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Part I

Untimely Meditations

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Thoughts out of Season, Part I

Friedrich Nietzsche

Plain modern English

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Based on the English translation by Anthony M. Ludovici.

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Untimely Thoughts, Part One, by Friedrich Nietzsche

THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The First Complete and Approved English Translation

EDITED BY

DR. OSCAR LEVY

VOLUME ONE

UNTIMELY THOUGHTS

PART ONE

Out of the first printing of one thousand copies, this is

Number 1

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

UNTIMELY THOUGHTS

PART ONE

DAVID STRAUSS, THE BELIEVER AND THE AUTHOR

RICHARD WAGNER IN BAYREUTH

TRANSLATED BY

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The Editor would like to point out some of the problems he ran into while putting together this edition of the complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche. He is not English himself, so he had to depend on the help of others to work with him, and they were rather slow to come forward. There were also not many of them. That is because the job needed more than an exact knowledge of German. It also needed sympathy for Nietzsche's shocking ideas, and even some excitement about them. On top of that, it needed a strong feeling for poetry, and especially for the highest kind of poetry, which is religious poetry.

A mix like that was hard to find: a mind shaped by the Bible, but still open to new ideas. Even so, the Editor had to find translators with that kind of mind. He could not be content, the way the French are and have to be, with a loose but elegant version of Nietzsche. In French, it is both impossible and unneeded to give a faithful and powerful version of Nietzsche's grand style, which sounds like the

Psalms. But in English it is both possible and needed. English is a rougher language with Germanic roots. And like German, it was shaped by an excellent translation of the Bible. France does not know the Bible well, and it may be happy with a perfumed, watered-down Nietzsche, a Nietzsche dabbed with cologne. The English would never be happy with that. They would want the real Teacher, natural and strong, and they would prefer his blunt, honest words to the finely carved sentences of a smooth storyteller. In fact, it is safe to predict this: once the English have gotten over the first shock of Nietzsche's ideas, their upbringing on the Bible will help them, more than any other nation, to see the deep religious feeling that lies underneath Nietzsche's mission.

This mission is almost sacred to the Editor himself, so he is happy to hear any suggestions for improving the style or the meaning, as long as they come from people who know what they are talking about. Not long ago, the Editor visited Mrs. Foerster-Nietzsche, Nietzsche's sister, in the German town of Weimar. There he got the translation rights from her. He did it by showing her that this way her brother's works would not end up in the hands of some ordinary publisher and that publisher's team of translators. For that reason, he has not made any deal with any publisher, not even with the one printing this book, that could get in the way of his work. No deal can tie him to a text that turns out to have mistakes. No deal can force him to agree to cutting parts out, or twisting the original, or "sweetening" it to help the books sell. So he is free to give his full attention to this work. He thinks it matters just as much to the country where he now lives as to the country where he was born, and to the rest of Europe too.

Because the Editor knows how important this work is, he is eager to warn younger readers of Nietzsche about a few problems. The first, of course, is not to start reading Nietzsche too young. The Editor freely admits that other people may be more gifted than he is. Still, he

wants to say that he started studying Nietzsche at twenty-six, and he could not have handled the weight of such teaching before then. Second, the Editor wants to talk the reader out of starting with Nietzsche's most difficult works. A reader who has not been properly prepared will find Zarathustra hard to understand, Ecce Homo full of itself, and The Antichrist violent. He should start instead with the little booklet on Education, Untimely Thoughts, Beyond Good and Evil, or The Genealogy of Morals. Third, the Editor wants to remind readers of the advice Nietzsche himself gave them: read him slowly, think about what you have read, and do not be too quick to accept a teaching you have only half understood. Because people have accepted Nietzsche too quickly, something has happened: his enemies are usually a much better group of people than those who call themselves his eager and excited followers. Surely not everyone is chosen to fight against a religion or a set of morals that has stood for two thousand years, first inside himself and then in the world outside. Anyone who feels like doing so should at least be willing to have his attention drawn to how huge that task is.

Nietzsche in England

An Introduction by the Editor

Dear English people, in one of my earlier writings I made this point. The world would never have had the great Jewish prophets or the great German thinkers if the people these remarkable men came from had not been, on the whole, so badly misguided. And in being so misguided, those people were also tough and stubborn. An arrow that is meant to fly far must be shot from a bow that is pulled back hard. So if greatness needs anything, it needs fierce and stubborn opposition. That opposition might take the form of open scorn, or nasty mockery, or sly silence, or plain stupidity. It must be an opposition that does not care about the wounds it causes or the precious lives it wastes. It must be an opposition that nobody would dare to fight unless he was ready, like the Spartan warriors long ago, to come home either carrying his shield in victory or carried dead upon it.

Opposition that has no pity like that is not usually found among you, my dear and fair-minded English people. That may explain why you have produced neither the greatest prophets nor the greatest thinkers in the world. You would never have crucified Christ, as the Jews did, or driven Nietzsche mad, as the Germans did. Instead, because Nietzsche wrote so well, you would have made him a government minister in a Whig cabinet. You would have invited Jesus Christ to your country houses. There all the ladies would have adored him for his long hair and interesting looks, and all the men would have put up with him as an amusing, if rather romantic, foreigner. I know most people think the opposite. I know your country is always being accused, even by you yourselves, of being closed off from the rest of the world, like an island in spirit as well as in fact. But I, for my part, have found you

almost as open as a woman is said to be, while I have been trying to introduce you to some ideas from my home country. This openness, however, has another thing in common with the female mind as people describe it: clearly, nothing sinks in deeply. It is all quickly wiped away by whatever the next lecturer, writer or politician tells you. I was ready for you not to care. I was not ready for this openness and that kind, ladylike smile. Ladies, like all people who are merely clever, usually hide behind such a smile the scorn they secretly feel for the foolishness of men. I was ready to be insulted, and even for a good fight. I was not ready for criticism so weak and timid. I did not expect some of my opponents to be so completely clumsy at that very necessary job of tearing a writer to pieces. No, no! Give me the Germans or the Jews as executioners. They know how to hang someone properly. The English hangman is like the Russian one. Once, when the rope broke, the half-hanged rebel said to that Russian hangman: "What a country, where they can't even hang a man properly!" And I say: what a country, where they do not hang philosophers properly, which is what ought to be done to them, but instead smile at them, drink tea with them, have discussions with them, and ask them to write for their newspapers!

To get to the heart of the matter: there have been many hopeful signs, comments and reviews, some hostile and some friendly. Even so, I do not think I have been very successful in my campaign for that European way of thinking which began with Goethe and has grown so finely in Nietzsche. It is true that I have won over many people. But some of them are people I would rather not have. For example, there are some bold publishers who used to be the hardest unbelievers in England. Now they have come to understand the "value" of this new message, meaning the money it can make. But this message is not exactly Christian, and neither am I, the one who brought it here. So I am not allowed to measure my success, as Christians do, by how

many publishers and sinners I have converted. I have to judge it by a higher, more spiritual measure: the quality of the people who have been won over. And by that measure, I am sorry to say, my success has been very poor.

Being an eager missionary, I have naturally asked myself why I have failed. Why are there no men in England willing to listen to a manly and daring philosophy? Why are there no eyes to see it, no ears to hear it, no hearts to feel it, no brains to understand it? I know how to blow my trumpet quite well, after all. So why can it not knock down the walls of English prejudice, as the trumpets knocked down the walls of Jericho? Why can it not break that prejudice against a teacher whose school no European with a higher purpose in his heart can possibly avoid? These days there is plenty of time to think, for a man who does not let himself get pulled into the pointless rush of pleasure, business or politics. That rush is called modern life. But outside it, just as outside those noisy cities of the East, there is a desert. There is calm out there, a true and almost grand stillness and free time, more free time than any age has ever had. And in that free time, a person can reach several conclusions about why the English do not care about this new way of thinking.

First of all, of course, there is the terrible abuse that Nietzsche has heaped on the heads of the innocent British. He feels warmly toward France and the Latin countries, toward the East and India. But this most outspoken of all philosophers, this prophet and poet-philosopher, cannot find enough words to show his disgust for the Englishman, whom he calls illogical, common, shallow, and interested only in what is useful. It must certainly be unpleasant to be treated like this, especially when you think fairly well of yourself. But why do you take it so very, very seriously? Did Nietzsche, by any chance, spare the Germans? And aren't you used to being criticized by German philosophers? Hasn't it long been the old, respected right of all of them,

from Leibnitz to Hegel, and even of German poets like Goethe and Heine, to call you bad names and speak unkindly about you? Hasn't there always been, among the few thinking minds in Germany, a quiet agreement and an open contempt for you and your ways? It is the same kind of contempt that you yourselves feel for the even more Anglo-Saxon culture of the Americans. I honestly admit that in my more German moments I have felt, and still feel, the way the German philosophers do. But I also have my European moods, and then I try to understand you, and even excuse you, and take your side against serious, thinking Germany. At those times I feel like telling the German philosophers this: if you, poor fellows, had put into practice everything they preached, they would have had to give up the pleasure of insulting you long ago, because there would be no Englishmen left to insult! As it is, you have suffered enough because of the wild German ideals that, luckily, you only partly believed in. What the German thinker wrote on patient paper in his study, you always had to write all over the world on tender human skins, black and yellow skins. Those skins covered ungrateful people who sometimes did not think very highly of the depth and beauty of German philosophy. And you have never taken revenge on the inspired masters of the European thinking-workshop. You have never insulted them back. You have never complained that they knew nothing about the real world. You have always suffered in silence and pain, just as the brave and loyal Sancho Panza used to do. Because that is what you are, dear Englishmen. You brave, practical, down-to-earth John Bulls and Sancho Panzas may know this world very well. You may be much better than your idealistic German Knight at noticing, counting, judging, and weighing things. Still, there is an eternal law in this world that the Sancho Panzas have to follow the Don Quixotes. That is because matter has to follow the spirit, even the poor spirit of a German philosopher! So it has been in the past, so it is now, and so it will be in the future, and you had better get ready for it in good time. If Nietzsche were nothing

more than the usual type of German philosopher, you would once again have to pay most of the bill. So it would be very wise of you to study him: Sancho Panza can avoid many sad experiences by knowing his master's weaknesses. But Nietzsche no longer belongs to the Don Quixote type. With him, Germany seems to be coming out of her youthful, odd, foggy dreaminess. So you will not even have the comfort of being beaten together with your master. No, you will be beaten all alone, which is a horrible thing for any decent human being. As the Latin saying goes: "Solamen miseris socios habuisse malorum."[6]*

[Footnote * : It is a comfort to people who suffer to have others suffering with them.]

The second reason why Nietzsche is ignored in this country is that you do not need him yet. And you do not need him yet because you have always had the British virtue of not taking things to extremes. According to the Germans, that is just a polite way of saying the British lack logic and the ability to think critically. For example, you have never let your religion have much influence on your politics. The moral German finds this completely shocking, and it makes him very angry with you. The German sees you acting like a moral, law-abiding Christian at home, and like a ruthless, scheming conqueror abroad. The more foolish people on the Continent always accuse you of hypocrisy. Even if the German holds back from that charge, he will certainly call you a "British muddlehead." Well, I myself do not take things that seriously, because I know that people of action rarely have time to think. That is probably also why you were given freedom of thought and speech. The lawmakers knew perfectly well all along that you would be far too busy to use, or misuse, such an unusual freedom. Anyway, it might now be time to misuse it just a little, and to think about what a strange mixture a Christian power with empire-building ideas really is. True, there was once before another Christian

empire that conquered and set up colonies like yours: Venice. But those Venetians were thinkers compared with you. They quietly slipped their gospel into the paw of their lion, the symbol of Venice, so it would not get in their way.... Why don't you follow their example, so that your religion does not needlessly embarrass you in your ventures abroad? That way you could also make peace with the proper Germans, who always live up to their theories, their Christianity, and their democratic principles. On the other hand, I fully agree that by doing this you would be very unfaithful to your own traditions, which are more democratic than those of any other European nation.

Every schoolboy knows that Democracy was born in an English cradle. Personal freedom, parliaments, and the idea that the people rule are all British ideas, and they spread from this island across all of Europe. But just as a prophet and his words are often not respected in his own homeland, other nations took up these ideas with much more passion than the nation that came up with them. The rest of Europe took the wish for freedom and equality far more seriously than the English who invented it. The English wanted to make people equal, but they also kept their heads cool. And the fiery imagination of France tried to put into action everything that the calmer English eye had never even noticed. Today everyone knows the good and bad results of the French Revolution. It swept across all of Europe and threw it into turmoil. It smashed thrones and empires, and everywhere it weakened authority and old traditions. While all this was happening in Europe, the one who started this merry game sat quietly on his island. He grinned at the excitable foreigners across the Channel. He caught as many fish as he could in the water he himself had so cleverly stirred up. In every way, he profited from the huge fight over the apple of love that he himself had tossed among them, like the golden apple in the old Greek story that started a war. Earlier I tried to

compare the Germans and the Jews, so now let me follow that with a comparison between the Jews and the English. It is a striking comparison. It will especially appeal to those religious people among you who believe you are the lost tribes of our people, and who are perhaps even more lost than you think. Here it is: The Jews brought Christianity into the world but never accepted it themselves. Even though they gave birth to something so democratic, they have always stayed the most conservative, closed-off, aristocratic, and religious people. In the same way, the English never let themselves get drunk on the strong drink of the idea that all men are born equal, even though they once kindly offered that drink to all of Europe. On the contrary, they have stayed the most sober, the most closed-off, the most attached to old ranks and lords, and the most conservative people in our part of the world.

But here the damage done by Democracy has been felt less than in other countries. A good deal of the old medieval building is still standing here. Things have never gone so far that they caused a backlash, which is what always happens when things go too far. Because of all this, no backlash has started in this country. The British mind has not yet felt any strong need for one, and no hunger for the balancing force of someone like Nietzsche. I must point out the serious results of England lagging behind like this. It comes from the fact that you have never taken any ideas or theories seriously, not even your own. Democracy, dear Englishmen, is like a river that all the peoples of Europe will have to cross. They will come out of it cleaner, healthier, and stronger. But while the others are already in the water, splashing, puffing, paddling, losing their footing, trying to swim, and even half-drowned, you are still standing on the bank, roaring with laughter, without mercy, at the poor swimmers, screamers, and strugglers down below. But one day you will have to cross that same river too.

And when you go in, the others will just be climbing out, and it will be their turn to laugh at the poor English straggler!

The third and last reason why Nietzsche has been met with icy silence in this country is this: as far as I know, he has no literary forerunner here whose teachings could have prepared you for him. Germany had Goethe to do this. France had Stendhal. In Russia we find a fearless curiosity about every problem, which is the mark of a young nation, maybe too young. In Spain, on the other hand, we find an old and experienced people. They had long practice living apart from Christianity under the rule of the Arabs, a Semitic people, who surely left some of their blood behind. But I find it very hard to name any man here who could be a useful guide up to the heights of Nietzsche's thought, except one, and he was not British. I mean a man whose politics you used to think of as fantastic, and whose writings you still think of as fantastic. Yet, like another dreamer of his people, he may have the wonderful gift of rising from the dead and coming back to life among you. I mean Benjamin Disraeli.

In my opinion, Disraeli's novels are the best and only preparation for those of you who want to get to know Nietzsche's spirit little by little. There, and nowhere else, you will find the true heroes of the times to come. They are men of moral courage. They are men whose failures and successes are equally admirable. They are men whose noble passions have completely left behind the ordinary crudeness and the everyday moral rules of lesser people. They are men gifted with an extraordinary imagination, which is balanced, though, by an equally strong power of reason. They are men already touched with a drop of that holy and noble oil, the kind once used to anoint kings. Without that oil, the High Priest-Philosopher of modern Germany, Nietzsche, would never have crowned his royal race of the future.

You can see that Disraeli and Nietzsche both start from the same gloomy diagnosis. They both see the wild disorder of modern Europe, its growing sadness, and the threat of Nihilism, the belief that nothing has any meaning. Both of them saw the danger of their time hiding behind several things. It hid behind the loud, forced cheerfulness of people on a sinking ship, which they called "shipwreck gaiety." It hid behind boastful talk about progress and evolution. And it hid behind a curtain of busy business activity, which covers up the age's fear and total despair. But even with this dark view, they are not weak enough to simply mourn and let things fall apart. Nor do they belong to that cheap group of society's doctors who mistake humanity's present misery for sinfulness, and who want to make their patient less sinful and even more miserable. Both Nietzsche and Disraeli clearly saw that their patient is suffering from weakness, not from sinfulness, since being sinful might still take some kind of strength. So both are completely against putting the patient on a stricter diet until he wastes away morally to skin and bones. Instead, they prescribe a tonic, something strengthening, a natural way of living. For this advice, both doctors have been accused of immorality, both by the people of their own time and by those who came later. But the younger doctor, Nietzsche, turned the tables on his accusers. He openly accused his Christian colleagues, the followers of the man from Nazareth, of the immorality of putting life itself in danger. He clearly showed the world that their trusting, believing patient was shrinking away under their very hands. He frankly predicted that one day these Christian fake doctors would end up like the fake skin doctor at the country fair, who, to prove his medical skill, used to show the peasants around him the skin of one of his patients, completely "cured." Both Nietzsche and Disraeli know the road to health, because they have had the sickness of the age themselves. But they have cured themselves of it, one of them partly and the other completely. They have resisted the spirit of their time and escaped the fate of the

people around them. That is why they, and only they, understand the danger those people are in. This is the reason they both speak so fiercely. This is why they both attack, with such bitter passion, the practical, money-minded and materialistic attitude of English science. This is why they both brush aside, with such irony, the airy and fantastic ideals of German philosophy. And this is why they both loudly declare, in Disraeli's words, "that we are slaves of false knowledge; that our memories are filled with ideas that do not come from the truth; that we believe what our fathers believed, though they were convinced for no good reason; that we study human nature in a house full of dead bodies; and that, like the nations of the East, we treat madmen and fools as if they were holy." But while these two great men cannot hold back from such open and harsh criticism, they also show the way forward. They both teach that ideas are holy and that action without principles is shameful. They both lift up the value of personality and character. They both look down on the influence of society and on making everyone the same. They both deeply praise and love life. But they both pour scorn and irony on the shallow optimist, who thinks life is delightful, and on the passive dreamer, who wants life to be calm, sweet and peaceful. So they both preach a life of danger, as opposed to a life of pleasure, comfort and happiness. And they do not just preach this noble life, they live it too, because both of them, with equal determination, risked even their lives to make their ideal come true.

It is surprising, though only surprising to someone who has studied the Jewish character in a shallow way, that we also find in Disraeli an almost Nietzsche-like admiration for the Greek-minded person, the Hellenist, who has always been the enemy of the Jewish people. Just like Nietzsche, Disraeli admits that the Greek and the Hebrew both belong among the highest kinds of human beings. It is just as surprising, though again easy to understand for anyone who knows some-

thing about the great Jews of the Middle Ages, that we find in Disraeli the same furious hatred of the idea that all people are naturally equal, the idea Nietzsche fought against all his life. Surely it was the great Maimonides himself, the spiritual father of Spinoza, who guided the pen of his Spanish-Jewish descendant when Disraeli wrote this in his novel Tancred: "It should be noted that, although the all-powerful Creator could have made, if he had wanted to, even the humblest of his creatures into a useful tool for his purpose, the Divine Majesty has never seen fit to speak with anyone except human beings of the very highest kind."

But what about Christianity? Disraeli was truly attached to it, and he always saw its creation as one of the lasting glories of his people. Didn't the Divine Majesty see fit, in that case, to speak with the humblest of its creatures: the fishermen of Galilee, the common crowd of Corinth, and the slaves, the women and the criminals of the Roman Empire? Since I want to be honest about Disraeli, I have to point something out here. His genius was the most outstanding in England during his lifetime, and he fiercely opposed the popular false beliefs of his day. Even so, he still partly belonged to his age. And there is a very forgivable reason for this: in his Jewish pride, he gave Christianity too much credit and even misunderstood it. He almost completely missed the close link between Christianity and democracy. He did not see that by fighting Liberalism and the Nonconformist churches all his life, he was really fighting Christianity, since its Protestant form is still the root of British Liberalism and individualism to this very day. Later in his life, Disraeli complained that the unrest in people's minds across nations had been caused by "the powerful attack by the Germans on the holiness of the Semitic writings," meaning the Bible. But here too he missed the link between this German movement and that same Protestantism. It was from Protestantism's narrow and common middle class that all those reas-

oning, unimaginative and merely clever professors came, who have so successfully undermined the ancient and respected teachings. And third, worst of all, Disraeli never guessed something about the French Revolution. In the same breath, he once scornfully called it "the Celtic rebellion against Semitic laws." Yet even though it claimed to attack religion, it was really a deeply Christian movement, because it was democratic and revolutionary. What a shame he did not know all this! What a shower of brilliant extra mockery he would have poured on those flat-nosed Franks, if he had known what I know now: that it is the Christian's eternal habit to be a rebel. Just as the Christian once rebelled against us Jews, he has never stopped pestering and rebelling against everyone else too, whether they share his faith or follow some other one.

