 1921.

13—Prose Works, "What Boots This Knowledge?" p. 256 (Bayreuther Blätter, Dec. 1880).

14—Prose Works, "Religion and Art," Vol. VI, pp. 241-242.

15—Ellis, W. A., "Richard Wagner." Vol. IV, p. 228.

16—All of these are included in Vol. VI, of the Prose Works.

17—Prose Works, *Know Thyself*, Vol. VII, p. 270.

18—*Ibid.*, p. 271.

19—Prose Works, the *Wibelungen*, Vol. VII, p. 275.

20—*Ibid.*, p. 287.

21—Cosima herself was one quarter Jewish, her mother being the Countess Marie d'Agoult, her grandmother, the daughter of the Frankfort banker, Simon Moritz Bethmann.

22—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 287.

23—Prose Works, "Judaism in Music," Vol. III, p. 103.

24—*Ibid.*, p. 108.
25—*Ibid.*, p. 107.
26—*Ibid.*, p. 109.
27—*Ibid.*, p. 110.
28—*Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.
29—*Ibid.*, p. 118.
30—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 624.
31—Newman, E., *Ibid.*, p. 638.
32—Ellis, A., *Richard Wagner*, Vol. V, p. 205.
33—Prose Works, Vol. III, Introduction by W. A. Ellis, p. x.
34—No relation to Anton. Author of the Wagner-inspired scurrilous attack on Schumann. His despondency over Wagner's death is supposed to have driven him to suicide.
35—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 638.
36—*Ibid.*, p. 368.
37—This evidence is on the authority of Alexander Ritter, husband of Wagner's niece, Franziska, who so informed Julius Kniese. "Der Kampft zweier Welten um das Bayreuther Erbe: Julius Knieses Tagebuchblätter aus dem Jahre 1883, herausgegeben von Julie Kniese." (Leipzig, 1931), p. 17.
38—Quoted in Aurel Kolnai, *War Against the West.*
39—The pretext given for originally publishing *Judaism in Music* under a pseudonym is that he did not wish to be accused of personal envy or malice.
40—Prose Works, Vol. VI.
41—Prose Works, Vol. IV. "German Art and German Policy," p. 58. The obvious reference is to Mendelssohn's "rediscovery of Bach."
42—Newman, Ernst, *op. cit., Vol.* IV, p. 181.
43—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. VI, p. 166.

what was anti-national? Thus, as we shall see, anti-Semitism was to become a definite national policy, rationalized on the basis of "superior" and "inferior" races.

Few Germans had done as much as Wagner to ready the Teutonic mind for this attitude, and none had done more.

1—The question of Wagner's descent has no particular bearing on this study. The controversy as to whether Geyer was actually Wagner's father and, if so, whether or not Geyer was Jewish is altogether irrelevant. The tragic irony of Wagner's anti-Semitism would be emphasized in the event Geyer could definitely be established as being both the true father of Wagner and of Jewish descent. On the basis of supposedly "racial" factors in Wagner's music, Lazare Saminsky and Sir Charles V. Stanford are convinced of both Geyer's paternity and Jewish descent, while Richard Eichenauer, the German music historian, inferentially arrives at the same conclusion. While these "racial" factors are without validity, a more solid basis for accepting the possibility of Geyer's paternity has been established. (See Appendix I. p. 286.) Also see *Wagner* by Wm. Wallace, Harper & Bros., (New York and London, 1925), Appendix B, "The Paternity of Wagner," pp. 279-287.

2—Ellis, W. A., *Life of Wagner*, Vol. IV, p. 128.

3—Schemann, Ludwig, *Meine Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner*, Stuttgart, Fr. Frommans Verlag (1902) p. 46.

4—Prose Works, Vol. VI, p. 33.

5—Prose Works, Vol. IV, p. 158.

6—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. IV, p. 159.

7—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 121.

8—*Ibid.*, p. 117.

9—*Ibid.*, *"On German Music."* Vol. VII, (1840).

10—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

11—Particularly on a religious basis.

12—An interesting case of this distinction, though tacitly made, may be observed in Guido M. Gatti's article on *Ernest Bloch*, Musical Quarterly, January. 1921.

13—Prose Works, "What Boots This Knowledge?" p. 256 (Bayreuther Blätter, Dec. 1880).

14—Prose Works, "Religion and Art," Vol. VI, pp. 241-242.

15—Ellis, W. A., "Richard Wagner." Vol. IV, p. 228.

16—All of these are included in Vol. VI, of the Prose Works.

17—Prose Works, *Know Thyself*, Vol. VII, p. 270.

18—*Ibid.*, p. 271.

19—Prose Works, the *Wibelungen*, Vol. VII, p. 275.

20—*Ibid.*, p. 287.

21—Cosima herself was one quarter Jewish, her mother being the Countess Marie d'Agoult, her grandmother, the daughter of the Frankfort banker, Simon Moritz Bethmann.

22—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 287.

23—Prose Works, "Judaism in Music," Vol. III, p. 103.

24—*Ibid.*, p. 108.
25—*Ibid.*, p. 107.
26—*Ibid.*, p. 109.
27—*Ibid.*, p. 110.
28—*Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.
29—*Ibid.*, p. 118.
30—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 624.
31—Newman, E., *Ibid.*, p. 638.
32—Ellis, A., *Richard Wagner*, Vol. V, p. 205.
33—Prose Works, Vol. III, Introduction by W. A. Ellis, p. x.
34—No relation to Anton. Author of the Wagner-inspired scurrilous attack on Schumann. His despondency over Wagner's death is supposed to have driven him to suicide.
35—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 638.
36—*Ibid.*, p. 368.
37—This evidence is on the authority of Alexander Ritter, husband of Wagner's niece, Franziska, who so informed Julius Kniese. "Der Kampft zweier Welten um das Bayreuther Erbe: Julius Knieses Tagebuchblätter aus dem Jahre 1883, herausgegeben von Julie Kniese." (Leipzig, 1931), p. 17.
38—Quoted in Aurel Kolnai, *War Against the West.*
39—The pretext given for originally publishing *Judaism in Music* under a pseudonym is that he did not wish to be accused of personal envy or malice.
40—Prose Works, Vol. VI.
41—Prose Works, Vol. IV. "German Art and German Policy," p. 58. The obvious reference is to Mendelssohn's "rediscovery of Bach."
42—Newman, Ernst, *op. cit., Vol.* IV, p. 181.
43—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. VI, p. 166.

CHAPTER IV

WAGNER AND CHRISTIANITY

ON the surface, the attitude of Wagner toward Christianity may seem to be contradictory and full of paradoxes. To term Wagner anti-Christian is to disregard the affirmative references to Christianity which appear throughout his works; yet, these references are neither as numerous nor as intense as his anti-Christian utterances. On the other hand, it may seem that whatever his previous opinions, "Parsifal," representing a final stage in his religious thinking cancels out, or at least corrects or modifies his previous viewpoints.[1] Certainly Nietzsche considered "Parsifal" a renegade achievement, a betrayal of a shared distrust and opposition. Yet, even Nietzsche did not recognize the tribal roots in "Parsifal;" had he done so, the edge of his bitterness and disappointment might have been much less keen.

That "Parsifal" should not be taken to indicate a reversal of Wagner's previous stand on religion is indicated by two facts. As late as the writing of *Herodom and Christendom* in 1880, the anti-Christian bias is very marked. Furthermore, had there been a truly marked conversion in his later life, he would not have hesitated to expurgate or modify the anti-Christian references in his issues of the *Collected Writings,* just as he omitted or modified statements in which there had been some change or attitude since the first publication.[2] That his

relationship, at least with institutional Christianity, was never close, even at the very end of his life is evidenced by the resentment his family felt at the conventionally religious remarks of the clergyman who officiated at his funeral services.[3]

The anti-Christian animus of Wagner is most revealing for it is here that his racial thinking manifests itself so clearly. The fact that his anti-Christian utterances are the more numerous and intense is of some significance in itself; the important consideration, however, is that his racial thinking which becomes so explicit here, is of the form and content which have so strongly influenced and directed subsequent thought and action.

Like Nietzsche, Wagner assumes a disjunction between the being and intent of Christ on the one hand, and the institutionalization of Christianity on the other: Nietzsche had written that "the last Christian died on the cross." If one bears this fact in mind, a large part of the apparent contradiction in the composer's expressions is resolved, for he can be pro-Christian in references to the Founder proper and anti-Christian in regard to the institutionalization of His tenets. Wagner, however, not only attempts to separate Christ from the subsequent Church, but also from his antecedent roots.

Wagner's anti-Christian attitude stems from or is associated with the following ideas and emotions:

(a) The belief that in its essence, Christianity conflicts with the Volk-instinct and Kultur content of Germandom.
(b) The resentment against the Judaic roots of Christianity.
(c) The resentment against Catholicism.

As for *Parsifal,* we shall see that, far from being a con-

sistent Christian expression it is actually rooted in Paganism, and is in truth *the fifth opera of the Ring.*

One of the ties that most closely bound Nietzsche and Wagner was their deep-seated opposition to Christianity. "I have treated the implantation of a deeply anti-German myth — Christianity — into the German heart as the German disaster proper," wrote Nietzsche. Thus, tersely, the philosopher had expressed one of the most important of the ideas which was to bind these two personalities together for so many years.

In the *Art Work of the Future,* Wagner had written of "the great instinctive errors of the people which found their earliest utterance in religion."[4] "Christianity" he wrote elsewhere, "had choked the organic impulse of the Volk's artistic life, its natural force of procreation."[5] A lengthy passage in *Art and Revolution* details the conflict between Volk and this alien religion, and particularly its Catholic embodiment:

> Hypocrisy is the salient feature, the peculiar characteristic of every century of our Christian era, right down to our own day, and indeed this vice has always stalked abroad with more crying shamelessness in direct proportion as mankind, in spite of Christendom, has refreshed its vigor from its own unquenchable and inner well-spring and ripened towards the fulfillment of its purpose . . . Into the ebbing veins of the Roman world there poured the healthy blood of the fresh Germanic nations. Despite the adoption of Christianity, a ceaseless thirst of doing, a delight in bold adventure and unbounded self-reliance remained the native elements of the new masters of the world. But as in the whole history of the Middle Ages, always we light upon one prominent factor, the warfare between the worldly might, and the despotism of the Roman Church, so, when this new world sought for a form of utterance, it could only find it in opposition to, and strife against the spirit of Christendom. The Art of Christian Eu-

> rope could never proclaim itself like that of ancient Greece, and the expression of a world attuned to harmony; for reason that its inmost being was incurably and irreconcilably split up between the force of conscience and the instinct of life, between the ideal and reality."[6]

We have noted the attraction which under the influence of Schopenhauer, the Brahmin doctrine had for Wagner. While he objected to the "oriental" roots of Christianity as being inconsistent with the culture of Western Europe which was grafted onto these roots, he finds no objection to the orientalism of Buddhism. More than this, as early as 1848, almost a decade before he had made the acquaintance of Schopenhauer, he expressed a belief in the philosophy and theology of the East as being not only pre-, but super-Christian. It is not, then, the oriental sources of Christianity in a geographic sense to which he takes objection, but its origins in Judaism.

In a letter to Liszt, written June 7, 1855, he speaks of "the naive Christian saints imbued with Jewish dogma . . ." and of the

> Brahmin doctrine, more particularly in its crowning transfigurement by Buddhism . . . How sublime and solely satisfying is this doctrine as against the Christian-Jewish dogma. The reason that Christianity has such a contradictory appearance to us is simply that we know it only in its blend with and distortion by close-hearted Judaism; whereas present day research has conclusively shown that pure and unadulterated Christianity is nothing more or less than a branch of that venerable Buddhism which found its ways to the shore of the Mediterranean after Alexander's Indian expedition.

Characteristically, the evidence of the "present-day research" to which he refers and its "conclusiveness" are taken completely for granted, simply because these are corroborated as one of Wagner's tenets. That such research was undertaken, and such conclusions established is a significant indication that the attempts by Wagner to separate Christianity from its Judaic roots were associated with similar trends established before and during his lifetime. It is very possible that in this instance he might have been influenced by Schleiermacher.

What is the great distinguishing factor which Wagner professes to find in "unadulterated Christianity"? The same letter provides the answer:

> In the earliest Christianity we can still see plain traces of complete denial of the will to life, and a longing for the foundering of the world, i.e., for the cessation of existence.

The negation of the will to live, which to Schopenhauer becomes the highest wisdom, is, then, for Wagner the apotheosis of religious experience, and it is this he professes to discover in an "earliest Christianity." But there is a dilemma here which demands solution. How is it that the "earliest Christianity" which was closest chronologically to its historic origins is yet free from the corruption of those apparent origins, while later Christianity, chronologically, geographically, and culturally more and more removed from the traditional Judaic sources, yet is subject to "corruption" by those associations? Though the problem is never stated by Wagner in precisely this manner, there is a tacit awareness of the existence of this dilemma.

The solution did not come to him all at once. In *Religion and Art* he had written, "For us it is sufficient to derive the ruin of the Christian religion from its drawing

upon Judaism for the elaboration of its dogma."[27] He speaks of the peculiar character of the English nation which to experts seems more propounded in the Old Testament than the New.

In *Know Thyself*[8] he complains that the struggle against the Jews is crippled by the adherence to the Old Testament. These are various facets of the first phase of the solution: not the figure of Christ and not his basic dogmas, but the elaboration of these dogmas drawing on Old Testament traditions constitutes the essential evil of Christianity. The pattern to this point is that Germandom has been corrupted by Christianity, which in turn had been corrupted by its Judaic associations.

The thought of Christ's origins in Judaism and the derivation of his mission from the prophetic writings of the Old Testament becomes more and more intolerable: "That the God of our Saviour should have been identified with the Tribal God of Israel is one of the most terrible confusions in World History."[9] This is the beginning of the wedge which is to separate Christianity from Judaism: the separation of the Father of the Son from the Jehovah concept. This separation becomes for him more and more necessary: "Is it so utterly impossible to Theology to take the great step"[10] (of separating Judaism from Christianity)? He feels compelled to attain a true picture of the real Christ, with no Jewish additions or substractions, a concept differing from the traditional one. He is on the brink of that hint which was to be so fully exploited by his son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain. The notion of the real Christ without Jewish additions or subtractions does not in itself preclude a Christ of Judaic origin. But that concept is the inevitable conclusion, the inevitable destination of the line of thought pursued to this point. The wish is father

of the thought, and the ultimate separation is accomplished when he writes that "it is more than doubtful if Jesus himself was of Jewish extraction."[11]

This is the second part of the solution of the dilemma: Christ was not Jewish, hence the "earliest Christianity" was uncontaminated by Jewish theology. But later, denominational Christianity, drawing upon Old Testament tradition was adversely affected. Thus is the dilemma resolved.

This separation, final though it may seem is but the beginning of a further development. The composer-thinker who found the figure and essential tenets of Jesus inconsistent with Judaic origins despite every theological and historical evidence of the reality of those origins, reveals no compunction in grafting the concept of an Almighty on the tribal German God and his incarnation in the flesh on the figure of a tribal hero, Siegfried. These amalgamations he had found entirely reasonable, and he can speak, in these connections, of complete identification. The vague shadows of things to come begin to take shape; like a Wagnerian leitmotif, one of whose functions the composer had declared to be the establishing of "forebodings and premonitions," this idea of a Christian plus a tribal concept is to assume greater and greater importance. The culmination was to come in the complete rejection of Christianity, and the revival of a Pagan theology. All these things are forecast in Wagner's approach to Christianity, some are explicit in his own words, and because a generation of Germans saw his words, his hopes, and his tenets take explicit form, the composer in retrospect became for that generation a prophetic visionary in whose stirring music they could indulge in a mystic ablution of national, aesthetic, and racial intoxication. The German historian, Karl Grunsky, emphasizes this aspect of Wagner's influence

in terming him a "religious thinker, not to say discoverer, far on the road to the future."[12]

Almost as virulent as his anti-Semitism was the anti-Catholic prejudice of Wagner. And because these two streams of hatred coursed in parallel fashion through his thoughts, they occasionally merged and he could then write of the "Semitic-Latin Church."[13] He constantly refers to "the ethical corruption of the Roman Curia with its demoralizing influence on the Clergy"[14] and "the hideous abuses of the Roman Curia so wounding to the German religious feeling."[15] As for the religious pilgrimages, "the Cavalcades to Rome were hateful to the German, who could be made at most to take kindly to them as predatory marches."[16] Of the Catholics, he frequently singles out the Jesuits for his particular scorn. In Cosima's diary, she records Wagner's remark that "Klingsor does not believe in the good, in which respect he is the analogue of the Jesuits."

That the composer's attacks on Rome as well as the concept of an autonomous Kultur, are not only reserved for his polemical writings is emphasized if we consider the closing verse of *Die Meistersinger*:

> Honor your German masters,
> Thus cherish ye great spirits;
> And treasure ye their works,
> Though doom'd to dust
> The Holy German realm,
> For us remains
> Our Holy German Art![17]

Wagner always resented the supra-national character of Catholicism. That the latter could involve Germans in activities that were neither nationally nor racially functional seemed to Wagner to be a tendency counter to the

best interest of the Germans. Thus he dates the true greatness of Germany from the time of its emancipation from participation in the Holy Roman Empire. This parochial jealousy of extra-national demands extends not only to political factors; it is one of the objections, ultimately, to a religion that was predicated on the spiritual equality of its members. The desire and achievements for a culture that was German and for the Germans, was paralleled by at least the striving for a religion that should be unique in its German-ness, and that would not, therefore, be accessible to the rest of humanity—Wagner deeply resented the surrender of the German "myth" to this religion that did not originate among the Germans. But since it had been adopted, he applied on a religious plane the same manner of thinking that underlay his pride in German cultural achievements. Thus, in his essay on *Beethoven*[18] he indicates the superficial indebtedness of German cultures to other European cultures, but points to the Germans as having most profoundly understood and preserved for humanity these very borrowings "always giving voice therein to our own innermost spirit."

It is this desire to find or develop a distinctive and uniquely *German* quality that leads him to graft Wotan on Jehovah and Siegfried on Christ. The tribal beliefs and myths were still alive for Wagner, and he wrote that

> There was no need for those ur-old notions to be sacrificed in toto on the conversion to Christianity. . . The abstract highest God of the Germans, Wotan, did not really need to yield place to the God of the Christians; rather could he be completely identified with him. . . Christianity has been unable in our day to extirpate the elementary local native Gods.[19]

The association of Siegfried with Christ is made mani-

fest time and time again. In the *Nibelungen Myth,* his first sketch for the drama, written in 1848, he refers to Siegfried as he who takes the guilt of the Gods upon himself to atone for their sins,[20] as "the God became man."[21] That the parallelism is not merely one of coincidence, but is actually a case of identity in Wagner's mind, is irrefutably established in "The Wibelungen."[22]

The re-orientation towards Christian theology involving a conception of God-Wotan, Christ-Siegfried, is combined with Nibelungen-myth shadows to give birth to a reconstruction of the Parsifal legend. Cosima's diaries reveal the composer's conscious awareness of what she terms the "esoteric connecting links between Parsifal and the Ring." But thirty years earlier, the composer in prophetic forecast had already forged those links and established the tangible correlates of the two myths. In the summer of 1848 the whole pattern is already explicit:

> In truth, the legend of the Holy Grail, significantly enough, makes its entry on the world at the very time when the Kaiserhood attained its more ideal direction, and the Nibelungen's Hoard accordingly was losing more and more in spiritual worth to yield to a higher spiritual content. The spiritual ascension of the Hoard into the Grail as accomplished in the German conscience, and the Grail, at least in the meaning lent it by German poets, must rank as the real representation or follower of the Nibelungen-Hoard.
>
> It is of the first importance that its keeper was priest and king alike, that is, a Master (Oberhaupt) of all Spiritual Knighthood, such as was introduced from the orient in the twelfth century. So this Master was in truth, none other than the Kaiser, from whom all Chivalry proceeded; and thus, the real and ideal world supremacy, the union of the highest kinghood and the priesthood seemed completely attained

> in the Kaiser... The occidental world, unsatisfied within, reached out past Rome and Pope, to find its place of healing in the tomb of the Redeemer at Jerusalem... as unsatisfied even there, it cast its yearning gaze half spiritual, half physical, still farther toward the East to find the primal shrine of manhood—so the Grail was said to have withdrawn from out the ribald West to the pure chaste reachless birth-land of all nations.[23]

"Parsifal" then becomes, in truth, the fifth opera of the "Ring": — "the spiritual ascension of the Hoard into the Grail" is analogous in its fusion of Teutonic myth and Christian legend to the Wotan-God, Siegfried-Christ amalgam, and a fourth element is added in identifying the Master of all spiritual Knighthood, Titurel and his successor, Amfortas, with the medieval Kaiser-concept. Gurnemanz refers to Amfortas, as "The sovereign of the staunchest race" (des siegreichsten Geschlechtes Herr).

While Wagner's emotional conception of Christ was an altogether personal-mystic one, separate from creed, dogma, or denomination, it nevertheless had a decided national-racial orientation. His anti-Semitism drove the composer to use any and every pretext for the dissociation of Jesus from his Judaic sources; his opposition to Catholicism in particular, and institutional Christianity in general, prompted an unceasing and unrelenting campaign against what he considered the spiritual inroads of that belief. Yet, since Christianity was a fact in German life, and could not be eradicated, he attempted to fuse its identities with the Gods of Teutonic legend, to recast the creed, not as a universal religion, but as a belief to be understood only "Germanly", just as the legends of "Parsifal" and "Tristan," though not originally German, only become significant and immortal when interpreted "Germanly."

This ethnocentric desire for racial and cultural exclusiveness, predicated on an immutable, even necessary, separation and disjunction of "races" was destined to be carried to an ultimate conclusion: God was to become a Deutscher Gott, and Christianity was converted into a "Deutscher Religion."[24] Finally this cultural-religious arrogation reaches its inevitable end — the elimination of the very figure of the Saviour as totally unnecessary and superfluous: "man of a German belief is aware of his affinity to God."[25]

Within but two generations, this development was to be accomplished.

It is another of those sometimes ironic, more often tragic paradoxes that what was approached as a peculiarly and particularly German-national problem was to have an extension in world culture and politics, and was to become part of a movement that affected the lives and the deaths of not only the Germans, but of many times more peoples, of almost all other nationalities and countries.

1—*Cf.*, E. Newman, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 546. ".... in an obedience to an irresistible inner urge he had let the categorical imperative of his today cancel out his yesterday."

2—One such instance is his cancellation of the dedication of *The Art Work of the Future* to Feuerbach; another is the omission of his *Vaterlandsverein* speech from his collected writings. In the *Journal* he kept for King Ludwig, he expresses hatred and contempt for Prussia. Published in 1878 under the title *What is German?*, these papers completely delete the anti-Prussian utterances.

3—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 716.

4—Prose Works, *The Art Work of the Future*, Vol. I.

5—Prose Works, *Opera and Drama*, Vol. II, p. 105.

6—Prose Works, *Art and Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 39.

7—Prose Works, Vol. VI, p. 233.

8—Prose Works, Vol. VI. First published in Bayreuther Blätter, March, 1881.

9—*Ibid.*, p. 79.

10—*Ibid.*, p. 79.

11—*Ibid.*, p. 233.

12—Grunsky, *Wagner und die Juden*, Munchen, Deutscher Volksverlag, 1920, p. 39.

13—Prose Works, *Herodom and Christianity*, p. 280.
14—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. VI, p. 160.
15—*Ibid.*, p. 157.
16—*Ibid.*, p. 154.
17—Ehrt eure deutschen Meister,
Dann bannt ihr gute Geister;
Und gebt ihr ihren Wirken Gunst,
Zerging in Dunst
Das heilge rom'sche Reich,
Uns bliebe gleich
Die heil'ge deutsche kunst!
18—Prose Works, Vol. V.
19—Prose Works, *The Nibelungen*, Vol. VII, p. 287.
20—*Ibid.*, p. 308.
21—*Ibid.*, p. 275.
22—See above page 19, also page 78.
23—Prose Works, Vol. VII, pp. 293-294.
24—Bergmann, Ernest, "Die Deutsche National Kirche," Breslau, 1933.
25—Friedrich Wilhelm Hauer: "Deutsche Gottschau" 1936. Quoted in A. Kolnai, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

CHAPTER V

JUDAISM IN MUSIC

THE racial thinking of Wagner achieves its most focused and concentrated expression in the article on "Judaism in Music." This controversial essay was written almost one hundred years ago and it may quite justifiably be asked whether enough has not been said in the intervening time to make any further discussion either redundant or superfluous. It might seem that in the space of a century so controversial an article by so important a musician and writer would have been subjected to so much and so thorough a review that one might bring little new to the inquiry.

The truth of the matter, however, is that in the English press, particularly, there has been but little effort to pursue the inquiry in its various implications. Those who have been much influenced by Wagner's ideas and conclusions have been generally content to either echo or refer directly or indirectly to their master's words; those who have opposed the German composer's thesis have resorted to bitter recrimination, invective, or angry outburst. Most Jewish writers or composers have preferred to disregard or completely ignore the Wagner article. Those who were Wagnerians excused or explained it as a merely unfortunate aberration; the anti-Wagnerians found in it an added reason for their antagonism. American and English historians have most often made but

passing references to this article, so called "racial issues" being a delicate subject.

In few, if any instances, was there any awareness of the actual danger inherent in the racial thesis implicit in this article, any more than, in the beginnings of the German fascist movement, was there any awareness of the danger for humanity in what many professed to consider merely a passing phase of internal German politics.

