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THE CASE OF NIETZSCHE:

SCHOPENHAUER, WAGNER, AND THE 'MUSIC-
MAKING' PHYSICIAN OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

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By *Ryan Harvey*

The primary object of this dissertation is to demonstrate the nature and extent of Wagner's intellectual influence on Nietzsche and to unravel the logic behind Nietzsche's enigmatic case of Wagner. An investigation of this nature appears now more than ever to be necessary, and for two especial reasons: 1) in the more general sense, and as far as scholars on Nietzsche are concerned, the nature of Wagner's influence must finally find its rightful place in the literature and can no longer be dismissed or ignored; and 2) in the more immediate sense, we must finally be able to address what Nietzsche's case of Wagner actually is, and to that extent, we can only attempt this undertaking by first analyzing the nature of Wagner's influence on Nietzsche.

The object of our investigation will take a two-fold aim: first, to demonstrate the nature of that influence (Chapters 1 and 2), and second, to demonstrate how that influence became the basis of Nietzsche's case of Wagner (Chapters 3 and 4).

We will demonstrate that Nietzsche's enigmatic symbol of the 'music-making Socrates,' which until now has never sufficiently been analyzed in the secondary literature on Nietzsche, is at the very basis of Nietzsche's case against Wagner. In particular, we will establish that this symbol, which grew out of Nietzsche's advocacy for Wagner and the promise that Wagner himself represented for the rebirth of a new European culture, increasingly came to symbolize the advocacy Nietzsche wished for himself as the promise for the rebirth of a new tragic culture *contra* Wagner. It is this symbol in particular which holds the key to why Nietzsche's case of Wagner becomes a matter for philosophy.

Table of Contents

Primary Sources and Abbreviations	9
Introduction	13
The ‘Case’ of Wagner	13
1. The ‘Case’ of Wagner	14
Chapter 1	21
Anticipating the Birth of a Tragedy.....	21
1. From the Ancient Music Drama to the Artwork of the Future.....	22
2. Life as the Great Ultimate, a Law unto Itself.....	30
3. The Philosopher of Life: the Will in Representation	31
4. The Philosopher of Life: the Authority of Insight	41
5. The Artist of Life: a Flesh-and-Blood Illustration of What Schopenhauer Calls a Genius	47
6. The Culture of Life: Anticipating the Rebirth of Tragedy.....	55
Chapter 2	63
The Philosopher as Physician of Culture	63
1. From the ‘Music-Making Socrates’ to the Problem of Modernity.....	64
2. Two Clues from Plato’s <i>Phaedo</i>	65
3. The ‘Meaning’ of Plato’s <i>Phaedo</i>	68
4. Socrates! Make Music!	70
Chapter 3	85
From Physician of Culture to “Physician, Heal Thyself!”	85
1. An Attempt at a Self-Criticism.....	86
2. The Pessimism of Degenerating Instincts vs. the Pessimism of Strength	90

3. Nietzsche's Post-Wagnerian Vitalist Thesis.....	98
4. From the Philosopher as Physician of Culture to "Physician, Heal Thyself!"	101
5. Nietzsche Contra Wagner, or: "Wagner is Altogether the Foremost Name in <i>Ecce Homo</i> "	112
6. Towards the Dionysian Future of Music.....	118
Chapter 4	121
Music as the Late Fruit of Every Culture	121
1. A Music Without a Future.....	122
2. Music as the Late Fruit of Every Culture	129
3. Nietzsche's Dangerous Game.....	133
4. The Case of Nietzsche.....	140
5. Conclusion	147
Appendix	149
On the Uses and Disadvantages of Wagner for Life	149
1. Nietzsche's Break with Wagner: a Conventional Story?	150
2. The 'Cause' of the Break?	156
3. Pledging Allegiance	161
4. Plans... ..	168
5. Un Petit Faux Pas de Jeunesse	171
6. <i>The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music</i> or... "I Will Say What Children Say When They Have Done Something Foolish: I Will Never Do It Again."	173
7. 'Proffering More Allegiance'	183
8. Brahms, Bayreuth...and Some Silk Underwear	189
9. Fomenting the "Verbal Instrumentalist"	196

For my parents

Primary Sources and Abbreviations

For the purposes of the present work, I have relied on the most recent critical editions of Nietzsche's unabridged notebooks translated into English and published through Stanford University Press. While it is only very recently that Stanford University Press has begun this project, their endeavor has been to publish, for the first time, the *Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe* in fifteen volumes into English based on the definitive edition of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. While only six of the total nineteen volumes from the Stanford series have been published to date, the results published from their series have been very impressive so far in their philological attention to detail. Manuscript changes, deletions, and ellipses, comparative analyses between the unpublished notebook entries and the published works, and comprehensive annotations to the notes and aphorisms themselves has given the critical scholar far richer analytical detail than anything else published in English to date for the direction and unfoldment of Nietzsche's thought during the periods in question. Accordingly, I have relied on their editions for both Nietzsche's notebooks and published writings whenever possible. To that extent, it also means adopting the translation of titles which might otherwise sound unfamiliar to the English scholar on Nietzsche, but this is done primarily to keep the editions with which I am referencing consistent. With the exception of the editions published as part of the Stanford series, I have adopted the traditional abbreviations for both the German and English editions of Nietzsche's works.

DBCW:

Die Briefe Cosima Wagners an Friedrich Nietzsche. In 2 vols., Published by Erhart Thierbach. Nietzsche-Archiv: Weimar, 1938-40.

SL:

Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche. Edited and translated by Christopher Middleton. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

L:

Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche. Translated by A.N. Ludovici. Edited with an introduction by O. Levy. London: Soho Book Company, 1985.

KGB:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel*, Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari in 21 vols. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975 – present.

KGW:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Werke*, Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari in 36 vols. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1963 – present.

KSA:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Kritische Studienausgabe, Sämtliche Werke*, Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari in 15 vols. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980.

KSB:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Kritische Studienausgabe, Sämtliche Briefe*, Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari in 8 vols. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986.

AC:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Anti-Christ*. Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by R.J. Hollingdale. In *Twilight of the Idols and Anti-Christ*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

BGE:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale with an Introduction by Michael Tanner. London: Penguin Classics, 2014.

BT:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Edited with an Introduction by Michael Tanner. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. London: Penguin, 1993.

CW:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Case of Wagner*. Translated with a Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. In *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. New York: Vintage, 1967.

D:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Dawn. From the Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Volume 5. Translated by Brittain Smith with an Afterword by Keith Ansell-Pearson. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

EH:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. Translated and Edited with a Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. In *Ecce Homo and The Genealogy of Morals*. New York: Vintage, 1989.

GM:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morality*. Translated by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen. Indiana: Hackett, 1998.

GS:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Translated with a Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.

HAH I:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, All Too Human I. From the Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Volume 4. Translated with an Afterword by Gary Handwerk. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

NCW:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. Edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. Translated by Judith Norman. In *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

TI:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols*. Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by R.J. Hollingdale. In *Twilight of the Idols and Anti-Christ*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

UF/HAH II:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, All Too Human II and Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II (Spring 1878 – Fall 1879)*. From the *Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Volume 4. Translated with an Afterword by Gary Handwerk. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

UO:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Unfashionable Observations*. From the *Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Volume 2. Translated with and Afterword by Richard T. Gray. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

UW:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Unpublished Writings from the period of Unfashionable Observations*. From the *Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Volume 11. Translated with an Afterword by Richard T. Gray. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

WEN:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Writings from the Early Notebooks*. Edited by Raymond Guess and Alexander Nehamas. Translated by Ladislaus Löb. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Z:

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Translated by A. Tille and Revised by M.M. Bozman with an introduction by Earnest Rhys. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1933.

FFR:

Arthur Schopenhauer. *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*. Translated by E.F.J. Payne. Chicago: Open Court Press, 2001.

WWR 1:

Arthur Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume I. Translated by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

WWR 2:

Arthur Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume II. Translated by E.F.J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1966.

PP 1:

Arthur Schopenhauer. *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Volume I. Translated by E.F.J. Payne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

CWD 1:

Cosima Wagner. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Volume I: 1869 – 1877*. In 2 vols., Edited and annotated by Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack. Translated with and introduction by Geoffrey Skelton. London: Collins, 1978.

CWD 2:

Cosima Wagner. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Volume II: 1878 – 1883*. In 2 vols., Edited and annotated by Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack. Translated with and introduction, postscript, and additional notes by Geoffrey Skelton. London: Collins, 1980.

BB:

Richard Wagner. *The Diary of Richard Wagner, 1865 – 1882: The Brown Book*. Presented and Annotated by Joachim Bergfeld. Translated by George Bird. London: Victor Gollancz, 1980.

ML:

Richard Wagner. *My Life*. Authorized Translation from the German, in 2 vols. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1911.

PW:

Richard Wagner. *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*. In 8 vols., Translated by William Ashton Ellis. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1893 – 1899.

Introduction

The 'Case' of Wagner

"He has wounded me, the one who awakened me."

– *Notebook 28* [6], Spring – Summer, 1878

1. The 'Case' of Wagner

The case of Wagner is no new subject to philosophy, but it is a subject which, on first glance, might seem rather unusual. Indeed, one might wonder why it has become a subject at all. What does Wagner have to do with philosophy? And why is there a 'case' against him? Why have philosophers since the time of Nietzsche found it necessary to take him on? These are very interesting questions, for what it suggests is that taking on Wagner has become a kind of genre in its own right, an intellectual tradition which, at least since the time of Nietzsche, has been invoked by an artist against an artist. One need only point out that some of the most enduring charges comprising the case of Wagner have been levelled against Wagner by either thinkers or philosophers who were artists themselves. This fact alone suggests – as is certainly the case in the historical lineage of Wagner criticism from Nietzsche to Mann to Heidegger to Adorno – that the case of Wagner has been motivated in large part by an ambivalent kind of admiration for him.

Yet leaving these considerations to one side, the question that still merits asking is why Wagner in particular has a 'case' named after him, and why is it a case for philosophy? The mere fact that the case of Wagner exists to the present day and is taken up by a number of modern thinkers under the banner of Wagner criticism does surprisingly little to clarify this point, for while no modern thinker would hesitate to acknowledge that the case of Wagner has its origins in Nietzsche's now famous insurrection and polemic against Wagner, there would be considerably more hesitation on the part of that same thinker if we endeavored to get clear on what Nietzsche's case of Wagner actually means for philosophy.

If, then, the case of Wagner does not simply or exclusively refer to a circumscribed event in the history of ideas inaugurated by Nietzsche in the last year of his productive life, then the question that should arise is one which attempts to clarify precisely this point: what do we mean by the case of Wagner? Are we referring to the case of Wagner as initiated by Nietzsche and as Nietzsche so understood it, or are we referring to the case of Wagner as some kind of ideological genre?

These are very important questions to consider, for when it comes to understanding what the case of Wagner actually is for philosophy, there is no question that Nietzsche plays a unique and critical role in determining it, both in terms of how that case arose as well as the charges in which that case consists. And yet, Nietzsche's case of Wagner is, in both its origins and its intentions, hardly clear at all, and in many ways this explains, at least to some extent, why Nietzsche's case of Wagner has been co-opted into what amounts to a totally different ideological genre.

So how then should we understand Nietzsche's case of Wagner? It is certainly true that most of the thinkers who have written about, or at least touched upon, the case of Wagner for philosophy have acknowledged that the case itself has its origins in Wagner's influence on Nietzsche. But in order for this acknowledgment to actually explain Nietzsche's case of Wagner for philosophy, we would have to go far beyond the mere fact *that* the influence existed, and begin instead to investigate *what* the

nature of that influence was. If we discount from our tally the mere mention of the fact that the influence existed, most of the literature written about the two has done very little to actually analyze it.

But between the two ‘factions’ as it were, it is Nietzsche scholars in general who have demonstrated far less acquaintance with Wagner than Wagner scholars have with Nietzsche. Curt von Westernhagen’s biography of Wagner, for instance, demonstrates considerable understanding of the dynamics between the two men, even though Nietzsche plays, to Westernhagen, only a relatively small role in his otherwise incredibly detailed biography of Wagner. Nietzsche scholars can hardly say the same, and laying aside the early biographers of Nietzsche such as Erich Podach, it seems by and large that Nietzsche scholars would just as soon prefer that the influence not exist, or what is effectively the same thing, that it be reduced to one that is essentially negligible to the total value of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Considering that Wagner’s influence on Nietzsche is hardly negligible, this attitude towards Wagner is rather puzzling. Yet nowhere is the partiality to this latter viewpoint better captured than in the pioneering work of Nietzsche’s first modern-day champion, Walter Kaufmann, and specifically in his rather presumptuous footnote at the end of section 15 to his translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* where he proclaims that “the book might well end at this point [...] the discussion of the birth and death of tragedy is finished in the main, and the following celebration of the rebirth of tragedy (i.e., the ten section panegyric to Wagner that follows) weakens the book and was shortly regretted by Nietzsche himself.”¹ Kaufmann’s statement, as Michael Tanner once commented, “is written from the standpoint of someone who not only had no interest in Wagner, but who wished Nietzsche never had either.”² And yet surely Kaufmann’s knowledge of Nietzsche was such that he had to have known that the essay itself was modelled on Wagner’s essay *The Destiny of Opera*, and thus that it is for the last ten sections of *The Birth of Tragedy* that first fifteen even exist at all.

Therefore, if we wish to open our inquiry into Nietzsche’s enigmatic case of Wagner for the scrutiny of critical history and philosophy, we must first recognize that at the centre of this debate is, without a doubt, *the nature of the relationship* between Wagner and Nietzsche.

Accordingly, the primary object of this dissertation is to present and demonstrate the nature and extent of Wagner’s intellectual influence on Nietzsche in order to unravel the logic behind Nietzsche’s enigmatic case of Wagner. An investigation of this nature appears now more than ever to be necessary, and for two especial reasons: 1) in the more general sense, and as far as scholars on Nietzsche are concerned, the nature of Wagner’s influence must finally find its rightful place in the literature and can no longer be dismissed or ignored; and 2) in the more immediate sense, we must finally be able to address what Nietzsche’s case of Wagner actually is, and to that extent, we can only attempt this undertaking by first analyzing the nature of Wagner’s

¹ BT, 1967: 98, §15, n. 11.

² BT, 1993: xi, Introduction.

influence on Nietzsche, for in the final analysis, it is the nature of Wagner's influence on Nietzsche which drives Nietzsche's case of Wagner in the first place. *A fortiori*, this investigation will help us address the auxiliary question which is invariably bound up with the nature of that influence; namely, in what sense does Nietzsche's case of Wagner become a matter for philosophy?

The object of our investigation will take a two-fold aim: in the first instance, to demonstrate the nature of that influence (Chapters 1 and 2), and in the second instance, to demonstrate how that influence became the basis of Nietzsche's case of Wagner (Chapters 3 and 4).

In particular, we will demonstrate that Nietzsche's enigmatic symbol of the 'music-making Socrates,' which until now has never sufficiently been analyzed in the secondary literature on Nietzsche, will be shown to be at the very basis of Nietzsche's case against Wagner. In particular, we will establish that this symbol, which grew out of Nietzsche's advocacy for Wagner and the promise that Wagner himself represented for the rebirth of a new European culture, increasingly came to symbolize the advocacy Nietzsche wished for himself as the promise for the rebirth of a new tragic culture *contra* Wagner. It is this symbol in particular which holds the key to why Nietzsche's case of Wagner becomes a matter for philosophy.

In Chapter 1, we trace the nature of Wagner's intellectual influence on Nietzsche from the time of Nietzsche's first notebook entries right up until the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Specifically we will demonstrate that Nietzsche's earliest philosophical work was completely bound up with the project of proclaiming and defending a German Reformation of Culture which closely followed Wagner's theoretical arguments about the connection between vitalism and art on the one hand, and its relationship to the decline of culture since the time of the ancient Hellenes on the other. In this connection, we will also demonstrate that Nietzsche had appropriated Wagner's theoretical arguments about the role that Socratic culture had played in historically bifurcating the vitalistic world-view, and hence art as culture, by divorcing rationality from the creative instincts for life, leading in turn to the decline of culture at the hands of science. Looking towards the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, we will then demonstrate that Nietzsche had endeavored to marshal what amounted to Wagnerian theses from first to last by arguing that Socratic culture, which had destroyed the vitalistic world-view upon which tragedy had been built, would itself be coming to a close wherein Wagner's music dramas, now supported by Schopenhauer's vitalistic metaphysics, would be seen as the tangible promise for the rebirth of a new tragic European culture through the nature of Wagner's music. In this respect, we will show that Nietzsche's earliest meditations on the problem of culture were completely dominated by the problems introduced by Wagner's aesthetics as well as the promise that Wagner himself represented for the rebirth of a new European culture.

In Chapter 2, we explore what Wagner's promise entailed more closely by scrutinizing Nietzsche's figure of the 'music-making Socrates' as the enigmatic symbol through which this promise would be fulfilled in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Utilizing a close

textual analysis of the clues that Nietzsche left for us, we will discover that the problem introduced by the symbol of the 'music-making Socrates' was intimately bound up with the question of whether Socratism and art were necessarily polar opposites, given the nature of the Platonic dialogues as a whole. It is here we will discover that Nietzsche's advocacy of this symbol was specifically mobilized to vindicate the Wagnerian thesis, and even more specifically Wagner's intention to revitalize a declining and moribund Western culture which had had its origins in the devitalizing nature of Greek science, by endeavoring to prove that the connection between vitalism and art are at the basis of all knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. Accordingly, we will establish that what is at the heart of Nietzsche's examination of this symbol in the context of the Platonic dialogues is to prove that Socratism and art are not the polar opposites that they are taken to be, and that therefore the symbol of the 'music-making Socrates' is no contradiction in terms by pointing out the simple fact that Socratic culture itself, which had long overemphasized and overvalued rationality at the crippling cost of divorcing it from creativity, was in actuality indebted to the creative vision of Plato for its origins in the first place, and had therefore implicitly relied on the art of Plato who, through the artistic deed itself, had demonstrated that a fusion between life, science and art was possible. Consequently the claim Nietzsche, and with him, Wagner, wish for us to understand is that rationality and creativity should never have been divorced from one another, for they were never divorced even in the very presentation of a life depicting that they ought to be so (i.e., in the life of Socrates), and that as a result, Nietzsche's vindication of the 'music-making Socrates' as a figure portending the rebirth of culture lay precisely in the formula that rationality must be fused to the creative instincts for life. It was this vitalistic formula which had 'officially' marked out Wagner himself as the individual who promised such a rebirth of culture.

Nonetheless, we will trace the development of this symbol unfold immediately following the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* in which we will discover that Nietzsche's meditations from this point forward increasingly came to organize themselves around the idea that the philosopher must be the physician of his culture. By analyzing a cross-section of notebook entries from his 'philosophers book,' we will establish that Nietzsche's meditations on the role the philosopher plays in his relationship to culture likewise embodies both the rational as well as the creative instincts for life in that he both reforms the excesses of his present culture as well as paves the way for a new one and in precisely in the same way that the pre-Socratics paved the way for Aeschylus. With these claims in hand, we will establish that the symbol of the 'music-making Socrates' had achieved its final and most mature form during Nietzsche's pro-Wagner period as the figure chiefly responsible for the rebirth of a new vitalistic world-view which would bring Socratic culture to a close, and that this conception was in perfect consistency with the cyclical pattern of culture implied in Wagner's theoretical arguments about the decline and rebirth of culture.

Following Nietzsche's break with Wagner, the central issue which we take up in Chapter 3 will be how Nietzsche's conception of the 'music-making Socrates' had

changed after he had broken away from Wagner. In this respect, Nietzsche's "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" provides us with some very important clues as to the nature of his 'post-Wagnerian' conception of culture which, as we will endeavor to establish, has its origins precisely in deriving a more consistent paradigm of both the philosopher and the artist – hence the 'music-making Socrates' – as a rival to Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture. Once again, using a cross-section of excerpts drawn from Nietzsche's 'post-Wagnerian' writings, we will seek to demonstrate that this rival conception was at pains to compete with Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture over the right to symbolize the meaning attached to the 'music-making Socrates' from his 'pro-Wagner' period, and that this competition culminates in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* as the deed which proved that he had, in effect, assimilated the paradigm of the philosopher and artist within himself. In the meantime, Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture had increasingly come to symbolize the sign of decline, and for precisely those reasons which Wagner himself said were responsible for the decline of culture since the time of the ancient Hellenes.

We begin Chapter 4 by summarizing the nature of Nietzsche's competition with Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture from Chapter 3 by observing that Nietzsche's case of Wagner indisputably possesses and underlying structure to it in which Nietzsche simply held Wagner to account for his theoretical arguments about the connection between vitalism and art on the one hand and its relationship to the decline of culture on the other in order for Wagner and his 'artwork of the future' to become the target for Wagner's own theory of the decline of culture. Once Nietzsche had convinced his readers that Wagner's art was the sign of decline, Nietzsche could declare himself to be the true 'music-maker' of culture with his *Zarathustra*, and therefore the true heir of the tragic culture in perfect consistency from his pro-Wagner period. Looked at in this way, we will argue that Nietzsche's case of Wagner is a case of psychological hegemony against Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture in which Nietzsche's personal challenge to Wagner had come to be grafted onto the theoretical structure of Wagner's overall pattern of culture, and was then used as the backdrop to wage his war against Wagner over the right to symbolize the 'music-making Socrates' for culture.

In light of this conclusion, we will then examine some of the principal 'charges' which constitute the *Case of Wagner* itself, and in so doing we will demonstrate that Nietzsche plays a very dangerous game in his stated task of 'overcoming' Wagner precisely because Nietzsche's case of Wagner is completely tied up with Nietzsche's case for himself, and in particular, his competition with Wagner over the right to symbolize the 'music-making Socrates.' This final conclusion provides us with some very suggestive observations about *Nietzsche's* case of Wagner, and how it is therefore fundamentally different from the so-called case of Wagner as a 'genre.'

This investigation concludes with an optional appendix devoted to analyzing the biographical nature of Wagner's intellectual influence on Nietzsche. The survey is both detailed and extensive, and is added not only to demonstrate the incredibly rich influence that Wagner exerted on Nietzsche, but to provide the foundations that

future research might take in coming to grips with Nietzsche's case of Wagner for philosophy.

Therefore, in order to examine just how pervasive this influence was – that Nietzsche was under the influence of Wagner, and that Wagner was on his agenda from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) to the *Case of Wagner* (1888) – let us get down to particulars.

Chapter 1

Anticipating the Birth of a Tragedy

“There is no higher cultural tendency than the preparation and creation of genius. The *state* too, despite its barbarous origin and its domineering gestures, is only a means to that end.”

– *Notebook 11* [1], *Preface to Richard Wagner*, written in Lugano on Schopenhauer’s birthday, 22 February 1871

1. From the Ancient Music Drama to the Artwork of the Future

Nietzsche's notebooks, starting from the first notebook of autumn 1869 onwards, are essentially concerned with one topic, and one topic only: the origins of culture. How does a culture originate and what are the conditions which sustain that culture? Yet in the very first note of this notebook, we already find the problem of culture intimately bound up with Wagner's art and Wagner's aesthetics: "Whoever talks or hears about Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides today immediately thinks of them as *littérateurs*" Nietzsche wrote, "because he first got to know them, either in the original or in translation, from *books*: but this is roughly as if somebody who is talking about *Tannhäuser* means and understands nothing more than the libretto. I want to talk therefore about those men not as librettists *but as composers of operas*."¹ Thus Wagner's 'music drama' *Tannhäuser* is immediately set on the same footing as the music dramas of Greek antiquity and then set to one side, while Nietzsche goes on to discuss how 'opera,' in the sense in which we understand this term today, is essentially a learned craftwork, since it came into existence as a result of abstract concepts that were derived from a conscious intention to produce the effects of the ancient drama. All genuine art by contrast, including the dramas of Greek antiquity, arise from the unconscious depths growing out of the life of the people, from an immediate acquaintance with, and direct perception into, the nature of existence. In this sense, modern 'opera' is an artificial homunculus. "Here we have a warning example of the damage the direct aping of antiquity can do. By such unnatural experiments the roots of an unconscious art growing out of the life of the people are cut off or at least badly mutilated."² Continuing, Nietzsche observes that the reason all the modern arts have broken down so often and have advanced so slowly and erratically is precisely because of "erudition, conscious knowledge and excessive study," whereas the beginnings of the Greek drama "go back to the unfathomable expressions of folk impulses" including especially "the orgiastic celebrations of Dionysus in which people were driven outside themselves – ἔκστασις³ – to such an extent that they acted and felt like transformed and bewitched beings."⁴

If we consider this note as a whole, we can already discern in seed form the conceptual framework that Nietzsche endorsed, and by which he was guided, to analyze the conditions under which art and culture are made possible in his subsequent notes and writings. And on this point, it is important to emphasize that Nietzsche not only *endorsed*, but was *guided by*, a conceptual framework. In order to appreciate the significance of this statement, let us consider some of the assertions that Nietzsche offered in this first note regarding art and its relationship to culture.

One of Nietzsche's more direct assertions in this note is that all genuine art arises from the unconscious depths growing out of the life of the people. The implication is

¹ WEN, 2009: 9, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869, my emphasis.

² WEN, 2009: 9, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

³ *Ecstasis*, literally "to be or stand outside oneself."

⁴ WEN, 2009: 10, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

that a conscious, willed art, in the sense of knowing or being aware of what should be willed, is already a separation from the folk impulses which brought forth the genuine work of art. This is, in fact, the fundamental problem of all modern art: modern art is a learned product which has come into existence as a result of “erudition, conscious knowledge and excessive study” and is therefore a sign of a deteriorating culture. Yet here we have a diagnosis of culture which, in its brevity, is not much more than a pre-digested iteration of Wagner’s own diagnosis as put forth in his essay *Artwork of the Future* from twenty years prior. In Part I entitled *Man and Art in General*, §4 under the heading “The Folk as the Force Conditioning the Artwork,” Wagner had claimed that

[the] impelling force, the plain and innate force of Life which vindicates itself in life-needs, is unconscious and instinctive by its very nature; and where it is this – in the Folk – it also is the only true, conclusive might. Great, then, is the error of our folk instructors when they fancy that the Folk must *know* first what it wills [...] ere it be justified, or even able, to will at all. From this chief error all the wretched makeshifts, all the impotent devices, and all the shameful weakness of the latest world-commotions take their rise [...] Not ye wise men, therefore, are the true inventors, but the Folk; for Want it was, that drove it to invention. All great inventions are the People’s deed; whereas the devisings of the intellect are but the exploitations, the derivatives, nay, the splinterings and disfigurements of the great inventions of the Folk.¹

From the content of this note, it is clear that Wagner’s argument posits art as the necessary consequence of a *want* which arises from the unconscious, instinctual life-pulse of the folk. This renders all genuine art the deed of necessity, since it is the want of necessity which drives it to invention. Wagner makes this condition explicit in §6 under the heading “The Standard for the Artwork of the Future” where he asserts that “the need of Art is not an arbitrary issue, but an inbred craving of the natural, genuine, and uncorrupted man [...] whence shall our uneasy ‘spirit’ derive its proofs of Art’s necessity, if not from the testimony of this artistic instinct and its glorious fruits afforded by these nature-fostered peoples, by the great Folk itself?”²

As might be expected, Wagner then singled out the one example with which he was intimately acquainted of a genuine art form that had arisen from the unconscious depths of the life of the people:

Before what phenomenon do we stand with more humiliating sense of the impotence of our frivolous culture, than before the art of the *Hellenes*?³

Using Greek antiquity as his case study of an art form driven by necessity, Wagner then makes an impressive exhortation about what is needed in order to bring about the revitalization of art and culture in his day and age.

Thus we must turn *Hellenic* art to *Human* art; to loosen it from the stipulations by which it was but an *Hellenic* and not a *Universal* art. The *garment of Religion*, which alone was the common Art of Greece, and after whose removal it could only, as an egoistic, isolated art-species, fulfil the needs of Luxury – however fair – but no longer those of Fellowship – this specific garb of the *Hellenic Religion*, we must stretch out until its folds embrace the Religion of the Future, the *Religion of Universal Manhood*, and

¹ PW 1: 79-80, “Artwork of the Future.”

² PW 1: 89, “Artwork of the Future.”

³ PW 1: 89, “Artwork of the Future.”

thus to gain already a presage of the Artwork of the Future [...] The Artwork is the living presentation of Religion; – but religions spring not from the artist's brain; their only origin is from the *Folk*.¹

Based on his foregoing arguments, it is evident that religion to Wagner does not mean arbitrarily erecting a set of dogmas that are the product of the intellect, but that it refers to a supreme or supernal value in human consciousness felt through the instinctual life-pulse of the folk and given artistic form and presentation. It is a value that can be awakened and collectively experienced. On this point, Wagner's entire argument is framed around the notion that modern man must advance his knowledge past the dialectical tension that exists between knower and what is known in order to firmly establish it in the recognition that he and nature are truly *one* as a conscious, experiential fact. Only in this way can art as culture be born again. Indeed, in the very first section of his monumental essay, Wagner tells us this as plainly as can be:

From the moment when Man perceived the difference between himself and Nature, and thus commenced his own development as *man*, by breaking loose from the unconsciousness of natural animal life and passing over into conscious life [...] from that moment did Error begin, as the earliest utterance of consciousness [...] But this distinction is merged once more, when Man recognises the essence of Nature as his very own, and perceives the same Necessity in all the elements and lives around him, and therefore in his own existence no less than in Nature's being [...] If Nature then, by her solidarity with Man, attains *in* Man her consciousness, and if Man's life is the very activation of this consciousness [...] so does man's Life itself gain understanding by means of Science, which makes this human life in turn an object of experience. But the activation of the consciousness attained by Science, the portrayal of the Life that it has learnt to know, the impress of this life's Necessity and Truth, is – *Art*.²

While the subsequent arguments that Wagner advances for this fundamental claim are involved, and are essentially the object of the essay which ensues, we can summarize them as they relate to the creation of art in the following way: the purpose of art is to reveal the principle of life to its people by 'reflection,' in other words by making life its object through depiction and presentation. As this portrayal of life is precisely the object of art, knowledge necessarily becomes instrumental to life itself, since its highest value is found, not by emphasizing the tension that exists between the knower and what is known, but by resolving both into the unity of consciousness through this very depiction. The resolution to this antithesis, which comprises both man *and* nature, or the knower and what is known, is attained by the artist, whose crowning achievement consists in revealing or unveiling the fundamental truths of life itself by reflecting this unity of consciousness *as* life back towards its source. Art in *this* sense is synonymous with culture.

Before we move to consider some of the additional arguments advanced in support of this thesis, it should be clear to the reader that whether or not the art of Greek antiquity arose in the manner specified by Wagner is immaterial. What Greek art *signified* to both men was that an historical art form had existed which could accommodate the conceptual framework Wagner had applied to it in which art *as*

¹ PW 1: 90, "Artwork of the Future."

² PW 1: 70-71, "Artwork of the Future."

culture could be defined. If we consider Wagner's thesis seriously, the music drama of Greek antiquity signified an art form in which the rationalistic emphasis had not yet broken away from the instinctual life-pulse of the common folk. Reason had not yet estranged itself from nature to look upon her as an object separate and apart from itself. Reason, which blossomed forth from life itself, was still firmly rooted in life. Art, and therefore religion, were still possible, for reason rooted in and wedded to life led to the contemplation of ultimates. This is what gave the ancient musical drama its terrible and profound insight into the nature of existence. Here was a wisdom that arose from the unconscious depths of life expressed in its beat, its rhythm, and its periodicity in the folk impulse, and then embodied in the Greek chorus. "Thus we may call the chorus, at this primitive stage of the original tragedy" Nietzsche would later write in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "a reflection of Dionysiac man for his own contemplation [...] In this function of complete devotion to the god, it is the supreme, Dionysiac expression of *nature*, and therefore, like nature, it speaks under the spell of wise and oracular sayings. *Sharing his suffering*, it is also *wise*, heralding the truth from the very heart of the world."¹

For Wagner then, Greek drama signified, in its innermost kernel, an art form that reverently honored the secret of life itself in doctrine, symbol, and mime, while at the same time, it betokened a living record and blueprint for how art as culture could be revitalized. Wagner articulates this thesis with well-nigh perfect precision in the following page of his essay when he states that

The path of Science lies from error to knowledge, from fancy to reality, from Religion to Nature. In the beginning of Science, therefore, Man stands toward Life in the same relation as he stood towards the phenomena of Nature when he first commenced to part his life from hers. Science takes over the arbitrary concepts of the human brain, in their totality; while, by her side, Life follows in its totality the instinctive evolution of Necessity. Science thus bears the burden of the sins of Life, and expiates them by her own self-abrogation; she ends in her direct antithesis, in the knowledge of Nature, in the recognition of the unconscious, instinctive, and therefore real, inevitable, and physical. The character of Science is therefore finite: that of Life, unending; just as Error is of time, but Truth eternal [...] The end of Science is the justifying of the Unconscious, the giving of self-consciousness to Life, the re-instatement of the Senses in their perceptive rights, the sinking of Caprice in the world-Will of Necessity. Science is therefore the vehicle of Knowledge, her procedure mediate, her goal an intermediation; but Life is the great Ultimate, a law unto itself. As Science melts away into the recognition of the ultimate and self-determinate reality, of actual Life itself: so does this avowal win its frankest, most direct expression in Art, or rather in the *Work of Art*. [...] The Art-work, thus conceived as an immediate vital act, is therewith the perfect reconciliation of Science with Life, the laurel-wreath which the vanquished, redeemed by her defeat, reaches in joyous homage to her acknowledged victor.²

From this excerpt, we are provided with a clear conceptual schema of the unfoldment of man and nature for consciousness whereby reason, once severed from nature to look upon life in alienation, now returns to the source from which she sprang in order to reflect life as the great ultimate, and to consecrate this knowledge in the immediate vital act of the work of art. The implication of this thesis can hardly be skirted: art is the truly metaphysical activity of man.

¹ BT, 1993: 42-44, §8.

² PW 1: 72-73, "Artwork of the Future."

From this point forward in his essay, Wagner sketches out a genealogical analysis of the arts which have come down to modernity in their separation from one another using his argument about the estrangement of man from nature. In order to trace this estrangement, Wagner begins by adopting the thesis that man's nature is two-fold; namely that it is divided between an outer and an inner sense. The faculty of vision, Wagner argues, is the strongest sense organ corresponding to man's outward nature, while the faculty of hearing is the strongest sense organ corresponding to man's inward nature. Accordingly, all arts which are intended to impress themselves upon man's eyes – including architecture, sculpture, and painting – can only represent man's *outward* nature, since what the eye apprehends “compares it with surrounding objects, and discriminates between it and them.”¹ Wagner is keen to emphasize however that, originally connected with these outward art forms, there was an inward art form corresponding to the primeval idea of music – including dance as rhythm, speech as tone, and poetry as measure and melody – and that these inward art forms imparted meaning and significance to the “emotions of the inner man which are not directly cognisable by the eye.”² While dance and poetry have long since become individual arts that have slid into decline as a result of their separation from music, their origins Wagner argues, are rooted in art forms of the inner sense, namely rhythm and melody respectively. Thus it becomes the task of music to unite the arts of dance and poetry once again so that they “regain their own true essence”³ in rhythm and melody.

By contrast, the art forms of man's outward nature, i.e., the plastic arts, fare less well in Wagner's genealogical analysis. While the reasons supporting the decline of the individual plastic art forms is varied, the essence of Wagner's argument seems to be the following: the plastic arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting are all outward forms in which man shapes his art from the materials of nature. But because these art forms are created *from* the materials of nature, the final product can only be a form that is separate from the man, wherein man *looks* upon his creation as an otherness. Accordingly, unless these art forms are connected by the undercurrent of life uniting both man *and* nature, these art forms are particularly susceptible to the laws which govern the representation of man's outward nature alone; namely, egoistic comparison, distinction and difference, which to Wagner, had culminated in a modernity rooted in, and addicted to, pluralistic utilitarianism.

Nonetheless, the evolution of the plastic arts, in each instance, achieved its zenith in the Hellenistic world, for here again the unconscious, communal life-pulse of the folk pervaded man and his relation to nature, and had thus become the subject and the matter of his own artistic treatment. Accordingly, the solution to the redemption of these “egoistically severed humanistic arts,” Wagner argues, is for each art form to renounce its separative, egoistic ‘taking’ from nature as it were, as marked by the modern proclivity of utilitarian man, in order to give nature back to the principle of

¹ PW 1: 91, “Artwork of the Future.”

² PW 1: 91, “Artwork of the Future.”

³ PW 1: 111, “Artwork of the Future.”

life, thus to the *commune*, to the original folk-impulses from which these art forms blossomed forth in the first place. For architecture, this means creating structures which once again see in nature and the forces of nature their perfect consummation in man, as for instance the Olympian Gods of the ancient Greeks that “bore themselves as men”¹ or the symmetry and proportion of the Euclidean geometry expressed through the Doric column perfectly balancing the architrave, frieze and cornice, and consecrated for use as “the Temples of the Gods [or] the Tragic theatres of the Folk.”² For sculpture, this means the return to nature by transforming inert stone into the “deified embodiments of nature-forces [...] through the shaping of natural substances to imitate the human form.”³ Sculpture will then have for its expression “the flesh and blood of man; out of immobility into motion, out of the monumental into the temporal.”⁴ Indeed, as Wagner reminds us, the oldest sculptural art originated through “[t]he religious need for [the] objectification of invisible, adored or dreaded godlike powers.”⁵ Finally, for painting this means repudiating the landscape in favor of depicting man in his living embodiment, as the tangible representation connected with the lyrical or the epic narrative from the tragic stage in order to recapture it in all its vividness and color.⁶

Overall, the conclusion that Wagner wants to draw from the decline of the arts since the Hellenistic world seems to be that once the arts became severed from the primeval idea of music, the ensuing fragmentation led to the production of art forms which increasingly catered to man’s outward nature alone, and thus could only result in representations which highlighted man’s felt sense of separateness from his fellow man. Predictably enough, Wagner’s solution to this decline is to re-establish the total artwork (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) in which the egoistically fragmented and individualistic art forms would once more be wedded to music, for only music, by unifying the inner man, can reveal the *harmony* in pluralism, and thereby give meaning and significance to man’s felt sense of separateness by revealing the true foundation out of which all the outward forms of art were derived, namely from life itself.

Throughout his essay, Wagner provides us with clues about how the artwork of the future might be achieved. In Part II entitled *Artistic Man, and Art as Derived Directly from Him*, §4 under the heading “The Art of Tone,” Wagner tells us that “only where eye and ear confirm each other’s sentience of him, is the whole artistic Man at hand.”⁷ As Wagner explains, this necessitates “simply a rich-gifted individual, who takes up into his solitary self the spirit of community that was absent from our public life; and from the fullness of his being, united with the fullness of musical resource, evolves within himself this spirit of community which his artist soul had been the first to yearn

¹ PW 1: 157, “Artwork of the Future.”

² PW 1: 158, “Artwork of the Future.”

³ PW 1: 163, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁴ PW 1: 164, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁵ PW 1: 163, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁶ PW 1: 177-78, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁷ PW 1: 125, “Artwork of the Future.”

for.”¹ Not three pages later, Wagner emphasizes that “only on the fullness of the special gifts of an individual artist-nature, can that art-creative impulse feed itself which nowhere finds its nourishment in outer Nature; for this individuality alone can find in its particularity, in its personal intuition, in its distinctive longing, craving, and willing, the stuff wherewith to give the art-mass form, the stuff for which it looks in vain in outer Nature.”² In Part V entitled *The Artist of the Future*, Wagner stops beating around the bush and asks quite plainly and directly “*who*, then, will be the *Artist of the Future*? Without a doubt, the Poet. But *who* will be the Poet? Indisputably the *Performer*. Yet *who*, again, will be the Performer? Necessarily the *Fellowship of all the Artists*.”³ As Wagner goes on to explain, “the Art-work of the Future is an associate work, and only an associate demand can call it forth.”⁴ Naturally, this association shall converge for one definite aim: the creation of the drama. Drama is the consummate art form of the outer man, for it borrows its materials directly from life and thus forms the intelligible bond that directly links art with life. In so doing, the mirror of art “upholds to Life the picture of its own existence, and lifts unconscious Life to conscious knowledge of itself.”⁵

From the foregoing examination, the philosophical implications of Wagner’s thesis seem clear: it takes both artist *and* philosopher to recognize the necessity in nature which brings reason to her own antithesis in order to return her to nature once more. Through this act, reason is redeemed for the conscious knowledge she now possess of the principle of life from which both she and nature sprang. Thus, the artist as philosopher must first and foremost be a philosopher of life. This is, perhaps, the most essential requirement for bringing forth the artwork of the future. Indeed, as Wagner reminds us earlier in his essay, “tragedy flourished for just so long as it was inspired by the spirit of the Folk” and only when “the common bond of its Religion and primeval Customs was *pierced and severed by the sophist needles of the egoistic spirit of Athenian self-dissection*,”⁶ did the Folk’s art also cease. In other words, when the pursuit of philosophy separated itself from the pursuit of art, so then did the decline of culture follow.

So who then will be the artist of the future according to Wagner? “Let us say it in one word: the Folk. That self-same Folk to whom we owe the only genuine Art-work, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restorations; to whom alone we owe all Art itself.”⁷

On the subject matter of method, Wagner paradoxically says very little. But given that he had written this essay five years before he encountered the philosophy of

¹ PW 1: 127, “Artwork of the Future.”

² PW 1: 130, “Artwork of the Future.”

³ PW 1: 195-96, “Artwork of the Future.” In this passage, Wagner footnotes the word ‘poet’ adding that “we must beg to be allowed to regard the *Tone-poet* as included in the Word-poet, – whether personally or by fellowship, is here a matter of indifference,” my emphasis.

⁴ PW 1: 195-96, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁵ PW 1: 197, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁶ PW 1: 136, “Artwork of the Future,” my emphasis.

⁷ PW 1: 204-05, “Artwork of the Future.”

Schopenhauer, which he admits only then proved to be the decisive key that opened the door to a conscious understanding of himself and his art, Wagner's silence on *how* the artist of the future shall create is understandable. Only one passage very early in the essay seems to suggest a methodology at work in the creation of art. In Part I, §2 entitled "Life, Science, and Art," Wagner states that, it is

true that the artist does not at first proceed directly; he certainly sets about his work in an arbitrary, selective, and mediating mood. But while he plays the go-between and picks and chooses, the product of his energy is not as yet the Work of Art; nay, his procedure is rather that of Science, who seeks and probes, and therefore errs in her caprice. Only when his choice is made, when this choice was born from pure Necessity – when thus the artist has found himself again in the subject of his choice, as perfected Man finds his true self in Nature – then steps the Art-work into life, then first is it a real thing, a self-conditioned and immediate entity.¹

The implication of Wagner's 'method' here seems to be that the artist is driven by an instinct that he cannot readily understand and therefore properly value, and so must pick and choose the materials which impel his art forward until such a time as the form which he creates reveals the source from which the original impulse sprang, thereby "lift[ing] unconscious Life to conscious knowledge of itself."²

We should point out that Wagner's description of the artistic method in this paragraph sounds suspiciously like it would succumb to the same criticism with which he accuses modern man's proclivity for utility, in that it seems to suggest a selfish and egoistic taking from nature in order to achieve individual artistic ends. But if we can accept Wagner's argument that the artistic genius is more conscious of his connection to the instinctual life-pulse of the folk, and so can take into himself the spirit of the commune in order to evolve it within himself out of the fullness of his artistic being, then it is possible, at least in theory, to avoid this criticism. All the same, Nietzsche hardly missed a beat when he later came to criticize Wagner on precisely this point, as we will discover in Chapter 4.

But for the moment, if we turn our attention back to the contents of Nietzsche's first note, what do we find? Not a single assumption about the relationship of art and culture that Wagner did not already articulate in his *Artwork of the Future*. In addition to the excerpts previously cited, consider the following statement in which Nietzsche asserts that "if the force slumbering in the depths is truly all-powerful [...] nature will be victorious, albeit very late in the day,"³ or that "among the Greeks the beginnings of the drama go back to the unfathomable expressions of folk impulses,"⁴ and whereas "the ancient musical drama blossomed out of such an epidemic; it is the misfortune of the modern arts that they do not stem from such a mysterious source."⁵ In other words, what we unquestionably find are Nietzsche's incipient attempts to 'work out' the consequences of Wagner's aesthetics and the assumptions he shares with Wagner

¹ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future."

² PW 1: 197, "Artwork of the Future."

³ WEN, 2009: 10, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 10, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

⁵ WEN, 2009: 10-11, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

at this early stage, for if the project at hand is to bring about the revitalization of a new culture, then it follows at once that an inquiry should be made into the most basic elements of which a culture consists as well as the conditions under which such a culture will thrive. This 'working out' of the consequences is precisely what Nietzsche's notes exemplify in their general outline, and it is to this argument that we shall now turn.

2. Life as the Great Ultimate, a Law unto Itself...

If we examine Nietzsche's notebooks from 1869 up until the time that *The Birth of Tragedy* was published in 1872, it soon becomes apparent that a substantial number of his notebook entries are organized around three broad categories that are mobilized to advance the consequences of Wagner's aesthetics as given in his *Artwork of the Future*. Broadly stated, these three categories are 1) Schopenhauer 2) Wagner and 3) the Greeks.

Now on the surface and at first glance, Schopenhauer, Wagner and the Greeks hardly seem to be related to one another at all, but rather seem to belong to separate, and at best, parallel worlds of discourse. But since Nietzsche's mobilization of these categories comprises nothing less than a full frontal assault on the decline of Western culture, of which its most important species is the 'problem of modernity,' we must first be able to articulate in precisely what sense these categories are united, and this can only be done by clarifying the fundamental assumption under which they operate. The implication is that the categories themselves must be linked by an evaluative claim, and yet based on what we have read from Wagner's arguments so far, we should hardly be surprised at what that evaluative claim is: in diagnosing 'the problem of modernity' for both men, we must understand that what it lacks, broadly speaking, is the principle of life. 'Life' is in fact the ultimate ontological category for Wagner, as it is for Nietzsche. In as much as these three categories are united, they all represent and embody the ontological category of life. Accordingly, these three categories are united by one critical fundamental assumption that is shared by Nietzsche, and through him by Wagner, which are together marshalled for the sake of an a priori argument against the decline of Western culture – one which assumes that the ultimate ontological category is life, and from which that assumption is taken as the basis for *evaluating* and *diagnosing* the problem of modernity. In effect then, these three categories possess a diagnostic value, for when the problem of modernity is analyzed, it is always analyzed in terms which reveal that modernity lacks precisely those elements or ingredients which these three categories, broadly speaking, possess, for to possess them is synonymous with the possession of a flourishing culture. We must understand then that by appealing to life as the ultimate ontological category, Wagner and Nietzsche, together with Schopenhauer, are fundamentally *vitalists*. In this regard, vitalism should be understood as a philosophical orientation which gives the category of life priority over the categories of mind or intellect, and

which points to a reality that, in a peculiar degree, can never be known in the exclusively conceptual sense. Once we understand this point, we will be in a far better position to understand in what sense each representative is invoked by Nietzsche, and how each one of them brings their own arguments to bear on the problem of life from their differing perspectives.

In this sense, 'Schopenhauer' signifies the philosopher of life, for he represents control over the boundless drive for knowledge as given by the sciences by calling attention to the fact that the sciences are, when all is said and done, instrumental to the problem of life. He therefore raises the question of the value of existence.

'Wagner' signifies the artist of life, for like the philosopher of life, he too controls the boundless drive for particularity as given by the egoistically fragmented and individualistic art forms and concentrates them to a singular point, and it is the spirit of music in particular which reveals their common root as well as their fundamental unity. The artist of life proves this most forcibly through the deeds of art, which combat the boundless drive for knowledge by drawing knowledge into an artistic conception of existence, thereby ennobling the inner nature of both man and the world.

Finally, the 'Greeks' signify the culture of life. More specifically, they are the relic of a once-extant culture whose primary purpose consisted in living life, and as the artists of life *par excellence*, they provide an historical connection with Schopenhauer and Wagner, who lead the latter day German Reformation of Culture that is a return to life and living.

In order to demonstrate how these categories form a united front for Nietzsche, and how they are mobilized by him to combat the problem of modernity, let us turn to an analysis of each of these categories under the problem of life from his earliest notebook entries. Doing so should provide us with the evidence, and at the very least the presumption, that the origins of Nietzsche's philosophy reside in a working out of the Wagnerian thesis, for let us recall and be very clear on this point too: the decline of Western culture and the problem of modernity was *Wagner's problem* before it ever became Nietzsche's.

3. The Philosopher of Life: the Will in Representation

As far as the philosophy of Schopenhauer is concerned, Nietzsche seems to value two distinct theses featured in *The World as Will and Representation* which, when taken together, bolster Wagner's own claims, and can therefore be said to have been appropriated primarily for that purpose. The two theses in question are Schopenhauer's metaphysical conception, especially as it relates to his metaphysics of music, and Schopenhauer's epistemic claim about the gulf or chasm between the concept and the lived experience from which the concept is derived. Considering how important these two theses are in bolstering the Wagnerian agenda, let us briefly consider each thesis in turn.

Schopenhauer had accepted Kant's distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself, and in particular, that the cognizing subject brings certain formal a priori elements to experience, including the forms of space, time, and causality, which necessarily condition the structure of its perceptions. At the same time however, Kant had maintained that the phenomena which the cognizing subject constructs of its experience do not arise arbitrarily, but seem to arise from a source that is independent of the subject. While Kant had tried to place this source outside of the cognizing subject as the *cause* of the sensations from which the subject constructs its experience, Schopenhauer had argued that not only do we *not* know this source immediately, we are made to infer its existence based on the law of causality, a cognition which Kant had specifically argued was a priori. In other words, once Kant had made the distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself, one of the principal implications that followed from his own thesis was that we could not affirm that the world that we experience is given exactly as it is in itself, only that it is true with respect to the structure of our possible experience. And as space, time, and causality, according to Kant, were subjective in origin and conditioned the form of possible experience for the cognizing subject, they could not at the same time be used to explain an unknown *x* that was said to be independent of, and entirely different from, the cognizing subject, and yet be the *cause* of how the cognizing subject experiences. Because the cognizing subject can only experience its world in conformity to the faculties with which he is equipped to cognize it, it is *precisely* for this reason that any metaphysical deduction can only appeal to *within* the limits of our possible experience. For Schopenhauer, this meant that we must look to the content of experience, to what is *immanent*, if there were any hope of deciphering the relationship between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. We could not go beyond the possibility of our own experience in order to hypostasize an external source from which experience itself is made possible and as Kant had tried to do in attempting to derive the thing-in-itself.

With this insight, Schopenhauer had insisted that the only thing that we know immediately in experience are the phenomena or the images or what he had called the *representations* of our experience, and in this respect, the representation (or what is represented to the cognizing subject) became the starting point of Schopenhauer's entire philosophical investigation.

Accordingly in deriving his metaphysical conception, Schopenhauer began with the representation, and pointed out the simple fact that our body is the only representation or phenomenon in experience that is given in two entirely different ways to the cognizing subject. On the one hand, the body is given to the cognizing subject as a representation in space and time, and through the nexus of the causal understanding, as an object among objects and liable to the same laws. But the body is also given to the cognizing subject from the inside, as the inner essence of the body's actions and expressions, and was designated by Schopenhauer with the word 'will.'¹

¹ WWR 1: 124, §18.

As the body is the *only* object that we know in this double sense, Schopenhauer argued that not only are we given the key to understanding the inner workings of our essence, our deeds, and our movements, we are also furnished with the ground to infer the inner nature of the entire world as representation, since all representations, or what is object for a subject, are precisely like our body in that they too occupy space and are subject to the same empirical laws.¹ Nonetheless, knowing the body in this double sense does not mean that an act of will and an act of the body are two different states which stand in relation of cause and effect;² rather, they are one and the same thing. The body is objectified will. This is a very important point. As Schopenhauer explains

...the cognition I have of my will, although it is immediate, cannot be separated from that of my body. I do not have cognition of my will as a whole, in its unity, in perfect accordance with its essence; rather I cognize it only in its individual acts, which is to say *in time*, time being the form in which by body (like every other object) appears: this is why the body is the condition of cognition of my will. *Consequently, I cannot truly imagine my will without my body.*³

The argument from this excerpt notably implies that an individual's will can only be known *a posteriori*, as a discharge of kinetic energy subject to empirical laws, whereas that which the individual is considered from the inside, is a *volens in potentia*, a potential energy of objectified or embodied will, and known *through time as directedness*. In describing what this will is insofar as it can be apprehended through the category of time, Schopenhauer tells us in §21 that

The will is the most immediate thing in our consciousness, and thus has not passed completely into the form of representation in which object and subject stand opposed to each other; rather, it announces itself immediately and in such a way that subject and object are not distinguished with complete clarity, and it becomes known to the individual only in its separate acts, not as a whole.⁴

It is clear from the struggle with which Schopenhauer deliberated over the designation of the word 'will' in the following section that he attempted to arrive at a conception that was, as far as possible, not derived from appearance, but rather sprung from within, and so resonated with one's most immediate consciousness.⁵ By highlighting this non-conceptual immediacy in self-consciousness, Schopenhauer had argued that it is precisely at this point that the veil between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself is thinnest. Thus in choosing to employ the word 'will' to designate this non-conceptual immediacy, Schopenhauer had argued that while the word itself could never avoid being a representation, as 'will' would have to pick out *some* referent of objective experience in order to convey meaningful conceptual content, it would nevertheless be a representation which, as far as possible, *points to* the immediacy of self-consciousness as given by the form of time alone, and so is neither subject to the form of space nor the same empirical laws which govern the representation as such.

¹ WWR 1: 128, §19.

² A point, incidentally, which Nietzsche persistently misunderstood; cf., BGE, 2013: 25-26, "On the Prejudice of Philosophers," §16.

³ WWR 1: 126, §18, my emphasis.

⁴ WWR 1: 134, §21.

⁵ WWR 1: 135-37, §22.

But as 'will' must still be known through the category of time, it is important to note here is that there is still a veil between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. It follows therefore from Schopenhauer's metaphysical deduction that the category of time is more fundamental than that of space for direct acquaintance with his metaphysical conception, and that *becoming* is the fundamental form of knowing in representation.

From the foregoing explanation, it is clear that Schopenhauer's metaphysical conception is intended to furnish us with an interpretation and explanation of experience, especially since it arrives at no conclusions as to what exists beyond all possible experience. Consequently, it is *immanent* in the Kantian sense of the word.¹ We do not know what the will is apart from its becoming in self-consciousness, for willing can only be valid of our inner experience in relation to the world of experience, of the entire world as representation. Apart from representation, we have no means of knowing, since it would transcend the boundaries of our possible experience. It is therefore a conceptual lacuna; i.e., it is nothing which we can know.

From the time of his earliest notebooks, it would appear that Nietzsche had a handle on these distinctions. As he explains in a note from notebook 5 dated late 1870 – early 1871, it is only through representation that the original unmanifested reality turns into phenomena for willing, into a becoming. In other words, will qua willing can only manifest when representation is brought before the will as its objective or end. However, these ends are only arbitrary delimitations for the will in representation, precisely because they set boundaries and limits upon that which is unlimited and inexhaustible. Accordingly, the will in representation can never grasp itself *through* representation and so, in a manner of speaking, 'deceives' itself by willing representations in the first place:

In the will there is diversity and movement only through the representation: it is through the representation alone that an eternal being turns into a becoming, into the will; i.e., the becoming, *the will itself as something effective, is an illusion*. There is only eternal repose, pure being [...] But if the

¹ WWR 2: 640, Chapter 50, "Epiphilosophy." Cf., "Thus the bridge on which metaphysics passes beyond experience is nothing but just that analysis of experience into phenomenon and thing-in-itself in which I have placed Kant's greatest merit. For it contains the proof of a kernel of the phenomenon different from the phenomenon itself. It is true that this kernel can never be entirely separated from the phenomenon, and be regarded by itself as an *ens extramundanum*; but it is known always only in its relations and references to the phenomenon itself. The interpretation and explanation of the phenomenon, however, in relation to its inner kernel can give us information about it which does not otherwise come into consciousness. Therefore in this sense metaphysics goes beyond the phenomenon, i.e., to nature, to what is concealed in or behind it (τὸ μετὰ τὸ φαινόμενον), yet always regarding it only as that which appears in the phenomenon, not independently of all phenomenon. Metaphysics thus remains immanent, and does not become transcendent; for it never tears itself entirely from experience, but remains the mere interpretation and explanation thereof, as it never speaks of the thing-in-itself otherwise than in its relation to the phenomenon [my emphasis]. This, at any rate, is the sense in which I have attempted to solve the problem of metaphysics, taking into general consideration the limits of human knowledge which have been demonstrated by Kant [...] I admit entirely Kant's doctrine that the world of experience is mere phenomenon, and that knowledge *a priori* is valid only in reference thereto; but I add that, precisely as phenomenal appearance, it is the manifestation of that which appears, and with him I call that which appears the thing-in-itself. Therefore this thing-in-itself must express its inner nature and character in the world of experience; consequently it must be possible to interpret these from it, and indeed *from the material, not from the mere form*, of experience [my emphasis]. Accordingly, philosophy is nothing but the correct and universal understanding of experience itself, the true interpretation of its meaning and content." WWR 2: 182-83, Chapter 17, "On Man's Need of Metaphysics."

representation is merely a symbol [for will], then the eternal movement, all the striving of being, is only an *illusion* [...] The *appearance* is a continuous symbolising process of the will. Because in delusions we recognise the intention of the will, the representation is a product of the will, the diversity is already in the will, the appearance is the μηχανή¹ of the will for itself.²

From the interpretation of Schopenhauer we find in this note, Nietzsche's epistemic position here seems clear enough, and follows that of Schopenhauer's quite closely: all willing, all striving, is valid only for the representation, for in the final analysis, the only way will qua willing can be known is *through* the representation. Nevertheless, for Nietzsche, there is something quite illusory about this entire process, for "an eternal being [which] turns into a becoming" in order to will representations in the first place ultimately has no need of either. This is why, according to Nietzsche, *Wahn* or illusion must be the end or *goal* of the will in representation.

On this latter point, we find a conception of the will in representation that appears to be quite unique to Nietzsche, for although Schopenhauer's metaphysics implies that the will in representation is ultimately illusory *sub specie aeterni*, it is precisely for this reason that the will in representation has no τέλος. Yet the will in representation does possess an adumbrative instrumentality for individual consciousness in that willing the representation, which is essentially understood as willing a relative emptiness or voidness of substantiality, acts like an irritant that tends to arouse consciousness to an awareness of itself. Because representations themselves are *delimitations* of the in-itself which, in effect, make possible the *ground* and *form* for willing, they are derivations from, rather than additions to, the original unmanifested reality. It is precisely for this reason that representations are insubstantial in and of themselves. Thus for Schopenhauer, the representation is, relatively speaking, an instance of *absence* arousing the power to be aware of *presence*, and illuminates the reason why he always maintained that pain, and not pleasure, was the positive value in consciousness, for the pain involved in willing what is essentially an illusion, or a voidness of substantiality, tends to arouse consciousness to an awareness of itself, for which the will eventually negates itself or turns back towards its source (i.e., it wills itself).

But for Nietzsche, the "eternal being [which] turns into a becoming" must do so purely for sport. Its essence must therefore consist in a kind of ceaseless creativity which takes pleasure in both creating and destroying – an "artist-god" as he later put it – whose continual becoming consists in delimiting itself qua illusion, only to redeem itself through that illusion.³ Thus, Nietzsche's assertion that illusion is the *goal* of the will in representation is precisely what he says it is: an "inverted Platonism" in which "the further something is from true being, the purer, the more beautiful, the better it is. Living in illusion as the goal."⁴ As we will discover shortly, making illusion the goal

¹ "instrument"

² WEN, 2009: 28, *Notebook* 5 [80], September 1870-January 1871, my emphasis.

³ Cf., BT, 1993: 25, §4; 8, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §5.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 52, *Notebook* 7 [156], end of 1870-April 1871.

of living plays a vital role for Nietzsche in the τέλος of all genuine art, whose object is to seduce us back to life.

Nietzsche's derivation and expansion of this idea occurs largely in Notebook 5, where illusion itself becomes the symbol of all that is known and experienced in representation:

How does instinct reveal itself in the form of the conscious mind? In delusions (*Wahn*). Their effectiveness is not destroyed even by knowing about their nature. But knowledge produces a painful condition: the only cure for it in the illusion of art [...] Art is the form in which the world appears under the delusion that it is necessary. It is a seductive representation of the will, pushing its way into knowledge.¹

As Nietzsche explains in the very next note, it is only those who 'see through' or 'see beyond' the world as representation, who see beyond this majestic and delightful scene of willing as an illusion that can be consoled by art.²

In accordance with what we have discovered so far about Nietzsche's metaphysical speculations at this early point in his thought, let us examine how music, and specifically Schopenhauer's metaphysical conception of music, supplies the philosopher's key for drawing knowledge into an aesthetic phenomenon as given by the artist and his deeds.

As we will recall, Schopenhauer had identified what he had believed to be the only representation in experience which could be apprehended in two entirely different ways as proof that a kernel of the phenomenon was different from the phenomenon itself, and by denoting the immediate certainty of our inner experience with the word 'will,' he had analyzed and interpreted the entire content of experience at precisely that nexus between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself in which he had placed Kant's greatest merit. From this analysis, it followed that will itself became the key to deciphering the entire world as representation in its plurality and diversity, for as Schopenhauer had claimed of his metaphysical conception, "the more intimate and immediate cognition we have of this species [i.e., the will] leads to the mediated cognition we have of all others."³

Accordingly, when it came to the subject matter of music, Schopenhauer's metaphysical claim was no empty, speculative abstraction – least of all for Wagner and Nietzsche – but was proved most convincingly by the very nature and deed of music itself. For Schopenhauer, music was an analogy for the will which, like the will itself, cannot belong to the world as representation, for we understand music's innermost message immediately and with certainty in self-consciousness, without relying on particular images or words or scenes or, in short, mediating representations, to derive it. In fact if words and scenes are employed, as is the case in opera, it is precisely the opposite: the words and the scenes which accompany them are unveiled in their true light, as if music, in its abstract universality, reached down

¹ WEN, 2009: 24, *Notebook 5* [25], September 1870-January 1871.

² WEN, 2009: 24, *Notebook 5* [26], September 1870-January 1871.