But I get carried away so easily by my favorite sport, which I was the first Jew to invent: teasing and baiting Christians. You must forgive this in a Jew, though. For two thousand years you Christians have hunted and tormented us. Now that the chance has finally come, a Jew likes to turn around and enjoy a little of that cheerful pastime himself. I openly admit it is delightful. Now I fully understand why your ancestors hunted mine as much as they could. If I had been a Christian, I probably would have done the same. Maybe I would even have done it better, because then nobody would be left today to write such cheeky truths against me—you can be sure of that! But since I am a Jew, and I have had far too much experience of being on the other side, I must try to control myself even while I am winning. I must judge things calmly. I must state the facts honestly. I must not let myself be unfair to you. So, first of all: this habit of rebelling that you have is something you inherited from the Jews. But you have used this inheritance in a more than generous way, a truly Christian way. You did not keep it stingily to yourselves. Instead you spread it all over the earth, from Nazareth to Nizhny Novgorod, from Jerus-

alem to Jamaica, from Palestine to Pimlico, so that nowadays everyone is a rebel and an anarchist. But second, I must not forget that inside every anarchist, and so inside every Christian, there is also, or there may be, an aristocrat. This is a man who, just like the anarchist, wants to obey no laws except those of his own conscience—but he has a completely holy right to do so. He is a man who thinks too highly of his own faith and beliefs to try to convert other people to them. So he would never carry his faith off to faraway peoples in Africa and Asia. In short, he is a man whom even the noblest and most exclusive Hebrew could shake hands with. In Friedrich Nietzsche, this aristocratic side that may be hidden inside a Christian has come out into the light. In him, the Christian's age-old demand for freedom of conscience, for being his own priest, for being made right by his own faith, is no longer used to destroy and rebel. Instead it is used to command and to create. Nietzsche came from a long line of Protestant pastors on both his father's and his mother's side. And this is the key to understanding this extraordinary man: in him, the Christian and Protestant spirit of anarchy grew so strong that he rebelled even against his fellow anarchists. He told them that anarchy was a low and contemptible thing, and that revolution was a job fit only for slaves of a better sort. But with this, the circle of Christianity has closed. And now the exclusive House of Israel has the delightful duty of making peace with its son, who was once lost and is now changing his ways.

The respected old Owner of this ancient house is still standing in his doorway. His face is pale, he looks worn out with worry, and his eyes seem to be searching for something far away. A terrible wind is blowing right now, and it is tossing his long white Jewish beard wildly about. But this white beard is starting to turn black again at the tips, and even his sad eyes can still flash like a young man's, as you can see at this very moment. For the old Jew's eyes, which seemed so dreamy

and distant, have suddenly fixed on something far off over there. The old Jew looks and looks. Then he rubs his eyes. Then he eagerly looks again. And now he is sure. His old, tired face lights up. His bent body suddenly stands straighter. And a tear of joy runs down his pale cheek into his long beard. For the old Jew has recognized someone coming from far away. It is someone he had missed but never spoken of, because his Law forbade him to. Yet he had secretly mourned for him all along, in the way only the people of the psalm-writers and the prophets know how to mourn. And he runs toward him, throws his arms around his neck, kisses him, and says to his servants: "Bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate!" AMEN.

OSCAR LEVY.

LONDON, January 1909.

Translator's Preface

Some readers already know Nietzsche. They have studied his book Zarathustra and understood it. On top of that, they have taken in the books called Beyond Good and Evil, The Genealogy of Morals, The Twilight of the Idols, and The Antichrist. For readers like that, everything in this volume will be completely clear and easy to understand. In the attack on Strauss, such a reader will spot right away the seed of the attitude Nietzsche held for the rest of his life: his dislike of being satisfied too quickly, and of the silly bliss of people who are "easily pleased." In the essay on Wagner, the same reader will recognize Nietzsche as a tireless digger, someone always drilling down, tunneling, and undermining. He is trying to define his ideals. Above all, he is struggling to know himself. And he grabs any person of his

own time who comes close to his ideal human being, so that he can hold that person up as the living example of his ideas. Wagner, the man who will reform humanity! Wagner, the poet-musician of drama! A reader who knows Nietzsche will not be fooled by phrases like these.

But a reader who knows nothing about all this deserves a few words of explanation. These words are needed not only about the two essays in this book, but also about Nietzsche himself. In our time, people pick up so much secondhand gossip about famous figures in science, art, religion, or philosophy that it is almost impossible for anyone today to start reading a great writer or scientist with a completely open mind, no matter how little he really knows. So it would be wise to begin reading Nietzsche with a clear idea of a few things. First, the purpose he never changed, if he ever had one. Second, the ideal he held all his life, if he ever kept one that long. Third, the one direction he always moved in, even though he seemed at times to wander off and take winding paths. Did he have such a purpose, such an ideal, such a direction? We don't want to start an argument here. And we don't think that answering "yes" will start one, because we know that everyone who has studied Nietzsche carefully will agree with us. Nietzsche had one very clear purpose, ideal, and direction that never changed, and that was "raising humanity higher." He tells us in The Will to Power: "Everything that helps to raise humanity higher is truth to me!" He had already committed himself to this principle as a student in Leipzig. Every line he ever wrote came from his devotion to it. It is the key to understanding all his complicated ideas, his shocking attacks on what people held sacred, his long-windedness, and his fierce seriousness. To Nietzsche, everything that helped raise humanity higher was good. Everything that kept people standing still or pushed them backward was bad. That is why he wrote David Strauss, the Believer and Author (1873).

The war between France and Germany had only just ended. The main message of this fighting pamphlet is: "Beware of getting drunk on success." All of Germany was wild with joy over its victory. The army's clear triumph made people think that every part of German society deserved glory too, even though it had done nothing to earn it. At a time like that, it took both courage and good judgment to speak up with a warning and to throw cold water on the celebration. But Nietzsche did both, and did them boldly, because his deepest fears had been stirred up. Lazy self-satisfaction (in German, erbärmliches Behagen, meaning "pitiful comfort") was threatening to block his one purpose, which was raising humanity higher. This lazy self-satisfaction showed itself most clearly in the German scholar. It acted as if it knew everything, could do anything, and was present everywhere. And all the while it was only a mask covering hidden rot and dull, empty nitpicking.

In the first essay, Nietzsche's attack on the cheerful optimism of the philosopher Hegel (pages 46, 53 and 54) is enough by itself to show the basic idea behind this essay. Sometimes the personal attack on Strauss seems to push the main subject into the background. If so, we must remember how the author himself saw this side of the matter. In fact, Nietzsche had neither the spite nor the meanness needed for a purely personal attack. In his book Ecce Homo, he tells us very firmly: "I have no wish to attack particular people. I only use a person as a magnifying glass. I hold it over the subject I want people to notice, just to make my point stronger." Soon after the first of the Untimely Thoughts came out, David Strauss wrote to a friend. In the letter he said he was completely amazed that a total stranger had gone after him so fiercely. The reader may well face the same puzzle on every page of this essay. But suppose we understand what Nietzsche was aiming at. Suppose we see that he was fighting against "culture snobbery" in general, as something that blocks progress, makes people

dull, and so drags them downward. And suppose we look at David Strauss the way the author himself did: simply as a lens that focuses all the light of our understanding onto the main subject. Then the essay on Strauss turns out to be enormously powerful, and its goal seems so high and noble to us that we have to reach one conclusion, whatever we think of the man being attacked. At least to Nietzsche, Strauss was only the living, real-life example of the evil and danger that was then threatening to take over his country. Exposing that danger was the whole point of this essay.

Strauss died on February 7th, 1874. We read that at that time Nietzsche was deeply tortured by the fear that the old scholar's death might have come sooner because of the way his name had been used in the first of the Untimely Thoughts. We also remember that, in the middle of this torment, Nietzsche cried out, "I was truly not made to hate and to have enemies!" Knowing this, we can better judge why, all through his life, he took on such powerful opponents and launched such merciless attacks. It came simply from his guiding principle: everything that helps raise humanity higher is true and good, and everything that keeps people standing still or pushes them backward is bad and false.

Some people may think his attacks were often unfair and badly judged. Those people would do well to keep this in mind: whatever his worth or strengths may have been as someone who tore down idols and old beliefs, at least his goal was noble and honorable enough. They should also remember that he never avoided the duties which, rightly or wrongly, he believed would help him to

With the essay on Wagner (1875 to 1876), we face a somewhat different problem. Most readers will have heard that Nietzsche later attacked Wagner's music harshly, so they will probably be shocked by this essay full of praise for him. Some readers, like Professor Saintsbury, will miss the clues inside this essay that point so surely to what

Nietzsche really thought of his hero, even though he was not yet fully aware of it himself. Such readers may even be happy to see his later attitude as a complete about-face, and in any case as a flat contradiction of the attitude shown in this essay. But let us look at the clues inside the essay that we are talking about. And let us also discuss the purpose and spirit of the essay.

We have said that Nietzsche was a man with a very firm and powerful ideal, and we have heard what that ideal was. So can we picture him? He was a young, eager scholar who had a well-trained love of music, especially Wagner's music. He was searching hard through all the people around him, through the whole city and country he lived in, and even through the whole continent he lived on. He was looking for something or someone that would put to rest his doubts about whether his ideal could ever really come true. Now can we picture this young man meeting, face to face, probably one of the greatest geniuses of his time? This was a man whose very presence must have felt electric, a man whose every word and movement must have given off some kind of power to everything around him. This man was Richard Wagner.

Try to imagine what it must have meant to Nietzsche, still in his twenties, just to get the attention of a man like Wagner. Then try to imagine how dizzy and thrilled he must have felt when that attention grew into friendship. If we can picture all that, we can hardly believe that Nietzsche was able to be critical of Wagner at all in the beginning. Naturally enough, he soon began to see in Wagner his ideal, or at least the way to reach the ideal that filled his every thought. All his hopes for the future of Germany and Europe clung, so to speak, to Wagner, whom he saw as the highest expression of their people's life. And little by little, he began to give his friend, who was already a great man, even more greatness, which really came from deep inside Nietzsche's own soul.

The friendship that grew between them was of a rare kind, where neither person could say who was influencing the other more. Wagner often said that the beautiful music in the third act of Siegfried came from Nietzsche's influence on him. He also took up the young man's way of talking about art. The ideas behind the words "wild and ecstatic" and "calm and orderly" were borrowed by Wagner from his friend's talks. How much Nietzsche owed to Wagner may never be known for sure. For readers who are interested enough to look into this question, we suggest Hans Belart's book, Nietzsche's Ethik. In it they will find references that give some hints about where the needed information might be found. Still, no one will ever know exactly how their conversations affected each of them. It would be silly to think that Nietzsche was basically the same person when he left Wagner as when he first met him. But it is now hard to say what the real nature of that change was.

For several years their friendship stayed strong and kept getting closer and closer. The Birth of Tragedy was one of the first times Nietzsche showed this friendship in public. After the book came out, many people came to believe that Wagner's art was a kind of rebirth of the wild and ecstatic art of ancient Greece. Nietzsche's enemies began to whisper that he was just Wagner's "literary servant." Many of his friends disapproved of the promising young scholar of languages. They questioned the overblown importance he was starting to give to music, and to art in general, as forces that shape the world. And all the while, Nietzsche had only one thought and one goal: to help the cause and improve the chances of the man he truly believed was meant to be the savior of European real culture.

Every great ideal that Nietzsche came up with in his own mind, he imagined to be the ideal of his hero. In his writings, he handed over all his noblest hopes for society to Wagner for free, as if they had come from Wagner's own mind. Think of the prophets of old times.

They never felt sure enough to believe that their noblest ideas were their own. Instead, they credited them to some higher, supernatural power, and so they learned to worship that power for the noble feelings they imagined it had. In the same way, Nietzsche, who still doubted his own abilities, turned his famous friend into an idol. In the end, he was deeply hurt and almost broken by disappointment when he discovered that the Wagner who wrote Götterdämmerung and Parsifal was not the Wagner he had pictured in his own mind.

By the time he was writing Ecce Homo, Nietzsche knew very well how far he had gone in making his friend into an ideal. He even felt able to say: "Wagner in Bayreuth is a vision of my own future.... Now that I can look back on this work, I would not want to deny that, deep down, it talks only about myself" (page 74). And on another page of the same book he writes: "... What I heard as a young man in Wagner's music had absolutely nothing to do with Wagner. When I described wild and ecstatic music, I was only describing what I myself had heard. In this way I took everything I carried in my own soul and translated it, and transformed it, into the spirit of the new art. The strongest proof of this is my essay, Wagner in Bayreuth. In every clearly psychological passage of that book, the reader can simply put in my name, or the name 'Zarathustra,' wherever the text says 'Wagner'" (page 68).

As we have already suggested, there are signs that, even at the high point of their friendship, Nietzsche had already noticed the REAL Wagner without fully realizing it, hidden behind the ideal picture he had made of him. His eyes were too sharp to be fooled, even if at first his mind refused to listen to what they were telling it. Both The Birth of Tragedy and Wagner in Bayreuth prove this. And they prove it not only when we read between the lines, but also when we take certain passages completely at face value, such as those on pages 115, 149, 150, 151, 156, 158, and 159 of this book.

We have explained how Nietzsche became so swept away by Wagner. He himself has admitted that, as a result, he turned the object of his admiration into an ideal. We have also pointed out certain passages which, we believe, show without any doubt that almost everything found in The Case of Wagner and Nietzsche contra Wagner was already in our author's mind without his being aware of it, long before he had started to feel even a little cooler toward his hero. If anyone thinks that our reading of these passages is forced or unfair, let them turn to the writings we have mentioned and judge for themselves. In our view, those well-known critics who complain about Nietzsche's complete about-face, and about his wild taking-back of his words and sudden swings of feeling, have completely missed this side of the question.

We would do well to remember that we cannot simply sum up Nietzsche's attitude toward Wagner, at any stage of their relationship, with one sentence of praise or blame. After all, we are facing a problem that no amount of fairness or cool distance on our part can solve. Nietzsche gave both Schopenhauer and Wagner qualities and goals that were so completely foreign to them that neither of them would have recognized himself in the pictures Nietzsche painted of them. His love for them was unusual. Perhaps we can only fully understand it with our feelings. Like all people who are able to love very deeply, Nietzsche filled in whatever greatness the people he loved happened to be missing. And when at last his eyes were opened, what drove even his most bitter attacks was real pain, not spite.

Finally, we would like to give just one more passage from Ecce Homo that has to do with the subject we have been discussing. It is especially interesting because of what it tells us about Nietzsche's own life, and it may be the best possible way to end this preface.

Nietzsche is writing about Wagner's music, and he says: "The world must truly feel empty to anyone who has never been sick enough to feel this 'hellish pleasure.' Here it is allowed, and yet almost forbidden, to use a mystical way of speaking. I think I know better than anyone the amazing things Wagner could do: the fifty worlds of strange delights that nobody but him could rise up to. And as I stand today, strong enough to turn even the most suspicious and dangerous thing to my own use and come out stronger for it, I declare that Wagner has done more good for my life than anyone else. One thing will always keep our names linked in people's minds: we are two people who have suffered more painfully than most people can suffer nowadays, and we even made each other suffer. And just as Wagner is nothing more than a misunderstanding among Germans, so am I, and so I always will be. My dear fellow Germans, you are missing two hundred years of training in understanding the mind and in art!... But you will never be able to make up the time you have now lost" (page 43).

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI.

DAVID STRAUSS,

THE BELIEVER AND THE AUTHOR.

DAVID STRAUSS

I.

In Germany, public opinion seems to strictly forbid anyone from mentioning the bad and dangerous results of a war. This is especially true when the war has been won. So the writers who get the most attention are the ones who treat public opinion as the last word. They compete with each other to praise the war as loudly and happily as they can, along with the strong effects it has supposedly had on morals, on real culture, and on art. But we have to admit that a great victory is also a great danger. People handle winning less well than they handle losing. In fact, you could even argue that it is easier to win a victory like this than to make good use of it, so that in the end it does not turn into a serious defeat.

Of all the bad results of the last war with France, the saddest may be a mistake that is widespread, even almost universal. Public opinion, and everyone who shares their thoughts in public, believes that the real culture of Germany also won in that struggle. They think it should now be crowned with flowers, as a fitting reward for such amazing events and successes. This mistake is extremely harmful. It is not harmful simply because it is a mistake, since some illusions are actually healthy and good for us. It is harmful because it threatens to turn our victory into a huge defeat. A defeat? I should rather say: it threatens to tear out the "German spirit" by the roots, all for the sake of the "German Empire."

Even if we imagine that the fight really was between two kinds of real culture, the value of the winner would still be measured only in comparison. And in any case, it would surely not justify such overblown celebration and self-praise. First of all, we would need to find out how much the losing culture was actually worth. It might be worth very little. In that case, even if the victory had been won with the most

glorious show of military power, it would still give no good reason for wild joy.

But even so, in our case there can be no talk of a victory of German real culture. The reason is simple: the real culture of France is still what it always was, and we still depend on it just as we always did. German real culture did not even help our armies win. What made us win were strict military discipline, natural courage and staying power, better leadership by our generals, and unity and obedience among the ordinary soldiers. In short, the things that made us beat an enemy who lacked the most important of these qualities had nothing to do with real culture. The only surprising thing is that the very thing now called "real culture" in Germany did not get in the way of the military actions that seemed absolutely necessary for a great victory. Perhaps, though, this was only because this "thing" that calls itself "real culture" saw that, for once, it was better off staying in the background.

But if it is allowed to grow and spread, and if it is spoiled by the flattering and foolish claim that it has won, then, as I have said, it will have the power to wipe out the German spirit completely. And once that has happened, who knows whether anything useful can still be made of the German body that is left behind!

The German soldier met the Frenchman's emotional, sudden rage with calm, stubborn courage. Suppose that same courage could be turned against the enemy inside the country. That enemy is the highly suspicious and, in any case, foreign "surface polish" that, through a dangerous misunderstanding, is called "real culture" in Germany. If that could be done, then hope for a truly genuine German "real culture", the opposite of that "surface polish", would not be completely lost. After all, Germans have never been short of clear-sighted and heroic leaders, though those leaders have probably often been short of

Germans to lead. But whether German courage can be turned in this new direction seems to me more and more doubtful all the time. I can see how completely everyone is convinced that such a struggle and such courage are no longer needed. On the contrary, they believe that most things are arranged as well as they possibly could be, or at least that everything important was discovered and achieved long ago. In a word, they believe the seeds of real culture have already been planted everywhere, and are now either sprouting fresh green shoots or, here and there, even bursting into rich bloom. In this world, not just happiness but pure delight rules over everything. I can sense this delight and happiness in the unspeakable, aggressive confidence of German journalists and of the people who churn out novels, tragedies, poems, and history books (it should be obvious that all these people belong in the same group). They seem to have teamed up to fill the free time and thinking time of modern people, which really means their "mental blank spots", by confusing them with printed paper. Since the war, this cheerful crowd is full of joy, self-importance, and self-awareness. After the startling successes of German real culture, this crowd sees itself not only as approved and officially accepted, but almost as holy. So it speaks very seriously, pretends to address the German People directly, and publishes "complete works" in the style of the great classics. It is not even shy about announcing, in the newspapers that are open to it, that a few of its members are the new German classics and model authors. You might expect that the more thoughtful and educated Germans would see the dangers of misusing success like this. Or at least you might expect them to feel how painful the comedy around them is. For what could make you feel more pity than the sight of a cripple strutting like a rooster in front of a mirror and trading pleased looks with his own reflection? But the "scholar" class is happy to let things stay as they are. They are too busy with their own business to bother looking after the German spirit. Besides, the members of this class are far too sure that their own learning is the

ripest and most perfect fruit of this age, and in fact of all ages. So they see no need to care for German real culture in general. As far as they and their huge army of fellow scholars are concerned, worries like that have, so to speak, been left behind everywhere. A more careful observer, especially one from another country, cannot help noticing something else as well. There is no big difference between what the German scholar thinks of as his real culture and that other, triumphant real culture of the new German classics, except in the amount of knowledge. Everywhere that knowledge counts more than ability, and information counts more than art, which means everywhere that life shows what kind of real culture exists, there is now only one particular German real culture. And is this the real culture that is supposed to have defeated France?