Under the pseudonym of K. Freigedank[1] the article on "Judaism in Music" first appeared in the "Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik" in the issues of September 3 and 6, 1850. It is doubtful whether, even from the beginning, the real author of the article was unknown. The article occasioned an immediate controversy, several successive issues contained answers and rebuttals, with a final summary by the editor, Franz Brendel, substantially supporting the author.[2] Brendel was a professor at the Leipzig Conservatory, and for having permitted the publication of the article, all of the remaining faculty members petitioned for his removal or resignation from the faculty. The signers of the petition included Joachim, David, Rietz, Becker, Bohme, Hauptman, Klengel, Moscheles, Plaidy, and Wenzel. However, Brendel neither resigned, nor was he discharged. According to Ellis, the catalogue of the British Museum lists ten replies in German, while Glasenapp tells of a collector amassing 170 different pamphlets relating to the controversy.[3]

In 1869 Wagner republished the article, with an addition in the nature of a reply to Madame Marie Mouchanoff, who had inquired as to the cause of the continued and continuous attacks on the composer. It is in this addition that the notion of a persistent and organized persecution is presented by the composer as an explanation of the opposition to his works.[4]

In the letter to Liszt previously quoted, Wagner quite boldly states the basic and general reason for the article of 1850. In his autobiography, he explains the more immediate occasion:

> I had noticed for some time that such ill-sounding-catch phrases as "Jewish ornamental flourishes" (Melismas) "Synagogue Music" and the like were being bandied about without any rhyme or reason beyond that of giving expression to meaningless imitation. The question thus raised regarding the significance of the modern Jew in music stimulated me to make a closer examination of Jewish influence and the character peculiar to it. This I did in a lengthy treatise on "Judaism in Music."[5]

In both the autobiography and in his reply to Madame Mouchanoff, he explains his use of a pseudonym as a means to avoid shifting the question "to the merely personal realm."[6]

The following is a summary of the material of Judaism in Music:

> It is necessary to explain the unconscious feeling of aversion towards the Jewish nature[7] on the part of the Volk. Thanks to those who, within Christianity, have drawn upon themselves the folk-hatred of the people, there is no religious opposition. The German feeling for emancipation of the Jews[8] was an outgrowth, not of any real sympathy (which would imply some common ground) but of an "abstract idea." The Jew speaks the language of the land in which he lives as a foreigner. He is outside the community of interests, for only he who has unconsciously been nurtured in and by the folk community, may and can participate in its creation and perpetuation. Since, therefore, German is a foreign language to non-(racial) Germans, creation by them in that language is an impossibility. Moreover, each of the European languages

and civilizations constitute a "foreign language" for the Jew. The latter, therefore, can only imitate and never truly create.

What is true of speech is even more true of music. Preoccupied with practical matters, rather than with spiritual content, and the formalization of creative effort, the Jews have never produced creative artists. Consequently, among them there have never been any great architects, painters, or sculptors.[9] Nevertheless they dominate modern music. Why is this so?

The answer lies in the field of economic determination. Higher education has become a kind of purchasable luxury, and the wealthy Jew has the money to buy it. It is partly in his capacity as purchaser that the (wealthy) Jew has come to dominate music. In his creative aspect, not being inherently rooted in the folk-culture, he can only imitate the manner, never achieving the true essence or content of an expression, to him immutably and inevitably foreign.

The only true racial source of a Jewish composer's music is the old Synagogue music. Therefore, even if involuntarily and unconsciously, the melismas and rhythms of Synagogue music condition his imagination, just as his folk-tunes condition the music of the true German composer. True German folk-expression being foreign to the Jew, he must approach it externally; his compositions are therefore a mere reflection of true German music, and compared with the originals strike one as foreign, cold, strange, listless, unnatural and distorted (fremdartig, kalt, sonderlich, gleichgueltig, unnatuerlich und verdreht). The result is an eclectic music.

Since the Jew has not really "suffered," since he has not truly felt the tribulations and pain of the "folk," his works will not project any passion, and must of necessity lack depth. On the other hand, there will be no true repose, for a true repose is the tranquillity stemming from suffering stilled through resig-

nation. His fast music is merely restless, and his slow music, indolent and sluggish. The "Jewish period" is therefore one of complete unproductivity and is further marked by stagnancy and decay.

Everything to this point has been merely a preparation for the climax to the argument:

What can make all of this clearer but the works of a composer of Jewish descent, endowed by nature with specific musical talents equalled by but few before him. Everything that presented itself in the investigation of our antipathy to Jewish being, every contradiction in relation to its own being and to ourselves... all these come to a climax of complete tragic conflict in the nature, the life, and the artistic influence of the prematurely deceased[10] Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

The music of Mendelssohn can never move a German as the works of the true (racial) heroes of German art. Beethoven had exhausted the potentialities of pure instrumental music, and any further attempt in this direction was doomed to be sterile and derivative. The tragedy of Mendelssohn, is that despite his natural gifts his racial origin makes it impossible for him to achieve any profound, meaningful utterance. Therefore, he is somewhat deserving of German sympathy, but no other can make a similar demand on our emotions. Meyerbeer is a deceiver.[11] Not only Jews, but many Germans have been affected by the Jewish spirit in music.[12] But true Germans must not shun the inquiry which Wagner has undertaken:

"Whoever shirks this toil, whoever turns his back upon this scrutiny—either since no need impels him to it, or because he waives a lesson that possibly might drive him from the lazy groove of mindless, feelingless routine—even him we now include in that same category of "Judaism in Music."[13]

Redemption (that is, assimilation) is only possible at the price of self-annulment; regeneration must come through

anguish and want, "mitleid," the suffering of the pains and agonies of the true Volk. Only one has so far succeeded, the writer Borne.[14] But he is an exception.

However, by the time the last paragraph is reached, even this hope of redemption is lost, for Wagner writes, "But, think ye, that one thing only can redeem you from the burden of your curse: the redemption of Ahasuerus[15] annihilation."

The suggestion of annihilation was a hint actively taken by those following the direct line of Wagner's thinking. No mere summary can approximate the strength of the language, the sharp intensity of feeling of the original. Such terms as "involuntary repellence," "aversion," "instinctive antipathy," "natural abhorrence," even in direct translation do not quite catch the corrosive and implacable quality of "unsers unüberwindlicher Widerwillen gegen jüdischen Wesens," or "widerliche Besonderheit des jüdischen Natur." Phrases such as "to beat the Demon out of the field"[16] and "Judaism is the evil conscience of our modern civilization"[17] convey the emotional orientation and overtones of this essay far more effectively than any sheer summary might — its rancor, its acerbity, and vituperative acrimony.[18]

The essence of Wagner's racial thinking lies in his expressed belief in the existence of inherent "racial" qualities and in innate, immutable "racial" differences. In this sense, the composer refers to the "*instinctive* possession of the strains and rhythms of our folk songs," and refers to the "rhythms and melismas of the Synagogue song" which "usurps the musical fancy" of the Jewish composer, the idea being that these rhythms and melismas are innate.[19] Later, Gobineau was to give him the mystic term, "blood," as the bearer of the innate enti-

ties. In art, science, and politics, this belief in the existence of inherent qualities and inherent differences racially determined was to become more and more pervasive. The myth of the Jew as Banker is perpetuated, and the emotions of the readers aroused by such incendiary statements as "who thinks of noticing that guileless looking scrap of paper is slimy with the blood of countless generations."[20] Hate had been aroused, the "moral motive of revenge" established, and the inevitable result became explicit in the terrorism of the Third Reich.

Not only the music and the arts, but politics, law and science reflect and are influenced by the racial bias of Wagner. We have outlined the sources of Wagner's racial thinking, noted its expressions, and now we must note its extension and influence through those who were his followers, both in time and in spirit.

1—We have already noted Wagner's penchant for using a pseudonym behind which he might hide in making attacks on peoples or institutions. The first such instance was his attack on the Berlin critic, Rellstab, written under the pseudonym of Wilhelm Drach, and rejected by Schumann. In 1841 his article on "Paris Amusements," published in Lewald's Journal "Europa," attacked authors and singers of the day; here the pseudonym used was W. Freudenfeuer. The issue of the "Neue Zeitschrift" of December 28th, 1841 carried his attack on Rossini's "Stabat Mater," signed H. Valentin. This was a particularly vicious instance, since there actually was a musician by that name. In 1869 his attack on Eduard Devrient appeared under the pseudonym of Wilhelm Drach. In addition many articles, such as Rubinstein's scathing denunciation of Schumann were directly inspired by Wagner.

2—Articles appeared in No. 19, No. 27, No. 31, Vol. 33 of the "Neue Zeitschrift." Brendel's concluding article of this series appeared in the issue of July 4, 1851, and is represented in part in Ellis' introduction to Vol. III of the Prose Works, pp. vii-ix.

3—Prose Works, Vol. III, Introduction, p. vi.

4—The original article with the 1869 addition are to be found in Vol. III of the Prose Works.

5—*My Life*, pp. 564-565.

6—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 102.

7—The German word is "wesen" which may be translated either as "nature" or "being." In the latter sense, the objection to Jewish "wesen" had sinister and foreboding implications, realized by but few of Wagner's contemporaries.

8—The Jews in Germany had been accorded equal rights as citizens in the years 1806-1813.

9—For a direct paraphrase of this idea see Adolf Hitler's, *Mein Kampf*. Reynal and Hitchcock, (New York, 1939) pp. 417-418.

10—The German "fruehe verschieden" could be translated more colloqually as "untimely," but in view of Wagner's attitude, the word "untimely" would have an inconsistent connotation.

11—The use of the German word Taüscher, is another instance of Wagner's clever use of language. As it stands, it means deceiver, without the umlaut it means merchant or tradesman, an innuendo which strikes Meyerbeer doubly.

12—We shall note this same inclusiveness in Chamberlain and in the "Gegentypus" theory of the German scientist, Jaensch.

13—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 99.

14—By a peculiar coincidence, this author was known by Wagner to be sympathetically inclined towards his literary and musical works.

15—The reference is to the legend of the "Wandering Jew" who achieves rest and surcease only in death.

16—"den Damon aus dem Feld zu schlagen."

17—"das Judenthum das ubel Gewissen unserer modernen Civilization ist."

18—Wagner reflects to an intense degree the penchant for name calling, for destruction by invective. Quite alien in general to Anglo-Saxon criticism, this tendency towards violent objurgation, has since the time of Luther been a characteristic of German expression. The exceptional severity of the later Wagner criticisms by Davison, music editor of the London Times and contemporary of the composer were quite possibly stimulated by Wagner's own address. Wagner himself was the object and victim of a larger and more bitter collection of epithets than any other composer. Tapper's "Wagner im Spiegel der Kritik" and Dole's "Famous Composers" mention several of the choicer epithets. See also "*Wagner in der Karikatur*" by E. Fuchs and E. Kreowski.

19—Prose Works, Vol. III, p. 91.

20—*Ibid.*, p. 82.

PART II

EFFECTS AND INFLUENCE

"you noble sower, now see your harvest"

Anton Pusinelli
in a letter to Wagner

" . . . at last I let fly."

CHAPTER VI

MUSIC HISTORIANS

IN this section, we shall be concerned with the direct and indirect influences of Wagner's thinking and writing, on Music, Religion, Law, Politics, and Science. It is self-evident that the particular racial attitudes which Wagner reveals are not limited to him alone, and because a parallel expression may be found in subsequent writers, there is no necessary proof of a direct derivation from the composer. It may even be shown that both Wagner and a succeeding writer derived from an earlier common source, their similar or identical viewpoints. It is necessary, therefore, that we clarify precisely what is meant by, and outline the kinds of influences to which we will have reference.

There are, first of all, the indubitably direct effects evidenced by quotations, (as in the writings of Brendel), and the known facts of direct association and contact (as exist in the cases of Schemann and Chamberlain). In a second category are the circumstantial evidences of influences found in such works as some twentieth-century German music histories, to which we shall have reference. In the third category are such manifestations which, whether they are a direct outgrowth of Wagner's thinking specifically, or represent the overt expression of a conflux of influences among which Wagner's is but one, are nevertheless the culminating point to which the

racial thinking of Wagner inevitably tends. The spirit of his influence is to be found in such manifestations, even if the letter of direct quotation is absent.

Lest it be felt that the extent of Wagner's influence on German thought, particularly, may be here over-emphasized, these pertinent facts might be considered: In 1887, six hundred and forty-one performances of his works were given in forty-four German towns and cities; by 1890 the number had increased to nine hundred and sixty-seven. By 1890, the Wagner society founded in 1883, had three hundred branches with a membership of eight thousand.[1] The performances are mentioned, not as a musical or historical fact, but as a tangible evidence of their importance in keeping the concept "Wagner" so actively alive for the German people, and particularly for the members of the Wagner societies. Many Bach societies exist solely for the singing and performance of the great cantor's works; the Wagner societies did not have as their sole function musical performance or even belligerent support of controversial works. By 1890 the composer's works had been quite universally accepted. These societies represented, therefore, not only an acceptance of the music of Wagner, but of his national and racial theories. Many of the eight thousand members became propagators of Wagnerian thought. We have already referred to the solicitation of the anti-vivisection society for a statement supporting their cause, a solicitation which certainly would never have been made unless it were felt the composer commanded enough regard and consideration to attract both attention and support.

In England, a Wagner society originally founded in 1873 with Dannreuther as president and Franz Hueffer as secretary, was revived in 1884. By 1890 it had three hundred members. In 1888 this society began issuing a

quarterly publication, "The Meister," modelled on the Parisian "Revue Wagnerienne." That it was not only Wagner's music which attracted members of this group evidenced by the conviction of one writer:

> Had he never composed one bar of music and never conceived one scene of drama, his prose works alone would have ranked him amongst the foremost thinkers of the day.[2]

In a letter of August 31, 1870 Dr. Anton Pusinelli wrote Wagner in enthusiastic reaction to the establishment of the German Empire:

> . . . the Barbarossa is awakened . . . Germany is united. From now on, Germany will stand at the peak of civilization, German art, warmth, profundity, integrity, innocence, veracity coupled with German strength have torn away the hypocritical mask from the face of French falsehood and have annihilated it. Hail to your noble young king . . . I believe that I am not mistaken when I attribute a great share of this noble deed to you. Through your whole patriotic German national bent, you have kindled and sustained in his young noble heart the flame that now stands gleaming in a mighty blaze in the German heaven. And like the young king you have inspired thousands of hearts with enthusiasm for the national cause; you noble sower, now see your harvest.[3]

Even making allowance for personal idolization, there is another evidence here of the degree to which Wagner and German nationalism had become identified. Wagner considered himself a kind of one-man emanation of the German spirit; in "What is German?" he even refers to this rebuke by an editor for thinking that he alone represents or understands the German soul. Often the importance and arrogation of his "mission" transcends

even national boundaries. "My baton," he once said, "will yet become the scepter of the future. It will teach the times what course they must take."[4] Yet so great was the impress and impact of his personality that those with whom he came in direct contact soon came to accept him on his own terms. By the end of his life he had become even more than a national figure; Bayreuth had been made into a kind of national shrine where, not music as such, but the flame of the German spirit was jealously preserved. Germans have always felt that there is a content in Wagner's operas that must always remain inaccessible to the outside world, and for that reason they tended to heed his writings the more, finding in him a seer as well as a composer. There is a profound symbolism in the familiar photograph of Kaiser Wilhelm II in the armor of Lohengrin, the swan by his side, an evidence of how deeply Wagner's manner of looking at things had become accepted by all Germany.

One German music historian wrote that "Wagner's political, religious, and sociological viewpoints are more Nordic than his art work, and in many instances a prophetic forecast of today's thoughts and aspirations."[5] Finally, there is the direct testimony of Hitler himself. In "Mein Kampf" he pays tribute to the great statesmen and reformers who correctly understood Germany's destiny: "Side by side with Frederick the Great stands a Martin Luther as well as a Richard Wagner."[6]

An instance of how uncritically statements of apparent fact were accepted by subsequent writers may be found in the matter of the "Jewish control of the Press." In his autobiography, Wagner writes of "the unparalleled animosity with which even up to the present day I have been pursued by the entire press of Europe... It must be remembered that almost all the newspapers of Europe are in the hands of the Jews."[7]

Echoing this, Ashton Ellis writes in his introduction to Volume III of the Prose works "it is also known that in Germany, a majority of the newspapers have long been in the hands of the Jews."[8] Slightly more circumspect, Newman in his biography of Wagner, writes, "A large proportion of the German Press of the time is said to have been in the hands of the Jews who naturally were not disposed towards Wagner after the publication of 'Judaism in Music'."[9] In "Wagner and the Jews" the German historian, Grunsky accepts in toto the Wagner assertion that the press of Europe was in the hands of the Jews; in Ellis, this is reduced to the press of Germany, and Newman, more carefully introduces the modifying phrase "is said to have been."

We have noted Wagner's elastic use of the word "Jewish" in its application to the English press, and Ellis' affirmation that not one of the critics to whom Wagner referred was of Hebrew descent. It must be emphasized that where Wagner believed himself to be the victim of an organized attack, Ellis, staunch Wagnerian though he is, points out that "it is far more likely that the war was waged by the adherents of Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn, than that the persecution proceeded from the Jewish nation itself; we find that he won many a private friend among the Jews, to say nothing of theatrical audiences."[10] Nevertheless, writers such as Grunsky were quick to accept Wagner's explanation of his persecution by an organized "alien" group, and to use this as a motive for the expulsion and even the extermination of that group.

What are the available facts concerning Jewish control of the press in Germany? In discussing the racial unrest about 1820, Graetz writes that "In Germany there were nearly forty Jewish writers who could address the German public. They possessed two Jewish organs and

the daily journals occasionally opened their pages to them."[11] It is hardly possible that between 1820 and 1850, the date of the publication of "Judaism in Music," the press of Germany suddenly passed into Jewish control. The same cry of Jewish control of the press (as of culture in general) was taken up by the followers of Hitler in the 1930's. A factual survey of this period revealed that outside of Berlin, Frankfort on the Main, and a few other places, the number of Jewish journalists was negligible. Of the 41,703 political newspapers listed by the Handbook of the German Daily Press in 1932, only twenty had Jewish editors. Of the 85 most prominent German newspapers of that time, only ten had Jewish editors-in-chief. On the other hand, Dr. Alfred Hugenberg, arch-nationalist and supporter of Nazi-ism, not only owned the enormous moving picture monopoly, U.F.A., but also controlled twenty-seven of the largest German papers, and 150 provincial papers. "Germany," this survey concludes, "never had what the anti-Semitic propaganda called a "Judenpresse" (Jewish press).[12]

In a footnote to the American edition of "Mein Kampf" the editors wrote "it is difficult to make a good argument to show Jewish economic dominance in pre-Hitler Germany, nor was Jewish cultural influence noteworthy outside Berlin. What can be said is that an unwise cult of publicity sometimes overstressed the importance of individual Jews. Many believed that anti-Semitic propaganda could be stopped if it were shown that Jews contributed a great deal to the reputation of Germany abroad. Almost precisely the opposite effect was achieved."[13]

Being already so predisposed, many of Wagner's contemporaries were not only willing, but even anxious to accept both the premises and conclusions of "Judaism

in Music." Others, influenced by the personality and reputation of the composer, were convinced of the logic and justification of these conclusions. The theologian, Lorenz Krausshold, indicates that while Wagner's anti-Semitic utterances were not too discreet, there was actually no distortion of the truth.[14] Wagner's English acquaintance, Ferdinand Praeger, wrote in the New York Musical Gazette of the 24th of February, 1855,

> Wagner once wrote an article on *Judaism in Music* in which he conclusively proves that a Jew is not a Christian, and neither looks, nor feels, nor talks, nor moves like one, and consequently does not compose like a Christian either.

Ashton Ellis wrote that

> ... If one looks at the matter calmly and dispassionately, there was nothing so *very* dreadful in "Judaism in Music" about Meyerbeer; whilst Mendelssohn is handled in almost an affectionate manner so far as concerns his personality.[15]

For Ellis, as for many others, the shadows of Buchenwald, Oscwiecin, and Dachau were not yet imaginable in the future; they could hardly have forseen "Mein Kampf" springing out of the soil nurtured by the "Gesammelte Schriften."

During the five week stay in England for the Albert Hall concerts in 1877, Wagner and Cosima were house guests of the English musician, Edward Dannreuther. It is he who wrote the article on "Wagner" for Grove's "Dictionary of Music." "Judaism in Music" he found to be

> a far less intemperate and injudicious production than might be supposed from the *succes de scandale* it met with when Wagner signed and republished it ... when he issued the

> augmented edition in 1869 dozens of articles and pamphlets appeared in reply; yet none of these attempted to deal with the artistic questions he had raised. The actual contents of the article were ignored; but Wagner was persistently reproached with having attempted a disgraceful defamation of rival composers (because of their Hebrew origin). It remains significant that amongst his staunchest and most intelligent friends there were many of Jewish descent who may have wished he had left the subject alone, but who nevertheless saw no reason to disagree with him in the main.[16]

One wonders whether Dannreuther could have been aware of such phrases as those previously quoted[17] when he refers to this as a "less intemperate" production than one might have imagined. His astonishment that some actually considered Wagner's attack to have been occasioned by the "Hebrew origin" of the composers, rather than the content of their work, is, to say the least, naive. The phrasing is so similar to assertions in "Mein Leben" and in the 1869 addition to the original article on "Das Judenthum," that one may reasonably surmise it is but a paraphrase of Wagner's own conversation on the matter.

One might assume, on the strength of this reference, that Dannreuther himself, "saw no reason to disagree with Wagner in the main." However, in the sixth volume of the Oxford History of Music, of which he was the author, he writes of Wagner that, "Now and then his judgment seems strained and beside the mark . . . as when he refused to credit the Jews with creative ability."[18] Despite this rejection of one of Wagner's conclusions, the dictionary article is evidence of the marked impression left not only by the music, but by the concepts of Wagner.

The notion that composers of the "Jewish race" are

derivative, imitative, and basically non-creative, and that they are so because of innate and inherent qualities, stems directly from "Judaism in Music." In the case of Dannreuther, it is possible that but for the example and enormous influence of Mendelssohn in England, he might have been misled into consistently agreeing with Wagner's thesis. Even those who have no particular racial bias or animus, adopt this thesis as a tacit credo. The fact that many outstanding virtuosos are of Jewish descent is taken to substantiate this credo, proving that the "racial" talent is for reproduction rather than direct creation. Rarely is the origin of this notion questioned and even more rarely is the very basic question raised: Whether there is in fact a "Jewish race," and whether any kind of race, as the bearer of inherent and innate psychological traits, exists in reality. But the premise of "race" and "Jewish race" being dogmatically accepted, many people "saw no reason to disagree in the main" with the Wagnerian logic.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of Wagner on German critics and historians. Franz Brendel, successor to Schumann as editor of the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, was also an important music historian. His acceptance of the article on "Judaism in Music" and his subsequent support of its arguments are tangible evidences of the composer's influence on his thought. In Brendel's concept of music as a particularly German art, there is a further parallel to another aspect of Wagner's thinking.

Among other chauvinistic German histories in which the Wagnerian influence is marked are those by Karl Storck[19] and Karl Grunsky.[20]

One of the principal means of communication between Wagner and the future was his son-in-law, close

spiritual ally, and biographer, Houston Stewart Chamberlain.[21] The latter develops one of Wagner's theses into the theory of an "irreconcilable conflict" between Nordic culture and Semitic-oriental Mediterranean culture. This theory is expounded from a musicological standpoint in the essay on "The Major-Minor Idea as a Problem in Cultural History" by H. J. Moser.[22] To what he terms the Semitic-oriental music concepts of Modes, Moser opposes the Nordic concept of tonality. On the basis of the conflict between German and Mediterranean culture, "proved" by Chamberlain, Moser develops the musical correlate:

> Because of their essentially different content, the development of the Northern major-minor tonality out of the "Oriental" modality is "ontologically unthinkable." Granting that the art music of the Church might have contained modal materials, these latter were opposed by a strong native folk-idiom. This folk-idiom manifested itself in a feeling for the third, and then the triad, the basis of occidental harmony, a feeling much in contrast with the predominant step-wise-melos of Gregorian Chant. The ancient lur was a large bronze instrument, supposedly of German antiquity and usually found in pairs. Upon these instruments, each of which produces twenty-two partials, the Germans undoubtedly played major and minor thirds long before the Christian era.

Here, presented in a scholarly musicological guise, is the Wagnerian thesis of the conflict between oriental and occidental concepts, associated with the Wagner-derived feeling of an inherent musical opposition between Catholic (Gregorian) music and the music of the *germanisches Volksthum.* In 1930, however, Moser in his "Epochen der Musikgeschichte," withdraws his lur-triad theory as an evidence of the origin of the triad in the

West, since similar instruments had been found in Tibet.

The most commonly accepted hypothesis is that the tonalities of Major and Minor were, in fact, an outgrowth of the modal concepts of the near east, these being transferred to and diffused through Europe, combining with folk-materials to evolve into the tonal major and minor complexes.[23]

That there are important and demonstrable differences between the music of Western Europe and the Byzantine-Hebraic antecedents of Gregorian chant is admittedly true. The transformation of the melismatic *jubilus* at the end of the alleluia into the medieval metric sequence-form is an evidence of this difference. The absence of meter and an evolving harmony from most of oriental music, and the significant presence of these materials in Western music is another such evidence. The tendency to utilize the interval of the third instead of the tetrachordal modal music style of the Church was already strongly in evidence by the eleventh century.