³ WWR 1: 136, §22.

through *this* scene, through *these* words, to well forth its innermost nature. Indeed, as Schopenhauer famously remarks in Book Three of *The World as Will and Representation*, “unlike the other arts, music is in no way a copy of the Ideas; instead, it is a *copy of the will itself*, whose objecthood the Ideas are as well: this is precisely why the effect of music is so much more powerful and urgent than that of the other arts: the other arts speak only of shadows while music speaks of the essence.”¹ Yet at the same time, music is a highly cognitive or rational construction, which not only allows its listeners to feel its innermost message with certainty in self-consciousness, but to know what this feeling is in its abstract universality. For the ‘in itself’ of music is simply a function of numerical relations, both in terms of its quantity (i.e., its beat or measure), and in terms of its quality (i.e., the intervals of the scale, which rest on arithmetical relations or vibrations). In this respect, the ‘in itself’ of music simply consists of numerical relations in both its rhythmic and its harmonic element, and therefore, the whole nature of the world, the entire content of the world as representation, can be expressed by numerical relations, which, as phenomenon of music, speaks or resonates with the will in representation. In this respect, Schopenhauer had argued that music is comparable to what numbers and geometric figures are to the Kantian forms,² for while the Kantian categories of space and time delimit the *form* of our possible experience, music and the will which it embodies provide us with the full breadth and extent, the entire scale and scope of the possible *content* of our experience. In this regard, music provides us with a key to the innermost essence of the world *as* representation, for it reveals the nature of the world to us in “its most secret sense, and acts as the clearest and most apt commentary on it.”³ Nonetheless if music, just like the will which it embodies, is only valid in relation to phenomena, and can only express its nature and character in the world of experience, it follows that music can only narrate the story of the will in representation. In other words music, which “so often exalts our minds and seems to speak of worlds different from and better than ours, nevertheless *only flatters the will-to-live*, since it depicts the true nature of the will, gives it a glowing account of its success, and at the end expresses its satisfaction and contentment.”⁴

At this point, we have adduced two very important ideas about Schopenhauer’s metaphysics which, when taken together, unquestioningly bolster Wagner’s own claims and are therefore central to Nietzsche’s philosophical position at this early point in his thinking: 1) *Wahn* or illusion is the goal of the will in representation, and 2) the very nature of music demonstrates this most emphatically by presenting to us, through the musical deed itself (i.e., the composition), the universal and unconditional content of life, which is nothing other than the will for representation. Music arouses our will *for* willing and seduces us back to life, for willing can never be anything other than a will *for* life.

¹ WWR 1: 285, §52.

² WWR 1: 290, §52.

³ WWR 1: 290, §52.

⁴ WWR 2: 457, Chapter 39, “On the Metaphysics of Music,” my emphasis.

These two points come together very nicely in a number of Nietzsche's earliest notebook entries, where it is evident that Nietzsche appropriates the 'protective armor' of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and of music in particular, in order to work out the views of Wagner's aesthetics.¹ Take for instance an early entry from Notebook 1 about the power of music to depict the "instinctual life-pulse" of the will through its most rudimentary attributes, namely beat and rhythm:

What does music do? It dissolves an intuition into will. [Music] *contains the universal forms of all conditions of desire*: it is throughout a symbolism of the instincts and as such intelligible, completely and to everybody, in its simplest forms (beat, rhythm). Music, then, is always more universal than any single action. That is why it is more intelligible to us than any single action. Therefore music is the key to drama.²

Already in this small excerpt, the reader will notice that Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music is used to bolster a key element of the Wagnerian thesis, namely that music is the privileged art form of the inner man in that it directly speaks to the unconscious depths of his will to life. The will to life, in its instinctual and cyclical nature, is expressed in music by analogy through its beat, rhythm, and periodicity, and is therefore the most perfect reflection of the universal and unconditional will to life, with which the essence of the inner man is identical.³

In Notebook 2, Nietzsche provides us with a similar parallel between the metaphysics of music and the will to life, relying on the analogy of its thoroughly intuitive and determinate, yet unlimited and inexhaustible nature. Again, concern for the Wagnerian thesis is unmistakable. While the dramatic poem is the consummate art form of the outer man in that it "upholds to Life the picture of its own existence" through mime,⁴ music on the other hand

[...] is a language which is capable of infinite explanation. Language explains only through concepts, so that the shared sensation is created through the medium of thought. This sets a limit for it [...] the spoken language resonates, and its intervals, rhythms, tempi, volume and stress are all symbols of the emotional content that is to be represented. *All this is contained in music simultaneously*. The largest amount of feeling does not express itself through words. And the word itself barely hints: it is the surface of the choppy sea, while the storm rages in the depths. This is the limit of spoken drama. The inability to express things side by side.⁵

If we consider the contents of this note against the claims Wagner makes for the artwork of the future, and specifically the claims Wagner makes about revitalizing the drama by uniting it once again to tone poetry, Nietzsche's exposition here becomes perfectly intelligible as advocacy for the Wagnerian agenda; i.e., as advocacy for the rebirth of culture out of the spirit of music.

¹ It is interesting to note that Nietzsche's primary criticism of Wagner in the *Third Essay of The Genealogy of Morality* is that Wagner needed the philosophical 'authority' and 'protective armor' of someone like Schopenhauer in order to disseminate and defend his own artistic views. It is an accusation that Nietzsche clearly knew from experience, for this is precisely what he himself was doing in some of his earliest work.

² WEN, 2009: 11, *Notebook 1* [49], autumn 1869, my emphasis.

³ PW 1: 91, "Artwork of the Future."

⁴ PW 1: 197, "Artwork of the Future."

⁵ WEN, 2009: 14-15, *Notebook 2* [10], winter 1869/1870-spring 1870, my emphasis.

When we come to Notebook 7 however, dated from the end of 1870 – April 1871, we have what are in effect notebook sketches for arguments soon to be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The passages of these notes are, on the whole, far more extensive than previous notebooks, and for our purposes, much more clearly develop the connection between the metaphysics of music with the τέλος of all genuine art, whose object is to seduce us back to life. Take for instance the following note in which Nietzsche asserts that

The tendency of art is to overcome dissonance: thus the world of the beautiful originating from the point of indifference strives to draw dissonance as the disruptive element as such into the work of art. Hence the gradual enjoyment of the minor key and dissonance [...] *Music* proves that the whole world in its diversity is no longer felt to be a *dissonance*. That which suffers, struggles, tears itself apart is always only the *one* will: it is the absolute contradiction as the primal source of existence.¹

From the context of this note, it seems clear that Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, believed that pain was the truly positive value in one's lived experience, of the will in representation; but unlike Schopenhauer, the value of art, and of music in particular, lay not in liberating us from willing the representation, but in raising us to the delightful vision of willing itself as the all-embracing illusion *par excellence*. Music, as the symbol of the will itself, arouses our will for willing, even in the face of a suffering existence, and therefore seduces back to life. We are, in effect, *redeemed* by illusion – that mysterious and cryptic phrase which Nietzsche so often uses to such ineffectual ends – by affirming our will for life. As Nietzsche explains a few notes later on, the reason why we are redeemed by illusion is precisely because the will is known only in so far as it manifests *in* representation. Life is, in other words, the will *for* representation.

Here we must remember that the intellect is merely an organ of the will, so that all its operations, with a necessary craving, push for existence, and that its goal can be only various forms of existence but never the question of being or not-being. For the intellect there is no nothingness as a goal, and therefore no absolute knowledge, because absolute knowledge, compared to being, would be a not-being. Accordingly, to support life – to seduce to life – is the intention underlying all knowledge, the illogical element, which, as the father of all knowledge, also determines the limits of knowledge.²

As Nietzsche makes very clear here, the will can only be known insofar as the intellect represents. Apart from representation however, beyond the frontier of what can be known and therefore represented through the intellect, there can be, properly speaking, no goal for the will; for a goal implies directedness to an object or an end, but it is the very nature of an object or an end to be a representation. Consequently, what cannot be represented can be neither object nor end, and what is neither object nor end cannot be willed. To be is to will and to will is to live for the endless cycle of representation. Being is thus, at best, an ontological illusion which springs from the depths of a continual becoming.

¹ WEN, 2009: 35, *Notebook 7* [117], end of 1870-April 1871.

² WEN, 2009: 44, *Notebook 7* [125], end of 1870-April 1871.

With this explanation, we have arrived at perhaps Nietzsche's most important philosophical symbol: the Dionysian. The figure of Dionysus symbolizes for Nietzsche the principle of becoming, but more especially for the joy found in the affirmation of becoming. Any art form which can depict the joy in becoming is by definition Dionysian, since it is a joy which ultimately seduces us back to life and thus to "the illusion of being." For Nietzsche, there is only one art form which can genuinely be called Dionysian: music. Music is the great symbol of the Dionysian. It is the artistic deed *par excellence* of the joy found in becoming, or in Schopenhauer's parlance, in flattering our will to live. Music seduces the will *to* will through the very joy it brings to it as the all-embracing illusion of representation. It is only through music that the will finds temporary satisfaction in willing this continual becoming, this "illusion of being."

The Dionysian, then, is the principle of eternal rebirth, and is given by the very joy we find in the affirmation of becoming. This is, for Nietzsche, the root of all creativity and the source of all inspiration. Once we can grasp this conception, it becomes far easier to grasp the logic of Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will in representation. For Nietzsche, "the will is already a *form of appearance*: that is why *music* is still the *art of illusion*."¹ And as we cannot explain why an "eternal being turns into a becoming" in the first place, since willing the representation is ultimately illusory *sub specie aeterni*, this eternal being must do so purely for sport. After all, it is an "artist god" who takes pleasure in creating and destroying, one whose becoming consists in delimiting itself by illusion, only to redeem itself through that illusion.² Consequently we must, like the "artist god" himself, take joy in the illusion itself, and in the necessity of nature, knowing that all that is created must necessarily be destroyed as a transient form of existence that becomes on the world stage. And as music is the "illusion of being" given through the will to life as a continual becoming, it makes perfect sense that Nietzsche had insisted on the point that "our whole empirical world, from the point of view of the primal One, is a Dionysian work of art, or, from our own point of view, *music*."³

With this explanation of the Dionysian, and specifically of music as the Dionysian form of art, we have shed considerable light on how Nietzsche's metaphysical speculations, together with Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music, play a vital role in bolstering Wagner's own claims to music as the privileged art, and was for obvious reasons taken up by Nietzsche as the theoretical basis for explaining Wagner's art as a *return* to life. Moreover, when we consider the claims Wagner makes about music being the immediate vital act of art and therefore of life, we have a very powerful theoretical formulation of music as the will *for* life, the depiction of which in musico-dramatic composition is the object and end of all genuine art, its τέλος.

Thus while Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music was mobilized purely for the purposes of their positive project, it was still essential for Nietzsche to argue for its necessity by setting it over and against that which was being critiqued, namely, the

¹ WEN, 2009: 55, *Notebook* 7 [167] end of 1870-April 1871.

² BT, 1993: 25, §4; and "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," 8, §5.

³ WEN, 2009: 45, *Notebook* 7 [126], end of 1870-April 1871, my emphasis.

problem of modernity. In this respect, there was at least one other Schopenhauerian thesis which was pivotal to advancing this critique, for it provided Nietzsche with an epistemic claim from which he could evaluate the problem of modernity according to the ontological category of life. This was Schopenhauer's epistemic claim about the gulf between the concept and 'pure perception.'

4. The Philosopher of Life: the Authority of Insight

Perhaps no thesis found in *The World as Will and Representation* is more fundamental to Nietzsche's critique of science as the perpetrator of the *peccatum originale* against art and life than Schopenhauer's epistemic claim that all genuine knowledge is derived from perception or insight.

With this claim, Schopenhauer's intention is to illustrate that, although the conceptual and the perceptual are orders which unquestionably interact, they are orders that are ultimately incommensurable with one another, for the one is, in large measure, ineffable with respect to the other. From here, a very important consequence for thinking follows: since conceptual derivation and theoretical formulation rest upon the immediately given sensuous presentment, the problem of philosophic and scientific formulation itself rests on the indefinables of one's immediately given aesthetic experience. Even the 'hardest' of all sciences, pure mathematics, is not exempt from this insight, and Schopenhauer makes it a point to illustrate, time and time again that it is not the proof itself, of the chain of deductions which follow with rigorous necessity from a previously given set of principles or postulates which have been axiomatized, but the original principles or postulates themselves as *fundamental assumptions* on which both the set of axioms and the subsequent chain of deductions rests. These, he argues, must be grounded in perception or insight.

Schopenhauer's arguments for this claim are found primarily in Book One of *The World as Will and Representation*, but he also makes several pertinent comments about it in Chapter 7 of the supplementary volume entitled "On the Relation of Knowledge of Perception to Abstract Knowledge." The general theme of Book One is epistemology; i.e., what we can know about the representation. In §14, Schopenhauer asserts that although it is true that the methodology of the deductive sciences proceeds by drawing inferences from the principles which just preceded in order to establish proofs at each step in its descent from the universal to the particular, he also points out that the methodology itself has given rise to a subtle psychological prejudice which in effect asserts that only that which is *proven* is true, whereas he notes, it is precisely the reverse: the original principles or postulates on which the chain of deductive proofs rests are themselves fundamental assumptions, and so must necessarily remain *unproven*. For this reason Schopenhauer asserts that

No truth can be produced through inferences entirely on their own [...] Since all proofs are inferences, we should not look first for a proof of a new truth, but rather for immediate evidentness [...] No science

can be exhaustively proven, any more than a building can stand in mid air: all its proofs must lead back to something that is intuited and therefore no longer provable, for the whole world of reflection is based on and rooted in the world of intuition. All ultimate, i.e., original *evidentness* is *intuitive*.¹

In other words, the primary problem with conceptual proof, Schopenhauer argues, is not that it does not 'prove,' but that the very nature of *what* it proves remains conceptual. What this means, in effect, is that deductive proofs never furnish us with any new content – they do not bestow upon us any new genuine 'evidentness' – for what is proved is merely the clarification and explication of what already lies, quite complete, within the premises as *concepts*. The reason for this, Schopenhauer maintains, is that no concept can ever grasp the indefinables of one's immediately given aesthetic experience, for these are by their very nature ineffable and incommunicable. What the concept does, Schopenhauer argues, is to transform these indefinables by isolation and abstraction of their essential or critical features in order to raise them to the status of universals. The original and immediate evidentness from which the concept was derived is now viewed as no more than a particular instance, while its particular *quale* is lost or dropped away by the concept so that thinking can more easily handle and manipulate its content.² But the problem here is twofold: on the one hand, the concept can never lead us back to the original and immediate evidentness from which it was derived, and on the other hand, because concepts are themselves abstractions, their content is indefinite, which in turn makes their 'boundaries' indeterminate. It follows that reasoning by and through concepts alone can very easily lead to conceptual confusion and error:

scientific form [...] implies that the truth of many propositions is grounded only in logic, that is, depends on other propositions, and therefore requires inferences, which at the same time emerge as proofs. But we should never forget that the whole of this form is only a way of *facilitating cognition, not a means for achieving greater certainty* [...] If intuition were always as accessible to us as derivation through inference, then it would be thoroughly preferable to the latter. For every deduction by means of concepts is extremely error prone because of the *extensive overlap between conceptual spheres* and the often indefinite character of their contents [...] as a result, immediate evidentness is always far preferable to proven truth and the latter should only be accepted when the former is too remote to be accessible and not when immediate evidentness is easy (or even easier) to obtain than proof.³

Schopenhauer's concern here seems to be that concepts which develop in their own sphere and move in abstractions that are either divorced or separated in a high degree from the perceptual order tend to lose their rooting in original and immediate evidentness. Accordingly, if concepts are to vouchsafe any meaning at all, they must be replenished constantly anew by fresh material drawn from perception. It is this latter requirement, in its most fundamental form, which rendered a conviction in both

¹ WWR 1: 90-91, §14.

² FFR, 2001: 145-49, "On the Second Class of Objects," §26; WWR 1: 62-75, §9.

³ WWR 1: 93-94, §14, my emphasis.

Wagner and Nietzsche about the “arbitrary concepts of the human brain” and the relative instability of all scientific doctrine built upon such concepts.¹

It is certainly true that there is something to be said about the role direct insight or original and immediate evidentness plays as an element in our total knowledge, but even when we grant this to be the case, one is still not relieved of the problem attaching to the conceptual formulation of the insight. But for Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche, communication of the insight lay *not* in conceptual formulation, but in the deeds of art. Recognition of this fact goes a long way to explain why these three as a unit placed far greater emphasis and valuation on the perceptual over the conceptual order. As far as Schopenhauer is concerned, we can see that this is so very early on in his chief work. As he explains in §8 of *The World as Will and Representation*

Intuition is sufficient unto itself and so whatever has arisen from it alone and remained true to it can, like an authentic work of art, never be false or confuted by the passage of any amount of time: it does not offer opinions but rather the thing itself.

Conversely it is only abstract cognition, and the reasoning process which results from it, that is responsible for all doubt and error.

While *illusion* distorts reality for a moment, *error* can reign for millennia in abstractions, throw its iron yoke over whole peoples and stifle the noblest impulses of humanity; those it cannot deceive are left in chains by those it has, by its slaves.²

Schopenhauer's assertion in this latter excerpt is unequivocal: when concepts are not alive, when they are not drawn from, renewed, and regenerated by and through a lived experience, they end up becoming the tools of man's own bondage and enslavement, for the concept is then nothing more than an empty abstraction that is completely divorced from the perceptual order, from the lived experience in which it was originally rooted, and so loses its connection with all immediate and genuine evidentness.³

¹ Schopenhauer's fundamental epistemic concern seems to be that, when all is said and done, only concepts that are synthetic a priori give new knowledge in the sense in which he felt that Kant had demonstrated this to be true with regard to pure mathematics in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. Kant had defined the synthetic a priori as a concept which is necessarily connected with another, and yet is not contained in it as one of its predicates. The concept 'line' for instance does not contain the concept 'space,' and yet it is necessarily connected with it in order to reproduce it as a geometric extension. But 'space' is not simply a concept; it is an a priori form of cognition which makes perception itself possible as extension. Thus, we can very easily see Schopenhauer's attraction to the sort of proofs Kant mounted in support of pure mathematics, which in effect combines the concept with an element drawn from the immediacy of perception not contained in the concept, and yet necessarily connected with it in order to give us new knowledge.

² WWR 1: 58, §8

³ Schopenhauer's assertion here seems to foreshadow what would later become one of Nietzsche's chief accusations against Christianity in *The Antichrist*, namely that it is not about what one *believes*, but rather how one *lives* that matters, since how one lives is a fortiori *the proof* of what one believes: "It is false to the point of absurdity to see in a 'belief,' perchance the belief in redemption through Christ, the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he who died on the Cross *lived*, is Christian [...] To reduce being a Christian, Christianness, to a holding something to be true, to a mere phenomenality of consciousness, means to negate Christianness." AC, 1968: 151, §39; Cf., "Dogmas keep idle reason occupied: but in the end actions go forward on their own, not along the path of dogma; for the most part they do not follow abstract maxims, but tacit ones, whose expression the whole human being in fact is." WWR 1: 83, §12.

With this explanation, we now possess the decisive conceptions necessary to make sense of Nietzsche's critique of the sciences as seen through the lens of art, and art as seen through the lens of life. Again, looking at his earliest notebook entries from 1869 onwards, Nietzsche's attacks on the sciences are almost exclusively directed against their *anti-vitalistic tendency*.

In order to understand what this means, we should recall from the previous section that for Nietzsche, being *is* willing. It is a ceaseless striving of the will to grasp itself through the representation in an endless cycle, and so 'being' is nothing more than an ontological illusion which springs from the depths of a continual becoming. But since the intellect is only an instrument of the will, whose sole purpose is to give ground or form for willing in order for the will to be able to manifest at all, the implication is that the intellect itself perpetuates the "illusion of being," since the will in representation has no beginning and no end. The thrust of this argument obviously follows Schopenhauer's arguments very closely about what can be known about the content of the world purely from the side of the phenomenon or the representation, which is the object of the scientific investigation. In particular, Schopenhauer had argued that because the fundamental theme of science is to investigate the relationship between grounds and consequents in phenomena, science by its very nature is concerned with establishing the *syntactical* relationship between phenomena, since its primary concern is to establish terms in relationship and to investigate the nature of those relationships. Accordingly

Science, following the restless and insubstantial current of the four types of ground and consequent [i.e., the fourfold root of the principle of sufficient reason], is always ushered onward with each goal it attains, and can no more find a final goal or complete satisfaction than we can walk to the point where the clouds touch the horizon.¹

Thus it is precisely here, Nietzsche thinks, that science falls into the trap laid for it by the will in representation, for science itself is nothing but a systematic implementation of the will's very instrument; i.e., the intellect, whose sole purpose is to, in a manner of speaking, chase its own tail (think of the ouroboros). The intellect, in the form of a systematic interpretation and construction of its experience according to concepts, somehow deceives itself into believing that it is free of the will, and so falls victim all the more readily to that subtle psychological prejudice which in effect supposes that what it proves can somehow get beyond the will in representation. Science thus suffers from what Nietzsche, following Wagner, would call the Apollonian, the "illusion of illusion":

Not letting oneself be ruled by illusions is an infinitely naïve belief, but it is the intellectual imperative, the command of science. In uncovering these spider's webs *ἄνθρωπος θεωρητικός*,² and with him the will to existence, celebrate their orgies: he knows curiosity never ends and he regards the scientific drive as one of the most powerful *μηχαναί*³ of existence.⁴

¹ WWR 1: 208, §36.

² 'theoretical man,' although the context here seems to render the idea of the 'slavish scholar.'

³ 'instruments'

⁴ WEN, 2009: 25, *Notebook* 5 [33], September 1870-January 1871.

Not only is the scientific drive the illusion of all illusions Nietzsche thinks, it is an illusion which is ultimately dangerous to the will to life, since its goal is to dismember and dissect the qualitative, aesthetic immediacy of life as given by the will in representation in order to fix it to quantitative base-values; yet all this ever ends up doing is distorting and misrepresenting our representations for what life is in its aesthetic immediacy.¹ Summarizing both Schopenhauer and Wagner on this point, science, which “takes over the arbitrary concepts of the human brain,” begins to separate man’s life from hers, and thus the lived experience in which the concept was originally rooted loses all connection with immediate and genuine evidentness; i.e., with “life as the great ultimate.”² In Notebook 3, Nietzsche puts forward a couple of entries which admonish the thinker on precisely these points. In note 11, Nietzsche proclaims that

The purpose of science is to annihilate the world. Admittedly it happens that the immediate effect is the same as that of small doses of opium: an enhanced affirmation of the world.³

Ultimately however, the entire corpus of scientific knowledge as system cannot but become divorced from lived experience, from the deed, and what we are left with according to both men, is the estrangement of reason from the unconscious will to life in its instinctual and cyclical nature. Nature is now viewed in isolation from reason, and man in turn loses all connection with life as the great ultimate. That is why, according to Nietzsche,

Perfect knowledge kills action; indeed if it refers to knowledge itself it kills itself. One cannot move a muscle if one first tries to know precisely what it takes to move a muscle [...] Knowledge is a screw without an end: whenever it is brought into play an infinity begins: that is why there can never be any action. – *All this is valid for conscious knowledge only.* I die as soon as I try to ascertain the ultimate causes of a breath before I take it.⁴

The primary problem with science then, according to the foregoing arguments, is that it does not truly possess any privileged epistemic access into the world of representation, and yet it manages to drive a wedge between man’s conscious, superficial knowledge of the world as representation, that is, the world according to name and image, and man’s unconscious will to life. But as far as Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche were concerned, it is only by direct acquaintance with the latter form of existence that genuine knowledge can be derived at all. With Schopenhauer’s philosophy presupposed, we can begin to see the ‘authority and backing’ of Wagner’s theoretical arguments about the decline of culture taking shape, which echo the very sentiments of Nietzsche’s first note from Notebook 1 that we

¹ Cf., “The specific tendency of all Western mechanics is towards an intellectual *conquest by measurement*, and it is therefore obliged to look for the essence of the phenomenon in a system of constant elements that are susceptible of full and inclusive appreciation by measurement.” Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 1: 377.

² PW 1: 71 et seq., “Artwork of the Future.”

³ WEN, 2009: 19, *Notebook 3* [11], winter 1869/70-spring 1870.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 19, *Notebook 3* [10], winter 1869/70-spring 1870, my emphasis.

examined at the very beginning of this chapter: once science uprooted the arts, the arts themselves became a learned craftwork which came into existence as a result of abstract concepts that were completely divorced from lived experience and so derived from a purely conscious intention to produce the effects of the ancient drama. Indeed, only imitators and mannerists “approach art from the concept,”¹ whereas we know from Wagner’s essay that that all genuine art arises from the unconscious depths growing out of the life of the people, from an immediate acquaintance with, and direct perception into, the nature of existence.² Sure enough, we find this theoretical position expressed with well-nigh perfect concision in one of the early notes to Notebook 7. According to Nietzsche

The boundless, demanding logic of science develops at the same time as the supreme flowering of art. *This kills the tragic work of art. The sacred keeper of instincts, music, disappeared from drama.* The scientific existence is the last manifestation of the will: the will no longer appears veiled, but being true it acts as a stimulant in its endless diversity. Everything must be explained: the smallest thing becomes attractive and the eye is, as it were, violently distracted from wisdom (of the artist). Religion, art, science – all merely weapons against wisdom.³

In this one note, three very familiar themes converge, and by converging, lead us at last to one of the key deductions Wagner makes about the decline of Western culture in his *Artwork of the Future*. From this note, we can see just how vital the Schopenhauerian themes we have analyzed so far are in bolstering the claims made by the Wagnerian thesis, and in what sense Schopenhauer as representative has been invoked by Nietzsche to evaluate and diagnose the problem of modernity from the standpoint of “life as the great ultimate.” Utilizing the Schopenhauerian themes we have in hand so far, the underlying logic of the argument here in favor of the Wagnerian thesis is actually extraordinarily simple.

First and foremost, music is the will to life: it taps into the “emotions of the inner man which are not directly cognizable by the eye”⁴ and is for that reason the great unifier of the other arts which have been revealed as distinct and disconnected representations of the outer man. Music is the art form *par excellence* precisely because it unifies the outer arts through the inner man. Second, there is only one example in the history of Western culture where the art forms of both the inner and outer man were in harmony; i.e., the music drama of Greek antiquity. Unfortunately, “the egoistic spirit of Athenian self-dissection” ushered in “the boundless, demanding logic of science” at the very moment that the supreme flowering of the music drama was awakening on Greek soil, thereby permanently severing the common bond of its religion and primeval customs. Man became separated from himself, that is, his unconscious will to life. This killed the tragic work of art. Naturally music, as the sacred keeper of the instincts, disappeared from the drama, and in its stead we have

¹ “imitators, mannerists, *imitatores*, *servum pecus*, approach art from the concept: they take note of what is effective and pleasing in genuine works of art, clarify this to themselves, grasp it in a concept and hence abstractly, and then imitate it, overtly or covertly, with shrewd intent.” WWR 1: 261, §49.

² PW 1: 79 et seq., “Artwork of the Future”; WEN, 2009: 9-11, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

³ WEN, 2009: 33-34, *Notebook 7* [21], end of 1870-April 1871, my emphasis.

⁴ PW 1: 91, “Artwork of the Future.”

been left with a two-thousand year old record which testifies to the decline of Western art at the hands of science, which has culminated in the pathological addiction to hedonistic utilitarianism. Accordingly, we have arrived at a critical moment in our Western culture. We need a return to art, which is at the same time a return to life; and yet, how do we get modernity to recognize this? How do we give the folk the one thing needful, while at the same time apprising them of the fact that they need it? The answer to these questions is in Nietzsche's conception of Wagner as the artist of life.

5. The Artist of Life: a Flesh-and-Blood Illustration of What Schopenhauer Calls a Genius

What is perhaps most striking about Nietzsche's earliest notebook entries on Wagner is that a war in aesthetics has *already been declared* on Wagner's behalf. By marking out the problem of modernity in terms that are antithetical to Wagner's art, Nietzsche defines their interrelationship as one of opposing tendencies in dialectical tension, and then proceeds to characterize their interaction in terms of forces armed and ready to do battle. Whereas Wagner in his *Artwork of the Future* had quite charmingly and naïvely nominated himself when he asked in all seriousness whom the artist of the future might be, Nietzsche's earliest notes in effect proclaim this commission to be fulfilled, and that Wagner is its prophet. While we have already established that Nietzsche was highlighting the opposition between Wagner's art and the problem of modernity as early as the first note of Notebook 1, we are now in a position to understand what this opposition means for Wagner as the artist of life.

The first observation we should make about Wagner as the definitive or archetypal artist of life is that he stands utterly opposed to the present conception of art which has thrown its iron yoke over the whole of modernity by conceiving it as the product or outcome of "erudition, conscious knowledge and excessive study."¹ For Wagner, the creation of art, and the principle of creativity in which art subsists, can never be derived from abstract concepts. Rather it is precisely the reverse: abstract concepts are derived and developed for the sole purpose of serving the principle of creativity in that they, in his words, "lift unconscious life to conscious knowledge of itself."² Concepts then can only possess an *instrumental*, not an absolute value for life. The principle of creativity is the absolute value, for life has no higher source than its own creation. All conception is, in the final analysis, instrumental to the creative principle.

Nonetheless to grasp this insight would seem to imply that the artist and the philosopher must be united in a single being. As a philosopher, the individual must recognize the necessity in nature which brings reason, by way of her antithesis, to her own fulfilment, something which the purely scientific mind, which follows the "restless and insubstantial current" of the principle of sufficient reason can never do;³

¹ WEN, 2009: 10, *Notebook 1* [1], autumn 1869.

² PW 1: 197, "Artwork of the Future."

³ WWR 1: 208, §36.

while as an artist, the individual must tap into the same creative source out of which both man and nature are derived in order to reflect back to life, through the mirror of art, the innermost kernel of the world, the truths of life itself.

Now if this sounds familiar, it should. Not only are these the fundamental conclusions we saw Wagner draw about art and the deeds of art in his *Artwork of the Future*, with this reiteration, the reader will now notice that we have just described the man of deeds by emphasizing the positive corollary of Schopenhauer's epistemic claim from the previous section; i.e., that all genuine knowledge is derived from perception or insight, and that Wagner as the artist of life becomes perfectly intelligible once we emphasize this positive corollary.

In other words, if all conception is instrumental to the creative principle, and it is the latter alone that is the absolute value for life and art, then recognition of this insight for the artist in particular implies that he has a special faculty which can harness in *deeds* this insight in its purity. And what is this special faculty, according to Schopenhauer, that fosters genuine knowledge through perception or insight? It is *genius*, and its essence is marked by the capacity for grasping the (Platonic) Ideas in their purity; in other words, the eternal forms or archetypes of the will to life in nature, and the source of what is essential and enduring in all appearances apart from the principle of sufficient reason.¹ Thus *the positive corollary of Schopenhauer's epistemic claim is the temper akin to genius*. With this doctrine, the inversion to the principle of sufficient reason is achieved, and built upon it is Nietzsche's declaration of war in aesthetics, which effectively pits art and culture as the products of genius against science and the decline of culture at the hands of science. The key then to Wagner as the artist of life lies in Schopenhauer's doctrine of the genius.

We already know from Schopenhauer that science as system is knowledge of an abstract or theoretical nature, and that its chief concern is to establish the relationship between the grounds and consequents of phenomena. In other words, science is purely *syntactical*, since its concern is to establish terms in relationship and to investigate the nature of those relationships. As Schopenhauer remarks on this point, "their theme always remains appearance, its laws, connections and the relations that arise from these."² Yet in contrast to abstract or theoretical knowledge is a mode of cognition which has the peculiar ability to apprehend "the true content of the world's appearances"³ standing apart from all syntactical relationships. For Schopenhauer, the "true content of the world's appearances" are given by the (Platonic) Ideas, while the mode of cognition in question, whose prerogative it is to grasp these Ideas in their purity, is the temper akin to genius.⁴ The result is the immediate vital act of art. As Schopenhauer explains,

¹ "Plato says that they stand in nature like archetypes, and that all things else bear a resemblance to the ideas because they are copies of these archetypes." Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, III, §13.

² WWR 1: 207, §36.

³ WWR 1: 207, §36.

⁴ WWR 1: 207, §36.

Art repeats the eternal Ideas grasped through pure contemplation, it repeats what is essential and enduring in all the appearances of the world [...] art originates in the cognition of the Ideas alone; and its only goal is the communication of this cognition.¹

To grasp these eternal Ideas, as Schopenhauer acknowledges here, implies a cognitive state or a noetic condition which can reach a high degree of purity in its contemplation, a condition which he describes as an “objective orientation of the mind, as opposed to a subjective orientation that is directed to one’s own person; i.e., the will.”² For just as unity is to multiplicity, so too is the archetype to its copies, and unless the individual is to be hopelessly lost amongst its facsimiles which are inexhaustible in nature, the individual must possess the cognitive power to ‘see past’ the facsimiles given through nature to the Ideas as their source. It is precisely this power for objectivity, this “capacity to maintain oneself in a purely intuitive state”³ that has no connection either with one’s own person or the willing that is the expression of that person, in which the essence of genius consists. Genuine knowledge, which is derived from an intuition or an insight that grasps the (Platonic) Ideas, is given alone to the genius.⁴

Accordingly, the opposition we have found so far between art and science is really the manifestation in *deeds* of the more fundamental one found between wisdom and knowledge: one follows “the restless and insubstantial current” of the principle of sufficient reason,⁵ while the other ‘sees past’ the facsimiles given through nature to the Ideas as their source. As Nietzsche puts it, “σοφία is discrimination, the possession of good taste: whereas science, lacking such a refined sense of taste, gobbles up anything that is worth knowing.”⁶ The way of the genius is the way of σοφία (wisdom) not ἐπιστήμη (knowledge); it is the way of insight, not syntax; it is the way of art, not science; and perhaps most importantly, it is

the way of regarding things independently from the principle of sufficient reason, as opposed to the way of regarding things that closely follows this principle, which is the path of experience and science [...] The rational way of regarding things follows the principle of sufficient reason, and it alone is valid and useful in practical life as it is in science: a genius’s way of regarding things turns away from the content of the principle of sufficient reason, and it alone is valid and useful in art.⁷

If this is so, then what does Schopenhauer’s formulation of the genius actually mean for Wagner as the artist of life, at least insofar as Nietzsche’s conception of him is concerned? The solution to this question is to be found in part by Wagner’s *Artwork of the Future*, while its correlative expansion and working out, as we might expect, is

¹ WWR 1: 208, §36.

² WWR 1: 209, §36.

³ WWR 1: 209, §36.

⁴ “For genius to emerge in an individual, it is as if a degree of cognitive power had been granted to him that is in far excess of the amount required for the service of the individual will; and when liberated, this surplus of cognition now turns into the subject purified of all will, the bright mirror of the essence of the world.” WWR 1: 209, §36.

⁵ WWR 1: 208, §36.

⁶ UW, 1999: 32, *Notebook* 19 [86] summer 1872-early 1873.

⁷ WWR 1: 208, §36.

found in Nietzsche's notebooks; so let us briefly review some of the points we had originally highlighted in Wagner's essay about preparing the ground for the artwork of the future.

We already know from Wagner's essay that genuine art becomes possible only when it is the necessary consequence of a *want* arising from the unconscious and instinctual life-pulse of the folk. But in order for this instinctual life-pulse to crystallize into a definite and determinate self-expression – in order for the mirror of art to uphold to life the picture of its own existence – our modern culture requires “a rich-gifted individual, *who takes up into his solitary self the spirit of community that was absent from our public life.*”¹ In fact, this “rich-gifted individual” can be none other than just such a musico-dramatic genius according to Wagner's essay. For only out of “the fullness of his being, united with the fullness of musical resource, [will he] evolve within himself this spirit of community which his artist soul had been the first to yearn for,”² for only the *artistic genius* can grasp this organizing Idea, this unconscious need as given by the folk, in order to lift it to conscious expression.

Now surely this is a tall order, made taller by the fact that genius is exceptionally rare. For as the archetype is to its copies, so too is the genius to his milieu. But if the genius is to have any relation to his milieu, if this “rich-gifted individual” is to take into his solitary self the spirit of community missing from public life in order to lift it from unconscious need to conscious expression, then it cannot be true that the archetype exists merely to serve its copies. On the contrary, all copies tend towards their archetype, for it is the *archetype*, and *not* the copies that is rooted in life itself, just as it is the *genius*, and *not* his milieu who can access them for precisely the same reason. Only like can know like.

Now certainly a conviction such as this renders the genius *theoretically* necessary, and when this necessity is tacitly endorsed, we can see at once that the oppositions Nietzsche fomented between the Idea and the concept, between wisdom and knowledge, between art and science, and between genius and the principle of sufficient reason are brought into very clear relief in the service of Wagner as the artist for life. We might remark, at this point, that the origin of these oppositions is almost perfectly prefigured in §49 of *The World as Will and Representation*, where Schopenhauer notes that

[...] as useful as the concept is for life, and as practical, necessary and fruitful as it is for science, it will always be barren for art. By contrast, the apprehended Idea is the true and unique source for every genuine work of art. In its forceful originality it is drawn only from life itself, from nature, from the world, and also only from true genius or someone momentarily inspired to the point of genius.³

Nonetheless, it is certainly a credit to Nietzsche's own genius, and no less to Wagner's, that these categories were conceived in such dichotomous terms as to be almost mutually antagonistic. There was, however, a reason for this: after all, Wagner and

¹ PW 1: 127, “Artwork of the Future,” my emphasis.

² PW 1: 127, “Artwork of the Future.”

³ WWR 1: 261, §49.

Nietzsche were not simply looking to rest contentedly with a theoretical justification about the nature of genius and his relationship to genuine art, for the artistic genius, as far as they were concerned, was already at hand, and his ability to create genuine works of art was beyond dispute.¹ We already know that for Nietzsche, Wagner *was* the “flesh-and-blood illustration of what Schopenhauer calls a genius.”² And if music truly is the immediate vital act of art and therefore of life – if in truth it is the will to life itself, the depiction of which in musico-dramatic composition was the object and end of all genuine art – then Wagner’s art might truly reconcile science with life once and for all,³ paving the way for art as a *return* to life. Here, a promise lay open for the artwork of the future in a very tangible way.

But there was one final problem, and it presented a serious obstacle to a reformation of culture within modernity, even though Wagner, the musico-dramatic genius was at hand. This was, in fact, the central problem that had badgered both men with no end in sight, and it was the very problem that was invoked in their attempt to give the modern folk the artwork of the future. This was, in short, the problem of science and its effect on the modern folk.

For both Wagner and Nietzsche, the fundamental problem of science, as we alluded to previously, was that it had deceived itself into believing that limitations simply did not exist for it, as though by starting from the principle of causality, it somehow imagined it could leap right over it to explain “the innermost essence of things.”⁴ And at least during the middle of the 19th century, science had made a number of overbearing and imperious claims, even though as far as both Wagner and Nietzsche were concerned, science had no authority to make them, especially since the methodology of the sciences was, in their view, restricted to “the restless and insubstantial current” of the principle of sufficient reason, and therefore could “no more find a final goal or complete satisfaction than we can walk to the point where the clouds touch the horizon.”⁵

Yet however true these justifications might have struck both men, they rested on purely theoretical arguments and did not affect the modern folk in the least. But for the artwork of the future to actually take root and blossom, it became necessary to demonstrate in precisely what way science did, in fact, affect the modern folk. It was therefore not enough to launch a critique on science in and of itself without at the same time demonstrating the deleterious effects of science on the folk as well. And as far as the Wagnerian thesis was concerned, there was no better way to demonstrate the decline of culture at the hands of science than to argue that science had been responsible for the self-estrangement of modernity by having turned itself into a means for the expressed purpose of pampering modern man. Once this thesis could be established, science would become directly responsible for modern man’s

¹ Just think of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*, premiered in 1865 and 1868 respectively.

² *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 28 September 1869, SL: 60 and KSB 3: 61.

³ PW 1: 72-73, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁴ BT, 1993: 87, §18.

⁵ WWR 1: 208, §36.

addiction to luxury and all the ridiculous superfluity that goes along with it, a pervasive symptom of modernity which had alienated modern man from himself, from his only true need, which is to live and to be happy.¹ This was the masterstroke. According to Wagner,

It is the soul of that Industry (i.e., luxury) which deadens men, to turn them to machines; the soul of our State which swears away men's honour, the better then to take them back as lieges of its grace; the soul of our deistic Science, which hurls men down before an immaterial God, the product of the sum of intellectual luxury, for his consumption. It is – alas! – the soul, the stipulation, of our – Art! Who then will bring to pass the rescue from this baleful state?²

Certainly the musico-dramatic genius – certainly you Wagner – if you could only but catch a break. But in this modern culture, according to Wagner, with its “heartless, inhuman, insatiable, and egoistic”³ addiction to luxury, which daily and hourly “racks, devours, torments and burns, without an instant's stilling” our modern humanity held in the thrall of it,⁴ the modern folk simply do not realize that it has “swallow[ed] up all gladness, mirth, and joy of life.”⁵ The problem with modernity reasoned Wagner, is that “conscious autocratic thought completely govern[s] Life,”⁶ and where the sciences have completely surrendered their significance to the service of practical ends such as economics,⁷ it is certain that the vital impulse has been usurped and diverted “to some other purpose than the great Necessity of absolute life-needs.”⁸ Life has been dethroned, and swallowed up in science, and the latter in turn has been swallowed up by the State in order to deaden men, and to turn them into machines merely for the sake of being pampered by luxury.

And truly Science, in her overweening arrogance, has dreamed of such a triumph; as witness our tight-reined State and modern Art, the sexless, barren children of this dream.⁹

With this brief rhetorical glimmer, we can begin to see how the Wagnerian thesis, enhanced by the ‘authority and backing’ of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, developed into the principal arguments with which Nietzsche armed himself in order to inaugurate his war in aesthetics against modernity on Wagner’s behalf. And now that we have unfolded their logic a bit more completely, let us now flesh out the full thrust of these arguments according to the rhetoric that we surely find in anticipation of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

So long as modern man continues to be deceived by his true needs (so the argument goes) will he continue to allow his vital impulse to be seduced by comfort into becoming a tool for the State, where he will, in all truth “struggle miserably to

¹ PW 1: 203, “Artwork of the Future.”

² PW 1: 76-77, “Artwork of the Future.”

³ PW 1: 76, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁴ PW 1: 76, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁵ PW 1: 76, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁶ PW 1: 74, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁷ WEN, 2009: 19, *Notebook 3* [10], winter 1869/70-spring 1870.

⁸ PW 1: 74, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁹ PW 1: 74, “Artwork of the Future.”

perpetuate a miserable life”¹ simply in order to continue “to vegetate at all costs.”² Indeed, the “tremendous social crises of the present” have been brought upon us precisely by this “pampering of modern man”³ who “behaves utterly slavishly while anxiously avoiding the word ‘slave.’”⁴ So long as this continues

The real Man (i.e., the genius) will therefore never be forthcoming, until true Human Nature, and not the arbitrary statutes of the State, shall model and ordain his Life; while real Art will never live, until its embodiments need be subject only to the laws of Nature, and not to the despotic whims of Mode.⁵

Unfortunately, what science “in her overweening arrogance” has failed to realize is that science itself is nothing other than a systematic implementation of the will’s very instrument; i.e., the intellect, which means that all it ever does, nor can do, is chase its own tail, that “restless and insubstantial current” of the principle of sufficient reason.⁶ This explains, in large measure, its servile conformity to the practical ends of the State in obsequiously fulfilling the demands created by an artificial need, and thus its complicity in “swearing away men’s honour” in order to lead them down into the “hell of Luxury.”⁷ Yet we need not be in thrall to this “illusion of illusion” any longer, as our slavery to luxury and our tight-reined State and modern art amply demonstrate, “the sexless, barren children of this dream.”⁸ What we need is the redemption of thought and science and their transmutation into artwork.⁹ We need the eternal joy in becoming which seduces us back to life, to that primordial illusion, “the illusion of being.” In a word, we need the Dionysian. We need Wagner, the Dionysian genius *par excellence*.¹⁰ Truly, this is what the folk *want*, although they do not realize this want, for the folk have become alienated from themselves in their slavish pursuit of luxury. Only the genius, who stands in relation to his milieu perceives this, for only *he* is rooted in life itself. And it is this “rich-gifted individual” who must evolve, out of the “fullness of his being,” this “spirit of the community” in order to lift unconscious need to conscious expression.¹¹

With these rhetorical claims in hand, all that remained was for Nietzsche to underscore it in the most daring and courageous form possible by declaring, first of all, that the musico-dramatic genius was here, even now in our presence, and then to point out that modernity had completely inverted its values with regard to the nature of the genius; i.e., that it is not for the sake of the State that the genius exists, rather it is for the sake of the genius that the State exists. Only by exempting the genius from the universal drudgery of slave labor, which is the natural condition of the great lot of

¹ WEN, 2009: 67-68, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

² WEN, 2009: 68, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

³ WEN, 2009: 71, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 67, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁵ PW 1: 71, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁶ WWR 1: 208, §36.

⁷ PW 1: 77, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁸ PW 1: 74, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁹ PW 1: 74, “Artwork of the Future.”

¹⁰ Cf., BT, 1993: 28-32, §5.

¹¹ PW 1: 127, “Artwork of the Future.”

earthly mortals whose needs coerce them into “struggling miserably to perpetuate a miserable life” for the State,¹ will he pay, in Schopenhauer’s words, “a hundredfold his debt to mankind by achieving what no other could do and by producing something that contributes to the good of all and also redounds to their honour.”² The one thing needful now lay in a public proclamation of their intentions, perhaps even a bit of propaganda – and so we find it in Nietzsche’s early preface to Richard Wagner in anticipation of publishing *The Birth of Tragedy*:

You know how utterly I abhor the misguided belief that the people, let alone the state, should be an ‘end in itself’: but I equally balk at seeking the purpose of mankind in the future of mankind. Neither the state nor the people nor mankind exist for their own sake; the goal lies in their peaks, in the great ‘individuals,’ the saints and artists, that is, neither before nor behind us, but outside time. And this goal points entirely beyond mankind [...] the genius does not exist for the sake of mankind; although he is definitely the peak and ultimate goal of it. There is no higher cultural tendency than the preparation and creation of the genius. The state too, despite its barbarous origin and its domineering gestures, is only a means to that end.³

With this move, all the decisive elements of the German Reformation of Culture are in place, including their final judgment over science, which went something like the following: while “the egoistic spirit of Athenian self-dissection” may have ushered in “the boundless, demanding logic of science,”⁴ which in turn led us to conceive of knowledge as a “screw without an end,”⁵ science has ultimately sinned against art and life by trying to “annihilate the world,”⁶ as is evident by a two-thousand year old record which testifies to the decline of Western art at the hands of science and in to the lap of luxury – or shall we say, decadence? But now, a return to art and life is at hand with

Germany as the proper seat of the oracle of art. – Aim: a state-managed cultural organization – art as a means of education – elimination of *specifically* scientific forms of training. Dissolution of the still living religious emotions into the domain of art – this is the practical aim. Conscious annihilation of art criticism through the increased *consecration* of art. To demonstrate this as the drive of German Idealism. Thus: liberation from the predominance of ἀνθρωπος θεωρητικός.^{7,8}

At long last, we know the truth behind the claim we made at the beginning of section 4; namely, that no thesis found in *The World as Will and Representation* is more fundamental to Nietzsche’s critique of science and its sins against art and life as is the claim that all genuine knowledge is derived from perception or insight. In Schopenhauer’s doctrine of the genius, Nietzsche supplied a theoretical framework to Wagner’s life which justified, through the deeds of art, the nature of Wagner’s existence. With this doctrine Wagner became, in effect, both its guarantee and its

¹ WEN, 2009: 67-68, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

² PP 1: 350, “Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life, Chapter 3: What a Man Has.”

³ WEN, 2009: 80-81, *Notebook* 11 [1], *Preface to Richard Wagner*, 22 February 1871.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 33-34, *Notebook* 7 [21], end of 1870-April 1871, my emphasis.

⁵ WEN, 2009: 19, *Notebook* 3 [10], winter 1869/70-spring 1870, my emphasis.

⁶ WEN, 2009: 19, *Notebook* 3 [11], winter 1869/70-spring 1870.

⁷ ‘the slavish scholar’, lit. ‘theoretical man’.

⁸ WEN, 2009: 22, *Notebook* 3 [60], winter 1869/70-spring 1870.

fulfilment. Genius as archetype welled from the depths of a lived experience in Wagner as individual, while his art, conceived as the “immediate vital act” of genius, possessed the immediate and inward certainty to life as lived experience.

We might say more about the doctrine of genius as it features in Nietzsche’s early notebooks, but it is unnecessary to do so at this point. For we will see the doctrine of the genius return again under the heading of the ‘Greeks,’ whose sole purpose it would seem was to provide an historical context for the latter day German Reformation of Culture, as well as to produce a lineage – a genealogy if you will – to those latter day prophets in Schopenhauer and Wagner who were leading the assault against the decadence of modernity through a return to life. It is to this that we now turn.

6. The Culture of Life: Anticipating the Rebirth of Tragedy

Notebook 10, written at the beginning of 1871, was originally intended to be part of *The Birth of Tragedy*, but it is certain that had its contents been incorporated, it would have set off far more academic ire than it already has done in its present form. In this 12-page essay fragment, Nietzsche’s primary object is to emphasize the necessary connection that exists between genius and the State, with the former being in every respect the supreme tendency towards which the latter strives, no matter how dimly it perceives or understands this. While it is no secret that the State is built upon slavery and destruction, Nietzsche argues, looked at psychologically these unfortunate measures are merely the State’s most immediate object in expressing, discharging, and consolidating its drives considered as “forces of nature” as it were, and these are themselves necessary attainments along the way in preparing for their ultimate expression, which is to give birth to the genius.¹ In the very first paragraph of this essay fragment, Nietzsche lets us know that this is how we must understand Hellenic life. Indeed, even as early as Notebook 7, Nietzsche makes it perfectly clear that the “Hellenic will” is to be understood in precisely this sense:

The glorification of the will through art is the goal of the Hellenic will. Therefore it was necessary to ensure that artistic creations were possible. Art is the free excess strength of a people which is not squandered in the struggle for existence. Hence the *cruel* reality of a *culture* – in so far as it builds its triumphal gates on enslavement and destruction.²

Within the context of Notebook 10 however, Nietzsche’s thesis about the Hellenic world is mobilized to advance a far more fundamental point on the agenda: by issuing this proclamation of genius and the State, Nietzsche’s intention is to contextualize Wagner as phenomenon within the backdrop of an historical example in order to signify his genius as *directedness* towards the latter day German Reformation of Culture. As all history is, in the final analysis, a history for thinking, it is only through an historical example that the extensionless present can be infused with a lineage, a

¹ WEN, 2009: 65, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

² WEN, 2009: 33, *Notebook 7* [18], end of 1870-April 1871.

genealogy, which starts with an arbitrary beginning (i.e., Greek culture) and ends, logically enough, with this extensionless present (i.e., Wagner) through time as *directedness* in order to impart meaning upon the present in precisely those aspects which that history for thinking presupposed. Suddenly now, Wagner as genius can only be understood “with reference to the Greek world,” for only in the Greek world do we find the birth of genius, with reference to the polis (πόλις), at the apex of the pyramid, the base having been built up and built upon destruction and slave labor.¹ It is only after this manner, Nietzsche suggests, that genius as abstract potential can transform itself into a force of nature for his milieu. With this thesis presupposed, the Greek world becomes the definitive case study to investigate “the most important *preparations* the ‘will’ requires in order to attain [genius],”² with Wagner waiting in the wings of course to claim his fair share of whatever Greek genius has fallen to his lot as a result of Nietzsche’s investigation.

If the genius is really the goal and ultimate purpose of nature it must now be possible to demonstrate that the other manifestations of the Hellenic character can be perceived only as necessary auxiliary mechanisms and preparations for that ultimate goal.³

In the 10 pages that follow, Nietzsche sets out to describe in precisely what sense it was true for the Hellenic world that in order for art as culture to flourish, it was a necessary prerequisite for the πόλις to have originated upon “a terrifying foundation.”⁴ Running parallel to this description of the Hellenic world is Nietzsche’s comparative analysis of modern slavery within the contemporary State and *its* ability to generate art as culture. According to Nietzsche’s argument, the fundamental difference between the two, is that while the former looked at the fact squarely in the face, recognizing in the ignominy a necessary condition for any kind of artistic greatness to take root and to blossom, the latter had simply deceived itself of the ineluctable fact, and by championing euphemisms such as ‘the dignity of man’ and ‘the dignity of labor,’ essentially created “the feeble products of slavery hiding from itself.”⁵ How can a culture, Nietzsche asks, which has recourse to such “pitiful expedients”⁶ ever truly raise itself to the height of Dionysiac ecstasy? How could we ever hope to appreciate truth in all her naked beauty when she tells us that “everything that comes into being must have a sorrowful end?”⁷ How could we ever hope to see “the struggles, the torment, the destruction of phenomena as necessary”⁸ through the impermanent forms of existence passing upon the world stage, and issuing from the same creative source out of which both man and nature are derived? And yet, despite all our “pity and terror, we are happy to be alive, not as individuals

¹ WEN, 2009: 67, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

² WEN, 2009: 67, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

³ WEN, 2009: 67, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 70, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁵ WEN, 2009: 68, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁶ WEN, 2009: 68, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁷ BT, 1993: 80, §17.

⁸ BT, 1993: 80, §17.

but as *the* single living thing, merged with its creative delight”¹ – with that “artist god” who takes pleasure in creating and destroying, and whose becoming consists in delimiting itself by illusion in order to redeem itself through that illusion?² Only the Dionysian genius can ‘see’ this by becoming one with its vision.³ Otherwise, it is impossible Nietzsche argues, for modern man is caught up in “a very different, pampered way of looking at things,”⁴ one which repudiates the tragic view of the world through its most “illustrious antagonist” Socratic science, which is “optimistic to the very core.”⁵ With such scientific optimism “imagining itself boundless,”⁶ genius can neither manifest its full force, nor bring what force it can manifest to fruition, for modern man in his self-estrangement will never be able to recognize the Dionysian genius nor his art for what it truly is: life concerned with the contemplation of ultimates as *represented* through tragic poetry and infused with tonality. It is precisely this set of circumstances which explains why modernity has no claim to genuine art and culture.

And as we might expect, when it came to the feeble products of our modern culture, the target of Nietzsche’s ire, which was surely guided by the steady hand of Wagner, was the genre of opera, that “artificial homunculus” of modernity:

The man who is incapable of art creates for himself a kind of art by the very fact that he is the inartistic man as such. Because he has no notion of the Dionysiac depths of music, he transforms musical enjoyment into a rationalistic words-and-music rhetoric of passion in the *stilo rappresentativo*, and into a voluptuous sensuality of vocal music; because he is incapable of vision he forces the mechanic and the decorative artist into his service; because the true essence of the artist is beyond his comprehension, he conjures up the ‘artistic primitive man’ in accordance with his own taste, the man who passionately sings and declaims [...] According to this belief, opera is the expression of amateurism in art, dictating its laws with the cheerful optimism of theoretical man.⁷

Echoing the same sentiments found in Notebook 1, which we noted were themselves themes already found in both Wagner’s *Artwork of the Future* and in Schopenhauer’s magnum opus, here again we find in the climax to *The Birth of Tragedy* a merciless castigation of an art form which starts from the concept, and by applying “abstract

¹ BT, 1993: 81, §17.

² BT, 1993: 25, §4 and 115, §24; “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” 8, §5: “The striving for infinity, the wingbeat of longing, that accompanies the supreme delight of clearly perceived reality, reminds us that both states (i.e., the Apollonian and Dionysian) are aspects of a Dionysiac phenomenon: over and over again it shows us the spirit that playfully builds and destroys the world of individuals as the product of a primal pleasure: similarly dark Heraclitus compares the force that builds worlds to a child placing stones here and there, and building sandcastles and knocking them down again.”

³ WEN, 2009: 66, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 71, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁵ BT, 1993: 76, §16.

⁶ BT, 1993: 86, §18.

⁷ BT, 1993: 92, §19. Cf., “The need of ‘poetic pathos’ made our poets deliberately adopt a *rhetorical mode of diction*, with the aim of working on the Feeling; and, as it was impossible for our unpoetic actors to either understand or carry out the ideal aim, this diction led to that intrinsically senseless, but melodramatically telling style of declamation whose practical object was just the said ‘Effect,’ i.e. a stunning of the spectator’s senses, to be documented by the outburst of ‘applause.’ [...] and since our playwrights live on the Effect of the roles of our actors, it is easy to understand why the opera-composer appears to them a very hateful rival, for he can bring all this about by simply arranging for a good loud scream at the close of any vocal phrase you please.” PW 5: 133-34, “The Destiny of Opera.”

theory and the conscious intention to achieve the effects of the ancient drama,"¹ ends up giving birth to a "fantastically silly dalliance."² Thus opera is not, like the ancient drama, an art form that is "marked by the elegiac pain of eternal loss" but is rather "the cozy enjoyment of an idyllic reality."³ In short, it is a testament to philistinism.

But it precisely this "cozy enjoyment" of knowledge, this knowledge as "small dose of opium," according to Nietzsche, which had been directly responsible for the rise of the modern day cultural philistine, for it had created out of its optimistic spirit the delusion that knowledge in the form of dissection and analysis will eventually lead theoretical man to some terminal noetic value with respect to life and living. But as we have seen from Nietzsche's appropriation of Schopenhauer's epistemology on this point, no matter how analytically minute the concept may be, it can never reach down and reach through to knowledge of direct perception, but only to finer, more distinct conceptions, which can only be capable of more ultimate dissection and analysis.⁴ For the vitalist, whose orientation is, above all, to life itself, all conceptual construction and analysis can only ever serve a purely functional or instrumental role, since all concepts either point to other concepts, or they suggest perceptual indefinables which then stand in need of conceptual development. The conclusion that the vitalist would draw, as surely Nietzsche did draw, is that all genuine conception must be instrumental to a somewhat beyond itself, namely to "life as the great ultimate," and so could never be severed from life to find a terminal value with respect to itself.⁵ With respect to a potential German Reformation of Culture for the folk then, perhaps more to the point was the fact that with this democratization of knowledge,

The sudden enrichment of a people holds the same dangers as a sudden overdose of scientific discoveries. The road from insight to life, from ken to can, from know-how to art, is forgotten: a luxurious reveling in knowledge begins. The continuing quiet work of those who produce culture suddenly is swamped by those who take pride in knowledge: no one wants any longer to move down the smaller paths in practical matters; instead, everyone egoistically limits himself to being a know-it-all [...] the excess of science appears to be becoming a curse for our culture.⁶

Thus between luxuriating knowledge divorced from life, and luxuriating life divorced from knowledge, it would remain forever impossible to give birth to the tragic concept. These two dangers of the Socratic culture, if left untreated, would continue to contaminate and infect modern man's sense for the tragic that lives and grows upon the soil of life, and through its "inartistic, parasitical spirit" of optimism,⁷ would continue to eat away at the kernel before it ever has a chance to take root. For both Wagner and Nietzsche, being passionately infused with their conception of the Hellenes, these consequences alone merited the invocation of Hellenistic culture as a kind of pedagogical reproof against a modernity which somehow believed that it was

¹ WEN, 2009: 9, *Notebook* 1 [1], autumn 1869.

² BT, 1993: 93, §19.

³ BT, 1993: 93, §19.

⁴ WWR 2: 65, Chapter 6, "On the Doctrine of Abstract Knowledge or Knowledge of Reason."

⁵ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future."

⁶ UW, 1999: 155, *Notebook* 26 [18], Spring 1873.

⁷ BT, 1993: 116, §24.

the rightful heir to this once great culture of life, and Nietzsche, the twenty-seven year old professor of Classics, was surely the right person to lead this assault on modernity in order to make room for Wagner.

As far as Nietzsche's part was concerned in effecting this German Reformation of Culture, the first concept to be disabused was this delusion about knowledge under which the Socratic culture had been laboring for the past (give or take) two-thousand years. In both Notebook 10 and in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche invokes a truly inspired contrast between the two cultures in terms of their approach to knowledge by drawing upon the literary figure of *Faust*, who is the definitive archetype for modern Socratic man in both his voracious and unquenchable drive for knowledge, as well as the inherent weariness and dissatisfaction he finds in all forms of knowledge for life and living. With this belief about knowledge, Nietzsche argues, with this pampered and self-indulgent approach to knowledge which views the knower as admirable – indeed even laudable – for having adorned himself with the jewels of erudition in order to strut about like a peacock displaying life as a superfluous luxury, it is no wonder that modern man is eternally dissatisfied, both with himself and with the artistic products of his culture.

How unintelligible to a true Greek must *Faust* appear, the modern man of culture, intelligible in himself, as he storms unsatisfied through all the faculties, devoting himself to magic and the devil because of his urge for knowledge. We need only compare him with Socrates to see that modern man has begun to sense the limitations of the Socratic delight in knowledge, and yearns for a shore from the wide and barren sea of knowledge.¹

The Greeks, as Nietzsche states here, would have found this idea utterly incomprehensible, for 'Hellenic knowledge' was still in the service of life, and had not yet divorced itself from life in order to look upon the latter as its 'object.'² For Socratic man on the other hand, even though he has amassed vast quantities of information and learning that has far transcended anything that the Hellenic culture ever knew, and in almost every conceivable discipline and branch of knowledge that there could possibly be, to nonetheless find himself resonating with the literary figure of *Faust* demonstrates beyond all doubt his weariness with this 'scientific spirit,' indeed that this scientific spirit has been taken to its limits. Truly, the folk of modernity do not realize the "hell of Luxury" into which they have descended,³ and with the rise of the modern day cultural philistine, who loves nothing more than to feel 'edified' by the classics, but whose secret watchword is that we should seek no further to emulate the ancients in either their courage or spirit,⁴ what we find in Socratic culture is nothing more than the cozy enjoyment of an idyllic reality brought about by abstract theorizing and fact-sifting conjectures.

¹ BT, 1993: 86, §18; cf., WEN, 2009: 71, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

² PW 1: 70, "Artwork of the Future."

³ PW 1: 77, "Artwork of the Future."

⁴ UO: 13-14, §2, "David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer."