That claim seems far too ridiculous. Every fair-minded judge, and in the end even the French themselves, said the victory came only from three things: the German officers knew more, the German soldiers were better trained, and the German army used more scientific battle plans. So, if we set German learning aside as a separate thing, in what way can German real culture be said to have won? In no way at all. The moral qualities of strict discipline and calm obedience have nothing to do with real culture. The Macedonian army, for example, had those qualities, even though the Greek soldiers had far more real culture than the Macedonians. So when people say that German scholarship and real culture won the war, it can only come from a misunderstanding. That misunderstanding probably comes from the fact that nobody in Germany today has any clear idea of what real culture is.

Real culture is, above all, one shared artistic style that runs through every part of a people's life. Having lots of knowledge and learning is not necessary for it, and it is not proof that it exists. In fact, if it came to that, knowledge and learning could get along much better with the

exact opposite of real culture, which is a lack of culture. By that I mean having no style at all, or having a wild mess of every style mixed together. And that wild mess is exactly where the German of today lives. So the serious question is this: with all his learning, how can he fail to notice it? And on top of that, how can he be so wholeheartedly happy with his present so-called "culture"? Everything around him should open his eyes. Every look at his clothes, his room, his house should do it. So should every walk through the streets of his town, and every visit to his art dealers and his fashion shops. When he mixes with other people, he ought to realize where his manners and his gestures really come from. In the middle of our art institutions, at our concerts, theaters, and museums, he ought to notice every style you can imagine, piled on top of each other and crowded side by side. The German heaps up around himself the shapes, colors, products, and odd objects of every age and every part of the world. In this way he creates a loud, flashy newness, like a country fair. His scholars then study this and call it "Modernism itself." And there he stays, sitting quietly and comfortably in the middle of this clash of styles. But with this kind of "culture", which is really nothing more than a dull, sluggish blindness to real culture, people cannot defeat an enemy. They least of all can defeat an enemy like the French. Whatever the French may be worth, they truly have a genuine real culture that creates new things. And up to now, we have copied them on purpose and all the time, though usually without much skill.

Even if we really had stopped copying them, it would still not mean that we had beaten them. It would only mean that we had freed ourselves from their control, like taking a heavy yoke off our necks. Only when we have managed to force a truly German real culture onto them can anyone talk about German real culture winning. In the meantime, let us not forget this: in every question of form and style, we are just as dependent on Paris now as we were before the war, and

we have to be. That is because, up to now, there has never been a truly original German real culture.

We all should have realized this on our own. Besides, one of the few people who had the right to scold the Germans pointed it out in public. Goethe once said to his friend Eckermann: "We Germans are newcomers, born only yesterday. It is true that for the last hundred years we have worked hard at polishing ourselves. But a few more centuries may still have to pass before our countrymen are filled with enough intelligence and higher real culture that people can say of them: it has been a long time since they lacked culture."

II.

So our public and private life clearly shows no signs of a real culture that is creative and has its own character. On top of that, our great artists admit this huge fact, and have admitted it, with the deep seriousness and honesty that belong to true greatness. It is a very humiliating fact for such a talented nation. If all this is true, how can German scholars still be so astonishingly satisfied? And since the last war, this self-satisfied attitude has seemed more and more ready to burst out in cheering and victory celebrations. In any case, people widely seem to believe that we have a genuine real culture. This triumphant satisfaction clashes enormously with the weakness that should be obvious to everyone. Yet only a few chosen people seem to notice the clash. That is because everyone who thinks the way the public thinks has covered their eyes and blocked their ears. Nobody even admits that the clash exists. How is this possible? What power is strong enough to deny that it exists? What kind of people must have taken control in Germany, so that such strong and simple feelings are denied or kept from being spoken? I will name this power, this kind of people. They are the culture snobs.

As everyone knows, the word for a narrow-minded conformist, "Philistine," was borrowed from the slang of German university students. In its widest and most common meaning, it means the opposite of a child of the Muses, of an artist, and of a person of real culture. The culture snob, however, is different. Studying his type, and listening to his confessions whenever he makes them, have now become boring duties. He stands apart from the ordinary narrow-minded conformist because of one false belief: he imagines that he himself is a child of the Muses and a person of real culture. This baffling mistake clearly shows that he does not even know the difference between a narrow-minded conformist and the opposite kind of person. So we should not be surprised when we find him, most of the time, solemnly insisting that he is not a narrow-minded conformist. Because he does not know himself, he is sure that his "culture" is the most perfect example of real German culture. Everywhere he goes, he meets scholars just like him. All public institutions, whether schools, universities, or academies, are set up to fit perfectly with his education and his needs. So wherever he goes, he carries with him the proud feeling that he is the worthy champion of the German culture that rules today, and he makes his demands and claims to match.

Real culture assumes one shared artistic style. Even a poor, run-down culture is hard to picture unless its many different forms have blended together to some degree. So the culture snob's mistake may come from this: everywhere he goes, he meets people made in the same mold as himself. From that, he concludes that this sameness among all the "scholars" must point to a certain sameness in German education, and therefore to real culture. All around him he sees only needs and opinions like his own. Wherever he goes, he finds himself wrapped in a circle of unspoken agreements about almost everything, but especially about religion and art. This impressive sameness is like a whole orchestra playing the same note together. No one gives the

order, yet it is always ready to burst out. And it tricks him into believing that a real culture must be settled and thriving here. But narrow-minded conformity, however organized and powerful it is, does not become real culture just because it has a system. It is not even a poor kind of real culture. It is always the opposite: a firmly rooted lack of culture. The sameness of character that is so obvious in German scholars today comes only from shutting out and denying, on purpose or without noticing, every creative artistic form and every need that a true style would have. The culture snob's mind must have become badly unhinged. He takes the very things real culture rejects and calls them real culture itself. And because he is logical about it, he manages to build a connected set of these rejections. The result is a system of non-culture. In a pinch, you might even grant it a kind of "one shared artistic style," if it were not nonsense to say that a lack of culture has style. Whenever he has to choose between an act with style and its opposite, he always picks the opposite. Since he follows this rule every time, all his acts carry the same negative mark. This mark is how he recognizes the character of the "German culture" that he thinks he owns, like a patent. Anything that does not carry this mark looks to him like an enemy or an obstacle lined up against him. Faced with these forces, the culture snob either just blocks the blows, or else he denies things, keeps quiet, covers his ears, and refuses to look at the facts. He is a negative creature, even in his hatred and hostility. But there is no one he dislikes more than the person who sees him as a narrow-minded conformist and tells him what he really is. He is the wall that blocks every strong person and every creator. He is the maze that traps everyone who doubts and gets lost. He is the swamp that swallows the weak and the tired. He is the chains on those who want to run toward high goals. He is the poisonous fog that chokes every hope just starting to grow. He is the burning sand under the feet of all the German thinkers who are searching and thirsting for a new life. Then the author speaks straight to these

snobs: "For the German spirit is searching. And you hate it because it is searching, and because it will not take your word for it when you announce that you have already found what it is looking for." How could a type like the culture snob ever have come about? And even if it did come about, how did it rise to the powerful position of top judge over every question of German culture? How could this happen, when a whole parade of great and heroic figures has already passed before us? Their every movement, every look on their faces, their questioning voices and their burning eyes all showed one thing: they were searchers. And what they were looking for was exactly what the culture snob had long imagined he had already found, namely, a true and original German culture. They seemed to be asking: Is there ground somewhere that is clean enough, untouched enough, holy and fresh enough, for the German spirit to build its house on? Asking this, they wandered through the wilderness and through the forests of miserable times and cramped conditions. And as searchers they passed out of our sight. One of them, when he was old, could even say on behalf of them all: "For half a century my life has been hard and bitter enough. I have allowed myself no rest. I have always struggled, searched, and worked, as well and as hard as I possibly could."

What does our culture snobbery say about these searchers? It sees them simply as people who found the answer. It seems to forget that they themselves only ever claimed to be searchers. Its sons say, "We have our real culture. After all, don't we have our 'classics'? Not only is the foundation laid, but the building already stands on it, and we ourselves are that building." And as he says this, the narrow-minded conformist proudly raises his hand to his forehead.

But to judge them so wrongly, and to give our classic writers this backhanded kind of respect, people must have stopped really knowing them. And, generally speaking, that is exactly what has happened.

Otherwise, people would know that there is only one way to honor them: to keep searching with the same spirit and the same courage, and never to grow tired of the search. Instead, people stick the doubtful label of "classics" on them and now and then "improve" themselves by reading their works. Doing that means giving in to the same weak and selfish feelings that any paying customer can buy at concert halls and theaters. Even putting up monuments to them, and naming festivals and clubs after them, are nothing but so many coins tossed loudly on the counter. With these payments the culture snob settles his debt to them, so that otherwise he can be rid of them. Above all, it means he no longer has to follow in their footsteps and carry their search further. For from now on, asking questions must stop: that is the narrow-minded conformist's slogan.

This slogan did once make some sense. Take Germany in the first ten years of the nineteenth century. Back then, a wild, confused wave of searching, experimenting, tearing down, promising, guessing, and hoping was rushing back and forth across the country, like currents and cross-currents. At that time, the thinking middle classes were right to worry about their own safety. It made sense for them to shrug their shoulders and put out of their minds the whole jumbled heap of fantastic philosophies that twisted and mangled language, the angry, one-sided history books written to prove a point, the carnival of every god and myth, and the showy poetic posing and nonsense that a drunken spirit might produce. In this, they were quite right, because the narrow-minded conformist is not even allowed the freedom to run wild. But with the slyness typical of low-minded people, he used this moment to cast doubt even on the spirit of searching itself, and to invite people to join him in the cozier hobby of "finding" instead. His eyes opened to the pleasures of narrow-minded conformity. He saved himself from wild experiments by clinging to a cozy, simple country-life picture of the world. Against the restless creative spirit that drives

the artist, he set up a kind of smug comfort: the comfort of being proudly narrow, calm, and satisfied with himself. Without even pretending to be modest, he pointed his slender finger at all the private, homely little events of his life, and at the many touching, innocent joys that sprang up in the miserable depths of his life without real culture. These joys bloomed modestly, like little flowers on the swampy ground of narrow-minded conformity.

Of course, there were a few talented storytellers who, with a delicate touch, painted lively pictures of happiness, plain everyday simplicity, sturdy country health, and all the well-being that fills the lives of children, scholars, and farmers. Holding picture-books like these in their hands, these smug people now tried, once and for all, to escape from the burden of those questionable great classic authors and the command those classics contained: to keep searching and to find. They only came up with the idea that this was an age of latecomer imitators so that they could have peace for themselves. That way, they could brush off every effort of troublesome innovators as the work of mere latecomer imitators. To make sure of their own calm, these smug people even took over history. They tried to turn every field of knowledge that threatened to disturb their miserable comfort into a branch of history, especially philosophy and the study of ancient Greek and Latin. By being "historically aware," they protected themselves from enthusiasm. Against what Goethe had said, they claimed that history would no longer fire people up. No, in their wish to understand everything historically, making people dull and numb became the only goal of these philosophical fans of "nil admirari," the old saying that means "be amazed by nothing." They claimed to hate every kind of fanaticism and intolerance. But deep down, what they really hated was the commanding genius and the strict, real demands of real culture. So they gathered and used all their strength wherever a fresh and powerful movement seemed likely to appear, and then

they paralyzed it, dulled it, and tore it to pieces. In this way, a certain philosophy, which hid the narrow-minded beliefs of its founder behind neat twists and fancy flourishes of language, went further and found a formula for making the ordinary and commonplace holy. It went on at length about how everything real is reasonable, and so it won the favor of the culture snob. He also loves neat twists and flourishes of language, and above all he thinks of himself as real, and treats his own reality as the measure of what is reasonable for the whole world. From then on, he began to let everyone, even himself, think things over, do research, talk about beauty and art, and especially write poetry, make music, and even paint pictures, not to mention build systems of philosophy. But all this was allowed only on one condition: that everything was done in the old way, and that no one attacked the "reasonable" and the "real," which really means no one attacked the narrow-minded conformist himself. He doesn't mind at all giving himself up now and then to the delightful, daring naughtiness of art or of doubting, skeptical history books. He doesn't underrate how charming such hobbies and entertainments can be. But he strictly keeps "the serious business of life" apart from such small, unimportant things. By "the serious business of life" he means his job, his business, and his wife and child. And among the unimportant things he counts everything that has anything to do with real culture. So, woe to the art that takes itself seriously, that knows what it has the right to demand, and that dares to threaten his income, his business, and his habits! He turns his back on that kind of art as if it were something indecent. Acting like a guardian of purity, he warns every unprotected, innocent person not to look at it under any circumstances.

Since he is so good at warning people, he is always grateful to any artist who pays attention to him and listens to his warnings. He then promises the artist he is protecting that life will be made easier for

him. As a like-minded friend, the artist will no longer be expected to create great, lofty masterpieces. Instead, his work must be one of two kinds. Either it must copy reality so closely that it is like a monkey copying people, in cozy country scenes or gentle, funny satires. Or it must freely copy the best-known and most famous classic works, though with shy, embarrassed changes to suit the taste of the times. The narrow-minded conformist may only be able to enjoy slavish copying or exact portraits of the present day. Still, he knows that the portraits of the present will only make him look good and add to the comfort of "reality." And the copies of the classics, far from hurting him, actually help build his reputation as an expert judge of classic taste, and they cause him no other trouble, since he has already made his peace with the classics once and for all. Finally, he comes up with one general, powerful catch-all word, "Health," for his habits, his ways of looking at things, his opinions, and the things he chooses to support. Meanwhile, he dismisses the pushy troublemaker who disturbs his peace by calling him "hysterical" and "sick." This is exactly how David Strauss talks. Strauss is a true example of someone who is fully satisfied with our schools and universities, and a typical narrow-minded conformist. This is how he speaks of "the philosophy of Schopenhauer," calling it "thoroughly intellectual, yet often unhealthy and unprofitable." It is truly a sad fact that intelligence should show such a clear liking for the "unhealthy" and the "unprofitable." And even the narrow-minded conformist, if he is honest with himself, will admit something about the philosophies that people like him produce: he often notices that they lack intelligence, although, of course, they are always thoroughly healthy and profitable.

Every so often, when the narrow-minded conformists are among themselves, they treat themselves to a bottle of wine. Then they start remembering things, and they talk about the great deeds of the war, honestly and without any guile. At times like these, a lot often comes

out that they would otherwise keep firmly hidden. One of them may even be heard blurting out the most precious secrets of the whole club. In fact, a slip like this happened only a short time ago to a well-known expert on beauty and art, a man who followed Hegel's way of thinking. It has to be said, though, that what set him off was rather unusual. A group of narrow-minded conformists were having a feast together to honor the memory of a true enemy of narrow-minded conformity. What is more, this man had been destroyed by narrow-minded conformity, in the strictest sense of the words. This man was Hölderlin. So, given the occasion, the art expert had good reason to speak of the tragic souls who had been shipwrecked on "reality." Here, "reality" meant the common sense of the narrow-minded conformists. But the "reality" is different now, and one might well ask whether Hölderlin could even find his way in today's great age. "I doubt," says Dr. Vischer, "whether his delicate soul could have put up with all the roughness that always comes with war. I doubt whether it would have survived all the wrong-headedness that we now see thriving everywhere since the war. Perhaps he would have given in to despair. His was one of those souls with no armor. He was the Werther of Greece, a lover without hope. His life was full of softness and longing. But there was strength and substance in his will, and his style had greatness, richness and life. Here and there it even reminds you of Aeschylus. His spirit, however, was not tough enough. He did not have the weapon of humor. He could not accept that a person may be a narrow-minded conformist and still not be a barbarian." It is not the sugary sympathy of this after-dinner speaker that matters to us, but this last sentence. Yes, they admit that they are narrow-minded conformists. But barbarians? No, not at any price! Sadly, poor Hölderlin could not make such fine distinctions. If by the word "barbarian" you mean the opposite of civilization, or maybe piracy at sea, or eating people, then the distinction is fair enough. But what the art expert clearly wants to prove to us is that we can be narrow-minded con-

formists and, at the same time, people of real culture. That is the humor that poor Hölderlin lacked, and the lack of it finally destroyed him.[7]*

[Footnote *: Nietzsche's mention of Hölderlin here is full of tragic meaning. Like Hölderlin, he too was finally destroyed and driven mad by the narrow-minded conformity of his time. Translator's note.]

On this occasion, the speaker made a second admission. He said something like this: "It is not always strength of will, but weakness, that makes us superior to those tragic souls who respond so passionately to the pull of beauty." And he said this in the name of the gathered "We," that is, the "superior ones," the ones who are "superior through weakness." Let us be satisfied with these admissions. From one of the insiders, we now have information about two things. First, these "We" stand above any passion for beauty. Second, they got to that position through weakness. In less private moments, though, this very weakness wore the disguise of a much prettier name: it was the famous so-called health of the culture snob. But in light of this very recent new statement of the matter, it would be better to stop calling them the "healthy ones" and call them the "weaklings," or, even better, the "feeble." Oh, if only these feeble ones were not in power! Why do they even care what we call them? They are the rulers, and a ruler who cannot stand being given a nickname is a poor ruler. Yes, once you have power, you soon learn to make fun of things, even of yourself. So it cannot matter very much if you give yourself away, because what could the purple robe of victory not cover up? The culture snob's strength steps out into broad daylight when he admits his weakness. The more he admits it, and the more shamelessly he admits it, the more fully he shows how aware he is of his own importance and superiority. We are living in a time of shameless confessions by narrow-minded conformists. Just as Friedrich Vischer gave us his confession

in a single word, David Strauss has handed us his in a book. And both that word and that book are shameless.

III.

When it comes to culture snobbery, David Strauss confesses it twice over: once in what he says, and once in what he does. In other words, he confesses it in the words of Strauss the believer and in the actions of Strauss the author. His book, The Old Faith and the New, is one long, nonstop confession. It is a confession first because of what it says, and second because of what it is: a book, a piece of writing. And the simple fact that he lets himself write confessions about his faith at all is already a confession in itself. It seems that anyone has the right to write the story of their life once they pass forty. Even the most ordinary person among us may have lived through things, and seen them up close, in a way that could be useful and valuable to a thinker if written down. But writing down what you believe has to be seen as a thousand times more arrogant. That is because it assumes the writer thinks his beliefs are worth something, not just the things he has lived through and studied. Now, what a careful thinker will want to know most of all is this: what kind of faith fits people of Strauss's type? And what have they "half dreamily conjured up" (p. 10) about subjects that only people with firsthand knowledge have the right to talk about? Who would ever have wanted to read the confessions of, say, Ranke or Mommsen? And these men were scholars and historians of a far higher class than David Strauss. Yet if they had ever tried to get us interested in their faith instead of their scientific research, we would have felt they were stepping outside their proper area in a very annoying way. But that is exactly what Strauss does when he talks about his faith. Nobody wants to know anything about it. The only exceptions might be a few narrow-minded enemies of Strauss's teachings. These people suspect that, underneath his teachings, there is a

hidden layer of devilish ideas. So they hope he will damage his reputation as a scholar by revealing what those ideas are. Perhaps these clumsy people found what they were looking for in his latest book. But we never had any reason to suspect a hidden devilish layer, and we found nothing of the kind. In fact, we would have been rather pleased if we could have spotted even a touch of the devil anywhere in the book. But surely no evil spirit could talk the way Strauss talks about his new belief. Actually, spirit of any kind seems completely missing from the book, and most of all the spirit of genius. Only the people Strauss calls Strauss's "We" crowd talk the way he does. And when they go on and on to us about their faith, they bore us even more than when they tell us about their dreams. That is true whether they are "scholars, artists, military men, civil servants, merchants, or landowners; whether they come by the thousands, and not the worst people in the country either!" If they don't want to stay quiet and peaceful in their towns and counties, but threaten to get loud, then we should not let the noise of them all singing together fool us. Their loudness cannot hide how poor and common the tune they are singing really is. Why should we feel better about a statement of faith just because a crowd approves of it? Especially when it is the kind of faith that, if any one person from that crowd tried to tell us about it, we would not even listen to the end, but would cut him off with a yawn? If you share a belief like that, we would say to him, then for Heaven's sake, keep it to yourself! Maybe, in the past, a few harmless people looked for a thinker in David Strauss. Now they have found the "believer" in him instead, and they are disappointed. If he had kept quiet, he would have stayed a philosopher, at least in their eyes. But now no one sees him that way. However, he no longer wanted to be honored as a thinker. All he wanted to be was a follower of the new belief, and he is proud of his new belief. By writing it down and declaring it, he imagined he was writing the official rulebook of "modern thought," and building the "main road to the future." Indeed, our

narrow-minded conformists are no longer timid and shy. They have become confident to the point of being almost shameless. Long, long ago, there was a time when the narrow-minded conformist was only put up with as something that did not speak, and that nobody spoke about. Then came a time when his rough edges were smoothed down, when people found him amusing and talked about him. Being treated this way, he slowly became a smug know-it-all. He was delighted with his rough edges and his wrong-headed, open oddities, and he began to talk for himself, in the cozy, homey style of Riehl's cozy home music.