All available indications point to its use in the twelfth-century *gymel* and *descant* of England and the early fifteenth-century *faburden* of Italy, before the development of any significant art music in Germany. Speaking of European music, Curt Sachs writes:

> The growth of major and minor seems to have been indigenous: the basic principle of chains of thirds, also known from other continents, was all-European, regardless of race and region, and the development of chains of thirds into major and minor patterns was just as all European. A German or Germanic origin is out of the question since the earliest examples are French. Indeed, just the opposite is true. Germany accepted the major and minor scales late and with reluctance.[24]

The approach of Moser in his earlier study is not that of an investigator deriving conclusions from factual material alone, but that of one who has predetermined conclusions in mind and seeks to find or distort facts in order to corroborate these antecedent conclusions.

The writer, Willy Pastor, echoing another motive of Wagner, had expressed the opinion that the influence and penetration of Christian music into Central and Northern Europe was a harmful one. With this concept Moser takes issue, pointing to occidental music as the result of the confluence of two cultures, out of which emerged the triumph of the major-minor concept. As did Bach and Brahms, Moser emphasizes, so may composers still find enrichment and refreshment in the great treasury of old modal music.

However, whatever possibilities of an objective historical perspective existed prior to World War I were almost totally destroyed thereafter. Thus, Moser, who had in previous writings given some indication of a degree of objectivity reveals an extreme and biased nationalism in his *"Geschichte der deutschen Musik"*.[25] Germanic superiority, the origins of harmony from out of the German Volk-consciousness, the rhythmic superiority of "true" German music are among the elements stressed in this work. All the accessories of involved reasoning applied to basically false premises or distorted facts, assumptions chosen because they will fit an antecedent conclusion, rather than conclusions drawn from objectively considered data, are among the characteristics of this work.[26] An increasingly chauvinistic viewpoint is similarly manifested in Moser's "Die Epochen der Musikgeschichte im Ueberblick" (1930).

The concept of Germany as that nation which has always been in the forefront of musical advance, and

which has ever nourished music as a leading art, is the thesis developed in Max Chop's "Führer durch die Musikgeschichte."[27]

"Eine Deutsche Musikgeschichte" by Hans Mersmann[28] emphasizes the "inherent" strife between German Kultur and Latin Christendom. Though Christianity did not uproot German culture, Mersmann wrote, it altered it radically; the blond Aryans who left their native lands after invading Italy were softened by the Christian music.

Thorstein Veblen in a profoundly wise phrase sets up the distinction between the aesthetically true and the reputably correct. In the Germany of the Third Reich the reputably correct assumed precedence from the first. The correlated culture, nationalistic, and racial trends culminated in a state of mind that inevitably evoked parallel expressions in art, science, law and politics. Intellectual and cultural objectivity were destroyed or completely obliterated. Among the interesting phenomena associated with the attempt to achieve a conforming viewpoint was the re-writing of music histories, in some instances by new editors, since the original authors had died, in others, by the original authors. Some of the latter had suppressed a latent racism in their original works; now, not only undeterred but actually encouraged to vent their prejudiced viewpoints, these authors re-wrote and re-arranged their original material. Anton Myer's "Geschichte der Musik,[29] a conventional work in its first edition in 1928, was reissued five years later with an entirely new approach. In the revised edition, all music which did not lead or contribute to a culmination in German music is disregarded or deprecated. A new preface by one, Georg Vollerthum, is an adulation of "Der Führer."

A standard work, Emil Naumann's "*Illustrierte Musikgeschichte,*[30] originally issued 1880-85, was completely rewritten in its tenth edition (1934) under the editorship of one Eugen Schmitz. In its rewritten guise, its principal thesis is that the distinctive quality of Occidental music is a result of Germanic-Nordic genius.

Between 1928-31 there was published under the editorship of Ernst Bücken the "Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft" and "Die grossen Meister der Musik."[31] The thirteen-volume "Handbuch" to which Bücken himself contributed two volumes (*Rococo and Classical Music* and *Music of the Nineteenth Century*) was marked by objective scholarship and an international perspective. In "Die Musik der Nation"[32] (1937) by the same author, the already familiar pattern of musical chauvinism is followed, and not unexpectedly, the new volume breaks out in a sudden rash of anti-Semitism. In Bücken's case, as in so many others, the ideology of the Third Reich did not actually create new prejudices; it merely evoked and strengthened those already present, waiting to be released and set free.

A supreme irony is achieved in Richard Eichenauer's "Musik und Rasse."[33] It is in this work that the Wagnerian viewpoints of racial distinctions are most methodically developed in their musical relationships. The Wagner-Chamberlain-Moser theory of the inherent oppositeness of the Oriental and German (Aryan) spirit as revealed in music is worked out by means of a unique re-orientation. The sources of occidental German music are derived from the Greeks, through the Persians and Hindus, and this music is seen as the antithesis of a florid, unrhythmic and sensuous Oriental music associated with the Hebrews and early Christians. Great occidental music is "proven" to be derived from Nordic

folk-song. Some composers, though tainted by a non-Nordic descent, have nevertheless, because of their great gifts and the salutary effect of an assimilated German tradition, overcome this initial handicap. These composers include Mendelssohn and Mahler—and here is the culminating irony—Richard Wagner. He who had helped create this juggernaut of racial evaluations is at length caught in its path.

Although he will not commit himself to an out and out acceptance of either Geyer's paternity or Jewish descent—even referring to Bournot's "proof" of Geyer's Christian ancestry [84] — the ultimate inference is that Eichenauer finally does accept both possibilities as facts. His discussion of Wagner is mainly concerned with a careful separation of the truly Nordic from the mixed racial content of the composer's work. One must not be misled, he writes, by the composer's use of German folk or historical lore; those may still be combined with a non-Nordic music. The following non-Nordic elements in Wagner are noted:

(a) Pessimism, and negation of the will to live.

(b) Eroticism.

(c) The capacity to change so quickly and easily from one style and idiom to another, a clear indication of a Near-Eastern (Oriental) heritage and a racial mixture.

(d) His literary style.

(e) His extreme awareness of racial differences and of the necessity for racial rejuvenation—also a sure token of racial mixture.

Nordic traits are indicated in the pathos of the prelude to the third act of the Meistersinger, and the breadth and rhythm of much of Wagner's music. In the end, Eichenauer strikes a middle course between those

who claim Wagner as pure German, and those who see in him a corrupter (verderber) of German art.[85]

Mendelssohn, Eichenauer echoes Wagner, was destined to failure in his attempts to achieve a consummate expression, because of his racial origin. Mahler is redeemed because of his love for, his understanding of, and his extensive use of the German folk-song. Using the racial lexicon of the Third Reich, Eichenauer appends to the photographs of the various composers, qualifying descriptions which indicate the various degrees of hierarchy: Monteverde is *nordisch - dinarisch,* (Balkan-Nordic), Rameau, *vorwiegend nordisch,* (preponderantly Nordic), and Mendelssohn is *vorwiegend orientalisch mit vorderasiatischem Einschlag* (predominantly oriental with near-Eastern influence.)

In the works to which we have referred, the influence of Wagner is clear and evident. It is not necessary that one go to the extreme of one writer who speaks of the "nationalistic hypothesis of music history for which Wagner was so largely responsible."[86] Nationalism in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the outgrowth of closely correlated cultural, social, economic and political trends; nationalistic hypotheses of music history were but one aspect and manifestation of these trends, and to hold Wagner "largely responsible" may not be literally correct. But in Germany, and on German writers, he exercised such an enormous influence, that without doubt he was the most powerful force which gave shape, form, and content to the nationalistic writing and thinking of Teutonic musicians; through these latter, that influence became world-wide in scope.

Up to this point we have been primarily concerned with the effect of Wagner's theories on the thinking of

his followers. The expression of that thinking in action is finally manifested in the Sauberung (cleansing) officially decreed by the Cultural Committee of the Third Reich. Wagner had included as objectionable and anti-German not only Jews, but all those who either felt sympathetic towards Jewish musicians, or who turned from the conclusions reached in his essay, "Judaism in Music."[37] Similarly, as we shall see, the psychologist, Jaensch, included many Germans in his category of the anti-type.

Those who exercised a presumably corrupting influence were removed. Some were murdered. Those who could, escaped. A particularly pathetic aspect of this exodus was the fact that among those compelled to flee where many who had hitherto felt themselves to be an essential part of the very core of German culture. They had considered themselves as patriots, and now they were officially rejected by the Fatherland. Wasserman, Zweig, Toller, Paul Bekker,[38] and to some extent, Schoenberg all tasted this bitter fruit. Among these supposedly corrupting influences were Hindemith, Bruno Walter, Fritz and Adolph Busch, Serkin, Schnabel, Kreisler, all first ranking artists in their respective fields by any standard other than that of a concept founded on social insanity.

In an attempt to foster and crystallize a "reputably correct" founded on the avowed masterworks of a past era, any music departing from the norm of that achieved past was automatically condemned. German composers of 1935 whose works were no more controversial than were Wagner's of 1860 were banned. But a nation which looks back into the past for its greatest glory rather than into the future for its promise has reached a period of cultural stagnancy. By the turn of the century Germany had already yielded the scepter of musical leadership to

other nations; it maintained nevertheless a vital and still important musical culture. By the expulsion of the so-called corrupting influences, she sent out some of her most vital forces, most of whom were never to return.

1—Dole, Nathan Haskell, *Famous Composers*, Cromwell and Co., (New York, 1936) p. 416.

2—Moser, Max, *"Richard Wagner in der Englischen Literatur des* XIX jahrhunder's," A. Francke, Bern, 1938, p. 13.

3—"The Letters of Richard Wagner to Anton Pusinelli," tr. by Elbert Lenrow, A. A. Knopf (New York, 1932) p. 235.

4—Schemann, Ludwig—*Meine Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner*, Stuttgart, Fr. Frommans Verlag, 1902, p. 35. *Cf.* the remark of Wilhelm Schafer concerning Wagner: "One however moves towards the present, his baton bringing a new pulse beat to the times." Schafer, W., "Die dreizehn Bücher der deutschen Seele." München, Georg Muller, 1922, p. 495.

5—Eichenauer, R., *op. cit.*, p. 235.

6—Hitler, Adolf, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

7—"My Life," p. 600.

8—P. x of Introduction.

9—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 218.

10—Prose Works, Vol. III, Introduction, p. x.

11—Graetz, H., "History of the Jews," The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1895, Vol. V, p. 534.

12—*The Jews in Nazi Germany*—The American Jewish Committee, (New York, 1935) pp. 11-12.

13—*Op. cit.*, p. 415.

14—Krausshold, Lorenz, "Die Musik in ihrer Kultur-historischen Entwicklung und Bedeutung." Grau-Bayreuth 1876.

15—Prose Works, Vol. III, Introduction, p. vi.

16—Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians." Vol. X, p. 591.

17—See Page 110.

18—Oxford History of Music, Second Edition, 1932. Vol. VI, p. 534.

19—Storck, Karl, "Musikgeschichte (seit 1800)" Leipzig, 1908. 1st edition, 1904. 5th edition, 1922.

20—Grunsky, Karl, "Musikgeschichte (seit 1800)" Leipzig, 1908. Grunsky, Karl. "Wagner und die Juden" Munich, Deutscher Volksverlag, 1920.

21—Chamberlain, H. S., "Foundations of the 19th Century," London and New York, John Lane, 1911.

22—Moser, H. J., "Der Durgedanke als Kulturgeschichtliches Problem," Quarterly Magazine of the Int. Music Society, Vol. 15, Part 2, January-March.

23—See Gustave Reese, "Music in the Middle Ages." W. W. Norton and Co. (New York, 1940).

24—Sachs, Curt, "Europe and the Road to Major and Minor," in "The Rise of Music in the Ancient World," W. W. Norton, (New York, 1943) p. 303.

25—Moser, H. G., *Geschichte der deutschen Musik*, Cotta, Berlin and Stuttgart, 1921-8.

26—Of the same period is Moser's article "Zur Methodik der Musikalischen Gedichtschreibung" in the Zeitschritt fur Aesthetik, Vol. XIV, 1920, pp. 130-145.

27—Chop, Max, "Fuhrer durch die Musikgeschichte" Globus, Berlin, 1822.

28—Sans-Souci, Potsdam, Berlin. 1934.

29—Deutsches Leben und Sieben-Stabe, Hamburg, 1933.

30—First edition, 2 volumes, Sperman, Stuttgart, 1880-85. Dr. Naumann, who had been a student of Mendelssohn, died in Dresden, in 1888. It is interesting to point out that an English translation of Naumann's history was made by F. Praeger, Wagner's host during his first London visit.

31—Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Atheneion, Potsdam.

32—Kroner, Leipzig, 1937.

33—Lehmann, Munich, 1932.

34—Bournot, Otto, *Ludwig Geyer*, C. F. W. Siegel, (Leipzig, 1913).

35—Eichenauer, R., *op. cit.*, pp. 225-236.

36—Allen, D. W., "Philosophies of Music History," American Book Co., (New York, 1939).

37—See above page 109.

38—See Paul Bekker's introduction to his *Story of the Orchestra* in which he explains his determination to write in English since "the field of German language had been closed" to him.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION IN THE THIRD REICH

PERHAPS no single volume is more clearly indicative of Wagner's direct relation to the Third Reich and the blossoming of its most mephitic blossoms from seeds sown by him than Dr. Karl Grunsky's "Wagner and the Jews."[1] We have already noted this writer as the author of one of the excessively chauvinistic music histories of the early nineteen-hundreds. As a motto for his book on Wagner, Grunsky chooses the closing words of a German history: "Reason is much; the Will, however, is everything."[2] For Grunsky, what Wagner had pointed out had an undeniable importance; but the Will which was to resolve into action the ideas of Wagner, the Will of Nazi Germany, becomes the great consummation. An exegesis of Wagner's writings on the Jews, it inevitably concerns itself with religion in general and Christianity in particular.

To Grunsky, Wagner's works "are a paean of all things German, and therefore a continuous offense to Jewish nature."[3] We have already referred to Grunsky's assertion that Wagner was a "religious discoverer... far on the road to the future."[4] Stressing the marked influences of Wagner, the author indicates that the thoughts and acts of the composer may seem new to those who are accustomed to consider Wagner from a purely musical point of view.[5] The revelations and attacks of Wagner,

Grunsky asserts, will ultimately be considered as important and significant as Luther's struggle against alien Roman Christianity.[6]

Grunsky speaks of two enemies together:—Rome and Judaism. In the end, he declares, more important than any interpretation of the Gospel is the question as to whether historic Christianity is one with the teaching and presentation of Jesus. Following Wagner, the author declares the contrary is notoriously true. One chapter of this book is titled "Why is the Roman Church Jewish?" In answer, Grunsky points to the intermingling of races in the Roman Empire and the "historical antagonism" between the papacy and the teachings of Jesus, apparent since 754. Finally, he emphasizes the Judaic basis of Catholic theology.

Because of Wagner's opposition to war, Grunsky has one of his rare moments of disagreement with the composer. Certainly, he writes, it is difficult to reconcile the words of Jesus with a defense of warfare, but he leaves that problem to the theologians. In this connection, he warns against the pacifism of the Jews, who are against War in order to literally and figuratively disarm the Volk of means to combat them. Pacifists are internationalists, and as such are against the noble institution of warfare. Where Grunsky had accused German Jews of being pacifists, and as internationalists, against War, Hitler and others of his followers were to denounce the Jews of England, France and America as war mongers, seeking to embroil the world in conflict.[8] There is here but one aspect of the multifarious and expedient contradictions of the Nazis: the Jews as German "pacifists" were bad, but as war-thirsty Americans or French or English were even worse. War was a "noble pursuit", but, apparently only when pursued by Germans.

In 1939, the opposition to that portion and content of Christianity which was stigmatized as being Judaic was given an organizational foundation in Germany: "The Institute for the Study of Jewish Influence on German Church Life."[9] This Institute endeavored to

> develop the scientific conclusions from the race and folk conceptions of the National Socialist Weltanschauung for the religious sector of German life. The men united in the Institut, as National Socialists, from the very outset took this stand as opposed to the previous theology and science of religion, which do not accept these conceptions and therefore are barren for the religious future of the German people.[10]

One of the opposed Judaic concepts was that of "sin" and the concommittant notions of a conscience and a sense of guilt. Wagner had called the Jews the "evil conscience of mankind." This ambiguous phrase is somewhat clarified by H. S. Chamberlain in a passage wherein he simultaneously attacks the dilemma of a Jewish race which is permanent, continuous, and yet not "pure." The Aryans and Teutons having been established as persistent and exclusive strains, it might seem that the Jews, similarly characterized, would therefore also be "pure". Chamberlain solves this dilemma by asserting that though the Jews represent a permanent and persistent racial group, they had been bastardized, corrupted through an admixture of heterogeneous groups, particularly Syrians and Bedouins. This corrupting admixture, declares Chamberlain, is the basis of the Jewish stigma of a *guilty conscience,* a sense of sin. This bloodshame, *Blutschande,* (in German having a connotation of an incestuous union) is the source of that sense of guilt which represents one of the Judaic influences on Christian theology. Wagner's "evil conscience" then, refers to that

sense of guilt and the presence of conscience which, to him, has been an evil influence on the Teutonic spirit.

Taking the matter up at this point, Hitler echoes the hypothesis that race-crossing leads to degeneration: "To bring about such a development means nothing less than sinning against the will of the Eternal Creator." Forebodingly he adds, "This action then is also rewarded as a sin."[11]

Wagner had suggested that Christ was himself not Jewish, and this tenet is actively supported by such Nazi writers as Walter Grundmann, in "Jesus der Galilaer und das Judenthum",[12] and Emanuel Hirsch, in "Das Wesen des Christentums."[13] Grundmann had been one of the organizers and the first research director of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Influences. His desire for a periodical were treated in a dilatory fashion by the Propaganda Ministry which, in a confidential note, wrote:

> The endeavors of this organization and its leading men such as Prof. Grundmann are well meant. *But there is no interest either in assimilating Christian teaching in National Socialism* or in proving that a reshaped Christianity is not fundamentally Jewish.[13]

By 1944 a new research director, one Dr. Georg Bertram, succeeded Grundmann.

For the propaganda Ministry there had never been any notion of Christianity serving as an end in itself. For a time, Christianity had been useful as an anti-Semitic weapon. The Jews having been disposed of, in principle at least, the Judaic elements in Christianity were the next target. Wagner, Chamberlain, Grunsky and Grundmann were among the many writers who found the Judaic stigma particularly evident in Ca-

tholicism. From a discrediting of one part of Catholicism to Catholicism itself was a short step, and the traditional enmity of Lutheran Germany found nothing dangerous in taking this step. But Catholicism represented an important aspect of Christianity, and it was not difficult to transfer the opposition from the Catholic element in Christianity, to the Christian element in religion. Christ having been successfully divested of a Judaic origin, and therefore of an association with the God of the Old Testament, there was little left in the Christ-concept that could prevail against the myth-gods of Teutonism. A Christ-concept uprooted from the religious traditions of Christianity and with no roots in the Volk tradition of the Teutons, had little to sustain it in competition with the tribal Gods. It is at this point that the Propaganda Ministry decides it has no interest in a "reshaped" Christianity, or in "assimilating Christian teaching in National Socialism," that a de-Judaized Christ is cast aside in favor of the pagan Gods, that Protestantism itself is put on the defensive as the last surviving manifestation of an active Christianity.

The culminating rejection of Christianity occurs in the establishment of the official pagan "Third Church" whose New Testament is Rosenberg's "Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts."[14] In this work the author writes that

> the condition of membership of the new community is the recognition of the values which have been displayed in Germanic dramatic art (meaning Richard Wagner?) and at their highest level in the mysticism of Master Eckhart.[15]

The allusion to Wagner is inserted by Gurian, and serves to emphasize the unequivocal reference of Rosenberg. The report of the Instructional Camp held by the

National Socialist German Students League in 1935 reads in part as follow:

> The National Socialist *Weltanschauung* is suited only to the German race, not, like the Christian, to all races. We are not out against the hundred and one different kinds of Christianity but Christianity itself.[16]

Two years earlier Ernst Bergmann had sought to explain the weakness and defeat of Germany in the first world war as the result of the German desertion of their tribal god. Here the last pretense of any kind of a universal religion, of a possible common ground for all humanity in some kind of spiritual unity and affinity, is destroyed. "The God of Christendom has forsaken us Germans," wrote Bergmann.

> He is no just God; no supra-rational God, he is a political party God of the others. The cause of our defeat in the great fight was that we believed in him and abandoned our German God (Deutschgott) for the Deutschgott was the secret of our force, of our vital tenacity. We are in possession of the only true and right religion; wherefore we, just we, call it German religion (Deutschreligion).[17]

Chamberlain is one of the most significant links between Wagner and the revivers of the pagan-myth of Teutonism. In the introduction to the English translation of the "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century" Lord Redesdale wrote that Chamberlain "plunged heart and soul into the mysterious depths of the Wagnerian music and philosophy, the metaphysical works of the master probably exercising as strong an influence upon him as the musical dramas—the spell of the great musician was upon him. One critic did not hesitate to accuse him of

plagiarising—plagiarising above all from Richard Wagner."[18]

Chamberlain's opposition to the "oriental" aspects and the Judaic heritage of Christianity, to Catholicism, Jesuits, Popery, derives directly from Wagner. No less direct is the line leading from Chamberlain to Alfred Rosenberg. In addition to those individuals previously mentioned, such writers as Friedrich Wilhelm Hauer, Arthur Dinter, Count Ernst Reventlow, the Ludendorffs, and Wilhelm Stapel reflect the same anti-Christian bias which we have noted in Wagner. The voluminous literature which such as these produced, the marked influence of the movements they inaugurated, created a religious perspective which is not radically altered by a military defeat, and which must continue to be a major and serious problem for Western civilization for many generations to come.

1—Grunsky, Dr. Karl, *Wagner und die Juden*, Deutscher Volksverlag, (Munchen, 1920).

2—"Erkennen ist viel; der Willen, aber, ist alles." *German History*, by Einhart, Th. Weicher. (Leipzig, 1919).

3—"Seine Schoepfungen sind wie ein einziges Preislied auf alles Deutsche und darum eine Versündigung an jüdischen Wesen." Dr. K. Grunsky, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

4—*Ibid.*, p. 39.

5—*Ibid.*, p. 23.

6—*Ibid.*, p. 75.

7—*Ibid.*, p. 44.

8—See Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors*, Yivo (New York, 1946) pp. 85-86.

9—*Ibid.*, p. 61-67.

10—*Ibid.*, p. 63. This is a quotation from a letter by Dr. Walter Grundmann of the University of Jena.

11—Hitler, Adolf, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

12—Wigand, Georg, (Leipzig, 1940).

13—Weimar, Deutsche Christen, 1939. As in many other similar instances, the transition from Wagner's hypothesis to the above-mentioned works is achieved through Chamberlain who postulates various ethnic and psychological conclusions to prove that Christ was not actually Jewish.

13—Translated from an original manuscript now in the possession of the Yiddish Scientific Institute of New York.

14—Munich, 1930.

15—Gurian, W., "Hitler and the Christians" translated by E. F. Peeley, Sheed and Ward, (New York, 1936) p. 55.
16—*Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.
17—Kolnai, A., *op. cit.*, p. 233. See also Chapter V, "Faith and Thought," pp. 230-276.
18—Chamberlain, H. S., "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century," John Lane and Co., (London, 1910), Introduction pp. vi-vii.

CHAPTER VIII

SCIENCE

SCIENCE, which is ordinarily considered objective in its research and findings finally sucumbed to the racial prerogative. Even before the triumph of Nazism "scientific" proof of the superiority of the Aryan or Nordic race became the prime objective of anthropologists and geneticists in Germany. The Gobineau Society became an active and important factor in the establishment and perpetuation of the racial thesis. Chamberlain developed the theory of spiritual divination, a kind of "rational" anthropology. As an instance and proof of the latter, Chamberlain cites the following: "When a Jew, otherwise undistinguishable from a German enters a room, a child usually a girl, will begin to cry."[1] Western civilization is essentially a Teutonic expression. Dante was a Teuton. The Renaissance was a movement stemming from Teutonic activity in Italy. The great minds of Europe were and are Teutons. Paul and Jesus were Aryans, not Jews.

Ludwig Woltmann expounds an almost identical theory on his "Politische Anthropologie"[2] (the title itself is symptomatic—is there a political zoology?) and "Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien."[3] *All* civilization is Teutonic: Giordano Bruno was originally Braun; da Vinci, Wincke; Giotto, Jothe; Diderot, Tietroh; and Gounod, Gundiwald.

Gobineau and H. S. Chamberlain become the twin pillars of the new "scientific" structure of the Third Reich. Volume after volume sets out to prove the racial thesis: that the basic traits of body and soul, character, personality, inward "Wesen" and outward appearance —all of these are the fixed, permanent and unchangeable manifestations and attributes of "race," which, transmitted from generation to generation, are reproduced in inevitable and immutable pattern.

> ... the voice of blood and race operates down to the last refinement of thought and exercises a decisive influence on the direction of thought. Race science ... proves the existence of irreconcilable differences in soul, mind, and blood between the various races.[4]

Ernst Krieck, a German professor converted to Nazi-ism, writes,

> Each man's story begins with his people. All national will and activity in the individual is confined to his everyday life; beyond this range, he can only achieve a higher destiny and fulfilment insofar as he is gripped by the superior power of fate ... not through his own rational scheming will he be made a creative and relevant being, only through forces that work above and beneath him, that do not originate in his own self, but sweep and work their way through his self.

This is but a paraphrase, close even in terminology of Wagner's contention that

> Every musical organism is by nature womanly; it is merely a becoming and not a begetting factor; the begetting force lies clean outside it, and without fecundation by this force it positively cannot bear.[5]

His rejection of Mendelssohn is founded on this same principle of an "alien" spirit that cannot be fertilized by the Volk.