What a spectacle it is to see our aestheticians, armed with the butterfly net of their own peculiar 'beauty,' beating the air as they chase after the spirit of music, while it scampers away before them with an incomprehensible life.¹

With this argument about the limitations of the 'scientific spirit,' as well as Socratic man's incipient awareness of this fact as revealed to him by his affinity for the literary character of *Faust*, the time was nigh for Socratic man to recognize the Wagnerian thesis that science "bears the burden of the sins of Life," and could only expiate them "by her own self-abrogation."² Once knowledge reaches this point in its evolution, science could only end "in her direct antithesis, in the knowledge of Nature, in the recognition of the unconscious, instinctive, and therefore real, inevitable, and physical."³

Accordingly, the second concept to be disabused was Socratic man's naïve optimism about knowledge, and thus the absurdity attached to modernity's belief in its 'democratization,' on which point again the Hellenic world would be shown to differ. "In no other artistic age have so-called 'culture' and art itself been so mutually hostile as we see them today," Nietzsche laments in §20 of *The Birth of Tragedy*. "We can understand why such a feeble culture hates true art: it fears that it will bring about its downfall."⁴ And rightfully so, for according to Nietzsche's rhetoric here, modern Socratic man is simply too addicted to his abstract theorizing and fact-sifting conjectures to actually behold a truly great culture, so he fails to recognize the utterly "vacuous rhetoric" that is attached to the notions of "Greek harmony," "Greek beauty" and "Greek cheerfulness"⁵ – notions which in no way actually depict the historical reality of Hellenic life as a lived experience, but only correspond to the reveries and "idyllic reality" of Socratic man's abstract theorizing. The Germans, in other words, do not realize that this 'democratization of knowledge' has been directly responsible for the cultural impoverishment of modernity, for they have been reared under the mythology of the historical in Hegel – a mythology that had been founded on the basis of offering up the "feeble products of slavery hiding from itself" in such watchwords as 'the dignity of man' and 'the dignity of labor,' because it genuinely believes that whatever happens to a people only has significance in its relationship to the State. Yet insofar as the genius was concerned, and especially when it came to the genius of Wagner, "how could [the State] possibly be a purpose! The only hope is that inherent in the preservation of so many losers also will be the protection of a few individuals in whom humanity will culminate."⁶ Certainly the call to understand everything 'objectively,' to get angry about nothing, and to comprehend 'everything' makes people submissive and pliant,⁷ but it also destroys the very instinct within the folk that is necessary for art as culture to survive, and at the same time removes us even

¹ BT, 1993: 95, §19.

² PW 1: 72, "Artwork of the Future."

³ PW 1: 72, "Artwork of the Future."

⁴ BT, 1993: 97, §20.

⁵ BT, 1993: 97, §20.

⁶ UW, 1999: 226, *Notebook* 29 [73], summer-autumn 1873.

⁷ UW, 1999: 217, *Notebook* 29 [57], summer-autumn 1873.

farther away from any kind of comprehension for what the Greeks were as a lived experience. Heretofore, only the Greeks have understood the necessity in nature, which is at the same time her wisdom, when she decreed that “striv[ing] to create the greatest beauty is something terrible. It is in accordance with this character of nature that the triumphal processions of *culture* benefit only an incredibly small minority of privileged mortals, while on the other hand *slave labour* of the mass is necessary if art is to conceive a proper desire to come into being.”¹ Accordingly, the conclusion that Nietzsche reached with Wagner waiting in the wings was that, in order for genuine art as culture to flourish, Socratic culture, like the Hellenic world

needs a slave class in order to exist in the long term; but in its optimistic view of existence it denies the necessity of such a class and therefore, once the effect of its fine seductive and consoling words about ‘the dignity of man’ and ‘the dignity of labour’ has worn off, it slowly drifts towards terrible destruction.²

Here again, the differences we find between the two cultures in terms of their orientation and approach to knowledge radically diverged to such an extent that for both men it was a difference that quite literally had *vital* consequences; and once again, from Wagner’s *Artwork of the Future* to the climax of *The Birth of Tragedy*, this thesis remains intact. The major hindrance for Socratic man is that in his boundless optimism, he simply cannot look at facts squarely in the face without labelling the fact of his slavery by “deceptively glamorous names in order to be able to live.”³ For in truth, between modern man’s self-indulgent approach to knowledge and his desire to be pampered surely lurks the *de facto* proof that he belongs to the slave class already. It is this self-deception and, paradoxically, this lack of intellectual integrity, which prevents Socratic man almost from the outset from contributing to the birth of any kind of art as culture. But tragic knowledge, according to both men, is only revealed to one whose being is in harmony with the necessity of nature, something which by definition is sealed off from one whose knowledge is severed from life and living. We might understand, therefore, that the first order of business in building up momentum to the German Reformation of Culture and the rebirth of the tragic concept lies foremost in acknowledging how

through Kant and Schopenhauer the spirit of *German philosophy*, which flows from the same sources, was able to destroy scientific Socratism’s complacent delight in existence by demonstrating its limitations, and how it thus introduced an infinitely more profound and serious consideration of ethical questions and art, which we might almost describe as Dionysiac wisdom in conceptualized form.⁴

And the second order of business? Well, “if the tragedy of the ancients was diverted from its course by the dialectical impulse towards knowledge and scientific optimism, we might conclude from this that there is a never-ending struggle between the theoretical and the tragic philosophies. And only after the scientific spirit has been

¹ WEN, 2009: 67, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

² BT, 1993: 87, §18.

³ WEN, 2009: 68, *Notebook 10* [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871.

⁴ BT, 1993: 95, §19.

taken to its limits, and has been forced by the demonstration of those limits to renounce its claim to universal validity, can we hope for a rebirth of tragedy. We might employ the symbol of the *music-making Socrates* [...] to describe that cultural form.”¹

Within this formula and its bold and impressive exhortation, the rebirth of tragedy out of the spirit of music has been made as plainly as can be.

There is, however, one single solitary problem remaining with this exhortation: who or what is being invoked within the formula of our music-making Socrates? Surely the figure to recognize the limits of the scientific spirit, and the call to renounce its claims at the threshold of those limits, sounds suspiciously similar to that “rich-gifted individual” Wagner had called for in his *Artwork of the Future* from twenty-three years prior. And we now know, according to our analysis of Nietzsche’s notebook entries as well as *The Birth of Tragedy* proper, that this “rich-gifted individual” can be none other than the Dionysian artistic genius. But within this formula lay an exhortation to culture that appeals every bit as much to the sensibilities of the philosopher as they do to those of the musician. And yet who is both? Who can be both? Who must be both?

¹ BT, 1993: 82, §17.

Chapter 2

The Philosopher as Physician of Culture

"The Philosopher.

Observations on the Struggle between Art and Knowledge."

– *Notebook 19 [98], winter 1872-73*

1. From the 'Music-Making Socrates' to the Problem of Modernity

The so-called 'problem of modernity' was an issue that occupied Nietzsche for the duration of his productive life, and in Chapter 1 we uncovered the origins of his preoccupation with it, noting that the issue itself was originally – and very intimately – bound up with Wagner's art from the time of his earliest notebooks. Nietzsche's earliest concerns about the problem of culture had pledged allegiance to the Wagnerian cause, and this implied that the problem of modernity would need to be defined in terms that were antithetical to Wagner's art. We discovered, in fact, that the content of Nietzsche's earliest notebook entries heavily relied on a number of theoretical arguments about the decline of culture from Wagner's own prose writings, and specifically from his essay on the *Artwork of the Future*. And since Wagner and Nietzsche both shared the ontological commitment to vitalism, it soon became necessary to evaluate and diagnose the so-called 'problem of modernity' (i.e., cultural decline) through the lens of vitalistic thought, since any positive project associated with the reformation of culture heavily relied on cultivating awareness for the philosophical presuppositions of vitalism. According to Wagner's theoretical arguments, vitalistic presuppositions were shown to be at the very root of ancient Hellenistic culture, and are what allowed the Attic drama to flourish as long as it did. The artistic vision of life had been wedded to the contemplation of ultimates and was given dramatic form on the world stage, and had not yet been severed by Greek science, which now pressed, now interrogated, now importuned life, and in general found life to be a problem, and which soon gave way to justifying it by clinging tightly to the bough of dialectic. Thus vitalistic presuppositions were logically inferred to be the necessary ingredients involved in revitalizing a declining culture, with the philosopher of life and the artist of life joining forces once again to consecrate the rebirth of tragic knowledge. Schopenhauer, Wagner and the ancient Hellenes become the great vitalistic exemplars around which Nietzsche's notebook entries are organized, and key doctrines from Schopenhauer's philosophy were invoked by Nietzsche to give 'authority and backing' to Wagner's arguments on the one hand, while diagnosing the problem of modernity from the standpoint of "life as the great ultimate" on the other. Having deciphered these philosophico-aesthetic presuppositions, we were able to demonstrate that the content of Nietzsche's earliest notes prefigure the arguments that would eventually be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*, whose sole aim it appears, was to proclaim and defend a latter day German Reformation of Culture roughly according to the Wagnerian blueprint.

But as we saw in the nail-biting build up to Nietzsche's exhortation for the rebirth of tragedy, Nietzsche had alluded to the figure of a 'music-making Socrates' – and not just once, but three times. Yet this figure of a 'music-making Socrates' seems at first glance to be a puzzling phenomenon, so much so that even scholars who have written about Nietzsche's relationship to Socrates have passed over it in silence. Alexander Nehamas's well-informed and virtually comprehensive treatment of Nietzsche's

relationship to Socrates makes no mention of it,¹ and so one is tempted to think that this figure is either one of those impetuous embellishments that Nietzsche has so often been accused of making in *The Birth of Tragedy*, or that impetuous embellishment aside, it was a direct and unequivocal invocation for Wagner to step into the limelight. In a sense both these accusations are true, and yet in a deeper sense, Nietzsche's figure of a 'music-making Socrates' signifies or points to something far more significant and enduring in his thought. To demonstrate that this is true, we will need to examine some of the clues he left for us to consider within the *Birth of Tragedy* as symbols foreshadowing the development of this figure. Once we have secured the meaning of this figure, we can move confidently towards its evolution and development in Nietzsche's 'post-Wagnerian' works as the very figure he uses in challenging Wagner to a duel over the meaning of the philosopher and artist for culture. With this figure, in fact, we have reached the turning point in our evaluation of the case of Nietzsche.

2. Two Clues from Plato's *Phaedo*

The first clue Nietzsche left for us comes shortly before the close to §14 of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the sections just prior to the climax to §14, Nietzsche had singled out the figure of Socrates as the phenomenon responsible for dealing the deathblow to Greek tragedy, an influence which he found especially at work in the tragedies of Euripides. Nietzsche had given this new influence on tragedy the epithet of "aesthetic Socratism," the chief law of which now became "to be beautiful everything must first be intelligible" – an aesthetic formula which Nietzsche remarked ran parallel to the Socratic dictum of "only the one who knows is virtuous."² From that point on, tragedy was served up according to a rationalistic method, with Nietzsche going so far as to state that with the entrance of Socrates, instinct was dissociated from the power of creativity in order to become the critic – a shift which Nietzsche labels as "a monstrosity *per defectum*!"³

And now, after he had finished sketching out the formal arguments between "aesthetic Socratism" on the one hand and tragic art on the other, Nietzsche found himself asking whether the birth of an 'artistic Socrates' was a contradiction in terms, and he did so by alluding to the final episode in the life of Socrates from Plato's *Phaedo*. Now the question of course becomes *why*? What do the final moments in the life of Socrates signify for Nietzsche, at least according to Plato's narrative?

The scene is the prison of Socrates on the day of his execution. His friends enter to visit him one last time, and Socrates is soon asked why, when he had never written a single line of poetry, he was now putting some of Aesop's fables into verse and was

¹ Alexander Nehamas. "A reason for Socrates' face: Nietzsche on 'the problem of Socrates'". From *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*. California: University of California Press, 2000 (hereafter Nehamas), 128-156.

² BT, 1993: 62, §12.

³ BT, 1993: 66, §13.

composing a hymn to Apollo. In response, he told his friends that he had often had a dream in which he was told to “make and cultivate music,” but that he had always thought that his dream was bidding him do what he was already doing, which was to encourage him in the study of philosophy. Doubts however had crept in, for according to Nietzsche’s interpretation of the story, “[w]here art was concerned, the despotic logician had the sense of a lacuna, a void, something of a reproach, of a possibly neglected duty [...] Until shortly before his death, he drew comfort from the idea that his philosophy was the highest of the arts, spurning the notion that a deity might remind him of ‘vulgar, popular music.’ To salve his conscience entirely, he finally resolved in prison to make the very art he held in such low esteem. And with this attitude he wrote a hymn to Apollo and put some Aesopian fables into verse.”¹ Having passed his judgment on this anecdote of the dialogue, what Nietzsche then said next gives us a vital clue to what it signifies for his thought, in other words, for why he brought it up in the first place: “This voice of the Socratic dream vision is *the only indication that he ever gave any consideration to the limitations of logic*. He was obliged to ask: ‘Is that which is unintelligible to me necessarily unintelligent? Might there be a realm of wisdom from which the logician is excluded? *Might art even be a necessary correlative and supplement to science?*’”²

The second clue Nietzsche left for us is perhaps even more revealing, once we have grasped its relationship to both Wagner’s and Nietzsche’s call for art as a return to life from the limitations of science. Nietzsche first reveals its significance, likewise in the climax to §14, but he does not fully explain what this means until the middle of §15, where we soon see just how important this argument is.

As we first saw in Wagner’s essay, the principal cause for the decline of Hellenistic culture had been “Athenian self-dissection” in the hands of Greek science. While this was later pinned on Socrates in particular in §12 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche lets us know in §14 that this anti-Dionysiac tendency had been around and at work destroying the roots of Greek culture with the “rod of its syllogisms” even in the time of Sophocles, and it was simply the historical figure of Socrates who turned out to be “its most magnificent expression.”³ Here is our second clue: that the historical figure of Socrates was singled out, first by Wagner, and later by Nietzsche, as the most “magnificent expression” of this anti-Dionysiac tendency makes it clear that it was *not* the mere historical appearance of Socrates that was problematic, but rather what the phenomenon of Socrates *signified* or *betokened* by appearing. This is precisely what Nietzsche means when he goes on to say that “we must not shirk the question of where such a phenomenon as Socrates *was pointing*”⁴ in the midst of this anti-Dionysiac tendency.

He was pointing, of course, to the incipient decline of Hellenistic culture according to the Wagnerian thesis, for as Nietzsche goes on to note in the following section, it

¹ BT, 1993: 70-71, §14.

² BT, 1993: 71, §14, my emphasis.

³ BT, 1993: 70, §14.

⁴ BT, 1993: 70, §14, my emphasis.

was only with the historical figure of Socrates that a profound illusion first entered the world, namely that “rational thought, guided by causality, can penetrate to the depths of being, and that it is capable not only of knowing but even of *correcting* being.”¹ Nietzsche then notes, almost with ire, that this sublime metaphysical illusion is the instinctual accompaniment to science, where the image of the *dying Socrates*, the man who is “freed by insight and reason from the fear of death” soon became “the emblem over the portals of science reminding all who entered of their mission: to make existence appear intelligible and consequently justified.”² Not to let oneself be “ruled by illusions” became the “intellectual imperative of science,”³ and in this sense, the image of Socrates became the archetype of modern theoretical man.⁴

But there is an additional irony to this picture. This image of the dying Socrates, *this same image* that decreed that only what is rational is beautiful and which soon became the intellectual imperative of science was created by none other than Plato – that same Plato whom Nietzsche tells us was originally a young tragedian who “burnt his writings in order to become a pupil of Socrates.”⁵ Thus in his attempt to do justice to his new master, who had scornfully repudiated all of the art forms already in existence, Plato the thinker “had taken a detour to arrive at a place where Plato the poet had always been at home.”⁶ The Platonic dialogue, Nietzsche points out, is a mixture of all available styles, which almost seems as if “tragedy had absorbed all earlier genres within itself”⁷ and now found itself “hovering somewhere between narrative, lyric poetry and drama, between prose and poetry”⁸ and perhaps indeed, music besides. For while Socrates soon became the dialectical hero of the Platonic dialogue who demonstrates his unshakable faith in the explicability of nature, yearning to demonstrate a visible bond between virtue and knowledge, faith and morality,⁹ it is precisely *this image* of Socrates, Nietzsche intimates, which Plato *created* and embedded within an incredibly rich artistic presentation. Socrates, that divine symbol of rationality, and subsequently that mystagogue of science, who admonished all who followed in his wake of their mission not to be ruled by illusions, was brought out and brought forth through *an artistic vision of the world*.¹⁰ If, therefore, Socrates is taken to be the symbol of Western scientific thought in both its origins and its ends, then it follows that we have the most condemning historical proof that the origins of Western scientific thought themselves presuppose an artistic vision

¹ BT, 1993: 73, §15.

² BT, 1993: 73, §15.

³ WEN, 2009: 25, *Notebook* 5 [33], September 1870-January 1871.

⁴ BT, 1993: 72, §15.

⁵ BT, 1993: 68, §14.

⁶ BT, 1993: 68, §14.

⁷ BT, 1993: 68, §14.

⁸ BT, 1993: 68, §14.

⁹ BT, 1993: 69, §14.

¹⁰ Cf., “Plato was the first to adopt all three poetic forms for his ‘dialogues,’ so filled with dramatic life and so rich in myth-invention; and these scenes of his may be regarded as the foundation – nay, in the poet-philosopher’s glorious ‘Symposium,’ the model unapproached – of strictly literary poetry, which always leans to the didactic. Here the forms of naive poetry are merely employed to set philosophic theses in a quasi-popular light, and conscious tendency takes the place of the directly-witnessed scene from life.” PW 5: 138, “The Destiny of Opera.”

of the world, and that the “cocoon of its logical schematism”¹ is itself a product of that vision.

There is, however, one more very significant feature to Nietzsche’s arguments here. In particular, Nietzsche’s arguments imply, of course, that Plato had to resort to his *instinct* after all: his instinct for tragedy finally triumphed over his newly found ‘rational’ love for dialectics in bringing us this artistic vision of rationality to the world in the first place. Thus, while Plato may have ardently desired to reveal the dialectical greatness of his new master, the result, Nietzsche suggests, is that the Platonic dialogue effectively became “the lifeboat in which the shipwrecked older poetry and all its children escaped: crammed together in a narrow space, fearfully obeying a single pilot, Socrates.”² Humorous though this may be, what Nietzsche alludes to here is in fact deeply suggestive. Plato’s love for rationality had to be nurtured by his creative instinct, and it is this fact alone which made it possible for him to *procreate* an entirely new genre in the process, for in his wake, Nietzsche reminds us, “Plato gave posterity the model for a new art form – the novel.”³

3. The ‘Meaning’ of Plato’s *Phaedo*

When we bring together these two clues, it becomes quite obvious that Nietzsche’s mobilization of Plato is instrumental to his conception of the ‘music-making Socrates.’ As far as our first clue is concerned, Nietzsche’s purpose in relating the anecdote of the *Phaedo* now becomes perfectly clear. The principal implication is that Socrates, that paragon of the “despotic logician,” had been misinterpreting his divine sign all along, and as a consequence, he had only practiced one part of the great art, but not the great art in its entirety. In his final hours, his divine sign had made this perfectly clear, and it was at that moment that a kind of recognition dawned upon Socrates that perhaps there *is* a somewhat that is more fundamental than reason, or at least correlative to it, and that music does, in fact, speak to it. “After all,” Socrates thought, “music is certainly intelligible, so perhaps *my* logic for what is intelligible is merely the definition of what is intelligible from the *limitation of my own point of view*.” The moral of the story, Nietzsche intimates, is that *rationality cannot be divorced from the creative instincts for life*, the very urge or desire to which music speaks, and it is *Plato* and *not* Socrates who ultimately furnishes us with this insight.

As far as our second clue is concerned, and when we consider the Platonic dialogues as a whole, it quickly becomes apparent that rationality is *not* divorced from the creative instincts for life. While it is true that the dialogues are concerned with cultivating the understanding through dialectical intelligibility, it is this image of dialectical intelligibility that has been presented *as a work of art*. If, therefore, Socrates has become the symbol of what Wagner had identified as “the consciousness attained

¹ BT, 1993: 69, §14.

² BT, 1993: 69, §14.

³ BT, 1993: 69, §14.

by Science," it is nevertheless "the portrayal of the Life that it has learnt to know, the impress of this life's Necessity and Truth" which, in the hands of Plato, is art!¹ To see, therefore, Socrates as the despotic logician who only finds what is intelligible to be beautiful, and who decrees that illusions shall be banished as the singular law around which modern theoretical man has been built is to completely overlook the fact that this is a *depiction* of science first and foremost, and it is a depiction moreover that has been built on and built upon art as the immediate vital act of life – Plato's in particular. It is only when this image or depiction of rationality is divorced from a *lived experience*, which Socrates embodied, and set against life in order for it to become its 'object' that we find the decline of culture at the hands of science. Unfortunately and regrettably, this is precisely what *did* happen as far as Wagner and Nietzsche were concerned. Yet once we recognize that the entire edifice of Western scientific thought, starting from that mystagogue of science himself, has been founded upon an artistic vision of the world, science herself takes one step closer to bearing, as Wagner had put it, "the burden of the sins of Life," which will be expiated "by her own self-abrogation."² So when we read, therefore, Nietzsche's proclamation towards the climax of §15 that science, spurred on by its powerful illusion, is rushing to its limits,³ we must now recognize beyond all doubt that we have come face to face with the Wagnerian thesis as given in the *Artwork of the Future* which stipulates that "[a]s Science melts away into the recognition of the ultimate and self-determinate reality, of actual Life itself: so does this avowal win its frankest, most direct expression in Art, or rather in the *Work of Art*."⁴ In other words, once we recognize that art is the immediate vital act of life, it becomes "the perfect reconciliation of Science with Life, the laurel-wreath which the vanquished, redeemed by her defeat, reaches in joyous homage to her acknowledged victor."⁵ It is *this* 'transformation' or recognition of which Nietzsche speaks that leads him to "knock agitatedly at the portals of the present and the future" at the climax to §15, for only when *rationality is fused to the creative instincts for life* will it "lead to ever-new configurations of genius, and particularly of the *music-making Socrates*."⁶

Here we have, in its earliest outline, Nietzsche's formula for the 'music-making Socrates,' for which the Socrates of Plato had vouchsafed through the very deed of his dialogues that a fusion between life, science, and art is possible.

¹ PW 1: 71, "Artwork of the Future."

² PW 1: 72, "Artwork of the Future."

³ BT, 1993: 74, §15.

⁴ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future."

⁵ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future."

⁶ BT, 1993: 75, §15.

4. Socrates! Make Music!

To be sure, Nietzsche's formula of the 'music-making Socrates' in *The Birth of Tragedy* was intended to invoke the Dionysian artistic genius, that "rich-gifted individual" whose rationality and creative instincts for life were already fused, and whose presence in the world even here and now signified a return to life and to culture. Needless to say, the remaining sections of the essay leave little doubt that Nietzsche had 'officially' meant Wagner, but if we consider Nietzsche's notebooks soon after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, along with a consideration of what *The Birth of Tragedy* actually did to Nietzsche's academic career, it soon becomes clear that in latching on to Wagner as the new 'music-making Socrates,' Nietzsche had also made a solemn promise to himself. In other words, Aaron Ridley is quite right to assert that Nietzsche himself aspired to become the 'music-making Socrates,' the essence of which he had initially pointed towards in the final sections to *The Birth of Tragedy*.¹

Accordingly, if we look again at the formula for the 'music-making Socrates' – rationality fused to the creative instincts for life in order to yield the philosopher who speaks music – what we have, in effect, is not only the single most important philosophical 'deed' around which Nietzsche's entire productive life revolved, we also have the "verbal instrumentalist" of which Fischer-Dieskau speaks as given through the poetic form of Nietzsche's philosophical compositions.² Furthermore, Nietzsche's need to study at the foot of Wagner in order to perfect his *own* art was the principal reason why he put himself and the resources he commanded time and again at the disposal of Wagner and the Wagnerian cause.

We have already given sufficient attention in our appendix to some of the conflicting motives Nietzsche entertained around the time *The Birth of Tragedy* was published, where Nietzsche's commitment to Wagner even at this time seemed elusive at best – that there was, in other words, an incipient competition that was emerging out of his instinctual attraction to Wagner as both a father figure and an intellectual mentor, and that publishing *The Birth of Tragedy* simply pushed these competing expectations into the recognition of a conscious fact. In other words, the thesis of the book was probably doomed from the start, but if, in theory, the respected professor of classical antiquity was supposed to marshal arguments in favor of Wagner's art and Wagner's aesthetics in order to convince his peers that the rebirth of tragedy was alive and well in the spirit of Wagner's music, then it was an undertaking that was undoubtedly undermined by Nietzsche himself.³ While his passion, enthusiasm, and zeal did not go unnoticed by the Wagners, neither did his increasing dependence upon them in the wake of the book's dismal reception. And since the immediate effect of the book, including Wagner's defense of it to the academic community, effectively dissociated Nietzsche's name from academic

¹ Aaron Ridley. *Nietzsche on Art*. London: Routledge, 2007, (*hereafter* Ridley), 100.

² Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. *Wagner and Nietzsche*. Translated by Joachim Neugroschel. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978 (*hereafter* Fischer-Dieskau), 72.

³ See Appendix, sections 4-6.

consideration and pigeon-holed him as a Wagnerian propagandist, it soon became clear that Nietzsche was left with either one of two options: either he could stand to the side in stupefied astonishment at the rebirth of tragedy out of the spirit of music now that he had done his part by heralding its arrival, or he could take upon himself what he had tried to inaugurate from the start; namely, to take up *his* part and to carry his *own* burden in the German Reformation of Culture. In this sense, Wagner's added pressure on Nietzsche at precisely this point turned out to be Nietzsche's greatest gift in becoming who he was.

One of the more discernible philosophical consequences of this pressure, both personal and professional, is the traceable shift we now find in the focus of Nietzsche's notes following *The Birth of Tragedy*. As early as the summer of 1872, thus less than six months after *The Birth of Tragedy* was published, we find a virtual explosion not only in terms of the sheer quantity of Nietzsche's notebooks, but also in terms of the purpose and directedness of their content, which is now almost exclusively pre-occupied with the role the philosopher plays in his relationship to culture. Prior to *The Birth of Tragedy*, the substance of Nietzsche's notes, as we witnessed in Chapter 1, seemed far more concerned to mobilize Schopenhauer and the pre-Socratic Hellenes as the props and stilts on which to hang Wagnerian aesthetics, and in this regard, the great vitalistic exemplars of philosophy and culture were utilized with a certain measure of theoretical distance and circumspection as the 'authority and backing' needed to justify Wagner's art against a declining culture. But now, beginning with Notebook 19, the problem of the philosopher completely takes over center stage.

As vitalistic presuppositions still remain the necessary ingredients involved in the flourishing of a culture, it is only natural that Nietzsche's notebooks would turn to a contemplation of the great vitalistic exemplars of philosophy – Schopenhauer and the pre-Socratic Hellenes – as the models or archetypes of the philosopher of culture *par excellence*, but what we find now is a tendency to examine them almost as if Nietzsche were trying to deduce certain comparative structural or morphological consequences relevant to *his* role in the rebirth of culture. Nietzsche's so-called 'philosophers book,' which comprise his notebooks between the period of 1872-1874, are so completely dominated by his reflections on the role the philosopher plays in his relationship to culture, that we must conclude that these notebooks as a whole represent important transitional documents in Nietzsche's 'self-appointed task,' marking out not only the direction he would ultimately take towards unriddling the meaning of the philosopher as the merciless castigator of cultural excesses in his contra-Wagner years, but also illustrating his so-called 'psychological approach' to the individuals and subject matters of his investigations in so doing. So as we might expect, this 'self-appointed task' has its origins in his pro-Wagner years, the earliest reflections of which can be traced to the organizing idea of the *philosopher as the physician of culture*.

With this shift towards unriddling the meaning of the philosopher as the physician of culture, the role of the philosopher Nietzsche now suggests, has become *indispensable* to any kind of attempt to revitalize culture, for not only does the philosopher comprehend the direction towards which his culture is tending, it is

because he comprehends it that he is able to pave the way for a new culture by identifying and reforming those cultural excesses which prevent the new culture from emerging. And since the ‘excesses’ of Western culture in particular have been traced, according to the Wagnerian thesis, to the luxuries of Socratic eudemonism, the philosopher as physician of culture must begin his reformation by restraining the omnidirectional nature of the drives, and in particular the drive for knowledge, by putting them into the service of a comprehensive world-view, a *weltanschauung*, an *artistic vision*, thereby consolidating and unifying them. The clarity of this conception is captured almost perfectly by the content of Note 27:

If we are ever to attain a culture, we will need unheard-of artistic powers so as to break the limitless drive for knowledge, so as to produce a unity once more. *The supreme dignity of the philosopher is revealed when he gives focus to the limitless drive for knowledge, controls it by giving it unity.* This is how the earlier Greek philosophers are to be understood, they control the drive for knowledge. How did it come about that after Socrates it gradually slipped from their grasp? To begin with, we see that *Socrates and his school* displayed the same tendency: it is supposed to be controlled out of *individual* concern for *living happily*. This is a final, inferior phase. Previously it had not been a matter of *individuals*, but of the *Hellenes*.¹

As we can see from the content of this note, it is the philosopher who first recognizes, and therefore makes it possible, for an artistic culture to emerge by giving form and expression to the contemplation of ultimates through his sweeping vision of existence. The artistic vision or comprehensive world-view that Nietzsche has in mind, of course, is the nature of the myth which, in its most essential function, provides an archetypal conception or vision of the nature of existence which in turn allows the immediate present to be seen and understood “*sub specie aeterni*, and in a certain sense, timeless.”² Since the drive for knowledge, as typified by the present age, has become worn out and threadbare as a result of “Socratism bent on the destruction of myth,”³ the philosopher as physician of culture must combat this omnidirectional dissipation of drives by putting them into the service of an artistic vision that arouses a deeper need than the luxuriating drive for knowledge, and as we have seen, re-establishes the fundamental relationship between art and life. In other words, the philosopher as physician of culture must be a *visionary reformer*.

The philosopher of the future? He must become the supreme tribunal of an artistic culture, the police force, as it were, that guards against all transgressions.⁴

Accordingly, the philosopher must ever remain focused on giving form and expression to this artistic vision in order for the emerging culture to ensue: “amid this antlike swarming, he must emphasize the problem of existence, the eternal problems in general” in order to “*discover what is needed* [so that] the artist should *create it*.”⁵ He

¹ UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [27], summer 1872-early 1873.

² BT, 1993: 111, §23.

³ BT, 1993: 110, §23.

⁴ UW, 1999: 27, *Notebook* 19 [73], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁵ UW, 1999: 9, *Notebook* 19 [23], summer 1872-early 1873.

must, in other words, make it possible for the artist in turn to depict it, as Wagner had already claimed, “in its immediate physical portrayal, in the moment of its liveliest embodiment”; that is, in music and drama.¹

Yet alongside his more proscriptive role of establishing the limits of permissible sagacity, we soon discover that the very act of giving form and expression to the eternal problems in general in the role of the visionary reformer *is itself a work of art* because it possesses aesthetic value for life in its immediate and concrete vitality (our previous elucidation of Plato being highly pertinent here!) The philosopher thus controls the limitless drive for knowledge through the very act of his philosophizing, that is, in the very act of his providing a conception or vision of the nature of existence. Take, for instance, Nietzsche’s searching examination of this problem from Note 45, where he asks

How does the philosophical genius relate to art? Little can be learned from his immediate conduct. We have to ask: Is there anything in his philosophy that is art? Work of art? What *remains* when his system, as science, has been destroyed? But it must be precisely this remaining element that *controls* the drive for knowledge, that is hence the artistic element. Why is such control necessary? For, when considered scientifically, his system is an illusion, an untruth that deceives the drive for knowledge and affords only temporary satisfaction. In this control, the value of philosophy does not lie in the sphere of knowledge, but in the sphere of life: the *will to existence uses philosophy* for the purpose of a higher form of existence.²

Since art is the fundamental expression of all vitality, truly the central point for Nietzsche here is that the value of philosophy lies not in the sphere of knowledge, but in the sphere of life. This is precisely what makes controlling the drive for knowledge necessary for the philosopher. For if all knowledge possesses only instrumental value for “the problem of existence, the eternal problems in general,” then the *philosophic act* itself becomes the principal means by which it is controlled. By sublimating the sphere of knowledge to the sphere of life, the philosophic act transfigures the former into art, and it is this transfiguration which endeavors to point to a higher form of existence. If then, it is the philosopher alone who understands this, then his first deed as physician of culture is to sweep away this limitless drive of knowledge by first raising the problem of the *value* of such knowledge in the face of “the problem of existence, the eternal problems in general” as an immediate vital act. It becomes apparent, then, that in providing concentration and focus to the limitless drive for knowledge, the philosopher as physician of culture also possesses a *creative power* or potential that is demonstrated above all in his philosophical conception of life.

With this deduction there is, however, one small uncategorizable problem that is unique to the philosopher according to Nietzsche, and it is a problem that even the artist qua artist of life does not have. While the artist, and more specifically the tone poet, and even more specifically Wagner, does not need to rely on the concept, on the world as representation in order to convey his innermost ‘message’ with certainty, the philosopher, in order to convey *his* artistic vision, does. He does not have the

¹ PW 1: 73, “Artwork of the Future.”

² UW, 1999: 18, *Notebook* 19 [45], summer 1872-early 1873.

advantage of music which, as we discovered in Chapter 1, reveals the nature of the world to us in “its most secret sense, and acts as the clearest and most apt commentary on it” as Schopenhauer had put it.¹ Yet if the philosopher must rely on conceptual representation in order to convey his artistic vision, how can he do so without his concepts becoming empty abstractions? What the philosopher must convey is far deeper than simply shifting concept-spheres subservient to grammatical categories and the rules of syntax. Out of this deliberation, there arises a

Great quandary: whether philosophy is an art or a science. In its aims and in its results it is an art. But its means, conceptual representation, it shares with science. It is a form of poetic artistry. – It cannot be categorized: consequently we must invent and characterize a species for it. *The physiography of the philosopher*. He arrives at knowledge by poeticizing and poeticizes by arriving at knowledge. He does not grow; I mean, philosophy does not follow the same course as the other sciences: even if some of the domains of philosophy gradually fall into the hands of science. Heraclitus never can be obsolete. It is poetry beyond the limits of experience, continuation of the *mythic impulse*; also essentially in images.²

Nietzsche’s logical struggle here is understandable. Because concepts for Nietzsche are, following Schopenhauer, abstractions which have already dropped away “the original and immediate evidentness” of the perceptual order from which they are derived,³ and can therefore only form a way of “*facilitating cognition*, not a means for achieving greater certainty,”⁴ then all concepts must be, in the final analysis, metonymies. They are indeterminate abstractions.⁵ No concept comes down to ‘pure perception,’ which implies that there is a fundamental gulf between the conceptual and perceptual orders. But since the philosopher (unlike Wagner the tone poet) must rely on conceptual representation in order to convey his vision, the fixable signs of the language he must employ as a means must not come to denote empty abstractions which have lost their rooting in the immediate evidentness of the perceptual order, but to be truly creative or generative, the language must, like music itself, *resonate* with the will to life by analogy through its beat, rhythm, and periodicity. And indeed, we already know from the Wagnerian thesis that language corresponds to the primeval idea of music, including dance as rhythm, speech as tone, and poetry as measure and melody,⁶ and that these rhetorical devices, which constitute the art forms of the ear, will naturally impart meaning and significance to the “emotions of the inner man which are not directly cognisable by the eye,”⁷ thus replenishing the concept with fresh material drawn from the immediacy of perception.

Accordingly, the struggle we find in this note – and in many similar notebook entries from this time period – suggests that Nietzsche’s pre-occupation with the meaning of the philosopher is no longer concerned with what the philosopher says,

¹ WWR 1: 290, §52.

² UW, 1999: 23-24, *Notebook* 19 [62], summer 1872-early 1873.

³ FFR, 2001: 145-49, “On the Second Class of Objects,” §26; WWR 1: 62-75, §9; cf. Chapter 1, section 4.

⁴ WWR 1: 93, §14, my emphasis; cf., Chapter 1, section 4.

⁵ Cf., “*Abstractions* are *metonymies*, that is, confusions of cause and effect. However, every concept is a metonymy, and knowledge occurs by means of concepts.” UW, 1999: 63, *Notebook* 19 [204], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁶ PW 1: 91, “Artwork of the Future.”

⁷ PW 1: 91, “Artwork of the Future.”

but rather with how the philosopher says it, and that means above all, who the philosopher is considered as a deed. For if, as Nietzsche later put it, “philosophy has no common denominator, [since] at times it is science, at times art,”¹ then it is the *philosopher himself* who is the puzzling, uncategorizable phenomenon standing outside his culture. And yet, because he finds himself *in* a culture, he must utilize the tools at his disposal, which is sometimes art and sometimes science, in order to manifest his teleology; i.e., his direction or end.

This further deduction brings us to a very important point: what is the teleology of the philosopher with respect to his culture? Based on what we have surveyed so far, we now can make some fairly reliable inferences. First, since “the problem of existence, the eternal problems in general” are, in a manner of speaking, timeless, we know that the philosopher, in the very act of his philosophizing, conceives a vision of the nature of existence in conceptual form, which provides aesthetic value for life in its immediate and concrete vitality, and it is this philosophic act which controls the limitless drive for knowledge by re-focusing or re-emphasizing the eternal problems of life in general through a powerful conceptual symbol for contemplating life (e.g., the myth). This is philosophy in its *reforming* tendency. But since the philosophic act is fundamentally *creative*, inasmuch as the philosophic act “draws knowledge into an artistic conception of the world, and thereby ennobles it,”² the philosopher as physician of culture is essentially a *visionary* who paves the way for a new artistic statement or depiction of life “as the great ultimate.” This is philosophy in its *creative* or *generative* tendency. Accordingly, the teleology of the philosopher as physician of culture is the manifest symbol of rationality fused to the creative instincts for life. Nietzsche suggests as much in Notebook 19 when he pauses to consider

The concept of the philosopher and the different types {of philosophers}. – What do they all have in common? Either he issues from his culture or is hostile toward it. He is contemplative like the visual artist, empathetic like the religious person, thinks in terms of causality like the man of science: *he tries to let all the tones of the world resonate within him and to project the tonality of this sound outside himself by means of concepts.*³

In other words, the philosopher as physician of culture is the great synthesizer or, if you like, *harmonizer* of tendencies and trends in a culture, and that this vocation occupies the rational element of his philosophy. Yet in harmonizing these tendencies and trends, the philosopher as physician of culture resonates these disparate elements within himself in order to express the tonality of these sounds into one single, unified melody: his vision of life. Since however the philosopher, unlike the musician proper, must rely on conceptual representation to convey this unified melody, his language must, like music itself, resonate with the will to life by analogy through its beat, rhythm, and periodicity in order to impart meaning and significance to the “emotions of the inner man.”⁴ In so doing, the philosopher as physician of

¹ UW, 1999: 116, *Notebook* 23 [8], winter 1872-73.

² UW, 1999: 21, *Notebook* 19 [52], summer 1872-early 1873.

³ UW, 1999: 26, *Notebook* 19 [71], summer 1872-early 1873, my emphasis.

⁴ PW 1: 91, “Artwork of the Future.”

culture really does “arrive at knowledge by poeticizing and poeticizes by arriving at knowledge.”¹ It is therefore a contingent fact whether his means are more ‘scientific’ or more ‘artistic’ since, when the philosopher is oriented towards the sphere of life, he is an ‘artist’ by definition, since he is, in the final analysis, concerned with “the problem of existence, the eternal problems in general” for which all knowledge, including the knowledge at his own command, possesses only instrumental value for “life as the great ultimate.” With this insight, it is easy to see why Nietzsche claims that

*There is no distinct philosophy, separate from science: in both, the manner of thought is the same. The reason why unprovable philosophizing still has some value – more value, in fact, than many a scientific proposition – lies in the aesthetic value of such philosophizing, that is, in its beauty and sublimity. It continues to exist as a work of art even when it cannot prove itself as scientific construction. But isn’t this the same in matters of science? – In other words: it is not the pure drive for knowledge that is decisive, but rather the aesthetic drive: the inadequately proven philosophy of Heraclitus has far more artistic value than all the propositions of Aristotle.*²

Here again we find that the relationship between art and life is far more mysterious and inscrutable than is the relationship between knowledge and life. And indeed, as we have seen in the case of Plato’s Socrates, the relationship between art and life is at the very foundation of the relationship between knowledge and life. For although the drive for knowledge is the ostensible aim of one’s investigation into nature – its ‘surface’ reason – it is ultimately not the drive for knowledge that governs, but rather the aesthetic drive, which is far more intimately connected with the problems of immediate and concrete vitality. So once more we are confronted with the idea that the pursuit of knowledge, especially knowledge in the scientific sense, is essentially the “illusion of illusion.”³ But the philosopher as physician of culture knows better: in order to serve the great problems of life, the philosopher as physician of culture applies his physic to the drive for knowledge by highlighting the value of the knowledge he possesses in its ability to speak to the “eternal problems in general” through his comprehensive world-view, his *weltanschauung*, his vision. In so doing, he demonstrates his insight into the mysterious and inscrutable relationship between art and life as fundamental to existence. It is in precisely this sense that philosophical thought directed towards controlling the drive for knowledge possesses cultural significance.⁴ Nietzsche is quite clear on this point when he states that

It is probably only the isolation of knowledge due to the segregation of the sciences that makes it possible for knowledge and culture to remain alien to one another. In the philosopher, knowledge once again comes into contact with culture. He encompasses all that is known and raises the question concerning the value of knowledge. This is a cultural problem: knowledge and life.⁵

Accordingly, once we have a handle on Nietzsche’s arguments about the relationship between art and life undergirding, and therefore presupposing, the relationship

¹ UW, 1999: 23, *Notebook 19* [62], summer 1872-early 1873.

² UW, 1999: 28, *Notebook 19* [76], summer 1872-early 1873.

³ Cf., Chapter 1, section 4.

⁴ UW, 1999: 31, *Notebook 19* [83], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁵ UW, 1999: 54, *Notebook 19* [172], summer 1872-early 1873.

between knowledge and life, it is fairly easy to understand why the philosopher as physician of culture must sweep away this omnidirectional dissipation of the drive for knowledge in order to revitalize culture, for indeed, at the basis of the sciences lies a philosophical world-view, and in the particular culture that Wagner and Nietzsche are combating, it is the Socratic. Hence,

It is not a matter of destroying the science, but of *controlling* it. In all its aims and methods it is wholly reliant on philosophical views, *though it easily forgets this. But the philosophy that is in control of science must also consider the extent to which science should be allowed to develop: it must determine its value!*¹

The ‘value’ of course that Nietzsche has in mind is the rebirth of the tragic concept. In order to combat our Socratic culture then, the teleology of the philosopher as physician of culture must pave the way for the rebirth of the tragic concept, or in other words, the return to it. But if the philosopher as physician of culture must combat this anti-Dionysiac tendency of ‘blind science’ and ‘knowledge at any price’ with his comprehensive vision of existence in order to restore the relationship between art and life,² then what this means in effect is that the teleology of the philosopher as physician of culture is utterly antipodal to the teleology of Socrates and his school, which completely “negates culture.”³ More importantly, if these two phenomena stand in an antipodal relationship to one another, then the phenomenon of Socrates and the philosopher as physician of culture alike signify the dividing and uniting point of two cultural tendencies in antithetical tension. Thus what Nietzsche has, in effect, argued for is the rebirth of the tragic concept based on an overall Wagnerian conception of culture. The diagram below helps us to envision what this morphology is:

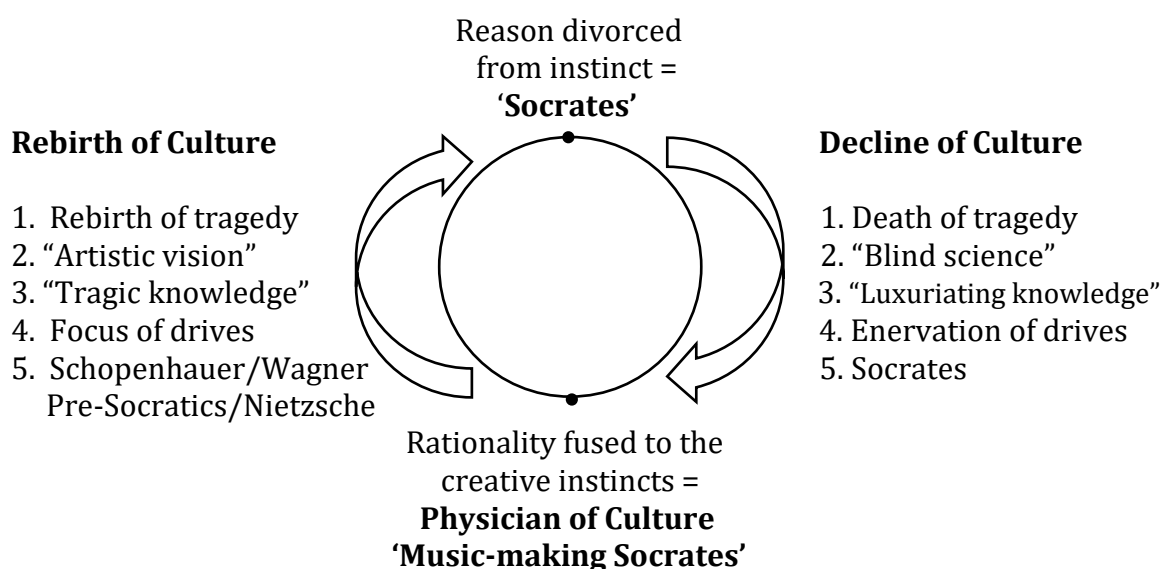


Figure 1. Nietzsche’s ‘pro-Wagner’ conception of culture

¹ UW, 1999: 9, *Notebook* 19 [24], summer 1872-early 1873.

² UW, 1999: 13, *Notebook* 19 [35], summer 1872-early 1873.

³ UW, 1999: 103, *Notebook* 21 [11], summer 1872-beginning 1873.

With this diagram, it becomes quite easy to identify how the role the philosopher as physician of culture plays maps onto Nietzsche's overall Wagnerian conception of culture, and how Schopenhauer and the pre-Socratic Hellenes in particular are mobilized for the sake of this overall pattern. Indeed, since Nietzsche's task – so he tells us – is “to comprehend the inner coherence and necessity of every true culture,”¹ let us first consider the upward swing towards the rebirth of culture based on the pattern we have depicted.

Based on Nietzsche's arguments so far, we know that the phenomenon of Socrates represents the most “magnificent expression” of what Nietzsche calls the anti-Dionysiac tendency of ancient Hellenistic culture, and therefore symbolizes the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension: the emerging Socratic culture and the precipitous decline of the tragic culture in the ancient world. We also know that the reason for this precipitous decline was due to the fact that the ancient philosophers then on the scene – i.e., Socrates and his school – allowed the drive for knowledge to gradually slip from their grasp once they tried to control it “out of *individual* concern for *living happily*.”² This was, according to Nietzsche, the final inferior phase of philosophy's ability to control the drive for knowledge, for “previously it had not been a matter of *individuals*, but of the *Hellenes*.”³ The implication, of course, is that prior to Socrates and his school, the great ancient philosophers controlled the drive for knowledge, not out of concern for the *individual*, but rather out of concern for Hellenic life *in general* – or let us say the ‘folk’ in Wagner's terminology – and this is precisely what Nietzsche tells us in several notebook entries from his ‘philosophers book.’ In note 28, Nietzsche informs us that prior to Socrates and his school, the great ancient philosophers were a part of general Hellenic life, but after Socrates, sects were formed, where “gradually philosophy loses its hold on the reins of science.”⁴ The earlier Hellenistic philosophers however – the pre-Socratics – were able to control the drive for knowledge out of concern for Hellenic life in general, and in this sense, they were able to depict a vision of life through a kind of “religious drive for unity by means of the concept.”⁵ In fact, Nietzsche finds that all the drives of the pre-Socratics evince this controlling unity, what he calls in one note the “Hellenic *will*.” “Each of these drives attempts to exist on its own to infinity,” wherewith “the ancient philosophers attempt to construct a world out of them.”⁶ The drives are necessarily tyrannical,⁷ but the world they reveal, Nietzsche goes on to note, is the same one that created tragedy, and it is through this example that we grasp the unity

¹ UW, 1999: 11, *Notebook* 19 [33], summer 1872-early 1873.

² UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [27], summer 1872-early 1873.

³ UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [27], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁴ UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [28], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁵ UW, 1999: 27, *Notebook* 19 [72], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁶ UW, 1999: 17, *Notebook* 19 [41], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁷ As is perhaps evidenced by the political life of ancient Hellenistic culture in general.

of philosophy and art for the purpose of culture.¹ In this sense, the philosophical systems of the early Hellenistic philosophers are instruments to culture.²

It is important to note however that these 'systems' do not directly influence the popular culture, for if the philosopher's first product is his life even before his works, if his *life* is *his* work of art,³ then as we very well know, the philosopher himself, in terms of his teleology, will forever be viewed as a puzzling, uncategorizable phenomenon who stands outside his own culture. Therefore with regard to popular culture, he could never have a primary, but only a secondary significance. Only Socrates, Nietzsche goes on to explain, displays the strongest democratic-demagogic tendency.⁴ Nonetheless it is the former class of pre-Socratic philosophers with which Nietzsche is here concerned, and into this class Nietzsche specifically puts Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaximander – philosophers who exemplify control over the drive for knowledge in order to strengthen the mythic-mystical and the artistic.⁵ Taken together, these philosophers are eternal types: they demonstrate the *background* of what is Greek, as well as the *result* of art. They are the contemporaries of tragedy⁶ in the sense that alongside these great pre-Socratic philosophers, Aeschylus the 'total artist' soon appears, and we are led to the incipient rise of culture in the fifth century. The upward swing towards the rebirth of culture is now complete, and now that we have deciphered the key to understanding it by analyzing what Nietzsche believed the role of the ancient Hellenistic philosopher to be, it will be well worth quoting Nietzsche's first notebook entry to Notebook 23, so that we can finally possess a concrete sense for how all of these elements fit together:

In order to understand them as wholes, one must recognize in them the first outline and germ of the Greek *reformer*; their purpose was to pave the way for him (i.e., the artist), they were supposed to precede him as the dawn precedes the rising sun. But the sun did not rise, the reformer failed: hence the dawn remained nothing but a ghostly apparition. However, the simultaneous emergence of tragedy demonstrates that something new was in the air; *but the philosopher and legislator who would have comprehended tragedy never appeared, and hence this art died again and the Greek reformation became forever impossible*. It is not possible to think of Empedocles without a sense of profound sadness; he came the closest to filling the role of that reformer. That he also failed at this and soon disappeared – following who knows what horrible experiences and what hopelessness – was a pan-Hellenic catastrophe. His soul had a greater capacity for empathy than any other Greek soul; and yet perhaps not enough, for all in all, the Greeks are deficient in this quality. And it was precisely the tyrannical element in their blood that prevented the great philosophers from attaining the profound insight and sweeping vision that Schopenhauer possessed.⁷

As Nietzsche makes very clear here, the upwards swing towards the rebirth of culture, at least in the ancient world, possessed all the necessary ingredients which would have established the tragic world-view as an enduring philosophical and artistic

¹ UW, 1999: 21, *Notebook* 19 [51], summer 1872-early 1873.

² UW, 1999: 24, *Notebook* 19 [64], summer 1872-early 1873.

³ UW, 1999: 274-75, *Notebook* 29 [205], summer-autumn 1873.

⁴ UW, 1999: 119, *Notebook* 23 [14], winter 1872-73.

⁵ UW, 1999: 119, *Notebook* 23 [14], winter 1872-73.

⁶ UW, 1999: 122, *Notebook* 23 [21], winter 1872-73.

⁷ UW, 1999: 113-14, *Notebook* 23 [1], winter 1872-73, my emphasis on "but the philosopher [...] became forever impossible.

outlook except perhaps for the one essential and decisive catalyst: *the philosopher and legislator who would have comprehended the depiction of tragedy as an art form never appeared*. In all other respects, the pre-Socratic philosophers – and in particular Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaximander – had paved the way for the tragic world-view by controlling the drive for knowledge through powerful conceptual symbols in their respective philosophies for contemplating the eternal problems of life, thereby strengthening the mythic-mystical and the artistic vision of life. The drives of the Hellenes soon became focused. Tragic knowledge was in the air, but the cross-correlation between philosophy in its *reforming* tendency and philosophy in its *generative* tendency never occurred. In other words, the philosopher as the symbol of rationality fused to the creative instincts for life – the ‘music-making Socrates’ – never materialized. By the middle of the fifth century, the anti-Dionysiac tendency had already appeared and was at work destroying the roots of Hellenistic culture with the “rod of its syllogisms,” so that even in the time of Sophocles, the chorus had begun to be functionally problematic. Instead of being the focal point of the tragedy as they are in the tragedies of Aeschylus, they had become marginalized almost as an afterthought, whereas the focal point and gravitas now resided in the roles of the *individual personas* on the stage. The imminent death of tragedy was at hand. From here we fall into the downward swing towards the decline of culture at the hands of science, and the historical figure of Socrates in particular who turned out to be the most “magnificent expression” of this anti-Dionysiac tendency.¹

From this point forward, we know the story as it concerns Socrates. With the historical figure of Socrates, a profound illusion first enters the world which stipulates that “rational thought, guided by causality, can penetrate to the depths of being, and that it is capable not only of knowing but even of *correcting* being.”² In other words, Socrates re-evaluates life in terms of reason, and the Hellenistic instincts for life begin to decay. As Nietzsche puts it,

Socrates, abstractly human, gives priority to the welfare of the individual, knowledge for the purpose of life. Eradication of the instincts.³

Perhaps the most important or significant feature of Socrates arriving on the scene however is that he *popularizes* philosophy by wedding his conception of life to the “*individual concern for living happily*.”⁴ In Nietzsche’s opinion, he becomes the great rabble-rouser: it is this which Nietzsche means when he talks about Socrates possessing “the strongest democratic-demagogic tendency.”⁵ Yet even Socrates is not totally successful, for like all true philosophers in Nietzsche’s estimation, they are catapulted far ahead of their time. Once again, we can see the significance of Socrates here in Nietzsche’s overall Wagnerian conception of culture where he symbolizes the

¹ BT, 1993: 70, §14.

² BT, 1993: 73, §15.

³ UW, 1999: 108, *Notebook* 21 [23], summer 1872-beginning 1873.

⁴ UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [27], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁵ UW, 1999: 119, *Notebook* 23 [14], winter 1872-73.

dividing and uniting point of two cultural tendencies in antithetical tension.¹ What we have been left with in the wake of Socrates is a kind of scholastic theodicy: “only the one who knows is virtuous,” whose aesthetic corollary is “to be beautiful everything must first be intelligible.”² Compared to the pre-Socratics, the discontinuity is striking as Nietzsche points out when he says

I have to know how the Greeks philosophized during their age of art. The *Socratic* schools sat amid a sea of beauty – What can one discern of this in their work? Immense expenditures are made for art. The Socratics have either a hostile or a theoretical attitude toward it. *By contrast, the earlier philosophers are governed in part by an impulse similar to the one that created tragedy.*³

Yet perhaps the most significant feature for Nietzsche himself in considering the decline of culture at the hands of science is that “we see what {philosophy’s} weakness is. It no longer leads the way: because it itself is mere scholarship, and it is gradually turning into nothing but the guarding of borders.”⁴

As far as Nietzsche is concerned then, we have reached the bottommost point of the downward swing in a declining culture so that what we need, naturally enough, is the philosopher as physician of culture to materialize in order to restore the relationship between art and life. Like Socrates, the philosopher as physician symbolizes the dividing and uniting point of two cultural tendencies in antithetical tension, but unlike Socrates and his school, which completely “negates culture,” the philosopher as physician of culture is called to unify philosophy and art for the purpose of culture, and is therefore indispensable in that he will pave the way for the artist “as the dawn precedes the rising sun.”⁵

But the question still remains: what makes this return of the upward swing towards the rebirth of culture different from what it had been in the ancient world? There is one critical difference, and in fact, Nietzsche’s notebook entry from the previous page has already suggested what that difference is: in paving the way for the rebirth of the tragic concept, the important and critical difference is that this time there *is* a philosopher and legislator who is able to grasp the artistic depiction of tragedy through his philosophical vision of life, and who can thus foment the tragic world-view as an enduring philosophical and artistic outlook. In other words, the critical difference is that this time, there *is* a ‘music-making Socrates’ to cross-pollinate philosophy in both its reforming and generative tendencies. Looking at it from the standpoint of Nietzsche’s Wagnerian conception of culture, we are poised for the German Reformation of Culture, and from the *Strauss* essay to *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, this is precisely what Nietzsche’s four *Unfashionable Observations* signify. What Schopenhauer had begun would be carried on by Nietzsche, and here we have

¹ In another entry, Nietzsche tells us that “*optimism* begins with Socrates, but it is no longer artistic, with teleology and the belief in a beneficent deity; the belief in the knowing, good human being. Dissolution of the instincts. Socrates breaks with all prior *science* and *culture* ... [his] skepticism is a weapon that is to be used against the previous culture and science.” UW, 1999: 130, *Notebook* 23 [35], winter 1872-73.

² BT, 1993: 62, §12.

³ UW, 1999: 26, *Notebook* 19 [70], summer 1872-early 1873, my emphasis on the final clause.

⁴ UW, 1999: 304, *Notebook* 30 [36], autumn 1873-winter 1873-74.

⁵ UW, 1999: 113-14, *Notebook* 23 [1], winter 1872-73.

the deeper and more symbolic reason why Schopenhauer as the philosopher of life is invoked time and again by Nietzsche, for the artistic mission of Wagner's music dramas is contextualized within Schopenhauer's sweeping vision of existence, and is therefore structurally similar to the pre-Socratic philosophers as contemporaries to the tragedies of Aeschylus.¹ We can see the completion of the circle as it were when Nietzsche remarks that

[Schopenhauer's] greatness is extraordinary, to have once again peered into the heart of existence, without scholarly digressions, without tiresome lingering and entanglement in philosophical scholasticism. The study of the one-quarter-philosophers who followed him is attractive for the sole purpose of seeing how they immediately arrive at the place where scholarly pro and con, brooding, contradiction, but nothing more is permitted – and where, above all, one is not permitted to *live*. He demolishes secularization, but likewise the barbarizing power of the sciences; he arouses the most enormous need, just as Socrates was an arouser of such need. People have forgotten what religion was, as they have the significance that art has for life. Schopenhauer stands in contradiction with everything that today passes for culture: Plato with everything that *was* culture in Greece at that time. Schopenhauer was catapulted ahead of his time.²

When we consider the content of this note alongside the content of note 1 from Notebook 23 as already cited, it becomes quite clear that in Nietzsche's estimation, the critical difference between the incipient rise of culture in the fifth century and the German Reformation of Culture twenty-four centuries later is due to the fact that the philosopher as physician of culture must be the manifest symbol of *rationality fused to the creative instincts for life*. It is in this sense that the artistic vision of the physician of culture is not to be understood as some vague and idyllic reverie, but derives its authority precisely because he alone possesses the insight to perceive the cyclical nature of a culture, and can thus identify its overall pattern. This is precisely what gives him the authority to comprehend the direction towards which his culture is tending and to provide physic to it, thus reforming its cultural excesses so that a new artistic culture could emerge. For all genuine culture in Nietzsche's eyes is, in fact, synonymous with life.

Indeed, if Nietzsche truly believes that "the *culture* of a people reveals itself in the *unifying control of this people's drives*,"³ and that "every higher culture has become such by means of this control"⁴ where "philosophy [in particular] controls the drive for knowledge,"⁵ then we know that the philosopher as physician of culture must address "the struggle of knowledge with knowledge"⁶ for the benefit of an artistic culture, and that he can only do this if he possesses philosophy in both its *reforming* and *generative* tendencies.

With this explanation of the philosopher as physician of culture, we have come face to face with the deeper meaning of Nietzsche's 'philosophers book' in explaining how

¹ As we very well know, Wagner himself believed that he was a disciple of Aeschylus.

² UW, 1999: 365-66, *Notebook* 35 [11], Spring-Summer 1874.

³ UW, 1999: 17, *Notebook* 19 [41], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁴ UW, 1999: 20-21, *Notebook* 19 [51], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁵ UW, 1999: 17, *Notebook* 19 [41], summer 1872-early 1873.

⁶ UW, 1999: 12, *Notebook* 19 [34], summer 1872-early 1873.

his reflections on the role the philosopher plays in his relationship to culture point to the development of Nietzsche himself as the 'music-making Socrates.'

While it is no doubt true that Nietzsche's preoccupation with the philosopher as cultural diagnostician intensified over the course of his productive life, and especially following his break with Wagner, what is overlooked time and time again is that running alongside Nietzsche's cultural criticism is his call for the philosopher to make and cultivate his own music. And now that we have deciphered the meaning or significance of the 'music-making Socrates' as the symbol of rationality fused to the creative instincts for life, it will become increasingly clear, as we move into an analysis of Nietzsche's later works, that it is a symbol that Nietzsche never really abandoned.

Chapter 3

From Physician of Culture to “Physician, Heal Thyself!”

“Eventually, it was the old Wagner against whom I had to defend myself; as for the real Wagner, I shall be in good measure his heir.”

– *Letter to Peter Gast*, 19 February 1883

1. An Attempt at a Self-Criticism

When Nietzsche came to write his belated postscript to *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1886, the call for a 'music-making Socrates' will still very much on his radar. The ostensible purpose of this prefatory postscript – what Nietzsche entitled his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" – was to distil a handful of themes that had first appeared in his youthful work, and yet still managed to retain philosophical significance when viewed through the lens of his present philosophical project. The new lens in question was Nietzsche's categorical insistence on accepting and embracing the ethical implications of vitalism in an unqualified and uncompromising way, and in the same stroke, it was an attempt to surpass and excel those other exemplars of vitalism who had effectively been the heroes of the original essay. Nietzsche called this new reevaluation the 'pessimism of strength.'

Viewing the ancient Hellenes through the lens of this new reevaluation, Nietzsche frames his new problem very early on in §1 when he asks: "Is pessimism *inevitably* the sign of decline, decadence, wayardness, of wearied, enfeebled instincts [...] as it seems to be with us 'modern' Europeans? Is there a pessimism of *strength*? An intellectual predilection for what is hard, terrible, evil, problematic in existence, arising from well-being, overflowing health, the *abundance* of existence?"¹

As Nietzsche seems here to suggest, if there is more than one species of pessimism, then the declining culture as a *type* can be traced to a consequence that is rooted in the very nature of the pessimism that a culture endorses. The implication, then, is that the species of pessimism that a culture endorses reveals that culture's fundamental orientation towards the problem of existence. Accordingly, and as Nietzsche soon makes clear, it is not pessimism per se which is responsible for a declining culture, but only the pessimism of *degenerating instincts*, which finds its most crystallized expression in the scientific approach to life. It is here that we are made to understand that the entire problem of culture, of the declining culture as a *type*, is grounded *only* in that species of pessimism which is derived from a depleted, exhausted, and devitalized orientation to the problem of existence. In this regard, the historical Socrates still remains the archetypal villain who ushered in this decline, with Nietzsche going so far as to take credit for the very same questions that Wagner had originally raised in relation to the problem of culture: "could not that very Socratism be a symptom of decline, fatigue, infection, and anarchical dissolution of the instincts?... And science itself, our own science – what does all of science mean as a symptom of life?"²

But what Nietzsche seems keen to emphasize with his distinction is whether the entire scientific approach to life has been brought about from a kind of fear of life itself, and is therefore an attempt to escape the inevitable conclusion of pessimism. In other words, is the entire scientific approach to life, and the resolve to be scientific at

¹ BT, 1993: 3, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §1.

