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Major HISTORY

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Department and course number History 300

When course was taken Fall, 2007

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Research Strategies and Materials in Completing the Project

Jorgen R. Olson

For my research project called “Nationalism and the Vision of Music: An Examination of Historical Accounts Covering Two Influential Elements in the Nietzsche/Wagner Break,” I used a wide variety of secondary and also primary sources in order to approach the issue dealt with in the paper. One of my main strategies for this particular project was utilizing the bibliographies and references provided by certain authors and writers on the subject in order to expand my research and gain the necessary level of information. Throughout my project, I acquired a substantial collection of books directly from the main library, and I found it especially helpful to use books as actual “links” in the attempt to find more books, rather than just spontaneously searching. Thus, after tracking down a book by a certain author, I would pay very close attention to the works that were cited in the references or mentioned in the bibliography, and then judging by the relevance of the title, I would track down what appeared to be most useful.

Another strategy for this project was putting a great emphasis on successfully synthesizing all of the information that I had read and recorded from all of my various sources. As can be readily seen from my bibliography and footnotes, I utilized a great number of sources, and one of the most potentially challenging things was being able to integrate all of this material in the most optimal fashion. In this situation, it is very important to be able to mentally extract and highlight all of the most relevant and significant points that were addressed in all of my literature – that is being able to extract the most essential elements and retain them for analysis and skilled presentation. I think I did this very well, because there were a great number of points brought up during the course of my research, but I am quite confident that I succeeded in drawing attention to the most valuable and essential.

Yet another strategy that I used during the course of this project was making sure to find the correct amount of emphasis depending on which type of source I used. As mentioned before, I utilized both primary and secondary sources for this project, and in this case the primary sources were particularly valuable due to the complexity of the issues being dealt with and discussed. It was extremely helpful to have the clarity and immediacy of the primary accounts in this situation. Thus, I was always careful to make sure that, whatever conclusions I reached throughout my paper, those conclusions always had support from the various primary accounts that were consulted. It would have been very easy to get wrapped up in secondary sources in this project, given the fact that so many secondary accounts have been written on his specific subject. But, I made sure to place the proper amount of emphasis on the primary accounts, since they had a special significance in my case.

These three research strategies – utilization of bibliographies and references, successful synthesis of research materials, and carefully balancing emphasis between primary and secondary accounts given the nature of my project – were the most important strategies that I used in completing my project. Using them together, I was able to produce a project that I feel made a very serious effort at penetrating the issues and topics that I set out to delve into. I was very satisfied with my final product, and most of this can ultimately be traced to my original research strategies used from the beginning.

Nationalism and the Vision of Music:
An Examination of Historical Accounts Covering Two
Influential Elements in the Nietzsche/Wagner Break

Jorgen Olson
History 300
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I – Introduction

Even more than a century after their deaths, the Nietzsche/Wagner friendship and the issues surrounding the break between them continues to inspire literature from writers involved in virtually all fields of academic and scholarly endeavor. Due to its far-reaching implications for such a wide variety of disciplines, it seems unlikely that any single professional domain will come to dominate the discussion in the near future. Academics involved in intellectual history, for example, have argued endlessly about the possible consequences of the philosophies of both individuals in the course of later twentieth century European history.¹ Biographers, as another group, have focused on the sharp personal differences and events that may have contributed to the break.² Theatre

(1) Specifically, the most common aspects of later European history that are mentioned are Germanic nationalism and the Third Reich. Historians have treated this subject in endless ways, from discussing the attraction of Hitler to Wagner's literary and musical works, to the influence of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* on National Socialist ideology. For some of the more prominent discussions on this issue, see Herbert Richardson, ed., *New Studies in Richard Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung* (New York: The Edwin Miller Press, 1991), 155-175; Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich, eds., *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002); Robert L. Jacobs, "Wagner's Influence on Hitler," *Music & Letters* 22, no. 1 (January, 1941): 81-83; Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Also, for an extremely fascinating account dealing with Hitler's early attraction to Wagner, see August Kubizek, *The Young Hitler I Knew*, trans. Geoffrey Brooks (London: Greenhill Books, 2006). Kubizek's primary account is especially relevant here because he discusses the importance of Wagner on Hitler's development and ultimate political and social positions.