A similar expression is found in Paul Joachimsen's "Historical Psychology of the German Idea of the State" (1922):

> The doctrine of the national essence (Volksthum) shows a German concept of community as opposed to the Western notion of society. It comprehends the individual in his national relations to his environment, which determine him completely and in which alone his essence can be realized. The individual is conceived merely as a *representative of the type* and his rightful claims originate only in the natural group in which he is born.[6]

The ultimate correlation of the spiritual *Volk*-feeling with material concepts is attempted by Jakob Hommes, who, in 1934, identified *Volk*-consciousness as the test and determinant of scientific, objective truth in both the human and historical sciences: "Whatever is believed by a whole community is *ipso facto* a conviction amply tested in its truth."[7]

In "Judaism in Music," Wagner established a model which consciously or unconsciously was followed by numerous subsequent writers.[8] The psychologist, Erich Jaensch, used this particular approach in setting up an abstract pattern of a "Gegentypus" (anti-type); laboratory tests and experiments were then devised to come to the predetermined conclusion that the anti-type was most characteristically to be found in Jews.[9] The latter are represented as distracted and erratic, terms which closely parallel similar Wagnerian expressions. Singularly like Wagner's is his conclusion that the weakening of German racial structure and the consequent emergence

of a weaker type and mentality led to the acceptance of the Jews as political equals. His conclusion echoes the sentiment of the closing sentence of "Judaism in Music": "alien" elements must be removed from German life, even, if necessary, by cruel and undesirable methods.[10]

In "Judaism in Music," Wagner had included as Jews all those who either did not sense the indicated corruptions, or shrank from the task of "Sauberung," a cleansing of German music. Chamberlain utilizes this approach in writing: "One does not need to have the authentic Hittite nose to be a Jew; the term, Jew, rather denotes a special way of thinking and feeling."[11] Finally Jaensch provides an official label, "Gegentypus" and a presumable scientific basic for his conclusions already reached.

At the University of Heidelberg on December 13, 1935, Johannes Stark, physicist and winner of the Nobel prize in 1919, declared that Jewish physics and Jewish formalism in science, as represented above all by Einstein, was to be rejected as one of the decisive causes of the distress of the German people. In this speech, Stark quoted with approbation the conclusion of another Nobel prize winner, physicist Phillip Lenard, that the "Jews must be sunk to the center of the earth."[12]

The Nazi state found every confirmation and corroboration, then, for its most nefarious and sinister plans in the "proofs," even the demands of its scientists. The famous historian of literature and culture, Hans Naumann, "gave the address and his sanction for burning books banned by the Nazis in the market place in Bonn on May 10th, 1933."[13] On September 15, 1935, the Nuremburg Laws were passed.

The scientists had given their technical and moral sanction to measures which were to assume concretion

in the political and legal manifestations of suppression, expulsion, persecution, and finally, planned and premeditated murder.

This was the Wagnerian solution of "Der Untergang."

1—Klineberg, Otto, *Race Differences*, Harper and Bros. (New York, 1935) p. 5.
2—Eisenach, 1903.
3—Leipzig, 1905.
4—Tirala, Lothar G., "Rasse, Geist, und Seele," T. F. Lehman, Verlag (Munich, 1934).
5—Prose Works, *Opera and Drama*, Vol. II, p. 109.
6—Kolnai A., *op. cit.*, p. 66.
7—Hommes, Jakob, "Leben und Bildungsphilosophie als Voelskische und Katholische Aufgabe," Freiburg, 1934.
8—For a discussion of the experiments of Jaensch, see D. P. Boder, "Nazi Science" *Jewish Forum Magazine*, (Chicago, 1942) Vol. I, No. 1, p. 23.
9—In "Wagner und die Juden" Grunsky quotes the demand of a German professor that what Wagner had done in "Judaism in Music" ought to serve as a model for similar works concerned with each of the arts, sciences and industries.
10—"Der Gegentypus," Leipzig, 1938.
11—Chamberlain, H. S., *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 491.
12—Weinreich Max, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.
13—Kahle, Paul E., "Bonn University in Pre-Nazi and Nazi Times," London, 1945.

CHAPTER IX

LAW AND POLITICS

THE mystic entity of the Volk in conjunction with the concept of Race proceeds from Wagner through those individuals associated with him, to achieve a culmination in the Germany of Hitler, Goebbels and Rosenberg.

One of the most important individuals linking Wagner and Hitler was the former's son-in-law, Houston S. Chamberlain. Before Hitler, one of Chamberlain's strongest advocates was Kaiser Wilhem II. Not only did the Kaiser read the "Foundations of the 19th Century" to his son, but he had this work distributed among the officers of the German Army. In addition, funds were made available for its wide distribution in schools, libraries and reading rooms.

"Both Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain obtained their pernicious influence on the German people through their connection with Wagner and the people around him."[1] To these two must also be added Ludwig Schemann, translator of all four volumes of Gobineau, founder of a Gobineau museum, Professor of Physical Anthropology at the University of Freiburg, and himself the author of three large volumes on race: "Die Rasse in der Geistes Wissenschaften" (1928-31). The fourth volume of his Gobineau translation is dedicated "To the

departed spirit of Richard Wagner." In the introduction to this volume Schemann wrote:

> If without conceit I may declare that the Germans could only learn of Gobineau through my translation, so should they know to whom they are indebted for this gift. . . Richard Wagner was the first, who in tones of overwhelming enthusiasm first spoke to me of Gobineau. He little suspected then what this great deed was to mean to me; when I look back, however, on that consecrated hour . . . etc.[2]

Elsewhere, Schemann credits Wagner with the revealment (Ausbreitung) of Gobineau. "Gobineau's doctrine and Wagner's art complement each other, like the letters and the image of a coin, the golden coin of Germandom."[3]

By race, wrote Schemann,

> we mean a definite psycho-physical type which is common to a larger national and tribal circle of men, and maintains itself by hereditary descent . . . Race is the alpha and omega of the life of nations in its entirety.

"The state," wrote Hitler, "must place racial value in the center of general life." For Schemann "the struggle between Semitism and Aryanism is *the* gist (das Fazit) of all history up to the present."

It is but another of the paradoxes to which we have frequently alluded that the State which realized so many of Wagner's ideals, nevertheless was one which violently contradicted his own political outlook. In 1850 he had written of the

> influence of the State with its perpetual tendency to make everything uniform, and to suppress with more and more

> deadly power, the might of free personality... This wicked political State lives entirely on the vices of Society the virtues of which are the product of the human individuality exclusively. The State is the oppressor of society in proportion as the latter turns its vicious side to the individual.[4]

In view of this and similar contentions against a dominant state, Wagner's high repute under the Third Reich may seem inconsistent. Actually the contradition is implicit in Wagner himself, for, while on the one hand he inveighed against the tyrannical state and its curtailment of individual liberty, on the other he insisted on the gemeinschaftliche Noth, the common want, the rightness of mass feeling. This very belief in the rightness of mass feeling, however, joined to the concepts of a superior race, was to provide the social and philosophical basis for the German Fascist State, an entity to which the individual was to be necessarily subordinate.

It may seem that in projecting the lines of Wagnerian influence through the laws and politics of the Third Reich, one might be accused of exaggerating Wagner's personal influence, and of isolating only one of several similar contemporaneous expressions, each of which might claim with like justice the amount and kind of influence which is here attributed to Wagner. It is true that in individuals like Heinrich von Treitschke, Ernst Hasse, and Heinrich Class, and in institutions like the Pan-German League founded in 1891, there is a cultural arrogance and an aggresive anti-Semitism which equals that of Wagner. But Wagner precedes these, and even their chauvinism is not uninfluenced by the composer's nationalism; however, where Wagner had thought in terms of cultural leadership and dominance and had warned against the lust for power, the German militar-

ists translated Kultur into Germany's moral right to world domination. Furthermore, the two individuals who most influenced the racial thinking of Germany after Wagner did so primarily because of the weight and prestige of the composer, who had served as a magnetic focus, attracting all similarly inclined Germans. It is a tragic paradox that these two were neither of them Germans; yet, Gobineau, the Frenchman, and Chamberlain, the renegade Englishman, both contributed to that German state of mind which was to bring so much anguish to their own native lands.

Finally there is this ultimate reason for relating Wagner to the legal and political aspects of Fascist Germany: Wagner had started certain lines of thought, and continued others; the projection of these lines into the history of our present helps to form the very outlines and patterns of the most characteristic legal and cultural manifestations of the Third Reich.

What were some of these manifestations?

Wagner had established the "gemeinschaftliche Noth", the *feeling* of a collective want or need as the basis of Volk-unity and identity. We have seen how this notion of "right-feeling" was derived from Romanticism, assuming a national expression in Jahn. This mystic significance of "Volk" was not destined to remain merely the subject of racial tracts and aesthetic discussions. The instinctive "right" of Volk-feeling became the actual, tangible basis of law. The notorious Nuremburg laws were but the beginning. A pamphlet by Erick Wolf on "Right Law in the National Socialist State" declares

> This law, really living in us, lived by us, is the right one. For an un-real, un-vital law is the negation of law . . . Right law means law in harmony with the essence of the Volk. The foundations of a new law are laid wherever real *Volk* life at

> the present is striving. Living law in practice begins to crystallize in the unwritten laws of comradeship among the S.A. and S.S. troops or the new customs of living that flourish in the ranks of the Hitler youth.

Legal justice, consequently, is based not on established precedent or some attempted standard, but on *unerring racial instinct.* A judge could therefore issue a verdict without any necessary reference to any established law. According to the German law code, section 176(a) put into effect June 26, 1935, the public prosecutor may punish any misdemeanor or misdeed not provided for in written law, but "which deserves punishment according to *sound popular judgment.*" This becomes the legal analogue of Chamberlain's "rational" anthropology, and Wagner's Volk-institution. In America it is sometimes known as "lynch law."

In "Judaism in Music" Wagner had characterized as anti-German all those who, not Jewish by descent, were either insensitive to the dangers and corruptions of Judaism (and hence lacking in true Volk-intuition) or, though aware of the danger, did nothing to combat or counteract it. Similarly, Werner Sombart speaks of "frightening the Jewish spirit which is manifest in many non-Jews as well as Jews." We have noted that when Wagner called the Jews the "evil conscience of mankind" he was referring to the sense of guilt and the concept of conscience which he believed Christianity derived from Judaism. In a similar vein Wilhelm Stapel, author of a book on anti-Semitism,[5] attacks the concept of equality before the law, writing "Terrestrial justice is the basic notion of all Jewish ethics."

The classical principal of *nulla poena sine lege* (no penalty without law) becomes superseded in the Germany of 1934. In the series "The German State of Today"

more than a dozen leading jurists collaborated in justifying the legal foundation of the Third Reich. "Neutral research," one authority wrote "was dead... research now was the institutional reality of the spiritual realm."[6]

Wagner had written that he had

> no hesitation about styling the subsequent revolutions (in the first half of the 19th century) entirely un-German. 'Democracy' in Germany is purely a translated thing. It exists merely in the press, and what this German press is one must find out for oneself.

In this same essay he refers to "This translated Franco-Judaic-German democracy."[7] Following this particular line of thought, Franz Haiser contended that the "conclusive method of settling the Jewish question consists in extirpating democracy as a whole, and this purge must be carried out internationally."[8] Haiser's work shows the clear impress of Wagner's influence, in his attitude towards Jews, democracy, and Jesuitism. His use of the phrase "the microbe which invades our organism" is almost a direct quotation from Wagner's essay on *Judaism in Music.*

The extirpation of democracy which Haiser had demanded as necessary on an international scale was to begin in the Fatherland. In 1933 Landsgerichtsprasident, Dr. Dietrich of Hochingen, officially ruled that any action which would aid in achieving the national goal

> is to be considered without further ceremony a motive for excluding guilt. Thus the judge who already has the courage freely to interpret the law may now find the right way in the appropriate situation. In this, he also treads old Teutonic

> paths. As is well known, among our forefathers the inner enemy used to be outlawed and became a man without honor, without right and peace, an outcast. Each Volk member could openly slay him as long as he was not at sanctuary. Infamous is the nation that does not stake everything on its honor. Exterminating without remainder the inner enemy is doubtless part of restituting German honor.[9]

Thus, having been given every legal justification, the leaders of the Third Reich could proceed with a clear conscience, to establish the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Triblinka, Dachau, Warsaw, Buchenwald, and Bergen-Belsen.

The hour of restitution of German honor was at hand. The demon was about to be beaten from the field.

1—Hertz, F., *op. cit.*, p. 361.
2—Gobineau, A. T., *op. cit.*, tr. L. Schemann. Vol. IV, p. vii.
3—Schemann, L., "Die Rassenfragen im Schriftum der Neuzeit." Munchen, J. F. Lehmann's Verlag, 1931, p. 444.
4—Prose Works, *Opera and Drama*, Vol. II.
5—Stapel, Wilhelm, "Antisemitismus und Antigermanismus," Hamburg, 1928.
6—Ritterbusch, Dr. Paul, *Idee und Aufgabe der Reichuniversitaet*, Hamburg Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935.
7—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. IV, p. 166.
8—Haiser, Franz. "Die Judenfrage vom Standpunkt der Herrenmoral." Leipzig, 1926.
9—Deutsche Juristenzeitung, June 1, 1933, quoted by M. Weinreich, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

CHAPTER X

CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

DURING his lifetime, Mendelssohn was considered the greatest living composer. Yet, in less than a century, a prominent historian could write, "It is the fashion today to deny him any value at all."[1]

Some critics have sought an explanation of the decline of Mendelssohn's reputation in the more impassioned romanticism of the late nineteenth century, or in the over-valuation which characterized the popular and critical contemporary attitude towards the composer. There have been composers, of course, who enjoyed an enormous popularity in their own time and who are all but forgotten now. In Mendelssohn's case, the interesting fact is that, despite critical disdain, his principal works have always remained in the repertoire; there is a measure of musical and sheer performance satisfaction in such compositions as "Elijah," the violin concerto, the Italian and Scotch Symphonies, his Songs Without Words, and the "Variations Serieuses" that have kept these and other works of his alive despite a certain condescension on the part of "educated" musicians and listeners. So persistent and omnipresent has this condescending attitude become, that many performers assume an apologetic or defense-mechanism aggressiveness in performing Mendelssohn's work; these sense a conflict between

an "official" attitude and their own feelings or attraction towards the compositions.

The return to favor of much of Mendelssohn's music is reflected in the words of a contemporary critic, who writes that

> One of the interesting musical features of this century will be discovered by future historiographers to be the restoration of the fame of Felix Mendelssohn. The music of that genius fell under the somewhat frigid disapproval of earnest concert-goers toward the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This probably was the preliminary symptom of the anti-romantic movement, and partly may have been due to the over-adulation given to the music of the composer during his lifetime, and long after his death.[2]

In view of Mendelssohn's own opposition to extreme romanticism, from both a personal and a musical stand point, it is somewhat inaccurate to refer to his neglect as the "preliminary symptom of the anti-romantic movement." If anything, his return to favor at this time may very well be attributed in part to the present-day opposition towards emotional extremism, and to the absence of that extremism from Mendelssohn's music.

One may grant that changes in taste and reaction from excessive adulation may account for part of the neglect of Mendelssohn. But the more important reasons are to be found in an extra-musical cause. That cause is rooted in Wagner's attacks on Mendelssohn. For those immediately susceptible to his reasoning, any liking for Mendelssohn's music became an evidence of weakness and corruption in their own character, and they would naturally tend to *create* a dislike in order to fortify themselves against the danger of succumbing to that music. There were many, of course, who opposed Wagner and

rallied behind Mendelssohn. But as the prestige and reputation of Wagner increased, his opinions correspondingly were accorded more importance, and became more influential. His association with German nationalism when nationalistic feeling was increasing strengthened in parallel measure his already great influence. Those Germans who accepted Wagner's premise of race descent could never bring themselves to admit that a spiritual and racial "auslander" could and did achieve a consummate mastery in an art which all nineteenth century Europe had come to consider a particularly German province. Historians, such as Brendel, Grunsky, Moser and many others, strengthened and reaffirmed Wagner's condemnation. Their history texts had a wide circulation not only in Germany but in other countries of Europe, being translated or freely copied. In addition, one must recall that Germany was the mecca of all aspiring musicians, particularly instrumentalists, in the nineteenth century. While it is true that associates of Brahms, Joachim, and the Conservatories helped counteract the Wagnerian influence, the latter eventually triumphed.

We have seen that the anti-Semitic bias of several historians did not openly reveal itself until corroborated and evoked by the Nazi State. In their earlier criticism these historians had stressed the deficiencies of Mendelssohn from an apparently "objective" musical viewpoint. Individuals who in themselves might be free of any racial bias, accepted this apparently "objective" criticism at its face value without realizing that, instead of being objectively musical, the true basis of the criticism was subjectively racial; that, for these historians, any music by Mendelssohn was subject to an *a priori* classification regardless of its inherent worth, content, or beauty. When Newman writes that "Mendelssohn's re-

putation, as well as Meyerbeer's, calls for a defense against the blinder Wagner partisans,"[3] he is markedly understating the case. For it is not only the "blinder Wagner partisans" who have been strongly influenced.

It is a paradox that Treitschke, as rabid a nationalist as Wagner, found in Mendelssohn

> a German from tip to toe. Among foreigners he was never fully understood by Frenchmen, only by Bretons of Germanic kin-race. Since this musician, known and beloved throughout the whole of Germany, commenced wielding his baton in Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfort and Leipzig, music, which had degenerated into sheer entertainment, regained esteem as the highest of arts. It is to him that Germans have to be grateful if their audiences have retained a nucleus of pure taste.[4]

It might seem that a logical reaction to Wagner's kind of racial thinking, particularly on the part of those who were its victims, would be an antipathy or opposition to racial thinking in general. Most often, however, the contrary is true, for racial antagonisms breed racial defensives. Frequently, objections to the racism of the Third Reich did not attack basic premises but derived conclusions. In such instances, racial purity was not itself called into question; it was affirmed that the Aryans were not the *only* pure race, and the Nordic branch of the Aryans was not a superior race. Race notions were accepted, but with a transfer of complimentary labels. Thus Moses Hess, Ludwig Lewisohn and Lazare Saminsky merely removed the stigma from an assumed Jewish race, replacing this by laudatory encomiums praising that "race."

The inevitable effect of racial arrogation, whether on the part of the Germans, French, English, Italians, or

any others, is the development of an antagonism or, at the very least, a condescension towards other nations. Individuals do not recognize the errors and the dangers of racial propaganda and racial hatred because these provide an outlet for the desire of most people to act aggressively; distortions and outright prevarications are not recognized as long as these are rationalizations and justifications of either emotional attitudes or aggresive actions.

Racial thinking such as Wagner's has another effect—the unifying of its victims. Just as in times of stress the body reacts by the production of more white corpuscles or by the secretion of adrenalin, there is a defensive reaction on the part of those attacked. They achieve a kind of co-operation, and individuals or groups may be spurred to greater efforts and greater accomplishments. The necessity for making positive responses to successive challenges may fortify and strengthen a group or nation. But it may also place certain values out of focus, and result in an exaggeration of what would normally be positive qualities. Thus aggressiveness, hypersensitivity, and suspicion are often concommitant results of achievements in the face of great opposition.[5]

In times of stress, a reaction as violent as its cause may be set up, so that one may well express the very kind of spirit to which strenuous objection is taken. Thus Carl Engel, writing in the Musical Quarterly and referring to Wagner as the great musical "verfuhrer who fanned the fires of Naziism," actually considered the advisability of burning all of Wagner's writings and music because of their content and as an answer to the book burning at Bonn.[6] Similarly, during the first World War another writer, L. D. Frost, could assert,

> Let us avow ourselves, when once the peoples around us will understand what German art and German poetry are they will hate these just as much as German militarism. Today, they still nurse illusions about it... There is no contradiction between German reality and the German spirit.[7]

In a remark of Thomas Mann's, uttered on the occasion of Germany's entry into World War I in 1914, some may find an apparent corroboration of Frost's bitter denunciation:

> How the hearts of our poets were immediately ablaze once war was declared. The military spirit is akin to the spirit of 'art'. German militarism is the manifestation of German morality. The militarism inherent in the German soul—this is what refuses to recognize the civilian spirit as a final ideal of mankind.[8]

That these words could have been uttered by so profoundly human a soul as Mann's, by one so ultimately democratic in feeling is but an attest of how powerful an influence the prevailing assumptions had become. In Mann's remarks we have also a concrete realization of the transition from art and culture dominance to military dominance. With keen intuitive insight Wagner had recognized this lust for power as a potential danger to the Germans themselves, and had warned against yielding to it. In Mann this yielding not only takes place, but symbolically enough, it is not the work of a militarist but of a leading writer and thinker.

But Frost is wrong, just as Mann was wrong, in disregarding the great body of German literature and art which is non-military, truly universal and represents the hope of redemption for a people who had adopted a social religion built on false idols and untenable dogmas.[9]

Perhaps the most serious effect of Wagner's racial thinking on those who are his followers is the crippling or actual paralysis of critical judgment. In a larger sphere racism, stimulating group conceit, eventually has the same result: values are distorted, emotions poisoned and judgments made blind. Prejudices and hate not only tend to warp personalities but to hinder the exercise of rational and objective thought.[10] If one follows Wagner in believing the soul to be the attribute of a tribe, instead of a personal possession or expression, the evaluation of a person's creative work is made on the basis of certain *a priori* considerations: these may be totally at variance with either the demonstrable facts or the aesthetically true. Cosima, commenting on the picture of Joachim's daughter, indicated certain objectionable and reprehensible qualities supposedly revealed in the photograph. What Cosima saw was not the true picture but a reflection of her own state of mind, a distorted and corrupted image.

A musical composition is much less tangible than a photograph and much more susceptible to differing or conflicting aesthetic opinions. But the same distorted perspective and lack of reality that characterized Cosima's opinion of the photograph may affect not only the critical but also the emotional reactions of a listener. It is not only possible, it is necessary to make this distinction here. Critical appraisals represent an intellectual reaction, sifted through the emotions, true enough, but ultimately involving the exercise of reason in an expression of opinion. A normal response by a conditioned listener involves an immediate emotional reaction on the direct basis of the music heard. A predetermined attitude that contradicts or interferes with this normal response by directing the emotions in channels contrary

to what would be the normal reaction, results not only in a distortion of critical opinion, but in an actual inner confusion and subconscious conflict in the individual. Instead of developing and completing itself, the emotion is aborted, and an inner disharmony and disagreement is set up. Instead of being recognized for what it is in origin and content, this feeling of disharmony is reprojected and blamed on the music. In a certain sense the music is the cause, but not as a result of its inherent content, but because of the warping and distortion of his own emotions by the listener. This, then, is the basis of the rejection of Mendelssohn by many who honestly felt they were being objective.

As a concrete instance of how prejudice may cripple judgment, cloud the understanding and pervert values, consider the following "Wagnerian" critique of a piano concerto:

> In the first movement, note the descending thirds, tinkling superficial music to appeal to a jaded appetite seeking mere entertainment. Note the augmented seconds, undeniably the expression of the synagogue; our staunch Western music indulges in no such soft orientalism. And in the second movement, this inane recitative-like melody, is it not rooted in the melismas of the Hebraic art-taste which has so poisoned our true German music? How typical is this movement: no definition, no sense of direction, this music that negates the "Volksthum" of our people in its vagueness, its uncertainty, that would cause us to lose our grip on reality, so that we may be rendered even more powerless to resist the inroads of an insidious influence—this is the very musical embodiment of sheer impotence. In the last movement, note the artificial symmetry of the thematic construction, mechanical and unfelt, the padding that derives whatever sustenance it has from musical corpses, devoid of the living spirit. How farcical

> this work would be were it not a tragedy that so many of our true Germans are misled into thinking that *this* is their music, that *this* is an expression of their native genius. Into what hands has our destiny been given!

Wagner did not write this, but such a reception could this work have met had it actually been composed by Mendelssohn: the descending thirds, the augmented seconds, the recitative of the slow movement, the symmetry of the last movement's themes—all of these might have served as a springboard for Wagner's criticism, concerned not with the music, primarily, but with an antecedent attitude.

For this composition, with its thirds, augmented seconds, recitative slow movement (wonderful, wonderful movement) and symmetrical themes, is Beethoven's great Piano Concerto Number Four in G Major, Opus 58.

1—Landormy, Paul, "History of Music" (First Ed. 1910), tr. by F. H. Marten. Charles Scribner and Sons, (New York, 1926), p. 207.

2—Borowski, Felix, *Chicago Sun*, June 14, 1947. For a similar expression see H. O. Schoenberg, "Mendelssohn," *Musical Digest*, New York, Oct. 1947. pp. 22-28.

3—Newman, E., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 382.

4—Heinrich von Treitschke, "Deutsche Geschichte," quoted in "Mendelssohn's Letters," Pantheon Books, Inc., (New York, 1945) p. 12.

5—"The heart of the tragedy lies in the fact that a penalization which stimulates a penalized minority to a heroic response is apt to warp its human nature as well." A. Toynbee. "A Study of History" (abridgement by D. C. Somervell) Oxford University Press, (New York and London, 1947) p. 304.

6—Musical Quarterly, April, 1941.

7—Quoted by A. Kolnai, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

8—*Ibid.*, pp. 514-515. See also Mann's "Dr. Faustus," pp. 299-301.

9—For a study specifically concerned with the incidence of democratic ideas in German literature see John F. Coar, "Studies in German Literature in the Nineteenth Century," New York, Macmillan, 1903.