² BT, 1993: 4, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §1; cf., Chapter 2, sections 4-6.

all costs, nothing but a “subtle form of self-defense against – *the truth?* And, morally speaking, something like cowardice and falsehood?”¹ Is it, in other words, a pessimistic world-view that refuses to admit that it is pessimistic, because it cannot look at facts squarely in the face without recourse to “deceptively glamorous names in order to be able to live?”² This is not the characteristic mark of one who endorses the ‘pessimism of strength’ following the pre-Socratics, to whom Nietzsche now identifies himself as cultural heir. Indeed, as Nietzsche tells us in §§4-5 of the “Self-Criticism,” the characteristic mark of the pessimism of strength is the good, rigid resolve to accept and affirm the image of “everything terrible, evil, cryptic, destructive and deadly underlying existence”³ without resorting to “the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence.”⁴ The pessimism of strength, Nietzsche tells us, “dares to demote morality and locate it in the phenomenal world, and not only among the ‘phenomena’ ... but among its ‘deceptions’, as illusion, delusion, error, interpretation, artifice, art.”⁵ This is what, according to Nietzsche, he claims he meant by the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world that was taught in *The Birth of Tragedy* to the effect that “the existence of the world is *justified* only as an aesthetic phenomenon.”⁶

By contrast, the appeal to the moral interpretation and significance of existence was the very trick, according to Nietzsche, that the historical Socrates played on the ancient Hellenes by insisting that there be a visible bond between virtue and knowledge, faith and morality. But not only did the historical Socrates deceive himself on this point Nietzsche thinks, he also deceived all of ancient Athens as well, for while he may have ushered in Greek science with its ever more cheerful, optimistic, and logical interpretation of the world, the last recorded words of the historical Socrates seem to betray the fact that his optimistic spirit was only a superficial theatrical pose which had been unmasked in the final moments of his life when he let the words, “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius” slip from his lips.⁷ In making this statement, the historical Socrates had referred to the custom of sacrificing a rooster to the god of medicine only when recovering from an illness. Yet the historical Socrates was by all accounts the hardest soldier of logical, optimistic cheer that the ancient Athenians had ever known, and was not in any other respect ill. Thus, in saying “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius” in the final moments of his life, and just before he was to drink his cup of hemlock, Nietzsche claims that Socrates had to have been saying that life is, or has been an illness, for which he has now been cured.⁸ Socrates, in other words, was a pessimist who had suffered from life after all,⁹ but he suffered specifically from the

¹ BT, 1993: 4, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §1.

² WEN, 2009: 68, *Notebook* 10 [1], fragment of an expanded version of *The Birth of Tragedy*, January 1871; cf., Chapter 1, section 6.

³ BT, 1993: 6, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §4.

⁴ BT, 1993: 8, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §5.

⁵ BT, 1993: 8, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §5.

⁶ BT, 1993: 8, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §5.

⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, 118a.

⁸ TI, 1968: 29, “The Problem of Socrates,” §1.

⁹ GS, 1974: 272, “The Dying Socrates,” §340.

pessimism of *degenerating instincts* which sought after the scientific approach to life as a “subtle form of self-defense” against the truth.¹ It is principally this deception which leads Nietzsche to wonder whether the entire scientific approach to life was a piece of cunning and falsehood on the part of the historical Socrates: “Oh Socrates, Socrates, was that, perhaps, *your* secret? Oh, secretive ironist, was that, perhaps, your – irony?”²

With this foreground explanation of the pessimism of strength, especially as it is connected to the father of modernity, the historical Socrates, that first pessimist of degenerating instincts, it is critical at this point to recognize just how diametrically opposed Nietzsche’s conception of the historical Socrates is to his ambition to *become* the ‘music-making Socrates,’ for only the latter conception is built upon his categorical insistence on accepting the ethical implications of vitalism in an unqualified and uncompromising way – something which the historical Socrates did *not* do – and it is principally in this respect that the ‘pessimism of strength’ signifies Nietzsche’s attempt to surpass and excel those other exemplars of vitalism who had effectively been the heroes of the original essay, Schopenhauer and Wagner.³

In order to fully flesh out this conception, it is highly germane to point out the groundwork that had already been prepared by Schopenhauer between music and vitalism on the one hand and the significance of Socrates for philosophy on the other. In §52 of his well-known treatise on music and its connection with the will, Schopenhauer tells us that

[...] a mere moral philosophy without an explanation of nature, such as Socrates tried to introduce, is entirely analogous to a melody without harmony [...] and that conversely a mere physics and metaphysics without an ethics would correspond to a mere harmony without melody.⁴

Complementing these thoughts, this time found in Chapter 47 of the supplements to the fourth book of his magnum opus entitled, interestingly enough, “On Ethics,” Schopenhauer observes that

Since Socrates, the problem of philosophy has been to connect the force which produces the phenomenon of the world and in consequence determines its nature, with the morality of the disposition or character, and thus to demonstrate a *moral* world order as the basis of the *physical* [...] but I have shown [...] that the force working and operating in nature is identical with the *will* in ourselves. In this way, the *moral* world-order actually enters into direct connexion (sic) with the force that produces the phenomenon of the world [...] Consequently, the problem raised since the time of Socrates is now already solved for the first time, and the demand of our thinking reason, that is directed to what is moral, is satisfied.⁵

¹ BT, 1993: 4, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §1.

² BT, 1993: 4, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §1.

³ Indeed, Nietzsche tells us that what he had then said should have been said, not as a philologist, but as a musician and poet: “It should have been *singing*, this ‘new soul’, not speaking!” BT, 1993: 6, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §3.

⁴ WWR 1: 293, §52.

⁵ WWR 2: 590-91, Chapter 47, “On Ethics.”

As we can readily discern from these two quotes, if, as Schopenhauer claims, the force operating in nature is identical with the will in ourselves, then there is an ostensible connection between one's individual disposition or character with the force that produces the phenomenal appearance of the world. Moreover, since melody and harmony when taken together are entirely analogous to the connection between an ethics and metaphysics in action, it follows that one's individual disposition or character corresponds with the *melody* of the will, while the force that produces the phenomenal appearance of the world (as seen in the scale of the will's objectification in nature) corresponds with the *harmony* of the world as will. The inescapable implication of this figure then is that the individual interacting with the world must create and make his own 'music' out of life. It would appear then that this is an ethical teaching that is *immanent*, not transcendent, and moreover one which complements Schopenhauer's metaphysical teaching, which is likewise immanent. Accordingly, as far as the concept of the philosopher is concerned, this would render the different types of philosophers found in the world as being, in a very real sense, instruments who sing a particular music of life by allowing "all the tones of the world to resonate within [themselves] and to project the tonality of this sound outside [themselves] by means of concepts (i.e., their teachings)."¹

But if these are the true ethical implications of Schopenhauer's own teachings, then at what point does the *resignation* of the will appear within us, if indeed it is the same expression of the force operating in nature? And what is its relation to Greek tragedy in particular? This is the central point at issue that Nietzsche takes up against Schopenhauer in §6 of the "Self-Criticism" and, indeed, after having quoted Schopenhauer's opinion of our relation to tragedy,² Nietzsche tells us point blank "how differently Dionysus spoke to me! How far I was then from all that resignationism!"³ Resignation of the will is an ethical teaching of *Christianity* and is therefore inconsistent with the ethical implications of vitalism. This is a point that Nietzsche never tires of telling his readers when it comes to Schopenhauer's solution; i.e., that it was a 'Christian' solution – "hasty, youthful, only a compromise, a way of remaining – remaining stuck – in precisely those Christian-ascetic moral perspectives."⁴

"But the book contains something far worse," according to Nietzsche, for after all, what did the world of Greek tragedy have to do with contemporary German music? Here, Nietzsche confesses, "I spoiled the grandiose *Greek problem*, as I saw it, by adulterating it with the most modern ideas!"⁵ As Nietzsche goes on to tell us, contemporary German music – by which he really means Wagner's music – is "romantic through and through, and the most un-Greek of all possible art forms"; but

¹ UW, 1999: 26, *Notebook* 19 [71], summer 1872-early 1873.

² BT, 1993: 9-10, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §6. Cf., WWR 2: 433-34, Chapter 37, "On the Aesthetics of Poetry."

³ BT, 1993: 10, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §6.

⁴ GS, 1974: 308, "On the Old Problem: 'What is German?'" §357.

⁵ BT, 1993: 10, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §6.

it is also “a narcotic of the worst kind [...] with its dual properties of being both an intoxicating and a befogging narcotic.”¹

Accordingly, by emphasizing the pessimism of strength as the new lens through which to view the accomplishments of the original essay, Nietzsche is claiming, in effect, to have derived a more consistent vitalism than either of the heroes of the original essay, for the ethical implications of vitalism imply the unconditional *assertion*, not the *denial*, of the will for life. Thus whereas Schopenhauer and Wagner had once been seen as the grand symbols of vitalism leading the assault against the decadence of modernity and its redemption from modern Socratic man, they are viewed here in the “Self-Criticism” as additional victims of Socratic culture and the pessimism of degenerating instincts – Schopenhauer with his ‘Christian’ solution to the will, and Wagner, whose whole art “wants to present itself as a companion piece and supplement to Schopenhauer’s philosophy,”² a decaying and despairing decadent himself, who thus “sank down helpless and shattered before the Christian cross” with his final music drama *Parsifal*.³ In other words, Schopenhauer and Wagner, like the Greeks from Socrates onwards, have all fallen prey to the pessimism of degenerating instincts.

It would seem virtually indisputable then that, while the original dichotomy that Nietzsche had perfected leading up to *The Birth of Tragedy* had been Schopenhauer, Wagner and the pre-Socratic Hellenes vs. the problem of modernity, with his revision of pessimism, the dichotomy Nietzsche now wants us to derive is Nietzsche and the pre-Socratic Hellenes vs. Schopenhauer, Wagner, and the problem of modernity.

2. The Pessimism of Degenerating Instincts vs. the Pessimism of Strength

The revision of this original dichotomy between vitalism on the one hand (Nietzsche and the Pre-Socratics) vs. the pessimism of degenerating instincts on the other (Socrates, Schopenhauer and Wagner as the philosophical and artistic symptoms of ‘modernity’) should make it perfectly clear that there is a world of difference between Nietzsche’s critique of Socrates as an historical figure or phenomenon, and Nietzsche’s figure of the ‘music-making Socrates,’ which is the manifest symbol of rationality fused to the creative instincts for life.

Now that we have analyzed Nietzsche’s conception of the philosopher as physician of culture in our previous chapter in some level of depth, we need only compare what Nietzsche’s claims are regarding the historical Socrates against our explanation of the ‘music-making Socrates’ in order to demonstrate what the critical differences are. First, as is evident from our analysis of the “Self-Criticism,” Nietzsche never really abandoned the Wagnerian thesis that the historical Socrates signified not only the

¹ BT, 1993: 10, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §6.

² GS, 1974: 154, “Schopenhauer’s Followers,” §99.

³ NCW, 2005: 276, “How I Broke Away from Wagner,” §1.

degeneration of the Greek instinct in terms of his more immediate effects, but he also became the archetype of modern theoretical man with his ever more ardent desire for logic and his more cheerful, scientific approach to life. Nowhere is the connection between these two 'effects' made any clearer than it is in §4 of the "Self-Criticism" where Nietzsche asks us point blank: "if [...] the Greeks, precisely at the point of their dissolution and weakness, became ever more optimistic, superficial, theatrical, more and more ardent for logic and a logical interpretation of the world, and thus both more 'cheerful' and 'scientific'? What then? Might we not assume – in the face of all 'modern ideas' and prejudices of democratic taste – that the victory of *optimism*, the now predominant *reason*, practical and theoretical *utilitarianism*, like democracy itself, with which it is coeval, is a symptom of waning power, of approaching senescence, of physiological fatigue? And precisely *not* pessimism?"¹ Of course it is, for the excesses of Western culture were never pinned on anyone or anything other than precisely this 'anti-Dionysiac' tendency of Socratic eudemonism following the Wagnerian thesis, with its 'blind science' and 'knowledge at any price.'² It is therefore a sign of degenerating instincts, since the entire appeal to discover the moral interpretation and significance of existence by inaugurating the scientific approach to life was simply a "subtle form of self-defense" against the truth.³

But perhaps the most significant statement we have on record regarding the historical Socrates is also Nietzsche's last in *Twilight of the Idols*. Using what we have already discovered about the philosopher as physician of culture, it becomes a very easy task to pick apart the critical differences which exist between the historical Socrates on the one hand and the 'music-making Socrates' on the other. In so doing, it becomes abundantly clear that the former always and at all times signified the degeneration of the instincts, while the latter, from *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, always signified a call to ground the philosopher as one whose rationality is fused to the creative instincts for life. Thus, not only do these two conceptions remain utter antipodes, as they had been *prior* to Nietzsche's break with Wagner, and as our diagram in section 4 of our last Chapter reveals, it is only the latter who, in Nietzsche's estimation, rises to the calling of the true physician of culture.

In order to proceed with this analysis, let us recall very briefly what the task peculiar to the philosopher as physician of culture is. The true philosopher as physician of culture is essentially a *visionary reformer*. It is he alone who possesses the insight to perceive the cyclical nature of culture, and can therefore identify its overall pattern. It is precisely this genius which gives him the ability to comprehend his specific culture's tendencies, and to reform its excesses by providing physic to it. In this sense, the physic he provides paves the way for the new artistic statement or depiction of life "as the great ultimate."

With this brief recapitulation, let us now turn to Nietzsche's conception of the historical Socrates as he figures in *Twilight of the Idols*. Here, it is plainly evident that

¹ BT, 1993: 7, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §4.

² Cf., Chapter 1, sections 1 and 6; Chapter 2, sections 2-3.

³ BT, 1993: 4, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §1.

the historical Socrates still signifies the most magnificent expression of the 'anti-Dionysiac' instinct that would soon sweep over all of ancient Greece, and indeed, down into modernity. To begin with, Nietzsche tells us in §2 of "The Problem of Socrates" that he had recognized Socrates and Plato as *declining types*, as symptoms of decay, as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*. Given what we have already analyzed in the theoretical writings of Wagner, this is only properly a half-truth, but we can let that go for the moment. What is pertinent to this section is that Nietzsche parries the value judgments of the *consensus sapientium* who have all agreed that life is worthless with the astonishing insight that "*the value of life* [either for or against] *cannot be estimated*. Not by a living man, because he is a party to the dispute, indeed its object, and not the judge of it; not by a dead one, for another reason."¹ This insight is extremely important, for what it essentially says in no uncertain terms is that the value judgment of the whole cannot be mounted from *within* the whole. To pass judgment on the value of life, whether for or against, is ultimately immaterial, since the very activity of living it presupposes its value as a good. Here we see, right at the start, that Nietzsche's allegiance to vitalism asserts itself with a vengeance.

Continuing, Nietzsche relates the storied ugliness that attaches to the physiognomy of the historical Socrates and intimates that this ugliness is an index to his character. Following the precept of *monstrum in fronte, monstrum in animo*,² Nietzsche tells us (on the testimony of one who had supposedly made the same judgment to his face) that Socrates "contained within him every kind of foul vice and lust," whereupon "Socrates answered merely: 'You know me, sir!'"³ The claim being advanced here, which flowers in the following section is that, while the historical Socrates was the physical embodiment of one who had succumbed to the dissoluteness and anarchy of his instincts, he was exceptional in that, not only did he see and was able to admit the dissoluteness and anarchy of his instincts, but he had found a weapon to combat them; his 'superfetation of the logical,' which culminated in that "bizzarest of equations and one which has in particular all the instincts of the older Hellenes against it"; i.e., reason = virtue = happiness.⁴ Here again we find the accusation that Socratic eudemonism led to the degeneration of the instincts for life.⁵

Continuing still further, Nietzsche submits the methodology of dialectic to a withering critique, noting perhaps most significantly that dialectics "are not very convincing," and can only be "a *last ditch weapon* in the hands of those who have no other weapon left."⁶ Yet, while engaging in a form of bad manners which inspires mistrust, the most important result, of course, is that the "dialectician *devitalizes* his

¹ TI, 1968: 30, "The Problem of Socrates," §2.

² "a monster in face, a monster in soul."

³ TI, 1968: 30, "The Problem of Socrates," §3.

⁴ TI, 1968: 31, "The Problem of Socrates," §4.

⁵ Cf., Chapter 2, section 4.

⁶ TI, 1968: 31-32, "The Problem of Socrates," §6.

opponent's intellect."¹ Thus exhaustion and enfeeblement of the intellectual instincts are the true hallmarks of dialectics.²

With this deduction in hand, we are led to the climax in §9, where Nietzsche observes that the historical Socrates at once "grasped *his* case"; i.e., he realized that "the same kind of degeneration was everywhere silently preparing itself: the old Athens was coming to an end [...] everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere people were but five steps from excess: the *monstrum in animo* was the universal danger," and so Socrates had understood that all the world had need of him. At that point, Nietzsche claims, Socrates had realized his solution; i.e., that if the "instincts want to play the tyrant; we must devise a *counter-tyrant* who is stronger."³ Socrates, who was himself "the extreme case" of these mutually antagonistic and degenerating instincts had found a way to become master of himself, and seeing his solution, almost as if in a vision according to Nietzsche's rhetoric, he enthroned reason to tyrannize over the instincts. Reason became the *counter-tyrant* to the instincts, forcing them either to submit to dialectics or to perish out of irrationality. In other words, what we find here in §9 is that the historical Socrates had acted in *precisely the same way* that the philosophical physician does when comprehending his specific culture's tendencies and then reforming its excesses by providing physic to it. Accordingly, as Nietzsche goes on to tell us in §10,

If one needs to make a tyrant of *reason*, as Socrates did, then there must exist no little danger of something else playing the tyrant. Rationality was at that time divined as a *savior*; neither Socrates nor his 'invalids' were free to be rational or not, as they wished – it was *de rigueur*, it was their *last* expedient. The fanaticism with which the whole of Greek thought throws itself at rationality betrays a state of emergency: one was in peril, one had only one choice: either to perish or – be *absurdly rational*.⁴

Socrates may have saved the Greek world from perishing through his personal art of self-preservation, but at what cost? It is here, in §11, that we find Nietzsche's judgment on the historical Socrates – a judgment which agrees in all respects with

¹ TI, 1968: 32, "The Problem of Socrates," §7.

² Cf., "The wisdom of Socrates is a philosophical article of faith. It is clear that the Socrates of Plato is an ideal and is therefore poetical, expressing Platonic thoughts, whereas in the Socrates of Xenophon there is not exactly much wisdom to be found [...] The advantage of the *Socratic method*, as we come to know it from Plato, consists in the fact that we arrange for the grounds of the propositions we intend to demonstrate to be admitted one at a time by the collocutor or opponent before he has surveyed their consequents. For from a didactic delivery in continuous speech he would have an opportunity to recognize at once consequents and grounds as such, and would thus attack them if they did not suit him. Meanwhile, one of the things that Plato might impose on us is that, by means of an application of this method, the sophists and other fools would quite calmly have let Socrates demonstrate to them that they were so. This is inconceivable; on the contrary, at about the last quarter of the way, or generally as soon as they noticed where it would lead to, they would have spoilt the cleverly planned game of Socrates and would have torn his net by digressions, or by denying what was said, by intentional misunderstandings, and by whatever else is instinctively applied as tricks and dodges by dogmatical dishonesty. Or again, they would have become so impolite and insulting that he would have found it prudent to save his skin on occasion. For how could even the sophists fail to know the means whereby anyone can make himself the equal of anyone else and instantly remove even the greatest intellectual inequality, namely insult? A low and ignoble nature, therefore, feels even an instinctive urge to insult as soon as it begins to detect intellectual superiority." PP 1: 40-42, "Fragments for the History of Philosophy: §3, Socrates." But it is precisely with Socrates and his dialectical method that "the rabble gets on top." TI, 1968: 31, "The Problem of Socrates," §5.

³ TI, 1968: 32-33, "The Problem of Socrates," §9.

⁴ TI, 1968: 33, "The Problem of Socrates," §10.

that found, not only in his “Self-Criticism,” but in that sense, with the Wagnerian thesis he laid down in his earliest works.

I have intimated the way in which Socrates exercised fascination: *he seemed to be a physician, a savior*. Is it necessary to go on to point out the error which lay in faith in ‘rationality at any cost’? It is self-deception on the part of philosophers and moralists to imagine that by making war on *décadence* they therewith elude *décadence* themselves. This is beyond their powers: what they select as an expedient, as a deliverance, is itself only another expression of *décadence* – they alter its expression, they do not abolish the thing itself. Socrates was a misunderstanding: *the entire morality of improvement, the Christian included, has been a misunderstanding* [...] To have to combat one’s instincts – that is the formula for *décadence*: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness and instinct are one.¹

Accordingly, the moral of this characterization is that while Socrates may have been a physician in the sense that he had comprehended his specific culture’s tendencies and then reformed its excesses by prescribing reason to counter-tyrannize the instincts, he was a physician of *décadence*, of *degenerating instincts*. Battling the instincts goes against life, and is therefore associated with a *descending* or *declining* type of life, for as long as life is *ascending*, so Nietzsche tells us, happiness and instinct are one. The conclusion that we must draw is that the historical Socrates was no true physician of *culture* in the sense in which rationality could be fused to the creative instincts for life. And so here again we find, in Nietzsche’s ‘final’ position, that the teleology of the philosopher as physician of culture is utterly antipodal to the teleology of Socrates and his school, since it is the latter who completely “negates culture.”² The true philosopher as physician of culture *must be consistent with the ethical implications of vitalism*: he must not go beyond the possibility of experience by appealing to the moral interpretation of existence, as did the historical Socrates. On the contrary, he is required, given the nature of existence, to embody the pessimism of strength by finding a way to affirm all that is hard, terrible, evil, and problematic in existence out of overflowing health and the abundance of life, not out of its impoverishment.³ It is in this very real sense that the philosopher as physician of culture must find a way to make ‘music’ out of life.

Given the nature of our examination between Nietzsche’s relationship to the historical Socrates on the one hand, and his aspiration to become the ‘music-making Socrates’ on the other, it is essential at this point to disabuse the notion, as originally advanced by Nietzsche’s English translator, R.J. Hollingdale in his translation of *Twilight*, and mobilized into a thesis most recently by Alexander Nehamas in his essay on Nietzsche’s problem with Socrates, that the historical Socrates was every bit as important, and even more important, than both Schopenhauer and Wagner in Nietzsche’s life and thought. Nehamas in particular believes that Socrates had played a role that was “very similar” to the roles that Schopenhauer and Wagner played as Nietzsche’s educators, and seems to be especially concerned about the need to

¹ TI, 1968: 33-34, “The Problem of Socrates,” §11, my emphasis on “he seemed to be a physician, a savior.”

² UW, 1999: 103, *Notebook* 21 [11], summer 1872-beginning 1873.

³ BT, 1993: 3, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §1; GS, 1974: 327-331, “What is Romanticism?” §370.

reconcile Nietzsche to Socrates.¹ There are a number of threads to Nehamas's argument, but the principal thrust is that Nietzsche could never be sure "that his own project was not also the project of the character who animated the tradition against which he defined himself," and that as a consequence, Socrates was the only one of Nietzsche's "educators" from whom he could never be sure that he had emancipated himself.²

In many respects, Nehamas's argument about Nietzsche's ambivalence towards Socrates is quite accurate, but when it comes to understanding the meaning or significance of this ambivalence, his conclusions leave much to be desired. In the first place, Nehamas seems to be completely unaware of the fact that Nietzsche's attitude towards Socrates had been shaped in critically important respects by Wagner, a point which we illustrated in depth in Chapter 1. The "complex of views" associated with Nietzsche's attitude towards Socrates from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo*, and which Nehamas enumerates in support of this thesis for instance are, without exception, Wagnerian theses from first to last.

According to Nehamas's account, Nietzsche believed that Socrates had 1) denied the importance of instinct and stressed instead the value of reason and dialectic; 2) introduced morality into the world by appealing to reasons for why individuals engage in the actions that they do; and by means of these first two, 3) destroyed the tragic Greek world and its art and introduced the first modern individual. Yet once we compare Nietzsche's objections to Socrates as enumerated by Nehamas with Wagner's complaint about the event of Socrates in his *Artwork of the Future*, it becomes well-nigh impossible to gainsay the conclusion that Wagner had unquestionably held these views first.³ In addition, we must also consider the fact that, when Nehamas tells us that this "complex of views" towards Socrates lasted throughout Nietzsche's productive life, we need hardly hesitate to point out that this "complex of views" can already be found fully worked out by the time *The Birth of Tragedy* was published, as a book that was dedicated to Wagner. And as the purpose of this dedication in particular was to herald the arrival of those "ever-new configurations of genius," (by which Nietzsche originally meant Wagner, but later came to mean himself),⁴ as a promise towards transcending the deadlock of a modernity that the historical Socrates had been directly responsible for ushering in, there could be no hope of doing so without it becoming every bit as necessary for those "new configurations of genius" to do precisely what the historical Socrates had

¹ Nehamas, 2000: 132.

² Nehamas, 2000: 154-55.

³ "Tragedy flourished for just so long as it was inspired by the spirit of the Folk, and as this spirit was a veritably popular, i.e. a communal one. When the national brotherhood of the Folk was shivered into fragments, when the common bond of its Religion and primeval Customs was pierced and severed by the sophist needles of the egoistic spirit of Athenian self-dissection, – then the Folk's art-work also ceased: then did the professors and the doctors of the literary guilds take heritage of the ruins of the fallen edifice, and delved among its beams and stones; to pry, to ponder, and to re-arrange its members. With Aristophanian laughter, the Folk relinquished to these learned insects the refuse of its meal, threw Art upon one side for two millennia, and fashioned of its innermost necessity the history of the world; the while those scholars cobbled up their tiresome history of Literature, by order of the supreme court of Alexander." PW 1: 136, "Artwork of the Future."

⁴ BT, 1993: 75, §15.

done, which is to represent both the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension. To that extent, Nietzsche certainly saw the parallel between himself and the historical Socrates, but he was his utter antipode, at least at the *theoretical* level. In particular, Nietzsche only ever saw in the historical Socrates a sign of the degeneration of the Greek instincts, while he envisioned the ‘music-making Socrates’ as the perfect balance between rationality and the creative instincts. To be sure, this is a purely theoretical distinction, but in many respects this is precisely the point: the very fact that Nietzsche held such consistently theoretical views on Socrates from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo* and relentlessly persecuted him after Wagner’s lead is tantamount to implicitly endorsing Wagner’s theoretical views on Socrates and his responsibility for the decline of culture. Given the fact that this explanation of the decline of Greek culture remains intact as a *theory* which Nietzsche shared with Wagner from first to last, and was then mobilized *against* Wagner in order to negatively define his ‘own project,’ as we will more fully discover later, certainly makes it seem as if Nietzsche could never really be sure that he had emancipated himself from Wagner, *not* Socrates.

But then, when we actually stop to consider whether the historical Socrates was, in fact, one of Nietzsche’s “educators” in the same sense in which both Schopenhauer and Wagner had been, it actually becomes regrettable to have to point out to Nehamas that there is not one palpable shred of evidence to suggest that this was so. In fact, the *only* piece of evidence which Nehamas marshals to support this inference, and for which the entire edifice of his argument about Socrates relies, is the product of *one* note from Notebook 6 dated to the summer of 1875 – in fact the *very same note* on which Hollingdale had relied before him – and which states “I must confess that *Socrates* is so close to me that I am almost always fighting a battle with him.”¹ Yet in arriving at this inference, Nehamas seems to have ignored *every other single note in the same exact notebook* which testifies to the fact that the appearance of the historical Socrates destroyed Greek culture. Take, for instance, *the very next note* in which Nietzsche tells us that the results of Socratism were, above all, “damage to science and ethical living.”² Or again, that “*Socrates knocks everything over* at the moment when it has approached the truth *most closely*; this is particularly *ironic*.”³ This latter observation, if we recall, sounds suspiciously similar to the judgment Nietzsche would later advance in his “Self-Criticism” regarding the ultimate ‘irony’ of Socrates. Or take again Nietzsche’s comments from note 14, where he tells us that

Early Greek philosophy was *throughout* a philosophy of *statesmen*. How paltry our statesmen are! Incidentally, that this is the greatest difference between the Pre-Socratics and Post-Socratics. Among them one does not find the ‘revolting claim to happiness’, as one does from Socrates onward. Not everything revolves around the condition of their soul [...] I will add Schopenhauer, Wagner, and *early Greek culture* together: this presents a view of a magnificent culture.⁴

¹ Nehamas, 2000: 132; cf., WEN, 2009: 209, *Notebook 6* [3], summer 1875, Nietzsche’s emphasis; TI, 1968: 207, Glossary of Names, “Socrates.”

² WEN, 2009: 210, *Notebook 6* [4], summer 1875.

³ WEN, 2009: 210, *Notebook 6* [7], summer 1875.

⁴ WEN, 2009: 212, *Notebook 6* [14], summer 1875, my emphasis on “early Greek culture...”

Here we find, in other words, the same exact schema between Schopenhauer, Wagner and the early Greeks on the one hand, and the historical Socrates on the other as the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension. And bear in mind that this is a note from 1875, when Nietzsche was supposedly ‘distancing himself’ from his two mentors. But let us not content ourselves with this one isolated statement. Let us invoke note 18 which, as the reader will recall, echoes precisely the same concerns that Nietzsche had addressed in Notebook 23 [1] from the winter of 1872-73, and which we analyzed in section 4 of Chapter 2, that the cross-correlation between philosophy in its *reforming* tendency and philosophy in its *generative* tendency never occurred, and consequently how the ‘music-making Socrates’ – the symbol of rationality fused to the creative instincts for life – never materialized. Here, in particular, Nietzsche tells us that,

[The Greeks] did not find their philosopher and reformer; compare Plato: he is distracted by Socrates. An attempt at a characterization of Plato *without* Socrates. Tragedy – profound conception of love – pure nature – no fanatical turning away: obviously the Greeks *were about to find an even higher type* of man than the previous ones; then the scissors snipped, and there remains only the *tragic age* of the Greeks.¹

Finally, let us consider the content of note 25, which not only underscores the schema we have been discussing between the pre-Socratic and post-Socratic philosophies being the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension, it also states in no equivocal terms that Nietzsche continued to blame the historical Socrates for ushering in this decline of culture, thereby clearly illustrating where Nietzsche’s alliances lie.

With Empedocles and Democritus, the Greeks were well on the way to *correctly assessing* human existence, its irrationality, its suffering; *but they never reached this*, thanks to Socrates. An unbiased view of men is missing in all the Socratics, who have terrible abstractions, ‘the good, the just’, in their heads. Read Schopenhauer and ask why the ancients lacked such a deep and free outlook – *had* to lack it? I do not understand that. On the contrary. They lose their unbiased attitude through Socrates. Their myths and tragedies are much wiser than the ethics of Plato and Aristotle; and their ‘*Stoic* and *Epicurean*’ men are *poor* in comparison with their earlier poets and statesmen.²

If, therefore, there is any truth to be found in Nehamas’s claim regarding Nietzsche’s proximity to the historical Socrates, then we ought to conclude that it is a proximity that is derived from Nietzsche’s stated task of comprehending “the inner coherence and necessity of every true culture”³ as is set forth in the calling unique to the philosopher as physician of culture. For the nature of these notes, when taken together, clearly reveal that Nietzsche’s interest in the historical Socrates, even in the very notebook where Nietzsche confesses his ‘closeness’ to him, is always contextualized within the wider concerns of the cultural trends then happening in Greece, with his attitude being hostility and antagonism at its worst, and ambivalence

¹ WEN, 2009: 213, *Notebook* 6 [18], summer 1875.

² WEN, 2009: 214-15, *Notebook* 6 [25], summer 1875.

³ UW, 1999: 11, *Notebook* 19 [33], summer 1872-early 1873.

at its best. Yet the reason for this attitude should now be abundantly obvious, since the fundamental schism Nietzsche finds between Schopenhauer, Wagner and the pre-Socratics on the one hand and Socrates and the post-Socratics on the other remains fully intact at this point in time: Schopenhauer, Wagner, and the pre-Socratics are exemplars of *vitalism*, and more importantly, of vitalistic orientation and thought, whereas Socrates and the post-Socratics are the exemplars of devitalized rationalists who usher in concern for their soul and its “revolting claim to happiness.”

To claim therefore that the role Socrates had played was “very similar” to the roles that Schopenhauer and Wagner had played as Nietzsche’s educators, and that Nietzsche was in fact “more deeply involved with Socrates than with either [Schopenhauer and Wagner], and he knew it”¹ is a claim that is driven more by wishful thinking than by nuance for the actual facts. As these notes were penned in 1875, what we should note in particular about them is that the original schism remained intact *prior to Nietzsche’s break with Wagner* and only changed or shifted after his break. Thus, the fundamental question to ask is: how did Nietzsche’s conception of the ‘music-making Socrates’ change *after he had broken away from Wagner*? This is the central issue.

3. Nietzsche’s Post-Wagnerian Vitalist Thesis

In the preceding sections of this chapter, we noted two very important consequences for Nietzsche’s later position regarding his conception of the ‘music-making Socrates.’ The first consequence, born from the ashes of the pessimism of strength, is that the philosopher as physician of culture, the ‘music-making Socrates,’ must be consistent with the ethical implications of vitalism. His approach to life must accept what is immanent, and not appeal to what is transcendent. With this consequence, we noted that Nietzsche believed he had derived a far more consistent vitalism than either of his great mentors, Schopenhauer and Wagner, and so surpassed them in approaching the problems of existence in a purely vitalistic way. In the final analysis, Schopenhauer and Wagner, like the Greeks from Socrates onwards, had all fallen prey to the pessimism of degenerating instincts, since they all tried to explain the nature of suffering in the world by appealing in some way, shape, or form, to the moral interpretation and significance of existence.

The second consequence we noted has to do with how the philosopher as physician of culture, the ‘music-making Socrates,’ can approach existence in a purely vitalistic way. We have already secured the conclusion that the philosopher as physician of culture must be a visionary reformer who provides physic to his culture by approaching the problems of existence through his ability, faculty or genius for fusing rationality to the creative instincts for life. Admittedly however, and for those who may still be in some doubt, this requirement may sound more like a catchphrase than

¹ Nehamas, 2000: 132.

a conception of any significance or depth. Therefore, it now becomes necessary to demonstrate how ‘rationality fused to the creative instincts for life’ means music in the widest possible sense – hence the name ‘music-making Socrates’ – and therefore how it is that the philosopher as physician of culture, in affirming all that is hard, terrible, evil, and problematic in existence in a purely vitalistic way, must be committed at some level to finding a way to make ‘music’ out of life. Taken together, these two consequences have resolved themselves into two separate, but interrelated themes and will help us in our final attempt to resolve Nietzsche’s vitalist thesis, and to answer, not only what Nietzsche’s later conception of the ‘music-making Socrates’ is, but what Nietzsche’s final conception of culture is following his break with Wagner.

The first consequence we have deduced speaks to the *what* in Nietzsche’s thesis, which is, broadly conceived, the vitalist’s duty to face the nature of suffering through a kind of pessimism of strength. The second consequence we have deduced speaks to the *how* in Nietzsche’s thesis, which is again, broadly conceived, the nature of music, with its peculiar ability to convey meaning or content in an immediate and irrefutable way. With these two themes in hand, we must now look to explain how it is that the latter in particular becomes the means through which the former is confronted, and how it is that this explanation in general signifies Nietzsche’s final conception of culture.

In order to inaugurate the final sections of our chapter’s investigation, and more specifically to ground the theoretical framework for what Nietzsche means by ‘music’ in its broadest sense, we will need to take one last glance back at our discussion of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of music from Chapter 1.

First, let us recall that for Schopenhauer, “music is a copy of the will itself,”¹ meaning that it is the copy of the will in representation. It is therefore a concept of appearance, not essence. It is clear from his earliest work, Nietzsche never misunderstood the distinction Schopenhauer made between concepts of essence and appearance in his metaphysics of music, for in §6 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche makes it perfectly clear that when one uses the term ‘will’ in the metaphysical sense, it could hardly be applied to music, “since as such it would be entirely excluded from the realm of art, given that the will is precisely that which is *not* aesthetic; *yet it is manifest as will*.”² In other words, music *appears* as willing, but is not, all other things being equal, will itself. So again, the conclusion we must bear in mind is that music and the will which it embodies is only valid in relation to phenomena, and can only express its nature and character in the world of experience. Accordingly, if music “only flatters the will-to-live, since it depicts the true nature of the will, gives it a glowing account of its success, and at the end expresses its satisfaction and contentment,”³ then it would be quite right to maintain that the effect of music is purely immanent, not transcendent.

¹ WWR 1: 285, §52.

² BT, 1993: 34, §6, my emphasis.

³ WWR 2: 457, Chapter 39, “On the Metaphysics of Music.”

Nonetheless, because for Schopenhauer, will is the innermost essence of the world as representation, and because music resonates with this essence, music becomes, like the will which it embodies, the most immediate object and expression of our self-consciousness, while at the same time it holds the key to deciphering the mediated cognition we possess for the entire world as representation.¹ Accordingly, music expresses, and is the expression of, the immanent content of the world as representation.

From this conclusion, let us also recall the fact that, while music may express, and be the expression of, the immanent content or material of the world as representation, the ‘in itself’ of music, i.e., the structure or architecture of music itself in terms of what is meant by harmony and melody, beat and measure, is at the same time the apogee of logic and rationality; i.e., number.² On this highly important point, let us supplement our discussion of the metaphysics of music with one additional passage from Schopenhauer, this time, and suggestively enough, from his section on the pre-Socratics from his “Fragments for the History of Philosophy.”

In a section dedicated to revealing the insights the ancients possessed into the nature of the world and comparing those with his own, Schopenhauer lets us know that

the metaphysics of music, as I have explained in my chief work [...] can be regarded as an exposition of the Pythagorean philosophy of numbers, [and] has already been briefly alluded to by me in that work [...] According to these [passages], *melody* expresses all movements of the will as it makes itself known in man’s self-consciousness; in other words, it expresses all emotions, feelings, and so on. *Harmony*, on the other hand, indicates the scale of the will’s objectification in the rest of nature. In this sense, music is a second reality that runs entirely parallel with the first, yet it is of quite a different nature and character therefrom so that, while it has complete analogy, it has no similarity with it. But now, *as such*, music exists only in our auditory nerve and brain; apart from these or *in itself* (understood in the *Lockean* sense), it consists of mere numerical relations, first, according to their quantity, as regards measure or beat, and then, according to their quality, as regards the intervals of the scale, which rest on arithmetical relations or vibrations. In other words, music consists of numerical relations in its rhythmic as well as its harmonic element. Accordingly, the whole nature of the world, both as microcosm and macrocosm, may certainly be expressed by mere numerical relations and thus to a certain extent be reduced thereto. In this sense, Pythagoras had been right in placing the true nature of things in numbers.³

Here again we find virtually the same claim connecting one’s individual disposition or character as it expresses itself in the individual’s self-consciousness (the *melody* of his will) with the force producing the phenomenal appearance of the world (the scale of the will’s objectification in nature as the *harmony* of the world as will). But in considering the ‘in itself’ of music apart from its representation as a brain phenomenon, Schopenhauer rightfully points out, as the Pythagoreans had before him (and more clearly in fact in this passage than he had done in his *magnum opus*), that the essence of music simply consists in numerical relations, not only in terms of both its melodic and harmonic elements, but also in terms of its beat and measure – i.e., in

¹ WWR 1: 136, §22.

² Cf., Chapter 1, section 3.

³ PP 1: 37-38, “Fragments for the History of Philosophy: Pre-Socratic Philosophy,” §2.

its rhythmic elements – and so has a direct analogy with the will to life in its instinctual and cyclical nature. Once we understand music in *this* sense, as surely as Wagner had done, one could legitimately assert, as Schopenhauer did, that “music is an unconscious exercise in metaphysics, in which the mind does not know that it is philosophizing,”¹ and that music is the very discipline that fuses rationality to the creative instincts for life, since it speaks to the whole man, the rational *as well as* the vital embodiment.

With this explanation of music, rooted as it is in Schopenhauer’s vitalist orientation, we have arrived, albeit tentatively, at the *how* in Nietzsche’s thesis. Since music, under our wider and more comprehensive definition of it, as given first by the Pythagoreans and then expanded by Schopenhauer, essentially reveals a discipline that is both rational (i.e., number) and instinctual (i.e., the cyclical nature of the will to life), we have discovered, all things being equal, the very methodology that the philosopher as physician of culture utilizes in providing physic to his culture, for as we have just discovered, music speaks to the whole man, the rational as well as the vital, and is therefore instrumental in conveying content about the world in an immediate and irrefutable way.

But if we are to enquire into the nature of this physic for Nietzsche’s later, post-Wagnerian conception of culture, we need to examine how it is that making ‘music’ out of life and the duty to confront suffering are related in Nietzsche’s later works, for this conception is, on the whole, a remarkable transformation from Nietzsche’s earlier commitment to the physic implied in Wagner’s German Reformation of Culture. In other words, it is the *what* in Nietzsche’s thesis that will reveal Nietzsche’s final conception of culture.

4. From the Philosopher as Physician of Culture to “Physician, Heal Thyself!”

Beginning with *Human, All Too Human*, the first book Nietzsche published following his break with Wagner, we find dozens of aphorisms that are not only hypercritical of the ‘artist’ and all ‘higher art,’ we also find Nietzsche’s first attempts to respond to his own criticism of higher art by presenting his new counter-conception of culture, which is a decided shift away from the macrocosm towards the *microcosm*, and in particular towards the individual as the ‘irreducible cultural unit.’ Whereas previously, Nietzsche’s conception of culture, following Wagner’s, could be captured by the notion of a German Reformation of Culture, and is perhaps best summarized by the second paragraph of §2 of Nietzsche’s *History* essay written only four years

¹ WWR 1: 292, §52; *musica est exercitium metaphysices occultum nescientis se philosophari animi*. Schopenhauer here modifies the original saying of Leibniz that music is an ‘unconscious exercise in arithmetic in which the mind does not know it is counting.’ (*exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi*)

previously,¹ what we find now is an emphasis on the duty or responsibility of the individual as the irreducible cultural unit to foster a sense of culture within himself. As Nietzsche tells us in Volume 1 of *Human, All Too Human*, §276 entitled “Microcosm and Macrocosm of Culture,”

Human beings make the best discoveries about culture within themselves when they find two heterogeneous powers ruling there. Given someone who is as much in love with the plastic arts or music as he is enraptured by the spirit of science and who sees it as impossible to suspend this contradiction by annulling the one and completely liberating the other: the only possibility remaining for him is to shape himself into a cultural edifice big enough for both those powers to inhabit, albeit at opposite ends, while between them there reside mediating powers with sufficient strength to smooth over, if necessary, any strife that might break out. Any such cultural edifice in a single individual, though, will have the greatest resemblance to the cultural structure of an entire era and will by analogy furnish instruction about it.²

From the content of this note, we get a very clear sense of Nietzsche’s new microcosmic approach to culture. While culture can perhaps still be defined as the unity of artistic style that manifests itself throughout all the vital self-expressions of a people,³ it has now become clear with this shift towards the microcosm of culture that the call for this ‘unity of artistic style’ must begin with the individual himself as the irreducible cultural unit. In fact, Nietzsche is quite clear that this ‘unity of artistic style’ can only come about from the strength and authority of the individual himself to be able to mediate the tensions, contradictions, and inconsistencies that inevitably arise in trying to accommodate and unify such seemingly disparate loves in one and the same individual. As obscure and unassuming as this aphorism seems to be on the surface, the actual implications of it are quite shocking when we consider where Nietzsche once stood with regard to Wagner’s conception of culture: so long as the individual is committed to fostering a sense of culture within himself, *a single individual will have the greatest resemblance to the cultural structure of an entire era!*

With Nietzsche’s new microcosmic approach to culture presupposed, we soon find a number of challenges that are directed towards the ‘artist’ in particular – and who is the ‘artist’ other than Wagner himself? – critiquing the nature of how he goes about creating his art, and by extension, calling into question the very nature of his creations as genuine or legitimate contributions to culture. Take, for instance, the aphorism found in *Human, All Too Human* 2, §102 entitled “An Excuse for Much Guilt,” where Nietzsche tells us point blank that when the artist’s creative urge is to busy himself with matters outside of himself in an attempt to imitate them, it prevents him from looking within, that is, “from *creating* himself.” As Nietzsche goes on to relate, only the artist who can grow in proportion to the greatness of his works can be considered an artist at all, and even then, Nietzsche cautions us to recognize that such an individual

¹ “Suppose someone believed that no more than one hundred productive human beings, educated in working in the same spirit, would be needed to put an end to the cultivatedness that has just now become fashionable in Germany; would he not be strengthened by the recognition that the culture of the Renaissance was borne on the shoulders of just such a band of one hundred men?” UO, 1995: 98, “On the Utility and Liability of History for Life,” §2.

² HAH I, 1995: 187-88, “Microcosm and Macrocosm of Culture,” §276.

³ UO, 1995: 9, “David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer,” §1.

still only has a limited amount of energy. “What he expends upon *himself* – how could this still benefit his *work*? – And vice versa.”¹ The implication here, in other words, seems startlingly clear: there should be no chasm between the artist and his work, for the true artist is himself his *own work of art*.

Seven sections later, in §109 entitled “Living without Art or Wine,” Nietzsche tells us that it is better to need art just as little as to need wine. We should not try by laborsome petition to search for these things outside of ourselves but, alluding to the theurgical act attributed to Jesus of turning water into wine,² Nietzsche tells us on the contrary that we should stick with water, “continually transforming that water into wine ourselves through inward fire and inward sweetness of soul.”³

Here again we find the same emphasis on the individual’s responsibility as the irreducible cultural unit to contribute to his culture by first transforming or creating himself. As long as the individual tries in earnest to create himself as his own work of art, it follows that he will possess the greatest unity of artistic style and therefore of culture at the individual (i.e., microcosmic) level. The bar for culture is set that much higher, for who after all is willing to be their own guinea pig?

When we come to *Dawn*, we find one of Nietzsche’s earliest articulations about the nature and effect of all modern art set in opposition to what we have called the *what* in Nietzsche’s thesis, which is the vitalist’s duty to face the nature of suffering. In §52, which is titled aptly enough, “Where Are the New Physicians of the Soul?”, Nietzsche tells us that the means of solace, of which modern art is the supreme example, are precisely what make life so full of suffering for so many, for by mistaking “the momentarily effective, anesthetizing, and intoxicating means, the so-called consolations, for the actual remedies,” people got themselves addicted to the intoxicating effects themselves so that “there was no longer any chance for recovery.” Nietzsche then observes that while it was Schopenhauer who finally took humanity’s suffering seriously again, he also wonders in the same breath who will follow Schopenhauer in finally taking seriously the *antidotes* to this suffering, this “scandalous quackery with which, under the most magnificent names, humanity has treated its diseases of the soul.”⁴ From the content of this note, we become witnesses to one of Nietzsche’s earliest attempts to grapple with the problem of modern art and its relationship to suffering. Here, modern art can only ever be an ersatz antidote to the suffering found in the world precisely because of the intoxicating and befogging means with which it affects its audience. While perhaps “momentarily effective,” the spell soon wears off, leaving its audience restless, unhappy, and most importantly, unprepared to confront the suffering found in the world and from which they tried to escape in the first place. Yet Nietzsche also reminds us here that opposed to these “momentarily effective, anesthetizing, and intoxicating means,” stands the true

¹ UF/HAH II, 2013: 47, “An Excuse for Much Guilt,” §102.

² John 2:1-11.

³ UF/HAH II, 2013: 49, “Living Without Art or Wine,” §109.

⁴ D, 2011: 40-41, “Where Are the New Physicians of the Soul?” §52.

philosopher as physician of culture, that is, the physician of himself, who must be able to affirm all that is problematic in existence in a purely vitalistic way.

In this connection, book five of *Dawn* is particularly exceptional for the manner in which Nietzsche attempts to redefine our understanding of what art is – not as a momentary escape from the suffering of life, but in truth, the very activity or deed through which suffering is confronted. Thus it is here, in book five of *Dawn*, that we find some of the very first aphorisms, inchoate as they are, connecting the *how* with the *what* in Nietzsche's thesis; that is, cultivating the 'art' or 'music' of life as a means to confront this suffering. We are reminded, indeed, that the true philosopher as physician of culture must be, not so much the great synthesizer or harmonizer of tendencies or trends in a culture, as he must be the great synthesizer or harmonizer of *himself*, and by so doing, he will soon resonate these disparate elements within himself in order to express the tonality of these sounds into one single, unified melody: his vision of life.

To begin with then, in §459 entitled "The Thinker's Magnanimity," Nietzsche lets us know, in the first instance, that both Schopenhauer's and Rousseau's motto of *vitam impendere vero*,¹ lofty though it be, was actually the wrong way around, for in both cases, Nietzsche notes, "their lives tagged along beside their knowledge like a temperamental bass that refuses to stay in tune with the melody!" But for the melody of the thinker to be truly in harmony with the world as will, the true thinker (i.e., Nietzsche) must offer his life in sacrifice for it. Thus the motto becomes *verum impendere vitae*.^{2,3}

But for the true thinker to dedicate truth to life means, of course, that his melody of life must be in harmony with the world as will, and not, on the contrary, be an amorphous and anesthetizing sound wall with no character of its own (i.e., it must not be Wagner's 'endless melody'). And so two sections later, in §461 entitled "Hic Rhodus, Hic Salta," this is precisely the claim we find about cultivating our 'music' of life. In this section, Nietzsche tells us that nothing has been impossible for music up until now, so why would it not be possible for music "to find as well that brighter, more joyful, and widespread sound that corresponds to *the ideal thinker*?" What this means in particular for Nietzsche is that music must now show that it is possible "to experience these three things at once: sublimity, deep and warm illumination, and the bliss of the highest logical consistency."⁴

In §531 entitled "Feeling Art Differently," we find Nietzsche advocating once again that the true artist is himself his own work of art, in that one now *lives* what one once desired from art.⁵ Finally, and perhaps most emphatically, we find Nietzsche mocking the "cheap fame of the 'genius'" in §548 entitled "Victory Over Energy" by suggesting that what truly matters is whether the quantum of artistic genius which one has been

¹ "To dedicate one's life to truth."

² "To dedicate truth to life."

³ D, 2011: 233-34, "The Thinker's Magnanimity," §459.

⁴ D, 2011: 234-35, "Hic Rhodus, Hic Salta," §461.

⁵ D, 2011: 257-58, "Feeling Art Differently," §531.

allotted has been overcome by “something higher” than the energy that the “genius” expends on his works, for this is simply a spectacle, while the true artistic genius according to Nietzsche goes unnoticed, for only the latter “expends *not on works*, but *on himself as a work*, that is, on his own mastery, on the purification of his fantasy, on the ordering and selection of the onrushing stream of tasks and sudden insights.” And so here again we find Nietzsche underscoring the fact that with this new microcosmic approach to culture, the bar for culture is set infinitely higher than what now passes for it, and that this explains why the true artistic genius’s “*victory over energy* remains without eyes to see it and consequently without song and singers.”¹

We find Nietzsche’s next work, *The Gay Science*, literally brimming over with Wagner criticism, but the latter half of book two (§§76-107) is especially noteworthy for its sustained reflections on the problem of all ‘higher culture.’ In this respect, §86 entitled “Of the Theater” picks up where *Dawn* and *Human All Too Human* leave off regarding the anesthetizing and intoxicating effect of all modern art. Here in particular, Nietzsche lets us know that both modern theater and music have been “designed for [...] tired mules who have been whipped too much by life,” and not for the true conquerors of existence who have no need of “intoxicants and idealistic whips.” Building on §52 of *Dawn*, which endeavors to take the “antidotes” to humanity’s suffering seriously again, Nietzsche lets us know that “whoever finds enough tragedy and comedy in himself, probably does best when he stays away from the theater.” After all, Nietzsche asks, “what are the Faustus and the Manfreds of the theater to anyone who is somewhat like Faust and Manfred?” In other words, we are reminded once again that greatness begins at home, and is not a spectacle designed for the masses. This is the true significance of what it means to be an artist and a work of art in the highest sense of the word, and is not the tragic or comical spectacle of our European theater and music “as the hashish-smoking and betel-chewing of the European” knows these terms. And yet, and as Nietzsche spitefully notes, this conception of what it means to be a work of art “is almost the history of ‘culture,’ of our so-called higher culture.”²

With the very next section however (§87, “Of the Vanity of Artists”), Nietzsche introduces a qualification or two to his critique of Europe’s so-called higher culture from the preceding section. Here, the exceptionality of Wagner is singled out from other artists of the theater in his ability to create, not simply “intoxicants and idealistic whips” for tired mules, but who, “more than any other musician, is a master at discovering the tones out of the realm of suffering, depressed, tormented souls and at giving speech even to dumb animals.”³ Wagner, Nietzsche tells us, “finds sounds for those secret and uncanny midnights of the soul [...] he knows how souls drag themselves along when they can no longer leap and fly, nor even walk; his is the shy glance of concealed pain, of understanding without comfort, of farewells without confessions.” Yet what is most exceptional of all about Wagner is not simply that he

¹ D, 2011: 270-71, “Victory Over Energy,” §548.

² GS, 1974: 141-42, “Of the Theater,” §86.

³ “mute misery” for “dumb animals” in NCW, 2005: 265, “Where I Admire.”

comprehends the realm of suffering, but that he is “the master of the very small.” Unfortunately, being the master of the very small “is not what [Wagner] *wants* to be. His character prefers large walls and audacious frescoes.” And yet, despite himself, indeed “concealed from himself, he paints his real masterpieces all of which are very short, often only a single measure in length; there he becomes wholly good, great, and perfect [...] but he does not know it. He is too vain to know it.”¹

With this admission, Nietzsche leaves us in no doubt about the fact that Wagner’s art is at its best when it too centers on the intensely personal, and hence the *microcosmic*, and yet it is at its best precisely when Wagner is least aware of it. Of course, there are a number of implications that might be drawn from this final accusation, but perhaps the most startling one of all – and the one which is a direct challenge to Wagner himself – is that there is still a chasm to be found between Wagner the artist and Wagner’s art. For how can the true artistic genius, who expends his energy “*not on works, but on himself as a work*, that is, on his own mastery,”² still exhibit such blind spots in his own self-awareness for that which he creates?

Interesting though this accusation may be, when we read this section as it specifically and overtly applies to Wagner in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, we note that the last two lines, and therefore the final accusation, have been omitted, and in its stead we find Nietzsche making the following confession: “Wagner is someone who has suffered deeply – his *superiority* to other musicians. – I admire Wagner wherever he has set *himself* to music.”³ Here in the final form in which this section stands, Nietzsche’s original accusation seems to have entirely dropped away, and so one has to wonder whether Nietzsche ultimately retracted the claim he had originally made of Wagner’s lack of self-awareness and his ham-and-sham artistry at the end of his productive life, for these final two sentences plainly confess his admiration for Wagner’s ability to set his own suffering to music. In other words, what is most remarkable indeed about the present section is Nietzsche’s admission that *Wagner may have understood the intimate connection between suffering and music after all*. Thus as the title of Nietzsche’s work suggests, Nietzsche knew that *contra* him, Wagner was his most formidable opponent in bringing to light the very conception of culture he was trying to establish independently of Wagner; i.e., the duty to confront suffering by making ‘music’ out of life.

In this connection, perhaps one of the most revealing of all the sections in *The Gay Science* dealing with the power of music to convey meaning or content in an immediate and irrefutable way comes in §106 entitled “Music as an Advocate.” Given the importance we have attached to music in this more comprehensive sense, and especially as it relates to the *how* of Nietzsche’s final conception of culture, it is well worth quoting this section in its entirety:

¹ GS, 1974: 143, “Of the Vanity of Artists,” §87.

² D, 2011: 270-71, “Victory Over Energy,” §548.

³ NCW, 2005: 266, “Where I Admire.”

"I am thirsting for a composer," said an innovator to his disciple, "who would learn my ideas from me and transpose them into his language; that way, I should reach men's ears and hearts far better. With music one can seduce men to every error and every truth: who could refute a tone?" – "Then you would like to be considered irrefutable?" said his disciple.

The innovator replied: "I wish for the seedling to become a tree. For a doctrine to become a tree, it has to be believed for a good while; for it to be believed, it has to be considered irrefutable. The tree needs storms, doubts, worms, and nastiness to reveal the nature and the strength of the seedling; let it break if it is not strong enough. But a seedling can only be destroyed – not refuted."

When he had said that, his disciple cried impetuously: "But I believe in your cause and consider it so strong that I shall say everything, everything that I still have in my mind against it."

The innovator laughed in his heart and wagged a finger at him. "This kind of discipleship," he said then, "is the best; but it is also the most dangerous, and not every kind of doctrine can endure it."¹

In the first place, the content of this dialogue sounds suspiciously similar to one that might very well have occurred between Wagner and Nietzsche, one in which Nietzsche might have found himself "with my pen in hand and my notebook before me," ready to jot down "something of which I have never thought, something that I wish to impress upon my mind."² But with Nietzsche aspiring to become the master here at the time *The Gay Science* was written, it is plainly evident from the content of this dialogue that, in the second place, one ought to possess the ability to make 'music' even out of one's ideas, one's philosophy, of life. For if the 'in itself' of music, as we have already noted, consists in numerical relations, including especially beat and measure insofar as the rhythm of language is concerned, then these rhetorical devices, which constitute the art forms of the ear, will naturally impart meaning and significance to the "emotions of the inner man" through the fixable signs of the language (i.e., words). For only language rooted in the immediate evidentness of the perceptual order conveys both abstract rational as well as creative, generative, and instinctual values since, like music, it bears direct analogy with the will to life in both its rational and creative aspects. Accordingly, to make 'music' through the medium of language imbues those doctrines with a privileged epistemic access into the hearts and minds of the listener, ensuring that those doctrines will be heard, assimilated, and perhaps even believed. For after all, who *can* refute a tone?³

In an earlier section in fact, in §84 entitled "On the Origin of Poetry," Nietzsche frankly admits this very point, charting out not only the storied history attached to the utility of poetry among the ancients in *effecting compulsion*, but also citing the fact that such a fundamental feeling can never be entirely erased; indeed, that even to this day, "the wisest among us are still occasionally fooled by rhythm – if only insofar as we sometimes consider an idea truer simply because it has a metrical form and

¹ GS, 1974: 162-63, "Music as an Advocate," §106.

² *Letter to Richard Wagner*, 18 April 1873, SL: 118 and KSB 4: 144-45.

³ Lou Salomé, who was at one point Nietzsche's intellectual companion and unrequited love interest in the early 1880s, once remarked to their mutual companion Paul Rée about the contrast in their respective writings styles. "Your style," she told Rée "wants to convince the reader's *head* and is therefore scientifically clear and rigorous, setting aside all emotion. N. wants to convince the whole person, he wants to reach into the heart with his word and overturn what is innermost; he wants not to *teach* but to *convert*." KGB III. 7/1: 908-09. Lou Salomé, *Tautenberg Diary for Paul Rée*, 21 August 1882. Quoted in Robin Small. *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, (*hereafter* Small), 41.

presents itself with a divine skip and jump.”¹ No doubt this impish final remark was meant in part to discredit Schopenhauer, who cited a number of the ancient poets as support for some of his own doctrines, but considering that Nietzsche believed that “a man is in a condition of genius when he loves and ridicules the same thing at the same time,”² it is more than likely that it refers every bit as much to Schopenhauer as it does to him. After all, Nietzsche would soon become the poet of *Zarathustra*, and as we know from his assessment of *Zarathustra* as showcased in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche certainly believed that “perhaps the whole of *Zarathustra* may be reckoned as music; certainly a rebirth of the art of *hearing* was among its preconditions.”³ If true, this makes *Zarathustra* a seducer, plain and simple.⁴ Thus, if not exactly an unconscious exercise in metaphysics, rhythm at the very least is an unconscious exercise in hypnotics in which the mind does not know that it is being mesmerized, and it is §106 which brings this ‘lesson’ out in full force.

Nonetheless using language to make ‘music’ out of one’s philosophy is only one facet of the more all-encompassing duty that falls to the ‘music-making Socrates’ to affirm life in a purely vitalistic way. For if the duty, after all, is to make ‘music’ out of life itself, then the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements of life must be, exactly like the discipline of music itself, organized, disposed, and arranged by the composer in such a manner that there is a final compositional form that expresses, and is the expression of, the content of the world as representation. This is what it means to give style to one’s character, something which Nietzsche openly acknowledges in §290 (“One Thing is Needful”) is “a very great and rare art!” For the music-maker of life, Nietzsche tells us, must survey

all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it [...] In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!⁵

¹ “When one lets rhythm permeate speech – the rhythmic force that reorders all the atoms of a sentence, bids one choose one’s words with care, and gives one’s thoughts a new color, making them darker, stranger and more remote – the utility in question was *superstitious*. Rhythm was meant to impress the gods more deeply with a human petition, for it was noticed that men remember a verse much better than ordinary speech. It was also believed that a rhythmic tick-tock was audible over greater distances; a rhythmical prayer was supposed to get closer to the ears of the gods. *Above all, men desired the utility of the elemental and overpowering effect that we experience in ourselves as we listen to music: rhythm is a compulsion; it engenders an unconquerable urge to yield and join in; not only do our feet follow the beat but the soul does, too* [...] There was an even stranger notion that may have contributed most of all to the origin of poetry. Among the Pythagoreans, it appears as a philosophical doctrine and an artifice in education; but long before there were any philosophers, music was credited with the power of discharging the emotions, of purifying the soul, of easing the *ferocia anima* – precisely by means of rhythm [...] In sum: what could have been more useful for the ancient, superstitious type of man than rhythm? [...] without verse one was nothing; by means of verse one almost became a god [...] Such a fundamental feeling can never be erased entirely; and even now, after men have fought against such superstitions for thousands of years, the wisest among us are still occasionally fooled by rhythm – if only insofar as we sometimes consider an idea truer simply because it has a metrical form and presents itself with a divine skip and jump.” GS, 1974: 138-40, “On the Origin of Poetry,” §84, my emphasis.

² WEN, 2009: 220, *Notebook* 17 [16], summer 1876.

³ EH, 1989: 295, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” §1.

⁴ EH, 1989: 220, “Nietzsche’s Preface,” §4.

⁵ GS, 1974: 232, “One Thing is Needful,” §290.