(2) Nearly all of the significant biographies of either Nietzsche or Wagner have touched on the subject. For some of the more relevant ones dealing with Nietzsche's perspective, see Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 126-217; Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 37-46; R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 68-104. For those dealing with the situation from Wagner's point of view, see Derek Watson, *Richard Wagner: A Biography* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979), 216-321; Ernest Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, 4 vols. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1946). There are other personal accounts of the situation that, while not being individual biographies, discuss some of the non-philosophical aspects of the issue. See Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, trans. Ronald Taylor (New Haven: Yale

(2)

and drama critics, as yet another group, have concentrated more on the unique theoretical and aesthetic positions that both individuals possessed in relation to the nature of opera and tragic drama.³ All of these different commentaries emphasize certain aspects of the Nietzsche/Wagner situation that are definitely notable in the larger picture of the entire course of their friendship. And, in any complete treatment of the affair, all of the separate elements that they examine would have to be included. However, given its limited scope, the purpose of this paper will be to examine the accounts of two factors that affected the outcome of the friendship in some way. Thus, the role that these factors played will be examined not only through historical accounts that objectively describe the events which took place, but also through the interpretations put forth in the relevant literature. In the end, the aim is produce a clearer picture of the significance of these two different elements in the context of their friendship by examining how they have been treated by commentators of all sorts.

University Press, 1998); Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Wagner & Nietzsche*, trans. Joachim Neugroshel (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976). However, certain individuals have considered these accounts to be generally sympathetic to one party. For example, in his review of Köhler's work Hollinrake writes: "After reading Köhler's book, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Wagners, perfectly matched in temperament, were extremely unpleasant people." See Roger Hollinrake, review of *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, by Joachim Köhler, *Music & Letters* 80, no. 4 (November, 1999): 641-644.

(3) For relevant discussions on this issue from a theatrical or dramatic point of view, see Sandra Corse, "'Parsifal': Wagner, Nietzsche, and the Modern Subject," *Theatre Journal* 46, no. 1 (March, 1994): 95-110; Sandra Corse, *Wagner and the New Consciousness: Language and Love in the Ring* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1990); Michael P. Steinberg, "Music Drama and the End of History," *New German Critique*, Issue 69 (Fall, 1996): 163-180.

II – Historical Background

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883) first met in late 1868, just after Nietzsche was awarded a full professorship in classical philology at the University of Basel in Switzerland.⁴ Nietzsche, who was then only twenty-four years of age, was appointed to the post despite the fact that his doctorate was incomplete because he had received a special recommendation by his academic supervisor, Friedrich Ritschl.⁵ By that time, Wagner was already established in the musical scene of Germany and recognized as a talented composer across Europe as a whole. Nietzsche had possessed a firm admiration for Wagner's music since 1862 when he first came into contact with a piano score of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*.⁶ After this first encounter with *Tristan*, Nietzsche continued to speak of it with the highest glorification, even after they eventually parted ways. During their first meeting, Nietzsche apparently left a remarkable impression on Wagner, who cordially invited him to be a guest at his house in Tribschen, an offer that was usually only extended to Wagner's closest associates. As various

(4) Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 97; Hansell Baugh, "Nietzsche and His Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (April, 1926): 242.

(5) Even though Ritschl was consistently worried about Nietzsche's exposure to Wagnerian and Schopenhauerian influences, he always stood behind Nietzsche's literary and scholarly abilities. In one of his letters to the Basel authorities regarding Nietzsche's potential, he writes: "As many young scholars as I have seen developing under my supervision in the last 39 years, I have never known a young man, never tried to advance the career of anyone in my discipline, who so early and so young was as mature as this Nietzsche." This is quoted in Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 99.

(6) This early exposure to Wagner's *Tristan* came when Nietzsche was in his musical club called "Germania" with two of his school friends. For specific references to this early experience with *Tristan* and the enthusiasm for Wagner, see Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, "Wagner and Nietzsche: The Beginning and End of Their Friendship," *The Musical Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (July, 1918): 467-469; Hansell Baugh, "Nietzsche and His Music," *Music & Letters* 4, no. 3 (July, 1923): 241; Martin Van Amerongen, *Wagner: A Case History*, trans. Stewart Spencer and Dominic Cakebread (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1983), 45-55.

(4)

commentators have noted, Wagner was a man of many outside interests apart from music and there can be little doubt that he was eager to discuss his passionate interest in both Schopenhauer and classical texts from ancient Greece with the young professor.⁷

During this early phase of their relationship, Nietzsche seems to have been devoted to Wagner to the fullest possible extent. He went to see Wagner at his house in Tribschen as often as his University responsibilities would allow, and these visits were apparently some of the most treasured experiences of his life.⁸ However, historians still debate the precise nature of this early stage between the two individuals – were they on equal footing in terms of their consideration for each other in an intellectual sense, or was Wagner more motivated by Nietzsche's potential utility as a kind of spokesman for his music in the academic and literary world?⁹ Even though it does seem quite true that

(7) On Wagner's many interests, Giddings remarks: "Yet one of the most surprising facts about Wagner was his constant, active and varied interest. His conversations and letters show an interest in all and everything – music, drama, poetry, history, philosophy, aesthetics, anthropology, painting, and sculpture." See Robert Giddings, "Wagner and the Revolutionaries," *Music & Letters* 45, no. 4 (October, 1964): 349. Undoubtedly, Nietzsche's specialized knowledge of classical literature was a major attraction for Wagner who, as Ewans noted, lacked the academic training in the Greek language and a formal grounding in classical Greek texts. Wagner attended some of Nietzsche's lectures in classical philology before Nietzsche ultimately abandoned his professorship in 1879. See Michael Ewans, *Wagner and Aeschylus: The Ring and the Oresteia* (Great Britain: Faber and Faber Limited, 1982), 1-15.