10—"Racialism if not vigorously kept in hand fosters the growth of injustice, inhumanity and fanaticism in general. It soon permeates the whole atmosphere and poisons all relations." F. Hertz, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

PART III

A CRITICAL EVALUATION

"There has seldom been a human life presenting such an artistic web of conscious untruth and self-deceiving world conceit. No one understood better than Wagner how to transform petty feelings into bombastic presentations, to inflate lowly and sometimes sordid little interests into matters of national importance, the destiny of the German people. This is the point where both his life and his art assumed a potential danger for the future of German culture."

P. H. Lang

CHAPTER XI

RACE CONCEPTS

UP to this point, we have outlined the origins, expressions, and effects of Wagner's racial thinking. We have not yet subjected that thinking to any critical evaluation in terms of its basic premise:—the actual existence of a German race, destined to leadership and dominance, and the existence of inferior races destined to subservience. This concept of race involves an aggregate of distinctive and separative attributes or characters being transmitted by the germ plasm from one generation to another, with every important aspect of body, spirit, mind and personality so transmitted. No people and no country has produced such an enormous literature on race and the national character as has the German, and in no country has it ever assumed the aspect of an official attitude as in the Germany of Treitschke, Bismarck,[1] Wilhelm II, and Hitler. The objective of this racial literature has been the transmutation of values in order to make these values conform to, corroborate, or intensify a political and cultural arrogation.

Lest it be thought, however, that racial thinking is exclusively a German prerogative, it might not be out of place to indicate the occurrence or prevalence of such thinking among other peoples.[2]

Among the French, Gobineau, Renan, and Taine

consider race as an immutable determinant. The music critics, Fetis, Tiersot, and Boschot take racial characteristics for granted and base many of their critical opinions on this assumption. The authors, Balzac, Merimee, Lamartine, and Victor Hugo, similarly reflect the prevalence of a belief in the hereditary entities of cultural and national groups. The recognized and respected historian of modern art, Elie Faure, adopts the Gobineau thesis of white, yellow, and black races with their predetermined characteristics. His book, *The Three Drops of Blood*[3] is dedicated "To the tragic genius of the hybrids, Michel Montaigne, Jean Racine, H. de Balzac, Eugene Delacroix, rhythm breakers and rhythm creators."

Though Wagner would never credit Mendelssohn with being a "rhythm creator" there is a marked parallel in Wagner's characterization of Mendelssohn as an exemple of a "complete tragic conflict" and Faure's phrase "the tragic genius of the hybrids." In *Literature Considered in Relation to Society* (1800) Madame de Stael wrote, "One must seek in a people as in a man his characteristic trait; all others are the effects of a thousand diverse chances; that one trait alone constitutes his being." In another of her works[4] she derives the German characteristics as exemplified in Romanticism from the nature of the race—the good, simple, dreamy, melancholy, sentimental, and the musical. Latins, on the contrary she describes as more practical and wordly, masters in the art of domination.

Sometimes conflicting judgments arise out of attempts to explain an individual in terms of racial attributes. Thus Rabelais is a Frank to Paul Rosenfeld, an old Gallic spirit to Bazalgette, and J. J. Ampere finds in him "a return to pure Latinity." To Paul Rosenfeld, Berlioz is Gallic-Roman, to Tiersot he is classic Latin, and

Boschot sees in the Romantic French composer a German, attempting to find a Germanic root of his name in "Berl." To Gatti, Bloch is Hebraic, but not Judaic, to Saminsky, Bloch's is the music of the Ghetto rather than that of the Prophets, and for Idelsohn, eminent Jewish music-historian, Bloch's music has nothing "racial" in it at all.[5]

Among the English, Carlyle's assumption of racial dominance, the exaltation of a "Führer", brings him close in spirit to the Germans of his day and later. In his *Crown of Wild Olives,* Ruskin emphasizes that aspect of art which is the product of a social expression rather than individual achievement, and associates with this viewpoint the virtues of a "pure race". Mosley with his "Black Shirts" in England, and the "Cagoulards" in France represent crystallizations of a national-racial outlook similar in character to that of German and Italian fascism.

Among Americans, Madison Grant, Lathrop Stoddard, Henry Fairfield Osborne, Charles D. Meigs, Charles Lindberg, Pelley, and Gerald L. K. Smith represent levels of racial expression ranging from the scholarly to gutter demagoguery.

In his "History of Jewish Music", Idelsohn assumes the reality of race, declaring, however, that "Race alone does not make for originality in music. It serves merely as fertile soil, which, when sown with seeds of the spiritual culture of that race, bears distinctive fruits."[6]

Whether for purposes of self-glorification or deprecation of others, the notion of race as defining socio-cultural human groups with associated mental and physical characteristics has been widely adopted as a kind of credo, a dogma self-evident, axiomatic, sup-

ported if need be by a host of "scientific" and anthropologic writers.

But many writers, scientists among them, had themselves taken for granted the very premises which their researches were supposed to prove. Confusion resulted from lack of definition, definition as to meaning, and definition as to outlining specific fields of inquiry.

> Geneticists believe that anthropologists have decided what a race is. Ethnologists assume that their classifications embody principles which genetic science has proved correct. Politicians believe that their prejudices have the sanction of genetic laws and the findings of physical anthropology to sustain them.[7]

If the concept of race involves an aggregate of distinctive and inherited traits characteristic of a group united by nationality and language, certain questions must be answered. To what extent are physical characters inherited, to what extent acquired? To what extent are mental qualities inherited? Is there a specific predetermined association between mental and physical characters?

The already complex problems of inheritance become enormously more so when the factual evidence of the intermingling of peoples and nations is considered.[8] The early migrations in Europe, with the Celts passing from Western Europe through Italy as far east as Asia Minor; the teutonic migrations westward and south even as far as North Africa; the movements of the Slavs across Russia to the North and across the Balkans to the South; the Moors in Spain; the colonization of the Mediterranean area as well as Europe by the Romans; the mass migrations to America; the intermarriages and mixed births which are the inevitable aftermaths of wars; all

of these factors make the problem of attempting to isolate "pure" characters impossible.

The problem is still further complicated, if one attempts to consider the modifying influence of place, time, climate, and differing social relationships in shaping human behavior.

> If, with each human social group, the geneticist finds it impossible to discover with any reasonable certainty the genetic basis of behavior, the problems must seem extraordinarily difficult when groups are contrasted with each other, and when the differences are obviously connected not only with material advantages and disadvantages resulting from location, climate, soil, and mineral wealth, but with traditional customs, religious taboos, conventions, and prejudices.[9]

An actual unit-carrier of character is, in the opinion of H. S. Jennings of Johns Hopkins University, nonexistent. "Characters are not inherited at all; certain material which will produce a particular character under certain conditions is inherited."[10]

For centuries writers have used the word "blood" in both a literal and symbolic sense to indicate inherent traits and distinctive qualities. Not until the past few decades were the biologically diverse blood types identified. After the determination of the specific factors A, B, AB, O, M, N, and Rh, anthropologists endeavored to find whether or not there was any connection of blood type with either race or ethnic grouping. The available evidence points to the conclusion stated by A. L. Kroeber, that blood type does not occur in broad conformity with race. One possible reason for the irrelevance of blood-type to race is that the former is but a single trait, whereas "race is an expression of the total or average coherence of many traits."

The word "race" has acquired so many connotative and denotative associations, that some anthropologists have wished to discard it altogether. By a consensus of opinion, however, from three to five or six large divisions of mankind are recognized. In the five-fold division are Caucasian, Mongolian, Negro, Australian-Melanesian, and Polynesian.[12] There are subdivisions within each division or race, and innumerable gradations from one to another. The classification is most frequently made on the basis of stature, color, and hair-texture. Physical and cultural differences are maintained by reason of separating and isolating factors and other barriers. There is no identity of race and nation; national boundaries have been changed time and time again without corresponding changes in the racial attributes or identity of the peoples involved. Neither can there be any identity of race with language. The present European languages are all compounds. One cannot speak of the "Latins" as a race, because Latin as a description of language refers to French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, or Romanian. These are all Latin in origin. When one recalls that South Americans are included in the term "Latin" the word becomes quite meaningless in its ambiguity.

Consequently, it is wrong to speak of an Italian, a German, or an English "race." These are linguistic or national definitives. Germans, for example, include Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean types of the Caucasian race.

The word "Aryan" as applied to race is equally meaningless. As a philological term it designates the parent source from which most European languages are derived. Max Muller, who at first believed that one could speak of an Aryan race, later declared himself in error and expressed the opinion that an anthropologist who speaks

of an Aryan race or Aryan blood sins as greatly as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar.

There is no evidence of innate mental capacities or innate differences in mental capacities associated with the large divisions of mankind comprising racial groups, or their subdivisions. Consequently, there is no basis for the supposition that by reason of superior native endowment, one group is justified in the domination or exploitation of another.

The Wagner-Gobineau theory of race

> has no basis in scientific fact nor in any other kind of demonstrable fact. It is a pure myth, and it is the tragic myth of our tragic era. . . . The so-called races merely represent different kinds of temporary mixtures of genetic materials common to all mankind. . . . All the varieties of man belong to the same species and have the same remote ancestry.[13]

Brown shirts in Germany, Black shirts in Italy and France, the Silver shirts in America, Cagoulards, the Ku-Klux-Klan, all testify to the enormous and monstrous influence of this myth on contemporary life. The perpetuation of this myth, even in tacit assumptions, precludes any ultimate kind of unity and understanding among the peoples and nations.

It becomes evident, then, that a Jewish "race" does not factually exist.

> There is no "Semitic" race; when Arabs and Jews are described as Semites, all that can legitimately be meant is that Arabic and Hebrew both belong to a group of languages known as Semitic. As to physical type Arabs are predominantly Mediterranean. Many Jews belong to the same general

> type but these are definitely in the minority; if there is any one type which occurs more frequently than another it is the Alpine. There is clearly no one physical type which can be described as Semitic. As far as Jews are concerned, a very large number of investigations have revealed so much variability in physical type with skin color ranging from very blond to very dark, and cephalic index from extreme dalichocephaly to extreme brachycephaly that almost all anthropologists (with the exception of those whose views are influenced by purely political considerations) agree that a *distinctively "Jewish race" does not exist.* In every country, Jews approximate the physical type of the people among whom they live.[14]

The commonly held opinion that Jews are distinguished by physical and behavior traits which on the one hand set them apart from other people and on the other bind them into a cohesive unit is one entertained by both friends and enemies. Considering physical characteristics, this opinion could only become tenable if it were possible to prove the existence of a unified and detached group which maintained its separate identity from the time of its historical origins to the present. The actual facts altogether controvert this supposition. The first converts to Abraham's religion were members of several Arabic tribes. Canaanites, Amorites, Hivites, Egyptians, and Hittites were all represented, and absorbed in Jewish communities. During their Diaspora or Dispersion, the Jews intermingled with the populations of the various nations and states: Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, the Roman Empire, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Galicia, the Western Ukraine, America. Because of this intermixture, Jewish groups vary in terms of hair color, eye color, cephalic index, depending on the specific community, and independent of any kind of an international standard.[15] Specifically referring to Hebrews, Boas has indicated that

> the differences between immigrants and *their own* European-born children are always less than those between them and their own American born children and the differences agree in direction and value with those obtained from the general population.[16]

Distinctive culture traits with which Jews may be identified are not biological or innate, not bound up with inherited or hereditary qualities transmitted by the germ plasm. These culture traits are the outgrowth of a quasi-national character which the Jews have succeeded in maintaining throughout the centuries of dispersion. Such traits as gesticulations or aggressiveness are environmentally determined. The so-called business acumen is similarly a reaction to external factors rather than a manifestation of inherent inclinations. The feudal system banned Jews from owning land, the Guilds banned them from participation in industry or manufacturing. Trade, commerce and banking were among the few occupations left open. The thesis of Wagner, that Jews turn away from the actual cultivation of the land in a desire to avoid hard physical labor is controverted by the Palestine agricultural colonies established in the middle decades of this century. Scholastic and musical abilities are similarly attributes of cultural-environmental determination. Learning has been a historical tradition, and it provided one of the principal means of breaking through the restrictions and prejudices of various social groups and communities. To the extent that these activities, scholastic and musical, represented *personal expressions,* they also became means of achieving objectives unhampered by externally imposed limitations. An individual may be either a Jew by culture, or a Jew in religion, or he may be both; the absence of one does not preclude the possibility of the other. As for a Jewish archetype,

> From the standpoint of scientific classification, from the standpoint of physical anthropology, and from the standpoint of zoology, there is no such thing as a Jewish type, and certainly there is not, nor was there ever anything remotely resembling a Jewish 'race' or ethnic group. . . .

Jews "are and always have been a socio-cultural entity, best described as a quasi-national group"—which has "preserved and transmitted religious and cultural traditions and modes of conduct."[17]

There are various prejudices and concepts which give rise to anti-Semitism, and Wagner reflects and develops the principal types: the prejudice of xenophobia, the fear and suspicion of the stranger; the prejudice of escapism and of frustration, wherein a scapegoat is sought; the prejudice of religious differences; and the prejudice of race-concepts. From Tacitus to Hitler racial doctrines originate in disappointment, despair and frustration. Such doctrines have necessarily a negative basis and a negative result, stimulating a suspicion and hatred that ultimately warp and destroy judgment and humaneness.

Prejudices often rise out of social and economic maladjustments. When judgments rooted in prejudices or partisan-viewpoints pretend to have found either the cause or the cure of such maladjustments, the possibility of any ultimate solution becomes correspondingly remote and delayed. Far from clarifying a problem, such judgments so confuse it that true causes are ignored and obscured and possible remedies overlooked or disregarded.

Race theories, writes Jacques Barzun,

> occur in the minds of men for an ulterior purpose, which once set in motion suggests a literally infinite series of possible systems, more and more complex as civilization expands, more and more abstract as the changing standards of moral-

> ity demand an ever more intellectual rationalization for the concealment of primitive aggressiveness and snobbery.[18]

Similarly, John Stuart Mill wrote:

> Of all the vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent national differences.[19]

Thriving amongst the people who are often unaware of its real origin and direction, this mode of thought eventtually becomes charged with distrust and hatred; it offers a convenient escape from the responsibilities of one's own actions and errors, and ultimately ends by denying the diversities of individuals within a group, and the truly inherent similarities of all human beings.

The "hope of assimilation" which Wagner seems to hold out in the 1869 addition to *Judaism in Music* is merely an illusory one. If the tenets of racist belief are adhered to, there can be no compromise. Wagner himself swings from the superficial tolerance of the 1869 revision to the sentiment of the original last sentence of "*Judaism in Music*" wherein "der Untergang" is indicated as a final solution. Franz Brendel, editor of the "Neue Zeitschrift" at the time of the essay's first publication defends Wagner's (Freigedank's) opinions in an article published July 4, 1851, which terminates the controversial exchange initiated by the polemic.[20] Supporting Wagner's views, Brendel indicates the religious and cultural dualism of the German Jew. But Mendelssohn, known to be a Christian, and certainly culturally integrated, was not acceptable. Many, perhaps the great majority of Germans, were at one with him and proud of his achievements, but the minority who rejected him were those who ultimately

turned Germany to Hitlerism. As defined by Brendel and as clarified by Grunsky, the Wagnerian attitude towards Jews in Germany pointed irrevocably in one direction: to Hitler, the laws of Nuremburg, the "science" of Jaensch, and the ovens of Auschwitz.

Only an economically and morally corrupt state could adopt the racial thesis of the Wagner-Gobineau-Chamberlain complex. That Wagner's racial thinking was rooted in an egocentric perspective did not lessen its ultimate influence in the field of national politics and aesthetics.

> There has seldom been a human life presenting such an artistic web of conscious untruth and self-deceiving world conceit. No one understood better than Wagner how to transform petty feelings into bombastic presentations, to inflate lowly and sometimes sordid little interests into matters of national importance, the destiny of the German people. This is the point where both his life and his art assumed a potential danger for the future of German culture.[21]

1—With Bismarck, however, the national rather than the racial destiny of Germany was ever paramount.

2—We will note here only the racial thinkers of the nineteenth century. Among earlier writers Tacitus and Count Henry De Boulainvelliers (1658-1722) may be noted.

3—Paris, 1929.

4—"Allemagne," 1810, p. 13.

5—See Leon Stein, "The Problem of Ernest Bloch," *Jewish Forum Magazine, Chicago,* Vol. V, No. 1, Fall, 1946.

6—Idelsohn, Z., *Jewish Music.* (New York, 1932), Henry Holt and Co., p. 476.

7—Hogben, Lancelot, *Genetic Principles in Medicine and Social Science,* (New York, 1932), A. A. Knopf.

8—See the genealogy of Darwin in H. E. Barnes, "History and Social Intelligence," (New York, 1926) A. A. Knopf Co., p. 225. Every European nationality is involved in his ancestry.

9—T. H. Morgan quoted in J. Barzun, *op. cit.,* pp. 298-299.

10—Quoted by G. A. Dorsey in Beard's "Whither Mankind." p. 242.

11—Kroeber, A. L. *Anthropology,* Harcourt, Brace Co. (New York, 1948) pp. 158-175. See also Allison Davis, *The Distribution of Blood Groups and the Concept of Race* in *Political Arithmetic,* ed. Lancelot Hogben, Macmillan (New York, 1938).

12—The threefold division recognized by Klineberg, Kroeber, Hrdlicka, Ripley and Dr. Henry Field are Negroid (black), Mongoloid (yellow-brown), and Caucasian (white). Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean are considered subdivisions of Caucasian.

13—Ashley-Montagu, M. F., "Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race." Columbia University Press, (New York, 1942) pp. 10, 41-47.

14—Klineberg, Otto, "Race Differences," Harper and Brothers, (New York. 1935), p. 22. Hrdlicka, however, classes Jews and Arabs together as Semites. "Races of Man" in "Scientific Aspects of the Race Problem," Longman's Green Co., (New York, 1941), p. 182.

15—See Franz Boas, "Race, Language, and Culture," Macmillan, (New York, 1940), pp. 60-137.

16—*Ibid.*, p. 65.

17—Ashley-Montague, M. F., "Are the Jews a Race?" *Jewish Forum Magazine, Chicago*, Vol. II, No. 2, 1943-44.

18—Barzun J., *op. cit.*, p. 169.

19—Mill, John Stuart., "Political Economy," Vol. I, p. 390.

20—This article is reprinted in the introduction to Prose Works, Vol. III, pp. viii-lx.

21—Lang, P. H., *op. cit.*, p. 878.

CHAPTER XII

SOME WAGNERIAN FALLACIES

THERE is no justification for the belief in, or the establishment of standards of behavior, aptitudes or expressions based on the existence of races supposedly national or linguistic in origin. Of the actual races which do exist, whether the division be made on a three-fold or five-fold basis, no one is superior to the other in terms of inherent or native abilities. The Wagnerian assumption, that the only true art and the greatest of all Volk was that of Germany when she was fulfilling her manifest destiny, is associated with the corollary belief that only Germans could truly understand their cultural "heroes" and that only Germans could create for each other. The liberal assumption that there is a universal nature of man, and that this universal nature is a common ground for both the interchange of ideas and the participation in cultural experience is consequently non-existent for Wagner and his followers.

It is true that a conductor or performer may not truly understand a composition indigenous to a locality foreign to him. The basis of such a misunderstanding, however, is essentially social or cultural, rather than founded on an innate lack or deficiency. Where so-called abstract music is involved, the understanding or penetration of the individual musician is not dependent on a

Volk-derived empathy, but on the complex of his endowment, background, training and experience. The number of foreign musicians who have succeeded in becoming noteworthy Wagnerian interpreters is an indication of the fallacy of considering "true" comprehension as limited to one's countrymen. There may sometimes be a warmer personal feeling derived from the consciousness of common associations, and this feeling may make a person more receptive to a fellow-countryman. Essentially, however, such a feeling is extra-musical; as often as not, it may obscure an objective understanding and appraisal, and thus destroy or invalidate judgment. Did not Wagner himself point to the Frenchman Habeneck's performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as the first he had heard which had caught the true essence of this work?

For Wagner, one of the most important elements which at once united the Volk and excluded outsiders was language, language as a function of race. His case against "Judaism in Music" was prepared, as we have seen, by a lengthy section on language. Because language was more tangible an entity than music, he constructed an elaborate offensive in relation to language, and then carried the derived conclusions into the field of music. Language was doubly important, first in itself as a profound manifestation of racial identity, and secondly, as one of the important constituents in his *Gesammtkunst*. These two aspects are revealed in *Opera and Drama* where he wrote:

> We have had to recognize language itself as the indispensable basis of a perfect artistic expression. . . . The German alone possesses a language whose daily usage still hangs directly and conspicuously together with its roots.[1]

His conclusion in regard to language is similar to that in regard to race: a pure race expresses itself in a "pure"

language inaccessible to the outsider, even if he be born in Germany.

A "pure" language however is as non-existent as a "pure" race. As Hrdlicka has written,

> Any assumption of an 'English', 'French', 'German' or 'Italian' race would be grossly erroneous. There are but people of the English, or French, or German or Italian, etc. language, and even these languages are all compounds, more or less corrupted, of others—there is not now a single pure European language in existence.

While the faculty of speech is innate, the use of a specific language is an acquired characteristic and is never instinctive. A German by descent, born outside of Germany and lacking any contact with German as a language, a literature, or a culture, would never manifest any inherent feeling for the language, and without instruction would never learn to speak it. His vocal chords would have no "natural" disposition to the guttural quality of German; were he born and raised in Poland, the sibilants of Polish would be as "natural" for him as are the umlauts to one born in Germany. The writings of Heine, Wasserman, Borne, Conrad and Brandes among many others are sufficient evidences of a feelingful use of language by supposedly non-racial individuals.

But the most conclusive proof of the Wagnerian fallacy in respect to language may be found in American culture. Most of the population of America is derived from linguistic groups to which English was a foreign language. It is true that many who have maintained ties with the culture of their origins may speak or write English with something of a foreign inflection. However, a large number speak and write English as well as any Englishman, an English which in itself is of mixed derivation.

Wagner, however, was convinced that only the German could write for and understand the German. Despite this, he saw no discrepancy in his belief that

> The German Genius would almost seem predestined to seek out among its neighbors what is not native to its motherland, to lift this out of its narrow confines, and thus make something universal for the world. Naturally, however, this can only be achieved by him who is not satisfied to ape a foreign nationality, but keeps his German birth-right pure and undefiled, and that birth-right is purity of feeling and chasteness of invention. Where this dowry is maintained the German may do the grandest work in any tongue and every nation beneath all quarters of the globe.[2]

The German with a key to the universal, then, could break through the barrier of a foreign nationality; a foreigner in Germany, alien to the Volk, however, could never feel the *gemeinschaftlicher Noth* which bound the people indissolubly together.

At the time this was written (1840) Wagner was in Paris, facing the possibility of remaining there for some time. To justify and rationalize his residence as a composer away from his native land, he developed this theory of the universalism of German creation. Not only could the German extract the universal which is "not native to the motherland," but, he wrote, "it is more possible for the German than for anyone else, on foreign soil to bring a national artistic epoch to its highest pitch and universal acceptance."[3]

Furthermore, since he was in Paris, he attempted to show that French and German music were really not far apart, particularly in the opera:

> As regards Dramatic music, then, we may take it that the

> Germans and the French at present have but one; though their works be first produced in one land, this is more a local than a vital difference. In any case, the fact that these two nations now are stretching hands to one another, and lending forces each to each, is a preparation for one of the greatest artistic epochs. May this propitious union ne'er be loosed, for it is impossible to conceive two nations whose fraternity could bring forth grander and more fruitful results for Art than the German and the French, since the genius of each of these two nations is fully competent to supply whatever may be lacking in one or the other.[4]

Before many years had passed, the composer was to retract or contradict every statement made in the preceding paragraph. To some this might indicate a radical change of viewpoint. Actually, however, what the 1840 Parisian article represents is not so much reasoned conclusion and matured opinion, as an expedient viewpoint, uttered to reconcile him and his readers to the fact of a German composer writing in Paris, and to reconcile his already marked chauvinism with creation in French exile. As such, this article was but one of many to follow, tracts based on an egocentric viewpoint rather than on any objective considerations.

Thus in 1840, when he wrote "On German Music," Wagner was convinced that the highest expression of the art was in instrumental music, and that the highest expression of instrumental music was that of the German composers. At this time he had apparently not yet determined on a career as an operatic composer. That change having taken place, it naturally followed that pure instrumental music was but a parasitical expression. At the very end of his life, however, he considered a return to the pre-classic type of symphony. Between the early and late chronological extremes he had adopted and adapted

to his own particular purposes the theory of the synthesis of the arts. The tendency towards amalgamation and synthesis, one of the important aspects of nineteenth century romanticism, reaches one of its culminations in Wagner's theory of the Gesammtkunst.

In stressing the instrumental aspect of music as that sphere in which German genius found its most apt expressions, Wagner's instinct was correct. From Bach through Strauss, it is in instrumental music, whether solo, ensemble or orchestral, that the great German composers have made their most significant contributions. This is not to deprecate such important works for voices as Bach's cantatas, Passions, or the B *Minor Mass,* Beethoven's D *Major Mass,* or Brahm's *Requiem;* but even these vocal works represent an instrumental approach to vocal compositions. This is brought into relief if we contrast the music of Mediterranean cultures, particularly that of Italy, with the music of Germany. While sonata, concerto, and concerto grosso originated in Italy, where many admirable examples were written, these forms are consummated in German and Austrian masterworks. There is no such work as a really great Italian Symphony. It is no mere accident of history that opera was born in Italy: the appearance of the homophonic song in the seventeenth century Italian opera is evoked by the ever-present vocal concept of music which ultimately seeks expression in the one-voice song. In Italy instrumental music is not necessarily neglected because of this condition but reflects the vocal-lyric concept, the feeling for a bel-canto line, for the melodic curve, and is therefore a kind of music closely linked with song.