One is reminded here that to govern everything large and small by the “constraint of a single taste” is precisely what the physician of culture does when he restrains the omnidirectional nature of the drives by putting them into the service of an artistic vision, or what Nietzsche here calls “an artistic plan.” For “if we are ever to attain a culture,” as Nietzsche once claimed, “we will need unheard-of artistic powers so as to break the limitless drive for knowledge, so as to produce a unity once more,”¹ and this seems now more than ever true when it is incumbent upon the individual as the irreducible cultural unit to foster a sense of culture within himself. Indeed, this is precisely where “the supreme dignity of the philosopher is revealed,”² for as Nietzsche goes on to tell us here in §290, it is only the strong and domineering natures that will be able to “enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own [...] for one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold.”³

But how should one discover the means to attain satisfaction with oneself? That is, “how can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they never are?” Here in §299, we find that “What One Should Learn from Artists” holds out a potential resolution to this problem. For how to conceal as well as to reveal, to illuminate as well as to tinge, and in general, to develop and cultivate perspectives on ourselves are all techniques that can be taken straight out of the artist’s playbook – “all this we should learn from artists” Nietzsche councils us, “while being wiser than they are in other matters. For with them this subtle power (i.e., wisdom) usually comes to an end where art ends and life begins.” But as we should know very well by now, the true artist of life does not hunger after vanity, or glory, or the ‘cheap fame of the genius,’ nor is he a spectacle designed for the masses. It is wisdom that the true artist of life seeks, and to this end Nietzsche tells us, “we want to be the poets of our life – first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters.”⁴

Finally, in a very important section towards the end of book five (§372, “Why We Are No Idealists”), Nietzsche tells us that formerly philosophers have denied life in favor of embracing their “cold realm of ‘ideas’” and their frosty philosopher’s virtues; that indeed, “having ‘wax in one’s ears’ was then almost a condition of philosophizing.” But philosophy, Nietzsche exhorts us here, is much more than abstract propositions and conceptual formulae; it is also the very activity of living itself. And yet, as Nietzsche goes on to note, the price that these philosophers always paid for being seduced to the “cold and anemic” realm of their ideas was by paying for it with their own life, their own blood: “these old philosophers were heartless;

¹ UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [27], summer 1872-early 73.

² UW, 1999: 10, *Notebook* 19 [27], summer 1872-early 73.

³ GS, 1974: 233, “One Thing is Needful,” §290.

⁴ GS, 1974: 239-40, “What One Should Learn From Artists,” §299.

philosophizing was always a kind of vampirism.” These old philosophers, in other words “no longer listened to life insofar as life is music.”¹

Considering that music is both rational and instinctual, and the ‘music-making Socrates’ is the symbol of rationality fused to the creative instincts for life, it should come as no surprise here that the implication Nietzsche wishes us to draw from this section is that the true philosopher must not deny the music of life, for his philosophy must speak to the whole man, the rational as well as the vital.

With *Beyond Good and Evil*, the music of one’s language – or lack thereof – is brought back into focus, especially as it features in the philosophy of the ‘free spirit’ and, as might be expected, contrasted with the peoples of the ‘fatherland’; that is, the Germans. Here in §28, Nietzsche tells us that what translates worst from one language to another is “the tempo of its style”; and this is true for the simple reason that language has its origins in the character and expression of a culture’s life-pulse, or what Nietzsche calls here “the average tempo of its ‘metabolism.’” The literary discussion which then ensues becomes a convenient pretext for Nietzsche to reprove the Germans for what he considers their dull, languid, and lifeless tempo, and consequently, their boring, tedious, and unwieldy style. Truly, they could hardly be the folk dreamt about in Wagner’s *Artwork of the Future*. “The German,” Nietzsche relates

is virtually incapable of *presto* in his language: thus, it may be fairly concluded, also of many of the most daring and delightful nuances of free, free-spirited thought. Just as the *buffo* and the satyr is strange to him, in his body and in his conscience, so Aristophanes and Petronius are untranslatable for him. Everything staid, sluggish, ponderously solemn, all long-winded and boring species of style have been developed in profuse multiplicity among the Germans.²

Nietzsche’s ire over the careless and slovenly style of the Germans reaches the pinnacle of exasperation in §246, in which he accuses the Germans not only of not knowing how to write, but also of not knowing how to read either. The indignation here is significant, for when we consider that Nietzsche himself believed that in creating his *Zarathustra*, he had given the Germans “the profoundest work in the German tongue, also the most perfect in its language”³ – indeed the apogee of ‘music-making’ – the inability of the Germans to write, much less to read, simply proved for Nietzsche that the Germans had no talent for music, least of all the ability to make music out of life.

– What a torment books written in German are for him who has a *third ear*! How disgustedly he stands beside the slowly turning swamp of sounds without resonance, of rhythms that do not dance, which the Germans call a ‘book’! Not to mention the German who reads books! How lazily, how reluctantly, how badly he reads! How many Germans know, or think they ought to know, that there is *art* in every good sentence – art that must be grasped if the sentence is to be understood! A misunderstanding of its tempo, for example: and the sentence itself is misunderstood! That one must be in no doubt about the syllables that determine the rhythm [...] that one should lend a refined and patient ear to every *staccato*, every *rubato*, that one should divine the meaning in the sequence of vowels and diphthongs

¹ GS, 1974: 332-33, “Why We Are No Idealists,” §372.

² BGE, 2014: 44-45, “Part Two: The Free Spirit,” §28.

³ *Letter to Karl Knortz*, 21 July 1888, SL: 299 and KSB 8: 340.

and how delicately and richly they can colour and recolour one another through the order in which they come: who among book-reading Germans has sufficient goodwill to acknowledge such demands and duties and to listen to so much art and intention in language? In the end one simply 'has no ear for it': and so the greatest contrasts in style go unheard and the subtlest artistry is *squandered* as if on the deaf.¹

If style in language has its origins in the character and expression of a culture's life-pulse, that is, in "the average tempo of its 'metabolism,'" and that the German 'metabolism' is dull, languid, and lifeless, then it is hardly a wonder according to Nietzsche's argument that the German 'style' of reading and writing is precisely the same as the German 'way of life': boring, tedious and unwieldy. If anyone can refute a tone then, it would be the Germans, for only those who are deaf and atonal can be incapable of listening to the music of life. The conclusion Nietzsche wishes us to draw here, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that there are no true German musicians.²

But for anyone who has 'ears to hear,' it is clear that Nietzsche's mockery of the Germans and their lack of musical talent in §246 is not so much directed towards Germans in general as it is towards one musician in particular, especially when we consider the opening remarks of the very next section. "How little German style has to do with sound and the ears," Nietzsche observes here in §247, "is shown by the fact that precisely our good musicians write badly. The German does not read aloud, does not read for the ear, but merely with his eyes: he has put his ears away in the drawer."³

There can be little doubt that these disparaging remarks were surely made at Wagner's expense. In the first place, Nietzsche draws attention to the fact that, when it comes to prose, Wagner the prose writer has no talent for 'music.' In fact, Wagner writes horribly, and even in the essay which was ostensibly written to commemorate him, Nietzsche had to concede this point. Something of the "repeatedly broken" and "uneven rhythm" of Wagner's dialectic causes "excitement and disquiet," for one is apt to find his texts "richly swollen with superfluous words" and written "in the style of spoken, not of written discourse."⁴

In the second place however, and curiously enough, these shortcomings in Wagner's ability to command the German language sound suspiciously similar to the irresponsible accusations that Wagner himself made against the Jews' use of language in his infamously inflammatory essay *Judaism in Music*; especially as it pertains to the "effect the Jew produces on us through his speech" and its relationship to the "Jewish influence upon music." The conclusion Wagner had reached in his essay was that if the Jews were "almost incapable of giving artistic enunciation to [their] feelings through talk," then their aptitude and capacity to express themselves through music would be "infinitely smaller."⁵ On the other hand, if the correlation between speech and music is as Wagner says it is, and moreover, we also admit Nietzsche's observation that Wagner's texts are written more "in the style of spoken, not of

¹ BGE, 2014: 217, "Part Eight: Peoples and Fatherlands," §246.

² Cf., "I shall never admit that a German *could* know what music is." EH, 1989: 251, "Why I Am So Clever," §7.

³ BGE, 2014: 218, "Part Eight: Peoples and Fatherlands," §247.

⁴ UO, 1995: 323-24, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §10.

⁵ PW 3: 84-86, "Judaism in Music."

written discourse,” and that he expresses himself in “repeatedly broken” and “uneven rhythms,” then it becomes plainly evident that Nietzsche is accusing a fanatical anti-Semite of being ‘Jewish’ in precisely the sense that it would wound Wagnerians, and the Wagner legacy the most.

But the challenge to Wagner goes even further than this. By asserting that there are no true German musicians, and certainly none that are capable of listening to the music of life, Nietzsche has in effect paved the way open for himself and, in particular, his *Zarathustra* as the legitimate counter-offer to the Wagnerian conception of culture. Indeed, as Lesley Chamberlain has astutely commented, *Zarathustra* is nothing short of an out-and-out competition with Wagner and his *Ring Cycle* in which “[p]roposition and response are spectacular.”¹ *Zarathustra* is the spiritual antithesis of the dull, heavy, and ponderous German typified by Wagner’s music, with teachings that signify instead the metaphor of ‘dance’ – a graceful flexibility which moves on light feet and is the key to self-surmounting.² Yet when we come to consider *Zarathustra* structurally, or in terms of its linguistic morphology, the musicality of its language is the symphonic form flowing beneath the quasi-mythical narrative of Zarathustra’s teachings and the Songs of Zarathustra. The condensed imagery and symbology of Zarathustra’s teachings effectively function as cellular leitmotifs which organize the narrative content, and are draped against the background of a lyrical hero wandering from adventure to adventure in order to convey his ‘teachings.’ Like Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*, *Zarathustra* offers us no shortage of serpents, forest murmurs, singing birds, dwarves, riddles and itinerant shepherds. But in contrast to Wagner’s “excessive use” of triplets and five- and seven-beat phrases,³ the sound pattern of the prose is proportioned and symmetrical, hence ‘classical’; while at the same time, Nietzsche’s use of the aria and chorus as operatic devices is emphasized over the Wagnerian ‘endless melody.’ Indeed as Nietzsche once claimed, the movement of the soul through music is dance, not “swimming and floating” amidst a sea of endless melody.⁴

5. Nietzsche Contra Wagner, or: “Wagner is Altogether the Foremost Name in *Ecce Homo*”

In the previous section, we endeavored to answer how Nietzsche’s conception of the ‘music-making Socrates’ had changed *after he had broken away from Wagner* by analyzing a cross-section of aphorisms from Nietzsche’s post-Wagnerian works beginning with *Human, All Too Human* and leading right up until the works from his final year in Turin. In analyzing this cross-section of aphorisms, we were able to

¹ Lesley Chamberlain. *Nietzsche in Turin: The End of the Future*. London: Quartet, 1996, (hereafter Chamberlain), 66.

² E.g., Z, 1933: 140-43, “Of the Vision and the Riddle”; 172-75, “Of the Spirit of Gravity.”

³ *Letter to Carl Fuchs*, End of July, 1877, SL: 162 and KSB 5: 261.

⁴ UF/HAH II, 2013: 58, “How the Soul Should Be Moved According to Modern Music,” §134.

identify a very definite and traceable developmental pattern of rivalry and competition in Nietzsche's post-Wagnerian works, which began at first with indirect and unassuming parry and riposte and evolved into direct assaults and full frontal attacks.

In this respect, perhaps nowhere else than *The Case of Wagner* does Nietzsche's challenge to Wagner come to a head more perfectly than it does in *Ecce Homo*, and in so doing, the individual threads we have been weaving so far of the relationship between the *how* and the *what* in Nietzsche's post-Wagnerian conception of culture are almost virtually unmasked for what they are. But before we unmask these final profundities, let us try to bring together the individual strands of our discussion in anticipation of the final denouement as it features in *Ecce Homo*, for once we understand Nietzsche's philosophy, and especially Nietzsche's achievement in 'composing' *Zarathustra*, as a direct challenge to Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture, we will at once recognize the spirit lurking behind Nietzsche's image and parable in telling us that the first part of his masterpiece "was finished exactly in that sacred hour in which Richard Wagner died in Venice."¹

First let us recall that following Nietzsche's break with Wagner, the solution to the problem of modernity no longer resided in the 'macrocosmic' approach to culture. Rather the approach, as we have now seen, shifted towards the 'microcosmic' in that it is ultimately the responsibility of the individual as the irreducible cultural unit to revitalize his culture by first transforming or creating himself. We soon found out that this requirement necessitated a 'unity of artistic style,' which can only really come about through individual strength; that is, the strength to mediate the tensions, the contradictions, and the inconsistencies that inevitably arise in trying to unify such seemingly disparate loves in one and the same individual. In this regard, the creative urge of the artist must be directed back towards himself, for only in his attempt to create himself do the artist and the work of art become one and the same object. The fundamental problem however is that the artist of life must work with the materials of life itself, and to that extent, he must be able to affirm, not simply the beautiful, the attractive, and the desirable, but likewise everything questionable in existence as well, even if those question-marks ultimately point to the illusions, the delusions, and the deceptions of life. In this respect one must be strong enough to affirm the question-marks of life, for this is precisely what it means to take the suffering of life seriously again.

But to take the suffering of life seriously again only addresses one half of the problem. The other half of the problem resides in confronting the counterfeit presentment of that which has been pawned off on humanity as the antidotes to the suffering found in the world. Here we find only momentarily effective, anesthetizing, and intoxicating means of all "higher culture." In one word, we had found Wagner's art.

¹ EH, 1989: 295, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra," §1.

What then is the narrative that we find Nietzsche telling to himself – and to us – in *Ecce Homo*? In order to take on Wagner, it is first of all necessary to set himself as Wagner's equal, for it could hardly be a meaningful duel if the participants were unfairly matched. To begin with then, Nietzsche first presents us with an overly-stylized account of his reveries of Tribschen with Wagner. We learn soon enough that Wagner was one who, like Nietzsche himself, had been the antithesis of the “merely German,” and so had been an “incarnate protest against all ‘German virtues.’”¹ Yet there is one other very important dimension in which Nietzsche and Wagner are equals according to Nietzsche's auto-stylography:

That in which we are related – that *we have suffered more profoundly, also from each other, than men of this century are capable of suffering* – will link our names again and again, eternally; and as certainly as Wagner is merely a misunderstanding among Germans, just as certainly I am and always will be. Two centuries of psychological and artistic discipline must come first, my dear Teutons! – But with that one does not catch up.²

With *this* move, Nietzsche in effect sets both himself and Wagner apart from the German canaille, and as equals to one another in terms of the capacity for suffering. But while equals in suffering, and in the capacity for suffering, Wagner and Nietzsche are not at all equals (according to Nietzsche) when it comes to creating one's art as a response or an ‘antidote’ to this suffering. Once again, it is precisely *on* this point that Nietzsche takes exception to Wagner, and it is precisely *at* this point that Nietzsche's challenge to Wagner becomes meaningful. Wagner's art, Nietzsche tells us once again, is a “toxin, a poison” designed for weary nerves, a narcotic like hashish to which one turns when “wants to rid oneself of an unbearable pressure”³; whereas conversely, the greatness of *Zarathustra* resides in the fact that he is the most tremendous Yes-sayer to life. So while we find that Wagner's art is a toxin designed for weary nerves, Nietzsche's art, and in particular, his *Zarathustra*, is the manifest symbol of one who can affirm life in a purely vitalistic way in that it teaches, out of the pessimism of strength, the philosopher's duty to confront the problem of suffering by being strong enough to make ‘music’ out of life. *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche is telling us, cultivates both the philosopher's virtues, which are those of wisdom and reason, with those of the artist, which are those of creativity and insight, and so becomes the manifest *deed* of the ‘music-making Socrates’ for culture.

That Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the manifest deed of the ‘music-making Socrates’ is a very important point – one that could not be more important in fact when we come to consider in what sense Nietzsche is challenging Wagner. No longer did the formula of the ‘music-making Socrates’ refer to that “rich-gifted individual” in the person of Wagner whose presence in the world both here and now had portended a return to life from the wearied instincts of Socratic culture through the Dionysian future of music. All Wagner's art could ever create, according to Nietzsche's account here in

¹ EH, 1989: 247, “Why I Am So Clever,” §4.

² EH, 1989: 250-51, “Why I Am So Clever,” §6, my emphasis.

³ EH, 1989: 249, “Why I Am So Clever,” §6.

Ecce Homo, was a toxin designed for weary nerves; while by contrast, Nietzsche boasts that it was “the long, secret work and artistry of my instinct” which ultimately led him to his *Zarathustra*.¹ In particular, Nietzsche claims that the artistry of his instinct was the result of an “organizing idea” which, while destined to emerge into his surface consciousness as the commanding identity, nonetheless took great affirmation of life to effect: “slowly [the organizing idea] leads us *back* from side roads and wrong roads; it prepares *single* qualities and fitnesses that will one day prove to be indispensable as means toward the whole – one by one, it trains all *subservient* capacities before giving any hint of the dominant take, ‘goal,’ ‘aim,’ or ‘meaning.’”^{2,3}

Yet the artistry of Nietzsche’s instinct as he paints it to himself in *Ecce Homo* is, as one might imagine, not the parthenogenetic birth that Nietzsche would have us believe. His “capacities,” in other words, did not suddenly leap forth “in their ultimate perfection,”⁴ as did Athena from the head of Zeus. Considering that Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* is a direct challenge to Wagner, Nietzsche’s discussion about the artistry of his instinct has *everything to do with Wagner*. On this very important point, it is worth noting that the same fundamental rhetoric behind Nietzsche’s “organizing idea” in *Ecce Homo* can be found fully intact in his fourth *Unfashionable Observation*, where Nietzsche reflects on the “ruling thought” of Wagner’s life.⁵ Additionally, we find Nietzsche telling us in §9 of this same essay that “to reflect on what *Wagner the artist is*” is tantamount to “the cure and recovery for anyone who has thought about and suffered over *how Wagner the human being developed*.”⁶ In fact, we find a number of telling comments about Wagner here: that, for instance, “[Wagner’s] appearance in the history of art is like a volcanic eruption of nature’s entire, undivided artistic ability,”⁷ or that the fearlessness with which Wagner tackled his “totally terrifying task shows just how powerfully he was guided by the poetic spirit, like someone who must follow regardless of where his ghostly guide takes him.”⁸ Yet perhaps the most telling comment of all, and one which directly concerns our analysis here, comes in the context of Nietzsche’s discussion of Wagner the composer.

In general, we can say about Wagner the *composer* that he gave a language to everything in nature that until now had not wanted to speak; he does not believe that anything must be mute. He even immerses

¹ EH, 1989: 254, “Why I Am So Clever,” §9.

² EH, 1989: 254, “Why I Am So Clever,” §9.

³ For a philosopher who had nothing but scorn for him and his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, this notion sounds incredibly similar to the philosophy of Eduard von Hartmann, who had argued that will and reason together comprise the Unconscious, and while willing is the active element or aspect to awareness that ‘breaks through to the surface,’ the will in striving acts on reason potentially present in the Unconscious, or beneath the surface of consciousness, manifesting the idea and bringing it to the surface as the expressed and no longer latent object of the will. Walter Kaufmann, in his rather immoderate hero-worship of Nietzsche, thinks that this idea, and the notion that precedes it, i.e., that “consciousness is a surface” prefigures Freud. But this notion is not only explicit in Schopenhauer, for whom Kaufmann’s knowledge was unpardonably uninformed, it is perhaps even more consistently derived in von Hartmann, whose stated goal was to balance the insights of both Hegel and Schopenhauer.

⁴ EH, 1989: 255, “Why I Am So Clever,” §9.

⁵ UO, 1995: 296-308, “Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,” §8.

⁶ UO, 1995: 308, “Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,” §9.

⁷ UO, 1995: 308, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, §9.

⁸ UO, 1995: 309-10, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, §9.

himself in colorful dawns, forests, fog, chasms, mountainous heights, the dread of night, and moonlight and takes note of their secret desire; they too want to resound. *When the philosopher says there is one will in animate and inanimate nature that thirsts for existence, then the composer adds: and at every stage this will wants a resounding existence.*¹

What is perhaps most significant about the foregoing observations here, including especially the words highlighted in this final last clause, is that these qualities are, one and all, qualities which Nietzsche now attributes to himself. What we find specifically formulated here in the final clause are the very words adumbrating the very idea of the philosopher and composer united in one and the same individual. Accordingly, Nietzsche's challenge to Wagner as we find it in *Ecce Homo* could not be any more personal than it is, for it is a direct challenge vis-à-vis his two great intellectual mentors Schopenhauer and Wagner for *psychological hegemony* over the meaning of the philosopher and the artist for culture. How truly indubitable this conclusion is becomes almost impossible to gainsay once we consider the numerous statements Nietzsche makes to his readers as evidence in support of this conclusion, and the fact that he repeatedly takes the opportunity to point it out again and again, not only in *Ecce Homo*, but even in his private letters.

To begin, we need only look at why Nietzsche, according to his own account, writes such good books. Here we find in the assessment of his very first book – a book not only dedicated to Wagner, but one which unquestionably drew on a number of Wagner's own ideas as we witnessed in Chapter 1² – Nietzsche claiming that, when it came to promoting the 'artwork of the future,' or what Nietzsche calls here the 'Dionysian future of music' as it features in the final ten sections of *The Birth of Tragedy*, what he had truly heard as prefigured in Wagner's music was a vision of his own future:

A psychologist might still add that what I heard as a young man listening to Wagnerian music really had nothing to do with Wagner; that when I described Dionysian music I had described what I had heard – that instinctively I had to transpose and transfigure everything into the new spirit that I carried in me. The proof of that, *as strong as any proof can be*, is my essay on *Wagner in Bayreuth: in all psychologically decisive places I alone am discussed – and one need not hesitate to put down my name or the word "Zarathustra" where the text has the word "Wagner."* The entire picture of the dithyrambic artist is a picture of the pre-existent poet of *Zarathustra* [i.e., Nietzsche] sketched with abysmal profundity and without touching for a moment the Wagnerian reality. Wagner himself had some notion of that; he did not recognize himself in this essay.

Similarly, "the idea of Bayreuth" was transformed into something that should not puzzle those who know my *Zarathustra*: into that great noon at which the most elect consecrate themselves for the greatest of all tasks. Who could say? The vision of a feast that shall yet live to see [...] Wagner, Bayreuth, the whole wretched German pettiness are a cloud in which an infinite mirage of the future is reflected. Even psychologically all decisive traits of my own nature are projected into Wagner's [...] the absolute

¹ UO, 1995: 313-14, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §9, my emphasis on the final sentence.

² Including the very important fact that it was Wagner, *not* Nietzsche, who originally came up with what is now the 'celebrated distinction' between the Apolline and Dionysiac spirit in Greek tragedy: "The Tragedy of the Greeks having evolved from a compromise between the Apollinian and the Dionysian elements, upon the basis of a system of Lyrics wellnigh past our understanding, the didactic hymn of the old Hellenian priests could combine with the newer Dionysian dithyramb to produce that enthralling effect in which this artwork stands unrivalled." PW 5: 138-39; cf., "Well then, the design is settled – to be modeled on Wagner's *The Destiny of Opera* – rejoice with me!" *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 18 November 1871, SL: 82 and KSB 3: 243.

certainty about what I am was projected on some accidental reality [i.e., Wagner and Bayreuth] – the truth about me spoke from some gruesome depth.¹

This passage is perhaps one of the most astonishing testaments to Nietzsche's competition with Wagner over the meaning of the philosopher and artist for culture, and it occurs, according to Nietzsche's own account, in the very essay in which he struggled over the 'meaning of Wagner' for posterity. But the meaning of this struggle was not for Wagner, for as Nietzsche claims here, the name 'Wagner,' as it occurred in his essay on Bayreuth, was nothing more than a convenient placeholder which had prefigured the direction in which Nietzsche himself was, in all psychologically decisive places, heading. The name 'Wagner' did not refer to the empiric actualities of Bayreuth, nor to the individual associated with that designation, but to a psychological symbol which inwardly indexed a vision of his own future. Where the real Wagner was, we have no means of knowing, for as Nietzsche tells us here, "Wagner himself did not recognize himself in this essay." But if we can substitute, as Nietzsche surely claims we can, the name 'Wagner' with 'Zarathustra' as the manifest deed of what would eventually become the philosopher and the composer united in one and the same individual, then we unquestionably find, according to Nietzsche's own account of it, that from the perspective of his essay on Wagner, the promise which he had made to himself to become the 'music-making Socrates' had been psychologically fulfilled from the standpoint of *Ecce Homo*. In fulfilling his vision of the 'music-making Socrates,' we should also point out the fact that, at the very close of the passage just excerpted, we find Nietzsche promising us nothing less than a reawakening of that excess of life on earth from which the Dionysian state is made possible, and therefore the coming of a new tragic age.²

This is just the beginning. We soon find in the context of assessing his four *Unfashionable Observations*, of which Nietzsche's essays on Schopenhauer and Wagner comprise half of that collection, the following claim made in the very first section:

In the *third* and *fourth* Untimely Ones, two images of the hardest self-love, self-discipline are put up against all this [i.e., German "culture"], as *pointers to a higher concept of culture, to restore the concept of culture* – untimely types *par excellence*, full of sovereign contempt for everything around them that was called "Empire," "culture," "Christianity," "Bismarck," "success" – Schopenhauer and Wagner, *or*, in one word, Nietzsche.³

Here we find, as plain as can be, Nietzsche confessing that he had distilled a *psychological unity out of both Schopenhauer and Wagner as types*, and that as a result, he had earned his rightful claim over the meaning of the philosopher and artist for culture. What we find in this passage in other words is precisely what Nietzsche had told Georg Brandes in a letter to him earlier in the same year that he composed *Ecce Homo*; namely that,

¹ EH, 1989: 274-75, "Why I Write Such Good Books: The Birth of Tragedy," §4, my emphasis.

² EH, 1989: 274, "Why I Write Such Good Books: The Birth of Tragedy," §4.

³ EH, 1989: 277, "The Untimely Ones," §1, my emphasis on "pointers to a higher concept of culture..."

The two essays on Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner are, it seems to me now, confessions about myself – above all, they are avowals to myself, rather than, say, real psychological accounts of those two masters, to whom I felt as much kinship as I felt antagonism. (I was the first person to distill a sort of unity out of both of them...)¹

Again, in §3, we find Nietzsche confessing that, when looking back on the two essays distinguished by the names of Schopenhauer and Wagner,

I do not wish to deny that at bottom they speak only of me. The essay *Wagner in Bayreuth* is a vision of my future, while in *Schopenhauer as Educator* my innermost history, my *becoming*, is inscribed. Above all, my promise!²

No longer do we find ‘Schopenhauer as Educator,’ but ‘Nietzsche as Educator.’ Of course with this psychological confession, the most appropriate question to ask Nietzsche at this juncture is: to educate us in what? Yet we ought to know the answer, for he has told us time and time and time again: Nietzsche as educator *is promising us a return to the Dionysian world-view*, to a world-view which says Yes out of suffering from the overabundance and fullness of life, and to those who demand the tragic vision of life out of the pessimism of strength.³ Nietzsche as educator is promising us the reappearance of a new tragic age on earth with his assimilation of the philosopher and artist united in one and the same individual. In other words, with Nietzsche claiming, in effect, to have surpassed his two great intellectual mentors by uniting what was best in them *within himself*, there can be nowhere else for the historical Schopenhauer and Wagner to go except down, since Nietzsche must of necessity throw out the remainder. Thus the challenge to Wagner, and through him, to Schopenhauer, has been brought to a head vis-à-vis his two great intellectual mentors for psychological hegemony over the meaning of the philosopher and the artist for culture, and with it the right to symbolize the meaning which attaches to the ‘music-making Socrates’ for modernity.

6. Towards the Dionysian Future of Music

As we have insisted upon from the very beginning of the chapter, the meaning or significance of the ‘music-making Socrates’ is not only a symbol that Nietzsche never abandoned, we have now demonstrated beyond all question through an analysis of his later, post-Wagnerian works that its significance resides *principally in the fact* that the philosopher and the artist, or in other words, rationality fused to the creative instincts for life, must be united in one and the same individual for the purpose of life and living, for it is the philosopher’s duty to confront the problem of suffering by drawing on one’s capacities to make ‘music’ out of life. Therefore, Nietzsche’s

¹ Letter to Georg Brandes, 19 February 1888, SL: 286 and KSB 8: 260.

² EH, 1989: 281, “The Untimely Ones,” §3.

³ Cf., GS, 1974: 328, “What is Romanticism?” §370.

challenge to Wagner, especially as we find it in *Ecce Homo*, is a triumphal statement of psychological self-overcoming as well as recognition of the fact that he has earned his rightful claim to take over the mantle from both Schopenhauer and Wagner about the nature and meaning of the philosopher and the artist for culture.

With this move, we are now poised to recognize the most startling fact of all, and one which will undoubtedly direct us towards the final resolution of Nietzsche's enigmatic and puzzling case of Wagner, and what it signifies for philosophy. But before we can recognize this fact for what it is, we must first understand in precisely what sense Wagner has been discarded. To resolve this issue will provide us with the structural foundation to Nietzsche's case of Wagner, from which the final, most intimate nature of the duel can finally be unraveled. These are the principal problems on which everything else rests, and it is to our final chapter, and their resolution, that we now turn.

Chapter 4

Music as the Late Fruit of Every Culture

“Of all the arts that grow up on a particular soil under particular social and political conditions, music is the sort of plant that appears *last*, perhaps because it is the most interior and, consequently, the latest to arrive [...] Perhaps our latest music too, dominant and thirsting for dominance though it is, only has a limited lifespan ahead of it: for it arose from a culture that is going speedily downhill, a *sunken* culture; it presupposes a certain catholicity of feeling together with a joy in all old, indigenous ‘nationalisms’, monstrous and otherwise.”

– *Nietzsche Contra Wagner: from the Files of a Psychologist*

1. A Music Without a Future

The primary concern of our investigation so far has been to present and demonstrate the nature and extent of Wagner's intellectual influence on Nietzsche, and in this respect, our fundamental objective has been to unfold the logic that exists behind Nietzsche's enigmatic *Case of Wagner*. The logic that we have unfolded so far, and which came to a climax towards the end of our last chapter, is that Nietzsche, in claiming to have distilled a 'psychological unity' out of both Schopenhauer and Wagner, had claimed, in effect, to have surpassed his two great intellectual mentors by uniting what was best in them *within himself*, and that as a consequence, the challenge to Wagner, and through him, to Schopenhauer, had been brought to a head vis-à-vis his two great intellectual mentors for psychological hegemony over the meaning of the philosopher and the artist for culture, and with it the right to symbolize the meaning which attached to the 'music-making Socrates' for culture.

Yet in challenging Wagner to a duel over the meaning of the 'music-making Socrates' for culture, Nietzsche had effectively presented his readers with the form of a challenge which lay in choosing between his 'psychological unity' on the one hand, or Schopenhauer and Wagner on the other, for rightful claim over the 'music-making Socrates' for culture. In other words, Nietzsche had left his readers with the choice of either one or the other of two alternatives for culture, and yet it was obvious, at least within the context of *Ecce Homo*, that the nature of these alternatives were mutually exclusive of one another. With Nietzsche telling us that his *Zarathustra* was the deed which proved that he had assimilated his two great intellectual mentors into a living paradigm of the philosopher and artist for life, it was clear that his 'psychological unity' was the logical choice over Schopenhauer and Wagner, and in particular, the Wagnerian conception of culture. In the final analysis, only Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* could promise us *a return to the Dionysian world-view*; that is, the coming of a new tragic age, not Wagner's *Artwork of the Future*.¹

So with this rhetoric in hand, it now becomes clear that we as Nietzsche's readers have been left with a choice. Yet to choose one or the other of two alternatives implies that the other choice would have to be discarded. But we can only really discard the alternative if we as readers have been convinced that the alternative really *is* the sign of decline. Yet this is precisely what Nietzsche is asking us to do: to discard Wagner, and through him Schopenhauer, as the sign of decline. Therefore, what better way to discard Wagner other than to tell his readers, using Wagner's own theory of the decline of culture, that Wagner himself is the sign of decline? In effect, what Nietzsche has done is to turn Wagner's theoretical arguments against Wagner himself and his art in order to claim, exclusively for himself, the right to carry the mantle of the 'music-making Socrates' for modernity with its promise for the rebirth of a new tragic culture.

¹ EH, 1989: 274, "Why I Write Such Good Books: The Birth of Tragedy," §4; Cf., GS, 1974: 327-31, "What is Romanticism?" §370.

This is our solution to how Wagner has been discarded, and with it, we have resolved the theoretical structure underpinning Nietzsche's case of Wagner for philosophy.

To fully envision how Wagner, and through him, Schopenhauer have been discarded, we ought to recall from Chapter 2 that the symbol of the 'music-making Socrates' had achieved its final and most mature form during Nietzsche's pro-Wagner period as one who embodied both the rational element fused to the creative instincts for life: as philosopher and artist, the 'music-making Socrates' had promised the rebirth of a new vitalistic world-view which would bring to a close the Socratic culture, which itself had originally destroyed the vitalistic world-view of the ancient Hellenes upon which tragedy had been built. With these claims in hand, it was here we noted that Wagner's theoretical arguments, especially in relation to the decline and rebirth of art as culture, implied a cyclical pattern of culture according to which physics could theoretically be applied, for between the tragic culture of the pre-Socratics and the Socratic culture stood the historical Socrates on the one hand, while between the Socratic culture and the rebirth of a new tragic culture stood the enigmatic symbol of the 'music-making Socrates' on the other. Using the diagram that we had created there, and which we have featured again below, to help us envision Wagner's cyclical pattern of culture, we were finally able to make sense out of the claims that Nietzsche, and through him, Wagner, had been making about the connection between vitalism and art on the one hand and its disappearance as a world-view which had led to the decline of culture on the other, and therefore the significance that the 'music-making Socrates' as a symbol had promised for culture according to their existing narrative. What we had discovered then was that Nietzsche, as self-appointed physician of his culture, had effectively drawn out the logical conclusions to Wagner's historical arguments about culture, and that he had in effect argued for the rebirth of the tragic concept based on an overall Wagnerian pattern of culture as follows:

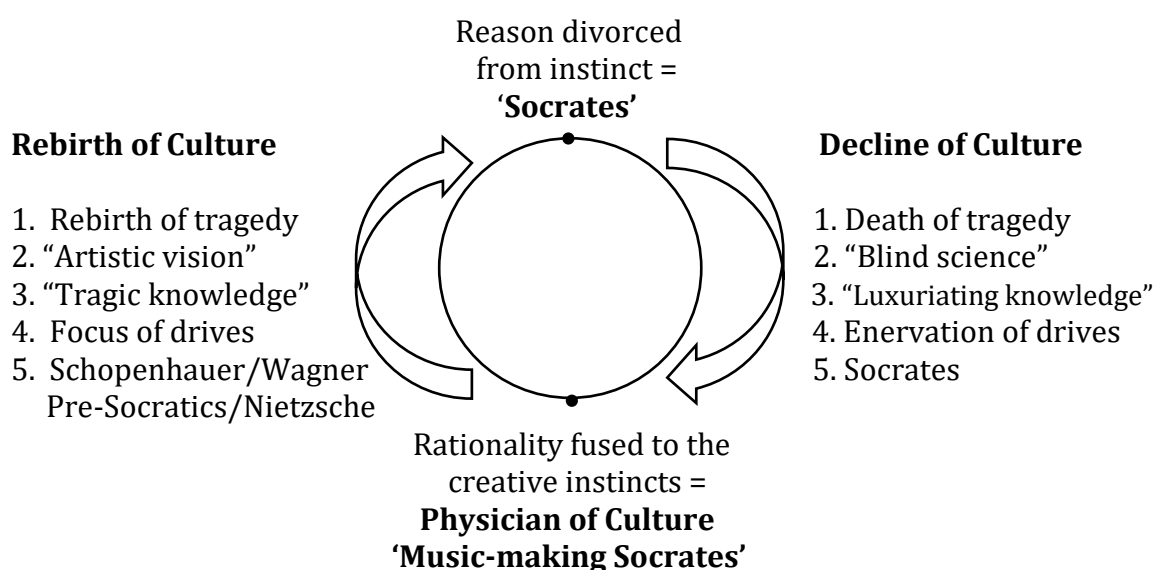


Figure 1. Nietzsche's 'pro-Wagner' conception of culture

According to Nietzsche's 'pro-Wagner' conception of culture as depicted in this pattern, it was the historical Socrates who had effectively brought about the death of tragedy and with it the decline of culture by attempting to divorce rationality from the creative instincts for life. Therefore, the teleology of the philosopher as physician of culture necessarily had stood in an utterly antipodal relationship to Socrates and his school, for the physician of culture was concerned with fusing rationality to the creative instincts for life, thereby reawakening and revitalizing the connection between vitalism and art, and with it, a new tragic culture. Without further ado, the pre-Socratics, and in particular, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaximander and their relationship to Aeschylus the 'total artist' of the fifth century had become structurally or morphologically similar to Schopenhauer/Nietzsche and their relationship to Wagner, author of the latter day *Gesamtkunstwerk*,¹ who together portended the coming German Reformation of Culture.² Accordingly, the phenomenon of Socrates and that of the philosopher as physician of culture had come to symbolize the dividing and uniting point of two cultural tendencies in antithetical tension. As we noted in Chapter 2, this was the significance of the figure of Socrates for culture.³

But following Nietzsche's break with Wagner, Nietzsche's solution to the problem of modernity resided in the 'microcosmic' approach to culture, in that the responsibility lay with the individual as the irreducible cultural unit to revitalize his culture by first transforming or creating himself. As a means to that end, and with Nietzsche himself now aspiring to become the 'music-making Socrates,'⁴ Nietzsche 'distilled' what ultimately became his 'psychological unity' out of Schopenhauer and Wagner, those who had themselves been the original models of the philosopher and artist of life, and the heroes of the original 'pro-Wagner' conception of culture.

In distilling the 'philosopher of life' from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche had derived an ethical teaching that was far more consistent with the metaphysical implications of Schopenhauer's vitalism. For if life truly is "the great ultimate, a law unto itself"⁵ in which the will always wills life,⁶ then the ethical implications of holding to this insight entail that one has the duty to unconditionally affirm the nature of existence in a purely vitalistic way. One must embrace the immanence of life, and that implies the further duty to confront the suffering found in the world without recourse to transcendental expedients. It was here that Schopenhauer had erred (according to Nietzsche), for it was the philosopher's duty to confront the problem of suffering, not to negate the will out of hope for a fusion of identity with the transcendent.

In distilling the 'artist of life' from Wagner, Nietzsche had learned how to embrace the immanence of life, and in particular to discover for himself "the tones out of the

¹ "The total work of art," PW 1: 88, "Artwork of the Future."

² Cf., UO, 1995: 292, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §7.

³ Cf., Chapter 2, section 4.

⁴ Ridley, 2007: 100

⁵ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future."

⁶ Cf., WWR 1: 186-89, §29 and WWR 2: 349-60, "Characterization of the Will to Live," Chapter 28.

realm of suffering”¹ as Wagner had done, in order to ‘make music’ out of life. For only the art of music appeals to the whole man, the rational as well as the vital, and is therefore the very discipline that fuses rationality to the creative instincts for life.² Yet it was precisely here that Wagner had erred (according to Nietzsche) by turning what is the most powerful art form into “a narcotic of the worst kind [...] with its dual properties of being both an intoxicating and a befogging narcotic.”³ One must find a way to make music out of life without getting oneself addicted to the intoxicating effects themselves.⁴ It was in this sense that Nietzsche had learned to fuse the cosmic beat and the rhythm of life into a living experience as a microcosm, and through the rational element, he learned to organize, dispose, and arrange the rhythms of life in such a way that they began to harmonize. By effecting a harmony of these rhythms, Nietzsche as the ‘artist of life’ fused these disparate elements within himself in order to express their tonality into one single, unified melody: his vision of life.

Under Nietzsche’s post-Wagnerian vitalist thesis, the symbol of the ‘music-making Socrates’ had come to emphasize the microcosmic approach to self-creation in which the wisdom of the philosopher to confront the problem of suffering would be fused with the ability to impart this wisdom to others in an immediate and irrefutable way. In distilling what he felt to be essential from his original mentors, Nietzsche had endeavored to ‘psychologically unite’ both the philosopher and the artist of life in one and the same individual through what we had termed the *what* and the *how* of his post-Wagnerian vitalist thesis respectively, while correspondingly, that which could not be distilled out of Schopenhauer and Wagner as a living paradigm of the ‘music-making Socrates’ for culture necessarily became, psychologically speaking, excess waste to be discarded. As we remarked in Chapter 3, this approach to the problem of culture was at pains to compete with Wagner’s throughout Nietzsche’s post-Wagnerian works. Yet as we witnessed in the astonishing climax to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche’s challenge to Wagner had culminated through the composition of his *Zarathustra* as the deed which proved that he had now become the ‘music-making Socrates’ for culture. With *Zarathustra* as the proof of both the *here and now* as well as the promise of what was to come in the imminent rebirth of tragic culture, Nietzsche’s ‘microcosmic’ approach to the problem of culture had effectively claimed the right to symbolize the ‘music-making Socrates’ for modernity by, on the one hand, attacking Wagner’s art as the target for Wagner’s own theory about the decline of culture, while on the other, proclaiming a victory for culture with his ‘psychological unity’ of Schopenhauer and Wagner in accordance with the same Wagnerian pattern of culture as follows:

¹ NCW, 2005: 265, “Where I Admire”; cf., GS, 1974: 143, “Of the Vanity of Artists,” §87.

² Cf., Chapter 1, section 3; Chapter 3, section 3.

³ BT, 1993: 10, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §6.

⁴ D, 2011: 40-41, “Where Are the New Physicians of the Soul?” §52.

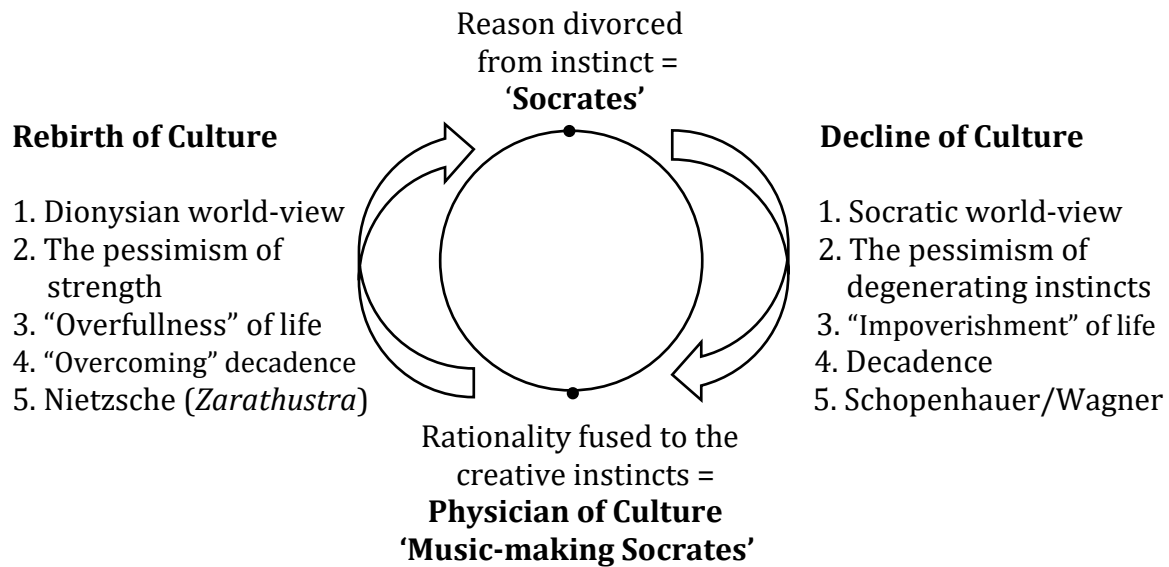


Figure 2. Nietzsche's 'contra-Wagner' conception of culture.

As depicted here in Nietzsche's revaluation of the Wagnerian conception of culture, Nietzsche's entire challenge to Wagner and Wagner's art – and that means in particular the deed of *Zarathustra* as the 'music-making Socrates' for culture – was built upon Nietzsche's categorical insistence on accepting the ethical implications of vitalism in an unqualified and uncompromising way.¹ This unconditional affirmation of life entailed, according to Nietzsche, the pessimism of strength, and it was precisely this revision of pessimism which we witnessed in Nietzsche's "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" that had separated Nietzsche as heir to the pre-Socratics from Schopenhauer and Wagner as the pessimists of degenerating instincts, thereby setting the stage for Wagner's art to become the target for Wagner's own theory about the decline of culture.²

With this categorical insistence on accepting the ethical implications of vitalism in an unqualified way presupposed, Nietzsche's entire challenge to Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture came to revolve around the fundamental premise that life truly *is* the great ultimate, and therefore a law unto itself as Wagner had maintained.³ Therefore, when life itself becomes a problem, the implication is that the instincts for life have begun to decline. If, therefore, art truly *is* the metaphysical activity of man as Wagner had likewise maintained,⁴ then the decline of art and culture would necessarily follow. Yet according to Wagner's own theoretical arguments, this is precisely what did happen to the tragic culture of the Greeks at a time when the "sophist needles of Athenian self-dissection" destroyed it.⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche himself never abandoned this thesis, as we clearly analyzed in Chapter 3.⁶

¹ Cf., Chapter 3, section 1.

² BT, 1993: 6-8, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," §§4-5; Cf., Chapter 3, section 1.

³ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future."

⁴ PW 1: 72-73, "Artwork of the Future."

⁵ PW 1: 136, "Artwork of the Future."

⁶ Cf., Chapter 3, sections 1-2.

Therefore, when it came to the question of vitalism, of life as the great ultimate, the Greeks following Socrates did not, in the final analysis, embrace life as the great ultimate after all, but had begun to dismantle and destroy the tragic conception of culture by endeavoring to discover “the moral interpretation and significance of existence.”¹ But since Wagner’s theory is correct (according to Nietzsche’s implicit endorsement of it), it follows that the instincts for life must still be declining in modernity as well, for Wagner in particular has had to resort to “the moral interpretation and significance of existence” in his art, especially in his final music drama *Parsifal*. The conclusion that Nietzsche wishes us to draw is that Wagner had succumbed to the very same phenomenon as those to whom he had originally blamed for having destroyed Greek tragedy in the first place, Socrates and his school. In that respect, Wagner was merely another disciple of the father of modernity, Socrates, that first pessimist of degenerating instincts, and as such, Wagner’s entire approach to culture must be diagnosed as the sign of decline.

Thus it is here we can see that Nietzsche simply held Wagner to account for his historical arguments about the connection between vitalism and art on the one hand and its relationship to the decline of culture on the other in order for Wagner and his ‘artwork of the future’ to become the target for Wagner’s own theory about the decline of culture. With this revision of pessimism, which emphasized cultivating the true ethical implications of vitalism, the original dichotomy of culture between vitalism on the one hand and the problem of modernity on the other had shifted from being the ‘pro-Wagner’ formula of Schopenhauer, Wagner and the pre-Socratic Greeks vs. the problem of modernity to the ‘contra-Wagner’ formula of Nietzsche and the pre-Socratic Greeks vs. Schopenhauer, Wagner, and the problem of modernity. Accordingly, once Nietzsche had convinced his readers that Wagner’s art had succumbed to his own theories about the decline of culture, it followed that Nietzsche could declare himself to be the true ‘music-maker’ for culture with his *Zarathustra*, and therefore the true heir of the tragic culture in perfect consistency from his pro-Wagner period.²

With this conclusion, it is very important to note that the phenomenon of Socrates and that of the philosopher as physician of culture still retain the same structural position in Nietzsche’s revaluation of the Wagnerian conception of culture. We must therefore emphasize once again that there is no question that Nietzsche did not recognize a parallel between himself and the historical Socrates, as our analysis has clearly shown, but it was a perceived parallel which depended principally on the fact that the historical Socrates represented, for Nietzsche, *the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension*. In this sense, it is a purely symbolic value which is at stake for Nietzsche, since this is precisely what Nietzsche endeavored to do in his attempt to bring about the final, struggling, moribund state of Socratic culture, and

¹ BT, 1993: 8, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” §5.

² Yet Nietzsche manages to go even further than this: he tells us that he is altogether the first *tragic philosopher*, even when considered among the pre-Socratics, EH, 1989: 273, “Why I Write Such Good Books: The Birth of Tragedy,” §3.

with it Christianity, with its degenerating instincts for life, to a hasty demise by ushering in a new rebirth of the tragic age, thereby *himself* becoming the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension.¹ So while it would be quite in form to suggest that the historical Socrates had capitalized on the conditions of his own milieu to his advantage, thereby hastening the downfall of a culture that had already succumbed to the anti-Dionysiac tendency of dialectic as we analyzed in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3,² the mistake of the historical Socrates, and in particular, why he failed as a physician of *culture* as far as Nietzsche was concerned, was that he had interpreted what was genuinely Hellenic (e.g., Pindar, Homer, the tragedies of Aeschylus, etc.) as a decline. In this respect, it is not a question of whether Nietzsche “could [ever] be sure that his project was not the same as the project of the tradition he had denounced” as Nehamas concludes,³ for in the final analysis, the issue was not so much the project itself, and in particular, whether the historical Socrates had been a self-creator in precisely the same sense that Nietzsche had endeavored to be,⁴ but in the *structural* or *morphological* significance that the historical Socrates played in the history of philosophy in having been the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension. This is precisely why the symbol of the ‘music-making Socrates’ carries so much theoretical weight with Nietzsche, for not only does it implicitly rely on Wagner’s overall pattern of culture, which had taken vitalistic presuppositions to be exclusively responsible for the decline and rebirth of culture which divide history accordingly, it is these *same* presuppositions which now govern, through the mouth of his *Zarathustra*, the demise of the pessimism of degenerating instincts, from Socrates, to Christianity, to Schopenhauer and Wagner, and through it to the rebirth of a new tragic age. For anyone who represents both the ascending and declining types of life at once, and who therefore unites two cultures in antithetical tension within himself, as Nietzsche plainly states in *Ecce Homo*, that person “breaks the history of mankind in two. One lives before him, or one lives after him.”⁵ With this Nietzsche becomes, as he had once claimed he would of Wagner, “in good measure his heir.”⁶ We now know the truth lurking behind Nietzsche’s image and parable that *Zarathustra*, with its promise of a new Dionysian world view, was born “exactly in that sacred hour in which Richard Wagner (i.e., the ‘old god’) died in Venice.”⁷

With the explanation we have advanced here, we have resolved the meaning of Nietzsche’s enigmatic case of Wagner, at least from the standpoint of the theoretical structure on which Nietzsche’s case of Wagner rests. We have seen that Nietzsche’s duel with Wagner is, of necessity, deeply embedded within this theoretical structure,

¹ In this connection, there is probably no better self-confession on Nietzsche’s part than the one he made to August Strindberg in late 1888 when he told him, “I am strong enough to break the history of mankind in two.” *Letter to August Strindberg*, 8 December 1888, SL: 330 and KSB 8: 509.

² Cf., Chapter 2, section 2; Chapter 3, section 2.

³ Nehamas, 2000: 155.

⁴ Nehamas, 2000: 155.

⁵ EH, 1989: 333, “Why I Am A Destiny,” §8.

⁶ *Letter to Peter Gast*, 19 February 1883, SL: 208 and KSB 6: 333-34.

⁷ EH, 1989: 295, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” §1.

and to that extent, it is intimately connected with the ideas of the decline and rebirth of culture which divide history accordingly, and the role that the ‘music-making Socrates’ as a symbol plays in this process. With this resolution, we have finally arrived at a position in which we can evaluate the text of the *Case of Wagner* itself by simply picking out the theoretical structure on which Nietzsche’s case of Wagner rests, and then testing it against a detailed analysis of what Nietzsche is actually saying (and doing) in challenging Wagner to a duel over the right to carry the mantle of the philosopher and artist for culture. It is to these considerations that we now turn, and with them, the final threads to Nietzsche’s duel with Wagner.

2. Music as the Late Fruit of Every Culture

Already in the preface to the *Case of Wagner*, we are immediately confronted with two very important and very prominent structural features of Nietzsche’s case which frame the entire backdrop of his subsequent attack on Wagner. The first feature is Nietzsche’s identification of the problem of modernity, that is, his ‘timeliness.’ What is the single element that has been responsible for the excesses of modernity, and which has prevented a new culture from emerging? According to Wagner’s *own* diagnosis, as we recall from Chapter 1, it is *luxury*.¹ But as the theoretical structure underpinning Nietzsche’s case of Wagner is that Wagner himself must become the victim of his own theories about the decline of culture, it follows at once that Wagner is *himself* luxury or, in other words, Nietzsche’s favorite word, decadence.

The second feature with which we are confronted, and the one which renders the philosopher necessary to his time, especially in terms of his teleology, is Nietzsche’s unique position in recognizing and thereby overcoming the problem of modernity, that is, the problem of decadence. When we put these two features together, we have, in Nietzsche’s own words, the following ‘confession’:

What does a philosopher demand of himself first and last? To overcome his time in himself, to become “timeless.” With what must he therefore engage in hardest combat? With whatever marks him as the child of his time. Well, then! I am, no less than Wagner, a child of his time; that is, a decadent: but I comprehended this, I resisted it. The philosopher in me resisted.²

When we examine the structure of this ‘confession,’ we are reminded once again of the vital and indispensable role that the philosopher as physician of culture plays from Nietzsche’s pro-Wagner period: not only does the philosopher comprehend the direction towards which his culture is tending, it is because he comprehends it that he is able to pave the way for a new culture by reforming those cultural excesses which prevent a new culture from emerging. In this regard, Nietzsche is never more the physician of his culture, that is, the physician of decadence, than he is in framing *The Case of Wagner*. From here, it is a small step to suggest, as surely as Nietzsche is

¹ PW 1: 76-78, “Artwork of the Future”; cf., Chapter 1, sections 5-6.

² CW, 1967: 155, “Preface.”

suggesting, that it was his fate to overcome decadence and therefore Wagner: that it was both necessary and indispensable in his role as the physician of his culture; that is, as the physician to himself.

Accordingly with this 'confession,' we can now discern what is perhaps one of the most important structural features to Nietzsche's case of Wagner: it is the philosopher as the physician of his culture who represents the dividing and uniting point of two cultures in antithetical tension, and to that effect, it is he and he *alone* who comprehends both the ascending and declining types of life at once. Again we see that in precisely the same structural sense as the historical Socrates, Nietzsche recognized "his case."¹ Because Nietzsche recognized his own decadence, which was at the same time the direction towards which all of modernity was tending, he was able to overcome it, thereby paving the way for a new culture that would be, in a very real sense, post-Wagnerian.

We should note that the form in which we find this 'confession' from the preface only addresses what we have termed the *what* in Nietzsche's post-Wagnerian vitalist thesis, and on that point, it is a very suggestive fact that the language of the 'confession' itself seems to be taken almost directly out of Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator* essay.² This should come as no real surprise however, for in Nietzsche's post-Wagnerian vitalist thesis, it is the *what* which corresponds with the paradigm derived from the philosopher of life in Nietzsche's 'psychological unity' of Schopenhauer and Wagner.

Yet this means we are still left with the question of *how*. How was it that Nietzsche overcame his decadence, and therefore his Wagnerism, in order to pave the way for a new culture? We do not find an answer to this question in the text to the *Case of Wagner* itself, but we do find one in the context of Nietzsche's discussion of decadence in *Ecce Homo*, and how he was uniquely destined to overcome it even from the physiological standpoint.

According to the story he tells us in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's very genealogy had been a union of both sickness and therefore 'decline' from his father, while at the same time he had inherited the instincts for life from his mother. It was this unique constitution of both the ascending and declining types of life at once, and in one and the same body which had given Nietzsche, according to his own account, "a subtler smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher *par excellence* for this – I know both, I am both."³ Continuing, he notes that

Looking from the perspective of the sick toward *healthier* concepts and values and, conversely, looking again from the fullness and self-assurance of a *rich* life down into the secret work of the instinct for decadence – in this I have had the longest training, my truest experience; if in anything, I became master

¹ TI, 1968: 32-33, "The Problem of Socrates," §9.

² Cf., "the philosopher must evaluate his own age by contrasting it with others, and by overcoming the present for himself – even with regard to the picture he draws of life – overcome the present – that is, make it unnoticeable, paint over it, as it were. This is a difficult, indeed, scarcely achievable task." UO, 1995: 193, "Schopenhauer as Educator," §3.

³ EH, 1989: 222, "Why I Am So Wise," §1.

in *this*. Now I know how, have the know-how, to *reverse perspectives*: the first reason why a “revaluation of values” is perhaps possible for me alone.¹

Yet despite a physiological disposition towards weakness and decline, Nietzsche had always possessed an instinct for health, and so he had always “instinctively chosen the *right* means against wretched states.”² That is, Nietzsche had instinctively inclined towards the *ascending* type of life, for only one who is healthy at bottom can make oneself healthy again. This is precisely what he tells us: “As *summa summarum*, I was healthy; as an angle, as a specialty, I was a decadent [...] I took myself in hand, I made myself healthy again: the condition for this – every physiologist would admit – is *that one be healthy at bottom*. A typically morbid being cannot become healthy, much less make itself healthy.”³ In other words, to accept decadence as an angle, as a specialty, one must be *strong* enough, for in that case, “being sick can even become an energetic *stimulus* for life, for living *more*.”⁴ Thus here we find an explanation for why Nietzsche, in knowing both and in being both, could in the end overcome decline in order to transmute it into the ascending type of life. Truly what we find in *Ecce Homo* is Nietzsche telling us nothing less than he is the very embodiment of the dividing and uniting point of decadence in history, and as the actual *incarnation* of both the ascending and declining types of life, it was his destiny to overcome his ‘timeliness’; that is, his own decadence, by becoming the physician of it in order to pave the way for a new culture, or what he calls here, a “revaluation of values.”

But with this confession of decadence in hand, we as readers are still not all that clear as to *how* it is that he was able to turn from the declining towards the ascending type of life. Yet given the fact that we have already identified in precisely what sense Nietzsche was competing with Wagner, we should hardly be surprised to find *self-creation* at the basis of how Nietzsche turned out well. For when it comes to making ‘music’ out of life, one must be *strong enough* to give style to one’s character:

That a well-turned-out person pleases our senses, that he is carved from wood that is hard, delicate, and at the same time smells good. He has a taste only for what is good for him; his pleasure, his delight cease where the measure of what is good for him is transgressed. He guesses what remedies avail against what is harmful; he exploits bad accidents to his advantage; what does not kill him makes him stronger. Instinctively, he collects from everything he sees, hears, lives through, *his* sum: he is a principle of selection, he discards much. He is always in his own company, whether he associates with books, human beings, or landscapes: he honors by *choosing*, by *admitting*, by *trusting*. He reacts slowly to all kinds of stimuli, with that slowness which long caution and deliberate pride have bred in him: he examines that stimulus that approaches him, he is far from meeting it halfway. He believes neither in “misfortune” nor in “guilt”: he comes to terms with himself, with others; he knows how to *forget* – he is strong enough; hence everything *must* turn out for his best.⁵

In other words, what we find in this passage is that one can turn from the declining towards the ascending type of life only if the individual is strong enough to

¹ EH, 1989: 223, “Why I Am So Wise,” §1.

² EH, 1989: 224, “Why I Am So Wise,” §2.

³ EH, 1989: 224, “Why I Am So Wise,” §2.

⁴ EH, 1989: 224, “Why I Am So Wise,” §2; cf., “Sickness itself can be a stimulant to life: only one has to be healthy enough for this stimulant.” CW, 1967: 165, §5.

⁵ EH, 1989: 224-25, “Why I Am So Wise,” §2.

concentrate, through the constraint of a single taste, all that life confers upon him in order that he may select from out of this bestowal the materials according to which he is able to create himself. To have the strength to create oneself, to make music out of life by facing existence on its own terms, is synonymous with the *ascending* type of life.

Once again, we should note that the form in which we find Nietzsche's 'confession' for *how* he overcame decadence in *Ecce Homo* not only resounds with the methodology of how the artist "[finds] himself again in the subject of his choice" as given in *Artwork of the Future*,¹ but also with a number of statements we find in Nietzsche's *Bayreuth* essay in which he had noted that the genius of Wagner's art resides principally in the fact that all the materials of learning and cultivation – all philosophies, all histories, all religions – were ultimately subordinated to his 'creative power,' and in particular as a means for his artistic needs, for it is the subjective needs of the artist, as a creator, which dominate.² Only after this manner could Wagner

...not only [pass] through the fire of many different philosophical systems without being afraid, but through the mist of knowledge and scholarship as well, and all the while he remained faithful to his higher self, which demanded of him *collective actions of his many voiced being*, and which commanded him to suffer and learn in order to accomplish those actions.³

In other words, we find that Nietzsche's solution for *how* he overcame decadence corresponds perfectly with the paradigm he had derived from the artist of life in Nietzsche's 'psychological unity' of Schopenhauer and Wagner.

Thus we find that by framing decadence as the backdrop for his entire attack on Wagner, the *what* and the *how*, which had together combined to form the 'microcosmic' approach to the problem of modernity as the rival to Wagner's, has become the very methodology to overcome Wagner himself *as* the problem of modernity. In order to pave the way for a new culture that would be, in a very real sense, post-Wagnerian, the *what* (to confront one's 'timeliness'; one's decadence, one's Wagnerism) and the *how* (through self-creation) become the prescription given by the physician of culture to heal himself from modernity, and with it, the Wagnerian conception of culture. Since it is given, moreover, for us to accept that only one who has recognized this declining life and has overcome it is by definition rooted in the ascending type of life, it follows (according to Nietzsche's logic) that he must be creating his art out of the 'overfullness' of life and not its impoverishment, while conversely, Wagner's art must be a late and perhaps the last fruit of a declining culture with its degenerating instincts for life.⁴ With these battle lines drawn, we are unquestionably made to know who the better 'music-maker' for culture truly is.

¹ PW 1: 73, "Artwork of the Future"; cf., Chapter 1, section 1.

² UO, 1995: 270, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §4.

³ UO, 1995: 273, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §4.

⁴ Indeed, with his "keen eye for the symptoms of decline," Nietzsche recognized that Wagner's art signified "the will to the end, the great weariness." CW, 1967: 155, "Preface."

3. Nietzsche's Dangerous Game

By framing the *Case of Wagner* in terms of the decadence to which he had succumbed as well as the act of overcoming it through self-creation, it immediately becomes evident that Nietzsche believes, as the physician of his culture, that he has created an epistemic gap between himself and modernity when it comes to the business of criticizing Wagner's art, and it is principally in virtue of his 'microcosmic' approach to the problem of culture that he believes this to be possible. Now the question to ask when it comes to the *Case of Wagner* is: is this true? In other words, if Nietzsche's 'microcosmic' approach to the problem of culture is in fact a challenge to Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture, then how can we be sure *what* the charges against Wagner actually are in the *Case of Wagner*, especially if it is true, and can easily be proven, that Nietzsche openly ridiculed in Wagner what he covertly coveted for himself in creating his 'microcosmic' approach to culture?