"But what do I see? Is it a shadow? Is it real? How long and wide my poodle grows!"

Because now he is already rolling along like a hippopotamus down "the main road to the future," and his growling and barking have turned into the proud chants of someone founding a religion. So tell us, great master, is it your heart's desire to found the religion of the future? He answers: "The times seem to us not yet ripe (p. 7). It does not occur to us to want to destroy a church." But why not, great master? All you need is the ability to do it. Besides, to be completely honest about it, you yourself believe you have that ability. Look at the last page of your book. There you actually say, if you please, that your new way "alone is the future road of the world, which now only needs to be partly finished, and above all used by everyone, in order to also become easy and pleasant."

So stop denying it. The religious founder has been unmasked. The easy, pleasant main road leading to Strauss's Paradise has been built. The only thing you are not fully happy with is the carriage you want to carry us in. How modest of you! In your closing remarks you tell us: "Nor will I pretend that the carriage in which my respected readers have had to trust themselves to me meets every need... the whole way

one gets badly shaken about" (p. 438). Ah, you are fishing for a compliment, you charming old religious founder! But let us be honest with you. Suppose your reader spreads out the 368 pages of your religious handbook so that he reads only one page a day. In other words, suppose he takes it in the tiniest possible doses. Then maybe we could believe the book might do him some harm, if only because he would get annoyed when the results he was hoping for never showed up. But if he gulps it down more heartily, swallowing as much as he can in each mouthful, which is the method we would recommend for all modern books, then the drink can do no damage. After taking it, the reader will not end up feeling sick or grumpy. Instead he will be cheerful and in a good mood, as if nothing had happened. It will be as if no religion had been attacked, no main road to the future had been built, and no statement of beliefs had been made. And I truly call that a result! The doctor, the medicine, and the illness are all forgotten! And then there is the happy laughter, and the constant urge to be merry! You are to be envied, Sir. You have founded the most charming religion of all: one whose followers honor its founder by laughing at him.

IV.

The narrow-minded conformist as the founder of the religion of the future: that is the new belief stated in its strongest form. The narrow-minded conformist turns into a dreamer: that is the unheard-of event that sets apart the German nation of today. But for now, at any rate, let us be careful about this wild and fanciful excitement. After all, does not David Strauss himself advise us to be careful, in the following deep passage? Its whole tone makes us think more of the founder of Christianity than of our particular author. Strauss writes (p. 92): "We know there have been noble enthusiasts, enthusiasts of genius. The influence of an enthusiast can stir people up, lift them high, and

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have long-lasting effects on history. But we do not want to choose him as the guide of our life. He is sure to lead us astray if we do not keep his influence under the control of reason." But we know something more. We know there are enthusiasts who are not clever, who do not stir people up or lift them high, and who still expect not only to be the guides of our lives, but also, as guides, to have a very long-lasting effect on history and to rule the future. That is all the more reason to put their influence under the control of reason. Lichtenberg even said: "There are enthusiasts with no talent at all, and these are the truly dangerous people." To begin with, as far as this control of reason goes, we would like honest answers to three questions. First, how does the follower of the new belief imagine his heaven? Second, how far does the courage that the new belief gives him actually reach? And third, how does he write his books? Strauss the believer must answer the first and second questions. Strauss the author must answer the third.

The heaven of the follower of the new belief has to be a heaven on earth. That is because the Christian "hope of an everlasting life in heaven," along with its other comforts, "must disappear forever" for anyone who has even "one foot" on Strauss's ground. The way a religion pictures its heaven tells you a lot. And if it is true that the only things Christians do in heaven are singing and making music, then the outlook for the narrow-minded conformist, Strauss-style, is really not very comforting. However, in Strauss's book of beliefs there is a page about Paradise (p. 342). Happiest of narrow-minded conformists, unroll this precious scroll before anything else, and all of heaven will seem to climb down to you! Strauss writes: "We will only point out how we live, and how we have lived for many years now. Besides our jobs—and we work in all sorts of jobs, and we are by no means only scholars or artists, but also soldiers and government workers, merchants and landowners... and, as I have already said, there are not

just a few of us, but many thousands, and not the worst people in the country—besides our jobs, then, I say, we are keenly open to all the higher interests of humanity. In recent years we have taken a lively interest in the great national war and the rebuilding of the German state, and each of us has taken part in his own way. And we have been deeply uplifted by the way things turned out, as unexpected as it was glorious, for our nation that has suffered so much. To reach sound opinions on these matters, we study history, which has now been made easy even for people without much schooling, thanks to a series of attractive and popular books. At the same time, we try to widen our knowledge of the natural sciences, where there is also no shortage of sources. And finally, in the writings of our great poets and the performances of our great musicians, we find something that excites the mind and heart, the wit and the imagination, and leaves nothing more to wish for. This is how we live, and we go on our way joyfully."

"Here is our man!" cries the narrow-minded conformist in triumph as he reads this. "This is exactly how we live. It really is our everyday life."[8]* And how perfectly he understands the polite, sugar-coated language! For example, when Strauss mentions the history studies that help us form sound opinions about politics, what could he mean except our newspaper reading? When he talks about the active part we take in rebuilding the German state, surely he is only thinking of our daily trips to the beer garden. And is a stroll through the zoo not what he means by "the sources through which we try to widen our knowledge of the natural sciences"? Finally, the theaters and concert halls are described as places from which we bring home "something that excites the wit and the imagination and leaves nothing more to wish for." With what dignity and cleverness he describes even our most questionable habits! Here really is our man, because his heaven is our heaven!"

[Footnote *: This refers to a German student song.]

That is how the narrow-minded conformist shouts. And if we are not quite as satisfied as he is, it is only because we wanted to know more. The scholar Scaliger used to say: "What does it matter to us whether Montaigne drank red wine or white?" But in this more important case, how much we ought to value exact details like that! If only we could find out how many pipes the narrow-minded conformist smokes each day, as the new belief tells him to, and whether it is the Spener Gazette or the National Gazette that he likes to read over his coffee! But our curiosity is left hungry. On only one point are we given fuller information. Luckily, this point has to do with the heaven within heaven: the cozy little private art-rooms that will be set apart for the great poets and musicians. The narrow-minded conformist will go there to improve his soul. In fact, by his own account, he will even have "all his stains removed and wiped away" there (page 433). So we are led to think of these little art-rooms as a kind of bathroom. "But this only happens for a few short moments," our master sighs. "It happens and counts only in the world of imagination. As soon as we come back to harsh reality and the tight limits of everyday life, the old worries attack us again from every side." Still, let us make use of the short moments we spend in those little rooms. There is just enough time to catch a glimpse of the narrow-minded conformist raised up to godlike glory. That is, we see the narrow-minded conformist after his stains have been removed and wiped away, now a perfectly pure example of his type. Really, this chance could teach us something. If anyone has happened to fall victim to Strauss's book of beliefs, he should not put it down before reading the two extra sections at the end, "Of our Great Poets" and "Of our Great Musicians." Here the rainbow of the new brotherhood shines, like a sign of their promise. And whoever can find no pleasure in it, "for such a person there is no help," as Strauss says in another place. He might just as well say here, "he is not ready for our view." After all, are we not in the highest heaven? The eager explorer offers to show us around. He asks us to

forgive him if, in his great joy at all the beautiful things on view, he should happen to talk too much. He writes: "If I should perhaps become more talkative than seems right in this place, I ask the reader to be patient with me. For the mouth speaks what fills the heart. Let him only be sure that what he is about to read is not old material that I am taking the chance to slip in here. These remarks were written for this exact place and purpose" (pages 345 to 346). This admission surprises us a little at first. What can it matter to us whether these little chapters were freshly written or not? As if the writing itself were the point! Just between us, I would have been glad if they had been written twenty-five years earlier. Then at least I would have understood why the thoughts seem so faded and washed out, and why they smell so strongly of old relics brought back to life. But when something is written in 1872 and already smells rotten in 1872, that strikes me as suspicious. Let us imagine someone falling asleep while reading these chapters. What would he most likely dream about? A friend answered this question for me, because he had happened to go through it himself. He dreamed of a wax museum. The model authors stood there, elegantly made of wax and beads. Their arms and eyes moved, and a screw inside them squeaked along with every movement. Among them he saw something horrible: a misshapen figure, decorated with ribbons and yellowed paper, with a label hanging out of its mouth that said "Lessing." My friend went right up to it and discovered the worst. It was the Chimera from Homer, the monster made of three different animals: in front it was Strauss, at the back it was Gervinus, and in the middle it was Chimera. And the whole thing put together was called Lessing. This discovery made him scream with terror. He woke up and read no further. Truly, great master, why did you write such musty, stale little chapters?

We do learn something new from these chapters. For example, we learn that Gervinus told the world how and why Goethe was not a

genius at writing plays. We learn that in the second part of Faust, Goethe only created a world of ghosts and symbols. We learn that Schiller's Wallenstein is both a Macbeth and a Hamlet. We learn that Strauss's kind of reader pulls the short stories out of Goethe's novel the Wanderjahre "much as naughty children pick the raisins and almonds out of a tough plum cake." We learn that no play can have its full effect on stage without the element of force, and that Schiller came out of Kant's philosophy the way a person comes out of a cold-water health cure. All of this is certainly new and striking. But even so, it doesn't fill us with wonder. And as surely as it is new, it will never grow old, because it was never young. It was already old and feeble the day it was born. What strange ideas seem to come to these "Blessed Ones" of the new style, up in their heaven of art and beauty! And why can't they manage to forget a few of these ideas? Especially when the ideas belong to the same unartistic, earthbound, short-lived kind as Gervinus's scholarly thoughts, and when they so clearly look childish? But it almost seems as though the modest greatness of a Strauss and the vain unimportance of a Gervinus get along all too well together. Then long live all those Blessed Ones! And may we, the ones who were turned away, also live long, if this unquestioned judge of art keeps on teaching his borrowed enthusiasm. May he keep riding that hired horse whose gallop the honest writer Grillparzer describes so delightfully clearly, until all of heaven rings under the hooves of that clumsy, bouncing enthusiasm. Then at least things will be livelier and noisier than they are right now. At present, the cozy, slipper-wearing delight of our heavenly leader and the lukewarm fine words from his lips only end up making us sick and tired. I would like to know what a Hallelujah sung by Strauss would sound like. I think you would have to listen very carefully, or else it might sound like nothing more than a polite apology or a lisped compliment. On this subject, I could give an example that teaches us something and is a bit off-putting. Strauss strongly resented something one of his opponents did: this man

happened to mention Strauss's deep respect for Lessing. The poor man had misunderstood. True, Strauss did say that a person must have a very dull mind not to see that the simple words of paragraph 86 come straight from the writer's heart. Now, I don't doubt this warmth at all. On the contrary, the very fact that Strauss has such feelings for Lessing has always made me suspicious. I find the same warmth for Lessing, raised almost to boiling, in Gervinus. In fact, no great German writer is as popular among little German writers as Lessing is. But even so, they deserve no thanks for liking him. For what is it, really, that they praise in Lessing? One moment it is his wide range: the fact that he was a critic and a poet, an archaeologist and a philosopher, a playwright and a theologian. The next moment, "it is the unity in him of the writer and the man, of the head and the heart." That last quality, as a rule, belongs to a small writer just as much as to a great one. As a rule, a narrow head matches a narrow heart all too well, with fatal results. And as for his wide range, that is no special honor, especially when, as with Lessing, it was forced on him by bitter need. What is surprising about Lessing's fans is rather that they have no idea of the consuming need that drove him through life and into this wide range of work. They have no feeling for the fact that such a man tends to burn himself up quickly, like a flame. Nor do they feel any anger at this thought: the coarse narrowness and cowardice of everyone around him, especially the scholars of his time, so saddened, tortured, and smothered this tender and passionate person, that the very breadth he is praised for should make us feel the deepest pity. "Have pity on this exceptional man!" Goethe cries to us. "For it was his fate to live in such a miserable age that his whole life was one long fight." How can you, my fine narrow-minded conformists, think of Lessing without shame? He was ruined precisely because of your stupidity. He wore himself out struggling with your ridiculous idols and false gods, with the faults of your theaters, your scholars, and your theologians, and he never once dared to try the eternal flight he

was born for. And how do you feel when you think of Winckelmann? To turn his eyes away from your grotesque childishness, he went begging to the Jesuits for help. His shameful change of religion disgraces not him, but you. Do you dare say Schiller's name without blushing? Look at his portrait. See the flashing eyes that look with contempt over your heads, and the deathly red cheeks. Do these things mean nothing to you? In him you had such a magnificent, godlike toy that you broke it. Suppose for a moment that this harassed, hunted life could have been robbed of Goethe's friendship: then you would have been to blame for its ending even sooner. You had no hand in any of the life's works of your great geniuses, and yet you want to make it a fixed rule that no one should be helped in the future. But for every one of them, you were "the resistance of the dull world," which Goethe names outright in his epilogue to Schiller's poem The Bell. For all of them, you were the grumbling fools, or the jealous bigots, or the spiteful, selfish people. Each of them created his works in spite of you. Each of them aimed his attacks at you. And because of you, each of them went down too early, with his work still unfinished, broken and confused by the strain of the battle. And now you think you will be allowed, "as if the job had been well done," to praise such men! And with words that leave no one in doubt about whom you really have in mind when you give your praise. That is why your praise "springs forth with such hearty warmth" that a person would have to be blind not to see whom you are really bowing to. Even Goethe in his day had to cry out: "Upon my honor, we need a Lessing! And woe to all vain masters and to the whole artistic kingdom of heaven, when the young tiger, whose restless strength shows in every stretched muscle and every glance, sets out to hunt for its prey!"

V.

How clever my friend was to stop reading at that point. Thanks to that strange, dreamlike vision, he had already learned enough about Strauss's version of Lessing, and about Strauss himself. We, however, kept reading. We even asked the Doorkeeper of the new belief to let us into the holy room of music. The great master opened the door for us, walked in with us, and began listing certain names. In the end, we grew so suspicious that we stopped and stared at him. Could it be that we were being fooled by the same kind of illusion that had fooled our friend in his dream? As long as Strauss kept talking about these musicians, they seemed to us to have the wrong names attached to them. We began to think he must surely be talking about somebody else, even if he wasn't talking about mismatched ghosts. For example, he spoke about Haydn with the same warmth that had made us so suspicious when he praised Lessing. He acted like the chosen insider and priest of some secret Haydn religion. And in a discussion about string quartets, of all things, he even compared Haydn to a "good, simple soup" and Beethoven to "candy" (p. 432). At that moment, one thing, and only one thing, became certain to us: his Candy-Beethoven is not our Beethoven, and his Soup-Haydn is not our Haydn. On top of that, the great master believed that our orchestras are too good to play Haydn, and that only the most modest amateurs can do that music justice. This was more proof that he was talking about some other artist and some other kind of music, maybe something like Riehl's cozy home music.

But who on earth is this Candy-Beethoven of Strauss's? We are told he wrote nine symphonies, and that the Pastoral is "the least remarkable" of them. We are told that "each time he composed the third, he seemed driven to go past his limits and set off on a risky adventure." From this, you might guess that we are dealing with some kind of two-part monster, half horse and half rider. When it comes to a cer-

tain Eroica, this Centaur is in real trouble, because he did not manage to make clear "whether it is about a fight on an open battlefield or deep inside a man's heart." In the Pastoral, we are told, there is "a furiously raging storm." Strauss says it is "almost too unimportant" a reason to break off a dance of country people. And because of "its random link to a trivial musical idea," as Strauss so cleverly and correctly puts it, this storm makes the symphony "the least remarkable." It seems a harsher word came to the great master's mind, but he prefers to speak here, as he says, "with fitting modesty." But no, for once our great master is wrong. This time he is really a little too modest. After all, who will explain this Candy-Beethoven to us, if not Strauss himself, the only person who seems to know anything about him? And right below, he does give a strong judgment, with fitting immodesty, and it is about the Ninth Symphony in particular. He says, for example, that this symphony "is of course the favorite of a popular taste which, in art and especially in music, confuses the grotesque with genius, and the shapeless with the sublime" (p. 428). It is true that a critic as strict as Gervinus warmly welcomed this work, because it happened to support one of his theories. But Strauss is "far from looking in these doubtful works" for the good qualities of his Beethoven. "It is a pity," our great master cries, with a shaky sigh, "that such doubts force us to spoil our enjoyment of Beethoven, and the admiration we would gladly give him." You see, our great master is a darling of the Graces, the goddesses of charm. They have told him that they only walked with Beethoven part of the way, and that after that he lost sight of them. "This is a weakness," Strauss cries, "but would you believe that it can also look like a strength?" "Someone who rolls his musical idea along with pain and gasping for breath will seem to be moving the heavier load, and so will look like the stronger one" (pp. 423-24). This is a confession, and it is not only about Beethoven. It is also about "the model prose author" himself. He, the famous writer, is never left behind by the Graces. From the play of light jokes, meaning

Strauss's jokes, all the way up to the heights of serious earnestness, meaning Strauss's earnestness, they stay stubbornly by his side. He, the model author, slides his load along playfully and cheerfully, while Beethoven rolls his with pain and gasping. Strauss seems just to bounce his load on his knee like a baby, and that is surely a strength. But would anyone believe that it might just as well be a sign that something is missing? In any case, only people who confuse the grotesque with genius, and the shapeless with the sublime, could believe that. Isn't that right, you baby-bouncing darling of the Graces? We do not envy anyone the uplifting moments they may have, whether in the quiet of their own little room or in a new heaven specially furnished just for them. But of all such pleasures, Strauss's is surely one of the strangest, because he even feels uplifted by a little burnt offering. He calmly throws the greatest works of the German nation into the fire, so that he can wave their smoke like incense in front of his idols. Imagine for a moment that by some accident the Eroica, the Pastoral, and the Ninth Symphony had fallen into the hands of our priest of the Graces. Imagine he had the power to get rid of such "doubtful works" in order to keep the master's image clean. Who doubts that he would have burned them? And this is exactly how the Strausses of our time behave. They only want to know as much about an artist as fits the service of their little rooms. They only know two extremes: burning incense to something, or burning it up. They are welcome to do all this. The one surprising thing about the whole matter is that public opinion about art is so weak, so wobbly, and so easy to buy, that it happily lets these displays of poor, narrow-minded conformist taste pass by without any objection. Yes, it does not even have enough sense of humor to laugh at the sight of a tasteless little master sitting in judgment on Beethoven. As for Mozart, what Aristotle said about Plato really ought to apply here: "Unimportant people should not even be allowed to praise him." But in this matter all shame has disappeared, both from the public and from the great master's mind. He is

allowed not only to cross himself in front of the greatest and purest creations of German genius, as if he had spotted something godless and immoral in them. People actually cheer his honest confessions and his admitting of sins, especially since he never mentions his own sins, only the ones great men are supposed to have committed. "Oh, if only our great master is right!" his readers sometimes think, when a fit of doubt hits them. He himself, though, stands there smiling and sure of himself. He makes speeches, he condemns, he blesses, he tips his hat to himself. At any moment he could say what the Duchesse Delaforte said to Madame de Staël: "My dear, I have to admit that I find no one but myself always right."

VI.

A dead body is a pleasant thought for a worm, and a worm is a horrible thought for every living creature. Worms imagine their heaven inside a fat body. Philosophy professors look for theirs by digging around in Schopenhauer's guts. And as long as there are gnawing animals, there will be a heaven for gnawing animals. Here we have the answer to our first question: how does the follower of the new belief picture his heaven? Strauss's narrow-minded conformist lives inside the works of our great poets and musicians like a parasite worm. Its life is destruction, its admiration is eating them up, and its worship is digesting them.