In Germany, however, a combination of circumstances resulted in the stressing of instrumental rather than vocal music. Climate is a possible factor affecting those phys-

iological conditions which would or would not result in a pronounced inclination towards vocal music. From this viewpoint, the climate of Italy would seem to have been more conducive towards the development of vocal music than that of Germany. One of Wagner's persistent complaints is the difficulty of obtaining German singers for his operas; in another instance, he complains that the German conductors lack a song-approach to music making.

A second factor which may help explain the emphasis on instrumental music in Germany is to be found in the economic conditions of the duchies and States of Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The German nobility rarely possessed that wealth which enabled the Dukes and Princes of Italy to commission operas and engage choral, orchestral and solo performers for operatic spectacles. The first public opera house in Venice was founded in 1637, and by the end of the century, that city had eleven opera houses. Where the musical inclinations of a wealthy patron encouraged the engagement of musicians, instrumentalists, either singly or in small groups were attached to the household. In German opera particularly, as Paul Bekker wrote,

> Besides the conception of music as song, another conception grows up out of the world of instrumental tone. Continuously nourished on the increasing complexity of the instrumental side of music, this conception gains such predominance that the voice itself becomes simply a part of the total apparatus, one instrument among many. Assigned to a place in the mechanically organized total, it loses its original shaping force and must bow to instrumental musical mechanization.

Divested of the voice parts as its leading musical protagonists, the Wagnerian opera became enormously ex-

panded instrumental compositions where even the action is carried out in the orchestral developments of leitmotives rather than in the vocal expressions of the singers or the direct action of the plot.

The very fact that Wagner's music is so frequently performed apart from the drama as independent orchestral excerpts (the composer himself made the orchestra version of the Prelude and Love Death), is a refutation of the necessary and inevitable synthesis of all the arts on which Wagner predicated his music-drama. These excerpts exist then as pure instrumental music; they are in that very category which he had relegated to a musical limbo. It is a paradox that, in this respect, the Verdi operas actually exhibit a closer interdependence of music and drama than do the Wagner operas. The latter admit of much more independent and self-sufficient concert versions *without the voice* than do the former. A purely orchestral synthesis of *Il Trovatore, Othello,* or *Aida* is unthinkable—whereas, *Tristan, Parsifal,* and the *Meistersinger* have been so adapted.

Though he considered his poems and dramas as serious literary productions, Wagner's approach was never that of the true poet, for in the conception poetry and drama were already subordinated to an antecedent musical feeling. Before writing the text of his operas, he had a comprehensive idea of what the emotional content *from the musical* standpoint was going to be. He then wrote the text so that it could be used as a medium for that musical content. Instead of setting music to a text, Wagner reversed the process and set words to the potential music. His letter to the Princess Wittgenstein concerning his libretto of "Wieland the Smith," which he had offered to Liszt, reveals his lack of a true literary poetic intuition. Only the "simple versification," he writes, "remains to

be done." The notion that poetry is little more than the presentation of an idea in rhymed lines could never come from a true literary poet.

That the composer, himself, could be unconcious of the musician in him guiding the poet is indicated when, after "Rienzi", he writes, "Henceforth, with regard to all my dramatic works, I was in the first instance Poet and only in the complete working out of the poem did I once more become a musician." But in the very next sentence there is revealed some awareness of the true situation: "Only was I a poet who was conscious in advance of the power of musical expression for the working out of his poems."[5]

The point is that even in his own works the consummation of the music-drama synthesis is not achieved. Music is still predominant, it has not merely become one of severally equally important factors; the principal contrast with conventional opera, apart from the obvious differences involving the abolishment of set arias and choruses, is an instrumental conception as opposed to a vocal conception. In historical retrospect we recognize that far from being the music of the future, the Wagnerian opera is a culmination, not only of German opera but of German Romanticism. Its immediate successor is, characteristically enough, not a new world of music drama, but the orchestral works of Richard Strauss, compositions which frankly exploit the instrumental idiom and carry the Wagnerian orchestra to virtuosic heights. What there was of Wagner for the future emerges in *Orchestral* technique and harmonic idiom.

As for the synthesis of the arts, the idea of a *Gesammtkunst* is not in itself illogical or unsound; there is no inherent fallacy in the concept of a medium that would combine various arts. From the simplest folk-dance pan-

tomime to the most complex music drama, we may observe how music is used in successful conjunction with divers other arts. From the standpoint of music, the Wagnerian fallacy is not in the concept of the Gesammtkunst, *per se,* but in the belief that music, having outlived its function as a separate art, could only justify its continued existence in a synthesis as one of a number of *coordinate* arts.

This fallacy is founded on three errors. The first error was Wagner's contention that with Beethoven, music, and particularly instrumental music, had completely exhausted its *raison d'etre* as a separate art. It is clearly evident by now that neither in Wagner's own day nor thereafter was music as an individual art ever moribund.

Were it true, however, that music by itself *had* outlived its validity, no combination with other arts, no synthesis could restore it to significance and life. Music as a whole can never forego its prime function as an individual art without so deteriorating that its place in any amalgam would be less and less valuable and vital. This is the second error.

In order to emphasize his concept of the *Gesammtkunst* creator Wagner was wont to repeat over and over, "I am not a musician—for the salvation (Heilung) of music itself, I am not a musician." Unlike the composer of the past, Wagner considered music to be not the whole of his craft, but merely one of several equal adjuncts of his total creativity. In conjunction with the other arts music may assume either a subordinate, coordinate, or paramount role. In motion pictures and in background material for radio dramas, music is definitely a subordinate factor. Only in the ballet is music actually one equal, coordinate part of a synthesis. But in opera or music drama, music can rarely be a merely coordinate

part of the whole .From the earliest operas, of the seventeenth century Italians through Scarlatti, Gluck, Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Verdi, and Wagner himself, despite changes in objectives and values, the paramount and essential factor has generally been the music. It could not, and can never be otherwise. To have conceived of the music as merely one of a number of *coordinate* constituents comprising his music-drama was the third error of Wagner, an error that existed in his theorising, but not in his actual compositions.

We have already noted that at the end of his life, the certainty of his life's work achieved, he himself thought of a return to the preclassic symphony, light works without oracular pretensions.

The principal positive value of the theory of the Gesammtkunst was that it provided for the composer an organization and a point of departure for his enormous creativity. From the standpoint of operas, it was not the music of the immediate future he believed it to be. Music had not exhausted its potentialities as an independent art. Finally, in denying the voice its rightful place as the principal factor, Wagner's instrumental conception of opera was one of the contributing reasons for the decline of the form in the twentieth century.

1—Prose Works, Vol. II, p. 357.
2—Prose Works, *On German Music*, Vol. VII, p. 95.
3—*Ibid.*, p. 101.
4—*Ibid.*, p. 101.
5—"*Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde*," *Gesammelte Schriften*, Leipzig, E. W. Fritzsch, 1897, Vol. IV, p. 315.

CHAPTER XIII

MENDELSSOHN

IN his opposition to Mendelssohn, Wagner did not start from a critical evaluation of the former's music—that it was itself superficial, imitative and sterile—and therefrom draw the conclusion that it was inferior because it was an expression of music alone. On the contrary, having formulated his theory of the *Gesammtkunst,* he judged music by that *a priori standard,* and not in terms of its inherent content or worth. Because Mendelssohn was concerned with music alone, his art was necessarily and inevitably inferior. It is significant that his remarks and references to Mendelssohn's music, before his opinion "had matured" and his theory of the music drama had crystallized, are complimentary, even laudatory.

We have seen that the premises and conclusions of Wagner concerning the decline of the music as a separate art were in themselves false, and have been rejected by the development of music after him. Consequently, any rejection of Mendelssohn founded on those premises and conclusions has no logical validity. But this does not dispose of the question still remaining: What about Mendelssohn's music? Regardless of the approach to a critical opinion, is the music actually "superficial, derivative and parasitic?"

The temperamental disparity of the two composers

and their music, the poise and urbanity of Mendelssohn, the passion and sweep of Wagner, explains in part the lack of understanding which separates these creators. Mendelssohn was disturbed by any excessive emotion, any complication of sentiment, and his avoidance of these extremes in his own compositions led some to mistake restraint for superficiality. Friendly though he was with Schumann, the content of the latter's music eluded him. While Schumann's letters and criticisms are full of warmth and admiration for Mendelssohn and his music, Mendelssohn's letters contain very few comments on his colleague's compositions. It is as though, not finding anything to admire sincerely and consistently, he preferred to withhold comment rather than express any opinion which would either "damn with faint praise" or reveal the absence of any real enthusiasm.[1] Similarly revealing is Mendelssohn's attitude towards Berlioz: the latter's works he considered "nonsensical rubbish . . . it is really a shame to set murder, misery, and wailing to music."[2] In a letter to Moscheles, he finds particular pleasure, Mendelssohn declares, in the "neatness and grace" with which Cherubini writes.[3] On the other hand, Mendelssohn was clearly aware of the triteness and commonplace quality of the more conservative composers of his day; thus, after complaining of Liszt's music, he wrote,

> What annoys me is, that there is so little to throw into the other side of the balance; for what our Reissiger and Co. compose, though different, is just as shallow; and what Heller and Berlioz write is not music either, and even old Cherubini's "Ali Baba" is dreadfully poor and borders on Auber. It is very sad.[4]

The feeling for grace, taste and proportion precluded any soul-searching or deeply subjective music on Men-

delssohn's part. He is consequently at his best where the material involved is of such a nature that profound emotional complexity is neither demanded nor justified. The "Midsummer Night's Dream" music is in this category, as are the Scotch and Italian Symphonies. The writing in "St. Paul" and in "Elijah" is spontaneous and effective, but, with the exception of an occasional solo or chorus, it is lacking in that supernal elevation which crowns the *B Minor Mass* of Bach or Handel's *Messiah.* The Violin Concerto is unequalled in its lyric perfection, and "Fingal's Cave" is a miniature gem of the purest luster. Perhaps the most unique characteristic of Mendelssohn's music is to be found in his Scherzos and such a composition as the overture of the "Midsummer Night's Dream." Here we have, not the jovial humor of a Beethoven scherzo, not the superbly polished wit of a Mozart Allegro, not the peasant-like good nature of a Haydn Minuet, but a music of serenity and charm, poised, equable and scintillating.

It is wrong to term Mendelssohn's music superficial. Its symmetry of structure is neither externally nor mechanically derived; its form is as integral to the music as are the structural components in Beethoven. The balance may seem too exact to be truly organic, just as a face, too perfect in its features, may seem synthetic, wax-like. His works reveal that dangerous clarity and ease that seems to be associated with effortlessness; yet, in Mendelssohn's case, the effortlessness is often but the "art of concealing art." His letters reveal his constant self-criticism,[5] his dissatisfaction with even his printed works; he would like, he wrote, to do "St. Paul" all over.[6]

The assumption that only tragic music may have depth and a profound content has closed the ears of many to the ineffable beauty of Mozart. Mendelssohn

has similarly suffered from this preconception, a notion which grew out of late nineteenth-century romanticism. Granting the absence, on the whole, of a tragic conflict and sweeping passion, his music can still have meaning if accepted on its own terms. It never degenerates into mere salon music, although in the hands of the less talented of his followers, compositions modeled on Mendelssohn's are in that category.

Wagner's contention that Mendelssohn's Hebraic ancestry inevitably revealed itself in his music is entirely untenable. The notion that artistic expression is based on innate racial heritage is, as we have seen, altogether unjustified. But there remains the possibility of the expression of a cultural heritage.

For the serious composer of Jewish origin there are two possible orientations affecting the relation of his music to his immediate environment. If he is conscious and aware of a living Jewish tradition, he will often seek his spiritual roots in the music and content of the Old Testament. The cantillations and folk-materials will provide sources for his music either directly, in their content or, indirectly, in their inspiration. Had any Jewish composer of the last century correctly understood and used the modal materials of the traditional body of Jewish chant, it might seem that here would have been a presumable basis for a discrepancy between Occidental music and music written by such a composer.

There might occur a dichotomy resulting from the influence of indigenous materials on the one hand and the traditional Hebraic materials on the other. To the extent that the latter would be cultivated, the composer would feel himself on the periphery rather than at the center of a country's musical activity. A resulting dualism could be set up, a dualism which actually manifests itself in

the works of more than one Jewish composer who is aware of both his present national and his ancient cultural heritages. However, the actual discrepancy between major-minor and Hebraic or Gregorian modal materials is not so sharp as to obviate any reconciliation; the actual integration of modal materials in the works of Brahms, Bach, Liszt, not to mention the Russian composers, indicates that there is no irreconcilable conflict between these idioms. As it was, however, no Jewish composer of the 19th Century either in the liturgical or art-music sphere correctly comprehended the idioms of traditional Hebrew music. It was only with the exploitation and re-utilization of modal idioms as an important tendency in contemporary music that the traditional materials were correctly understood and consistently utilized. One of the most important collections of Hebraic liturgical music is that of Abraham Baer, published in 1877.[7] For most melodies, Baer provides two versions, the Eastern European and the German rite. The latter reveals symmetrical and chorale-like versions and alterations of the Eastern European melodies. It should be pointed out that the Reform movement of German Jewry, initiated in the early nineteenth century, tended at first to discard as valueless all the older traditional chants, and to replace them with tunes modeled on or borrowed from Church music. Far from Hebraic music having influenced German music, the effect was quite the opposite.

What of Mendelssohn's Judaism? Granting the absence of any "innate" feeling, was there a proximate Jewish culture which might have influenced his composition?

As a child, Mendelssohn presumably did have contact with a Jewish tradition through his pious, maternal

grandmother. But as a Protestant from his earliest years he attended the church, not the synagogue. He married a clergyman's daughter, and whatever the Jewish elements in his background, these became increasingly remote and attenuated.

His letters reveal a serene and content personality, with never the least suggestion of divided allegiance. He never manifested any interest nor gave any attention to the Jewish problems which agitated the politics of the day. In the year of Mendelssohn's birth, Wilhelm von Humboldt had prepared a *Draft of a New Constitution for the Jews*. This engendered a bitter controversy over granting the full civil rights proposed in the *Draft*: the persecutions in Wuerzburg and Franconia in 1819 and the pogrom in Heidelberg were evidences of the stresses and the tense feelings of the times. One of the most reactionary figures of this period was the Minister, von Eichhorn, and he was Mendelssohn's staunchest friend. In the midst of all these troubles, Mendelssohn manifested not the slightest interest, awareness, or sympathy. He was disturbed by the lack of any cordial feeling between himself and the Berlin Orchestra and the coolness of his reception by the Berlin public in 1842. Whether he associated this coolness with the fact of his descent he did not reveal, but there is some evidence for believing that bigotry as much as any difference of musical taste accounted for this coolness.

He is quoted as having once said concerning his revival of Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" that "it was an actor and a Jew who restored this great Christian work to the people."[8] This would be one of the rare moments when he thought in terms of his ancestry, but in itself constitutes no basis for assuming any empathy with or for Jewish culture.

As for the influence of the synagogue on his music, the truth is that it was his music which affected the works of such liturgical composers as Lewandowsky, Sulzer, and their followers, works used in the reform temple services of the German and later of other Jewish communities.

There is no evidence that Jewish melismas, Synagogue melodies or "rhythms," cantillations, or any other aspect of Jewish liturgical song influenced Mendelssohn's music, there is no transmission of inherent qualities which would have allowed him to derive sustenance from traditional cultural sources, nor is there any abstract feeling flowing out of "blood" or "innate" capacity.

Any attempt, therefore, to discover a Jewish idiom in Mendelssohn, whether by Wagnerians or pro-Semites, is founded on either ignorance, false premises, or a combination of both.

Paradoxically enough, while no possible melodic, rhythmic or structural derivation from Hebrew liturgy may be noted in Mendelssohn's music, one aspect of Wagner's technique is similar to the manner in which Hebraic cantillation motives are utilized, for Wagner's "endless melody" is achieved by the continuum of leitmotives used in succession, a mode of procedure analogous to the stringing together of cantillation motives. A similar treatment may be noted in the connections of traditional tonal patterns in oriental music, such as the *ragas* of India, and the *maquamat* of Arabia. However, this is no "proof" of Wagner's orientalism, but merely an indication of coincidence of technique.

One of the most recurrent criticisms of Mendelssohn in Wagner's writings is that by example and influence the former was corrupting German music and turning

it away from its "true" direction. We have seen there can be no basis for seeking a *racially*-derived impurity or sterility in Mendelssohn's music, those qualities which besides weakening the music itself, would be the means of a harmful influence on German music. There is left, then, the consideration of Mendelssohn's effect on German taste through his various musical activities.

Mendelssohn was active as a composer, conductor, pianist, and organist. His versatility was matched by his pre-eminence in each major field of endeavor. He was a prodigy whose gifts instead of declining, steadily matured. The presence of such a figure in their midst could hardly have been a baneful influence on German culture and music. His personal life was irreproachable; consider the scathing excoriations of Wagner had their moral characters been reversed—had Mendelssohn been guilty of those moral lapses which, however rationalized, are still facts in Wagner's life.

Besides his direct contribution to musical literature, what did Mendelssohn accomplish for the taste of Germany and of the musical world? Are we perhaps to find the "hurtful" influence of the composer revealed here?

From childhood this composer revealed a truly precocious sense of excellence and refinement. A sure instinct, at least for the music of the past, and a fine sense of discrimination are revealed in even his very early letters. Out of a profound sense of musical conviction, while still a young man, he rescued from the dusty archives the great St. Matthew Passion of Bach, initiating one of the important movements in music history. This movement was to affect not only the rediscovery and revaluation of Bach, but an eventual reawakening of interest in polyphony and polyphonic music.

> The same search for the German past that animated the literary men led romantic music to Bach, and from him to the forms and materials of earlier periods. Mendelssohn's performance of the St. Matthew Passion in 1829, one of the great events in the history of music, gave this movement its start.[9]

Characteristically enough, instead of any feeling of gratitude on the part of "pure" Germans, this epoch-making performance earned for Mendelssohn a feeling of resentment that an alien had made this discovery.

But Bach was not his only discovery. While a majority of musicians were puzzled by Beethoven's last works, Mendelssohn comprehended and performed these compositions from the very first.

As for his conducting, there are two aspects to be considered: the projection of the works, and his selection of programs. Wagner found Mendelssohn's conducting "superficial", characterized by a lack of true comprehension. But, as with the compositions, much of this attitude was not predicated on the actual conducting itself, but on the *a priori* notion that, as one of Jewish descent, Mendelssohn could not possibly grasp the content of German music. From other contemporary sources, including Grove and Reinecke, we get a totally different impression of the conducting abilities of Mendelssohn, and the penetration of his readings.

Concerning Mendelssohn's choice of repertoire, Wagner himself is witness to the fact that few others did as much to raise the taste of German audiences by the discriminating choice of orchestra programs.[10]

The extent of Mendelssohn's influence is emphasized by Grove's observation that this composer's

> versatile abilities dominated the musical taste of Germany during his life and of England for a generation or more after his death. . . . This was a man who had wound himself into our musical feelings as no other musician had done since Handel.[11]

Perhaps we are to find the pernicious influence, on which Wagner insists, in Mendelssohn's attitude towards composition and music in general. Did he perhaps pander to public taste; did he seek that approbation which may yield temporary rewards, but which in the end destroys the creative spirit, as it weakens the sense of values of the very individuals who demand that compromise?

The answer is to be found in a letter he wrote to his mother on October 11th, 1837: "I do not in the least concern myself as to what people wish or praise or pay for, but solely as to what I consider good."

We should not assume from this that he was impervious to criticism. He was most sensitive, but never deviated from his own convictions as to musical values.

From no conceivable standpoint, then, is there any validity in Wagner's accusation that the decline of taste and the mis-direction of Germany's musical activity was in general the fault of Judaism in music, and specifically of Mendelssohn's mis-guidance. For Mendessohn had set an inspiring example in the excellence of his performances, in the quality of his compositions, in the uncompromising demands he made of himself, in the elevation of German taste, in the moral uprightness of his own life, in the dignity and nobility which characterized his general attitude towards music.

In his own lifetime he was revered and respected as had been few musicians before him. What was his ultimate reward in the Germany of the Third Reich? "The Jews," wrote Wagner-inspired Ludwig Schemann, "are

carrying out a deliberate attempt to lower the level of non-Jewish mankind." And so this pernicious influence was removed from German musical life.

1—In a letter to Edward Buxton of January 27, 1944, he writes a recommendation for the publication of Schumann's "Paradise and Peri." Though the sentiments expressed are complimentary enough, one senses, nevertheless, a feeling of reserve.

2—"Mendelssohn's Letters," p. 230.

3—*Ibid., p. 286.*

4—*Ibid.*, p. 245.

5—*Ibid.*, p. 236.

6—"...today I am quite dissatisfied with my work, and should just like to write my oratorio (St. Paul) over again from beginning to end." Letter to Moscheles, March 25, 1835.

7—Abraham Baer (1839-1894) was a cantor in Gothenburg, Sweden.

8—Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. III, p. 384, quoted from Devrient's *Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy* (Leipzig, 1869). Grove's comment: "For once and once only alluding to his descent" is interesting in view of its first hand source.

9—Lang, P. H., *op. cit.*, p. 804.

10—See above, page 47. Also see Grove's Dictionary, Vol. III, p. 407.

11—Grove's *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 447.

CHAPTER XIV

MUSIC IN GERMANY

IN THE eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there had come out of Germany and Austria the largest successive number of great composers in the history of Western music: Bach, Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. It is not surprising that German nationalists found in this array an apparent corroboration for an already highly developed cultural arrogation.

In Wagner's reasoning, conclusions as to Germany's musical primacy were founded on the following convictions:

1. The Volk and the feeling of a common-want is the basis of all great art expression.
2. Therefore, all great music expression is national in origin, feeling, and content.
3. Germany was, and had always innately been, the greatest musical nation.
4. Therefore, great music was necessarily German.
5. The greatest German music was the greatest of all music.
6. The great music of other nations was, and had always been, inferior to that great music of Germany.

But it was not enough for Wagner to limit German genius to one field, or one period. The distant past, the

immediate present, and the future, by inference, held ultimate secrets that could only be revealed by the German thought. This, was true, for instance, of the discovery of the ancient spirit, its evaluation and interpretation. Speaking of Winckelmann and Lessing he writes,

> One may say without exaggeration that the Antique would have stayed unknown in its now universal world significance had the German spirit not recognized and expanded it.[1]

Much foreign literature would have been lost to the world or would have survived only as literary curiosities but for its rescue by Germans. For the latter "wills to understand it Germanly,"[2] which obviously means to get at its true essence. Thus, he points to Parsifal and Tristan which, though non-German in origin, were saved for the world by Wolfram von Eschenbach. Here Wagner modestly and somewhat coyly shrinks from stating an obvious conclusion, for the legends would have been quite as much a literary curiosity had they remained in Eschenbach's versions as they were in their originals.

Realizing the debt that even German music must owe that of other nations, he points out, quite correctly, that the Sonata-Form is a compromise between the German and Italian spirit of music.[3] But neither this nor the more sweeping statement that "we took music with all its forms from the Italians" should be interpreted as an avowal of indebtedness in the usual meaning of the word. On the contrary, though France and Italy have from time to time been leaders in music, these nations have actually endangered the spirit of art (he excepts Palestrina). France has always been interested in outward appearance, in *Mode,* a synonym for elegance, super-

ficiality, and mere taste, and Italian music is cursed by theatricalism and interest in externals. After attributing the decline of Europe to the baneful influence of French formalism (*Mode*) and Jesuitism, he describes the saving of Europe by "the German spirit that slipped into the field of art, as everywhere else, to heal this artfully induced corruption of the human race." Therefore, when Wagner speaks of the German adaptation or adoption of a device or form originating elsewhere, the assumption is always that the particular device or form was saved for the world by its recognition and expansion by the German spirit, by that spirit's "will to understand it Germanly." Far from Germany being in debt to one nation or another, the whole world is in debt to Germany for having rescued forms and materials which might otherwise have been lost or become corrupted.

These, then, are the tenets and premises on which Wagner based his conclusions of German musical supremacy. What is the historical and aesthetic validity of these claims?

The leadership of German music during the past two centuries is so incontrovertable a fact that many might be tempted to accept, without any reservation or inquiry, the claim of the innate musical genius of the German people. Yet, Germany of all the leading musical nations of Western Europe—Italy, France, Belgium, England, Spain—was the last to assert or assume any kind of predominance.

> The fact that Bach's is the dominating figure in the German music of his time must not lead us to imagine that his case was typical of the way in which music sprang up in Germany. That the great clan of the Bachs, almost all of whom were musicians, should have given their name to the town musicians of Erfurt is enough to prove that their inherited pro-

> ficiency in the art was an exceptional thing. For the rest of mankind in Germany it was not an art native to the soil, or inherited from generations of skillful ancestors; but an exotic, imported from a distance and only beginning to flourish in its new surroundings . . . . the influence of the foreigner was of the strongest. The sacred music of the period was indigenous it is true . . . .; but in all forms of secular music, whether in the opera or in instrumental works, the patterns were set by the Italians. . . .[4]

Burney, the 18th century English historian, speaks from direct experience of

> the corrupted motley, and Italianized melody to be heard in the capitals of this extensive country.[5] . . . it is not nature but cultivation which makes music so generally understood by the Germans; and it has been said by an accurate observer of human nature who has long resided among them, that 'if innate genius exists, Germany certainly is not the seat of it; though it must be allowed to be that of perseverance and application.'[5]

Commenting on this passage of Burney's, Fuller-Maitland writes, "Music, it is clear, was not yet a national possession."[6] The *Neu-eroeffnetes Orchester* (1713) by the German critic and composer Johann Mattheson, confirms the contemporary opinion of Burney. In his "Versuch uber die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen" (Leipzig, 1753) C.P.E. Bach wrote,

> I believe that the ideal way of playing the clavier and other instruments should combine the clarity and brilliance of the French performance with the pleasant and singing style of Italian singing. Germans are particularly equipped for such a task, providing they rid themselves of prejudices.