It would be difficult to trace all the points of ideological contention, let alone the numerous taunts and gibes as they occur in the *Case of Wagner*, without devoting an entire dissertation to an analysis of Nietzsche's intellectual confluence with Wagner, as well as a biographical unfolding of their relationship on which that analysis is based. In a certain sense, the work we presented in our appendix has provided a tentative direction that future research in this area should take, but in the context of analyzing the *Case of Wagner* itself, we can name two or three main points, or rather 'charges,' which are most pertinent to determining an answer to this question:

Charge 1: Nietzsche openly ridicules Wagner for the seductiveness of his art, calling him at times an "old magician" and a "clever rattlesnake,"¹ and at times "the master of hypnotic tricks"²; and yet at the same time, Nietzsche is fully aware of the power of music as an advocate, especially when it comes to the art of prose, to 'seduce' men's ears and hearts to both error and truth alike.³ Indeed, the primary lesson we derived from §106 of *The Gay Science* was that rhythm is an unconscious exercise in hypnotics in which the mind does not know that it is being mesmerized.⁴ But perhaps more to the point is that Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is just such a seducer,⁵ and more than a few times in *Ecce Homo* alone Nietzsche affords himself the opportunity to tell his readers that the great art of musical prose had been discovered by him and him alone.⁶ After all, Nietzsche knows very well that it is not possible to refute a tone.⁷

¹ CW, 1967: 160, §3.

² CW, 1967: 166, §5.

³ GS, 1974: 162, "Music as an Advocate," §106.

⁴ Cf., Chapter 3, section 4.

⁵ EH, 1989: 220, "Nietzsche's Preface," §4.

⁶ E.g., "Before me, it was not known what could be done with the German language – what could be done with language in general. The art of the great rhythm, the great style of long periods to express a tremendous up and down of sublime, of superhuman passion, was discovered only by me; with a dithyramb like the last one in the third part of *Zarathustra*, entitled 'The Seven Seals,' I soared a thousand miles beyond what was called poetry hitherto." EH, 1989: 265-66, "Why I Write Such Good Books," §4.

⁷ GS, 1974: 162, "Music as an Advocate," §106.

Charge 2: Nietzsche openly ridicules Wagner's genius by telling us that Wagner composes, not from inspiration, but from 'hallucination,' and moreover the hallucination from gesture, from which Wagner then "seeks the sign language of sounds for them."¹ Indeed, we find that Wagner is the greatest miniaturist in music *precisely because* he was never able to compose from totality, and that as a consequence, he had to make patchwork, motifs, and formulas, all of which are themselves derived from the gesture.² Once again we find the same accusation here that we had found in §87 of *The Gay Science* ("Of the Vanity of Artists"), along with its eventual 'concession' to Wagner in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*,³ namely that no musician is better at the infinitely small, and hence the microcosmic than Wagner. It is where he excels; yet his art is at its best precisely when Wagner is least aware of it, because he subordinates his entire art to that of the grand gesture: he is too vain to know that "his character prefers large walls and audacious frescoes."⁴

With these accusations, what we find in effect is that Schopenhauer's doctrine of the genius no longer applies to Wagner as the artist of life,⁵ and yet when it comes to Nietzsche himself and the question of his own genius, Nietzsche tells us that his *Zarathustra* had come to him as a *bone fide* inspiration. In a section completely devoted to the description of his afflatus, Nietzsche tells us that he had merely been the "mouthpiece, merely the medium of overpowering forces" in which the inspiration for his *Zarathustra* had been revealed to him. "Like lightning, a thought flashes up, with necessity, without hesitation regarding its form" Nietzsche reports, for "everything happens involuntarily in the highest degree but as in a gale of a feeling of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity [...] everything offers itself as the nearest, most obvious, simplest expression [...] here the words and word shrines of all being open up before you; here all being wishes to become word, all becoming wishes to learn from you how to speak." Concluding, Nietzsche then asserts that "this is *my* experience of inspiration; I do not doubt that one has to go back thousands of years in order to find anyone who could say to me, 'it is mine as well.'"^{6,7}

Thus when we compare Nietzsche's description of the joy, the freedom, and the power found in having his *Zarathustra* 'revealed' to him, Wagner's approach to

¹ CW, 1967: 170, §7.

² CW, 1967: 177, §10.

³ NCW, 2005: 266, "Where I Admire."

⁴ GS, 1974: 143, "Of the Vanity of Artists," §87.

⁵ Cf., Chapter 1, section 5.

⁶ EH, 1989: 300-01, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §3.

⁷ All in all, this is a very interesting turn of events, for in *Human, All Too Human* I, Nietzsche specifically denies the notion of inspiration which he seeks to exalt here in *Ecce Homo*, telling us instead that "in reality, the imagination of a good artist or thinker continually produces good, mediocre and bad things," and that it is his "*power of judgement*" which "rejects, selects, ties together," using Beethoven's notebooks – i.e., Wagner's favorite composer – to illustrate "how he gradually gathered together the finest melodies and selected them, as it were, out of multiple beginnings." HAH I: 118, "Belief in Inspiration," §155. We should note that Wagner was not slow to react to Nietzsche's sleight of the 'genius,' where Cosima recorded in particular that "R. talks in disgust about Nietzsche's denial of inspiration as shown by the Beethoven sketchbooks; it would be better, he says, if such sketches were not published – as if the search for a form for a particular inspiration were a denial of its existence!" *Diary Entry*, 27 July 1878, CWD 2: 123.

composition sounds downright devitalizing. In point of fact, Nietzsche tells us that Wagner's approach in cobbling together his patchwork of motifs and formulas at the cellular level simply "exhausts his strength,"¹ whereas conversely, Nietzsche's vigor and patience were perfect in the days following the composition of his *Zarathustra*: "Often one could have seen me dance; in those days I could walk in the mountains for seven or eight hours without a trace of weariness."² What we find, in other words, is that Nietzsche's art is effortlessly and authentically inspired, while Wagner's art is at best laboriously cobbled together from the gesture.

Incidentally, as our argument now touches on Nietzsche contra Wagner and the question of inspiration and the genius, it is important at this point to disabuse another one of Nehamas's claims which he takes to support his thesis about Nietzsche's affinity to Socrates, and in particular that Nietzsche had somehow "made peace" with Socrates during his "middle period."³ Once again, Nehamas invokes a single section to support his claim (*Dawn*, §544), and yet again Nehamas's excerpt is lifted completely out of context, for we need only point out that the portion of the section he presents for us to consider not only manages to remove the *climax* of the section, it also removes along with it Nietzsche's entire point. As is clear from the climax to §544, Nietzsche is specifically repudiating the doctrine that he and Wagner once shared vis à vis Schopenhauer's interpretation of Plato that the genius has privileged epistemic access to the Ideas. Therefore when one reads this section in its entirety, it becomes exceedingly difficult to figure out how Nehamas derived the claim he believes it supports. Yes, it was Socrates who discovered the "antithetical magic, that of cause and effect, of ground and consequence" which lies on the palate of every modern man as his normal taste, whereas it is only to the "lustful and conceited" that it cannot help being repugnant.⁴ But the "lustful and conceited" in this context clearly refers to Wagner, for continuing where Nehamas jumps off, Nietzsche tells us that these latter (i.e., the "lustful and conceited") delight in anything

that stands in contrast to the normal taste: their subtler ambition would like all too happily to convince itself that their souls are exceptions, not dialectical and reasonable beings, but instead – well, for example, "intuitive beings," gifted with "inner sense" or "intellectual intuition." Above all, however, they want to be "artistic natures" with a genius in their head and a demon in their body, and consequently also with special rights and privileges for both worlds, especially with the privilege of the gods to be incomprehensible. – *That* is what's driving philosophy today too! I'm afraid they'll notice one day that they have made a mistake – what they wanted was religion!⁵

When we consider the true context of this aphorism, it is important to understand that long after Nietzsche had left the picture, he continued to be the recipient of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, Wagner's periodical until at least 1878,⁶ in which the rhetoric

¹ CW, 1967: 170, §7.

² EH, 1989: 303, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §4.

³ Nehamas, 2000: 136.

⁴ Nehamas, 2000: 136.

⁵ D, 2011: 268-69, §544.

⁶ *Diary Entry*, 8 November 1878: "I tell [Richard] that Nietzsche has requested that the *Blätter* not be sent to him. 'I'm glad he has taken it to heart,' R. says." CWD 2: 193.

used in speaking about Wagner had become increasingly beatific, and which culminated on at least one occasion in which the Wagnerites had likened Wagner to Christ.¹ Naturally therefore, Nietzsche would now sing halleluiahs to the dialectical method in this aphorism, but not because he necessarily champions Socrates, but because it is *contra* Wagner and the entire paraphernalia, religious and otherwise, of the Wagnerian conception of culture.²

Charge 3: Finally, and by far the most pervasive accusation found in the *Case of Wagner*, is that Wagner introduced the psychology of the actor into music.³ If the essence of acting is, according to Nietzsche, dissimulation pure and simple, then Wagner's art gives the lie precisely because it concerns itself with "effect, nothing but effect."⁴ Hence the true agglutinating agent of his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and what enabled Wagner to lord it over the other arts, was Wagner's tyrannical instinct for acting. It was through his actor's genius that all the other art forms in existence became *mere means* for his art of calculating effects. Consequently, Wagner was neither musician, nor poet, nor dramatist.⁵ Rather,

he *became* a musician, he *became* a poet because the tyrant within him, his actor's genius, compelled him. One cannot begin to figure out Wagner until one figures out his dominant instinct.⁶

Wagner's art, in other words, is one grand theatrical gesture. In addition, because Wagner's pathos for acting toppled every taste and conquered every resistance for maintaining a separation of the arts, there was an overall change and decline of all the other arts into histrionics after Wagner had finished with them.

With these two accusations working in conjunction – 'Wagner the actor' with his art of 'effects' – we find once again Nietzsche working overtime to ensure that Wagner himself become the victim of his own theories about the decline of culture. In the first place, when it came to creating the artwork of the future, and in particular Wagner's monumental *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the deed itself was made to rest on the shoulders of the artist of the future. And yet who did Wagner nominate to be the artist of the future in his original analysis? "Without a doubt, the Poet. But *who* will be the Poet? Indisputably the *Performer*."⁷ In other words, the artwork of the future was made to rest on the shoulders of the actor, and Wagner, as we very well know, principally nominated himself in that role. Therefore, (according to Nietzsche's analysis), it must be true that Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* was held together by Wagner's tyrannical instinct for acting, for according to Wagner's *own* admission, the synthetic unity of all the arts rested on, and was made subordinate to, the gesture.

¹ *Diary Entry*, 9 December 1880, CWD 2: 571.

² Cf., "Drama requires *rigorous* logic: but what did Wagner ever care about logic?" CW, 1967: 175, §9.

³ CW, 1967: 169-80, §§7-12.

⁴ CW, 1967: 173, §8.

⁵ CW, 1967: 172-76, §§8-9.

⁶ CW, 1967: 172, §8.

⁷ PW 1: 195-96, "Artwork of the Future"; cf., Chapter 1, section 1.

But in the second place, if it was true that the synthetic unity of all the arts rested on the gesture, then it likewise followed that Wagner's art was principally concerned with creating 'false pathos' or, in other words, with 'effect,' and was therefore no better than the French 'sensational pieces' that he had railed against in his critique of modern opera from his essay *The Destiny of Opera*¹ – incidentally, the very essay which had been the model for Nietzsche's own *The Birth of Tragedy*. After all, it was Wagner who had decided there was a need for 'poetic pathos' in his music dramas, and who "deliberately adopted a *rhetorical mode of diction*, with the aim of working on the feeling" in his libretti; but, "as it was impossible for our unpoetic actors to either understand or carry out this ideal aim, this diction led to that intrinsically senseless, but melodramatically telling style of declamation whose practical object was just the said 'effect'; i.e., a stunning of the spectator's senses, to be documented by the outburst of 'applause.'"^{2,3}

The conclusion that Nietzsche urges us to draw is that Wagner's art is necessarily false, and consequently so is Wagner, for when one's dominant instinct is concerned with dissimulation pure and simple, one's art necessarily becomes "effect, nothing but effect."

Once again however, when it comes to this third set of 'charges' against Wagner, we find that Nietzsche is on very dangerous ground in making them, for when we consider Nietzsche's case against Wagner, and especially the nature of Nietzsche's competition with Wagner as a whole, who could possibly balk at the suggestion that Nietzsche's forceful and insistent showcasing of his *Zarathustra* is itself one grand theatrical gesture against Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture?

Let us take one very robust and highly instructive point for comparison in order to test this claim. In terms of its 'religiosity,' both in the sense of the 'profundity of its spirit' and of its devoutness as a deed, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is, in Nietzsche's estimation, far deeper and far more overwhelming than all the "moral and religious absurdities"⁴ and "all the counterfeiting of transcendence and beyond"⁵ that we find in Wagner's music dramas. While redemption may have been Wagner's problem,⁶ Wagner was above all "a first-rate actor,"⁷ and therefore it was Wagner's virtue to understand, according to the entire psychology of the actor, that "what is meant to have the effect of truth must not be true."⁸

¹ PW 5: 133, "The Destiny of Opera."

² PW 5: 133, "The Destiny of Opera."

³ The principal 'charge' to be found in Wagner's theoretical writings about the actor, and of the German actor in particular, was that actors by and large could not envision the ideal drama of the poet's creation, and so could not recreate the "poetic pathos" of the drama in any kind inwardly felt and sensed way. As a consequence, actors merely adapted the outward form of the pathos – what Wagner had termed "false pathos" – and the ensuing tendency to create effect. But for Wagner, the genius of the actor lay precisely in his or her intuitive improvisation, and in that respect, there was no drama of which to speak if the actor could not recreate the pathos of the poet as a living flesh-and-blood presentation on the dramatic stage.

⁴ CW, 1967: 162, §3.

⁵ CW, 1967: 183, "Postscript."

⁶ CW, 1967: 160, §3.

⁷ CW, 1967: 172, §8.

⁸ CW, 1967: 173, §8.

Yet when it comes to the authenticity of his own ‘redemption,’ we find Nietzsche telling his readers in *Ecce Homo* that he was no less than ‘reborn’ through the inspiration of his *Zarathustra*,¹ a claim which culminates above all in his grand theatrical admonishment that “one pays dearly for immortality: one has to die several times while still alive.”² Then when it comes to the deed of *Zarathustra* itself, the lyrical hyperbole practically overflows with ‘proof’ of just how authentic and original Nietzsche is, not only as the poet, but as the very embodiment of, this ‘music-maker’ for culture. In this regard, the claims Nietzsche makes here are so tremendous, that they are worth excerpting in some length:

This work stands altogether apart. Leaving aside the poets: perhaps nothing has ever been done from an excess of strength. My concept of the “Dionysian” here became a *supreme deed*; measured against that, all the rest of human activity seems poor and relative. That a Goethe, a Shakespeare, would be unable to breathe even for a moment in this tremendous passion and height, that Dante is, compared with Zarathustra, merely a believer and not one who first *creates* truth, a *world-governing spirit*, a destiny – that the poets of the Veda are priests and not even worthy of tying the shoelaces of a Zarathustra – that is the least thing and gives no idea of the distance, of the *azure* solitude in which this work lives. Zarathustra possess an eternal right to say: “I draw circles around me and sacred boundaries; fewer and fewer men climb with me on ever higher mountains: I am building a mountain range out of ever more sacred mountains.” Let anyone add up the spirit and good nature of all great souls: all of them together would not be capable of producing even one of Zarathustra’s discourses. The ladder on which he ascends and descends is tremendous; he has seen further, willed further, been *capable* further than any other human being [...] There is no moment in this revelation of truth that has been anticipated or guessed by even *one* of the greatest. There is no wisdom, no investigation of the soul, no art of speech before Zarathustra; what is nearest and most everyday, here speaks of unheard-of things. Epigrams trembling with passion, eloquence become music, lightning bolts hurled forward into hitherto unfathomed futures. The most powerful capacity for metaphors that has existed so far is poor and mere child’s play compared with this return of language to the nature of imagery [...] Zarathustra is a dancer – how he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has thought the “most abysmal idea,” nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence – but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal Yes to all things, “the tremendous, unbounded saying Yes and Amen.” – “Into all abysses I still carry the blessings of my saying Yes.” – *But this is the concept of Dionysus once again.*³

After reading these statements, it is virtually impossible to deny that the claims Nietzsche makes here are simply incredible, and when we truly consider the implications of what Nietzsche is telling us here about his *Zarathustra* (and in many other places besides), it likewise becomes impossible to deny that Nietzsche’s assertions here are the pinnacle of theatricality, and therefore of gesture, in trying to ‘take on’ Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture. Once again we find that *Zarathustra* typifies the pessimism of strength, of the one who “has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality,” and yet is able to eternally say Yes to all things – that is, to make ‘music’ out of life. Does this sound familiar? It should. For nothing less is at stake than the right to symbolize the meaning that is attached to the ‘music-making Socrates’ for culture; and yet in setting up his *Zarathustra* as the direct competition with Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture, and especially in *showcasing*

¹ EH, 1989: 295, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §1.

² EH, 1989: 303, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §5.

³ EH, 1989: 304-05, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §6.

that competition, the rhetorical ostentation that we find here is indisputably theatrical.

Yet continuing in §7, Nietzsche tells us that it was *he* who invented the dithyramb, not Wagner.¹ Consequently, the entire vision of the dithyrambic dramatist as we find it in Nietzsche's essay *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* really refers to "the pre-existent poet of *Zarathustra*" – he plainly tells us this, for after all, Nietzsche's 'psychological distillation' of Wagner is at stake.² And even though the essence of the dithyrambic dramatist is above all the synthesis of "the actor, the poet, and the composer"³ on Nietzsche's own admission, we are meant to understand once again, and with grand theatrical gesture all the same, just how authentic Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is. After devoting an entire section to excerpting the "Night-Song,"⁴ Nietzsche warns his readers that "nothing like this has ever been written, felt, or *suffered*"; indeed, that only a god such as Dionysus suffers after this manner.⁵

Here again, and with this statement in particular, Nietzsche plays a very dangerous game when it comes to showcasing the *what* in his post-Wagnerian vitalist thesis against Wagner, for in telling us frankly that "nothing like this [Night-Song] has ever been written, felt, or *suffered*," Nietzsche leaves himself open to the charge that it is *he*, and not Wagner, who has subordinated the problem of suffering to the gesture in the very act of challenging Wagner to a duel over the meaning of suffering in their respective works.⁶

Thus as far as the question of 'effect' is concerned, Nietzsche is every bit as aware of how to stupefy a spectator's senses with his own music, even though he lays the blame for it exclusively at Wagner's feet. It is perhaps for this very reason that we can easily discount what Nietzsche says about Bizet in the pamphlet – after all, Nietzsche did. Bizet was only invoked, according to Nietzsche, as "an ironic antithesis to Wagner," and for that purpose, he had "a strong effect."⁷ But perhaps an even more convincing test of this question comes from the comparison between the slander that we find of Wagner's *Parsifal* in the *Case of Wagner* with Nietzsche's very 'un-theatrical' reaction to the prelude in a letter to his musician-friend and confederate Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast) the year prior. In a letter dated 21 January 1887 and "in purely esthetic (sic) terms," Nietzsche admits,

Did Wagner ever compose anything better? The finest psychological intelligence and definition of what must be said here, expressed, *communicated*, the briefest and most direct form for it, every nuance of feeling pared down to an epigram; a clarity in the music as descriptive art, bringing to mind a shield with a design in relief on it; and, finally, a sublime and extraordinary feeling, experience, happening of the soul at the basis of music, which does Wagner the highest credit, a synthesis of states which will

¹ EH, 1989: 306, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §7.

² EH, 1989: 274, "Why I Write Such Good Books: The Birth of Tragedy," §4.

³ UO, 1995: 292, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §7.

⁴ EH, 1989: 306-07, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §8; Z, 1933: 96-97, "The Night-Song."

⁵ EH, 1989: 308, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §8.

⁶ Cf., "Wagner is someone who has suffered deeply – his *superiority* to other musicians. – I admire Wagner wherever he has set *himself* to music." NCW, 2005: 266, "Where I Admire."

⁷ *Letter to Carl Fuchs*, 27 December 1888, SL: 340 and KSB 8: 554.

seem incompatible to many people, even “loftier” people, with a severity that judges, an “altitude” in the terrifying sense of the word, with an intimate cognizance and perspicuity that cuts through the soul like a knife – and with a compassion for what is being *watched* and *judged*. Something of that sort occurs in *Dante* – nowhere else. Has any painter ever painted such a melancholy gaze of love as Wagner did with the last accents of his prelude? Loyally, your friend Nietzsche.¹

Given what Nietzsche says here about his initial reaction to the *Parsifal* prelude, it is interesting to note that in the context of his *Ecce Homo* one year later, *Zarathustra* ‘outdoes’ Wagner’s *Parsifal* in that “Dante is, compared with *Zarathustra*, merely a believer and not one who first *creates* truth, a *world-governing spirit*, a destiny,” and that *Zarathustra* too creates “Epigrams trembling with passion, eloquence become music, lightning bolts hurled forward into hitherto unfathomed futures.”² Whatever Wagner does, it seems, Nietzsche does better. So when we then compare Nietzsche’s initial reaction of the prelude with what we find in the *Case of Wagner*, we are forced to admit that we are simply confronted by theatricality designed for histrionic effect in Nietzsche’s fulmination at Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture:

In the art of seduction, *Parsifal* will always retain its rank – as *the stroke of genius* in seduction. I admire this work; I wish I had written it myself; failing that, *I understand it*. – Wagner never had better inspirations than in the end. Here the cunning in his alliance of beauty and sickness goes so far that, as it were, it casts a shadow over Wagner’s earlier art – which now seems too bright, too healthy. Do you understand this? Health, brightness having the effect of shadow? almost of an *objection*? – To such an extent have we become *pure fools*.³ – Never was there a greater master in dim hieratic aromas – never was there a man equally expert in all small infinities, all that trembles and is effusive, all the feminisms from the *idioticon* of happiness! – Drink, O my friends, the philters of this art! Nowhere will you find a more agreeable way of enervating your spirit, of forgetting your manhood under a rosebush. – Ah, this old magician! This Klingsor of all Klingsors!⁴ How he thus wages war against *us*! *us*, the free spirits! How he indulges every cowardice of the modern soul with the tones of magic maidens! – Never before has there been such a *deadly hatred* of knowledge! – One has to be a cynic in order not to be seduced here; one has to be able to bite in order not to worship here. Well then, you old seducer, the cynic warns you, *cave canem*.⁵

When we consider this excerpt as a whole, and especially when we compare it to Nietzsche’s initial reaction to the *Parsifal* prelude, one cannot help but conclude that in bringing his challenge to Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture to a head, Nietzsche has played a very dangerous game by introducing histrionics, theatricality, and the gesture himself into his act of overcoming Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture.

4. The Case of Nietzsche

With the analysis that we have presented so far of Nietzsche’s case of Wagner, we now know that in addition to the theoretical structure on which Nietzsche’s case of Wagner

¹ Letter to Peter Gast, 21 January 1887, SL: 260 and KSB 8: 12-13.

² EH, 1989: 304-05, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §6.

³ i.e., like *Parsifal* himself, the pure fool, enlightened by compassion.

⁴ The “black” magician in *Parsifal*, who seduces away the Knights of the Grail.

⁵ CW, 1967: 184, “Postscript.”

rests, there was also a personal challenge to Wagner that was grafted on to the structure itself where, as we witnessed in the text to the *Case of Wagner* itself, Nietzsche had endeavored to come clean from Wagner, and to overcome him by means of it. In this regard, the structural invariants we discovered, originating in Nietzsche's pro-Wagner period, and then used in Nietzsche's favor against Wagner during his contra-Wagner period, are as follows:

1. The philosopher as physician of culture comprehends the direction that his culture is tending, and is able to pave the way for a new culture by reforming those cultural excesses which prevent a new culture from emerging.
2. The philosopher as physician of culture is the true uniting and dividing point of two cultures in antithetical tension, for it is he and he alone who comprehends both the ascending and declining types of life at once. This was the significance of the historical Socrates for philosophy.
3. The philosopher as physician of culture is the utter antipode of Socrates and his school, for it was the historical Socrates who had been responsible for the death of the tragic concept, and with it the decline of culture, by divorcing rationality from the creative instincts for life.
4. Man is not simply a rational, but likewise a vital embodiment. Therefore, the physic for culture is, broadly speaking, the musical deed, for music is the only discipline capable of fusing the rational to the creative instincts for life, thereby effecting a very real harmony of the whole man, the rational as well as the vital.

These structural invariants, as we now know, were intimately bound up with the problem of culture and the so-called 'problem of modernity.' Because Nietzsche's entire challenge to Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture centered around the right to symbolize the 'music-making Socrates' for culture, Nietzsche's challenge could only be meaningful if the challenge itself necessarily presupposed the validity of Wagner's overall pattern of culture so that, on the one hand, Wagner's art could be shown to succumb to Wagner's own theories about the decline of culture, while on the other, Nietzsche could prove that he had won a victory for culture in accordance with them. This was the only way Nietzsche could declare himself to be the legitimate successor of the tragic culture in perfect consistency with his pro-Wagner period. But to triumph over Wagner meant challenging Wagner on his own terms, for in Nietzsche's logic, the issue at stake lay precisely in the fact that the philosopher and artist must be united in one and the same individual: Nietzsche's 'psychological unity' of Schopenhauer and Wagner had to be seen in Nietzsche's eyes as the legitimate counter-offer to rival Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture for the 'music-making Socrates' for culture. If, however, the issue at stake in challenging Wagner to a duel and in *winning that duel* meant triumphing over Wagner with his 'psychological

unity' of the philosopher and artist in one and the same individual – in other words, Nietzsche as the 'music-making Socrates' and *not* Wagner – then the significance of Nietzsche's dangerous game lay precisely in the fact that Nietzsche's challenge to Wagner necessarily entailed reaching into Wagner's 'bag of tricks' in order to overcome him. Looking at our analysis of these three main 'charges' as they occur in the *Case of Wagner*, this is exactly what we discovered, for when the 'charges' in question were in any way related to Nietzsche's 'psychological unity,' and especially when they concerned the deed of *Zarathustra*, there was nothing but legitimacy and authenticity spreading everywhere, whereas in Wagner's hands by contrast, they are tricks pure and simple.

With this explanation, we finally have a very suggestive reason as to why *Parsifal* cannot succeed when it comes to Nietzsche's attack of it in the *Case of Wagner*. Nietzsche's attack on *Parsifal* has nothing to do with the oft-cited cover story that Wagner started talking about a Christian conversion experience in connection with it during their final meeting in Sorrento in November 1876, and that it had somehow offended the sensibilities of Nietzsche's newly found 'free spirit.'¹ Nietzsche had long been aware of Wagner's intentions towards it as a project, for not only had the original prose sketch of *Parsifal* been drafted four years before Nietzsche even met Wagner,² Nietzsche himself had even heard the prose sketch read out loud for him at Christmas 1869 with "renewed feelings of awe."³ No. The reason *Parsifal* cannot succeed is that, if it does, Nietzsche would be forced to admit that Wagner had won the duel between them, and with it, the right to symbolize the 'music-making Socrates' for modernity. Therefore, *Parsifal* does *not* win, and so we necessarily get, on the one hand, *Zarathustra* 'outdoing' *Parsifal* in *Ecce Homo*, while on the other, we get the very musical, very theatrical tirade of it in the *Case of Wagner*.

On this point, an observation which Aaron Ridley makes on the value of what Wagner attempted to do with *Parsifal* dovetails very nicely into our discussion of Nietzsche's competition with Wagner. Following Michael Tanner's reading of *Parsifal* in certain important respects,⁴ Ridley notes that,

Far from *flattering* 'every nihilistic' instinct, 'every religious expression of decadence', as Nietzsche claims, Wagner sets out in *Parsifal* to understand and inhabit those instincts and expressions, so as to diagnose and *overcome* the impulses lying behind 'the whole counterfeit of transcendence and beyond'. Wagner's art, that is, is engaged in an enterprise that is Nietzschean to its core. *It is, in fact, an exercise in just the kind of musical philosophy for which Nietzsche longed most ardently.*⁵

How true Ridley's conclusion is becomes manifestly apparent once we consider, as we surely have done, both Nietzsche's 'un-theatrical' reaction to the prelude,⁶ and then

¹ Nietzsche's notes on his final conversation with Wagner are in KSA 14: 161 et seq.

² BB, 1980: 46-61, "Parzival" sketch, 27-30 August 1865.

³ *Diary Entry*, 25 December 1869, CWD 1: 176.

⁴ See Michael Tanner. 'The Total Work of Art,' in Peter Burbridge and Richard Sutton (eds.), *The Wagner Companion*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1979, 140-224.

⁵ Aaron Ridley. 'Nietzsche and Music,' in Came D. (ed.) *Nietzsche on Art and Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 232, my emphasis on the final sentence.

⁶ *Letter to Peter Gast*, 21 January 1887, SL: 260 and KSB 8: 12-13.

Nietzsche's 'competition' with it in *Ecce Homo* in which we find *Zarathustra* 'outdoing' *Parsifal* on some of the very qualities at issue which Nietzsche had cited to Gast in his letter with genuine wonder and enthusiasm.¹

While the analysis we have presented here of the *Case of Wagner* is by no means exhaustive, it is sufficient to call into question how far or in what way Nietzsche actually possessed an epistemic gap to critique Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture, for in the final analysis, it is precisely this perceived epistemic gap that has been, and continues to be, driving Nietzsche's case of Wagner in the purely negative sense.

Now certainly one may object to the fact that Nietzsche needs to have an 'epistemic gap' in order to criticize Wagner. The very fact that there continues to be a 'case' against Wagner proves in some sense that Nietzsche put his finger on something about Wagner. In that respect, one need not entertain, much less endorse, Nietzsche's competition with Wagner in order to take Nietzsche's case of Wagner seriously. To respond to these objections, we must now point out the fact that there would be no such thing as a 'purely negative case' against Wagner in the first place if Nietzsche had not found it necessary to build a competing case for himself. Nietzsche could hardly 'compete' with Wagner, much less declare himself the 'winner' of that competition, if Nietzsche had not constructed a negative case of Wagner on the one hand in order to build a positive case for himself on the other. It is here that we must understand that Nietzsche's 'purely negative case' against Wagner is *necessary* in that it is presupposed and given in the very act and gesture of Nietzsche creating a positive case for himself.

It may be true that we need not entertain, much less endorse Nietzsche's case for himself, but in order for the 'charges' in the 'purely negative case' against Wagner to stick, we must surely ask ourselves if we are comfortable with the fact that Nietzsche's act of 'overcoming' Wagner reaches into Wagner's 'bag of tricks' in order to do so. It is precisely on this point that Nietzsche's 'epistemic gap' becomes important, for it is principally in virtue of this gap that he believes he can frame his 'purely negative case' against Wagner. If the only issue at stake were Nietzsche's 'purely negative case,' then there would be no reason to expect that Nietzsche's act of 'overcoming' Wagner should in any way depend on Wagner. Wagner's 'bag of tricks,' which Nietzsche spends so much of his energy castigating in the *Case of Wagner*, would have to be 'tricks' in the unconditional sense, and could not be rehabilitated, or in any way qualified, when it comes to Nietzsche's act of 'overcoming' Wagner. But this is *not* the issue at stake. Nietzsche's case of Wagner is completely tied up with Nietzsche's case for himself, and in that sense we might even come to expect that Wagner's 'bag of tricks' should become 'fair play' in building a case for himself – and this is precisely what we *do* find. Because what is at stake with Nietzsche's case of Wagner is Nietzsche's competition with Wagner over who more consistently derived and unified the paradigm of the philosopher and artist of life in one and the same individual, Nietzsche is necessarily committed to helping himself to the very 'tricks' that he

¹ EH, 1989: 304-05, "Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, §6.

accuses Wagner of pandering to in his purely negative case, and in the process, he introduces what we have considered to be 'a very dangerous game.'

Once we understand that Nietzsche's case of Wagner is, more than anything else, a case of *psychological hegemony* which is rooted in Nietzsche's competition with Wagner over the right to symbolize the 'music-making Socrates' for culture, the inevitable conclusion we must draw is that carving out Nietzsche's case of Wagner in the purely negative sense is doomed, for what is driving the case of Wagner at a very deep level is in fact Nietzsche's case for himself. In this respect, there is something quite peculiar about the case of Wagner having become a 'genre,' and specifically one in which the 'afterlife' of the genre has found itself becoming systematically negative from Nietzsche onward. While Heidegger, Adorno, and Lacoue-Labarthe for instance were all involved in mainly negative debates about Wagner, their debates about Wagner and, as it were, their 'cases' against him are fundamentally different from Nietzsche's inasmuch as Nietzsche's case of Wagner is completely bound up with Nietzsche's positive case for himself.

For the case of Wagner as a 'genre' to therefore be a genuine continuation of the 'genre' that Nietzsche supposedly inaugurated, the so-called 'negative debates' surrounding Wagner would effectively need to raise and debate the very questions surrounding Nietzsche's case for himself. If the central debate invoked by the case of Wagner as a 'genre' is, as Badiou seems to think for instance, the debate around whether Wagner created a new situation with respect to the relationship between philosophy and music,¹ then the debate that is inextricably bound up with this reductive debate about Wagner is the debate about whether Nietzsche is every bit as responsible, and in fact the principal party to blame, for having appropriated music as a means to convey an ideological agenda. This is a point which completely eludes Badiou, whose 'lessons' are fundamentally organized around this very theme.² Frankly, with an admission such as the one we encounter in §106 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche could hardly be exonerated from the charge of not knowing the power of music as an advocate, especially when it comes to the art of 'seducing' men's ears and hearts to both error and truth alike. When that is combined with the means with which the philosopher must convey his innermost 'message' with certainty (i.e., via the concept), what we find is precisely what one would call transmitting an ideology in an immediate and irrefutable way. This is the *essence* of the philosopher who speaks music. So while perhaps we need not entertain, much less endorse, Nietzsche's offering of *Zarathustra* as the legitimate counter-offer to rival Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture, we are still left all the same with the question of whether Nietzsche in fact 'succeeded' precisely because he was able to make the 'charges' in the so-called 'purely negative case' against Wagner stick. Perhaps Nietzsche did exactly what he said he did after all: that he simply wrote "[a] page of

¹ Alain Badiou. *Five Lessons on Wagner*. London: Verso, 2010, (hereafter Badiou), 56.

² "I should mention at the outset an underlying thesis, which I have no intention of proving myself, that posits music as a fundamental operator in contemporary ideology. I'm taking 'music' in its loosest sense here, not as art or intellectuality or thought, but simply what declares itself as such." Badiou, 2010: 1.

‘music’ about music”¹ in which the ‘charges’ against Wagner have been parroted ever since, while Nietzsche’s case for himself as the philosopher who speaks music has been implicitly endorsed by the very fact that his ‘charges’ against Wagner have rarely, if ever, been critically examined (perhaps Thomas Mann is a singular exception.)

But as we have sufficiently demonstrated, Nietzsche’s ‘charges’ against Wagner remain ambiguous precisely because they imply a direct competition with Wagner in which Nietzsche’s case of Wagner ceremoniously ejects through the front door of his polemics that which eventually creeps in through the back in the name of his ‘self-overcoming,’ and in the specific charges we considered, the art of seduction, gesture, theatricality, and histrionics all played a part – qualities which are supposedly found only in Wagner’s ‘bag of tricks.’ And this is only the tip of the iceberg as far as the ‘charges’ in the *Case of Wagner* are concerned.

Therefore we would need to ask in a very real sense whether Nietzsche succeeded in becoming the musical philosopher that he promised he would, and therefore whether he won the duel with Wagner, for instance, by the sheer skill of his legerdemain to credit to the good Wagner’s ‘bag of tricks’ purely when it concerned his ‘psychological unity of self-overcoming,’ and yet to label those same ‘tricks’ as the symptoms of decline when it concerned Wagner’s art. Given the fact that Nietzsche knows all about Wagner’s ‘bag of tricks’ and uses them to ‘overcome’ Wagner means that Nietzsche’s ‘purely negative case’ against Wagner is conditioned right at the outset, so it would be debatable at best to take on board the ‘charges’ against Wagner without in some sense implicitly endorsing the success of Nietzsche’s case for himself. What this means, purely and simply, is that we must be able to resolve how far or in what way Nietzsche’s criticisms of Wagner actually implicate Nietzsche and the case he built for himself in the process. This is the only way in which the case of Wagner as a ‘genre’ would be a genuine continuation of the ‘genre’ that Nietzsche supposedly inaugurated.

Failing this, to continue believing that the Wagner criticism of the present day is somehow the genuine continuation of the ‘genre’ that Nietzsche supposedly inaugurated is only a gesture towards Nietzsche’s case of Wagner in the most superficial sense, for if all we mean by the case of Wagner as a ‘genre’ is just having a suspicious look at Wagner, then we are simply missing the point about Nietzsche’s case of Wagner in perhaps the most fundamental sense.

In this respect, Badiou’s desire to take on Wagner simply because “taking on Wagner constitutes a genre to which I would like to contribute one more variation”² sounds incredibly misguided, for not only does it resound as if what is at stake is nothing more than the gesture of making a case against Wagner for the sake of one, but that he even embraces the triviality involved in reducing his particular species of

¹ *Letter to Carl Fuchs*, 27 December 1888, SL: 340 and KSB 8: 553-54.

² Badiou, 2010: 55.

Wagner criticism to the tautology of the generic, even if the criticism happens to be, in Badiou's case at least, defending those tautologies.

To take on Wagner because others have also taken him on; to have a suspicious look at Wagner because others have likewise done the same, whether to prosecute him or defend him, ends up reducing Wagner to a banality in which 'Wagner's relevance for today' ends up being used as a foil for the term 'modernity' itself, as if it were somehow the last and conclusive term of the series beyond the 'ancient' and 'medieval,' and in which there would finally be some sort of culmination and fulfillment in criticizing him.

We must recall that it was *necessary* for Nietzsche to take on Wagner principally because he was endeavoring to make a case for himself, and in which the questions surrounding Nietzsche's case are still very much open for debate: did Nietzsche win, and if so, how so? By contrast, in what sense is Wagner *necessary* for Badiou, especially since he endeavors to defend, not prosecute? In this respect, Badiou's proclamation that "there is clearly no getting around it: philosophers take on Wagner, and I am going to take him on too" sounds utterly inane, for the only necessity we find, at least in this reader's assessment at any rate, is that Wagner criticism has been reduced to a banality purely for the sake of 'reopening the case of Wagner' for 'modernity.'¹

Nietzsche's case of Wagner is a 'musical' case for himself. The very fact that no other philosopher has been translated *into* music, as Aaron Ridley has noted, "by composers of the calibre of Mahler, Delius and Richard Strauss, for instance, nor have many had so clear an influence upon writers and poets of the stature of D.H. Lawrence, Rilke, Yeats and Thomas Mann, to name but a few,"² should give us a very clear indication that when it came to music, it was *Nietzsche* who wished for a case to be made for himself. If Wagner really has turned into a sort of critical hermeneutic focal point in terms of the relationship between philosophy and its artistic condition as Badiou seems to think,³ then that is only because Nietzsche's *competition* with Wagner has made him so. So if we intend to be positively clear in what respect 'philosophy and its artistic condition' have been merged, then we really ought to begin precisely where our dissertation has begun; that is, by evaluating how far or in what way rationality and creativity are implied in the philosophic act. To that extent, Nietzsche's case for Wagner, which is at once Nietzsche's case for himself, becomes the *de facto* proof over which a fundamental truth to the Wagnerian thesis was fought: as life has no higher source than its own creation, art is necessarily the immediate vital act of life. But if this so, what then is the relationship between the principle of creativity and the purely creative to the more traditional philosophical notions of 'reality' and 'truth'? On this very question, it is noteworthy to point out that the formal portion to the *Case of Wagner* closes with 'three demands' which Nietzsche places on art, and which deal precisely with this question of 'authenticity' and 'truth':

¹ Badiou, 2010: 55.

² Ridley, 2007: 141-42.

³ Badiou, 2010: 71-72.

1. That the theater should not lord it over the other arts.
2. That the actor should not seduce those who are authentic.
3. That music should not become an art of lying.¹

In looking over Nietzsche's 'demands' here, it becomes extremely difficult, in the final analysis, to figure out in what sense Nietzsche believed he could claim that he was any more 'authentic' than the artist that he very theatrically condemns in the *Case of Wagner*, but it should give us a very good indication of the principal issues that are truly at stake in Nietzsche's case of Wagner as a 'genre,' and why they matter for philosophy.

5. Conclusion

The primary object of this dissertation has been to present and demonstrate the nature and extent of Wagner's intellectual influence on Nietzsche in order to unravel the logic behind Nietzsche's enigmatic case of Wagner. The object of our investigation has taken a two-fold aim: in the first instance, to demonstrate the nature of that influence (Chapters 1 and 2), and in the second instance, to demonstrate how that influence became the basis of Nietzsche's case of Wagner (Chapters 3 and 4).

According to our analysis, we have demonstrated that Nietzsche's enigmatic symbol of the 'music-making Socrates,' which until now has never sufficiently been analyzed in the secondary literature on Nietzsche, has been shown to be at the very basis of Nietzsche's competition with Wagner. In particular, we established that the symbol of the 'music-making Socrates' had grown out of Nietzsche's advocacy for Wagner and the promise that Wagner himself represented for the rebirth of a new European culture but which, following Nietzsche's break with Wagner, had increasingly come to symbolize the advocacy Nietzsche wished for himself as the promise for the rebirth of a new tragic culture *contra* Wagner.

Looked at in this way, Nietzsche's case of Wagner is a case of *psychological hegemony* against Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture in which Nietzsche's personal challenge to Wagner had come to be grafted onto the theoretical structure of Wagner's overall pattern of culture, which had taken vitalistic presuppositions to be exclusively responsible for the decline and rebirth of culture which divide history accordingly, and was then used as the backdrop to wage his war against Wagner over the right to symbolize the 'music-making Socrates' for culture.

In this respect, Nietzsche simply held Wagner to account for his theoretical arguments about the connection between vitalism and art on the one hand and its relationship to the decline of culture on the other in order for Wagner and his 'artwork of the future' to become the target for Wagner's own theory of the decline of culture. Once Nietzsche had convinced his readers that Wagner's art was the sign of decline,

¹ CW, 1967: 180, §12.

Nietzsche could declare himself to be the true 'music-maker' for culture with his *Zarathustra*, and thus the true heir of the tragic culture in perfect consistency from his pro-Wagner period.

The essence of Nietzsche's case of Wagner is a 'musical' case for himself, which was necessarily mounted at Wagner's expense. It is no mistake that Wagner, always acutely perceptive to the world around him, had once remarked of Nietzsche that "that bad person has taken everything from me, even the weapons with which he now attacks me. How sad that he should be so perverse – so clever, yet at the same time so shallow!"¹ And as Lesley Chamberlain has astutely commented, "Nietzsche set himself up as Wagner's competitor, and in more ways than he could control. Wagner and his music became the principle leitmotifs in the score of Nietzsche's life while the prose came closer and closer to music."²

This is precisely what our analysis has confirmed, for Nietzsche knew that the only other person who could possibly 'make music' out of life, and in particular, to set himself and his sufferings to music, was Wagner. It is this which we have discovered, finally and at last, to be Nietzsche's case of Wagner.

¹ *Diary Entry*, 2 August 1878, CWD 2: 128.

² Chamberlain, 1996: 66.

Appendix

On the Uses and Disadvantages of Wagner for Life

“Since my ninth year, music is what attracted me most of all; in that happy state in which one does not yet know the limits of one’s gifts and thinks that all objects of love are attainable, I had written countless compositions and had acquired more than an amateurish knowledge of musical theory. Only then in the last period of my Schulpforta life did I give up, in true cognizance of myself, all my artistic plans; classical philology moved, from that moment on, into the gap thus made.”

– Nietzsche, *Autobiographical fragments* 1868-69

1. Nietzsche's Break with Wagner: a Conventional Story?

Bryan Magee, in his book *Wagner and Philosophy*, gives us for better or worse, what has now come to be the conventional story of Nietzsche's break with Wagner; namely, that despite his initial indulgence to Wagner, Nietzsche eventually came to see himself as an equal participant and co-creator in the revitalization of a new European culture, and once he realized that his efforts were not appreciated for the contributions that they were, he had no intention of remaining subservient to Wagner and to the glorification of Wagner's cause, as if Wagner were the sole visionary. Once this became clear to both men, as Magee puts it, "the friendship was bound to cool on Wagner's side."¹ While there are certain *prima facie* reasons to accept this conclusion as being more or less accurate, there are several other very important, and yet frequently overlooked aspects of their relationship which, when taken together, become highly significant for understanding Nietzsche's case of Wagner in its biographical guise. One of these aspects is Cosima herself.

As a whole, Cosima's diary entries are a testament to the untiring and unwavering obedience she demanded for Richard Wagner and the Wagnerian cause, not least of which was her own. But once that was procured, she took every step to ensure that others who came even remotely close to Wagner felt the same, and anyone who might otherwise be suspected of treason was kept on the radar and given a very short leash. Cosima was a sharp and discerning observer of all who passed through the halls of Tribschen, and later Bayreuth, and she ensured that the martyr's promise she had made to herself to defend Wagner at all costs would never be breached by the hands of some lesser, falsier idols, and she carried out this promise to herself with the cold discipline of a militant fanatic.² Cosima spent many hours with Nietzsche at Tribschen, and she shrewdly watched his interaction with Wagner, carefully noting everything that came her way as it might affect Wagner. Indeed, the beginning of their relationship is marked by numerous examples of "Prof. N." hastening to dispatch the latest press scandal about Wagner in order to ensure that both Wagner and Cosima could develop responses and then circulate them in order to neutralize their effects.³

¹ Bryan Magee. *Wagner and Philosophy*. London: Penguin, 2000 (*hereafter* Magee), 306.

² E.g., *Diary Entry*, 4 October 1869: "After lunch I talk to Schuré about the whole anomaly of R.'s coming into the world in our days. He should by rights have graced the world in Aeschylus's age; now, to clear up the insoluble misunderstanding between himself and the world, he relies on occasional explanations, and the more he talks, the wider the gap becomes. The theater of his thinking is a temple and the present theater a fairground stall, he speaks the language of the priest, and shopkeepers are supposed to understand him! I have to dedicate my whole life to him, for I have recognized his position." CWD 1: 152-153.

³ E.g., *Diary Entry*, 10 September 1869: "Letter from Professor Nietzsche, who reports that all newspapers are full of infamous accounts, talking of a complete break between W[agner] and the King, etc. He asks for news, which I then give him." CWD 1: 145.

Diary Entry, 29 September 1869: "[Nietzsche] sends me a newspaper in which are printed quotations from R.'s correspondence with a 'very dear' friend. Who this last is, is not stated, and I cannot guess. But this fresh piece of shamelessness horrifies me. In the evening I write to Prof. N., asking him to make known by means of an advertisement that R. knows nothing of this impertinence. I say nothing to R. about it." CWD 1: 151.

For a time, Nietzsche was a pivotal press agent for Wagner, and the propaganda he wrote on Wagner's behalf, or at any rate, for the benefit of Wagner, testifies to this effect, at least insofar as Cosima was concerned.

Yet even if we leave Cosima's participation in the relationship to one side, there was something far deeper lurking behind the emotional requirements of the young Nietzsche's alliance with Wagner, and indeed, in a relationship that can be characterized by a combination of paternal affection, devotion, and intellectual dynamite, what is perhaps the most surprising feature of all is that Wagner and Nietzsche were aligned for as long as they were. So when Aaron Ridley, in his recent book *Nietzsche on Art*, describes Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner as an "obsession," he was spot on, but when he further notes that "we must expect that Nietzsche's writings on Wagner will tell us at least as much about Nietzsche as they do about Wagner,"¹ he submitted a psychological insight of the very highest rank when it comes to Nietzsche and his works. As he subsequently put it, "Nietzsche's estimation of the significance of art, and music in particular, was permanently conditioned by Wagner; and he returned to him again and again, as if to a peculiarly seductive sore – picking, squeezing, probing, hating, fond – for the remainder of his life."²

It is interesting to note however that thinkers like Aaron Ridley are comparatively few when it comes to appreciating the depth of Wagner's influence on Nietzsche, whereas the sizeable majority of scholars on Nietzsche tend to say little to almost nothing at all. Yet if we consider both the titles to, as well as the content of, almost every single one of Nietzsche's books from start to finish, the influence becomes manifestly obvious.

First we have *The Birth of Tragedy*, a book which was dedicated to Wagner, very largely dealt with and expanded ideas from Wagner's own work *The Destiny of Opera*, and capped it all off by offering an extended ten section panegyric to him heralding him as the rebirth of the tragic concept in art.³ We then have a polemic, *David Strauss as Confessor and Writer*, which was designed purely to settle an old score of Wagner's about the problem of cultural philistinism in Germany.⁴ The primary thesis of Nietzsche's next essay, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, argues that history as a conception is soulless if it does not incite one to action or activity. Although the essay itself outlines a lengthy and involved argument which contends that only the individual who possesses 'directedness' can know how to harness history in the service of life, the thesis soon becomes a hardly veiled nod to Wagner's attempt to bring German mythology alive in the form of his music dramas, in contrast

Diary Entry, 13 February 1870: "Spent the morning with Prof. Nietzsche, talked of many things. He tells me that Dorn, the conductor, has published a book whose whole purpose is simply to denigrate R. [...] I beg Prof. N. to say nothing to R. about it." CWD 1: 189.

¹ Ridley, 2007: 141-42.

² Ridley, 2007: 146.

³ "Well then, the design is settled – to be modeled on Wagner's *The Destiny of Opera* – rejoice with me!" *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 18 November 1871, SL: 82 and KSB 3: 243.

⁴ See section 7, *infra*.

to what Nietzsche sees as a wasteland culture that luxuriates in knowledge, a phenomenon that had been brought about, as Nietzsche saw it, by the overburdened ideation of scholarship.¹ Nietzsche reminds us in his next essay, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, that the sciences are *instrumental* to the problem of life, not its culmination and fulfilment. In fact, the *belief* in science, and the dogmas which attend them – ‘evolution’, ‘development’ and ‘progress’ – turn out to be, in the final analysis, *articles of faith* par excellence which are meant to pressure the individual into a narrative of life which pictures nature as a function of man’s utility. That the zenith of human evolution is accomplished through the doctrine of the greatest happiness for the greatest number logically follows. But the problem of life, the value of existence, must be faced on its own terms, and the courage to face it without appeal to dogmas, scientific or otherwise, requires the strength of genuine individuality, for which Nietzsche councils us to develop the *Schopenhauerian man* within us as the archetype of precisely such an individual. It is no mistake that genuine culture has always and at all times rested on the strength of genuine individuality, on the *genius*, which is given in the form of its highest specimens – the artists, the philosophers and the saints – and as Schopenhauer and Wagner are themselves examples of these highest specimens, the time is nigh for a latter day German Reformation of Culture. Finally, we have *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, written to commemorate the opening of Bayreuth and the first performance of the *Ring Cycle* before the public. The essay itself, however strained rhetorically, dwells yet again upon greatness as the condition of genius, the knowledge that such greatness will only ever be recognized for what it is by the very few, and the power and directedness inherent in Wagner as phenomenon to have brought off such a monumental undertaking. These are just the so-called ‘early’ works.

In *Human, All Too Human*, we next have a book which very publicly and with feigned cheerfulness rejects everything on which Nietzsche once stood. The artist, the philosopher, and the saint – once revered archetypes of the genius necessary to bring about a genuine culture – now come under special attack through a method of skepticism and scientific reductionism, influenced in large part by the writings of Nietzsche’s newly found friend, Paul Rée. Wagner’s theories are undeniably the foil for these new views, and Wagner was not slow to pick up on it – so much so that Wagner wrote two articles that appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* between July and October 1878² ridiculing Nietzsche’s new take on genius as merely the product of biochemical phenomena.³ What came under particular scorn however was Nietzsche’s newly found “scientific method,” that “latest product of the Historical school of applied philosophy” which now believed it could explain all the mysteries in the life of the universe with its “reckless claims [...] in the province of biology.”⁴ Wagner now accused Nietzsche of nothing less than luxuriating in the utilitarian

¹ While many of the themes of this essay are rightly Nietzsche’s, the essay itself works out several of Wagner’s theoretical arguments about the decline of culture into the modern day ‘philistine.’

² PW 6: 51-82, “Public and Popularity”; 83-94, “The Public in Time and Space.”

³ PW 6: 74-75, “Public and Popularity.”

⁴ PW 6: 74-75, “Public and Popularity.”

promise of “pure *Science* and its eternal *Progress*,”¹ a delusion which had sent him “spinning in a constant whirl, now flying from accepted views, then flying back again in some confusion.”² In her analysis of the relationship, Lesley Chamberlain almost perfectly captures the significance of *Human, All Too Human* when she states that Nietzsche imagined himself “like Siegfried leaving the wicked guardian Mime, who would have killed him and the hope he signified of a regenerated humanity. Nietzsche had Siegfried’s need to forge himself a new sword and an ‘anvil-beating desire to wander into the wide and unknown world.’”³

The next two books have Wagner on their radar in one form or another. Practically all of the aphorisms from Book Four and a number from the enigmatic Book Five of *Dawn* target Wagner’s theories or his personality in one way, shape, or form, with Nietzsche alternating between covert sniping and full frontal assault, but *The Gay Science* is particularly noteworthy for Nietzsche’s attempt to compose a conciliatory gesture about the meaning of the break between them in the midst of what is otherwise unrelenting Wagner criticism.⁴ Perhaps most especially of all is that it had Wagner as a reader, albeit not a very happy one, less than two weeks before his death.⁵

With *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we next have a work which, as we have already demonstrated in the main body of our dissertation, directly competes with Wagner and the Wagnerian conception of culture in almost every conceivable way possible.⁶ *Zarathustra* is the spiritual antithesis of the dull, heavy, and ponderous German typified by Wagner’s music, with teachings that signify instead the metaphor of ‘dance’ – a graceful flexibility which moves on light feet and is the key to self-surmounting.

The dull, heavy and ponderous German and the extravagances of German Romanticism make yet another appearance in Nietzsche’s next book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which Wagner is now accused of manifesting in music what Hegel conceived in thought. We must now, Nietzsche claims, get beyond our German, beyond the European ethnocentric tendency in our cultural sensibilities, most especially in our

¹ PW 6: 73, “Public and Popularity.”

² PW 6: 73-74, “Public and Popularity.”

³ Chamberlain, 1996: 56.

⁴ A number of these aphorisms are concentrated in Book Two, although Nietzsche’s Wagner criticism is not restricted to Book Two, and a number of more subtle spars with Wagner can be found throughout the book. For example, §146 “German Hopes” refers to a dispute Nietzsche had had with Wagner about Luther’s German translation of the Greek term ‘barbaros’ as ‘un-German’ in the *Septuagint* (cf., *Diary Entry* 10 April 1873, CWD 1: 621 and *Diary Entry* 7 May 1879, CWD 2: 303-04); and §357 “On the old problem: ‘What is German?’” parodies the title of Wagner’s essay “What is German?”, published in 1878, and takes up a number of threads in Wagner’s theoretical arguments about the “German spirit.” The conciliatory gesture to which I refer is §279 “Star Friendship.” In this sense, I reject Lou Andreas-Salomé’s assertion that it signaled the farewell to his friendship with Paul Rée in any kind of exclusive sense. Knowing Nietzsche, it would be more consistent to assume that it was capable of addressing any number of different people, in which, if anything, *both* Rée at one time, and Wagner at another, are meant. See Lou Andreas-Salomé. *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinem Werken*. Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1924, 129n. See also Small, 2005: Preface et seq.

⁵ *Diary Entry*, 3 February 1883: “We then stroll up and down through the long Palazzo Vendramin, for which he no longer much cares. There is an article about Nietzsche’s *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* in Schmeitzner’s monthly; I talk about it, and R. glances through it, only then to express his utter disgust with it. The things in it of any value, he says, have all been borrowed from Schopenhauer, and he dislikes everything about the man.” CWD 2: 1003.

⁶ See Chapter 3, section 4-5 and Chapter 4.

music, and by doing so, get beyond our flaccid preconceptions of good and evil. But the castigating does not stop there: indeed, it is difficult to claim another one of Nietzsche's books which more thoroughly and comprehensively rejects everything he had once shared with Wagner than does *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is not just the topographical features of the subject matters he treats from words like 'Wagner,' 'Wagnerian' and 'anti-Semitism,' which might otherwise be easily espied from the index of the book, but in thoroughly deep morphologies that run through the entire work as a whole. Incidentally, we should also point out that this work is subtitled *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, which is an obvious parody to Wagner's essay as well as his deed to create *The Artwork of the Future*.

Perhaps Nietzsche's most famous book comes next, and yet both Schopenhauer and Wagner do not seem to escape the larger questions surrounding the thesis of the Third Essay of the *Genealogy of Morality* regarding ascetic ideals, in which the fundamental idea of culture – to wit, "to foster the production of philosophers, artists, and saints within us and around us, and thereby to work toward the perfection of nature"¹ – is once again taken to task with much more 'genealogical' skepticism against his former benefactors. There is a special space allocated to the castigation of Wagner here, in which Wagner and his art are viewed as symptoms of the degeneration of modernity, as seen through the ascetic ideal. Wagner's meal ticket, Nietzsche now claims, is the ascetic ideal. But it is not a meal ticket that Wagner arrived at by his own reasoning, for artists in general are far too fragile to stand alone. They need "a protective armor, a backing, a previously established authority" in order to disseminate their views.² Since artists can only depict what they are not, they must rely on their "protective armor" in order to depict it. "[W]ho could consider it even thinkable that [Wagner] would have had the courage for an ascetic ideal without the backing that Schopenhauer's philosophy offered him, without Schopenhauer's authority...?"³ The conclusion we should draw, Nietzsche argues, is that *Parsifal*, Wagner's final tone poem, should be regarded as a secret, malicious, derisive act which panders to the current degenerative tendencies of modernity with its weak, enfeebled and dissipated drives, thereby mocking a society currently fascinated with material asceticism and obscurantist metaphysics in secret cahoots with anthropomorphic theology. But perhaps what is most interesting of all is that now *Wagner* is accused of "ruthlessly chang[ing]" his views once he "converted to Schopenhauer," a phenomenon which led to "a complete theoretical contradiction [...] between his earlier and later aesthetic beliefs."⁴ The trope here is obvious: whatever 'conversion' experience Wagner had as a result of Schopenhauer's treatment of 'genuine Christianity,' Wagner's celebration of it in his final work is a pious fraud.

Finally, we have the Turin writings. Perhaps most significantly of all, we have the *Case of Wagner: a Musician's Problem* which, according to Nietzsche, was "a

¹ UO, 1995: 213, "Schopenhauer as Educator," §5.

² GM, 1998: 71, §5.

³ GM, 1998: 71, §5.

⁴ GM: 1998, 71, §5.

declaration of war, in aesthetics, and one which could not be more radical in conception.”¹ Once again, light feet and graceful flexibility – in other words ‘dance’ – make their reappearance as the metaphor to convey Nietzsche’s gospel of self-surmounting, and are put into his service as the backdrop against which Nietzsche, as it were, ‘comes clean’ from Wagner.

Next we have *Götzendämmerung*, a very obvious pun on the final music drama *Götterdämmerung* of Wagner’s monumental *Ring Cycle* tetralogy. While Wagner’s name is conspicuously missing from a good portion of the text, most likely because he had just written an entire pamphlet devoted to him, Cosima Wagner does not get off so easily, being teased in particular about the size of her ears. In the section entitled *Expeditions of an Untimely Man*, §19 under the heading of “Beautiful and Ugly,” the aphorism reads: “‘O Dionysus, divine one, why do you pull my ears?’ Ariadne once asked her philosophical lover during one of those celebrated dialogues on Naxos. ‘I find a kind of humor in your ears, Ariadne: why are they not longer?’”²

From here we get *Nietzsche Contra Wagner: Documents of a Psychologist*. While this little compendium of Wagner slurs from his previous works was not actually published until 1895, we have Nietzsche telling his musician friend Carl Fuchs shortly before his breakdown on 27 December 1888 that it is perhaps best described as “[a] page of ‘music’ about music” in which “the Wagner question is actually settled.”³ Finally, we have Nietzsche’s somewhat bizarre autobiography *Ecce Homo* in which he tries to sum up his previous writings and the consummation of his teachings, and yet as one might expect, “Wagner is altogether the foremost name in *E.H.*”⁴ It is only in the *Anti-Christ* that Wagner is spared from Nietzsche’s wrath. Yet even in the *Antichrist* there are unmistakable signs of a literary duel at work between the two men regarding the status of Christianity, and so one is tempted to say that even here, Wagner’s spirit is present.

¹ *Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug*, 4 October 1888, L: 240 and KSB 8: 446-47.

² TI, 1968: 78. It has long been recognized that Cosima Wagner played the part of Ariadne in Nietzsche’s mythic treatment of the Ariadne-Theseus-Dionysus legend which he projected onto his triangular relationship of Cosima-Wagner-Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s extant “Empedocles” and “Naxos” fragments testify to this morphology, and one of Nietzsche’s final letters, thus at the beginning of 1889, is addressed to Cosima Wagner acknowledging her as ‘Princess Ariadne’ and confessing his love: “Ariadne, I love you. Dionysus.” SL: 346 and KSB 8: 572.

As long ago as 1931, Erich Podach, one of Nietzsche’s earliest biographers, wrote: “Ariadne is the glittering symbol of the woman of Nietzsche’s heart’s desire, a symbol that took root and grew up in his own world of mythic experience. He does not reveal what experiences may have fostered its formation and growth – out of deep need and also probably following his often all-too-artistic impulse to put on a disguise. Yet beginning and end are certain: in Tribschen, Cosima becomes for the young Nietzsche the governing image of Ariadnean being; twenty years later – in Turin – he turns back to the original realm of his Naxos dreams and sends a last lover’s greeting to his heroine.” See Erich Podach, *The Madness of Nietzsche*. London, 1931, Middleton’s translation, cited in SL: 346.

³ *Letter to Carl Fuchs*, 27 December 1888, SL: 340 and KSB 8: 553-54.

⁴ *Letter to Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast)*, 31 December 1888, SL: 344 and KSB 8: 567.