(8) As Nietzsche recalls in his book *Ecce Homo*: "It would cost me little to forsake the rest of my human relationships, but not at any price would I part with the Tribschen days of my life, days of trust, of cheerfulness, of sublime coincidences – of profound moments...I do not know what experiences others have had with Wagner: never a cloud passed over our skies." Taken from *Ecce Homo*, trans. Duncan Large (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27.

(9) The term that is most commonly used is "propagandist" in relation to Nietzsche's frequent references to Wagner in his early essays as a professor, in *Birth of Tragedy*, and elsewhere as well. For specific references to this situation and also the issues related to Wagner's dominant personality, see Hansell Baugh, "Nietzsche and His Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (April, 1926): 238-240; G. Ainslie Hight, "Wagner's Attitude to Art," *Music & Letters* 4, no. 3 (July, 1923): 244; T. Moody Campbell, "Nietzsche-Wagner, to January, 1872," *Publications in the Modern Language Association of America* 56, no. 2 (June, 1941): 544-577; Carl Plutsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 103-126; Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, trans. Ronald Taylor

(5)

Wagner's personality was often demanding and required frequent recognition and praise, it is still probably the case that during this stage the admiration was mutual (though perhaps not equal in every respect). The degree to which Nietzsche was influenced by his association with Wagner in this period can be seen quite clearly in his first book entitled *The Birth of Tragedy*. Published in 1872, it was actually revised early on in order to more forcefully proclaim Wagner as the supreme artist who possessed the creative abilities to reestablish the much needed "tragic spirit" that was found in ancient Greece. Nietzsche and Wagner continued their friendship until 1876, when Nietzsche finally became disillusioned to the point where he no longer sought contact with the Meister, even though he had already parted ways internally long before.¹⁰ However, it is quite apparent that though they may have formally dissolved the friendship on a personal level, both individuals left permanent influences on the other.

As much as they wished to have been "outside" of their age, both Nietzsche and Wagner were very much tied to the cultural and intellectual environments into which they were born.¹¹ Among other things, this featured an artistic and social atmosphere

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Nietzsche's Friends and Enemies," *Review of Politics* 62, Issue 2 (Spring, 2000): 351-355; Roger Hollinrake, review of *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, by Joachim Köhler, *Music & Letters* 80, no. 4 (November, 1999): 641-644.

(10) Fischer-Dieskau describes their last meeting at Sorrento, Italy, in some detail in his work. See *Wagner & Nietzsche*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 151-156. Also, for more details on Nietzsche's relatively early disillusionment with Wagner on a philosophical/aesthetic level, see T. Moody Campbell, "Nietzsche-Wagner, to January, 1872," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 56, no. 2 (June, 1941): 544-577; Gerald Abraham, "Nietzsche's Attitude to Wagner: A Fresh View," *Music & Letters* 13, no. 1 (January, 1932): 64-74; Gary Zabel, "Wagner and Nietzsche: On the Threshold of the Twentieth Century," *The Musical Times* 131, no. 1770 (August, 1990): 407-409.

(11) The famous lines in the *Case of Wagner* by Nietzsche read: "What does a philosopher demand of his time in himself to become 'timeless.' With what must he therefore engage in the hardest combat? With

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involving great change and innovation. On the artistic level, the romantic movement in music saw some of its most talented representatives, including Chopin, Schumann, and Mendelssohn. On the political level, this period also witnessed the rise of various socialist movements across Europe, and even a number of revolutions in several states.¹² Likewise on the political scene, Germany itself was formally unified into a single national entity under the military and political leadership of Bismarck on behalf of Prussia after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, in which Nietzsche actually performed duties as a medical assistant.¹³ And, in the overall scheme of things, this timeframe experienced the brunt of the dramatic changes in the basic patterns of life that are associated with the rise of “modernity.” The changes brought by the rapid advances in industrialization and economic organization had profound consequences for all aspects of social life, including the world of philosophy. Perhaps more than any two individuals of their time, Nietzsche and Wagner both struggled to adapt and creatively respond to these changes in ways that they hoped would affect the later developments of European history. As will be shown, however, this inevitably resulted in the clash between them, as the directions in which they wished both history and culture to proceed were incompatible.

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.” Taken from the preface in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Toronto: Random House, Inc., 1967), 155.