Now, though, we have to answer our second question: How far does the courage that this new belief gives to its followers actually go? This question would already be answered if courage and showing off were the same thing. If they were, Strauss would not even lack the honest, real courage of a Mameluke, one of those fierce old warrior-slaves of Egypt. In any case, the "fitting modesty" that Strauss mentions in the passage we quoted earlier, where he talks about Beethoven, can only be a way of writing, not a real moral quality. Strauss has his full share

of the boldness that every successful hero thinks he has a right to. To him, all flowers grow only for him, the conqueror, and he praises the sun because it shines in at his window at exactly the right moment. He does not even leave the grand old universe out of his praise. It is as if the universe only now, and from now on, has been made holy enough by his praise to spin around its new center, David Strauss. The universe, he is pleased to tell us, is indeed a machine with jagged iron wheels that stamp and hammer heavily. But, he says: "We do not only find the turning of pitiless wheels in our machine of the world, but also the pouring of soothing oil" (p. 435). If the universe accepts Strauss's praise at all, it is not likely to be overflowing with thanks to this master of strange comparisons, who could not find any better images to praise it with. But what is this oil called that drips down on the hammers and stampers? And how would it comfort a worker who happened to get his arm or leg caught in the machine to know that this oil was dripping over him? Let us skip this comparison as a bad one, and look at another of Strauss's tricks, which he uses to find out how he feels about the universe. All the while, Marguerite's question from Faust, "He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me?" is on his lips. Strauss is not plucking flower petals or counting the buttons on his vest, but what he does is no less harmless, even if it maybe takes a bit more courage. Strauss wants to make sure whether his feeling for the universe as a whole has become numb or withered, so he pricks himself. He knows that you can prick a limb that is numb or withered without it hurting at all. In fact, he does not really prick himself. He picks another, more violent method, which he describes like this: "We open Schopenhauer, who takes every chance to slap our idea in the face" (p. 167). Now, an idea has no face, not even Strauss's idea about the universe. So if there is any face involved here at all, it must be the face of the man who holds the idea. The whole process can be broken down into these separate steps. First, Strauss flings Schopenhauer's book open. Then Schopenhauer slaps Strauss in the face. Then

Strauss reacts religiously, which means he starts hitting back at Schopenhauer. He insults him, talks about nonsense, blasphemy, and wild excess, and even claims that Schopenhauer could not have been in his right mind. The result of the fight: "We demand the same reverence for our universe that the faithful of old demanded for their God." Or, to put it simply: "He loves me." Our darling of the Graces makes life hard for himself, but he is as brave as a Mameluke, and fears neither the Devil nor Schopenhauer. How much "soothing oil" he must need if things like this happen to him often!

On the other hand, we can easily understand why Strauss is grateful to this Schopenhauer who tickles, pricks, and slaps him. So we are not very surprised when we find him saying this kind thing about him: "We need only flip through the pages of Arthur Schopenhauer's works (although for many other reasons we would do well not just to glance over them but to study them), etc." (p. 166). Now, who is this captain of narrow-minded conformists speaking to with these words? He has clearly never even studied Schopenhauer himself. Schopenhauer could well have answered him: "This is an author who does not even deserve to be skimmed, let alone studied." Clearly, Strauss swallowed Schopenhauer "the wrong way," and this rough coughing is just his attempt to clear his throat. But to complete his naive praising, Strauss even claims the right to give a pat on the back to old Kant. He talks about Kant's General History of the Heavens, from the year 1755, as "a work that has always seemed to me no less important than his later Critique of Pure Reason. In the later book we admire the depth of insight; in the earlier one we are struck by the breadth of observation. In the later book we can see the old man's worry about holding on to even a small amount of knowledge, as long as it rests on a firm base. In the earlier one we meet the man in his prime, full of the daring of a discoverer and conqueror in the world of thought." This judgment of Strauss's about Kant did not strike me as any more

modest than the one about Schopenhauer. In the one case, we have the little captain who cares most of all about stating even the most trivial opinion with total confidence. In the other case, we have the famous prose writer who, with all the courage that comes from ignorance, oozes his praise all over Kant. It is almost unbelievable that Strauss used nothing at all from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason while putting together his Testament of modern ideas. And the fact that he only knew how to appeal to the crudest, most down-to-earth taste must also be counted among the more striking features of this new gospel. This gospel claims to be nothing but the result of hard, steady study of history and science, and so it quietly rejects any connection with philosophy. For the conformist captain and Strauss's "We" crowd, Kant's philosophy simply does not exist. He has no idea of the basic contradiction at the heart of idealism, or of how very limited and relative all science and reason are. And it is exactly reason that should tell him how little we can ever know about things as they really are in themselves. It is true, though, that people of a certain age cannot possibly understand Kant. This is especially so when, in their youth, they understood, or thought they understood, that "gigantic mind," Hegel, as Strauss did. It is even more so if they also busied themselves with Schleiermacher, who, according to Strauss, "was perhaps gifted with too much sharpness of mind." It will sound strange to our author when I tell him that, even now, he depends completely on Hegel and Schleiermacher. His teaching about the universe, his habit of looking at things not from the view of eternity but from the view of a couple of years, his deep bows to the way things stand in Germany right now, and above all his shameless, narrow-minded optimism, can only be explained by certain impressions from his youth, early habits, and illnesses of the mind. For anyone who has once fallen sick on Hegel and Schleiermacher never fully recovers.

There is one passage in Strauss's book of beliefs where the hopeless optimism I mentioned above bursts out with all the cheerfulness of someone on holiday (pages 166 to 167). "If the universe is something that would have been better off never existing," says Strauss, "then surely the thinking of the philosopher, since it is part of this universe, is thinking that would have been better off never happening. The pessimist philosopher does not notice that he is, above all, calling his own thought bad as well, the very thought that calls the world bad. But if the thought that calls the world bad is a bad thought, then it naturally follows that the world is good. As a rule, optimism may take things too lightly. Schopenhauer's comments on the huge part that sorrow and evil play in the world are quite fitting as a balance. But every true philosophy must be optimistic, because otherwise it chops down the very branch it is sitting on." Strauss talks elsewhere about "the refutation loudly and joyfully cheered in higher circles." If this disproof of Schopenhauer is not the one he means, then I really cannot understand the dramatic language he uses elsewhere to strike at an opponent. Here optimism has, for once, made its job easy on purpose. But the master stroke was to pretend that disproving Schopenhauer was not such a hard job after all. Strauss swings this heavy load around playfully, like someone bouncing a baby, so that the three Graces who wait on this cheerful optimist can keep enjoying his tricks. The whole point of the act was to prove one single thing: that there is no need to take a pessimist seriously. Even the emptiest clever-sounding arguments become acceptable, as long as they show that a philosophy as "unhealthy and useless" as Schopenhauer's deserves only jokes and witty remarks, not proofs. While reading passages like this, the reader will fully understand a serious statement Schopenhauer made. He said that, where optimism is not just the empty chatter of people with low foreheads who store nothing in their heads but words, it struck him as not only a foolish attitude but a wicked one. To him it was an attitude full of mocking scorn toward

the unspeakable suffering of humanity. And when a philosopher like Strauss manages to turn it into a system, it becomes more than a wicked attitude. It then becomes a stupid gospel of comfort for the "I," or for Strauss's "We" crowd, and it can only make people angry.

Take, for example, the following remark about human nature. Who could read it without anger, since it is clearly just an offshoot of this wicked gospel of comfort? Strauss writes: "Beethoven said that he could never have written the words for an opera like Figaro or Don Juan. Life had not been so generous with its insults to him that he could treat it so cheerfully, or handle people's weaknesses so lightly" (page 430). But to give the most striking example of this shameless, coarse way of feeling, it is enough here to point out one thing. The first century of the Christian era was marked by a terribly serious urge to reject the world and by a movement toward holiness through self-denial. Strauss knows only one way to explain this. He supposes that there must have been an earlier period of overindulgence in every kind of sexual pleasure, which by itself led to a state of sickness and disgust.

"The Persians call it bidamag buden; the Germans call it 'Katzen-jammer.'"[9]*

[Footnote: This means the regret and sick feeling after a night of wild excess. Translator's note.]

Strauss quotes this himself, and he is not ashamed of it. As for us, we turn away for a moment so that we can get over our disgust.

VII.

The truth is, our leader of the narrow-minded conformists is brave, even bold, when it comes to words. He is especially bold when he hopes this bravery will please his fine companions, the ones he calls

Strauss's "We" crowd. So, according to him, the fasting and self-denial of the old hermits and saints was just a kind of hangover? Jesus can be described as a fanatic who today would hardly have stayed out of the madhouse, and the story of the Resurrection can be called a "world-wide deception." Just this once, we will let these views pass without objecting, because they can help us measure how much courage our "classic narrow-minded conformist" Strauss really has. First, let us hear his confession. He says: "It is certainly an unpleasant and thankless job to tell the world the truths it least wants to hear. The world would rather run its business on a lavish scale, taking in and spending money in grand style like the rich, as long as there is anything left. But if anyone adds up all its debts and worriedly points out the total, he is sure to be seen as a pushy busybody. And yet this has always been the leaning of my moral and intellectual nature." A moral and intellectual nature like that might perhaps be called courageous. But it still has to be proved whether this courage is natural and inborn, or whether it was learned and put on. Maybe Strauss only got used, little by little, to playing the part of the pushy busybody, until in time he picked up the courage that his job required. A born cowardice, which every narrow-minded conformist inherits, would fit perfectly well with this kind of development. And it is exactly this cowardice that shows through in the lack of logic in those sentences of Strauss's that took courage to say. They sound like thunder, but they do not clear the air. He does nothing aggressive. He only uses aggressive words, and he picks the most insulting ones he can find. On top of that, he uses up all his stored-up strength and energy in rough, noisy talk. Once his words have faded away, he is even more of a coward than someone who never spoke at all. Even the shadow of his actions, meaning his morality, shows us that he is a hero only in words. It shows that he avoids anything that might push him to turn his energy away from just talking and toward truly serious things. With admirable honesty, he announces that he is no longer a Christian. But he

insists he has no wish to disturb anyone's peace of mind. He seems to think it is a contradiction to get rid of one society by setting up another, when in fact there is nothing contradictory about it at all. With a kind of crude self-satisfaction, he wraps himself in the hairy coat of our scientists who trace our family tree back to the apes, and he praises Darwin as one of humanity's greatest helpers. But we are very confused when we find him building his ethics completely apart from the question, "What is our view of the universe?" Here he had a chance to show real natural nerve. He should have turned his back on his "We" crowd and built a moral code for life out of "the war of all against all" and the rights of the strong. But we fear that such a code could only have come from a bold mind like that of Hobbes. It would have had to grow from a love of truth very different from the kind that could only let itself out in angry blasts against priests, miracles, and the "world-wide hoax" of the Resurrection. Because while the narrow-minded conformist stayed on Strauss's side during these angry blasts, he would have turned against him if he had been faced with a real, seriously built system of ethics based on Darwin's teaching.

Strauss says: "I would say that all moral action comes from a person acting in line with the idea of his kind" (p. 274). Said clearly and fully, this means: "Live like a human being, not like an ape or a seal." Sadly, this command is both useless and weak. After all, how many different types are included in the group called Man! To name just two, there is the Patagonian tribesman and there is the great master, Strauss. And nobody could ever rightly dare to say, "Live like a Patagonian," and "Live like the great master Strauss"! But suppose someone made it his rule to live like a genius, meaning like the ideal example of the human race. And suppose he happened at the same time to be either a Patagonian or Strauss himself. Then what would we have to put up with from the pestering of genius-crazed oddballs? Even Lichtenberg had already talked about how they spring up like mushrooms in Germany.

With wild shouting, they would force us to listen to the confession of their latest belief! Strauss has not yet learned that no "idea" can ever make a person better or more moral. He has not learned that preaching a morality is as easy as building one is hard. His job should have been to take the signs of human goodness that already exist, such as pity, love, and self-sacrifice, and to seriously explain them and show how they connect to his basic Darwinian principle. But no. He chose to fly up into giving commands, and in that way he escaped the work of explaining. And even in his flight he was careless enough to fly right past the very basic principles we are talking about.

Strauss says: "Always remember that you are human, not just a product of nature. Always remember that everyone else is human too, and that, for all their individual differences, they are the same as you, with the same needs and claims as you have. This is the whole sum and substance of morality" (p. 277). But where does this command come from? How can it be something a person just knows by instinct? After all, according to Darwin, man really is a creature of nature. And man's rise to where he is now was shaped by completely different laws. It happened precisely because he kept forgetting that others were made like him and had the same rights as him. It happened precisely because he saw himself as the stronger one, and so slowly pushed down the weaker types. Strauss has to admit that no two creatures have ever been exactly alike. He has to admit that man's rise from the lowest animals to the lofty height of the culture snob depended on the law that each individual is different. And yet he sees no problem in announcing the exact opposite in his own law: "Act as though there were no such thing as individual differences." Where is the Strauss-Darwin morality in that? And above all, where has the courage gone?

In the very next paragraph, we find more proof of the exact point where this courage turns around and becomes its opposite. Strauss

goes on to say: "Always remember that you, and everything you see inside you and around you, everything that happens to you and to others, is not some broken-off scrap. It is not a wild mess of atoms or accidents. Instead, following eternal law, it all comes from the one first source of all life, all reason, and all good. This is the heart of religion" (pages 277 to 278). But out of that same "one first source" also flows all ruin, all things that make no sense, and all evil. And according to Strauss, the name of that source is the universe.

So how can this universe, with all the contradictions and self-destroying features that Strauss gives it, deserve religious worship? How can it be called "God," as Strauss calls it? He writes: "Our God does not, it is true, take us into His arms from the outside." (Here you expect him to go on to some rather miraculous way of being "taken into His arms from the inside.") "But He opens up the springs of comfort inside our own hearts. He shows us that although Chance would be an unreasonable ruler, necessity, meaning the chain of causes in the world, is Reason itself." (This is a mistake whose foolishness only Strauss's "We" crowd could fail to see. That is because they were raised on Hegel's worship of whatever is real as being reasonable. In other words, they were raised to treat success as something holy.) Strauss goes on: "He teaches us to see that asking for one single exception to a law of nature would be asking for the destruction of the universe" (pp. 435-36). Quite the opposite, great master! An honest natural scientist believes that the laws of nature rule the world without exception. But he takes no stand on whether these laws are morally good or wise. Whenever someone gives up that neutral stance, it is because he is thinking of the world as if it were a person, which lets reason go beyond its proper limits. Yet it is exactly at the point where the natural scientist stops that Strauss, to use his own words, "reacts religiously." He leaves the scientific and scholarly point of view behind and goes off along less honest paths of his own. With no further

proof, he assumes that everything that has happened has the highest possible meaning and worth. He assumes it was therefore planned in a completely reasonable and deliberate way, and that it even reveals an eternal goodness. So he has to defend the whole universe as good, which puts him at a disadvantage compared to someone who only needs to defend God. Such a person might, for example, see the whole of human life as a punishment for sin or as a way of being made pure. At this stage, stuck in this awkward spot, Strauss even offers a theory about the nature of reality. It is the driest and feeblest such theory ever dreamed up, and really just an unintended parody of something Lessing once said. On page 255 we read: "And there is that other saying of Lessing's: 'If God held truth in His right hand, and in His left hand only the never-ending desire for truth, on the condition of always making mistakes, and let him choose between the two, he would humbly grab God's left hand and ask for what it held, because truth belongs to God alone.' This saying of Lessing's has always been counted among the finest things he left us. People have found in it a general expression of his restless love of searching and doing. The saying has always struck me in a special way. Behind its personal meaning, I always seemed to hear a faint echo of a larger meaning, of endless importance. For doesn't it give the best possible answer to Schopenhauer's rude remark about the foolish God who had nothing better to do than turn Himself into this miserable world? What if, for example, the Creator Himself had shared Lessing's belief that struggling is better than calmly having?" What? A God who would choose to keep making mistakes, along with a striving for truth? A God who might even fall humbly at Strauss's feet and cry out to him, "Take all the Truth, it is yours!"? If ever a God and a man were foolish, it is this God of Strauss, whose hobby is to make mistakes and fail, and this man of Strauss, who has to pay for all this mistake-making and failing. Here, indeed, you hear "a faint echo of endless importance"; here flows Strauss's soothing oil for the whole universe; here you get some

idea of the reason behind all change and all laws of nature. Really? Isn't our universe more likely the work of a lesser being, as Lichtenberg suggests? A lesser being who didn't fully understand his job, so that the world is an experiment, a trial run, that is still being worked on? Then Strauss himself would have to admit that our universe is not at all a stage for reason, but a stage for error. He would have to admit that no amount of following laws can offer any comfort, since all the laws were made by a God who blunders and even enjoys getting things wrong. It really is a very funny sight to watch Strauss acting as an architect of big ideas about reality, building castles in the air. But who is this show put on for? It is for the smug and noble "We" crowd, so that they don't lose their good opinion of themselves. They may have suddenly got scared, caught among the rigid and merciless gears of the machine of the world, and be begging their leader, trembling, to come and help them. That is why Strauss pours out the "soothing oil." That is why he leads out, on a leash, a God whose passion is making mistakes. And for the same reason, he takes on, just this once, the completely unsuitable role of an architect of big ideas about reality. He does all this because those noble souls I mentioned are frightened, and because he is frightened too. And this is where we reach the limit of his courage, even in front of his "We" crowd. He doesn't dare to be honest and tell them, for example: "I have freed you from a God who helps you and pities you. The universe is nothing but a rigid machine. Watch out for its wheels, so they don't crush you." He doesn't dare to do this. So he has to call on a witch for help, and he turns to big ideas about the nature of reality. But to the narrow-minded conformist, even Strauss's ideas about reality are better than Christianity's, and the idea of a God who makes mistakes is more comfortable than the idea of a God who works miracles. After all, the narrow-minded conformist makes mistakes himself, but he has never yet done a miracle. That is why he hates the genius, because the genius is rightly famous for working miracles. So

it is very revealing to find out why Strauss, in just one passage, suddenly stands up to defend genius and the idea of an upper class of great minds in general. Why on earth does he do it? He does it out of fear, fear of the socialists. He points to Bismarck and Moltke, "whose greatness is even harder to argue with because it shows itself in the world of solid, visible facts. So there is no way around it: even the most stubborn and pig-headed of these fellows will have to lower themselves to look up a little, if only to catch sight of those grand figures, even if just as far as their knees" (p. 327). Are you, Master Thinker, maybe planning to teach the socialists the art of getting kicked? People willing to hand out kicks can be found everywhere. And you are completely right to promise those who get kicked a view of those lofty beings up to the knee. "In the world of art and science, too," Strauss goes on, "there will never be a shortage of kings whose building projects will give work to plenty of cart drivers." Fine. But what if the cart drivers start building? It does happen sometimes, great master, as you know, and then the kings just have to grin and bear it.

In fact, here is what I hate about this book. It mixes cheekiness with weakness, and bold words with cowardly giving in. It carefully weighs which sentences will impress the narrow-minded conformist, and which will calm him down and stroke him the right way. It has no real character or strength, yet it dresses up as if it had both. And its thin little bit of wisdom pretends to know everything. If I could picture young men having the patience to read this book and actually value it, I would sadly give up all hope for their future. And is this confession of miserable, hopeless, and truly shameful narrow-minded conformity really supposed to speak for the thousands who make up Strauss's "We" crowd, the people who are meant to be the fathers of the next generation? Think of a man who wants to help that next generation gain what the present one still does not have, namely a genuine Ger-

man real culture. To him, this is a horrible thing to look forward to. To such a man, the ground seems covered in ashes, and every star is hidden. Every dried-up tree and every ruined field seems to shout at him: "Barren! Abandoned! Spring can never come here again!" He must feel the way young Goethe felt when he first looked into the gloomy, godless half-darkness of the book called "The System of Nature." To Goethe, that book seemed so grey, so dark and gloomy, like a land of endless night, and so deadly, that he could hardly stand to have it near him. He shuddered at it the way a person shudders at a ghost.

VIII.

By now we should know enough about the heaven and the courage of our follower of the new belief. So we can turn to the last question: How does he write his books? And what kind of religious writings are they?