It is evident that in speaking of an "innate" genius in regard to music, Wagner uses the term in a racial sense. As we have shown, when used in this way, the term is meaningless. But it may possibly be used in the sense of a national genius or tendency. This involves no necessary implication of an inherent, chromosomic trait. It merely states the fact of a national trend, a cultural expression determined by a combination of environment, tradition, and all those various complexes which give a national-cultural utterance its distinctive quality. From this standpoint it is not incorrect to speak of the German genius for music during a particular period. But it is historically wrong to project this genius into the past, assuming its existence and pre-eminence throughout the past. There is not one of the principal forms of vocal or instrumental music, prior to the nineteenth century, that owes its inception or existence to German music. Gregorian Chant, virelai, estampie, madrigal, motet, mass, oratorio, opera, sonata, concerto, overture, — all are non-Germanic in origin.

There is no intention here of deprecating or questioning the fact of the enormous and inspired literature of the past two centuries of German music. But no one nation has a monopoly of either music culture or music leadership. Of the European countries, Italy and France have the greatest accumulation of years in developing and cultivating the art of music. Until a century ago, Russia was a musical non-entity insofar as its participation in and expression of Western music was concerned. Yet today, some of the most prominent composers are Russian.

A nation achieves musical leadership when idiom, orientation, and the development of vocal or instrumental music most closely corroborate the national character-

istics at a particular time. Thus the balance of classicism and the distinctive qualities of romanticism found their best means of expression through the German composers. The qualities of Impressionism are ideally suited to the French mentality, while certain aspects of modernism are most closely associated with the national-cultural expression of Russia. Yet in no instance is there that total detachment, that autogenesis that Wagner infers and desires for German music.

The fact that a national group manifests or reveals a talent in a particular art is no indication of any innate, hereditary talent. If such were the case there would not be the succession and alternation of national leadership. The history of Western European music is the record of such succession and alternation. Ambrosian Chant centered in Milan; Gregorian Chant in Rome; plain-chant perfected in the monasteries of Metz, Fulda, St. Gall; the predominating secular aspect of French troubadour and trouvere music; the preeminence of the Notre-Dame School of Leonin and Perotin as masters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries *ars antiqua;* the fourteenth century *Ars Nova* of Machault and de Vitry; the Italian *ars nova* of Landini; the emergence of writers of the Netherlands school of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the foremost composers; the growing predominance of the Italian school of the sixteenth, seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries; the important Elizabethan era of English music; the emerging importance of Germany in the Baroque era; the French rococo; the German classicism and romanticism; the emergence of Russian art music in the later nineteenth century; the predominance of French music in early twentieth century music and the subsequent re-assertion of Russia.

As Toynbee has written, "History shows that the group which sucessfully responds to one challenge is rarely the successful respondent to the next.[7] Wagner's assumption that German preeminence was an inevitable result of the inherent genius of the Volk reacting against the decay of European culture has this slight basis of truth: whenever culture pre-eminence is transferred from one group to another, it is because of the deterioration of the former. The incoming group invariably points to those whom it has superseded as decadent and sterile. In the reaction against post-romantic rhetoric and imitative emotion, the French pointed to the sterility, decay and insincerity of *fin-de-siecle* German music. Similarly, when Russia felt assured of certain musical superiority, the decaying bourgeois art of the capitalist world became targets for her criticism. This normal reaction is carried to an extreme in Wagner, who maintained that all music before the German ascendancy was merely a preparation; that only the Germans were "pure" in feeling; that music was the peculiar trust of the Germans; that only the latter could grasp the true essence of the art — "the will to understand it Germanly." There is the almost complete disregard of the transfer and diffusion of important techniques and treatments, because of which, regardless of the temporary pre-eminence of one nation or another, art-music is truly the heritage of all the peoples of Western civilization.

When Wagner refers to "the people" — the Volk — as the true source of cultural expression, it may seem that here at last is a tenet which is acceptedly true. Whether from a purely cultural or a political-economic viewpoint, many may agree with Wagner, feeling that they had or would have come to the same conclusion of themselves. This aspect of Wagner's viewpoint may seem

:o be in agreement with Vaughan Williams' belief in indigenous music as a basic source of inspiration and the opinions of those who find in folk-materials a rich vein of actual and political art — the musical nationalists of Russia, the United States, Brazil, or Spain. From an extra-musical viewpoint, lovers of democracy in Europe and America, or believers in the aesthetic rightness of mass-feeling, as among the Russians, may seem to find here a corroboration of their own opinions, or their wished-for conclusions.

But as we have already emphasized, the "people" of Wagner do not represent an actual real every-day entity. The "Volk" is a mystic concept, a philosophic abstraction, exclusive rather than inclusive, shutting out all those who feel no "collective want." These latter are not of the Volk, since they feel no collective want; thus a closed circle of a simultaneous premise and conclusion is set up. The nationalistic composers of other nations— Rimsky-Korsakoff, Vaughan-Williams, Bartok, de Falla, Dvorak, the Bloch of "America" and "Helvetia", Copland in the United States, Villa-Lobos in Brazil deliberately seek out and exploit folk-melodies. But, with rare exceptions, Wagner eschews such materials, and even manifests a certain condescension towards folk-song itself. The "Volk" of Wagner is specifically a German entity — it is not "the people" of the democracies, nor the "proletariat" of the communist state. As a young man under the influence of European revolutionaries he showed some slight semblance of folk-empathy, but this feeling is completely lost in the mature composer and thinker.

In general, one may accept the premise of the mutual relationship between an integrated composer and the collective feeling for expression of a community — the

composer responding to the spirit of time, place, and circumstance, his works both corroborating the feelings of the group, and evoking an emotion potential in his audience. As the discerning Wordsworth indicated, the poet creates the taste by which he is to be appreciated. There are times, such as the latter part of the nineteenth century, when nationalistic trends are paramount, and composers are self-consciously pre-occupied with selecting and incorporating folk-material in their work. But there are also periods wherein an international viewpoint prevails. Orlando di Lasso, Handel, Hindemith, the later Stravinsky, represent such a music and such a perspective; any attempt to interpret their music "nationally," as one might attempt to evaluate the music of the "Russian Five", or of Smetana, is founded on a false premise.

There is a dual and apparently contradictory aspect in respect to Wagner's attitude towards the "Volk." On the one hand he testifies to an innate national genius, and on the other he berates the people for their smug acceptance of the "wrong" music, for succumbing to false musical prophets, for an emotional passivity (Traegheit). He frequently uses the phrase "decline of music in our time." Yet his period was one of great activity. What, then, was the reason for this pessimism?

The most immediately recognizable motive is that of resentment at his neglect or at the attacks made on his works. But there is a less obvious, but extremely important reason. Wagner's intuition told him that the period of German dominance was approaching a close. There is the feeling of the end of a period not only in his literary works but even in his compositions. The puissance and the pompous brass of many passages testify to a positive vitality; but such compositions as "Parsifal"

and "Goetterdaemmerung" could never be the product of a nascent, a "becoming" art. The feeling of resignation of these two works does not derive from their dramatic content alone; it grows out of the intuition of a composer who subconsciously feels that these are closing works. Nietzsche also sensed this. While it is true that one must accept the philosopher's later criticisms of Wagner with numerous reservations, rejecting some altogether, there is nevertheless a profound insight in his feeling concerning the "Meistersinger" Prelude:

> It is a piece of magnificent, gorgeous, heavy, latter-day art which has the pride to presuppose two centuries of music as still living in order that it may be understood . . . . it has fire and courage, and at the same time, the loose, dun-colored skin of fruits which ripen too late.[8]

It must be emphasized that, whatever the defects or qualifications of Wagner's works from this viewpoint, they are not the outgrowth of his racial thinking, they are not the outgrowth of any conscious thinking at all, but spring from the circumstance of his occurrence in the history of music at the moment when Romanticism flared up in a last incandescence in his works, and began already to subside in a spirit of the reflective and resigned tranquillity so characteristic of his final creations.

Coincident with the decline of Romanticism the great period of German predominance in music was passing. With the fulfillment of the classical and romantic style patterns there had been the clustering of genius which characterizes every creative age. With gradually decreasing and less important demands to be met, with a period reaching its close, there began an inevitable decline in

the German music of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In only one important respect is there a conflict between the thinking of Wagner and the subsequent ideological development of Germany. The composer clearly realised the danger of confusing intellectual and cultural dominance with political and military prowess. He foresaw, too, that pride in artistic achievement could easily be transformed and pass into the desire for aggrandizement, for military dominance. He warns of this danger, showing that the important cultural achievements of the German people are necessarily dissociated from the periods of the pride and pomp of power.

> With the fall of outer political might, i.e., with the lost significance of the Romish Kaiserdom, which we bemoan today as the foundation of German glory, there began on the contrary the real development of a genuine German essence (*Wessen*) . . . German poetry, German music, German philosophy, are nowadays esteemed and honored by every nation in the world; but in his yearning after 'German glory' the German as a rule can dream of nothing but a sort of resurrection of the Romish Kaiser-Reich, and the thought inspires the most good-tempered German with an unmistakeable lust of mastery, a longing for the upper hand over other nations. He forgets how detrimental to the welfare of the German peoples that notion of the Romish State had been already.[9]

But Wagner himself, subsequently, accepted Prussianism and Empire, despite his former opposition to both. It is a tragic irony that the one aspect of his thinking which was truly prophetic and consistent with historical fact was quite completely ignored by those who so assiduously followed his other precepts. Yet, it was these other pre-

cepts which precluded any heed being given his warnings. For that extreme nationalism and chauvinistic arrogance which emanate from his writings could hardly find complete satisfaction or sustenance in mere cultural achievement. A crescendo of military activity to the accompaniment of nationalistic fanfare grew from decade to decade. Each believing himself to be the knight destined to rescue the Elsa of Germandom from the Ortrud-forces of evil, both Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler had themselves portrayed in the shining white armor of Lohengrin. The Fuehrer identified himself with the hero-gods of the "Ring", and, forebodingly, sensed in "Goetterdammerung" the overtones of his manifest destiny.

1—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. IV, p. 150.
2—*Ibid.*, p. 167.
3—Prose Works, *Beethoven*, Vol. V, pp. 81-82.
4—Oxford History of Music, Vol. IV, "The Age of Bach and Handel," J. A. Fuller-Maitland, Oxford University Press, Second Edition, 1931, p. 249.
5—Burney, "Tour of Germany," I, p. 202.
6—Oxford History of Music. Vol. IV, p. 250.
7—Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 258.
8—Nietzsche, Friedrich, "Beyond Good and Evil," Modern Library Edition, Boni-Liveright, New York, p. 170.
9—Prose Works, *What is German?* Vol. IV, pp. 154-155.

CHAPTER XV

THE JEWISH COMPOSER IN THE DIASPORA

ONE of the principal ideas of "*Judaism in Music*" is, that as aliens outside the cultural center of German music, composers of Jewish descent were necessarily imitative and derivative in their work. Since their compositions could not grow out of the present — there being no essential link to the direct motivation of a racial empathy — these compositions had to draw on and derive from a dead past. To the general notion of the Jew as financier, interested primarily in money and other externals, was added the thought of the Jew as a non-creative individual even when active in the arts. These opinions reinforced one another, and were quite eagerly accepted by those who felt the need of a "reason" for an already extant prejudice. The aspects of this question which involves anti-Semitism as such we shall consider later. At this moment, we shall be concerned with the purely "racial" aspect of the creativity or non-creativity of the Jewish artist.

Wagner, of course, is not the only one to maintain the opinion of a Jewish non-creativity. His reason was a racial one, the belief in the inherent difference in spirit and soul content between German and non-German. Others, while accepting the thesis of racial identity and distinction, explain the lack of creativeness not pri-

marily on a racial, but on a cultural basis. There is the inference that as a group outside the particular national culture, the Jews simply adopted, adapted, and developed cultural activities. While the final conclusion is identical with Wagner's, it is not derived from "racial" premises, but simply from the circumstance of a minority group adopting the pattern of a dominant culture.

Maintaining this viewpoint, Joseph Bonsirven, in *The History of European Civilization*, uses such phrases as the "soul of their race" and "if by blood they belong to Israel." (He could as well have said "if by head measurements, eye color, or hair color they belong to Israel.") However, his primary reason for considering the Jews as imitative is that

> For all that bordering on profane culture, or a mixture of profane and religious, the Jews did not show themselves creators, properly so-called. They learned the first principles of the sciences and of philosophy from those amongst whom they dwelt, merely elaborating them in a more or less individual fashion.[1]

A third attitude is revealed by those who consider the role of the Jew in music to be that of the performer, the re-creator, rather than the creator.

There are thus three main approaches to the belief that the Jewish artist is non-creative: — the racial one of Wagner, the cultural one of Bonsirven, and the functional one of many critics and musicians, who, it may be added, are not conscious of any anti-Semitic feeling, but who merely draw what seem to be apparent conclusions indicated by factual conditions. While the last two do not directly involve "racial" considerations, these may justifiably be considered here in view of definite interrelationships.

In view of the fallacies of considering the Jews or the Germans a race, or of associating race with language or national groups, any attempt to prove cultural imitation on the basis of race-qualities or race-differences must end in complete failure. The question, then, can only be approached from a cultural or national-cultural viewpoint. The concept that in none of the arts is true Jewish creativity evidenced, is contradicted by the mere listing of important Jewish writers, artists, sculptors and composers.[2]

However, granting that differences may not be explained on a racial basis, are there not, nevertheless, evidences of a cultural dualism on the part of a Jewish community and a Jewish composer? The question of dichotomy, to which we had already referred in our discussion of Mendelssohn, may perhaps be investigated more thoroughly here as to its causes and effects.

To the extent that a Jewish group or community may be concerned with any specific Judaic cultural activity, such as the Synagogue, or Hebrew, or Yiddish organizations, there will tend to be a degree of differentiation. This holds true for any nationalistic-cultural group which functions as a separate unit outside of its homeland, such as Lithuanian, Polish, German, or Italian groups in America. But while such a group may act as a unit in cultural affairs, it will not necessarily act as a unit in political or economic affairs outside the group. Consequently, any dualism implicit in this relationship is active, if at all, only in the cultural sphere, and not in the political or economic spheres. The more actively individuals are involved in the cultural aspects and activities of "foreign groups," the further they tend to be from the core of cultural activity of the country itself. Such group or individual activities become peripheral to the main circle

of achievement and endeavor. Thus, a composer of Jewish descent who is deeply conscious of a cultural heritage other than that of his country, be that group Russian, German, or American, will sense a dualism in the separate cultural streams affecting his work and his outlook.

But such a dualism can arise only if the composer is profoundly aware of and has been deeply influenced by the musical culture of an ancestral heritage. That culture is not "in the blood," nor is it in the "soul of the race," it is an acquired characteristic. Without contact with this ancestral heritage or peripheral culture, a composer of foreign descent may be totally integrated in and with the national culture of his homeland, and feel neither the need for nor the lack of contact with any ancestral tradition other than that of his geographic habitat.

Such complete cultural integration is to be found in Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Mahler, Schoenberg, Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Dukas, and Jerome Kern.

The assumption of Bonsirven that race in general, and a Jewish race in particular, is a social and biological fact leads to the notion that even in Science, supposedly an objective activity, the Jew makes no direct first-hand contribution. Such an inference is based on three further suppositions. The first is that even science is a racial-national function of an "in group," a function in the exercise of which the Jewish scientist is an elaborator rather than a creator. The second supposition is that should there be or develop a "Jewish" science, it would be unlike any other national science. This is only tenable, however, if each national science can be shown, in fact, to be basically individual. This is the third supposition. While Bonsirven would hardly consider himself anti-Semitic, the second and third suppositions are the same as the assumed premises which lead to the con-

clusions of Jaensch, Stark, and Neumann. And the assumption and inferences of Bonsirven are as fallacious as the premises and conclusions of the Nazi "scientists," for all are based on the non-existent biological and social aspects and distinctions of non-existent "races."

Concerning the Jewish musician as a performer, the pre-eminence of such artists as Heifetz, Elman, Kreisler, Feuerman, Piatigorsky, the Rubinsteins (Anton and Artur), and Horowitz, among many others, is an incontrovertible fact. Here too, however, social-environmental factors are of considerable importance in the development of a performing "tradition." The social conditions of that segment of European Jewry from which most performers originated was such as to encourage the kind of concentrated study which the development of a virtuoso requires.

The sorrows and tribulations of the community developed an empathy for emotional expressions in musical compositions, an empathy which found outlet in penetrating and discerning performance. It is no accident that the pre-eminence of the Jewish performer is coincidental with the rise and prevalence of Romantic and Post-Romantic music; in the emotional content of such music, performers of Jewish descent found a ready vehicle for their interpretative potentialities. The kind of distractions which, in a more integrated and wealthier group, would have destroyed or made difficult such kind of study were non-existent. In addition, where social and economic barriers shut various avenues of expression and activity to the Jews, there was for the performing artist a unique opportunity to break down these barriers. Composition, while it offered a means of expression, did not hold the same immediate possibilities as did performance. More important, the musical traditions and

backgrounds of the ingrown Jewish communities of Europe were not such as to evoke the talents of any potential composers. Changed economic and social conditions finally result in the productions of composers like Mendelssohn, Schoenberg, Mahler, Bloch, Copland, Goldmark, and Gershwin. To say a group which has given to the world such composers is non-creative is obviously false. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that thus far there has been no Bach or Beethoven.

Of particular interest is the musical renascence of the newly formed nation of Israel.[3] Here the problem of a cultural dichotomy will have largely disappeared within a generation. However, important musical problems and dilemmas remain to be solved: the matter of idioms, techniques, and the adaptation of occidental means to an oriental content. Nevertheless, in a remarkably short period, a literature significant in both quantity and quality has already been produced.

1—Joseph Bonsirven, "The Jew in the European System" in "History of European Civilization," edited by Edward Eyre. Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p. 826. Cf. Chamberlain "The Jew has never distinguished himself by creative power—indeed, what is most his own is borrowed." "Foundations" p. 446.

2—Livingston, S. "Must Men Hate?" Harper and Bros. (New York, 1944) Appendix pp. 240-267 lists seven hundred Jews who have made notable contributions to *modern* civilization. Among this group are the following artists: Antokolski, Chagall, Davidson, Epstein, Israel, Kroll, Lazlo, Lieberman, Modigliani, Pissaro, Rivera, Schatz, Sayer. Authors: Aguilar, Asch, Auerbach, Beerbohm, Bernstein, Borne, Brandes, Brod, Ferber, Feuchtwanger, France, Frank, Hart, Heine, Heyse, Hurst, Kafka, Komrath, Lewisohn, Ludwig, Maurois, Molnar, Montaigne, Pinero, Pollock, Rice, Schnitzler, Gertrude Stein, Stern, Untermeyer, Werfel, Zangwill, and the Zweigs. Composers: Achron, Berlin, Bloch, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Copland, Dukas, Gershwin, Goldmark, Halevy, Kern, Mahler, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Milhaud, Offenbach, Rossi, Rubinstein, Schoenberg, Tansman, Toch, Weinberg, Wieniawski.

3—Cf. Gradenwitz, Peter "The Music of Israel," W. W. Norton, New York, 1949, pp. 251-283.

CHAPTER XVI

RACIAL EXPRESSION IN WAGNER'S MUSIC

TO what extent did Wagner's racial thinking find expression in his music?

An attempt to answer this question involves the necessity of clarifying misconceptions and avoiding misapprehensions. These misconceptions and misapprehensions have two aspects: the general one concerning the possibilities and limitations of music as a vehicle of ideas in a philosophic sense, and the specific one concerning the possibilities and limitations of Wagnerian music as a projection of the composer's racial thinking.

When we speak of Wagner's music in this chapter, we mean precisely the music from the standpoint of melody, harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, form, and instrumentation or color. What is not included is plot, text, title, implied meanings or character-symbolism. We must divest ourselves of certain assumptions that could easily influence or direct our thinking into erroneous channels.

A very prevalent misconception is the assumption that every composer's music tangibly and necessarily parallels, and is an analogue in content of his personal life or experience. This viewpoint is the outgrowth of certain declarations by Romantic composers[1] and of a certain type of literature which attempts to "explain" a composer's music in terms of his personal life. In some cases

it is possible to establish such parallels or relationships. On close scrutiny, however, most such instances will be found to involve merely superficial aspects, with the parallel and personal incidents of a composer's life merely providing stimuli for creative work. Such stimuli no more "explain" a work in its musical or emotional content than the skylark explains Shelley's poem, or the Grecian urn Keat's ode. If for the moment we separate technique and content, some further aspects of the relationship of the person to his work may be noted. Whether or not a physician's politics or social outlook may be "good" or "bad" from any given viewpoint has no necessary bearing on his technique as a surgeon. Similarly, a composer's *technique* is independent of such extra-musical factors as social outlook or political opinion. It is true, of course, that were we concerned with technique alone we would be discussing only a musical craftsman, an "arranger", and not the creative composer who adds to technique insight, intuition, and revelation — in other words, content.

The danger of attempting to correlate the composer's work with the externals either of his appearance or behavior is evidenced if we consider such instances as Beethoven, Bruckner, or Schubert. The disorganization of Beethoven's personal life and appearance is completely contradicted by the superb organization and integration of his compositions. As for Bruckner, no one seeing the timid, naive-looking composer walking in the street would have judged that monumental creations emanated from him. And neither the tender sensitivity of his songs nor the urgency of his C-Major Symphony would have been thought to have originated with the shy, diffident, obscure Schubert. A man, evil by conventional moral standards, may write good music, whereas

a composer whose conduct in private life might be irreproachable, who might be a good father and a good husband, may write very bad music.

Is there, then, no relationship between a composer as an individual and his work? Obviously there must be but we must recognize levels and areas of spiritual experience and expressions, and realize that creative expression may involve one of several areas or levels of experience and expression, that the notion, "inner-life", is too inclusive, and must of itself be subdivided.

As for a philosophic content in music, the projection of exact ideas reached and comprehended by discursive reasoning is an impossibility. Certain obvious descriptions, such as bird-calls, are possible, but these are objective things and not abstract ideas. When Schopenhauer refers to the art of music, a reference developed by Wagner in the essay on Beethoven, it is not as an art rooted in the understanding, but as an abstraction rooted in the intuition. For Schopenhauer, it is precisely the significance of music that its content is beyond the intellectual comprehension which may be brought to bear on literature or the other arts.

It is impossible to understand the essence of music through reason alone because the part we do so understand is not its true essence. To take a simple instance, a melody has certain factors such as rhythmic relations, harmonic implications, rises, falls, tensions, and relaxations all of which can be understood, measured, codified, and classified. Having completely analyzed it, we may explain to our own satisfaction why a particular example might be good melody, but we have not really unveiled its essence, that quality which, growing out of the complex of individual factors, affects us. We have merely

touched on the periphery of the actual content. If it were actually possible to reach the essence of music through reasoning alone, it would be possible to literally reconstruct master-works, in the same way that a mechanic, after taking a machine apart, can manufacture one identical in every external and essential detail. The fact that only the external details are open to rational grasp is evidenced again and again in the thousands of quasi-classic sonata forms turned out each year in our music schools and conservatories — all "correct" in external details and all still-born. Individuals have been misled into reading *ideas* into music as the result of external, extra-musical factors, such as texts, plots, implied "explanations." The emotions produced by the action of laws elucidated by aesthetics and philosophy, but not the elucidation of aesthetic or philosophic concepts, are among the valid objectives of music expression. Thus, Strauss' "Zarathustra" can only be a subjective interpretation of Nietzsche's poem in terms of musical feeling, it can never express even the simplest concrete thought containing a specific subject and a specific verb.

Music can neither present facts nor postulate universal truths, but it can help create or support a state of mind conducive to the establishment of certain conditions or truths. When we speak of the ethical content of Beethoven's music, we mean that it can produce an exaltation of the spirit which gives us a sense of uplift and purification. But it does not achieve this through any statement of an elevated philosophy. Similarly, no musical passage or work can actually be inherently imperialistic, aggressive or tyrannical, but it may contribute to a state of mind, which, encouraged into certain channels, may result in imperialistic, aggressive, or tyrannical behavior. Even though the stimulus for the composer might have

stemmed from a spirit of political aggression, the music itself can only have a generally forceful content.

It becomes evident, then, that any attempt to find in Wagner's music specific philosophic *ideas,* racial or other, would be futile. It is possible, however, to find subjective expressions which stem from the same feelings which gave rise to racial criterions. There are racial ideas in the verse, as in the last chorus of the Meistersinger, or even in the stage directions, as those concerning the Nibelung Dwarfs. But these are emotional postulates and emotional correlates that stem from or are associated with verbal ideas. There is an undeniable breadth of epic feeling and a self-conscious ostentation that, as in Rienzi, sometimes verges on sheer bombast. When this feeling and this ostentation are associated with national legends, folk-gods, and folk-heroes, they evoke emotions of pomp, pride, and power not in the abstract but with specific chauvinistic references. Without the associated plots and legends, these emotions would still be brought into being, but not specifically as *German* pomp, *German* pride, or *German* power. The associated extra-musical factors provide a highly charged emotional frame of reference. It is the brass that carries most of this burden, the rhythms being generally straightforward, the harmonization diatonic rather than chromatic. The theme of the Meistersingers, the Pilgrims'-March theme in Tannhauser, the march-like Song of Love in Tannhauser, the Sword, Siegfried, Valhalla, and Valkyries'-Ride themes in the "Ring" — are all in this category. The heroic-declamations of the legendary heroes and folk-gods, however, also capture an epic quality that, as was intended, became adopted as racial expressions.