(12) Most critical to this present study is Wagner’s personal involvement in the revolutionary movements of 1848-1849 in which he took part in the uprising in Dresden. For references, see Barry Millington, “After the Revolution: The Ring in the Light of Wagner’s Dresden and Zurich Projects,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 678; Guy de Pourtalès, *Richard Wagner: The Story of an Artist*, trans. Lewis May (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972), 143-186.

(13) Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 111.

III – The Issue of Nationalism

The issue of nationalism and national identity in the context of the Nietzsche/Wagner friendship is something that has attracted commentary from a wide variety of historians. In fact, this element has probably been mentioned more than any other, most likely because of its connections to the later developments in nationalism that occurred in Germany during the twentieth century.¹⁴ For both individuals, nationalism was something linked very closely with a number of other significant points, including political structure, religion, history, ethnic qualities and affiliations, and also what each individual saw as the overall purpose of community. Thus, the matter of nationalism in this situation was actually far more complex than most people might suspect – rather than merely being a jumble of childish ideas about superiority or divine origins, or simply a fixation with exclusionary thinking and limited identity, nationalism was a complicated synthesis of ideas that encompassed practically all aspects of the human experience. Historians have argued countless different viewpoints on the significance of these ideas, often in an attempt to defend or justify a certain case in the process.¹⁵ It is very true that this issue of

(14) A particularly excellent discussion is located in George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 180-210. Also, see Steven E. Ascheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (California: University of California Press, 1992).

(15) A prominent example would be Walter Kaufmann, who aside from being one of the leading translators of Nietzsche's works, was at the forefront of trying to exonerate Nietzsche from any sort of ideological connection with the National Socialists. While his attempts in this regard have been seen as accurate in certain cases, some historians have claimed that his efforts to paint Nietzsche's thinking in this manner are not consistent with the available evidence. For one such example of this sort of treatment, see Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 37-46. For references to criticism of some of Kaufmann's conclusions on this issue, see Arnold M. Eisen, "Nietzsche and the Jews Reconsidered," *Jewish Social Studies* 48, Issue 1 (Winter, 1986): 8-9. Another example of a treatment that clearly takes a particular position would be Fischer-Dieskau's work.

nationalism played a critical role in the course of the Nietzsche/Wagner friendship – whatever their perspectives at the outset, by the close of the friendship the different positions that each individual developed in this regard were absolutely crucial to the ultimate break.

One aspect of the situation that played a significant role in the course of the affair was the issue of anti-Semitism. In the context of the friendship, this is clearly related to the larger subject of nationalism because ultimately both of these individuals came to interpret this issue from the overarching question of national identity.¹⁶ The complex issue of anti-Semitism was something discussed and argued over frequently in European society as a whole during this period, and expectedly both Nietzsche and Wagner were engaged with it in some level. In their era, anti-Semitism was more and more becoming a form of racial and cultural prejudice rather than religious prejudice, which is the form

Fischer-Dieskau quite obviously imposes his own interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophical and political contributions in such a way that it portrays him in a very specific light. In his words: "The diametric opposite of what the National Socialists made of him, Nietzsche provoked a change in Germany's intellectual atmosphere, first making possible the psychologizing of German prose. The intellectual climate of his no longer admitted the traditional concepts of "classical" and "romantic." His neo-classical goal was really "the good European." See *Wagner & Nietzsche*, trans. Joachim Neugroshel (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 214.

(16) For Wagner, the matter was ultimately bound up with his well-established romantic Germanism that put an emphasis on the centrality of the national community. The community experience was something extremely significant for Wagner, and this also ties in with his positions on the nature of art and especially opera. The experience of the national community was unavailable for Jews in a very important sense because of their racial origin – thus, even Jews of religious conversion were of a fundamentally different nature. For Nietzsche, the matter of national identity ultimately became something petty and also potentially dangerous to the long-term interests of Europe. Apart from his many other interpretations of Judaism and Jewish history, he argued against the ill-treatment of the Jews on the basis of nationalism. For relevant discussion, see Richard Wagner, *Wagner on Music and Drama: A Selection from Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. H. Ashton Ellis (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1970), 85-87; Richard Wagner, *Stories and Essays*, ed. Charles Osborne (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1973), 23-39; Martin Van Amerongen, *Wagner: A Case History*, trans. Stewart Spencer and Dominic Cakebread (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1983), 56-60; Michael F. Duffy and Willard Mittelman, "Nietzsche's Attitude Toward the Jews," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 2 (April-June, 1988): 301-317.

that had previously been most common. Long before the friendship ever began, Wagner had been known widely for his anti-Semitic positions based on his literary works. The most famous literary example would be his 1850 essay (updated in the 1869 edition) called *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Judaism in Music). Among other things, Wagner accused Jewish composers of corrupting the true artistic purpose in music – he also accused them of lacking the nature produce musical works of a spiritually healthy kind.