Anyone who can answer this question honestly and without bias will then face another serious problem. That problem is this: How did this little pocket-sized oracle of Strauss, made for the German narrow-minded conformist, manage to go through six editions? And he will grow even more suspicious when he hears that people really welcomed it as a pocket oracle. This happened not only among schoolteachers and scholars, but even in German universities. Students are said to have greeted it as a rulebook for strong minds. From all reports, the professors did not object to this view. Here and there, people have even called it a religious book for scholars. Strauss himself said that he did not mean his statement of faith to be only a reference book for learned and educated people. But let us stick to the fact that it was, first and foremost, a book aimed at his fellow scholars. It was supposed to be a mirror in which they could see their own way of life faithfully reflected. That was the trick. The great master

pretended to have given us a new, ideal picture of the universe. And now everyone is praising him, because each reader can imagine that he too sees the universe and life in the same way. So Strauss has seen something come true in each of his readers that he had only expected from the future. This partly explains the huge success of his book. "This is how we live, and we go on our way with joy," the scholar cries out in his book, and he is happy to see others cheering at this news. If a reader happens to disagree with the great master about Darwin or about the death penalty, it hardly matters. All the way through, the reader feels that he is breathing air he already knows, and hearing nothing but the echoes of his own voice and his own wishes. This total agreement may hurt anyone who truly cares about German real culture. But however painful it is, it is his duty to explain it as a fact without mercy, and not to be afraid of making this explanation public.

We all know the strange ways in which the sciences are practiced in our time. We all know them because they are part of our lives. And for exactly that reason, hardly anyone seems to ask what this way of doing science will mean for real culture in general. That is a fair question even if we suppose that the highest talents and the most serious effort were available everywhere to help real culture. In the heart of the average scientific person, there is a pure contradiction. (This is true no matter which examples of him we meet today.) He acts like the laziest rich man living off his money. To him, life is not a terrible and serious business. Instead, it is a safe piece of property, handed to him forever. He thinks it is fine to spend his whole life answering questions that, in the end, could only matter to someone who is completely sure he will live forever. But he owns only a few hours of life. Terrible, gaping pits surround him on all sides, frightening to look at. Every step he takes should remind him of the questions: Why? Where to? Where from? Yet instead, his heart warms to his work. Whether that work is counting the petals of a little flower

or breaking stones by the side of the road, he pours all his interest, pleasure, strength, and hopes into it. This contradiction, the scientific man, has lately rushed ahead in Germany at such a wild speed that you would almost think the world of science was a factory, where every lost minute means a fine. Today the man of science works as hard as the lowest class of slaves. His study is no longer a chosen activity. It is something he is forced to do. He looks neither right nor left, but races through everything, even through the serious matters that life brings with it. He does this with that half-tired lack of attention, and that ugly craving for rest, which is typical of a worn-out worker. This is also how he treats real culture. He acts as if his life were not only leisure, but leisure without dignity. Even in his sleep he does not throw off his burden. Like a freed slave, he still dreams of his misery, his forced hurry, and the whippings he got. Our scholars can hardly be told apart from farm workers, and where there is a difference, it does not flatter them. Those workers, in order to grow a small family property, labor hard day and night, tending their fields, pushing their plows, and driving on their oxen. Now, Pascal suggests that people work hard at their businesses and sciences only to escape the most important questions. These are the questions that press on them in every moment of loneliness or free time: Why do we live? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Strangely enough, our scholars never think about the most important question of all: Why do they do their work, why the hurry, why their painful excitement? Surely their goal is not to earn their bread or to win honored positions? No, certainly not. And yet you scholars work as hard as people who are starving and have no bread. With the greed and lack of judgment that starving people have, you even grab the dishes off the serving table of science. But if you, as men of science, handle science the way workers handle the jobs that the needs of life force on them, what will happen to real culture? Real culture has to wait for the moment of its birth and its rescue right in the middle of all this

nervous, breathless running back and forth, this messy, sprawling scientific activity.

Nobody has time for real culture. And yet, what should science make time for, if not for real culture? So at least answer us this: where does all science come from, where is it going, and what is it for, if it does not lead to real culture? Maybe it leads to a lack of culture? And we can already see the class of scholars moving dangerously far in that direction, if it is true that shallow books like this one by Strauss satisfy the level of real culture they have reached today. Because it is exactly in Strauss that we find that disgusting need for rest. We find in him that half-bored, passing attention to philosophy, real culture, and every serious thing in the world, and that habit of making easy peace with all of them. You may remember what happens at meetings of scholars. As soon as each person has finished talking about his own special field, you start to notice signs of tiredness. You see a wish to be entertained at any cost, a fading memory, and a scattered, patchy experience of life. When we listen to Strauss talk about any everyday question, whether it is marriage, war, or the death penalty, we are shocked by how completely he lacks any first-hand experience or any original thought about human nature. All his judgments smell strongly of books, and even of newspapers. Memories of things he has read stand in for real ideas and opinions. And a calm, grandfatherly tone takes the place of wisdom and mature thinking. How perfectly all this fits with the overblown, self-pleased spirit of the people who hold the highest posts in German science in the big cities! How strongly this spirit must appeal to theirs! Because it is exactly in those places that real culture is in the worst shape. It is exactly there that real culture cannot grow anew. Science makes such a noisy fuss with its preparations, and people so meekly let their favorite fields of study push aside questions that matter far more. What kind of lantern would we need here to find men who could give themselves com-

pletely to genius and truly know its depths? Where are the men with enough courage and strength to drive out the demons that have taken over our age, now that the good spirits have left it? From the outside, these places certainly seem to have all the grand show of real culture. With their impressive equipment, they look like huge weapons stores filled with giant cannons and other war machines. We see preparations going on and the hardest work imaginable, as if they were about to storm heaven itself and pull truth up from the deepest of all wells. And yet, in war, the biggest machines are the hardest to move. So genuine real culture carefully stays away from places like these. Its best instincts warn it that it has nothing to hope for there, and a great deal to fear. Because the only kind of real culture that the sore eyes and dull brains of the scholarly working class care about is the narrow-minded conformist kind, the kind whose gospel Strauss has preached. If we think for a moment about the deeper reasons why the learned working class feels so drawn to culture snobbery, we will find the road that leads to Strauss the author, who has been hailed as a model author. And from there we will reach our last and main subject.

First of all, that so-called real culture has satisfaction written all over its face. It will not allow any important changes to be made to the way German education works today. Above all, it is sure that all German schools and colleges are completely original, especially the high schools and universities. It keeps recommending them to foreigners. And it never doubts that if the Germans have become the most polished and best-judging people on earth, it is thanks to these institutions. Culture snobbery believes in itself, so it also believes in the methods and tools it has. Second, though, it leaves the final judgment on all questions of taste and real culture to the scholar. It even sees itself as an ever-growing collection of scholars' opinions about art, literature, and philosophy. Its first concern is to push the scholar to give his opinions. Then it mixes them, waters them down, and puts

them in order, and serves them to the German people like a bottle of medicine. Whatever comes to life outside this circle is either not heard or not noticed at all, or, if it is heard, it gets only half-hearted attention. This goes on until, at last, a voice comes out of the temple where the traditional, never-wrong taste is supposed to live. It does not matter whose voice it is, as long as it belongs to someone who is a perfectly typical member of the scholar tribe. From then on, public opinion has one more belief, which it repeats and repeats hundreds and hundreds of times. In fact, though, the idea that anything said from this temple about beauty and art can never be wrong is all the more doubtful. That is because we can assume that any scholar lacks taste, thought, and artistic feeling, unless it has first been proven that in his case the opposite is true. And only a few can prove this. After all, how many people who have taken part in the breathless, never-ending rush of modern science have kept that calm and brave gaze of the man who struggles for real culture, if they ever had it at all? That gaze sees even this rush we are talking about as a sign of a lack of culture. That is why these few are forced to live in an almost constant state of conflict with everyone around them. What could they do against the shared belief of thousands of people who have won public opinion over to their side and who all defend one another in that belief? What good does it do when one person openly declares war on Strauss, when a crowd has already decided in his favor? And the masses led by this crowd have learned to ask six times in a row for the master's narrow-minded conformist sleeping potion.

Suppose we simply took it for granted, right here, that Strauss's book of beliefs had won over public opinion and had been cheered and welcomed like a conquering hero. Its author might then point out to us that the many reviews of his book in the various newspapers and magazines were not all in agreement, and not even all friendly. He might add that this is why he felt he had to defend himself, in a post-

script, against some of the nastier, ruder, and more irritating of these newspaper boxers. "How can there be such a thing as public opinion about my book," he shouts at us, "if every journalist treats me like an outlaw and beats me up as much as he pleases?" This contradiction is easy to explain once you see that Strauss's book has two sides: the religious side and the literary side. Only the literary side has anything to do with German real culture. Because of its religious coloring, the book stands outside our German real culture. It stirs up hostility from the various religious groups. In fact, it stirs up hostility from every single German, since every German is born a religious sectarian of sorts, and only invents his own private belief so that he can disagree with every other belief. But when the talk turns to Strauss the author, just listen to what those religious sectarians say about him. As soon as people look at his writing, all the religious objections suddenly die down. Then the verdict comes out loud and clear, as if spoken by one whole congregation at once: "In spite of it all, he is still a model author!"

Everyone, even the most narrow-minded, strict churchgoer, pays the author the most flattering compliments. And there is always a word or two added in praise of his language, which is said to be almost as good as Lessing's, or of his light touch, or of how beautiful and accurate his views on art are. So, as a book, Strauss's work seems to meet every requirement of a perfect example of its kind. His religious opponents shouted the loudest of all, but they still make up only a tiny part of the general public. And even about them, Strauss still claims he is right when he says: "Compared with my thousands of readers, a few dozen public nitpickers are only a small, unimportant minority, and they can hardly prove that they speak for those readers. Of course, it is natural that the people who disagree make a lot of noise, while the people who agree stay quiet." So, apart from the angry bitterness that Strauss's statement of belief may have stirred up

here and there, even his most fanatical opponents agree about his skill as an author. To them his voice seems to rise up from a deep pit, like the roar of a beast, and yet they still praise his writing. That is why the way Strauss has been treated by the hired writers of the religious groups proves nothing against our claim: that culture snobbery celebrated its victory in this book. We have to admit that the average educated narrow-minded conformist is a little less honest than Strauss, or at least more careful about what he says in public. But that only makes him admire honesty all the more when he sees it in someone else. At home, or among people like himself, he may clap and cheer with wild excitement. But he takes care never to write down how completely Strauss's words match his own deepest feelings. For, as we have already said, our culture snob is something of a coward, even when it comes to the things he likes most. So Strauss, who can boast of having just a little more courage than he does, becomes his leader, even though Strauss's own courage also has very clear limits. If Strauss went past those limits, as Schopenhauer does in almost every sentence, he would lose his place at the head of the narrow-minded conformists. Then everyone would run away from him just as fast as they now run after him. Some might see this clever, if not exactly wise, moderation and this middling bravery as a virtue of the kind Aristotle described. But they would certainly be wrong. Aristotle's virtue is the golden middle between two faults. The bravery we are talking about, however, lies in the middle between a virtue and a fault. And it is exactly in that middle ground, between virtue and fault, that all the qualities of the narrow-minded conformist are found.

IX.

"In spite of it all, he is still a model author." Well, let us see! Maybe now we may be allowed to talk about Strauss as a writer of style and a

master of language. But first, let us ask whether, as a writer, he is up to the job of building his house. In other words, does he really understand how a book should be designed and put together? From this question we will be able to judge whether he is a solid, thoughtful, and experienced author. And even if we have to answer "No" to these questions, he can still, as a last way out, hide behind his fame as a model writer of prose. It is true, though, that this last talent on its own would not be enough to put him among the model authors. At most it would put him among the brilliant improvisers and show-off performers of style. Such people, when it comes to real power of expression and to the planning and shaping of a whole work, show the clumsy hand and the unsure eye of a bungler. So we ask the question: does Strauss really have the artistic strength needed to give us something that is a complete whole, or, as the Latin saying puts it, "totum ponere"?

Usually, you should be able to tell from the first rough sketch of a work whether the author pictured it as a whole. You should also be able to tell whether, with that first picture in mind, he found the right way to go about his task and to set its proportions. Suppose this most important part of the problem is solved, and the frame of the building has been given the best possible proportions. Even then there is plenty left to do. So many small mistakes have to be fixed, and so many gaps have to be filled in! Here and there, a temporary wall or floor was put in because it did the job for now. Dust and broken bits are lying all over the ground, and wherever we look, we see signs of work that has been done and work that still needs doing. The house as a whole is still dark and not fit to live in. Its walls are bare, and the wind blows in through the open windows. Now, whether Strauss has done this remaining work well, work that is necessary and very tiresome, is not what we care about right now. Our question is this: was the building itself planned as a whole, and are its proportions good?

The opposite of that, of course, would be a pile of pieces stuck together, which is the method scholars usually use. They trust that these pieces are connected to one another, and so they mix up a logical connection with an artistic one. Now, the four questions that serve as the chapter titles of Strauss's book are not connected logically. They are: Are we still Christians? Do we still have a religion? How do we understand the universe? How should we live? And we are not saying the connection is illogical just because the third question has nothing to do with the second, or the fourth with the third, or all three with the first. For example, the natural scientist who asks the third question proves his pure love of truth simply by quietly skipping over the second. As for the topics of the fourth chapter, which are marriage, having a republic, and the death penalty, Strauss himself seems to have known that linking them to the Darwinian theory he explains in the third chapter would only have muddled and confused them. That is why he carefully avoids mentioning that theory at all when he discusses them. But the question "Are we still Christians?" wrecks the freedom of the philosophical point of view in one blow, because it gives it an unpleasant religious, churchy flavor. On top of that, he completely forgot that most people in the world today are not Christians at all, but Buddhists. Why should anyone, without a second thought, jump straight to Christianity when hearing the words "old faith"? Does this show that Strauss never stopped being a Christian theologian, and so never learned to be a philosopher? Because something surprises us even more: he does not tell the difference between belief and knowledge at all. Again and again he talks about his "new belief" and the even newer science in the same breath. Or is "new belief" just a joking nod to the way ordinary people talk? It almost seems so. Every now and then he actually uses "new belief" and "newer science" as if they meant the same thing. One example is on page 11, where he asks which side, the old strict church teaching or mod-

ern science, "has more of the unclear points and shortcomings that human thinking can never avoid."

Also, according to the plan he sets out in his Introduction, he wants to reveal the proofs on which the modern view of life rests. But he takes all of these proofs from science, and in this way he acts much more like a scientist than like a believer.

So, deep down, this religion is not a new belief at all. Since it is cut from the same cloth as modern science, it has nothing to do with religion. But if Strauss still insists that he is religious, then his reasons for saying so must lie outside the limits of recent science. Only a tiny part of Strauss's book, just a few scattered pages, deals with what Strauss could fairly call a belief. That is his feeling for "the universe as a whole," for which he asks the same devotion that the old believer gave to his God. On those pages, though, he cannot claim to be fully scientific. Still, if only he could claim to be a bit stronger, more natural, more honest and open, and more truly devout, we would be satisfied. In fact, what may strike us most about him is how many artificial tricks he uses before he finally gets the feeling that he still has a belief and a religion. As we have already seen, he gets there through stings and blows, as if he had to hurt himself into feeling it. How poor and weak this emergency belief looks to us! It makes us shiver to see it.

In the plan he lays out in his Introduction, Strauss promises to compare the two faiths, the old and the new, and to show that the new one will serve the same purpose as the old one. But in the end even he starts to feel that he has promised too much. The question of whether the new belief does the same job as the old one, or does it better or worse, is dealt with almost in passing, and in an awkward hurry, in two or three pages (page 436 and following). And it is actually propped up by this dodge: "Anyone who cannot help himself in

this matter is beyond help and is not ready for our view" (page 436). How differently, and with how much deeper conviction, the ancient Stoic believed in the universe as a whole and in its reason and order! And seen this way, how does Strauss's claim to be original look? But, as we have already said, we would not care whether his belief was new or old, original or copied, as long as it was stronger, healthier, and more natural. Even Strauss himself leaves this twice-watered-down emergency belief to look after itself as often as he can. He does this to keep himself and us out of danger, and so that he can present his freshly learned knowledge of biology to Strauss's "We" crowd with a clear conscience. The more awkward he seems when he talks about faith, the rounder and fuller his voice becomes when he quotes the greatest helper of modern people, Darwin. Then he demands belief not only in the new Messiah, but also in himself, the new apostle. For example, while discussing one of the most complicated questions in natural science, he announces with real old-fashioned pride: "People will say I am talking here about things I know nothing about. Fine. But others will come who will understand them, and who will also have understood me" (page 241).

Judging by this, it almost looks as if Strauss's famous "We" crowd had a duty to believe not only in the "universe as a whole," but also in Strauss the naturalist. If so, we can only hope that a different process is needed to grow the feeling for this second belief than the painful and cruel process demanded by the first one. Or maybe, in this case, it is enough for the object of belief himself to be tormented and stabbed, so that the believers are brought to that "religious reaction" which is the special mark of the "new belief"? But then what credit would we find in the faithfulness of the people Strauss calls "We"?

Otherwise, there is a real danger that modern people will just carry on with their business, without worrying much about the new furniture of belief the apostle is offering them. That is exactly what they have

done until now, without any teaching about the reasonableness of the universe as a whole. All of modern research in biology and history has nothing to do with Strauss's belief in the universe as a whole. And the fact that the modern narrow-minded conformist does not need this belief is proved by Strauss's own description of his life, in the chapter called "What is our Rule of Life?" So Strauss is quite right to doubt whether the carriage that his respected readers have had to ride in "with him" "fulfils every requirement." It certainly does not. Modern people move forward faster when they do not climb into Strauss's carriage. Or rather, they were already getting ahead much faster long before Strauss's carriage even existed. Now, Strauss speaks about, and on behalf of, a famous "minority" which is "not to be overlooked." If it is true that this minority "attaches great importance to consistency," then it must be just as unhappy with Strauss the carriage-builder as we are with Strauss the logician.

But let us drop the question of Strauss as a logician. Maybe, from an artistic point of view, the book really is an example of a well-designed plan. Maybe it does meet the rules of beauty after all, even though it fails to meet the demands of a well-run argument. We have shown that he is neither a scientist nor a strictly correct and orderly scholar. So now, for the first time, we come to the question: Is Strauss a good writer? Perhaps the job he gave himself was not so much to frighten people away from the old faith, but to charm them with a colorful and graceful picture of what life would be like under the new one. If he thought scholars and educated people were his most likely readers, experience should have taught him something. You can shoot such people down with the heavy guns of scientific proof, but you cannot make them surrender. Yet they may give in all the faster to methods of temptation that are "traveling light." "Traveling light," and "on purpose": that is how Strauss himself describes his own book. And the people who publicly praise him do not hold back from using the same

expression about the work either. The following passage proves it. It comes from one of the least impressive of these admirers, and it simply puts the same expression in other words:

"The writing flows along in delightful harmony. Whenever it aims its criticism at old ideas, it handles the art of proof almost playfully. And with a certain liveliness it prepares the new ideas it offers so temptingly, and serves them up to simple tastes as well as to picky ones. The way it arranges such varied and clashing material is well thought out, so that every part that needs to be mentioned is touched on, without being pushed too far forward. At times the steps from one subject to the next are handled with real art, and you hardly know what to admire most: the skill with which awkward questions are set aside, or the tact with which they are kept quiet."

As the passage above clearly shows, the mind behind such praise is not as sharp at judging what an author is able to do as it is at judging what he wants to do. What Strauss wants, however, shows most clearly in his own strong, and not entirely innocent, praise of Voltaire's charms. In Voltaire's service, he might have learned exactly those "traveling light" skills his admirer talks about. That is, of course, assuming that good qualities can be learned at all, and that a schoolteacher can ever become a dancer.

Who could help feeling a little suspicious when reading, for example, the following passage, where Strauss says of Voltaire: "As a philosopher he is certainly not original, but mainly just someone who explains English research. In this respect, however, he shows that he has complete command of his subject. He presents it with unmatched skill, in every possible light and from every possible side, and he is also able to meet the demands of thoroughness, without being too strict in his method"? Now, all the negative traits in this passage could be said of Strauss. Nobody, I suppose, would claim that Strauss is original, or

that he is too strict in his method. But the question is whether we can call him "master of his subject" and grant him "unmatched skill." His admission that the book was "traveling light" on purpose makes us think that at least it was aiming for unmatched skill.