We may be tempted to categorically classify all strident brass themes in Wagner as "imperialistic" or evi-

dences of a "lust for power." However, the final (choral) section of Liszt's Faust Symphony and various brass passages in Meyerbeer are not in themselves "imperialistic," and these were models or even originals of Wagnerian treatments. It is only when the extra-musical perspectives of the music-drama were added that the abstract emotions were channelized as rationalistic expressions.

The racial affirmations and beliefs of Wagner did result in one kind of excess. More and more, in his thoughts and in his writings, the notion crystallized that there were strong and there were weak groups, and that it was not only the privilege but the duty of the strong to enslave the weak. This belief in sheer power finds tangible expression in Wagner's music: The composer often mistakes coarseness for power. There is sheer brutality in the Rienzi Overture, and the "Meistersinger" Prelude is not without similar moments. Nietzsche's appraisal of this Prelude is illuminated by one of his more correct intuitions, despite an expression in characteristic paradoxes. He found it to be often "rough and coarse... arbitrarily barbaric and ceremonious..."[2]

There is an element of coarseness, too, in the handling of Beckmesser in the "Meistersinger."

> The fun which he tried to extract from the drubbing of Beckmesser is overdone, brutal and clumsy. We know the cause of this; the character was conceived as a retaliation on his critical enemy and it mars the whole work.[3]

While the treatment of Beckmesser is outside the scope of this present study,[4] the point is significant in that the injection of a personal element resulted in an inferior section. Similarly, the more Wagner fancied himself a prophet in his music, the less inspired that music became.

Wagner's most characteristic structural device, the leitmotif, became in his hands a principle of construction rather than an example of direct creation. It is consequently architectural and only superficially like a motive or theme in Baroque music. Many critics and historians have compared the use of the leitmotif in Wagner with the use of the "subject" in Bach. The resemblance, so far as form is concerned, is only apparent and superficial. In Baroque music there is a continuous expansive development of a subject, and the whole composition evolves from this efflorescence, much as a flower is the continuous expansive development from the seed. But in Wagner, the leitmotif is not so used. Despite alterations, color changes and harmonic changes, it has a somewhat static quality, to be used, in Wagner's own words, in retrospective, prospective, and illuminative situations. Thus it is brought in at appropriate moments; while it is subject to modifications under emotional stresses and with the development of the plot, and while it may combine with other motives in a mosaic of tone and emotional patterns, it is not used continuously or expansively in the Baroque manner. The concentrated nature of a Baroque work whose length is counted in minutes, is based on a compositional technique that could not be used in the diffuse music drama, where a single scene might last a half-hour. No single continuous movement in Bach or Handel, for example, lasts as long as the average Wagnerian scene. The leitmotif is architectural, and "the architect," wrote Nietzsche "is always under the suggestion of power." It is this suggestion of power, whether subtly projected by architectonics, by rhetorical declamation, or by vibrant brass, that encouraged by association a "racial" feeling, that appealed to and stimulated the very lust for conquest which

Wagner himself had foreseen as a potentially dangerous trait.

Wagner's medium could never be the symphony because he needed characters and situations around which to construct his music. It is not that his characters needed leitmotives, but, on the contrary, that his themes needed individuals and situations to which to attach themselves. There is, consequently, always a kind of individualization in his music. The latter may have a species of universality, a universality of *type,* but never the all-embracing universality that one finds in Bach and Beethoven. For example, one may say of the Valhalla motive that not only is it a musical symbol of the abode of the gods, but that it is also the musical projection of nobility and dignity. Granting this, it is still a musical idea constrained within the limits of a type, with specific even if broad associations. The symphonic themes of Beethoven or the fugue subjects of Bach defy such limitations. Even the "affektvoll" representations of Bach did not similarly confine the content of his music.

Wagner succeeded so well in his depiction of the external and the psychological that his music becomes chained to the association of character and theme. While it is not true that one needs a guide book of leitmotives with which to follow the music, without some information as to thematic identification or an intuitive grasp of the *meaning* of the themes, the music may be somewhat confusing, somewhat out of focus.

From the standpoint of what we may call his limited universality, is there any relationship between Wagner's creative approach and his social outlook? There is quite definitely a correlation. In his creative work he had to have a focus, a center of reference, a specific character or situation for the engendering and development of his

ideas. Similarly, in his approach to humanity, there had to be a focus; it could not be all-embracing but had to center around one group. Some creative minds have had the capacity of extracting the universal from the local or even provincial; Wagner looked at the universal and saw it — Germanly.

In sonority, in color, in breadth, and in orchestration there is a bigness about his music which can be misleading. Because of its individualization it lacks, however, the comprehensiveness and scope, the typeless universality of the less ample, the less colorful music of Bach and Beethoven. It is nevertheless great music enriched by a fertile imagination and a puissant genius, music which just falls short of ranking with the very best.

Wagner's musical nationalism is not founded on the use of musical folk motives or melodies. It involves the support, and in part the creation, of a feeling of power, pride, and arrogation by the use of appropriate and consistent musical materials—rhythm, harmony, color, and form, in reciprocal relationships with extra-musical associations of a chauvinistic character.

"If Hitler likes Wagner's music, it is all the more reason why every non-Nazi should shun and loathe it," wrote Carl Engel.[5] The assumption of Engel is that since Hitler's was a base and evil mind, he would be attracted by those qualities which corroborated his own tendencies. The fact that he apparently found such qualities in Wagner's music is sufficient proof for Engel that the music must therefore contain evil potentialities in itself.

This viewpoint is untenable. Granting the abstract power implications of Wagner's music, what proved principally attractive to Hitler were unquestionably the associative factors—the German myths, the known racial

theories of Wagner, and the possibility of identifying himself with the legendary hero-gods of the music dramas. Not the music itself then, but its channelized interpretations and associations are the potential evils. The paradox is that for non-Germans, these associations being not as strong or as meaningful, the music can be heard much more objectively in terms of itself, rather than weighted with extra-musical association. Divested of these latter, the feeling of power, of urgency, of coarseness, even, is still present, but as an abstract, not a nationalistic expression. One hears it then more as music. Similarly, we listen to a patriotic song of some other people objectively, hearing it as music alone, divested of such emotional associations as seriousness, solemnity or patriotic fervor.

It is too easy to transfer our dislike of the man and the causes of that dislike to the music, finding in it a Nazi content. On the other hand, we have noted that a leading German music historian actually stigmatizes much of Wagner's work as non-Nordic, and indicates other aspects of his work as being clearly indicative of a racial mixture. Diametrically opposite though they may be in origin, and contradictory though the reason may be, an identical conclusion is reached by these two viewpoints. In the one case, a liberal assumption of the universal nature of man finds objectionable factors in Wagner's *ideas* and pretends to see these reflected in the music. In the other, the assumption of the inherently disparate nature of racial groups finds in Wagner a non-Nordic, and hence objectionable content. Both groups reject the composer—one for his Nordic racial content, the other for his non-Nordic content. Despite the oppositions in origin, both viewpoints come to the same conclusion, because they proceed from the same fallacy:—an attempt to evaluate the music in

moral terms which are external to the music and irrelevant. Wagner's rejection of Mendelssohn's music proceeded from the same fallacy. Having established a premise of the inevitable inferiority of music by Jewish composers, he could reject Mendelssohn's music without reference to its actual sound or content. Similarly, Engel, having established the premise of an evil Wagnerian ideology, could interpret the music in terms of the ideology, and could reject it altogether. In the same way, Eichenauer, having established for himself the notion of a possibly impure heritage, could find reflections of that heritage in the music of the composer, and consequently accept the music with reservations and some misgiving.

"Racists," however, are by no means agreed on *which* racial content is reflected in Wagner's music. Among those who are convinced that "blood will tell" we must note four different groups: the pro-Germans, the anti-Germans, the pro-Semites and the anti-Semites. In each of these groups will be found both Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians; there are, therefore, eight possible divisions. Up to this point, we have been principally concerned with the question of a German "racial" content in Wagner's music. There are many, however, who, believing Geyer to have been Wagner's father, and accepting Geyer's Jewish descent as a fact, profess to find definite Jewish qualities in Wagner's music. Among these are Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Lazare Saminsky.[6] To these may be added the anti-Semitic caricaturists, who in an attempt to denigrate the composer, pictured him with exaggerated "Jewish" features,[7] and the anti-Wagnerian journalists who found the reasons for Wagner's corrupt music in his Jewish descent.

Despite antipodal sympathies, these pro-Semitic and anti-Semitic Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians reached

their conclusion as a result of an acceptance of the same premises, premises completely false and untenable. Races in general, and the Jewish race in particular, were accepted as facts. It was assumed, consequently, that a composer of Jewish descent would inevitably and irrevocably manifest rhythmic and melodic tendencies that were "in his blood." Because these assumptions are so completely false, because no specific artistic expressions are "in the blood," it is needless to refute in detail the claims of Saminsky and Stanford. It merely becomes amusing and somewhat ironical to consider the conflicting reactions of Engel, Grunsky, Saminsky, Eichenauer, and the anti-Semitic anti-Wagnerians to the music of Wagner in itself.

We have seen that there is no necessary relationship between the external aspect of a man and the true nature of his music. Yet the temptation to think in terms of social and moral values in evaluating art works is very strong. If we reject a composer's work because his personal life or social activities have not conformed with our notion of the good and the virtuous, are we prepared to accept another's work, dull and uninspired though it may be, simply because he has been a good and virtuous citizen? On the other hand, assuming the separation of aesthetic values and moral standards in appraising a creator and his works, are there no ethical criterions involved in judging the artist and his creations? This is the dilemma we face in passing judgment on Wagner.

In his writings, his demagogic vilification, his malevolence, his incredible malice and disregard for fact and truth, his distorted anti-Christian thinking, and his virulent anti-Semitism convict him of the grossest social immorality. There can be no difference of opinion as to his guilt on these counts—his misleading of the German

people, the part he played in contributing to the degradation of Germans as well as non-Germans.

In attempting to explain the reasons for the existence and popular support of the Third Reich, the historian Veit Valentin lists what he terms six basic defects in the German national character:[8]

(1) Envy, jealousy, and ambition without generosity.

(2) Respect for power and the authority of the uniform.

(3) A skeptical disbelief in the efficacy of a central and supreme authority (such as the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, or the federal diet at Frankfort).

(4) False pride and a self-righteous ignorance of the actual forces newly at work in the modern world.

(5) A deplorable spirit of serfdom.

(6) A kind of over-specialization on the part of many of the intelligentsia which destroyed their equilibrium as human beings. To this was often joined the feeling of a unique mission, which made it incumbent on the righteous man that he obliterate his wicked opponent. In doing this, he is acting not out of a personal resentment, but in defense of a lofty principle, and all softness and fairness must be renounced.

In Wagner, these six factors are combined in various proportions. Using the above categories we may establish the Wagnerian equivalents of the six factors listed by Valentin:

(1) Egocentricity, and envy of Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn.

(2) A late-developed respect for Prussianism, and for German imperialism.

(3) Attacks on the State in "Opera and Drama" and the early interest in Proudhon and Bakunin.

(4) Musical chauvinism, an attempt to establish German preeminence, and a disregard for historical fact.

(5) An appeal to the spirit of blind, unquestioning and unswerving loyalty to his concepts and his works, the success of which was attested by the thousands of members of the Wagner-Verein. (It was this spirit of a blind subservience and unquestioning loyalty that made possible Hitler's leadership half a century later.)

(6) The lack of equilibrium is manifested in his attacks on Jews, Catholics, non-vegetarians, and in his personal and moral relationships. What Valentin indicates as the sixth point, could almost serve as a verbatim paraphrase of the last portion of "Judaism in Music."

What is supremely important here is not only the fact that Wagner himself incorporates the six basic defects, but that by example and influence he brought out and exaggerated these selfsame weaknesses in thousands upon thousands of Germans. It is possible at this point to summarize the conclusions we have reached in attempting a critical evaluation of the racial concepts of Wagner:

(1) Using the word in Wagner's sense, there is no such genetic-cultural unit as a race.

(2) Therefore, since such a unit is simply non-existent, there can be no such entity as a "superior" German race.

(3) Language is not an attribute of "racial" integrity, and any premises or conclusions founded on this fallacy can only lead to further errors.

(4) Having been successfully cultivated by various national groups in Western civilization, the art of music is not the proprietary right of any one country or people. While the Austro-German composers rank among the most important, it is only from the viewpoint of pure instrumental music that this group may with some justification be considered preeminent and unsurpassed.

(5) The best answer to Wagner's charge that Christianity has been a detrimental influence on the German *Volk* and German culture is provided in the social, political and religious immorality and degeneration resulting from the attempt to substitute for Christianity an indigenous *Deutschreligion* founded on tribal paganism. While there are also important economic and political reasons for this degeneration, the spiritual aspects are most closely associated with the attempted removal or debasement of Christianity.

(6) Music as a separate art had not and has not yet outlived its validity. Its continued cultivation, after Beethoven, was not an indication of musical or "racial" sterility.

(7) The greatest and, for the generations which followed, the most serious of Wagner's errors involved the Jews:

a. There is no such entity as a Jewish race, and the condemnation of individuals of Jewish descent on the basis of inherent and innate qualities was and is both unscientific and unjust.

b. The effect of participation in German culture by people of Jewish descent has been beneficial rather than harmful.

c. Primarily because of their Jewish descent, Mendels-

sohn and Meyerbeer stand out as the composers most unjustly maligned and abused.

d. The charge that individuals of Jewish descent cannot be creative is founded on a threefold delusion: the fallacy of race, the envy of temporarily more successful Jewish composers, and the malevolence of blind prejudice.

Only a few individuals were aware of the potential dangers of Wagner's tenets. One of these was Dr. Theodore Puschmann, who, in 1873, published a psychiatric study of Wagner. Puschmann's critique of Wagner's music reveals the kind of a hostile and uncomprehending attitude now familiar only as a record of past history. But he correctly evaluated the sinister possibilities devolving from a widespread adoption of Wagner's beliefs: *"Der Wahnsinn wenn er epidemisch wird, heisst Vernunft."* (When madness becomes epidemic, its name becomes Reason.) With a prophetic foreboding the author closes his essay with a fervent prayer that "some may be cured of their illusions before it is too late. May God grant it!"[9] It was a vain hope and a vain prayer.

If, in truth, Wagner's music were felt to distil the same evil as his ideas there would be every reason for condemning it as unreservedly as does Engel. But, even accepting those moments when his music and his racial thinking may seem to spring from the same emotional morass, the *greatest* part of his art may be understood and appreciated as music rather than an expression of his racial and political thinking. That he himself was aware of the strange dualism of his character is revealed in the letter to Mathilde Wesendonck wherein he wrote:

> So I reveal myself less and less in speech, reflecting that I am not a man to be understood through my actions and hoping that some day something at least of my works will meet with understanding. But to you I say this—only the sense of my purity confers on me this power. I feel myself pure: I know in the innermost depths of me that I have never wrought for myself but only for others; and my perpetual sufferings are my witnesses.

Though his music may be understood apart from his racial and political thinking, one cannot understand the man without reference to his ideas. Any analysis of these ideas must, in the end, almost assume the nature of a clinical study, for here was a person as perversely sick in his social outlook as he was great in his creative expression.

Unquestionably, the revelation of the content of Wagner's writings, unmitigated by omissions and conciliatory excuses, may, in some cases, cause a revulsion of feeling and a change of attitude towards his music. Were the Wagnerian racial tenets truly a thing of the past, it would be a matter of poor judgment and detestable taste to reawaken old quarrels, revive buried antagonisms. But because, rather than having died, these tenets have been awakened to a new life, the necessity for revealing the truth in all its varied aspects cannot be denied. The fact that one's liking for Wagner's music may suffer as a result is a small penance compared to the evil wrought by his ideas in his time and in the world of today. For it is imperative that his errors, fallacies, and misjudgments be corrected. The Wagnerian delusions not only do a great injustice to truth and to history, but to those who entertain these fallacies; clear judgment is destroyed, suspicion, corruption, hate and bitterness become their portion.

It can only be a matter of profound sorrow that a study such as this should have been necessary. For it is one of the great tragedies of our civilization that a great creative genius such as Wagner's was lodged in a mind and spirit such as he had. His racial thinking is part of a morbid social affliction, and his pseudo-philosophy is kept alive and sustained by the very prestige of his musical work. And because these works will live for a long time and support the influence of his concepts, mankind must be innoculated against this disease, not only once, but once in every generation.

1—Cf. Schumann, "Everything that goes on in the world affects me, and eventually finds expression in my music," and Heine's

"Aus meinen groszen Schmerzen
Mach ich die kleinen Lieder."

(Lyrisches Intermezzo, No. XXXVI.)

2—Fr. Nietschze, "Beyond Good and Evil", pp. 170-171.

3—Oxford History of Music, Vol. VII, "Symphony and Drama 1850-1900." H. C. Colles, p. 315.

4—From a certain standpoint there is a slight connection, for Beckmesser is a caricature of Hanslick, and Wagner frequently referred to Hanslick's "Jewish origins."

5—Musical Quarterly, April 1941, p. 244.

6—Saminsky, Lazare—"Music of the Ghetto," Bloch Pub. Co., New York, 1934.

7—Fuchs, E., and Kreowski E., "Wagner in der Karikatur," B. Behr, Berlin (1907), p. 58 and p. 95.

8—Valentin, Veit, "The German People," A. A. Knopf, (New York, 1946), pp. 675-683.

9—Puschmann, Dr. T., "Richard Wagner, eine psychiatrische Studie," 3rd Edition, B. Behr, Berlin, 1873, p. 69. The quotation is taken from the writer, F. H. Jacobi.

APPENDIX I

Concerning the question of Geyer's paternity, an interesting metamorphosis may be observed in the opinions of Ernest Newman. In the first edition of his work "Wagner as Man and Artist," published 1914, he expresses the quite definite belief that Geyer was not Wagner's father. In a later edition, published 1924, he has added an Appendix (pp. 327-350) wherein, because of new evidence, he declares himself neutral on the question. In 1933, the first of the four volume edition of the "Life of Wagner" was published; while there was yet no definite commitment, there was a clear inference that Newman was leaning very strongly in the direction of the Geyer-paternity theory. This influence was made the more emphatic by the detailed genealogical study of the Geyer family.

Finally, in Appendix I of Volume III of the "Life of Wagner", published 1941, Newman comes to the definite conclusion that Geyer was, in truth, Wagner's father, writing, "It certainly looks now, however, as if the gallant opponents of the theory of the Geyer paternity have been defending a lost cause" (p. 562). Of particular weight is the newly discovered evidence of Johanna Wagner's journey to Geyer at Teplitz, less than two months after Wagner's birth. Dr. Willi Schuh, editor of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, who published this evidence in the issue of July 16th, 1933, wrote "What could the object of the journey have been? Only the desire to be with Geyer again and to show him the tiny Richard.

After this documentary evidence (the record of the hotel registration of Johanna Wagner in the "Three Pheasants" Hotel on the 21st of July, 1813) doubt as to Geyer's paternity no longer seems possible."

In a footnote at the end of Chapter I of the first volume of the "Life" (p. 18), Newman takes up the question of Geyer's descent. "It remains to be added that even supposing Wagner to have been Geyer's child, the amount of Jewish blood in him must have been infinitesimal. The Geyers had been Protestants for generations, etc, etc..." What is implied here is a tacit assumption of the verities of "race" and "blood."

Whether or not Geyer was Wagner's father may be of biographical import, but from a biological standpoint, and regardless of any "degree" of Geyer's Jewishness, there are simply no racial questions involved. It cannot be repeated too often: just as there is no German, or French, or English race, there is no such entity as a Jewish *race*. There are no such unit-carriers as Jewish genes which Geyer might have passed on to any of his children — there is no such quantity or quality as "Jewish blood."

APPENDIX II

A CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF WAGNER TO WHICH DIRECT OR INDIRECT REFERENCE HAS BEEN MADE

Article	Probable date of writing	Volume in Ellis' translation (Prose Works)
"On German Opera"	Spring, 1834	VIII
"On German Music"	June or July, 1840	VII
"The Virtuoso and the Artist"	October, 1840	VII
"A Pilgrimage to Beethoven"	November, 1840	VII
"On the Overture"	January, 1841	VII
"An End in Paris"	Jan. or Feb., 1841	VII
"Correspondence-Letters to the Dresden Abend-Zeitung"	Feb. to Dec., 1841	VIII
"The Artist and Publicity"	March, 1841	VII
"Parisian Amusements"	April, 1841	VIII
"Parisian Fatalities for the German"	Summer, 1841	VIII
"A Happy Evening"	October, 1841	VII
"Letter to the Neue Zeitschrift"	February, 1842	VIII
"Autobiographic Sketch"	Winter, 1842	I
"The Apostles' Love-Feast"	April, 1843	VIII
"Weber's Reinterment"	December, 1844	VII
"On the performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at Dresden"	Spring, 1846	VII
"Jottings on Ninth Symphony"	March, 1846	VIII
"Artist and Critic"	August, 1846	VIII
"Plan of Organization of a German National Theatre for the Kingdom of Saxony"	June, 1848	VII
"Vaterlandsverein Speech and Letter to von Luttichau"	June, 1848	IV

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"The Wibelungen" (revised in summer of 1849 for publication)	Summer, 1848	VII
"The Nibelungen Myth" (first sketch for the Ring)	Summer, 1848	VII
"Siegfried's Death"	Oct. - Nov., 1848	VIII
"Jesus of Nazareth"	Winter, 1848-49	VIII
"On E. Devrient's History of German Acting"	January, 1849	VIII
"Theatre-Reform"	January, 1849	VIII
"Man and Established Society"	February, 1849	VIII
"The Revolution"	April, 1849	VIII
"Art and the Revolution"	Summer, 1849	I
"The Art Work of the Future"	Autumn, 1849	I
"Art and Climate"	February, 1850	I
"Opera and Drama"	Oct., 1850 to Jan.. 1851	II
"A Communication to my Friends"	Summer, 1851	I
"On Musical Criticism"	Jan., 1851	II
"Explanatory Programme: Beethoven's Heroic Symphony"	January, 1852	III
"Music of the Future"	prior to Feb., 1852	III
"On the Production of Tannhauser in Paris"	September, 1860	III
"Preface to the Ring poem"	March, 1861	III
"The Vienna Opera-house"	April, 1863	III
'To the Kingly Friend" (verse)	October, 1864	III
"On State and Religion"	Summer, 1864	IV
"A Music-School for Munich"	Winter, 1864-65	IV
"What is German?" (with addendum, Jan., 1878)	March, 1865	IV
"German Art and German Policy"	Autumn, 1867	IV
"Notices: Ferdinand Hiller"	Autumn, 1867	IV
Dedication of Second Edition, "Opera and Drama"	April, 1868	II
"Notices: E. Devrient and his Style"	Early, 1869	IV
"About Conducting"	Autumn, 1869	IV
Verses on "August 25, 1870"	August, 1870	IV
"Beethoven"	Autumn, 1870	V
Verses "To The German		

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Army before Paris"	January, 1871	V
"A Capitulation" (with preface 1873)	January, 1871	V
"The Destiny of Opera"	Spring, 1871	V
Introduction to the "Gesammelte Schriften"	July, 1871	I
Introduction to Vol. I "Ges. Schr."	July, 1871	VII
Introduction to "Art and Revolution" (i.e. Vols. III and IV Ges. Schr.)	Early, 1872	I
Introduction to Vols. V and VI "Ges. Schr."	Early, 1872	III
Letter to F. Nietzsche on Education	June, 1872	V
"Actors and Singers"	Summer, 1872	V
"On the name Musik-drama"	October, 1872	V
"A Glance at the German Operatic Stage of To-day"	December, 1872	V
"Prologue to a Reading of Gotterdammerung"	February, 1873	V
"The Rendering of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony"	March, 1873	V
"Bayreuth: I. Final Report: II the Playhouse"	April, 1873	V
"To the Presidents of Wagner-Vereins"	January, 1877	VI
Introduction to the First Number of the "Bayreuth Blatter"	December, 1877	VI
"Modern"	February, 1878	VI
"Public and Popularity"	March to July, 1878	VI
"The Public in Time and Space"	September, 1878	VI
Introduction to Hans von Wolzogen's "Decay and Rescue of the German Tongue"	January, 1879	VI
"Shall We Hope?"	April, 1879	VI
"On Poetry and Composition"	June, 1879	VI
"On Operatic Poetry and Composition"	August, 1879	VI
Letter to E. Von Weber		

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"Against Vivisection"	October, 1879	VI
"On the Application of Music to the Drama"	October, 1879	VI
"Introduction to the Year 1880"	Christmas, 1879	VI
"Religion and Art"	Summer, 1880	VI
"What Boots this Knowledge?"	November, 1880	VI
"Know Thyself" (second supplement to Religion and Art)	Jan. or Feb., 1881	VI
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"Hero-dom and Christendom" (Third supplement to "Religion and Art")	Summer, 1881	VI
"A Youthful Symphony"	December, 1882	VI
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