In his words:

“The Jew, as we have already pointed out, has no true passion, certainly none that can draw him towards artistic creativity. But where there is no passion, there is no repose: truly noble repose is nothing other than passion soothed by resignation. Where the repose has not been produced by passion, we find only inertia: and the opposite of inertia is only that prickling unrest which is to be found in Jewish music from beginning to end, except where it is replaced by this soulless, unfeeling inertia. The results of Jewish attempts at artistic creation must necessarily possess the qualities of coldness, indifference, triviality and absurdity, and we can only classify the Jewish period in modern music as one of final unproductivity, and of stability ossified.”¹⁷

As many writers have noted, Wagner’s anti-Semitic outlook found expression not only in literary tracts such as the one mentioned above, but also through his operatic works.¹⁸ But, whether the medium was through literature or opera, the overall picture of Wagner’s anti-Semitic opinions in the initial phase of their friendship, as his own

⁽¹⁷⁾ Richard Wagner, *Stories and Essays*, ed. Charles Osborne (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1973), 34.

⁽¹⁸⁾ See Michael P. Steinberg, “Music Drama and the End of History,” *New German Critique*, Issue 69 (Fall, 1996): 163-168; Sandra Corse, *Wagner and the New Consciousness: Language and Love in the Ring* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1990), 132-133. The opera that is most frequently cited in this regard is Parsifal (1882).

independent philosophy developed he came to see this issue as one which particularly disturbed him.¹⁹ One of the main reasons behind his rejection of anti-Semitism is related to the motivations of many of those who embraced it. Although, as mentioned before, much of the anti-Semitism that existed in this period was based on racial grounds, a substantial amount was still stimulated by religious prejudices.²⁰ Specifically, they rested on prejudice against Jews from a Christian perspective – and, as Nietzsche puts forth most forcefully in his book *The Anti-Christ*, to him this represented not only the greatest piece of irony but also the perpetuation of what he saw as a fundamentally flawed religious system.²¹ As he writes in *Anti-Christ*:

“This is precisely why the Jews are the *most disastrous* people in world history: they have left such a falsified humanity in their wake that

(19) There is some evidence that, although he may not have harbored any serious dislike or antagonism towards Jews, Nietzsche was so overwhelmed in his early admiration for Wagner that he essentially overlooked the matter. Also, some of Wagner’s romantic Germanism appears to have influenced Nietzsche during these early stages. As Nietzsche writes in one of his letters: “I have made bold to count myself among these *pauci* since realizing how incapable the world is of comprehending your personality or of feeling the deeply ethical current by which your life, your writings, and your music is permeated – in short, of sensing the presence of an atmosphere of a more serious and more spiritual attitude towards life, of which we poor Germans have been robbed overnight, as it were, by every conceivable sort of political misery, by philosophical nonsense, and aggressive Judaism. It is to you and Schopenhauer that I owe my ability to hold fast to the vital seriousness of the Germanic race and to the deepened contemplation of our enigmatical and perplexing existence.” Taken from Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, “Wagner and Nietzsche: The Beginning and End of Their Friendship,” *The Musical Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (July, 1918):473.

(20) Among those who began to develop racialist interpretations of the “Jewish Question” was the English-born Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who actually became Wagner’s son-in-law. For references to his intellectual influence on Wagner, see Robert C. Holub, “Nietzsche and the Jewish Question,” *New German Critique*, no. 66, Special Issue on the Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1995): 98.

(21) Numerous passages in *Anti-Christ* deal with the issue of Jews in relation to Christians/Christianity. For specific references, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 20-25.

even today Christians can think of themselves as anti-Jewish without understanding that they are the *ultimate conclusion of Judaism*.”²²

It was not only this historical ignorance that Nietzsche despised, but also the outmoded value system that Christianity promoted. As expressed in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, the value system of Christianity is basically a psychological revolt against the older “noble ideals” that prevailed in pre-Christian times. In his philosophy, these older ideals represented an “affirmation of life” through their emphasis on hierarchical distinctions and also the appreciation of human differences (especially with regard to natural ability).²³ By the end of their friendship in 1878, it was apparent that this issue of anti-Semitism had become a major factor in the break. In this case, ideologically they had departed in such different directions that a clash was ultimately inevitable. From Nietzsche’s point of view, although the Jews had been initially responsible for bringing forth the anti-noble values associated with the Christian tradition, he never altered his conviction that they first and foremost represented an especially tough-minded and spiritually advanced people. Wagner, on the other hand, held closely to his nationalist

(22) *Ibid.*, 21.