Our architect never dreamed of building a temple, or even a house. What he wanted was a kind of summer pavilion, surrounded by everything that the art of gardening can offer. In fact, it even seems as if that mysterious feeling for the universe as a whole was only meant to create a pretty effect. It is like a view of something wild and beyond reason, such as the sea, seen from the most charming and sensible of terraces. The walk through the first chapters, that is, through the gloomy theological underground tunnels with their tangled, over-decorated ornaments, was also nothing more than a trick for effect. Its purpose was to make the clean, clear common sense of the chapter "What is our Conception of the Universe?" stand out more sharply. Because right after that walk in the half-dark, and that quick look into the wilderness of the irrational, we step into a hall lit by a window in the roof. It greets us plainly and clearly. Its walls are decorated with star charts and math diagrams. It is full of scientific instruments, and its cupboards hold skeletons, stuffed apes, and specimens of body parts. But now, truly happy for the first time, we walk into the innermost room of joy where the pavilion's residents live. There we find them with their wives, their children, and their newspapers, chatting in an ordinary way about politics. We listen for a moment as they talk about marriage, the right of everyone to vote, the death penalty, and workers' strikes. We can hardly believe that anyone could run through the whole list of popular opinions so fast, like someone rattling off prayer beads. Finally, someone tries to convince us that the people living here have refined, classical taste. A quick stop in the library and the music room is enough to show us what we had expected all along: the best books were on the shelves, and the most famous pieces of

music were in the music cabinets. Someone actually played something for us. And even if it was Haydn's music, Haydn could not be blamed for the fact that it sounded like Riehl's cozy home music. Meanwhile, the host had found a chance to tell us that he agreed completely with Lessing and Goethe, though with Goethe only up to the second part of Faust. In the end, the owner of the pavilion started praising himself. He assured us that anyone who could not be happy under his roof was beyond help and not ready for his view. Then he offered us his carriage, but with a polite warning. He said he could not promise that it would meet every need, and since the stones on his road had just been newly laid, we should not mind if we got badly shaken about. Then our pleasure-loving garden god said goodbye to us with that same incomparable skill he had praised in Voltaire.

Who could still doubt that this incomparable skill exists? The complete master of his subject has shown himself. The artist-gardener traveling light has been exposed. And yet we still hear the voice of the model author saying: "As a writer, for once I will stop being a narrow-minded conformist. I will not be one; I refuse to be one! Instead I will be a Voltaire, the German Voltaire, or at least the French Lessing."

With that, we have given away a secret. Our great master does not always know which one he would rather be, Voltaire or Lessing. But under no circumstances will he be a narrow-minded conformist. If he had to, he would not mind being both Lessing and Voltaire at once. That way the old saying would come true: "He had no character, but when he wanted to look as if he had one, he put one on."

X.

If we have understood Strauss the believer correctly, he must be a true narrow-minded conformist. He has a small, dried-up soul, and his needs are those of an ordinary scholar. And yet no one would be an-

grier at being called that than David Strauss the author. He would be quite happy to be seen as naughty, bold, nasty and daring. But his dream of perfect happiness would be to find himself compared with Lessing or Voltaire, because those men were certainly anything but narrow-minded conformists. In chasing this happiness, he often seems to swing back and forth between two choices. Either he copies Lessing's brave, argumentative, cheeky temper, or he puts on the style of Voltaire, who was like a playful, free-spirited faun from the ancient world. Whenever he picks up his pen to write, he seems to be always posing for his portrait. At times his face is drawn to look like Lessing's, and a moment later it is shaped to look like Voltaire's. When we read his praise of Voltaire's style, we can almost picture him scolding the people of his own day for not having learned long ago what the modern Voltaire had to give them. "Even his strengths are wonderfully even," he says. "Simple naturalness, see-through clearness, lively quickness, charm that wins you over. Warmth and force are not missing either, where they are needed. Voltaire's deepest nature always rebelled against stiffness and putting on airs. On the other hand, if at times his wildness or passion sinks to an unpleasantly low level, the fault lies less with the writer of style than with the man himself." From this, Strauss seems only too aware of how important simplicity of style is. Simplicity is always the sign of genius, and only genius has the right to express itself naturally and innocently. So when an author chooses a simple way of speaking, this is no sign at all of common ambition. Many people know exactly what such an author would like to be taken for, and yet they are kind enough to take him for just that. The writer of genius, however, does more than show his true nature in the plain, clear form of what he says. His overflowing strength actually plays with the subject he is dealing with, even when that subject is dangerous and hard. Nobody walks stiffly along unknown paths, especially when those paths are broken all along the way by thousands of cracks and ditches. But the genius races lightly over

them, leaping with grace and daring, and looks down on the nervous, fearful steps of caution.

Even Strauss knows that the problems he is prancing over are terribly serious. He knows the philosophers who wrestled with them always saw them that way. And yet he calls his book "traveling light"! When the clever great master does his tricks in front of us, "traveling light, and on purpose," we stop noticing altogether how terrible these questions are. We forget how dark our thoughts usually become when we think about things like the value of life and what humans ought to do. Yes, he is traveling even lighter than his Rousseau. Strauss tells us people said of Rousseau that he stripped himself below and dressed himself up on top, while Goethe did exactly the opposite. It seems that perfectly innocent geniuses do not dress up at all. Maybe the words "traveling light" are just a polite way of saying "naked." The few people who have happened to see the Goddess of Truth say that she is naked. And perhaps those who have never seen her, but who fully believe those few, think that nakedness, or traveling light, is actually proof of truth, or at least a sign of it. Even this common superstition works in favor of the author's ambition. Someone sees something naked and cries out: "What if this were the truth!" Then he becomes more serious than usual. In this way the author wins a huge advantage. He forces his reader to come to him with more seriousness than the reader would bring to some other writer who is perhaps more heavily dressed. This is no doubt the best way to become a model author. That is why Strauss himself can tell us: "I even enjoy the honor, which I did not seek, of being thought by many to be a model author of prose." So he has reached his goal. Strauss the Genius goes strutting around the streets as a model author, dressed in the clothes of goddesses who travel light. Meanwhile Strauss the narrow-minded conformist, to use one of this genius's own original phrases, must at all costs be "declared to be on the decline," or "dismissed for good."

But sadly, no matter how often he is declared to be on the decline or dismissed, the narrow-minded conformist keeps coming back, and far too often. Strauss has twisted his face to look like Lessing and Voltaire, but from time to time those features have to relax and go back to their old, natural shape. The mask of genius slips off far too often. And the master's face never looks more sour, and his movements never look stiffer, than right after he has tried to make a genius's leap, or to flash a genius's fiery look. Because he is traveling light, dressed too thinly for our cold climate, he is more likely than others to catch a cold, and to catch it worse. It may seem like a terrible hardship to him that everyone notices this. But if he wants to be cured, he should be shown the following diagnosis of his case in public: Once upon a time there lived a Strauss. He was a brave, strict, and well-equipped scholar. We felt completely on his side, just as we feel on the side of everyone in Germany who tries to serve truth seriously and with energy, and to lead within the limits of their abilities. But the man who is now publicly famous as David Strauss is a different person. Maybe the theologians are to blame for this change. Either way, the way he now plays around with the mask of genius fills us with as much hatred and scorn as his earlier seriousness earned our respect and sympathy. For example, he tells us: "It would also show ingratitude toward my genius if I did not rejoice that, on top of my gift for sharp, analytical criticism, I was also given the innocent pleasure of creating art." It may surprise him to hear that, despite this self-praise, there are still people who claim exactly the opposite. They say that he never had the gift of creating art at all. They also say that this "innocent" pleasure he mentions is the least innocent thing of all, because it slowly weakened and finally destroyed a nature as strongly and deeply scholarly and critical as Strauss's. That scholarly, critical nature was the real Straussian genius. In a moment of complete honesty, Strauss himself even adds: "Merck was always in my thoughts, calling out, 'Don't make such child's play again; others can do that

too!'" That was the voice of the real Straussian genius. It was the same voice that asked him what his newest testament was worth, this innocent, traveling-light testament of the modern narrow-minded conformist. Others can do that too! And many could do it better. And even those who could have done it best, meaning thinkers far more gifted than Strauss, could still only have turned it into nonsense.

I assume you are now starting to understand what I think Strauss the author is worth. You are starting to see that I think of him as a costumed performer who wants to show off as a natural genius and a model author. Lichtenberg once said, "A simple way of writing is worth recommending, if only because no honest man trims and twists his words." But he did not at all mean that a simple style proves a writer is honest. For my part, I only wish Strauss the author had been more honest. Then he would have written in a more fitting way, and he would have been less famous. Or, if he really had to be a costumed performer no matter what, how much more he would have pleased me if he had at least been a better one, one more skilled at copying the innocent genius and the model author! Because it still has to be said that Strauss was not only a poor actor, but also a truly worthless writer of style.

XI.

Of course, Strauss deserves much less blame for being a bad writer when you remember how hard it is in Germany to become even a decent or fairly good writer. A truly good writer here is more the exception than the rule. Germany lacks the natural ground for good writing. It also lacks artistic standards, and a proper way of training and developing the art of public speaking. Look at the different kinds of speech we have: the talk of polite drawing rooms, the speech of the church, and the speech of Parliament. None of them has yet reached the level of a national style. In fact, they have not even started moving

toward any style at all. Every form of language in Germany still seems stuck in a kind of trial-and-error stage. Because of this, today's writer has, to some degree, no trusted standard to follow. So he can be partly excused if he tries to go his own way when it comes to language. As for where the present run-down state of the German language will probably lead, Schopenhauer may have put it most strongly. "If things go on as they are," he says, "by the year 1900 people will no longer understand the German classics. The simple reason is that no other language will be known except the cheap, worthless jargon of our 'noble' present day, whose main feature is weakness." And truly, if you look at the latest magazines, you will find German language scholars and grammar experts already saying that our classic authors can no longer serve as models of style. Their reason is that the classics keep using words, ways of speaking, and sentence patterns that are quickly going out of use. So, these experts say, we need to collect samples of the finest prose written by our best modern writers and offer them as models to copy, in the manner of Sander's pocket dictionary of bad language. In that book, Gutzkow, that disgusting monster of style, is presented as a classic. If we follow its instructions, it seems we are expected to get used to a whole new and amazing crowd of model authors. First among them, or one of the first, is David Strauss, whom we cannot describe better than we already have: as a worthless stylist. Now, the idea the culture snob has of a classic, standard author says a lot about his fake culture. He only shows his strength by fighting against any truly artistic and demanding style. And because he keeps up this fight so stubbornly, he finally ends up with a certain sameness in the way he writes, which almost looks like a true, unified style. So, given that everyone is allowed to experiment with the language, how can individual authors possibly find a tone that pleases everybody? What is it about them that interests everyone? First of all, it is something negative: they offend no one at all. But everything that is truly creative gives offense. Most of what a German reads each day no

doubt comes from newspapers, magazines, or reviews. The language of these papers slowly stamps itself on his brain through a steady drip, drip, drip of the same phrases and the same words. And he usually reads during those hours of the day when his tired brain is in no mood to resist anyway. So, slowly but surely, his ear for his own language gets so used to this everyday German that in the end it cannot do without it without feeling pain. But the people who produce these newspapers have, because of their job, become completely hardened to the stink of this newspaper jargon. They have truly lost all taste. Their taste buds are actually pleased by the most corrupt and random new inventions in language. That is why every fresh grammar mistake is greeted with everyone cheering in one voice, even though they are all so sluggish and sickly. With these shameless corruptions of the language, the hired hands of the newspaper world take revenge on it for the unbelievable boredom it keeps forcing on them more and more. I remember reading "an appeal to the German nation" by Berthold Auerbach. Every sentence in it was un-German, twisted, and false. As a whole, it was like a lifeless mosaic of words stuck together with a sort of international grammar. As for the shamefully sloppy German that Edward Devrient used to honor the death of Mendelssohn, I do not even want to do more than mention it. A grammar mistake, and this is the strangest part of the whole thing, does not seem like an offense at all to our narrow-minded conformist. Instead, it seems like a delightful refreshment in the dry desert of everyday German. Yet he still thinks that everything truly creative is offensive. The fully puffed-up, twisted, and worn-out sentence structure of the modern standard author, and even his silly made-up words, are not only put up with. They are counted in his favor, as the spice in his writing. But pity the writer with real character, who tries just as hard and as steadily to avoid the tired phrases of everyday talk as he does to avoid what Schopenhauer called "the overnight monster blossoms of modern ink-slingers"! When dull, overused, weak, and vulgar

phrases are the rule, and the bad and corrupt become refreshing exceptions, then everything strong, refined, and beautiful is bound to get a bad smell. It follows that in Germany, the well-known story of the normally built traveler in the land of hunchbacks keeps happening again and again. You will remember that he was insulted so shamefully there, because of his odd shape and his lack of a hump, that in the end a priest had to give a speech to the people for his sake. The priest said: "My brothers, pity this poor stranger instead, and give thank-offerings to the gods that you have been blessed with such attractive humps."

Suppose someone tried to write a proper grammar book based on today's international German style. Suppose he wanted to track down the unwritten, unspoken rules that everyone follows. He would end up with the strangest ideas about style and speech. He would find rules that are probably nothing more than memories of old school days, leftovers from punishment exercises in writing Latin, and maybe the results of reading selected French novelists, whose unbelievable crudeness any decently educated Frenchman would have every right to laugh at. Yet no thoughtful German seems ever to have stopped to think about these strange ideas, even though almost every German lives and writes under their control, as if under a yoke.

Here is an example of what I mean. One of these unwritten rules says that a writer must throw in a metaphor or a comparison every so often, and that it has to be new. But a shallow-minded writer thinks that "new" and "modern" mean the same thing. So he straight away racks his brain for metaphors taken from the technical language of railways, telegraphs, steamships, and the Stock Exchange. He is proudly sure that such metaphors must be new because they are modern. In Strauss's book of beliefs, we find plenty of these modern metaphors. He gives us a comparison a page and a half long, taken from modern road-building work. A few pages earlier, he compares the

world to a machine, with its wheels, pistons, hammers, and "soothing oil" (page 432). Then we get: "A meal that starts with champagne" (page 384); "Kant is a cold-water health cure" (page 309); "The Swiss constitution compares to the English one the way a watermill compares to a steam engine, or the way a waltz tune or a song compares to a fugue or a symphony" (page 301); "In every appeal, you have to follow the proper order of the courts. Now, the middle court between the single person and all of humanity is the nation" (page 165); "If we want to know whether a living thing that looks dead to us still has any life in it, we usually test it with a strong, even painful jolt, like a stab" (page 161); "The religious area in the human soul is like the land of the Native Americans in America" (page 160); "Experts at being holy, in convents" (page 107); "And put the total of everything above, in round numbers, on the bill" (page 205); "Darwin's theory is like a railway line that has only just been marked out... where the flags are flapping happily in the breeze." In this truly very modern way, Strauss has obeyed the narrow-minded conformist's rule that a new comparison has to be brought in every so often.

Another rule about writing is also very common. It says that passages meant to teach should be written in long sentences and stretched out into long, abstract ideas, while passages meant to persuade should be made of short sentences followed by sharp contrasts. On page 154 of Strauss's book, we find a perfect example of the teaching, scholarly style. It is a passage puffed up in the true style of the theologian Schleiermacher, and it is made to stumble along at a real tortoise's pace: "The reason why, in the earlier stages of religion, there appear many instead of this single Thing-we-depend-on, many gods instead of one, is explained in this account of where religion comes from, by the fact that the various forces of nature, or conditions of life, which make man feel that he depends on them completely, still act on him at the start with the full force of their separate characters; that he has

not yet realized how, when it comes to his total dependence on them, there is no difference between them, and that therefore the Thing-he-depends-on, or the Being it leads him to in the end, can only be one."

On pages 7 and 8, we find an example of the other kind of style: short sentences full of that fake liveliness. This liveliness so thrilled certain readers that they can no longer mention Strauss without naming him in the same breath as Lessing, the great German writer. Strauss writes: "I know very well that what I plan to describe in the following pages is known to many people as well as it is to me, and to some even better. A few have already spoken out about it. Should I therefore keep quiet? I think not. For don't we all fill in the gaps in each other's knowledge? If someone else knows more about some things, I may perhaps know more about others; while still other things I know and see in a different light. So out with it! Let me show my true colors, so people can see whether they are real or not."

It is true that Strauss's style usually keeps to a happy middle path between this kind of cheerful quick march and that other slow, lazy, funeral pace. But between two faults, you do not always find a virtue. More often you find only weakness, helpless stiffness, and lack of power. In fact, I was very disappointed when I looked through Strauss's book searching for fine and clever passages. Since I had found nothing worth praising in Strauss the believer, I had actually set out on purpose hoping to find, here and there, at least a few chances to praise Strauss the author. I searched and searched, but I never found what I was looking for. Meanwhile, though, another duty seemed to push itself hard on my mind. That duty was to list the grammar mistakes, the forced metaphors, the unclear shortcuts, the cases of bad taste, and the twisted phrases that I came across. There were so many of them that I dare do no more than pick out a few examples from a collection far too large to give in full. Through these examples, I may be able to show what it is that fills the hearts of

modern Germans with such faith in this great and charming stylist, Strauss. I mean his odd ways of saying things. In the empty, dry desert of his whole book, these oddities jump out at you as surprises. They may not be pleasant surprises, but they are painfully stimulating ones. When we read such passages, we can at least be sure, to use one of Strauss's own metaphors, that we are not quite dead, since we still react to the test of a stab. For the rest of the book has nothing in it that could offend anyone. And yet, as we have seen, being able to offend is the only quality that creates anything, and our model author has himself counted it among the true virtues. When educated people in large numbers meet extreme dullness and dryness, when they are faced with truly empty clichés, they now seem to believe that these things are signs of so-called health. On this point, the words of the ancient author of the "Dialogue on Orators" fit very well. He wrote in Latin: "illam ipsam quam jactant sanitatem non firmitate sed jejunio consequuntur." In plain words: "That very health they brag about, they get not from strength but from starving themselves." That is why they all agree in hating every kind of strength, because strength is proof of a kind of health quite different from theirs. So their one wish is to cast suspicion on everything strict and short and to the point, on every fiery and energetic movement, and on every full and delicate play of muscles. They have plotted together to turn nature and the names of things completely upside down. From now on, they want to speak of health only where we see weakness, and to speak of sickness and overexcitement where we, for our part, see real energy. And from this it follows that, to them, David Strauss is a model author.

If only this dullness were at least strictly logical! But these weaklings have lost exactly that: simple, strict thinking. In their hands, even our language has become a tangled, illogical mess. Here is a test to prove it. Let anyone try to translate Strauss's style into Latin. Remember, with Kant this can be done, and with Schopenhauer it is even a pleas-

ant exercise. The test fails with Strauss's German. That is not because his German is more truly German than theirs. It is because his writing is twisted and illogical, while theirs is noble and simple. Also, think of how hard the ancient writers worked to learn to write and speak correctly, and how modern writers don't bother. Anyone who knows this must feel, as Schopenhauer says, real relief when he can turn away from a German book like the one we are looking at and dive into those ancient works, which still seem to him to be written in a fresh, new language. "For in these books," Schopenhauer says, "I find a steady, fixed language that faithfully follows the rules of grammar and spelling all the way through. So I can give my full attention to what is being said. But in German I am always being interrupted by the author's cheek and his constant attempts to push his own spelling quirks and silly ideas, and their show-off foolishness disgusts me. It is truly painful to watch a fine old language, one with great classic works, being botched by donkeys and know-nothings!"

That is how Schopenhauer's holy anger cries out to us, and you cannot say no one warned you. Suppose someone refuses to listen to warnings like this and absolutely will not give up believing that Strauss is a model author. The only last piece of advice we can give him is this: go ahead and copy your hero. Try it at your own risk, anyway. But you will regret it, not only in the way you write but in the way you think. Then the words of the Indian prophet will come true, who said: "Whoever chews on a cow's horn chews for nothing and makes his life shorter. He grinds his teeth down, but his stomach stays empty."

XII.