2. The 'Cause' of the Break?

Nietzsche's preoccupation with Wagner and his ideas, a phenomenon to which he returned "again and again, as if to a peculiarly seductive sore – picking, squeezing, probing, hating, fond – for the remainder of his life,"¹ should give us some indication of the enormous complexity of their relationship. Indeed, the complexity of their relationship seems to preclude any kind of convenient description. The fact that this is true means that we should be more receptive to accept its counterpart too; namely, that the nature of their relationship was far too complex for Nietzsche's 'break' with Wagner to be explained on the basis of a single ground, event or reason. Nonetheless, several relatively recent writers have attempted to explain Nietzsche's break with Wagner on the basis of just such a singular event, with results that have been less than convincing. For instance, after devoting nearly fifty pages to the complex nature of their relationship, Bryan Magee reasonably enough concludes that "for a period of eight years or so Nietzsche was in thrall to Wagner, and that during that time – not out of weakness but out of hero-worship – he went along with Wagner in all sorts of ways that did not correspond with what, deep down, were his true feelings" so that when Nietzsche finally broke from Wagner, it was due, more than anything else, to "Nietzsche's own inevitable and proper need for independence."² And yet, not two pages later, we find Magee conjecturing upon a singular event that had transpired between Wagner and Nietzsche which accounted for their 'break.'

The singular event in question, according to several recent writers including Magee, can be traced to Nietzsche's acquaintance with a man named Otto Eiser, who was a medical doctor by profession, but also an ardent Wagner enthusiast. The doctor from Frankfurt had met Nietzsche in the summer of 1877 while at a spa in Rosenlaubad, Switzerland, and approached Nietzsche declaring that he was an enthusiast of Nietzsche's writings, especially those which championed Wagner. He then offered the young professor medical advice.³ Nietzsche had long been suffering from debilitating migraines which culminated in bouts of vomiting for days at a time. He also suffered from poor eyesight, stomach problems, and a host of other somatic discomforts including nervous exhaustion. At the time doctor Eiser encountered Nietzsche, he was astonished to discover that Nietzsche had never undergone a thorough medical examination to uncover the aetiology of his symptoms.⁴ From the correspondence Nietzsche sent to some of his friends shortly thereafter, it appears that he was quite hopeful of a cure. And while doctor Eiser probably was genuinely concerned about Nietzsche's health, it is almost certain that he saw Nietzsche more as a connection to Wagner. Doctor Eiser had already founded the Wagner Society of

¹ Ridley, 2007: 146.

² Magee, 2000: 332.

³ *Letter to Elizabeth Nietzsche*, 25 July 1877, KSB 5: 258.

⁴ In a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug dated 3 September 1877, Nietzsche wrote that "the last days of Rosenlaubad were, without exception, dreadful; I left the place with a violent headache at four in the early morning, alone, in darkness", but upon arrival in Basel, he had received a letter from doctor Eiser "demand[ing] that I come to Frankfurt soon for a fresh consultation." SL: 165 and KSB 5: 283.

Frankfurt and had written a couple of essays on Wagner's *Ring*. When he asked Nietzsche to forward them to the Wagners to be considered for Wagner's journal the *Bayreuther Blätter*, Nietzsche immediately sent them.¹

The details of what then followed can be pieced together on the basis of two separate diary entries, a letter which Cosima sent to Nietzsche, and the newest piece of evidence uncovered only in 1956 in the archives of Bayreuth, namely, Wagner's correspondence with the doctor in question regarding the cause of Nietzsche's maladies. On 13 October 1877, Wahnfried acknowledged receipt of doctor Eiser's essays by "friend Nietzsche," but noted that Nietzsche himself had "only bad things to report about his health."² In his letter, Nietzsche appears to have provided a fair amount of information about the cause of his maladies. He revealed that three doctors had identified two sources of infection in his eyes as the cause of his pain, and that there was the possibility that he would eventually go blind. He did not, however, reveal that doctor Eiser was the physician who had given him a thorough examination. Nonetheless, Wagner must have found this out by other means, for being unsatisfied with Nietzsche's account, he asked his new assistant Hans von Wolzogen to write to doctor Eiser directly to ascertain the state of Nietzsche's health.³ Rather than rebuff the improper enquiry as a breach of doctor-patient confidentiality, by all accounts doctor Eiser immediately responded to the Wagners to confirm what the Wagners had already heard from Nietzsche himself, namely, that there was the possibility that Nietzsche may go blind. Unfortunately what happened next seems to confirm that the Wagners were up to diversionary tactics. On 22 October 1877, Cosima composed a letter to Nietzsche in which she very kindly thanked him for doctor Eiser's essays, and noted that she had read them with great enthusiasm, but she made no mention of either Nietzsche's maladies, or the fact that Wahnfried had been in contact with doctor Eiser about them. As it turned out, this was the final letter she would ever send Nietzsche.⁴ The very next day, Wagner sat down to write "a long letter to Dr. Eiser in Frankfurt, who wrote a detailed report about our friend Nietzsche's state of health." Cosima then recorded a pun from Wagner that "N. is more likely to listen to the friendly advice of a medical man than the medical advice of a friend."⁵ It is difficult to tell whether Wagner's comment was intended sarcastically or not, but the relevant part of Wagner's letter is unambiguous about what he felt to be the cause of Nietzsche's maladies. Wagner wrote

I think strongly about Nietzsche's present state and compare it to the identical or similar experiences that I have made of young men with great intellectual promise. I saw them decay from similar symptoms and learned too readily that these were the results of onanism. As I have closely observed N., through such experience, all of his modes of feeling and characteristic practices have turned my

¹ On the strength of Nietzsche's recommendation, the essays were published the following year: Otto Eiser, "Andeutungen über Wagners Beziehungen zu Schopenhauer und zur Grundidee des Christentums" and "Richard Wagners 'Der Ring des Nibelungen.' Ein exegetischer Versuch," *Bayreuther Blätter* (1878): 222-29 and 309-17; 352-66.

² *Diary Entry*, 13 October 1877, CWD 1: 988.

³ Magee, 2000: 335.

⁴ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 22 October 1877, DBCW 2: 78-79.

⁵ *Diary Entry*, 23 October 1877, CWD 1: 989.

fears into certainties. I do not have to tell a friendly physician any more details...one can only say that the ophthalmologist that N. consulted in Naples a while ago, recommend that above all he – marry.¹

The exchange of letters which followed between Wagner and doctor Eiser firmed up the conjecture that Nietzsche's health was the result of excessive masturbation.² When Nietzsche visited doctor Eiser again, he learned about Wagner's conjecture, although it only appears to have been hinted at in ambiguous terms, for Nietzsche came away from his meeting with doctor Eiser believing that Wagner had accused him of being a pederast.³ Nevertheless, the damage had been done. According to Magee, the contents of Wagner's correspondence with doctor Eiser were leaked soon after, until by the time the 1882 festival premiere of *Parsifal* rolled around, Bayreuth was "brimming over with eye-popping gossip about the absent Nietzsche – that he was going blind from excessive masturbation, that he had been in the habit of picking up prostitutes in Italy, that he had had venereal disease as a student," and that this was all true because the good doctor and Wagner had said so.⁴

Sometime later, in 1884, Nietzsche's friend Eugen Kretzer undertook an interview with doctor Eiser. The purpose of the interview, which remained unrecorded until sometime after 1912, attempted to chronicle a more detailed explanation of Nietzsche's illness as well as to document the so-called 'moment of the break' with Wagner at the time doctor Eiser had intimated the 'unhappy news' to Nietzsche about his maladies. According to Kretzer's interview, the so-called 'moment of the break' occurred in the following manner:

I now come to Eiser's relationship to Friedrich Nietzsche...[Kretzer]: "Why did Nietzsche break with Wagner?" Eiser stated: "I alone know, because it took place in my house, in my examining room, when I gave Nietzsche the letter [from Wagner] with the best intentions. An outbreak of anger was the result, Nietzsche was beyond himself – one cannot repeat the words he applied to Wagner – at that moment the breach was sealed."⁵

There is, I think, no question then that this humiliating series of events added up to a mortal insult. One must recall that in the nineteenth century, it was commonly believed that masturbation led to blindness, so to have rumors such as these circulating about one's person must have been unimaginably horrific for Nietzsche to endure. As Magee explains, rumors such as these were not the kind of thing that Nietzsche could have mentioned, let alone draw attention to, in his published writings, "but they are more than enough to explain the feeling he had for the rest of his life that

¹ Quoted in Sander Gilman. "Nietzsche, Bizet, and Wagner: Illness, Health, and Race in the Nineteenth Century," *Opera Quarterly*, (23) 2007 (hereafter Gilman), 255. The source is from Manfred Eger, *Nietzsches Bayreuther Passion*. Freiburg: Rombach, 2001, 188.

² "...the patient speaks of gonorrheal infections during his student days, and also that he recently had intercourse several times in Italy on medical advice. These statements, whose truth is certainly beyond dispute, do at least demonstrate that our patient does not lack the capacity for satisfying the sexual urge in a normal manner; a circumstance which, though not inconceivable in masturbators of his age, is not the general rule." Excerpts from *doctor Eiser's letter to Wagner*, quoted in Magee, 2000: 336.

³ Gilman, 2007: 255-56.

⁴ Magee, 2000: 336.

⁵ Gilman, 2007: 256. All references to the Eiser interview are to the unpublished manuscript, "Erinnerungen an Dr. Otto Eiser. Für das Nietzsche-Archiv aufgezeichnet von Prof. Lic. Dr. Eugen Kretzer," in Sander Gilman's possession.

he had been intolerably wounded by Wagner, who had done him an unforgivable wrong.”¹ The conclusion Magee draws here does seem to be corroborated by a statement Nietzsche made to his friend Franz Overbeck on 22 February 1883, just nine days after Wagner had died, acknowledging that “Wagner was by far the *fullest* human being I have known, and in *this* respect I have had to forego a great deal for six years. But something like a deadly offense came between us; and something terrible could have happened if he had lived longer.”² But surely what intensified Nietzsche’s suffering was that the woman of his affections, Cosima Wagner, would have known the entire story in all its embarrassing minutiae, and this latter fact, together with the mortal insult, might very well have pushed Nietzsche over the edge.

In certain respects then, we do get an explanation for why Nietzsche’s attitude toward Wagner became far more critical after the so-called ‘break,’ targeting Wagner the individual as an object of scorn: Wagner’s theories are now openly ridiculed and Wagner the artist is derided as coarse, presumptuous, and tyrannical – adjectives which seem to apply every bit as much to Wagner the individual as to Wagner the artist. Notebook 27 from the spring to the summer of 1878 is brimming over with Wagner criticism, and as a result, Schopenhauer now takes on a very different meaning for Nietzsche following his “official repudiation notice” to Bayreuth at Christmas 1876.³ Two entries in particular are notable for their significance, following on the events of the mortal insult. “*In Schopenhauer*,” Nietzsche writes in note 67, “At first *holding fast* to him in large matters against the individual, later in individual matters against the whole.”⁴ And in note 80, we find Nietzsche further clarifying what Schopenhauer now means for him:

The *Schopenhauerian human being* drove me to skepticism toward everything respected, exalted, defended up to now (and also toward the Greeks Schopenhauer Wagner) genius saint – pessimism of knowledge. Via this *by-way*, I reached the *heights* with the freshest winds. – The writing about Bayreuth was only a pause, a sinking back, a *recuperation*. There, the *unnecessariness* of Bayreuth became clear to me.⁵

But aside from the notebooks of the time, Nietzsche’s openly critical attitude towards Wagner is immediately evident in the first part of *Human, All Too Human*, the first published work to come out after their ‘break.’ Even so, there do appear to be several passages of note which allude to the insult. In the section entitled *On the History of Moral Sensations*, §61 under the heading of “Being Able to Wait,” we have Nietzsche contemplating the value of waiting long enough to allow one’s feelings to cool, what happens when one cannot, and then considering under what conditions a duel becomes necessary. In the section entitled *Man in Society*, §365 under the heading of “Duel,” Nietzsche gives further attention to the value of a duel as a means to vindicate

¹ Magee, 2000: 337.

² *Letter to Franz Overbeck*, 22 February 1883, SL: 209 and KSB 6: 337. Note here that Nietzsche says *six years*, dating the ‘final blow’ to 1877, precisely when these events occurred.

³ *Diary Entry*, 24 December 1876: “Nice letter from Prof. Nietzsche, though informing us that he now rejects Schopenhauer’s teachings!” CWD 1: 938.

⁴ UF/HAH II, 2013: 308, *Notebook 27* [67], Spring-Summer 1878.

⁵ UF/HAH II, 2013: 309, *Notebook 27* [80], Spring-Summer 1878.

honor, writing that “if someone has such sensitive feelings that he does not want to live when some person or other says or thinks this or that about him, then he has a right to make the matter depend on the death of one or the other of them.” Nietzsche then concludes by stating that “such an institution (i.e., the duel) educates people to be careful in their expressions and makes it possible to associate with them.”¹ Perhaps however the most telling aphorism is from the third part of *Human All Too Human*, in the section entitled *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, §264 under the heading of “Slander.” Here, the aphorism is worth quoting in its entirety:

If we come upon the trace of a really infamous accusation, we should never seek its origin among our honest and simple *enemies*; for they, as our enemies, would never be believed if they were to invent something like that about us. But those whom we have benefitted most for a time, but who, for one reason or another, may be secretly certain that they will obtain nothing more from us – they are the ones who are in a position to get infamy rolling: they are believed, in the first place, because people assume that they would not invent anything that could do damage to themselves; and secondly, because they have come to know us better. – Someone who has been badly slandered can comfort himself by saying: slanders are the sicknesses of others that break out upon your own body; they prove that society is a single (moral) body, so that you can undertake a cure on *yourself* that shall benefit others.²

It seems clear then, based on the evidence, that the shameful series of events which passed between doctor Eiser, the Wagners, and Nietzsche and which culminated in the ‘mortal’ insult, sealed the breach between the Wagners and Nietzsche, thus beginning a literary duel which commenced with *Human, All Too Human* and did not let up until *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* was published in 1895, a full six years after Nietzsche’s productive life had ceased. Nevertheless, it does *not at all* seem clear that the insult was the *cause* of their break, as though the intricate labyrinth of their relationship could be narrowed down to a singular ground or event which, once it occurred, brought about a proportionate effect. To conceive of their relationship in such a mechanistic fashion is, in some sense, not only to ignore the fact that their alliance had incredibly rich and complex *biographical* antecedents, it also dismisses the fact, almost out of hand, that Wagner’s influence on Nietzsche’s *thinking*, both during their alliance, and long after that alliance had ceased to be, was a contributing factor in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Since the arguments of this appendix have been marshalled to demonstrate, in both cases, that the traditional narrative of Nietzsche’s break with Wagner needs to be revised, we would be far better advised, in the first instance, to understand the so-called ‘moment of the break’ with doctor Eiser as that of the response to a stimulus since, insofar as the relationship between *these* two terms are concerned, there is no equality that pertains between the intensity of the cause and the intensity of the effect. Not only is this conceptually much clearer, Nietzsche himself, in the aphorism just quoted, as much as acknowledges this to be so: slander, and the response to that slander, can only be what it is by virtue of the existing relationship.

¹ HAH, 1995: 211, “Duel,” §365.

² UF/HAH II, 2013: 260, “Slander,” §264.

In the second instance however, and more importantly, to understand why we cannot simply accept the incidents with doctor Eiser as the cause of the break more generally, it is vital that we now chronicle some of the biographical information available to us from the very earliest years of their relationship in order to more fully appreciate the taut and apprehensive undercurrent that existed as a result of their association, long before doctor Eiser ever came into the picture. While by no means exhaustive, this survey will provide us with a much sounder foundation to evaluate not only the biographical features at work in Nietzsche's relationship with, and break from Wagner, but will also provide us with a much sounder foundation from which to draw inferences about the depth and dimensionality of Wagner's *intellectual* influence on Nietzsche – an influence that is not only riddled throughout Nietzsche's philosophy, but one which eventually explains, from the standpoint of critical history and philosophy, what Nietzsche's case of Wagner must be.

3. Pledging Allegiance

Nietzsche was a committed Wagnerian before he even met Wagner. Indeed, from the earliest moments of their association, and with only one previous visit to the Wagners' home at Tribschen near Lake Lucerne under his belt from five days prior, Nietzsche was already writing a birthday greeting for the maestro's fifty-sixth birthday which is tinged with a kind of reverential piety that seems wholly disproportionate to their previous encounters. "How long have I intended to express unreservedly the degree to which I feel grateful to you," Nietzsche wrote to Wagner as a gift for his fifty-sixth birthday on 22 May 1869, "because indeed the best and loftiest moments of my life are associated with your name, and I know of only one other man, your great spiritual brother Arthur Schopenhauer, whom I regard with equal reverence, even *religione quadam*¹ [...] if it is the lot of genius to be for a while the possession of only *paucorum hominum*,² then certainly these *pauci* may feel themselves especially fortunate and privileged, because it is granted to them to see the light and to warm themselves by it, while the mass is still standing and freezing in the cold fog."³

With such an eloquent assurance as this, it was not long before Wagner recognized Nietzsche's talent for literature. Shortly after Nietzsche's first visits to Tribschen, Wagner had asked Nietzsche to help him revise and edit the opening chapters of his monumental biography, *Mein Leben*. As Wagner's amanuensis, Cosima had recently transcribed the pages from Wagner's dictation and put them into manuscript form, but it soon became Nietzsche's job to polish the prose and to proofread the manuscript for chronological errors. In a letter from Pilatus, near Lake Lucerne dated 4 August 1869 to his boyhood friend Gustav Krug, Nietzsche writes that he had just "looked through a quantity of manuscripts which Wagner had given to me to read,"

¹ "in a kind of religious manner"

² "a few men"

³ *Letter to Richard Wagner*, 22 May 1869, SL: 53 and KSB 3: 205-06.

adding that they are “strange novellas from his first Paris period, philosophical essays, and sketches for dramas...”¹ Indeed it is certain that they probably *were* somewhat revealing, for whatever the reason, Wagner soon took them back. That however did not stop Wagner from assigning Nietzsche the more mundane duties associated with preparing his autobiography for publication, but for one who had such terrible eyesight, correcting manuscript errata must have been a joyless and exacting task for the young professor.

Nevertheless, fresh commissions were handed down. In the autumn, Nietzsche was asked to carry out a “very great service” on behalf of Cosima to track down a portrait of Wagner’s uncle Adolph.² According to Cosima, the deceased uncle had bequeathed a portrait of himself to a former maidservant who was still living in Leipzig, and was presumably still in possession of the portrait. The portrait, Cosima announced, should be a Christmas gift for Wagner, since Wagner was still very much attached to this uncle. Effectively then, Nietzsche had been tasked with going to Leipzig to track down the deceased uncle’s former maid, and then presumably coaxing her with all sorts of blandishments to sign over the portrait to Nietzsche. It seems more than likely that Nietzsche tactfully tried to be excused from this duty, for in a letter dated 19 October 1869, Cosima soon asked Nietzsche if his sister might be willing to follow up with the request.³ Sure enough, a week later, Nietzsche wrote to his sister putting the commission into her charge, even going so far as to quote the request directly from Cosima’s letter.⁴ All the same, *Cosima’s Diaries* coolly allude to this incident, despite the fact that it was more than a minor inconvenience for the young Nietzsche to carry out.⁵

Then, shortly before Christmas 1869, Nietzsche received a rather urgent request from Wagner to contact the Basel printing firm of Bonfantini to negotiate the printing costs on his behalf for small selections of the autobiography to be printed.⁶ Even though Wagner only intended to have a few copies printed, he wanted to ensure that it could be printed in a lavishly decadent form, as it was intended as a birthday gift for Cosima, whose birthday fell on 24 December. Wagner’s request was accompanied by additional, even more banal requests from Cosima. In a letter dated on or around 24 November 1869, Cosima warmly beseeched the young professor to run some shopping errands on her behalf as well. “Since you bring me such good luck,” she wrote to the young Nietzsche “may I trouble you for something more? I would like to know if you could acquire Dürer’s engraving *Melancholia* for the Master’s Christmas gift. Prints of it are sometimes found easily enough. Then again they can be quite difficult to find.”⁷ One can only suppose that Nietzsche responded kindly to Cosima’s

¹ Letter to Gustav Krug, 4 August 1869, SL: 56 and KSB 3: 37-38.

² Letter to Nietzsche, 29 September 1869, DBCW 1: 7-8.

³ Letter to Nietzsche, 19 October 1869, DBCW 1: 10-11.

⁴ Letter to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche, 27 October 1869, KSB 3: 69.

⁵ Diary Entries for 29 September 1869, 26 October 1869, 5 November 1869, 7 November 1869 and 12 December 1869. Cosima’s liaison in Leipzig is Doris Brockhaus, one of Wagner’s relatives.

⁶ Letter to Nietzsche, 30 November 1869, DBCW 1: 13 n.74.

⁷ Letter to Nietzsche, late November 1869, DBCW 1: 13.

request, for less than a week later, on 30 November 1869, a torrential downpour of requests came from Tribschen for Nietzsche to sort out. Nietzsche was asked, in the first instance, if he could help organize (i.e., rebind) Wagner's extensive personal library. This could be done easily enough Cosima supposed, since the young professor was already troubling himself with negotiating the printing costs for Wagner's autobiography. "Please consolidate the Classics" she told him, "with the Greeks in chestnut, the Romans in ochre, on marbled paper with leather spine, the paper tinted either white or yellow with a watermark pattern, and the authors' names on small, colored labels so that they can be easily distinguished."¹ After that, Nietzsche services were demanded for a trip to the large toy retailer in the Eisengasse to deliver the enclosed wish list for Christmas. Presumably Nietzsche could have simply handed in the notes to the respective retailers detailing the Wagners' demands without getting himself even *further* involved, but according to Fischer-Dieskau, Nietzsche did not take his job lightly. "He critically examined books and art objects, and even toys. Thus, with the marionettes, he objected that the king didn't look genuine enough and the devil wasn't as black as he ought to be. He felt that an angel he found in Basel wasn't dressed in accordance with heavenly custom, and he ordered a garment from Paris instead."² Is it any wonder then, that Nietzsche received yet another missive on 9 December 1869 not to worry too much if "the king is not as genuine and the Devil is not as desirable"? After all, the Wagners hardly wished for the young professor to "start growing grey hair," for they reassured him, "only whichever errands are easiest for you."³ Unfortunately, Nietzsche had begun to set a dangerous precedent by catering to their every whim, and on 15 December 1869, Nietzsche received a new missive from Cosima to go to the clothing store to find "tulle with gold stars and polka dots; and if tulle is not available, tarlatan." These materials, she explained, were "nowhere to be found in all of Lucerne," and she needed them for the Nativity scene they were constructing of Christ in the manger.⁴ She did however close her letter, as she had done previously, by reminding herself that Nietzsche was a professor of philology, and that he should not be troubled by such trivialities as Wagner had previously maintained, but it is doubtful whether Cosima ever saw in Nietzsche anything other than a young and able man fit to carry out errands for the whims of the Wagnerian household.

Even though Nietzsche was present for the Christmas festivities at Tribschen, there is a conspicuous lack of credit paid to the frankly commonplace administrative and secretarial duties he carried out for Wagner and his wife, as Cosima's diary entry for Christmas Day 1869 reveals: "Loldi⁵ came to me, R. had sent her in with a little volume of manuscripts and 32 pages of the printed biography. Very moved, particularly by the former, *for R. certainly must have gone to much trouble acquiring them.* Tears."

¹ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 30 November 1869, DBCW 1: 13-14.

² Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 33.

³ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 9 December 1869, DBCW 1: 16.

⁴ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 15 December 1869, DBCW 1:18.

⁵ 'Loldi' was the pet name the Wagners gave to their eldest daughter, Isolde, conceived at a time when Cosima was still married to Wagner's disciple Hans von Bülow. Isolde was born in April 1865.

Cosima then notes that a parcel had arrived for the children with all sorts of toys, whereupon “*I tell the children that the dolls which gave them the most pleasure came from their father.*”¹ One gets the sense that even in small matters, Wagner could hardly stand for anyone else to share center stage.

From the earliest moments of their association then, Nietzsche’s relationship with Wagner hardly rested on equal footing. But from what we have surveyed so far, it now seems clear that Nietzsche was instrumental in promoting the inequality, not only through the ingratiating and obsequious imagery he routinely conjured up within his written correspondence to the Wagners, but likewise through the idyllic and wistful turns of phrase he frequently formulated for the sake of his third party beneficiaries. But the ingratiation did not stop there: it soon included intellectually pandering to certain aspects of Wagner’s personality, including his coarse anti-Semitism.² In short, Nietzsche put both himself and the resources he commanded at the disposal of Wagner and the Wagnerian cause, and this decision very often conflicted with the demands of his professorial post.

By the beginning of 1870, Nietzsche had already fallen behind in his own work as a result of the demands he allowed the Wagners to place upon him. Fischer-Dieskau records that “Nietzsche was fairly overladen with his many courses and his highly taxing private labors” and that Nietzsche had once confided to his sister that “Wagner and Frau Cosima had no idea how overburdened [I am].”³ But that hardly mattered to Wagner who, in addition to hassling Nietzsche for a thank you note for the holidays, alerted the young professor that he had found yet another chronological error in his autobiography, and beseeched the young professor to attend to it right away.⁴ Nietzsche had already been troubling himself with the engraving of Wagner’s coat-of-arms, and now he had to couple that task with correcting the galley proofs for Wagner’s autobiography.⁵

But now, in addition to the seemingly thankless tasks he had been performing for the Wagners, Nietzsche’s professional work began to take up Wagner’s views on anti-Semitism. The previous year Wagner had taken the opportunity to republish his inflammatory essay *Judaism in Music* from some twenty years prior, appending an

¹ *Diary Entry*, 25 December 1869, CWD 1: 176, my emphasis.

² In the letter already cited from 22 May 1869, Nietzsche had recounted how lucky he was to be “among the few” entrusted with the ability to grasp the genius of Wagner’s personality as a whole, adding that “the undivided, deeply ethical current that passes through your life, writings and music...we poor Germans have simply lost, through all kinds of political *misère*, through philosophical mischief and importunate Jewry.” *Letter to Richard Wagner*, 22 May 1869, SL: 53 and KSB 3: 205-06.

³ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 38.

⁴ “My dear friend! I find your silence astonishing: but I pray you will dispel my astonishment. – For today, in passing, a request! Reading old family letters, which arrived as a Christmas present, I stumbled upon a chronological mistake in my biography. Hopefully, the first folio has not been printed definitively yet, and so may I ask you [...] to correct the chronological data on these pages.” Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 40-41.

⁵ “The coat-of-arms turned out very well; we have every reason to thank you for your meticulous care. But here my old *vulture* draft has risen anew, the bird of prey that everyone takes for an eagle until told that scientifically there is such a thing as a ‘cinerary vulture,’ closely resembling the eagle. Now, since, because of the relationship, the ‘vulture’ absolutely has to be recognized at once; may we ask you to prevail upon the engraver to give our bird its characteristic ruffle – using any available picture of the beast. This probably won’t work without a change in the neck, but perhaps it will come out alright.” Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 41.

attack on the famous actor Eduard Devrient's recently published memoir on Felix Mendelssohn, a composer to which Wagner had never warmed. As might be expected, the republication of the essay hardly went over very well, but at least initially, Nietzsche went along with the bigoted views of Wagner. On 1 February 1870, Nietzsche delivered his lecture *Socrates and Tragedy* to the Basel Museum and, according to Köhler, "embarked on a thinly disguised propaganda exercise on behalf of Wagner's views."¹ Socrates, Nietzsche declared, had systematically destroyed the music dramas of Aeschylus with his rational optimism and his instinctive animosity towards art. This sad state of affairs, once more, had remained unchecked until modern times. It was only when the modern-day Aeschylus, Richard Wagner, appeared on the scene to wage "a one-man war against those guilty of bringing about the destruction of culture" that the revitalization of culture had once again begun to flourish. Then, to his astonished audience, Nietzsche closed off his lecture by explicitly drawing out the analogy: "Socratism is the modern Jewish press. I need say nothing more."^{2,3} Writing to his friend Paul Deussen in an undated letter from February 1870, Nietzsche expressed his cavalier indifference about the lecture series having caused offense. "I would like soon to send you my most recent lectures, of which the latter (*"Socrates and Tragedy"*) has been understood here as a chain of paradoxes and has aroused hatred and anger in some quarters. Offense must come. I have, in the main, cast caution aside."⁴ And in a letter to his friend Erwin Rohde dated 15 February 1870, Nietzsche acknowledged the lecture "excited terror and incomprehension," but that it had "strengthened the ties with my Tribschen friends even more. I shall yet become a Walking Hope," Nietzsche declared. "Richard Wagner too has most touchingly indicated the aim he sees mapped out for me [...] Knowledge, art, and philosophy are now growing into one another so much in me that I shall in any case give birth to a centaur one day."⁵ The Wagners however, who prudently declined Nietzsche's invitation to attend the lecture when they saw the contents, were slightly more concerned. Writing to his young protégé on 4 February 1870, Wagner assured Nietzsche that while he was convinced of the correctness of his theory, the lecture series was not the appropriate medium to disseminate such questionable views. "I am

¹ Joachim Köhler. *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*. Translated by Ronald Taylor. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998 (*hereafter* Köhler), 88.

² *Letter to Nietzsche*, 4 February 1870, DBCW 1: 27 n.155. Cf., Köhler, 1998: 88.

³ All direct reference to the Jews was subsequently torn out from Nietzsche's original notebooks. The lecture as it now stands ends mid-sentence, in which the definitive Colli and Montinari edition of Nietzsche's *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* indicates additional missing text [+ + +]. The tone of the lecture and the lecture's final paragraph in particular nevertheless make it clear that a critical moment is at hand for the revitalization of art in Germany, and that it is for the contemporary 'Teuton' to decide between the coming Music Drama on the one hand or the superficial effects of 'Grand Opera' on the other, a hardly veiled reference to the style of opera which had been ushered in by the Jewish composer Giacomo Meyerbeer in Paris in the early part of the nineteenth century, and one of Wagner's arch-nemeses. Cf., "Socrates und die Tragödie", in KGW III.2, 25-41. In subsequent letters to friends in which this lecture is mentioned, such as the letter Nietzsche sent to Carl von Gersdorff on 21 June 1871, all direct reference to the Jews had been taken out, and it was up to the reader to 'read between the lines'; e.g., "I enclose a treatise which shows more of my philosophical doings than the title suggests. Read it charitably; I have many things in the making, and am getting ready for a struggle in which, I know, my friends will take great interest." *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 21 June 1871, SL: 81 and KSB 3: 204.

⁴ *Letter to Paul Deussen*, mid-February 1870, SL: 64 and KSB 3: 98-99.

⁵ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 15 February 1870, SL: 62 and KSB 3: 95.

worried about you, and pray with my whole heart that you won't ruin yourself. I would advise you, if I may, not to handle such very implausible views in short papers, with an eye to making an easy effect for considerations that will prove fatal in the long run, but [...] to gird yourself to write a larger, more comprehensive work on the subject."¹ The following day, on 5 February 1870, Cosima wrote to the young professor in gentle, almost maternal tones, admitting that while she was sympathetic to his basic outlook and admired the boldness of his approach, it was nevertheless a tactical error to directly state "our philosophical position." The letter indeed is unusually remarkable for its mix of Wagnerian propaedeutics couched in nurturing airs. "I have a request for you, as from a mother to a son," Cosima wrote to Nietzsche. "Do not stir up the hornet's nest. Do you understand me? Do not refer to the Jews by name, particularly not *en passant*. If you wish to take up the gruesome fight in God's name, do so later, but not at the outset."²

Nietzsche soon realized his error. Wagner, however, had not. He soon sent Nietzsche, by way of Cosima, into the fray again with a task that must have been more than a bit awkward for the young professor. Wagner, whose predilection for the most extravagant surroundings never failed him, set his mind on acquiring a lavish lamp made by the architect Gottfried Semper. But as both the Wagners and Nietzsche soon found out, Semper could not simply sell them the lamp, for the lamp had been consecrated for use in the Dresden synagogue, and the only individuals who could help in this instance were either the Council of the Elders in Israel, or the Jewish jewelers of Meyer and Noske, as the manufacturers of the lamp. Wagner could hardly be counted on to intervene, since he had taken the opportunity only the year before to describe the Jews as a "pestilence," while Cosima, whose pervasive paranoia of the Jews actually exceeded Wagner's, feared that she might compromise herself were she to order the artefact herself. Nevertheless Wagner wanted his lamp, and so once again, Nietzsche was charmed into performing another banality for lady Cosima, and through her, for Wagner. "May I trouble you again?" Cosima warmly appealed to the young Nietzsche. "I would prefer not to have my letter to Meyer and Noske signed with my own name or for the letter to be sent from Lucerne. I would do so at the risk of the Jewish newspapers. Please enclose the letter as written and signed by the governess of Tribschen and then submit it with your address." She then closed off her request with "a thousand pardons for the inconvenience."³ Nevertheless, *Cosima's Diaries* make no mention of Nietzsche's role in acquiring the lamp other than the fact that she "wrote to Prof. Nietzsche," comments which by themselves hardly reveal the extent to which he was roped in to procuring it. On 4 September 1870, Semper's lamp was "inaugurated" as if it were merely just another routine occurrence around Tribschen.⁴ By then, Nietzsche had enlisted as an orderly in the Prussian military

¹ Quoted in Curt Westernhagen. *Wagner: A Biography*. Translated by Mary Whittall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 (*hereafter* Westernhagen), 424.

² *Letter to Nietzsche*, 5 February 1870, DBCW 1: 27.

³ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 27 January 1870, DBCW 1: 21.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 4 September 1870, CWD 1: 266.

service, and while attending to six seriously wounded soldiers in transit to Karlsruhe, he soon fell ill himself. By 7 September, he had found his way back to the Erlangen, and by 14 September to his mother's in Naumberg where he would recover from dysentery and diphtheria.

Perhaps, however, the greatest weight that was put on the young Nietzsche's shoulders during the very earliest years of their relationship was the charge to educate Wagner's son Siegfried. Nietzsche had been present at the Wagner's villa in Tribschen when Cosima had gone into labor on the evening of 6 June 1869, the events of which are recorded in *Cosima's Diaries* in Wagner's own handwriting. When it was all over, the young Siegfried was born. Soon afterwards, the Wagners began speculating on how the young Siegfried would be educated, whereupon they hit upon the idea to send Siegfried away once he started to approach manhood. "But where?" was Cosima's query. "With Nietzsche – wherever Nietzsche is teaching." Then, in a particularly revealing comment, Wagner added "and we shall watch from afar, as Wotan watches the young Siegfried."¹ The parallels here between Wagner's art and Wagner's life seem to disclose eerie similarities where, according to Köhler, Nietzsche could have worked out for himself that "it was not he that was destined for the Wagnerian succession but the Master's own son. In Wagner's scheme of things Nietzsche was only to be allocated the thankless role of Mime, the treacherous dwarf whose reward for bringing up Siegfried is to be slain by his pupil."²

It would seem then that the Wagners simply failed to understand Nietzsche's emotional needs at this early stage of the relationship, but it was Cosima in particular who seemed more resistant to this insight. Nevertheless, the Wagners were genuinely concerned for the young professor, for between his deeply-seated religious nature and his desire to bring about the revitalization of a new culture with Wagner as its chief representative, Nietzsche exacted terrible demands on himself. While he had, on the one hand, assimilated the fourth book of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* at a very young age, it was the youthful passion of such an age to invariably derive a predominantly physiological, and hence, materialistic asceticism from it, and this culminated in many forms of unnecessary self-flagellation.³ In this sense, Wagner's observation of Nietzsche's earliest behavior is characteristically astute, as recorded in *Cosima's Diaries* for 17 February 1870: "In the evening a letter from Prof. Nietzsche, which pleases us, for his mood had given us cause for concern. Regarding this, R. says he fears that Schopenhauer's philosophy might in the long run be a bad influence on young people of this sort, because they apply his pessimism, which is a form of thinking, contemplation, to life itself, and derive from it an active

¹ *Diary Entry*, 5 November 1869, CWD 1: 162.

² Köhler, 1998: 65.

³ Nietzsche's observation about his own life to his *de facto* mother and friend Malwida von Meysenbug in a letter dated 14 January 1880 is not only touching, it is particularly revealing: "For my life's terrible and almost unrelenting martyrdom makes me thirst for the end, and there have been some signs which allow me to hope that the stroke which will liberate me is not too distant. As regards torment and self-denial, my life during these past years can match that of any ascetic of any time; nevertheless, I have wrung from these years much in the way of purification and burnishing of the soul – and I no longer need religion or art as a means to that end." *Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug*, 14 January 1880, SL: 171 and KSB 6: 4-5.

form of hopelessness.”¹ Truly, the Wagners’ concern for the young man was justified, but between Wagner’s obsessive need for center stage and Cosima’s obsessive need to canonize him, Nietzsche’s emotional needs continued to remain unfulfilled.

4. Plans...

One of the most extraordinary events in the history of modern Christmases took place in Tribschen at Christmas 1870 with Wagner’s presentation of *The Tribschen Idyll*, later named *The Siegfried Idyll*, for Cosima’s birthday. Nietzsche was present during the Christmas festivities, staying from 24 December 1870 to 1 January 1871, and at Christmas, presented Cosima with a manuscript entitled *The Birth of the Tragic Concept*. “The depth and excellence of his survey,” Cosima recorded in her diaries “conveyed with a very concentrated brevity, is quite remarkable; we follow his thoughts with the greatest and liveliest interest.” *Whose* ideas they were, however, she subsequently made clear: “My greatest pleasure is in seeing how R.’s ideas can be extended in this field.”² And it was unfortunate that neither she nor Wagner ever tired of pointing out whose ideas they were. In a diary entry dated 5 January 1871, Wagner makes clear that Nietzsche “is the only living person [...] who has provided me with something, a positive enrichment of my outlook.”³ Likewise, in early April 1871, Nietzsche composed a treatise entitled *The Origin and Aim of Greek Tragedy* and had decided to dedicate it to Wagner. Upon hearing this news, the Wagners were thrilled. “In it one sees a gifted man imbued with R.’s ideas in his own way. We are spending these days in a lively discussion of our plans.”⁴

It is certain, too, that there *were* plans. Through July and August 1870, Wagner had been working on his essay on *Beethoven*, which was ostensibly intended to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the composer’s birth. In substance however, the essay was a call to ground the metaphysics of music through the philosophy of Schopenhauer and to exhort the German nation into acknowledging its role in the revitalization of a new culture through its exceptional talent for music.

According to Wagner’s thesis, the ‘outward’ form of the individual and society belongs exclusively to the French, and insofar as *this* achievement is concerned, no one can possibly rival them. As far as the ‘outward’ man has been concerned, the Germans have been slavish imitators, and not very good ones at that. “In truth it is French taste, i.e. the spirit of Paris and Versailles, that for two hundred years has been the sole productive ferment in European culture.”⁵ Nevertheless Wagner maintained, the Germans’ peculiar talent is not for ‘outward’ form, and the sooner the German recognizes this fact, the better off he will be. “At once we recognize that a ‘German

¹ *Diary Entry*, 17 February 1870, CWD 1: 191.

² *Diary Entry*, 26 December 1870, CWD 1: 312-13.

³ *Diary Entry*, 5 January 1871, CWD 1: 319.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 5 April 1871, CWD 1: 354.

⁵ PW 5: 115, “Beethoven.”

Mode,' set up as rival to the French, would be something too absurd; and since our feeling nevertheless revolts against that reign, we can only conclude that we are stricken with a veritable curse, from which nothing but a profoundly radical new-birth can ever redeem us."¹

With the problem safely identified, Wagner now advanced a two-fold solution. In order to bring about this "radical new birth of culture," the German must first recognize his own peculiar talent for 'inwardness.' And as music, Wagner argued, is the direct revelation of this 'inwardness' – a revelation for which the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the music of Beethoven had already precipitated – the time was nigh for the German musician in particular to pave the way for the rebirth of European culture out of the spirit of music, since music, according to Wagner, is the highest form to which art can aspire in its desire to express this 'inwardness:' "As for our present Civilization, especially insofar as it influences the artistic man, we certainly may assume that nothing but the spirit of our Music, that music which Beethoven set free from bondage to the Mode, can dower it with a soul again. And the task of giving to the new, more soulful civilization that happily may arise herefrom, the new Religion to inform it – this task must obviously be reserved for the German Spirit alone, that spirit which we ourselves shall never rightly understand till we cast aside each spurious tendency ascribed thereto."²

Nietzsche had become acquainted with Wagner's vision during the months in which Wagner was composing his essay, and now, shortly before Christmas 1870, Nietzsche wrote to his friend Erwin Rohde to affirm the alliance he had made with Wagner as well as the plans on which he believed that alliance rested. In order to do justice to Nietzsche's sentiments about these 'plans,' Nietzsche's letter is worth quoting at some length.

For, in the long run, I also realize what Schopenhauer's doctrine of university wisdom is all about. A completely radical institution for *truth* is not *possible* here. Above all, from here nothing really revolutionary can come [...] So one day we shall cast off this yoke – for *me* that is certain. And then we shall create a new Greek academy [...] From your Tribschen visit you will know of *Wagner's* Bayreuth plan. I have been quietly considering if we too should not likewise break with philology as practiced till now and with its educational perspective. I am preparing a big *adhortatio* for all who have not yet been utterly suffocated and swallowed up by the present age [...] A recent book of Wagner's on Beethoven will give you a good idea of what I desire of the future. Read it – it is a revelation of the spirit in which we – we! – shall come to live [...] Then we shall be teachers to each other; our books will be merely fishhooks for catching people into our monastic and artistic community. We shall love, work, enjoy for each other – perhaps this is the only way in which we can work for the whole. To show you how seriously I mean this, I have already begun to limit my needs, in order to save a little capital. Also we should try our luck in *lotteries*; when we write books, I shall demand during the coming period the highest fees. In brief, every permitted means is to be used, so that it will be physically possible to found our monastery. Thus we have our task for the next few years.³

As we can judge from the content of this latter, at the center of Nietzsche's aspirations was the opportunity to participate, alongside Wagner, in an attempt to bring about

¹ PW 5: 115, "Beethoven."

² PW 5: 123, "Beethoven."

³ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 15 December 1870, SL: 73-74 and KSB 3: 165-66.

the radical rebirth of Europe's intellectual and artistic culture. It would be, in a manner of speaking, a latter day German Reformation of Culture.

Unfortunately, Nietzsche's bout with both dysentery and diphtheria the previous autumn had further exacerbated the state of his physical organism, and by the beginning of 1871, he had already alerted the Wagners of his condition. Nevertheless, Nietzsche continued to stretch the capacities of his physical organism in dedication to the Wagnerian cause.¹ On 22 May 1871, on Wagner's fifty-eighth birthday, Nietzsche surprised the Wagners at Tribschen with an even more surprising disclosure. "On our return we found Prof. Nietzsche in the house," Cosima recorded in her diaries. "Prof. N. tells us that he intends to found a periodical, under R.'s auspices, two years hence, till then he will be busy preparing it."² Nietzsche returned two days later, the purpose of which appears to have been somewhat erratic, and by all accounts, Wagner seems to have been instrumental in calming the young Nietzsche down.³ As Westernhagen describes the incidents from around this time, Wagner was "concerned from the first that his young friend should not permit himself to be distracted from his true calling for his sake,"⁴ but it seems that Wagner's motives could not have been as altruistic as that. While Wagner was undoubtedly concerned for Nietzsche's wellbeing in the sense in which a father cares for his son, Wagner was also conspicuously conscious of the plans on which his alliance with Nietzsche rested, and the role that each man had to play in the revitalization of a new European culture. It was Nietzsche's role to promote and to endorse Wagnerian aesthetics, and this entailed that Nietzsche's status as a professor of classics could not be jeopardized. In point of fact, the very next sentence in Westernhagen's biography of Wagner unequivocally proves this sentiment, complete with Wagner giving the young Nietzsche one of his famed back-handed compliments: "If you had become a musician, then you would be approximately where I would be if I had stuck to the classics [...] Remain a classicist now, so that, as such, you may let yourself be guided by music [...] Show what classical studies are for, and help me bring about the great 'renaissance,' in which Plato embraces Homer and Homer, now imbued with Plato's ideas, at last becomes great Homer indeed."⁵

Nietzsche's fervent desire to help Wagner bring about the radical rebirth of culture did not go unnoticed however, and soon enough Cosima was warmly beseeching the

¹ In January 1871, Nietzsche had tried to apply to the chair of philosophy vacated by Teichmüller at Basel, citing both nervous exhaustion over his philological duties and that his real task was philosophy. "My doctors will have told you of the extent to which I am once more in a poor state of health, and that this intolerable circumstance is due to overstrain [...] I live here in peculiar conflict, and it is this which so exhausts me and even grates on me physically. Urged most intensely by my nature to make thorough philosophical inquiry into a homogeneous field of thought, and to dwell undisturbed and with sustained reflection on one problem, I feel myself always thrown hither and thither, and driven off my course, by my daily variegated professional work and by the way it is disposed. This juxtaposition of Pädagogium and university I cannot in the long run tolerate, because I feel that my real task, to which I must if necessary *sacrifice any profession*, my philosophical task, is being made to suffer by it, and is even being reduced to an activity on the side." *Letter to Wilhelm Vischer-Bilfinger*, undated January 1871, SL: 75-76 and KSB 3: 174-75.

² *Diary Entry*, 22 May 1871, CWD 1: 368.

³ *Diary Entry*, 24 May 1871: "In the afternoon a visit from Professor Nietzsche, R. accompanies him to the railroad station." CWD 1: 368.

⁴ Westernhagen, 1981: 424.

⁵ Westernhagen, 1981: 424.

young professor to once again carry out tedious secretarial duties on behalf of Wagner. "Would you be so kind as to recommend us a copyist to which we could entrust the manuscript of *Siegfried's Death* without worrying" Cosima wrote to Nietzsche on 2 June 1871, knowing perfectly well that the young Nietzsche would likely take upon the work himself. "There is great excitement over this piece," she told him "and the Winterthur Library would like a copy as soon as possible."¹ Sure enough, the devoted Nietzsche took it upon himself to copy out the score for the Wagners, and on 18 June 1871, Cosima recorded her astonishment at the undertaking: "Prof. Nietzsche sends back *Siegfried's Tod*, he has copied it out himself!"²

5. Un Petit Faux Pas de Jeunesse

Given what we have chronicled so far from Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner, it is difficult to imagine that there would have been sufficient grounds for Wagner to cavil at the nature of Nietzsche's devotion. But Wagner, who was forever suspicious about the form that such devotion took even in his most dedicated adherents, and who could be provoked to an unprecedented anger by the least contradiction to his intentions, surely kept everyone, including Nietzsche, on their toes. Given these aspects of Wagner's personality, there were several 'incidents' with Nietzsche up until this time which had already displeased the Master. In early May 1871 for instance, the Wagners had stopped off in Leipzig to visit some of Wagner's relatives and to promote the Bayreuth enterprise. While in Leipzig, Cosima had found out that Nietzsche, who had previously dedicated his lecture on *Homer and Classical Philology* to her as a Christmas gift for 1869, had now dedicated it to his sister. Cosima's initial reaction seems to have been harmless enough, "but then, after discussing it with R., see it as a dubious streak, an addiction to treachery, as it were – as if he were seeking to avenge himself for some great impression."³ Wagner had complained, too, that Nietzsche's submissiveness was affected and therefore unnatural, and that it likely sprung more from the desire to feel both emotional and intellectual acceptance than as a genuine trait of his character, an observation which is almost assuredly correct: "[Nietzsche] is certainly the most gifted of our young friends," Cosima wrote in her diary dated 3 August 1871 "but a not quite natural reserve makes his behavior in many respects most displeasing. It is as if he were trying to resist the overwhelming effect of Wagner's personality."⁴ Perhaps the most vexing 'incident' of all however was that Nietzsche, who was himself an amateur musician, would take occasions to improvise on Wagner's own piano. Nietzsche would perform piano reductions to some of Wagner's own works, including the preludes to *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*, but he also took the occasion to transition into musical compositions of

¹ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 2 June 1871, DBCW 2: 1

² *Diary Entry*, 18 June 1871, CWD 1: 378.

³ *Diary Entry*, 11 May 1871, CWD 1: 364-65.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 3 August 1871, CWD 1: 399.

his own. This was certainly a cause for vexation, for while Wagner was an incomparably superior composer, he was far from being an outstanding performer. When confronted with Nietzsche's superior skill on the piano, he must have surely felt the impact of this inferiority, to which the comment Wagner once made surely must be seen in context: "No, Nietzsche, you play much too well for a professor!"¹

It seems justifiable to assert that whatever slight Wagner perceived to his intentions, he polemicized the nature of their effects to Cosima so that she would be forced to take sides in Wagner's favor. There are simply far too many examples running through the whole of her diaries, and not just with Nietzsche, which seem to ground this interpretation. Given the nature of what was to come with Nietzsche in particular, it would certainly appear reasonable in hindsight to justify Wagner's hypersensitivity, but the story is not a clear cut as one might imagine, for it remains just as conceivable to suppose that Wagner's hypersensitivity worked to his disadvantage in the sense that the feelings of treachery and persecution which he projected on to others eventually became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some of the incidents, such as the incident with the *Idyll*, were utterly harmless, and yet Wagner magnified it to such an extent that it caused both Cosima and Nietzsche many hours of unwonted grief.² The counterbalance to the abovementioned assertion is to concede what Fischer-Dieskau notes in his account of their relationship when he points out that "[t]he composer was far more experienced in life, and thus, earlier than Nietzsche, he sensed the dangers in subconscious incompatibilities."³ Nevertheless, from what we have surveyed so far, it is difficult to figure out comments made in *Cosima's Diaries* such as the one recorded for 15 July 1871: "Letter from Prof. Nietzsche. In this friendship, too, R. lavishes more love than he receives."⁴ Unfortunately to the already distrustful composer, Nietzsche's behavior in what was to come *did* invite further suspicion.

During the summer months of 1871, Nietzsche had been working on drafts to *The Birth of Tragedy* in order to prepare it for publication. The treatise was initially supposed to have been published by the Leipzig publisher Wilhelm Engelmann, who specialized in publishing history and philology. Engelmann appears to have expressed some initial reservations about the manuscript through an expert who had been commissioned to review it, but he had nonetheless agreed to publish it. Nietzsche was not satisfied however, and impetuously pulled out of the publishing arrangement.⁵ After spending his twenty-seventh birthday in the company of Erwin Rohde and Carl von Gersdorff – two men who hardly needed convincing to join the Wagnerian cause

¹ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 90.

² *Diary Entry*, 5 August 1871: "Yesterday R. caused me sorrow; Prof. Nietzsche had asked me for the *Idyll*, so that he could read it; after asking R., I lent it to him, requesting him on his departure to return it to me, but he forgot; after his departure R. asked me about it; our absent-minded friend had left the little work lying on the piano, and R., assuming that I had been negligent, had taken it to his room in vexation; this pained me deeply, for my only mistake had been in assuming that Prof. Nietzsche had done as I asked and put the manuscript back in its place, which he knows. But the slight ill feeling is soon overcome." CWD 1: 400.

³ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 134.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 15 July 1871, CWD 1: 390.

⁵ *Letter to Wilhelm Engelmann*, 28 June 1871, KSB 3: 205-06.

– Nietzsche decided to approach Wagner for a recommendation to Wagner’s own publisher. This was an unusual move. In the first instance Wagner’s publisher, E.W. Fritzsche, was the director of a music publishing house in Leipzig, and so could not competently assess Nietzsche’s manuscript as a work of scholarship. *A fortiori* to have Nietzsche’s work published by one who otherwise publishes music would more or less imply that Nietzsche’s manuscript was *not* a work of scholarship. Wagner must have surely wished to avoid the possibility that anyone might draw out these implications, for not only did he crave a wider dissemination of his ideas, he also wanted to give the impression that his ideas had been critically endorsed by a professor of classics in order for them to win acceptance into academic circles. Finally, but perhaps no less significantly was the fact that Fritzsche published Wagner’s music in particular. Thus, for Fritzsche to publish *The Birth of Tragedy* would be perceived as identical with publishing pure propaganda for the Wagnerian cause. Taken together, these reasons gave Wagner cause for alarm, as can be seen from the letter he sent to Nietzsche asking him to clarify his intentions:

My dear worthy friend! I beg you fervently to tell me pointblank, as your true friend, the reasons that moved you to offer your promising manuscript, so highly regarded by me, to the music businessman Fritzsche. Your having withdrawn it from Engelmann makes me conjecture certain things, in regard to which I desire, out of pure and sympathetic interest to you, to hear your confident information.¹

Unfortunately, Nietzsche’s response to Wagner no longer survives, but a single diary entry of the incident recorded for 21 October 1871 suggests that Wagner was at least persuaded by Nietzsche’s reasons: “Letter from Prof. Nietzsche, he wants his book to be published by Fritzsche [...] In the evening Carlyle, after R. had warmly recommended Prof. Nietzsche’s manuscript to Fritzsche.”²

6. *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* or... “I Will Say What Children Say When They Have Done Something Foolish: I Will Never Do It Again.”

No period of their relationship even remotely touched the intensity of intellectual symbiosis than the period during which Nietzsche was conceiving *The Birth of Tragedy*. The intensity pervades Nietzsche’s letters, and *Cosima’s Diaries* and her letters to Nietzsche are likewise imbued with a pellucid, almost crystalline sense of awareness for Wagner’s cause, as well as an authentic invigoration to accomplish the deed, then seen as the establishment of Bayreuth.

In the spring of 1871, Wagner set out to tour the newly constituted empire in order to promote both his music and his philosophy in an attempt to win support for Bayreuth. Wagner met with Otto von Bismarck on the evening of 3 May 1871, ostensibly to express gratitude for the formation of a unified German empire, but

¹ Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 72.

² *Diary Entry*, 21 October 1871, CWD 1: 424.

more than likely to determine whether the chancellor might be swayed towards supporting the Wagnerian cause. While Wagner's words recorded for the day state that "to win him over, to ask him to support my cause, would never occur to me,"¹ Wagner's motives could hardly have been that altruistic in meeting with the chancellor, for he had been put into a terrible artistic position at the time by the impetuous and intransigent young King of Bavaria who continued to mount performances of the *Ring* in Munich against Wagner's wishes and, as it were, forced Wagner's hand into forming a "counter-plan of his own to produce the entire *Ring* according to *his* wishes."² Wagner officially announced his Bayreuth plan in Leipzig on 12 May, intending to recruit 'certificates of patronage' for Bayreuth, and soon afterwards authorized the formation of Wagner Societies in order to further assist with financing the festival through patronage vouchers issued through the Societies. Thus, in terms of forging the artistic revitalization of a new European culture, Nietzsche was heavily involved at this time in both the planning and promotion of Bayreuth. On 20 December 1871, Nietzsche joined Wagner in Mannheim for Wagner's 'Mannheim Concert' organized by members of the Mannheim Wagner Society, but now it seemed when the momentum of the plan was at its peak, Nietzsche declined the invitations to spend Christmas with the Wagners at Tribschen: "I need time and solitude to think out my six lectures ('Future of Educational Institutions') and to collect myself," he wrote to his friend Rohde on or around 21 December 1871.³ As a compensation for his absence, Nietzsche noted that he had dedicated one of his earlier musical compositions entitled *New Year's Eve* to Cosima, and that he was "excited as to what I shall hear about my musical work from there, for I have *never* heard a competent judgment."⁴

Nietzsche's composition, the complete title of which was *Echo of a New Year's Eve, with Processional Song, Peasant Dance and a Midnight Bell*, was arranged for two pianos, and ran nearly twenty minutes in duration. While Nietzsche's gesture was no doubt authentic, it was singularly inappropriate, and the Wagners it seems were not pleased. In the first place, Nietzsche had declined the Wagners' invitation to spend Christmas with them at the very moment, and at the very height that their plans had been taking shape, leaving the Wagners in no doubt, as Westernhagen puts it, that Nietzsche "regarded himself, for all his devotion to Wagner, as his equal as a cultural critic and innovator."⁵ Moreover, the effect of having received Nietzsche's composition, not in person, but through the post, must have likewise been alienating to Cosima, while at the same time underscoring, at least to Wagner, the implicit competition Nietzsche must have perceived in making the gesture. For just as Wagner had composed the *Tribschen Idyll* and dedicated it to Cosima the previous Christmas, Nietzsche it now seemed endeavored to do the same. And while Fischer-Dieskau notes

¹ *Diary Entry*, 3 May 1871, CWD 1: 362.

² Westernhagen, 1981: 425.

³ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, about 21 December 1871, SL: 85 and KSB 3: 257.

⁴ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, about 21 December 1871, SL: 85 and KSB 3: 257.

⁵ Westernhagen, 1981: 441.

that “Nietzsche’s musical talent was extraordinary,”¹ Wagner, who was unquestionably the superior composer, must have seen Nietzsche’s gesture as a pointed insult.

The suspicious discomfort incurred by Nietzsche’s absence at Tribschen was immediately dispelled when Wagner received a copy of *The Birth of Tragedy* on 2 January 1872. Wagner was deeply affected by the nature of its themes, and both he and Cosima were soon praising Nietzsche’s effort in a deluge of superlatives. Cosima’s letter to Nietzsche dated 18 January 1872 overflows with lyrical hyperbole: “How beautiful your book is! How beautiful and how profound, how profound and how audacious! [...] In this book you have conjured spirits that I had believed obeyed the bidding only of our Master; there are two worlds, one we do not see because it is too remote, and one we do not recognize because it is too close to us, and you have thrown a brilliant light upon them both [...] I have read this book like a poem which reveals to us the essence of the deepest problems, and I can no more tear myself away from it than the Master can, for it answers all the unconscious questions of my inner being.”² On the same day, Wagner wrote a letter to his nephew Clemens Brockhaus, which gives some insight into what was at stake for Wagner and Nietzsche in publishing the latter’s book: “It is a truly godlike thought that the profoundly significant rebirth of art under the influence of the German spirit has been seen by this mind as simultaneously the rebirth [...] of the essence of Greek art. If it is my influence that has guided him in this, then certainly no one can judge better than I how deeply and inwardly my thought has become the property of this man who is academically so formidably well equipped with everything that I have had to leave uncultivated in myself.”³

All praise aside however, the Wagners had wondered even as early as the day after they received it “what the fate of this book will be.”⁴ The following day, Cosima recorded that while Nietzsche’s book had given Wagner “ever-increasing satisfaction,” they were concerned all the same about “where the public for it is to be found.”⁵ For as much as he may have wished to read an extended ten-section panegyric to his art appended to the formal arguments of the book, Wagner was shrewdly practical with regard to his art. The question in effect raised was how far Nietzsche’s book could actually promote Wagner’s art if the arguments in favor of it alienated the academic community, for it was precisely those who remained unconvinced about Wagner’s art and his intentions that needed the most convincing. Such convincing could only come from a dispassionate examination in which academic arguments were brought to bear on the main theses of Wagner’s aesthetics, for Wagnerians hardly needed another piece of propaganda to convince themselves of their partisanship. None of this was to be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Yet when

¹ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 73.

² *Letter to Nietzsche*, 18 January 1872, DBCW 2: 17.

³ Quoted in Westernhagen, 1981: 440. See DBCW 2: 17 n.125 for the German original.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 3 January 1872, CWD 1: 445-46.

⁵ *Diary Entry*, 4 January 1872, CWD 1: 446.

we consider some of the antecedents which transpired between these two men prior to its publication, we can recognize that this was not, in the final analysis, the purpose of Nietzsche's book, and the effects which followed upon its publication proved to bring out the conscious recognition of this fact for both men.

First, as we have already noted, Nietzsche had more than once desired to abandon his academic career in favor of taking up the mantle of Wagner's art. Now, shortly before the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche made it perfectly clear that he was not concerned about the academic consequences which might ensue from the arguments put forth in his book. In the same letter to Rohde from 21 December 1871, Nietzsche wrote that he was not at all disturbed over the fact that the book might raise "a cry of outrage when it is published,"¹ while in declining his Christmas invitation to Tribschen in order to work out his lectures on *The Future of Our Educational Institutions*, Nietzsche had demonstrated just how seriously he took the notion of a propaedeutic reformation in the wake of Wagner's art. Now, in the wake of his own publication, Nietzsche contacted his former mentor and the man responsible for his appointment to Basel to impress upon him the motivations which lie behind his book. "[I]f ever you had met with anything promising in your life," Nietzsche wrote to Friedrich Ritschl on 30 January 1872, "it might be this book, promising for our classical studies, promising for what Germany means, even if a number of individuals might be ruined by it. For I at least will not fail to carry out the practical consequences of my views, and you will divine something of these if I tell you that I am lecturing here on 'The Future of Our Educational Institutions.'"²

As might be expected however, *The Birth of Tragedy* did not go over well with academics. Ritschl himself wrote in his journal for 31 December 1871: "N's book *Birth of Tragedy* (= intelligent rakish dissoluteness)" and again on 2 February 1872: "Amazing letter from N (= megalomania)."³ In the end, the Wagners were quite right to wonder about the practical consequences of Nietzsche's book, for while they were both initially quite taken with it, there was nothing else for Nietzsche to do from their perspective except to herald the arrival of the rebirth of tragedy from the spirit of Wagner's music, and thus to promote Wagner's cause. Indeed, when "considering the fate of this book," Cosima added that Wagner "hopes in Bayreuth to start a periodical which Prof. Nietzsche would edit."⁴ From Nietzsche's perspective however, this was very far from his intended ideal. Yet in terms of the immediate effects which followed upon the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, what can one say to the idea of Nietzsche having risked his whole academic reputation on what amounts to Wagnerian dogma, and then running back to the Wagners for protection, as if they could single-handedly countermand the effect that rippled through the academic community when it was published – something which the Wagners *did* in fact try to do? When we consider what was at stake between these two men, the issue invoked, time and time again,

¹ Letter to Erwin Rohde, about 21 December 1871, SL: 84 and KSB 3: 256.

² Letter to Friedrich Ritschl, 30 January 1872, SL: 93 and KSB 3: 282.

³ Letter to Friedrich Ritschl, 30 January 1872, SL: 93 n.76.

⁴ Diary Entry, 3 January 1872, CWD 1: 446.

was either the struggle for, or the resistance to, autonomy, and that these attributes belonged at once to both men.

Soon after the publication, Nietzsche once again fell ill, to which overwork and exhaustion had no doubt brought him. This was no excuse, for with the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, it had been clear, at least to Wagner, that Nietzsche's priorities came second. In point of fact, because Nietzsche's book had been panned by academics, the only other value the book could now have, especially since Wagner found himself defending it, was the publicity it stirred up for the founding of Bayreuth. To that extent, Wagner conjectured that Nietzsche might have been regretting his book, but he was also concerned that at the core of Nietzsche's illnesses was a struggle with himself – an observation which assuredly was correct.