(23) For references on noble value systems, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-37. Also, the chapter called “What is Noble” in *Beyond Good and Evil* is quite pertinent as well. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Toronto: Random House, Inc., 1966), 199-238.

commitments and his beliefs pertaining to the undesirable artistic and tribal qualities of the Jews.²⁴ As Nietzsche summarized in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*:

“In the summer of 1876, right in the middle of the first *Festspiel*, I took leave of Wagner. I cannot stand ambiguities: since coming to Germany, Wagner had acceded step by step to everything that I hate – even to anti-Semitism.”²⁵

Another issue pertaining to nationalism that played a significant part in the break was the fundamental difference in the viewpoint that each individual had on the meaning and importance of national identity. In numerous works, Nietzsche developed his unique notion of the “good European” – that is, a mentality free of the sort of narrow-minded national identity that was so significant during this period in Europe. One of the most important reasons for this is because national identity is not necessarily a reflection of

(24) As mentioned before, there are many different accounts of this situation, some of which are much more valuable than others. For three relevant accounts of Nietzsche’s complex views on the Jewish people that are well-written and mostly objective, see Robert C. Holub, “Nietzsche and the Jewish Question,” *New German Critique*, no. 66, Special Issue on the Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1995): 94-121; Michael F. Duffy and Willard Mittelman, “Nietzsche’s Attitude Toward the Jews,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 2 (April-June, 1988): 301-317; Arnold M. Eisen, “Nietzsche and the Jews Reconsidered,” *Jewish Social Studies* 48, Issue 1 (Winter, 1986): 1-14. An example of an account that is highly questionable both in its composition and conclusions is Janet Ward’s “Nietzsche’s Transvaluation of Jewish Parasitism” from *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*. Several instances in particular stand out, such as: “Despite these veiling, in the case of Nietzsche’s discourse on Jewish parasitism it still needs to be acknowledged that, even as an attempted antidote, the Nietzschean text undoubtedly constitutes one of the conceptual enablers of the Shoah, especially with the philosopher’s unfortunate predilection for the term *Zucht* (breeding/discipline).” This statement is debatable to say the absolute least, and in fact Ward’s whole general approach is quite suspect and it seems that most of her conclusions are simply reinforcements of pre-existing modes of thought. Plus, the style of the essay is considerably less fluent than other treatments. Overall, this simply reveals the fact that this issue is quite controversial and therefore susceptible to certain non-academically driven agendas. See Janet Ward, “Nietzsche’s Transvaluation of Jewish Parasitism,” *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 24 (2002): 65.

(25) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 276.

natural ability, and this is the basis on which Nietzsche recommends that Europe organize itself in the future. As he writes in *Anti-Christ*:

“The problem I am posing is not what should replace humanity in the order of being (-- the human is an *endpoint* --): but instead what type of human should be *bred*, should be *willed* as having greater value, as being more deserving of life, as being more certain of a future. This more valuable type appeared often enough already: but only as a stroke of luck, as an exception, never as *willed*.”²⁶

The “good European” is thus a product not of limited identities based on nationality, but the merging of various strains according to the principle of ability. By assorting things on this specific basis, the type of aristocratic class that fascinated Nietzsche to such an immense degree could eventually be produced. In a way, limited nationalist identities were almost negative in themselves from Nietzsche’s point of view because they inhibited the development of this higher, aristocratic segment of society. Wagner, on the other hand, certainly did not share Nietzsche’s position with regard to the importance of natural ability on the international scene. This is relatively unsurprising, however, given the extent to which romantic nationalist agendas had infused Wagner’s musical (and specifically operatic) career altogether. In a very important sense, the goals of opera were never separated from the needs and destiny of the national community. Thus, where Nietzsche recognized the need to reorganize European civilization in such a manner that the distinctions of in-group/out-group are awarded according to the standard

⁽²⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, 4. Nietzsche touches on a wide variety of issues in *Anti-Christ*, even though his primary objective is to demolish the ideals presented by Christianity. The “good European” notion is one of these side points that gets mentioned during the course of his larger analysis.

of ability and health, Wagner anticipated the overwhelming influence that the newly created nation-state would exercise over the course of twentieth century European history.²⁷ His romantic Germanism, the same type that had formerly motivated his revolutionary political activities in the tumultuous atmosphere of 1848, remained at the core of his being, and in the end this undeniably affected the outcome of the relationship.²⁸

IV – Music in Nietzschean and Wagnerian Aesthetic Theory

Considering the fact that both Nietzsche and Wagner possessed such intense natural predilections for music, it is not at all surprising that theoretical differences over this issue were such a significant factor in the break. It may seem unusual to modern eyes, however, that this sort of subject could generate this level of friction, given how rarely musical issues are considered with this sort of seriousness in our own era. Nevertheless, as a wealth of literature has demonstrated, the profound differences in musical perspective are absolutely critical to understanding the dynamics of their relationship. In fact, both Nietzsche and Wagnerian aesthetic positions on music are not

(27) For further references to Nietzsche's concept of the "good European," see Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 37-46; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Toronto: Random House, Inc., 1966), 173-198. Various literary and theoretical works by Wagner illustrate his nationalist sympathies with regard to the overall purpose of community and social experience quite clearly. As mentioned above, Nietzsche's insights are much more "far-reaching" in the sense that he is much less concerned with the sort of limited identities that were given so much attention in Europe during this time. See Richard Wagner, *Stories and Essays*, ed. Charles Osborne (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1973), 40-55; Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, vol. II (Michigan: Scholarly Press, Inc., 1972).

(28) Giddings, Robert. "Wagner and the Revolutionaries." *Music & Letters* 45, no. 4 (October, 1964): 354-358.

just interesting in this limited context – they are widely regarded as some of the most significant advances in music theory altogether. As will be shown, music theory has figured prominently in the literature produced on the friendship, and is indispensable in any treatment of the overall course of the situation.²⁹

The source for the most critical ideas in the context of the Nietzsche/Wagner friendship on music theory can be traced to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Among other things, *The Birth of Tragedy* puts forth a complete theory of the function and ultimate purpose that music serves in human life. The book initially developed out of a series of lectures that Nietzsche delivered while he was still a professor at Basel University. These lectures covered a variety of topics, including (a) the psychological origins of tragic drama in ancient Greece, (b) the critical role that music served in the process of tragedy, and (c) the precise reasons for the downfall of the tragic spirit soon after it reached its highest peak.³⁰ In Nietzsche's analysis, tragedy was the result of the successful synthesis of two widely different psychological tendencies, the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian represents all of the most wild and chaotic aspects of human behavior – it has no conception of boundaries, property, or even the existence of separate individuals. In

⁽²⁹⁾ It would be impossible to mention all of the literature produced in this area. Some of the more useful materials consulted can be listed here: Georges Liébert, *Nietzsche and Music*, trans. David Pellauer and Graham Parkes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Franz Hueffer, *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971); Matthew Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Philip Pothen, *Nietzsche and the Fate of Art* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002).

⁽³⁰⁾ An excellent study which covers this issue in detail is James I. Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus: An Essay on 'The Birth of Tragedy'* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000). Aside from this, see David Lenson, *The Birth of Tragedy: A Student's Companion to the Text* (Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1987); Michael Ewans, *Wagner and Aeschylus: The Ring and the Oresteia* (Great Britain: Faber and Faber Limited, 1982).

short, the Dionysian state of ecstatic chaos symbolizes the “return to nature” on the part of humanity, the release from the pressures and inhibitions associated with proper social life. On the other hand, the Apollonian represents the opposite – calmness, repose, restraint, proper form and beauty. According to *The Birth of Tragedy*, genuine tragic drama was only possible because of the perfect mixture of these two different impulses: while the Dionysian impulse supplies the wild energy that is necessary in everything artistic, the Apollonian channels this energy in such a manner as to give it coherent form and meaning. As Sweet summarized:

“Whereas before the essence of tragedy was said to consist more or less exclusively in the Dionysian impulse, Nietzsche now suggests that the essence of tragedy consists in the fusing together (*verschmolzen*) of both the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses. Dionysos is the god of the wild, uncontrolled excesses of nature, who was dismembered by his enemies and later restored by his brother, Apollo. Similarly, the Dionysian impulse in art must be brought together, sublimated, and harmonized through the constructive constraints of the Apollonian impulse. Apollo now becomes the artist-god (*Kunstgott*), one who, through the use of metaphors and symbols, is able to represent what is terrible and absurd in an artistically stylized and aesthetically pleasing way.”³¹

In this complex scheme, the music performs possibly the most vital function of all. In Nietzsche’s perspective, because early tragic drama had elevated music as the highest of all artistic forms in the course of the dramatic production, tragedy was able to achieve its desired effect, which is the overcoming of nihilistic despair by accepting the inherent absurdity of life. However, once music (and the Dionysian impulse in general)

⁽³¹⁾ Dennis Sweet, “The Birth of ‘The Birth of Tragedy,’” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 2 (April, 1999): 357.

had been devalued and sublimated in favor of an overly rationalistic agenda that focused solely on the exercise of reason and restraint, tragedy lost its genuine purpose.³² In the beginning stages of their friendship, Nietzsche was convinced that Wagner represented the reincarnation of the tragic spirit from classical times, and that through his operatic works the prevailing effects of nihilism could be overcome.³³ Wagner, as has been pointed out, was quite interested in the theoretical breakthroughs that were taking place in classical scholarship, and for a considerable period of time recognized himself to be the “modern Aeschylus.” In opera, both individuals saw the potential opportunity to redeem Europe from its sicknesses of over-rationalization and suppression of the necessary Dionysian impulses.