How difficult you make it for me to show any joy over you! The fact that you are ill made me quite unhappy. You must forgive us if we are rather anguished at the peripeties of your developmental stages, so to speak, ascertainment stages of your profession, to the extent that they have bearing upon your inner spiritual life [...] These illnesses have so often startled us, arousing as they did serious anxieties, not about your physical but about your spiritual condition.¹

Nietzsche's response to Wagner no longer survives, but it was evidently reassuring, at least for the time being. Soon afterwards however, in late May 1872, a young philologist named Ulrich von Wilmaowitz-Moellendorff wrote a critique of *The Birth of Tragedy* entitled 'Philology of the Future' critiquing Nietzsche for ignoring research, failing to use the critical-historical method, and most importantly for "smashing them in order to worship Richard Wagner in their dust."² Upon receiving this critique, Nietzsche immediately forwarded the pamphlet to Wagner, as if to have him settle accounts on his behalf.³ This Wagner surely did, although his 'open letter' to Nietzsche proved to do more harm than good, for as far-reaching as his views of education were, Wagner had no knowledge of the discipline he was critiquing, and this had the effect of frightening everyone off.⁴ Perhaps more significantly was the fact that in coming to Nietzsche's defense, Wagner singularly proved what everyone else had suspected all along; namely, that Nietzsche was just another one of Wagner's literary lackeys. The effects which soon followed seemed to foster an even greater reliance on Wagner's assistance, since Nietzsche had nowhere to turn after the publication of his book. "After everything that has recently happened to me, I truly have the least right to be despondent," Nietzsche wrote to Wagner mid-November 1872,

for I live really in the midst of a solar system of loving friendship [...] but there is one point which troubles me greatly at present: our winter semester has begun, and I have no students at all! Our philologists have not appeared! [...] To you, beloved master, I tell it because you should know all. That fact is, indeed, so easy to explain – I have suddenly acquired such a bad name in my field that our small university suffers from it! This agonizes me, because I am really very devoted and grateful to it, and want least of all to do it any harm [...] everyone condemns me, and even those 'who know me' cannot get beyond commiserating with me for this 'absurdity.' A professor of classical philology at Bonn, whom

¹ Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 79

² Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 77.

³ *Diary Entry*, 9 June 1872, CWD 1: 497.

⁴ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 16 July 1872, SL: 96 and KSB 4: 23.

I highly regard, has simply told his students that my book is 'sheer nonsense' and is quite useless: a person who writes such things is dead to scholarship.¹

The Wagners were genuinely distressed at Nietzsche's situation, and tried to force the matter with "all kinds of impossibilities,"² but in the end, Nietzsche's downfall as a classical philologist and an academic had been sealed.

The familial support which Nietzsche felt in the face of one of his darker discouragements must have aroused feelings of deeper concord and openness with the Wagners. It is all the more regrettable that what happened next proved to be another miscalculation on the part of Nietzsche. In early December 1872, Nietzsche decided to tell the Wagners about the critique he received of his *Manfred Meditation* from Hans von Bülow, a disclosure which not only implied that Nietzsche had solicited it without the Wagners' knowledge, but that he had solicited it from a man who was already trying to distance himself from the Wagner cult.

Hans von Bülow, in fact, had been married to Cosima at the time she had given birth to Wagner's two daughters – Isolde in April 1865, and Eva in February 1867 – and had already become pregnant with a third before Bülow realized the adulterous nature of her relationship with Wagner. So while Bülow may have still believed in the idol of his life and clung to *The Birth of Tragedy's* glorification of Wagner, it was very far from being true that he could still esteem the nature of Wagner's character. Bülow had been devastated by Wagner's actions towards him, all the more so since he had been singularly devoted to Wagner and his works, and had been responsible for premiering both *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger* in Munich. Nietzsche was unquestionably aware of these circumstances; indeed, it would be ridiculous to assume otherwise, for when he first showed up at Tribschen on Whit Monday, 17 May 1869, he was greeted by Wagner's mistress, Cosima von Bülow, who was pregnant in her third trimester and living in an adulterous relationship with Wagner. It was the scandal of Lucerne. But the eager professor, who "even quotes from *Opera and Drama* in his lectures"³ must have seemed to them like the perfect strategy for their immediate troubles: as a classical philologist Nietzsche could, on the one hand, toil on behalf of Wagner to gain a wider academic acceptance for his ideas, while at the same time create a diversion away from the public ostracism attached to their relationship.

These are, for better or worse, the circumstances under which their relationship had begun, and Nietzsche was unquestionably aware of them. To that extent, it remains baffling to consider why Nietzsche would have troubled the otherwise distraught Hans von Bülow for a critique of one of his own musical compositions without entertaining conjectures about how the personal bond between these two

¹ Letter to Richard Wagner, 7-8 November 1872, SL: 110 and KSB 4: 89.

² Diary Entry, 9 November 1872: 'A letter to R. from Prof. Nietzsche, who reports that this semester every one of his students has stayed away! And so he has been excommunicated on account of his book; the news affects us very deeply, for it is a serious matter and puts our friend in an impossible situation. – We start thinking up extravagant ideas and plans for sending students to Basel; of forcing from Bismarck an appointment in Berlin – all kinds of impossibilities. R. also has hopes that his journey might yield something: "This is a case where the aristocracy could intervene."' CWD 1: 555.

³ Diary Entry, 17 May 1869, CWD 1: 96.

men would have been strengthened to the point that Nietzsche could have solicited Bülow's opinion in the first place.

It is certain however that Bülow had come to Basel in mid-March 1872 to give a series of concerts, and during his visit spent time with Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy* no doubt formed a topic of their conversations, as Nietzsche had only recently sent Bülow a copy of his book at the Wagners' request.¹ But if *The Birth of Tragedy* formed the topic of their conversations, that meant that Wagner formed the topic of their conversations. According to Nietzsche's sister, it was during this face-to-face visit that Bülow gave vent to his personal feelings about Wagner. In particular, certain 'harsh remarks' were made about Wagner, and Nietzsche was made to feel how deeply Bülow's devotion to Wagner had been repaid with Wagner's treachery. If this story is even remotely accurate, it would support the conclusion that whatever passed between Bülow and Nietzsche strengthened the personal bond between the two men, at least enough for Nietzsche to initiate a correspondence independent of the Wagners. Prior to this time Nietzsche had no intimate dealings with Bülow, and he certainly could not have circumvented the Wagners given his knowledge of the extremely delicate circumstances that attached to the Wagners' dealings with Bülow. Once the connection had been made however, Nietzsche wasted no time in exploiting it.

On 20 July 1872, Nietzsche decided to initiate contact with Bülow by enclosing a copy of his *Manfred Meditation* along with a cover letter beseeching the Master to judge the work on its artistic merits, citing again the fact that he had *never* heard a competent judgment on his musical abilities.² Unfortunately, what came back to Nietzsche on 24 July 1872 was a remarkably candid but excoriating critique of Nietzsche's composition (see footnote for the letter in its entirety).³ The distress

¹ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 3 January 1872, DBCW 2: 16.

² *Letter to Hans von Bülow*, 20 July 1872, L: 261-62 and KSB 4: 26-27.

³ "I was so taken aback by your kind letter and the presentation accompanying it that I have rarely in my life felt so thoroughly uneasy in similar circumstances. The one question I asked myself was – shall I hold my tongue, or send a civil and trivial note in reply – or shall I open my heart quite freely? The latter course required courage almost to the extent of daring and to adopt it I had first to assume that I could rely on your firm belief in the respect I feel for you as a genial and creative champion of science – and secondly to take refuge in two privileges I possess and to which I only refer with the greatest reluctance – one of them indeed melancholy enough – the fact that I am a score of years or so your senior, and the other that I am a professional musician. In the latter capacity I am accustomed like the commercial man who 'in matters of business drops friendship' to practice the precept; in *materia musicae* politeness ceases.

But to return to the matter at hand. Your *Manfred Meditation* is the most extreme example of fantastic extravagance and the most unedifying and most anti-musical composition I have met for some time. Again and again I had to ask myself whether the whole thing was not a joke and whether it had not perhaps been your intention to write a parody of the so-called Music of the Future. Was it not on purpose that without exception you put every rule of harmony to scorn from the higher syntax to the most ordinary conventions of correct composition? But for the psychological interest – for despite all their confusion, your feverish musical productions display an exceptionally distinguished spirit – your Meditation, from the musical standpoint can only be compared to a crime in the moral world. I was utterly unable to find the faintest trace of any Apollonian elements in its composition, and as for those of the Dionysian order, I must confess that your piece reminded me more of the morrow of a Bacchanalian festival than the festival itself. If you really feel a passionate call to express yourself in the language of music it is essential that you should master the first elements of that language. A reeling imagination reveling in the memory of Wagnerian chords is not a fit basis for creative work.

which Nietzsche surely must have felt from Bülow's critique is evident from the fact that it took him over three months to respond.¹ Yet in suffering what had to have been the most humiliating experience of his life as a composer, why then did Nietzsche decide to detail his humiliation about the incident to the Wagners? As Cosima recorded in her diary for 4 December 1872, the Wagners were astonished,² and given the circumstances, their reaction was justified. Only a month before, the Wagners had responded with genuine distress to Nietzsche's letter complaining that he had no students for his winter semester, and in response they had tried to pull all sorts of strings on his behalf. But now, hearing about this "very curious" incident must have seemed to them like downright treachery. From the Wagners' perspective, not only did Nietzsche circumvent the sensitive nature of their relationship with Bülow simply to exploit a professional judgment from Bülow for his own benefit, to Wagner at least, the whole incident must have seemed like a pointless exercise having no other object than to insult him, for at the time Wagner was the most famous composer in Europe, and so must have felt indignant at the fact that his young protégé still had the audacity to compete with him as a musician. The very same evening, on 4 December 1872, Cosima responded to Nietzsche's letter, and with hardly disguised *Schadenfreude* she impressed upon her young pupil that, in the first place, the excoriating critique he had received of his musical abilities had been "justly deserved." Bülow's critique, she continued, had been a "masterpiece of form and admirable frankness" for which he should be "honored to be the object of such blunt truths." These truths, she went on

The most outlandish Wagnerian audacities, apart from the fact that they spring quite naturally from the dramatic texture and are justified by the words (in purely instrumental passages, as everyone knows, it avoids such atrocities) are always correct from the standpoint of language – indeed they are so down to the smallest detail of notation. If the insight of a thoroughly educated musical scholar like Dr. Hanslick is inadequate to this purpose, it follows that to form any proper estimate of Wagner as a musician, a man must be a musician and a half. If, my dear Professor, you really meant this aberration in the realm of composition seriously – which I cannot still help doubting – do at least try to confine yourself to vocal music, and let the words of the song steer you in the boat you sail on the wild waters of music.

Once again, no offence I hope – for you yourself called your music 'execrable', – you are right; it is even more execrable than you imagine. True it is not generally harmful, but it is worse than that, it is harmful to yourself and you could not possibly employ any surplus leisure you may have more badly by torturing Euterpe in the way you do.

If you declare that I have overstepped the uttermost limits of the most elementary civility I shall not attempt to deny it. Please discern in my uncompromising frankness (rudeness) the proof of my equally sincere respect. Really, after all I have said, I cannot make this lame excuse. I simply could not help giving full vent to my indignation at all such anti-musical experiments in tone. Perhaps I ought to direct a portion of this indignation against myself, for, seeing that I am responsible to Tristan's having been performed once more, I am indirectly to blame for having plunged so lofty and enlightened a mind as yours, my dear Professor, into such regrettable pianoforte convulsions [...] Once again I feel the same embarrassment as I felt when I first took up my pen to write you. Please do not be too vexed with me, dear Sir, and be so good as to think of me only as one who was genuinely edified and instructed by your magnificent book, which it is to be hoped will be followed by many like it – and who is therefore deeply and respectfully grateful to you.' *Letter to Nietzsche*, 24 July 1872, L: 263-266.

¹ "I have indeed allowed myself time, have I not, thoroughly to digest the admonition in your last letter, and to thank you most heartily for it. Rest perfectly assured that I should never have dared, even for fun, to solicit your opinion of my 'music' if I had had the faintest suspicion of its total unworthiness! [...] Do not think ill of me, my dear sir, and do me the favor of forgetting the anguish both as a man and as a musician to which you were subjected by the composition I so thoughtlessly sent to you, while, I for my part, shall certainly never forget your letter and words of good counsel. I say what children say when they have done something foolish: "I will never do it again," and remain, with the same feelings of regard and respect for you, sir, as you knew me before." *Letter to Hans von Bülow*, 29 October 1872, L: 267-69 and KSB 4: 78-80.

² *Diary Entry*, 4 December 1872, CWD 1: 565-66.

to explain, were conveyed with such brevity and wit that the critique itself would “one day appear to be very valuable to you.”¹

Taken together, it seems that Cosima’s remarks were meant to address a couple of ‘lingering vexations’ for which the opportunity to resolve them once and for all had now presented itself. In the first place, Nietzsche was made to understand in no equivocal terms who the better composer was, and in that moment, the death blow had surely been passed over his *New Year’s Eve* composition from the previous Christmas. More to the point however was the fact that, since Nietzsche had loved to improvise at the Master’s piano, the young professor was made to understand that both she and Wagner shared Bülow’s devastating criticism, and that they would be grateful if he would kindly refrain from his “music-making pastimes” on the Master’s piano in the future.²

Incidentally, it should be noted that whenever Cosima was charged with delivering the carping criticisms that both she and Wagner shared, they were always ensconced within a wider discussion of the philosophic and aesthetics trends in Germany, of the greatness of Schopenhauer, and of course, of the gravity attached to Wagner’s purpose here on earth. Whatever acknowledgment Nietzsche received for own his efforts usually came from Cosima in the form of tender, précieux distinctions and delicacies of feeling in order to arouse the young professor’s passionate nature, and thus to make him all the more pliant to the carping criticisms that were sure to follow. Hence as devoted as Nietzsche may have been, there is something peculiarly alienating about Cosima’s letters to him, and one could easily get the sense that Nietzsche may have begun to feel demoralized by the sanctimonious affectation with which she imbued them. In the first place, the commandment of obedience towards all sacred objects was continually enforced. For Nietzsche, this could only mean that all individuals shall be insignificant before the largesse of Schopenhauer and Wagner. Yet in demonstrating his devotion – in proving to the Wagners just how seriously he took the commandment of obedience – Nietzsche had undertaken tremendous efforts on behalf of Wagner, and yet they were constantly met with a barrage of criticism. From Nietzsche’s standpoint, the belittlement of his own peculiar talents combined with an implacable criticism of his efforts surely must have frustrated his allegiance to Wagner, all the more so since he was left scrambling to find an acceptable way to convey it. From the Wagners’ perspective, this was precisely the problem. Nietzsche was exhibiting far too much independent initiative. He was supposed to do neither more nor less, but precisely what he was asked to do. Like Brünnhilde, he was merely supposed to mirror Wotan’s will and then execute it on behalf of the god without question. Any independent initiative was regarded distrustfully, and the Wagners more than once had to reel in the young professor’s enthusiasms, for which Cosima’s letters to Nietzsche testify as documents. This latest act of initiative, one moreover that was genuinely dangerous for Nietzsche in more ways than one, had nothing to do

¹ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 4 December 1872, DBCW 2: 41.

² Köhler, 1998: 103.

with *The Birth of Tragedy*, and therefore had nothing to do with Wagner, and the Wagners it seems reproached him for it. Nietzsche was reminded, once again, of his place in the pantheon of gods.

Yet there were more carping criticisms to come. The Wagners, who had just returned from a tour of Germany looking for singers to engage for the first festival, had initially planned to continue the tour in support of the Bayreuth project, but several of the children had fallen ill and the plan in particular to travel to Berlin fell through. Not knowing their change of plans, Nietzsche spent Christmas with his mother in Naumberg, and on 26 December 1872, he attended a production of *Lohengrin* in Weimar under the baton of Franz Liszt.¹ His plan, it seems, was to return to Naumberg in order to work out his *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten and Unwritable Books* as a New Year's gift to Cosima. He had also been absorbed in Wagner's new article *On Actors and Singers*, and was keen to work out the implications of Wagner's aesthetic investigations.² At the last minute though, Nietzsche received a New Year's invitation to Bayreuth, but he declined it in favor of working out his articles. Wagner was not pleased. He was already unwell from general exhaustion, and was considerably dispirited by the countless artistic and administrative absurdities he had to confront in order to realize the Bayreuth project. There were no funds coming in from the numerous Wagner Societies across the empire, while the King of Bavaria had ostensibly deserted Wagner, abjured governance of his kingdom, and continued to order extravagant decorations for his "alpine chalets." In the meantime, the Wagners had racked up heavy expenditures trying to get the momentum for the Bayreuth project off the ground. Accordingly, Nietzsche's refusal to come to Bayreuth to help Wagner address these immediate and pressing concrete particularities must have reinforced the belief that Nietzsche's commitment to Wagner was equivocal at best, for the Wagners were hardly concerned at this point in time with the theoretical and speculative problems introduced by Wagner's aesthetics, let alone with Nietzsche's own philosophical musings. Their *sole* concern crystalized around the highly pragmatic and practical considerations attached to constructing the Bayreuth theatre. Again, Nietzsche had failed to comprehend the magnitude of the problem by fleeing from the most pressing considerations into theoretical reveries. Accordingly, when Cosima received Nietzsche's *Five Prefaces*, the carping criticism rolled forth. "Various things by mail, among them a folder of manuscripts from Prof. Nietzsche containing forewords to unwritten books," Cosima confided to her diary for 1-4 January 1873. "In the evening we read Prof. N.'s forewords [...]; [his manuscript] does not restore our spirits, there are now and again signs of a clumsy abruptness, however deep the underlying feelings. We wish he would confine himself principally to classical themes."³

¹ Letter to August von Loë, 25 December 1872, KSB 4: 109. Franz Liszt was Cosima's biological father.

² Letter to Richard Wagner, 7-8 November 1872, SL: 111 and KSB 4: 90-91.

³ Diary Entry, 1-4 January 1873, CWD 1: 579.

While Nietzsche was excited about the contribution he thought he had made, as can be seen by the letter he sent to Rohde on 4 January 1873,¹ the Wagners were not, and a thank-you note never came. It was only on 12 February 1873, after the Wagners had resumed their tour of the empire that Cosima put out “conciliatory feelers” as Fischer-Dieskau characterizes it, on behalf of Wagner. With what seems largely like feigned interest, Cosima had decided to take up some of the points Nietzsche had raised in his *Five Prefaces* and subject them to a critical enquiry, noting the many parallels already to be found in Schopenhauer’s thought. Her letter then confesses that she could not however “make heads or tails” of the words “penned with great pleasure,” indeed, that she could not “imagine a mood in which one could say such things.”^{2, 3} The effect Cosima’s letter had on Nietzsche seems to have been somewhat perplexing, for Nietzsche had felt that his literary endeavors were designed to help Wagner rally his efforts in a much more far-reaching and comprehensive way, and that this was far more effective than simply remaining at Wagner’s side in order to carry out menial secretarial and administrative duties on his behalf.

By the beginning of March 1873, Nietzsche had begun working on a book on Greek philosophy, but “not merely one of historical interest.” His book was meant to address a very real, very modern problem, namely that of the “Philosopher as the Physician of Culture,”⁴ and was intended as a surprise for Wagner’s sixtieth birthday. Yet in a letter to Carl von Gersdorff dated 2 March 1873, Nietzsche conveyed his desperation almost as much as his frustration at being unable to demonstrate his devotion to Wagner. “I cannot imagine how one can proffer more allegiance to Wagner in all important matters and show deeper devotion than I do. If I could imagine how, I would do it. But in minor, less relevant points, and in a virtually ‘salubrious’ abstention for more frequent personal association, I am bound to maintain a freedom, really only to be able to continue that loyalty in a higher sense. There is nothing to say about that, of course, but one can feel it, and despair, when that involves annoyance, distrust, and silence. In this instance, I never would have dreamt that I had given such offence; and I always fear that such experiences will make me even more apprehensive than I already am. – please, my dear friend, your honest opinion!”⁵

7. ‘Proffering More Allegiance’

About a month after Nietzsche penned his letter to Gersdorff, Nietzsche got his chance to ‘proffer more allegiance’ to Wagner. From 6-12 April 1873, Nietzsche and his friend Rohde spent the Easter holidays with the Wagners where considerable attention was

¹ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 4 January 1873, KSB 4: 110-12.

² Nietzsche had bound his *Five Prefaces* to Cosima bearing the following inscription: “For Cosima Wagner in deepest devotion and as a response to personal and epistolary questions penned with great pleasure during Christmas days of 1872.”

³ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 12 February 1873, DBCW 2: 45.

⁴ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 22 March 1873, SL: 116 and KSB 4: 136.

⁵ *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 2 March 1873, KSB 4: 131-32.

given to the radical Protestant theologian and anti-Wagnerite David Friedrich Strauss. Strauss had acquired notoriety years before for writing a demythologizing life of Jesus entitled *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1835-36) for which Wagner's dramatic sketch *Jesus von Nazareth* (1848-49) was closely aligned. But Strauss was also a 'Young Hegelian' whose inclination to explain the mysteries of religion by approaching them through the intellectual hygiene of Enlightenment rationalism repulsed both Wagner and Cosima. Perhaps most importantly however was the fact that Strauss was a sympathizer of a musical faction in Munich which intrigued against Wagner. The faction was headed by the General Music Director Franz Lachner, and was known as the 'Lachner faction.' Wagner knew the score (no pun intended), and at the time he published his polemical essay *On Conducting* in 1869, Wagner took the occasion to censure the 'Lachner faction' using Lachner himself as a foil.

The theme of Wagner's essay is simple enough, i.e., how to conduct, but in order to demonstrate how one *should* conduct, Wagner took the opportunity to animadvert at length on what he considered poor conducting, arguing that "conductors from the old school" are simply "unfit to cope" with the requirements of the modern orchestra. In recounting one of his "personal observations" on poor conducting, Franz Lachner does not escape the Master's ridicule. Perhaps more to the point however is that neither does Strauss. The relevant passage in Wagner's essay reads:

Once I slightly lost my patience. At a rehearsal of my 'Tannhäuser' I later had to put up quietly with many things, among others the clerical tempo of my knightly march in the Second Act. It transpired, however, that the invincible old maestro [i.e., Lachner] did not even know how to resolve a 4/4 beat into the corresponding 6/4 [...] However, as this time I had so glorious a representative of Tannhäuser as Ludwig Schnorr by my side, I was then, for the sake of eternal justice and to restore the proper tempo, obliged most respectfully to intervene against my maestro – which caused some faint unpleasantness. I rather think it led in time to 'martyrdoms,' and moved a cold-blooded critic of the Gospels [Strauss] himself to hymn them in a pair of sonnets.¹

These recollections at the time Wagner had been writing his essay in the fall of 1869 must have surely stirred his ire, for it is worth pointing out that Wagner had already composed three sonnets in ironical reply to Strauss's pair dated 11-12 March 1868 in his own diary.² Thus when Strauss published his six lectures on *Voltaire* shortly thereafter, the Wagners took every occasion to pour scorn all over them. "[We] continued reading David Strauss's lectures, begun yesterday," Cosima recorded in her diary for 3 December 1870. "Much dissatisfaction with the book, the style of which is as slovenly as a student's and again very mannered."³ Wagner chimed in his opinions the following evening: "Strauss's *Voltaire* annoy[s] him, the contemporary world appears grotesque to him, and, as he confesses to me, he is now painfully aware of how much the world resembles a lunatic asylum."⁴ In fact, the same day the Wagners had been pouring scorn all over Strauss's *Voltaire*, Cosima had sent out a 'feeler' to

¹ PW 4: 335-36, "On Conducting."

² BB, 1980: 125-26.

³ *Diary Entry*, 3 December 1870, CWD 1: 302.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 4 December 1870, CWD 1: 302.

Nietzsche alluding to their disgust in the hope that he might participate in the slander. In a letter dated 4 December 1870, Cosima wrote to Nietzsche that

David Strauss's *Voltaire* has recently come into our hands. Despite the significant and laudable intentions which spawned this book, to do justice to this great man, unfortunately it left a very unpleasant impression with its flatness of views, its affectation and its neglect of style. It is tastelessness in the highest degree. One might soon turn it into a 'second dragon.'¹

As the German editor of Cosima's letters Erhart Thierbach points out, Cosima's reference to a 'second dragon' is otherwise unintelligible unless one knows that it is an allusion to one of Wagner's chosen pseudonyms, 'Wilhelm Drach', which Wagner assumed on more than one occasion when he wanted to publicly castigate someone without facing the responsibility for it. As one might expect, the allusion was lost on Nietzsche, at least initially.

Two years later, in 1872 however, Strauss published a new work called *The Old and New Faith* which created a tremendous sensation, not least because it had abandoned the spiritual teaching of the Gospels, but also because it had championed the materialism of modern science in its stead, adopting the thesis that 'what is rational is what is real' and applying it to the concrete unfoldment of history. The Wagners found this work "terribly shallow" initially,² but in the weeks before Nietzsche and Rohde visited the Wagners for Easter in Bayreuth, Cosima spitefully recorded in her diary that "Herr Strauss's *The Old and New Faith* has reached its fifth edition – in a single year I believe,"³ a phenomenon incidentally that had never happened to any of Wagner's own prose writings. Yet more scorn was poured over Strauss's book the following evening, this time suggesting that his "terribly shallow" thinking was likely the result of his being Jewish: "In his analysis of the soul," Cosima confided to her diaries "Strauss shows complete ignorance of the basic conceptions of philosophy. Strauss probably an Israelite."⁴

The Easter holidays of 1873 do not appear to have passed without their 'vexations.' Nietzsche had presented a couple of excerpts on the pre-Socratic philosophers from his manuscript *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, but the Wagners were far too preoccupied with the Bayreuth undertaking for their "gloomy mood" to be "dispelled."⁵ They had also found cause to be "vexed" by Nietzsche's "music-making pastimes," which prompted Wagner to lecture on the turn that music had taken.⁶ Nevertheless, it is certain that Strauss's book was discussed, and that the Wagners vented their contempt for the views Strauss had promoted within it. Indeed, in the letter previously cited to Nietzsche from 12 February 1873 shortly before his Easter visit, Cosima had tried once more to arouse Nietzsche's ire by snidely commenting that Strauss's new book had "freed us from redemption, prayer, and Beethoven's

¹ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 4 December 1870, DBCW 1: 65.

² *Diary Entry*, 7 February 1873, CWD 1: 593.

³ *Diary Entry*, 20 March 1873, CWD 1: 611.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 21 March 1873, CWD 1: 612.

⁵ *Diary Entry*, 9 April 1873, CWD 1: 621.

⁶ *Diary Entry*, 11 April 1873, CWD 1: 622.

music,"¹ but now that they were all together, oblique allusions were dropped in favor of direct statements. It is certain that the Wagners made it unequivocally clear that something had to be done about Strauss during Nietzsche's Easter sojourn.

A week after his visit, Nietzsche penned a letter to Wagner which, in terms of content, brings out two very important themes we have been considering so far between Wagner and Nietzsche, i.e., Wagner's 'vexation' and Nietzsche's desire to 'proffer more allegiance,' two themes that seem intimately intertwined with regard to the origin of Nietzsche's subsequent attack on Strauss. "If you seemed not satisfied with me when I was present," Nietzsche wrote to Wagner on 18 April 1873,

I understand it only too well; but I cannot help it, for I learn and perceive very slowly and, every moment when I am with you, I realize something of which I have never thought, something that I wish to impress upon my mind. I know very well, dearest master, that such a visit cannot be a time of leisure for you, and must sometimes even be unbearable. I wished so often to give at least the appearance of greater freedom and independence, but in vain. Enough – I ask that you take me simply as a pupil, if possible with my pen in hand and my notebook before me, as a pupil too with a very slow and not at all versatile mind. It is true that I grow more melancholy every day when I feel so strongly how much I would like to help you somehow, to be of use to you, and how completely incapable of doing so I am, so that I cannot even contribute somewhat to diverting and amusing you. Or perhaps I can, when I have finished what I am now writing, a piece which attacks the famous writer David Strauss. I have now read his *Old and New Faith*, and have been amazed at his obtuseness and vulgarity as an author and as a thinker too. A fine collection of examples of his most appalling style should show the public once and for all what this supposed 'classic' actually is.²

This Nietzsche surely did. Nietzsche's attack, which was taken directly from Wagner's own playbook on the Jews, intended to accuse "Strauss the Israelite" of "speaking like a foreigner," this being the cause of his "slovenly style."³ Ultimately Nietzsche abandoned the idea, and the final published essay never actually traces the connection, although the final section of the essay is specifically devoted to an excoriating critique of Strauss's style, citing example after example of the 'bad style' to be found in Strauss's book, thereby subjecting his use of the German language to unrelenting derision.⁴ More significantly as a feather in the cap from Wagner's own playbook, Nietzsche had once again invoked the argument, as he had done so previously in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that complacent optimism and the rationalistic fetish for leading the happy life brought about cultural philistinism and in turn the

¹Letter to Nietzsche, 12 February 1873, DBCW 2: 46.

²Letter to Richard Wagner, 18 April 1873, SL: 118 and KSB 4: 144-45.

³Cf., "The Jew speaks the language of the nation in whose midst he dwells from generation to generation, but he speaks it always as an alien." In PW 3: 84, "Judaism in Music" with "To the German Writer David Strauss. Letter from a Foreigner. Someone once told me that you are a Jew and as such not in complete command of the language." UW, 1999: 159, *Notebook* 27 [7], Spring-Autumn 1873.

⁴There do however appear to be implicit connections between Wagner's article on the Jews and Nietzsche's essay on Strauss. Cf., "Only when a body's inner death is manifest, do outside elements win the power of lodgment in it – yet merely to destroy it. Then indeed that body's flesh dissolves into a swarming colony of insect-life [...] In genuine Life alone can we, too, find again the ghost of Art, and not within its worm-befitted carcass." *Judaism in Music*, PW 3: 99, with: "A corpse is a pleasant thought for a maggot, and a maggot a dreadful thought for everything living. In their dreams, maggots imagine heaven as a fat carcass; philosophy professors picture themselves gnawing about in Schopenhauer's entrails; and ever since there have been rodents, there has also been a rodents' heaven [...] The Straussian philistine dwells in the works of our great poets and composers like a maggot that lives by destroying, admires by consuming, and worships by digesting." UW, 1995: 32, "David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer," §6.

progressive degeneration of all modern culture, of whom Strauss was singled out as the supreme modern day example. Indeed, the content of the essay fit in perfectly with Wagner's own theoretical arguments about the decline of culture at the hands of science.

As one might expect, Nietzsche's essay attacking Strauss incited fury with the German public and created a scandal attaching to Nietzsche's name. From the point of view of being an academic, especially a 'classical philologist,' Nietzsche's attack on Strauss must have appeared inexplicable were it not for the fact Nietzsche had already acquired a reputation for championing Wagner's cause. Nietzsche's attack on Strauss was, in effect, the latest piece of propaganda commissioned for the Bayreuth machine and issued for the expressed purpose of settling one of Wagner's old scores. With his attack on Strauss, Nietzsche's sacrifice for Wagner's cause should have been beyond reproach, and yet astonishingly, the Wagners only found more to criticize. "In the evening finished [Nietzsche's] pamphlet, whose conclusion does not satisfy us," Cosima recorded in her diary for 13 August 1873. "R. says: 'He should have advised the theologians to study philosophy up to its highest level, from which viewpoint alone can one recognize the value and meaning of religion. The proposal of a vow with restrictions is disagreeable and petty.'" ¹ The following week, Cosima recorded her own observations: "In the evening read Nietzsche's pamphlet to our friend and am sorry to get from it an unpleasant impression of various things." ²

Nevertheless, by publishing the Strauss polemic, Nietzsche thought that his endeavor to 'proffer more allegiance' to the Wagnerian cause had finally taken an acceptable format, and that it had been received with admiration and enthusiasm, and in the months that followed, Nietzsche it seems tried to distance himself from Bayreuth. In addition to his heavy teaching load, Nietzsche had begun working on what would turn out to be the second of his *Unfashionable Observations*. This essay was a monumental undertaking, and in terms of its philosophic thought, it is a highly impressive piece of work. But for Wagner, the intervening months were nothing short of an administrative nightmare. Several large donors proved unreliable, and many of the various Wagner Societies across the empire only slowly and very laboriously trickled in funds they had guaranteed through certificates of patronage. The Wagners literally had to chase down donors in order to ensure that there were day-to-day funds. Wagner himself sent a copy of his essay *German Art and German Politics* along with a letter, "long, servile, and unusually awkward" to Bismarck, for which he received no reply. ³ For Wagner, more dramatic action was required, and once again, Nietzsche was called upon to help. On 18 October 1873, Nietzsche received a request from Wagner to write "for the benefit of the Bayreuth project and on behalf of the council of patrons, an appeal to the German People," ⁴ but Nietzsche, as can be seen from his letter, was far from enthusiastic to take up this new request, and implored

¹ *Diary Entry*, 13 August 1873, CWD 1: 664.

² *Diary Entry*, 20 August 1873, CWD 1: 666.

³ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 107.

⁴ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 18 October 1873, SL: 119-20 and KSB 4: 166-67.

Rohde to help him with the exhortation. "This request is also terrible, for once I tried to write something similar of my own accord without success. Therefore, I beg you, dear friend, with all urgency, to help me with this, in order to see if we can perhaps manage the monster together."¹ Rohde declined in a letter to Nietzsche dated 23 October 1873 and Nietzsche was left to shoulder the burden himself. Five days later, Nietzsche had finished his *Appeal to the Germans* and sent it to the Wagners. The Wagners, it seems, were quite pleased with what Nietzsche had drafted, but did not know whether it was actually wise to issue it to the delegate of patrons.² The Wagners nonetheless submitted Nietzsche's *Appeal*, but the delegate of patrons rejected it and, as Richard T. Gray writes in his afterword to Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks at the time, Nietzsche, perhaps out of spite, refused to revise it, requesting instead that someone else be given the task. As Gray continues, "this event is significant, for it testifies to Nietzsche's ambivalence toward Wagner and Bayreuth at this early date and signals Nietzsche's retreat from his commitment, already evident in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to devote his writings to the glorification of Wagner, his music, and the cultural renewal they represented for the young Nietzsche."³

But the events surrounding the Appeal were compounded by one additional tragedy, for the episode with Strauss was not destined to come to a pleasant conclusion. On 8 February 1874, Strauss died, less than six months after Nietzsche had published his polemic. Three days later, in a letter to his friend Carl von Gersdorff dated 11 February 1874, Nietzsche expressed the hope that his polemic had not made the end of Strauss' life miserable and that Strauss had died without ever having heard of Nietzsche or his essay, confessing to Gersdorff that "it affects me somewhat."⁴ Two weeks later, the Wagners were busy assessing Nietzsche's *History* essay. While the Wagners were pleased on the whole with this new work, the Wagners' judgment was not without its reservations.⁵ Yet this was only one half of the problem as far as the Wagners were concerned, for they had heard from a mutual friend in the interim (presumably from von Gersdorff himself) that Nietzsche had been expressing remorse for the passing of Strauss and the hope that he had not somehow been the cause of it. On 20 March 1874, Cosima sent a letter to Nietzsche in an attempt to kill two birds with one stone. In a letter replete with ambivalent criticisms for the new essay, Cosima impressed upon Nietzsche that she did not "tolerate any sentimentality

¹ *Letter to Erwin Rohde*, 18 October 1873, SL: 119-20 and KSB 4: 166-67.

² *Diary Entry*, 28 October 1873: "Professor Nietzsche sends us his 'Appeal to the Germans' but who will be prepared to sign it?" CWD 1: 691; *Diary Entry*, 31 October 1873: "Went through Prof. Nietzsche's very fine 'Appeal' with him. Is it wise to issue this – but what use is wisdom to us? Only faith and truth can help." CWD 1: 692.

³ UW, 1999: 468, Afterword.

⁴ *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 11 February 1873, SL: 122 n.154 and KSB 4: 200.

⁵ *Diary Entry*, 9 April 1874: "In the morning R. reads the latest work by our friend Nietzsche and summarizes his opinion thus: "It is the work of a very significant person, and if he ever becomes famous, this work will one day also earn respect. But it is very immature. It lacks plasticity, because he never quotes examples from history, yet there are many repetitions and no real plan. This work has been brought out too quickly. I don't know anybody to whom I could give it to read, because nobody could follow it. The basic idea has already been stated by Schopenhauer, and N. would have done much better to throw light on it from a pedagogical point of view." CWD 1: 750.

where matters of the mind are concerned” and that if a man has a harmful influence, “it is immaterial whether he is sick or dying.”¹ In other words, Nietzsche was told in no uncertain terms that his personal feelings, his “conscience” as it were, did not matter when it came to the Wagnerian agenda.

8. Brahms, Bayreuth...and Some Silk Underwear

When we consider what had transpired between Wagner and Nietzsche up until this time, what can we say about these incidents as ‘causes’ of the break between them? It would be difficult indeed to rely on any one of these anecdotes as the ultimate, single cause behind their break. In analyzing the events we have circumscribed so far, we have noted a number of isolated irritants or stimuli which grated upon Nietzsche, even as early as 1873, indeed perhaps even earlier. And while the so-called ‘moment of the break’ had yet to be sealed, what we have from now on it seems, from the biographical evidence at least, is the increasing and irreconcilable split between an outward devotion and an inward estrangement. In our consideration of this ‘estrangement,’ there seem to be a further ‘misunderstanding’ and two further anecdotes which should be appended to the general discussion.

In the early summer of 1874, the Wagners sent an invitation to Nietzsche to visit Wahnfried. As might be expected, Nietzsche declined in favor of completing his essay *Schopenhauer as Educator*. When his friend Carl von Gersdorff heard that he declined, he tried to coerce Nietzsche by threatening to stir up Wagner’s suspiciousness about the reason for his refusal. Nietzsche excused himself on the grounds that “their household and life there are in a restive state,” and that his visit now “would be inconvenient.” Then, in response to the “threat” Nietzsche retorted, “[w]e both know that Wagner’s nature tends to make him suspicious, but I did not think that it would be a good thing to stir up his *suspiciousness*. And last but not least, consider that I have obligations towards myself, which are very hard to fulfill, with my health in such a fragile state. Really, nobody should try forcing me to do anything.”² About a month after Nietzsche penned this letter, Nietzsche and his sister did show up at Bayreuth on 5 August 1874, but rather than staying at Wahnfried, they decided to stay at the Hotel Sonne. That evening, Nietzsche sent a message to the Wagners telling them that he was unwell, and Wagner, hearing Nietzsche was sick again, went to fetch Nietzsche at his hotel, and by the account recorded in *Cosima’s Diaries*, they spent a cheerful evening together after Nietzsche’s quick recovery.³

The next evening was less congenial. Nietzsche had brought a piano reduction of Brahms’s *Triumphlied* with him for Wagner to hear. According to Fischer-Dieskau’s interpretation of the circumstances, Nietzsche had become “sick of impersonal

¹ *Letter to Nietzsche*, 20 March 1874, DBCW 2: 49-50.

² *Letter to Carl von Gersdorff*, 4 July 1874, SL: 127 and KSB 4: 238.

³ *Diary Entry*, 5 August 1874, CWD 1: 779.

conversation and seemed intent on provoking Wagner.”¹ This seems at least partly true. Nietzsche was surely aware of Wagner’s views on Brahms, but just how deeply they ran was, it seems, another miscalculation on Nietzsche’s part. According to a conversation which a contemporary of Nietzsche’s, Arthur Egidi, had with Nietzsche in July 1882 about the incident, Nietzsche had recalled it as follows:

‘I had,’ so he began, ‘heard the *Triumphal Song* in Munich and been singularly impressed; it seemed to me like a revival of Handel’s choral spirit. So I brought it along to Bayreuth and wanted to play it for Wagner, but he evaded my repeated requests; but I did not give in until one day he said half reluctantly; “Klindworth, play the red score; Nietzsche is not leaving me in peace!” But after a few octaves Wagner stormily left the room, leaving behind his loyal followers in bewildered depression. I laughed and for a long time could not explain the matter, until I heard the context. The King of Bavaria had offered Wagner a high medal, which he at first wanted to refuse, but finally accepted due to the urgent arguments of his wife and friends. He hardly had it in his hands when he heard that Brahms had received the same medal, at the very same time he did.’²

This individual account is unquestionably accurate, at least in its externals, for it coincides with Cosima’s diary entry dated 31 December 1873 which states that there was “[g]reat annoyance from the report in the newspaper that J. Brahms received the Order of Maximilian at the same time as R.; R. realizes that the chapter nominated him only so that they could make the award to ‘that silly boy.’”³ And again on 18 February 1874, Cosima recorded that “I am foolish enough to talk to R. about [Brahms], and it brings him back to the subject of the decoration, he wonders how he can make his opinion about this known.”⁴ But whether Nietzsche intended to provoke Wagner, or whether he had simply not perceived how deeply Wagner’s antipathy ran for Brahms, he seems in either case to have displayed another lack of judgment in bringing the *Triumphlied* to Wagner’s attention. Again, Nietzsche was a guest in the home of the most famous composer in Europe, and knew Wagner well enough to know what would surely stir his ire. According to the account given by Fischer-Dieskau, when Wagner burst out, “Nietzsche did not reply, but merely turned crimson as usual and gaped at the herald of future music. Wagner subsequently remarked: ‘I would give a hundred marks on the spot just to have such fine behavior as Nietzsche, always noble, always dignified.’ [...] but whereas Wagner’s outburst quickly subsided, Nietzsche bore him a grudge for this ‘insult’ for a good long time.”⁵ Whatever the circumstances

¹ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 118.

² *Conversations with Nietzsche: A Life in the Words of His Contemporaries*. Edited with an Introduction by Sander L. Gilman. Translated by David J. Parent. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 (*hereafter* *Conversations*), 129, *Account of Arthur Egidi*, July 1882.

³ *Diary Entry*, 31 December 1873, CWD 1: 716.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 18 February 1874, CWD 1: 734.

⁵ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 119. See also, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche. *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsche*. Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1897, 2: 180 et seq. for her account of the Brahms ‘Triumphlied’ incident with Wagner. The account has Elisabeth asking her brother why he failed to tell her about the ‘Triumphlied’ incident, to which she says that “Fritz looked straight before him, and held his tongue; at last he said, beneath his breath: ‘Lisbeth, then Wagner was not great.’” She also notes, not necessarily to her brother’s advantage, (and therefore likely to be true), that Nietzsche at times came off as “superior” even when there was a mood of levity in the home and that to Wagner’s sometimes crude jokes, he could never shake off his spinsterish sensibilities. In particular she states that “Wagner once said to me, ‘Your brother is often quite tiresome in his gentle superiority, especially as he cannot conceal his thoughts from one; sometimes he is positively ashamed of my jests – and I can’t help pushing them all the farther.’” *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsche*, 2: 216.

surrounding the visit were, we do know, based on *Cosima's Diaries*, that the verdict of the *Triumphlied* was anything but well-received,¹ and that Nietzsche's visit, which turned out to be the final visit he made to Bayreuth before the first festival rehearsals in 1876, had given Wagner "many difficult hours."²

Though Wagner and Nietzsche remained mutually separated for all of 1875, Nietzsche did stay in contact with Cosima, and even arranged for his sister to come to Bayreuth to help house-sit while the Wagners were away touring the empire and Austria. But what is perhaps most interesting of all during this time is a single diary entry dated 21 January 1876, which reads: "More and more we are considering, R. and I, the question of education; thoughts of establishing a model school, with Nietzsche, Rohde, Overbeck, Lagarde. Could the King be induced to sponsor it?"³ But this idea, it seems, was too little too late. By the time Nietzsche had published his essay *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* in July 1876 to commemorate the first festival of the *Ring Cycle*, the ceremony was all but a formality. Nietzsche had come to Bayreuth still cherishing the ideal he held about Wagner's art, but as it subsequently turned out, that ideal proved less and less to be an objective factor that attached to Wagner's art as it was a subjective ideal to be confronted in Nietzsche's own self-surmounting. In *this* sense, Nietzsche's disillusionment for the events that transpired at the first festival was necessary to bring about this conceptual discrimination within himself.

Two ideals in particular of Nietzsche's seem noteworthy to raise in the context of the first festival as contributing to the sense of his disillusionment. First, Nietzsche had believed that Wagner's art was meant for the chosen few who, because they held the same convictions about what this art signified, would be united in the actual 'breaking of the ground,' the definitive moment marked out for all time as the rebirth of European culture. Second, Nietzsche had believed that the rebirth of culture would genuinely arise from the depths of the spirit of music, and that performers and spectators alike, united together in their convictions for what this signified, would be brought to the greatest heights of feeling in the performance of the "greatest symphony of all." Yet on both these points, Nietzsche quickly became disillusioned. In the first place, Wagner's art, and even more especially, the event of Bayreuth, was not at all for the chosen few, but a spectacle designed for the masses. The Wagners had already racked up an astronomical debt constructing the theatre, procuring the artists, rehearsing the musicians, and designing the scenery, not to mention dealing with the thousand hassles and headaches that come with them, so Wagner had simply opened up the gates to whomever could or would pay in order to defray the costs. Right away this became clear to Nietzsche when he had to wade through the cast of characters he met at Wahnfried. "Amorous, bored, unmusical patrons and patronesses mingled with the wealthy do-nothings of Europe as though Bayreuth

¹ *Diary Entry*, 8 August 1874: "In the afternoon we play Brahms's *Triumphlied*, much dismay over the meagre character of this composition which even friend Nietzsche has praised to us: Handel, Mendelssohn, and Schumann wrapped in leather. R. very angry..." CWD 1: 780

² *Diary Entry*, 14 August 1874: "on the following day Prof. N. departed, having caused R. many difficult hours..." CWD 1: 780.

³ *Diary Entry*, 21 January 1876, CWD 1: 889.

were the scene of a sporting event. In Nietzsche's eyes, they had merely lit upon a further pretext for idleness along with all the old excuses. And Wagner's music, with its secret and persuasive sexuality, struck Nietzsche as a device for binding together a society in which everyone was merely out for pleasure. The people who mattered all but vanished amid the elegant toilettes and diamonds."¹

And as far as the music itself was concerned? It was 'grand opera.' It was theatricality and artificial effects through and through. No one was concerned, and still less could they be bothered, to surrender their petty egoistic preoccupations in order to participate in a musical event that could transcend all this to recompense incomparably superior values. For all the Germans' professed devotion to their philosophical masters, the immortal Arthur Schopenhauer and the great Richard Wagner, what still mattered, when all was said and done, were the interests and inclinations of self-seeking egoism. Bayreuth was the place to see and to *be* seen. Fanatic Wagnerites, dressed up as characters of the *Ring*, made themselves into peripatetic exhibitions, and the spectators, most of whom were shallow, vain, idle, spendthrifts, were genuinely distressed over the fact that they could not see one another in the darkened auditorium. All of this must have seemed revolting to Nietzsche, a grotesque caricature that mocked everything for which he had devoted himself. In a letter to his sister dated 1 August 1876, Nietzsche, declining in his health once again, complained that "[t]hings are not right with me, I can see that! Continuous headache, though not of the worst kind, and lassitude [...] I long to get away [...] I dread every one of these long artistic evenings [...] I have had enough of it all!"² Nietzsche did leave shortly thereafter, but returned to Bayreuth on 12 August 1876, presumably at his sister's urgings and got through the rest of the first cycle of performances ending on 17 August 1876, but then gave his tickets away for the remaining cycles and left Bayreuth for good.

In consideration of this anecdote, it is worth considering the account of the French critic and Wagner partisan Edouard Schuré who encountered Nietzsche at the first Bayreuth festival of 1876 and described his impressions of him. It was originally published in 1895 in *Revue des Deux Mondes* and was quoted by Nietzsche's sister in her work *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsche* in order to gainsay Schuré's conclusions. But given what we have surveyed so far, the observation, on the contrary, is highly astute, especially since it coincides with other independent biographical factors we have already surveyed between Wagner and Nietzsche. Schuré's observation reads in part

Nothing was more deceptive than the apparent calm of his expression. His fixed eye betrayed the painful labor of thinking. It was at once the eye of a keen observer and a fanatical visionary. This dual character gave something about him that was uneasy and disturbing, especially since he always seemed to be fixed on a single point. In moments of effusion, his expression softened with gentle dreaminess, but soon enough it was hostile [...] To the wonders of art that Wagner accomplished every day before our eyes, we all had (thank God!) not the feeling, but something of the wonder expressed by Mime in watching Siegfried reforge the broken sword of his father after having reduced the iron filings and fused them in the crucible. Did Nietzsche's pride suffer from this kind of inferiority? Were his feelings

¹ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 140.

² *Letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche*, 1 August 1876, SL: 146-47 and KSB 5: 181.

shrilly hurt by a certain familiar coarseness from the master? [...] In his first meetings with Wagner, Nietzsche had placed himself on an equal footing with his master. He had dedicated his first book 'to his sublime champion of the avant-garde.' He had figured perhaps to reform Germany with a philosophical school of aesthetics and morals, of which Schopenhauer would be the venerated ancestor, Wagner the artist and man of works, but of which he, Nietzsche, would be the prophet and the supreme legislator.¹

While no one account can be given too much weight, Schuré's account is particularly perceptive, especially in light of the diary entry cited above dated 21 January 1876 regarding the establishment of a 'model school,' of Nietzsche's letter to Rohde cited above dated 15 December 1870 of founding a 'philosophical and artistic monastery' and the fact that Nietzsche's disillusioned ideals, which crystallized at the festival of 1876, made it necessary for Nietzsche to take sides with himself once and for all. In addition, Schuré's observation appears to be supported by an observation from a contemporary of Nietzsche's, Richard Reuter, who was a childhood friend of Nietzsche's sister, and encountered Nietzsche in the summer of 1876 in Basel shortly after Nietzsche's dreadful experience at the first festival. Reuter, in recollecting the experience he had had with Nietzsche that summer, and in trying to account for the turning point in his thinking, conjectured that

The ultimate causes of this strange, abnormal turn are surely extraordinarily numerous and complex. A variety of factors, internal and external, innate and acquired, stemming from intellectual activity and rooted in temperament and character, converged, and even the most thorough research will be unable to give an exact account of them. But in memory I have once again become convinced that Nietzsche's disappointment concerning the climactic point, the culmination of all his striving and hope, contributed very strongly and was indeed perhaps the primary cause. When the keystone to the temple he had built with the entire enthusiasm of his youth and of a great age dawning in his heart and thoughts, to whose realization he had wanted to dedicate his life, and at the end of his first book urged all who felt the same to sacrifice to this cause, when the keystone toppled to the ground, the pillars and buttresses and the whole wall also began to totter, indeed even the foundation was dislocated and smashed amid the general crashing of rubble. Then he lost all belief in the supernatural, perceiving only an element hostile to life and its values [...]²

Reuter's account is particularly interesting, because for someone who was essentially on the 'outside' of the circumstances between Wagner and Nietzsche, Reuter's account nonetheless manages to pinpoint, in a manner of speaking, the gravitas attached to what was both intellectually and emotionally at stake for Nietzsche, in effect converging with other independent biographical sources we have been

¹ « Rien de plus trompeur que le calme apparent de son expression. L'œil fixe trahissait le travail douloureux de la pensée. C'était à la fois l'œil d'un observateur aigu et d'un visionnaire fanatique. Ce double caractère lui donnait quelque chose d'inquiet et d'inquiétant, d'autant plus qu'il semblait toujours rivé sur un point unique. Dans les moments d'effusion, ce regard s'humectait d'une douceur de rêve, mais bientôt il redevenait hostile....Devant les prodiges d'art qu'il [Wagner] accomplissait chaque jour sous nos yeux, nous avions tous, non pas, Dieu merci ! les sentiments, mais quelque chose des étonnements de Mime en face de Siegfried qui reforge l'épée brisée de son père après l'avoir réduite en limaille et fondu au creuset. L'orgueil de Nietzsche souffrait-il de cette infériorité ? Sa sensibilité suraiguë se blessa-t-elle de certaines rudesses familières du maître ? ...Dans sa première intimité avec Wagner, Nietzsche s'était placé avec son maître sur un pied d'égalité. Il lui avait dédié son premier livre comme 'à son sublime lutteur d'avant-garde.' Il se figurait peut-être la réforme de l'Allemagne comme une école de philosophie, d'esthétique et de morale dont Schopenhauer serait l'ancêtre vénéré, Wagner l'artiste et le metteur en œuvre, mais dont lui, Nietzsche, serait le prophète et suprême législateur. » Eduard Schuré, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 1895, quoted in PW 6 : translator's preface, xxi –xxii.

² *Conversations*, 1987: 79-80. *Account of Richard Reuter*, summer 1876.

considering in this chapter. And indeed, as Nietzsche would soon note in *Human, All-Too-Human*, devotion to an ideal necessitated taking sides against himself *for the sake* of that ideal in order to find *himself* beyond it. Nietzsche had sought “the man rather than the doctrine, the thinker rather than the ideology, the teacher rather than the legacy.”¹ Consistency to that ideal and devotion to the “Schopenhauerian human being” now made it clear to him that it was the artist, not the artwork, the thinker and not the system, that was significant. His oft-quoted remark that “there are no philosophies, only philosophers” seems particularly germane here. In the moment of this confrontation, as Nietzsche himself wrote, “the *unnecessariness* of Bayreuth became clear to me.”²

The final anecdote we should append to this general discussion is the final meeting between Nietzsche and Wagner in Sorrento in the fall of 1876. Even though Nietzsche had fled the Bayreuth festival shortly after the first cycle ended on 17 August 1876, presumably every bit as much from disillusionment as from his physical ailments, Wagner it seems simply could not leave well enough alone. Shortly after the entire festival ended, on 30 August 1876, Wagner still found time to charge Nietzsche with the humiliating request to send him some underwear from the Basel firm of C.C. Rumpf. In a letter dated 27 September 1876, Nietzsche confessed his “pleasure” at being able to do this “small service,” adding that it had “reminded me of the times in Tribschen.”³ Whether Nietzsche meant this with deliberate hyperbole or whether he genuinely did the favor out of affection for an irretrievable past is difficult to know. But through the context of the letter, and in what Nietzsche subsequently discloses to Wagner, it becomes clear that Nietzsche was in a terrible space of interior torment and physiological sickness. “I now have time to think of things past, far and near, since I sit much in a darkened room for the atropine treatment of my eyes [...] The autumn, after *this* summer, is for me, and probably not only for me, *more* autumn than any previous one. Behind the great events there lies a streak of blackest melancholy, from which certainly no escape can come soon enough [...] perhaps you know that I myself am going to Italy next month, into a land, I think, not of beginnings but of the end of my sufferings. These have once more reached a climax; it is really high time. The authorities know what they are doing in giving me leave of absence for a whole year...”⁴ The letter continues, quite candidly, about how Nietzsche had arrived at such a pitch of suffering from his neuralgia which cycled every four to seven days, leaving him bed-ridden for thirty hours at a time, that he wanted now “to live in a state of good health or not at all. Complete quiet, mild air, walks, darkened rooms – this is what I expect from Italy; I dread having to see or hear anything else.” The letter closes with a conciliation by noting that, despite his impoverished objective circumstances, he had friends to help him, one of which was “the moral philosopher Dr. Paul Rée.”⁵

¹ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 121.

² UF/HAH II, 2013: 309, *Notebook* 27 [80], Spring-Summer 1878.

³ *Letter to Richard Wagner*, 27 September 1876, SL: 147 and KSB 5: 190.

⁴ *Letter to Richard Wagner*, 27 September 1876, SL: 147-48 and KSB 5: 190-91.

⁵ *Letter to Richard Wagner*, 27 September 1876, SL: 148 and KSB 5: 191.

Whatever notice Wagner took of this letter is difficult to know, but he was certainly astute enough to read between the lines as it were, as Nietzsche's letter is replete with double entendre. No mention is made of the letter in *Cosima's Diaries*, despite the fact that the Wagners themselves were now in Italy and, on 5 October 1876, in Sorrento.

On 27 October 1876, Nietzsche arrived in Sorrento along with two companions: one, a young Basel law student named Albert Brenner and the other, the moral philosopher doctor Paul Rée. The three men had been invited by a mutual friend of the Wagners, Malwida von Meysenbug, to sojourn in Sorrento with her that autumn. Albert Brenner was a relatively recent acquaintance, but Paul Rée had been Nietzsche's constant companion since Bayreuth, and had been helping Nietzsche cope with his physiological ailments. Unfortunately for Rée, he was also a Jew, and for the Wagners, that spelled disaster. The Wagners were already despondent from the astronomical deficits they racked up in putting on the festival, and so if it had been Nietzsche's intention to persuade the Wagners into compromising their anti-Semitic beliefs in the person of Paul Rée at precisely that moment, he was sorely mistaken. The Wagners took an immediate dislike to Rée, and on All Saints' Day, 1 November 1876, Cosima recorded in her diary that "we are visited by Dr. Rée, whose cold and precise character does not appeal to us; on closer inspection we come to the conclusion that he must be an Israelite."¹ Indeed, Wagner had punned the day 'All Fiends' Day.' The following day, All Souls' Day, proved to be the final meeting between the two men by all accounts, since the Wagners suddenly decided to pack up and leave for Rome on 7 November 1876, and no mention is made of Malwida, Nietzsche, or Rée visiting them between 2-7 November 1876 (incidentally, Brenner is never mentioned). Thus, if Wagner and Nietzsche had a 'final meeting,' it took place on All Souls' Day 1876. On the day of their final visit, Malwida and Nietzsche met again with the Wagners, but this time, Paul Rée was not in attendance, presumably because the Wagners had found out the night before that he was Jewish. According to Köhler's conjecture of the incidents, "what better subject for a private conversation between the two men than this exclusion of an un-German element from the Wagner circle – a move that could not but provoke Nietzsche's further resentment while arousing Wagner's crusading passion? No doubt Wagner would have reminded his stubborn young guest of the beliefs they used to share [...] and to call his former disciple to account for his brazen transgressions against the dogmas of Bayreuth and to draw his attention once again to the Christian values that he was spurning by consorting with the Jews."²

As despicable as the events of this 'final meeting' sound, there does seem to be a certain affinity with the biographical facts that we know of both men which more nearly resembles the truth of the encounter than does the oft-cited cover story that Wagner started talking about a Christian conversion experience in connection with *Parsifal*.³ The fact that the original prose sketch of *Parsifal* was drafted between 27-

¹ *Diary Entry*, 1 November 1876, CWD 1: 931.

² Köhler, 1998: 127-28.

³ For instance, see Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 152-153 for a particularly white-washed account of the 'final meeting.'

30 August 1865 and is recorded in Wagner's 'Brown Book' is proof enough that Nietzsche had long been aware of Wagner's intentions towards it as a project.¹ He had even heard the prose sketch read out loud for him at Christmas 1869 with "renewed feelings of awe."² Nonetheless, this does not preclude the fact that, in connection with several of the other irritants that came between both men up until this time, and including perhaps Wagner's appalling attack on the Jews in his final encounter with Nietzsche – an attack he knew would injure his young protégé – that Nietzsche may have certainly reacted with contempt and ridiculed Wagner's vision of *this* form of Christianity. This conjecture seems like a genuine possibility.³ At any rate, nothing more need be said about this contemptible incident other than perhaps what has been said already, although it is worth noting in this context that Nietzsche's "rejection" of Schopenhauer's teachings followed very closely on the disappointing events of the first Bayreuth festival of 1876 as well as the events that followed in his ill-fated final meeting with the Wagners in Sorrento that autumn.⁴

9. Fomenting the "Verbal Instrumentalist"

From this highly detailed and extensive biographical presentation of both men, we have arrived at a much more comprehensive foundation from which to evaluate the personal and subjective factors at work in Nietzsche's relationship with, and break from Wagner. From this foundation, which is at once a vantage point, we have witnessed the extraordinarily complex and labyrinthine relationship that these two men shared with one another, and given the anecdotes which we have surveyed in support of its complexity, it would be enormously difficult indeed to rely on any one of these anecdotes as the ultimate, single cause behind their break. In this sense, the anecdote with doctor Eiser becomes another anecdote in a long list of anecdotes which testifies, more than anything else, to the enormous complexity of their relationship.

Nevertheless, we have alluded to several different underlying and conflicting motivations existing between the two men which contributed to the taut and apprehensive undercurrent from the earliest years of their association. One of the most palpable conflicts, as we have seen, was Nietzsche's implicit, and sometimes explicit, competition with Wagner, of his desire to stand on an equal footing with Wagner "as his equal as a cultural critic and innovator,"⁵ while conversely it is almost certain that, even though Wagner may have wished to his vexation that Nietzsche would demonstrate greater intellectual independence and initiative, when Nietzsche

¹ BB, 1980: 46-61, "Parzival" sketch.

² *Diary Entry*, 25 December 1869, CWD 1: 176.

³ Nietzsche's notes on his final conversation with Wagner are in KSA 14: 161 et seq.

⁴ *Diary Entry*, 24 December 1876: "Nice letter from Prof. Nietzsche, though informing us that he now rejects Schopenhauer's teachings!" CWD 1: 938.

⁵ Westernhagen, 1981: 441.

actually did so, the Wagners reeled him in with a combination of false blandishments and carping criticisms. The complacency of dependence and the struggle for autonomy were thus dangerously allied for both men. Yet through this extraordinarily rich personal and intellectual influence, Nietzsche's philosophy was unquestionably influenced, and an observation from Fischer-Dieskau about the style and content of Nietzsche's philosophical prose puts much of what we have been saying into context:

Wagner seemed to embody what Schopenhauer had prepared in Nietzsche. The last thin partition between Nietzsche's intellectual world and his musical alter ego appeared to have toppled. This is the major reason for the disciple's deep gratitude to his master for the creative torrent of works, which (and not just in the author's opinion) were full of music: *The Birth of Tragedy* and the writings encircling it. Wagner allowed Nietzsche an intensive part of his life and the labor in his artistic studio that the younger man, overcoming his inhibitions as a barely trained musician, found the courage to release the verbal instrumentalist in himself. And the later Nietzsche, inwardly aloof from Wagner, never forgot this about the 'great benefactor of my life.'¹

It is significant, and no exaggeration on Nietzsche's part that, when he proclaims in a notebook from the spring of 1874, which later became the basis for his essay *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* that "if Goethe is a displaced painter and Schiller a displaced orator, then Wagner is a displaced actor," he also forgot to mention that he himself was a displaced musician.² Nietzsche's 'displacement' as a musician and the fact that he studied, as it were, at the foot of Wagner in order to release the 'verbal instrumentalist in himself' is, perhaps, the most significant advancement we have yet made in our present understanding about, not only Nietzsche's relationship and break with Wagner, but Nietzsche's case of Wagner as both a biographical and philosophical problem, and it is here in both the main body of this dissertation as well as in this appendix that we have staked this claim.

¹ Fischer-Dieskau, 1978: 71-72.

² UW, 1999: 315, *Notebook* 32 [8], Late Winter-Spring 1874. Cf., UO, 1995: 292, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §7.

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