However, the crucial turning point in this situation is related to Wagner’s unique theory of music that Nietzsche became fully aware of only gradually. In Wagnerian aesthetic theory, the true significance of the work depends on the precise harmony of all the individual elements that are involved. This means, above all, the successful combination of multiple art forms to achieve a grand impact whereby the audience is

(32) For one of the most important breakthroughs in the theories of the origin of Greek tragedy, see Gerald F. Else, *The Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965). Else claims that Aristotle, Nietzsche, Murray, and others have been mistaken in their interpretation of tragedy’s origins. His theory is one of the most important pieces of literature in modern classical scholarship. Also, for references to Nietzsche’s controversial attitude towards Socrates (and “Socratism”) which relates directly to his theory of the decline of ancient tragedy, see Walter Kaufmann, “Nietzsche’s Admiration for Socrates,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9, no. 4 (October, 1948): 472-491.

(33) An excellent discussion on the details of this early stage in relation to both music theory and especially tragedy is found in T. Moody Campbell, “Nietzsche-Wagner, to January, 1872.” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 56, no. 2 (June, 1941): 544-577. Campbell describes the early enthusiasm for Wagner that portrays him as the artistic redeemer of the German nation, and the eventual disillusionment as time progresses.

transformed and the aesthetic goal is complete. The musical element is seen as incredibly important, but it does not necessarily take special priority in the overall scheme of the production. But, for Nietzsche, the most critical aspect of this theory was its apparent devaluation of the overriding importance of music in the operatic production. In short, Wagner's "dramatic music" which had tried to convert music into a mere means towards the elevation of dramatic action, was in his perspective a terrible misrepresentation of the actual purpose and aesthetic function of music. It was precisely this sort of misrepresentation that had resulted in the decline of tragedy in classical Greece. In Campbell's words:

"If Nietzsche informs us in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that Schopenhauer's theory of the unique function of music led him to understand the real nature of Greek tragedy, and in addition cites Wagner in confirmation of Schopenhauer, he can do this only because Wagner in his essay on Beethoven had made a belated and unsuccessful attempt to graft Schopenhauer's theory upon his own. *The idea that music was unique among the arts was not Wagner's original position.* That idea was not consistent with the theory of 'dramatic music,' and here lay the fundamental difference between Wagner on the one hand and Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on the other."³⁴

Nietzsche's rejection of "dramatic music," stemming from his conviction that music is absolutely supreme among the arts, is undeniably a factor that significantly influenced the eventual parting.³⁵ Wagner's theory is quite understandable given his

⁽³⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, 551.

⁽³⁵⁾ Aside from Moody and Sweet, some of the literature that deals with the differences in the theoretical interpretations of music are as follows: Roger Hollinrake, "Nietzsche, Wagner and Ernest Newman," *Music & Letters* 41, no. 3 (July, 1960): 245-255; Gary Zabel, "Wagner and Nietzsche: On the Threshold of the Twentieth Century," *The Musical Times* 131, no. 1771 (August, 1990): 407-409; G. Ainslie.

specific aims involving the rejuvenation of opera, but ultimately this theory failed to live up to the sort of expectations that Nietzsche set out for himself and his independent philosophy. The personalities of both men were not exactly conducive to compromise, especially involving matters as significant as music theory. Once the initial “Wagnerian spell” had worn off, Nietzsche could no longer withhold his individual instincts and the unique viewpoints that came as a consequence. To Nietzsche, Wagner had committed the most fatal mistake in reducing the value of music to the point where its function in human life could no longer be fulfilled.

V – Concluding Remarks

The Nietzsche/Wagner situation is important because it contains many lessons for our own era. This is one of the main reasons that it has received such an overwhelming amount of attention in the academic world. Aside from the obvious consequences and implications for our own culture that stem from Wagner’s and especially Nietzsche’s philosophy, the dynamics of their independent relationship are extremely significant because they reveal many subtle features of the rapidly changing environment in which they themselves were involved. The famous episode of their friendship is just one example (although a particularly important one) of two sharply different responses to a variety of historical circumstances, many of which will remain unsettled and

Hight, “Wagner’s Attitude to Art,” *Music & Letters* 4, no. 3 (July, 1923): 236-245; Gerald Abraham, “Nietzsche’s Attitude to Wagner: A Fresh View,” *Music & Letters* 13, no. 1 (January, 1932): 64-74. Abraham’s study is particularly valuable because it emphasizes the profound differences in their natural perceptions of musical matters were – that is, the differences which spring from their fundamentally distant natures rather than anything acquired artificially.

controversial issues into the distant future. As this paper demonstrates, the treatment given by various academics and scholars in a variety of disciplines proves conclusively that nationalism and music theory were two important factors influencing the break. And, along with establishing their importance, the literature also reflects the subtleties in the separate natures of both Nietzsche and Wagner, and the different paths that inevitably followed.

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