To finish, we will now give our model prose writer the examples of his style that we promised and have collected. Schopenhauer would probably have called the whole bunch "new evidence adding to the worth-

less jargon of today." David Strauss may find some comfort in hearing this, if it can be called comfort at all: everybody writes the way he does nowadays, and some write even worse. Among the blind, the one-eyed man is king. In fact, we are giving him too much credit by saying he has even one eye. But we do it gladly, because Strauss does not write as badly as the worst wreckers of the German language of all: the followers of Hegel and their crippled offspring. At least Strauss wants to pull himself out of the swamp, and he is already partly out. Still, he is very far from standing on dry land, and you can still tell that as a young man he stammered in Hegel's kind of prose. Back then, maybe, something got sprained in him; some muscle must have been strained too hard. Perhaps his ear went dull, like the ear of a boy raised among pounding drums. It could no longer pick up those subtle yet powerful laws of sound, the artistic rules that every writer trained strictly on good examples is happy to follow. Because of this, as a writer of style, he has lost his most precious tools. He is doomed to lie, all his life, on the dangerous, empty, shifting sand of newspaper writing, unless he wants to slip back into the Hegelian swamp. Even so, he has managed to become famous for a couple of hours in our time. Maybe in another couple of hours people will remember that he was once famous. But then night will come, and with it, forgetting. Even now, as we write down his crimes against style in our black book, the dark cloak of evening is already falling over his fame. For whoever has sinned against the German language has spoiled something sacred at the heart of everything German. Through all the confusion and all the changes of peoples and customs, the German language alone has saved herself, as if protected by some magic spell. And by saving herself, she has also saved the German spirit. She alone is the guarantee that this spirit will live on in future ages, as long as she is not destroyed by the disrespectful hands of the modern world. "May the gods grant better! Away with you, you thick-skinned beasts, away! This is the German language, the language people use to ex-

press themselves, in which great poets have sung and great thinkers have written. Hands off!" [10]*

[Footnote *: Translator's note. At this point Nietzsche goes on to quote the passages he picked out of The Old Faith and the New to back up everything he has said about Strauss's style. But these passages, along with his comments on them, lose most of their point in English, so it seemed best to leave them out completely.]

To say it plainly: what we have seen were feet made of clay, and what looked like the color of healthy skin was only paint smeared on. Of course, culture snobbery in Germany will be very angry to hear its one living god described as a row of painted idols. But whoever dares to knock down its idols will not back away, no matter how outraged people get. He will tell it to its face that it has forgotten how to tell the difference between the living and the dead, the genuine and the fake, the original and the copy, a God and a crowd of idols. He will tell it that it has completely lost the healthy, manly instinct for what is real and right. Culture snobbery alone deserves to be destroyed. Already the signs of its power are fading. Already its royal purple robes of honor are falling off. And when the purple robe falls, the king who wore it soon falls too.

Here I reach the end of my statement of belief. It is the statement of one single person. And what can one person do against a whole world, even if his voice were heard everywhere? To use one last precious Strauss phrase, his judgment only has "that amount of personal truth which fits with a complete lack of objective proof." Isn't that right, my dear friends? In the meantime, cheer up. For now, let's leave it at this "amount which fits with a complete lack"! For now! That means: for as long as people think it is out of step with the times to do something that in reality always fits every time, and is more urgent now than ever. I mean... telling the truth.[11]*

[Footnote: A note from the translator. Every quotation from The Old Faith and the New that appears in the translation above was either copied directly from Mathilde Blind's English translation (published by Asher and Co. in 1873), or was adapted from that translation.]

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Richard Wagner in Bayreuth

I.

For an event to be great, two things have to come together: the high feeling of the people who do it, and the high feeling of the people who watch it. No event is great all by itself. That is true even if whole groups of stars vanish, several nations are wiped out, huge empires are founded, or wars are fought at the cost of enormous strength. History blows over things like these as easily as the wind blows over tufts of wool. But it also often happens that a powerful man strikes a blow that lands on a hard, stubborn stone and does nothing. You hear a short, sharp crack, and then it is all over. History can say little or nothing about failed attempts like that. That is why everyone who sees an event coming feels worried and wonders whether the people about to see it will be worthy of it. This back-and-forth between an act and how people receive it is always taken into account whenever anything, big or small, is going to be done. Anyone who wants to give something away has to make sure he finds people who will do justice to what his gift means. That is why even the work of a great man is not always great if it is short, fails, or bears no fruit. When he did it, he must have missed the fact that it was not truly needed. He must have been careless about his aim, and he cannot have picked and settled on the right time carefully enough. So chance took control over him. Because greatness is very closely tied to the instinct that sees the right moment to act.

So we leave it to those who doubt that Wagner can see the right time to act to worry and fret about whether what is now happening in Bayreuth is truly timely and needed. We are more confident. To us it is clear that he believes as strongly in the greatness of what he is

doing as he does in the greatness of feeling of those who will watch it. So whether there are many of them or few, everyone who gives Wagner this faith should feel deeply honored. Because Wagner himself told us that not everyone gave him this faith. Not the whole age, and not even the whole German people as they are today. He said this in his dedication speech on the 22nd of May, 1872, and not one of us could honestly and convincingly tell him otherwise. He said: "You were the only ones I could turn to when I looked for people I thought would support my plans. You are the closest personal friends of my own special art, my work and my efforts. Only you could I invite to help me with my work, so that it could be shown pure and complete to those who truly care about my art. Up to now, they have only been able to see it in a twisted and watered-down form."

One thing is certain: in Bayreuth, even the audience is a sight worth seeing. Imagine the spirit of some sharp-eyed wise man coming back after being gone for a hundred years, and comparing the most striking movements in today's world of real culture. He would find a lot to interest him there. Think of someone swimming in a lake who runs into a stream of warm water flowing from a hot spring. In the same way, in Bayreuth he would surely feel as if he had suddenly dived into warmer, gentler water. He would tell himself that this warmth must come from a faraway and deeper source, because the water all around, which in any case has a more ordinary origin, cannot explain it. In this way, everyone who takes part in the Bayreuth festival will seem like people out of step with the times. The reason they exist, and the forces that seem to explain them, lie somewhere else. Their home is not in the present age. I see more and more clearly that the scholar, as long as he belongs completely to his own day, can only take in what Wagner does and thinks through parody, meaning mocking imitations. And since everything gets mocked these days, he will even have the Bayreuth event shown to him through the joking art critics,

whose slide shows are anything but magical. And we should be grateful if they stop at mockery. Because mockery gives an outlet to a spirit of distance and hostility that might otherwise find a worse way to express itself. Now, the sharp-eyed wise man I mentioned could not fail to notice how unusually sharp and tense these contrasts are. People who treat slow, step-by-step development as a kind of moral law are bound to be a bit shocked when they see someone who, in a single lifetime, manages to create something completely new. They are slowpokes themselves and insist on slowness as a rule, so naturally they are annoyed by someone who strides quickly ahead, and they wonder how in the world he does it. There were no warning signs, no in-between stages, and no compromises before the Bayreuth project. Nobody but Wagner knew the goal or the long road that would lead there. In the world of art, it is like the first voyage all the way around the globe. And on this voyage, what was discovered was not only what seems to be a new art, but Art itself. Next to this, all modern arts have become almost worthless. They are luxury arts that have gone bad because they were cut off from everything else. The same goes for the foggy and muddled memories of a real art that we modern Europeans get from the Greeks. Let them rest in peace, unless they can now shine on their own in the light of a new understanding. Time has run out for a lot of things. This new art is like a fortune-teller who sees ruin coming, and not only for art. Her warning voice must fill our whole current civilization with terror the moment the laughter caused by its mockeries dies down. Let it laugh and have fun a little while longer!

As for us, the followers of this reborn art, we will have the time and the wish to think, and to think deeply. All the talk and noise about art that civilization has made so far must seem like shameless pushiness. Everything tells us that it is our duty to be silent, like the five years of silence that the followers of Pythagoras kept. Which of us has not

dirtied his hands and his heart in the disgusting worship of modern so-called culture? Which of us can get by without water to wash himself clean? Who does not hear the voice that calls out, "Be silent and be cleansed"? Be silent and be cleansed! Only the honor of being among those who listen to this voice will give even us the high point of view we need to see the event at Bayreuth. And the great future of this event depends on that high point of view alone.

It was a gloomy, cloudy day in May 1872. The foundation stone had just been laid on the hill at Bayreuth, while the rain poured down. Afterward Wagner rode back to town with a few of us. He was unusually quiet, and his eyes had a look that is hard to describe, the look of someone who has turned his attention deep inside himself. That day happened to be the first day of his sixtieth year, and his whole past now seemed like one long preparation for this great moment. People generally agree that in times of great danger, or at the turning points and high points of their lives, people see both the oldest and the newest events of their lives with unusual sharpness. In one quick inner glance they get a kind of wide view of many years, with every event shown truthfully. What, for example, must Alexander the Great have seen in the moment when he had Asia and Europe drink from the same cup? But what went through Wagner's mind that day, how he became who he is and who he will become, only those of us closest to him can imagine. We can follow him, up to a point, as he looks into himself. And only by seeing through his eyes can we understand his great work, and with that understanding promise that it will bear fruit.

II.

It would be strange if the thing a person did best and liked doing most could not be seen in the overall shape of their life. With very gifted people there is even more reason to think so. Their lives will

mirror their character, as everyone's does, but above all their lives will mirror their mind and their most personal tastes. The life of a poet who writes long heroic stories will have a touch of the heroic story in it. From all accounts this was true of Goethe, whom the Germans quite wrongly saw only as a writer of short songlike poems. In the same way, the life of a playwright will probably be dramatic.

There is no ignoring the dramatic side of Wagner's growth, starting from the moment when his main passion became aware of itself and took over his whole being. From then on, there is no more fumbling around, wandering off, or sending out side branches. Even over his most twisting detours and side trips, and over the often odd way he arranged his plans, one single law and one single will can be seen in charge. That will explains what he did, however strange the explanation may sometimes seem. But there was also a time before the drama began in Wagner's life, his childhood and youth, and you cannot look at it without finding countless puzzles. In this period there seems to be no sign yet of the man he would become. Looking back now, what one might take as a promise of his future greatness is really just a set of traits side by side that cause more alarm than hope. He had a restless, easily excited spirit, nervously eager to start a hundred things at once. He loved intense, almost unhealthy states of high emotion. And at any moment he could swing completely from calm, deep thinking to wildness and noise. In his case no family background or inherited tradition pushed him to study one particular art with steady effort. Painting, writing verse, acting, and music were all just as open to him as studying and becoming a scholar. Someone looking only at the surface of this stage of his life might even decide he was born to be an amateur who dabbles in everything. The small world he grew up in was not the kind of place we would pick as a home for an artist. He was always in danger of catching that risky, scattered habit of mind where a person tries a little of everything. He was also in danger of

the laziness that comes from knowing bits and pieces of everything, which is so typical of university towns. His feelings were easily stirred but poorly satisfied. Wherever the boy turned, he was surrounded by a remarkable bustle of people trying to seem learned. The flashy theaters made a silly contrast to all that, and the enchanting sounds of music made a confusing one. Now, to anyone who looks at things in comparison, it must seem strange that a modern person with exceptional talent is so rarely blessed, as a child and young person, with innocence and simple selfhood. Such a person is hardly able to have these qualities at all. In fact, people of rare talent, like Goethe and Wagner, much more often reach innocence as grown men than in the tender years of childhood and youth. This is especially true of the artist. He is born with an unusually strong ability to imitate, so he falls victim to the unhealthy many-sidedness of modern life, as if to a dangerous childhood illness. As a child he will be more like an old man. The amazingly accurate and original picture of youth that Wagner gives us in the character Siegfried, in The Ring of the Nibelung, could only have been imagined by a grown man, and by one who found his own youthfulness only late in life. Wagner's maturity, like his teenage years, also came late. So in this way alone he is the exact opposite of the kind of person who develops early.

When his moral and mental strength finally showed itself, it was like the opening scene of the drama of his soul. And how different everything became then! It seems as if his nature was made simpler in one terrible blow, and split into two drives, or two areas, that pulled against each other. From deep inside him there pours out a passionate will. Like a fast mountain stream, it tries to force its way through every path, gorge, and crack, looking for light and power. Only a force that was completely free and pure was strong enough to steer this will toward everything good and helpful. If it had been joined to a narrow mind, a will with such a bossy and endless hunger might have led to

disaster. In any case, a way out into the open had to be found for it as fast as possible, so it could rush out into fresh air and sunshine. High hopes that keep failing end up turning bad. Sometimes a person does not have the means to succeed because of a harsh fate, and not because he lacks strength. But if someone in that situation cannot let go of his hopes, even though he lacks the means, he will only grow bitter, and then touchy and intolerant. He may blame other people for his failure. In a fit of anger, he may even blame the whole world. Or he may stubbornly turn down hidden side paths and lonely lanes, or turn to violence. This is how noble people, on their way to the highest goals, can turn wild. Even among those who are only looking for their own moral purity, like monks and hermits, there are men who have been worn down and eaten up by failure until they became savage and sick beyond hope. But there was a spirit full of love and calm faith, full of goodness and endless tenderness. It was against all violence and all self-destruction, and it hated to see a soul in chains. And it was this spirit that showed itself to Wagner. It hovered over him like a comforting angel. It covered him with its wings and showed him the right path. Here we bring the other side of Wagner's nature into view. But how can we describe this other side?

The characters an artist creates are not the artist himself. Still, the whole line of these characters, which he clearly cares about deeply, must show something of who he is. So try to remember Rienzi, the Flying Dutchman and Senta, Tannhäuser and Elizabeth, Lohengrin and Elsa, Tristan and Marke, Hans Sachs, Wotan and Brünnhilde. All these characters are linked by a hidden current of morality that makes them nobler and wider. It flows through all of them and becomes purer and clearer as it goes on. And here we step, with respect and care, into the most hidden growth inside Wagner's own soul. In what other artist do we find anything like this, to the same degree? It is true that Schiller's characters, from The Robbers to Wallenstein and

William Tell, also become nobler as they go, and also show something of how their author grew. But with Wagner the standard is higher, and the distance traveled is much greater. In The Ring of the Nibelung, for example, in the scene where Brünnhilde is woken by Siegfried, I hear the most moral music I have ever heard. Here Wagner reaches such a high level of holy feeling that our minds drift, without our meaning to, to the shining ice and snow peaks of the Alps, to find something to compare it with. Nature shows herself here so pure, so alone, so out of reach, so innocent, and so bathed in rays of love, that clouds and storms, and even grandeur itself, seem to lie below her. Now, looking down from this height at Tannhäuser and the Flying Dutchman, we start to see how the man in Wagner developed. We see how restless and gloomy his beginning was. We see how stormily he tried to satisfy his desires, to gain power, and to taste wild pleasures that he often ran away from in disgust. We see how he wanted to throw off a burden, to forget, to say no, and to give up everything. The whole flood rushed first into this valley, then into that one, and filled even the most hidden cracks and corners. In the darkness of these half-buried upheavals, a star appeared. It glowed high above him with a sad, fierce brightness. As soon as he recognized it, he gave it a name: loyalty, unselfish loyalty. Why did this star seem to him the brightest and purest of all? What secret meaning did the word "loyalty" have for his whole being? For he has carved its image and its questions into all his thoughts and works. His works hold almost a complete set of the rarest and most beautiful examples of loyalty: of brother to sister, of friend to friend, of servant to master; of Elizabeth to Tannhäuser, of Senta to the Dutchman, of Elsa to Lohengrin, of Isolde, Kurvenal, and Marke to Tristan, of Brünnhilde to Wotan's most secret wishes, and many more. It is Wagner's most personal and private experience. He honors it like a religious mystery, and he calls it loyalty. He never gets tired of breathing it into hundreds of different characters, and of giving it the very highest and best that is in him, because his gratit-

ude overflows. In short, it is his recognition that the two sides of his nature stayed loyal to each other. Out of free and unselfish love, the creative, innocent, and brilliant side faithfully kept pace with the dark, stubborn, and domineering side.

III.

How these two forces inside him related to each other, and how one gave way to the other, was the one big thing he needed in order to stay fully and truly himself. At the same time, this was the only thing he could not control. He could only keep watch over it, while the temptation to be unfaithful to himself, and the dangers that came with it, pressed on him more and more. The uncertainty that came from this is a huge source of suffering for anyone who is still growing and taking shape. Each of his drives kept trying to climb to limitless heights. And each of his abilities to enjoy life seemed to want to break away from the others, so it could find satisfaction on its own. The stronger and wilder they were, the more terrible the uproar, and the more bitter the fight among them. On top of that, chance and life itself stirred up in him a hunger for power and glory. But more often he was tormented by the harsh need simply to make a living, while all around him there were obstacles and traps. How can anyone stay faithful in such a situation, and stand completely firm? This doubt often weighed him down. And he expressed it the way an artist expresses doubt: in works of art. Elizabeth, for example, can only suffer, pray, and die. Through her loyalty she saves the unfaithful, uncontrolled man, though not in this life. Every true artist who has to live in these modern times finds despair and danger scattered along his path. He has many ways to win honor and power. Peace and comfort keep offering themselves to him. But they come only in the form that modern people value, and to an honest artist that form is as deadly as poison gas in a mine. In this temptation, and in the act of fighting it,

lie the dangers that threaten him. These dangers come from his disgust at the ways modern life offers to gain pleasure and respect, and from the anger he feels at the selfish comfort of modern society. Picture Wagner holding an official job, for example as the music director at public theaters and court theaters. He did hold both of these jobs. Think how he, a serious artist, must have fought to bring seriousness into the very places that, to suit modern empty custom, are set up almost on purpose to be shallow, so that they appeal only to shallow people. Think how he must have succeeded in part, only to fail overall. Think how disgust must have followed close behind him, even though he kept trying to run from it. Think how he never found a safe harbor where he could take shelter, and how he always had to go back to the drifters and outcasts of our society, as one of them himself. Whenever he broke free from a job or position, he seldom found a better one to replace it. More than once, his restlessness brought him nothing but hardship. So Wagner kept changing the people around him, his home, and even his country. And when we understand what kind of circles he ended up in, we can hardly imagine how he was able to put up with them for very long. The bigger part of his past seems wrapped in a thick fog. For a long time he seems to have had no larger hopes at all, only hopes for the next day. And so, even though he had no faith in the future, he was not driven to despair. He must have felt like someone walking through the night, worn out, irritated from lack of sleep, trudging along under a heavy load. Such a traveler, far from fearing that death might suddenly come, actually longs for it, as something wonderfully sweet. His load, the road, and the night would all vanish! That thought tempted him. Again and again, lifted up by his short-lived hopes, he threw himself back into the chaos of life and left all his gear behind. But the way he did this, without any sense of limits, showed how weak a grip his hopes really had on him. They were only stimulants he reached for in an emergency. The clash between what he longed for and his partial

or complete inability to make it happen tormented him like a constant thorn in his side. Made furious by never-ending hardship, his imagination slid into wild excess whenever his need was eased for a moment. Life kept getting more and more complicated for him. But the tricks and methods he discovered in his art as a dramatist kept getting more inventive and bold. Even so, these were little more than obvious stage tricks and quick fixes, which were made up only for the moment and fooled people only for the moment. Such ideas flashed into his mind and were used up just as fast. If you look at Wagner's life closely and without any bias, then, to borrow one of Schopenhauer's phrases, you could say it was largely a comedy, even a farce. He was aware, for whole stretches of his life, of this undignified side to it. And he, perhaps more than anyone else, could only breathe freely in lofty, even more than lofty, heights. What this artist must have felt, only a thinker can begin to imagine.

Wagner lived this kind of life. To feel the pity, awe, and admiration it deserves, you would need to hear it described in full detail. And in the middle of it all, he developed a talent for learning things. Even for a German, a son of the nation that is more learned than any other, this talent was truly extraordinary. But this talent brought Wagner yet another danger. It was a bigger danger than the one that came from a life that seemed to have no support and no rules, a life pushed this way and that by confusing illusions. Wagner started out as a beginner testing his strength. He ended up as a complete master of music and of the theater. He also invented a great many of the technical groundwork needed to put art on stage. No one will deny him the glory anymore of having given us the highest example of grand artistic performance on a large scale. But he became more than this. And to grow that far, he had to reach the highest level of real culture through his studies, just like anyone else in his position would. And he did this wonderfully! It is a joy to follow how he moved forward. Material

seemed to come to him from every side and sink into him. And the bigger and heavier the building made of all this material became, the stronger and stiffer the arch of the main, organizing idea that held it up. And yet it has rarely been harder for any man to get into the sciences and the arts than it was for Wagner. It was so hard that he almost had to clear his own path to reach them. Think of all he became. He brought simple drama back to life. He discovered the place art should have in a true human society. He was a poet who explained the ways people saw life in the past. He was a philosopher, a historian, a thinker about beauty, and a critic. He was a master of languages. He studied myths and he wrote myths. He was the first to gather all these wonderful and beautiful works from ancient times into a single Ring, and he carved the ancient letters of his own thoughts onto it. What a huge amount of knowledge Wagner must have collected and kept under his control to become all that! And yet this mass of material could no more slow down his will than a single detail, however tempting, could pull him off his path. To fully understand how unusual this was, we should compare him with Goethe. As a student and as a wise man, Goethe was most like a huge river system. Such a river does not pour all its water into the sea. It uses up as much water along the way, at all its bends and turns, as it finally empties out at its mouth. It is true that a nature like Goethe's both has and creates more pleasure than any other. There is more gentleness in it, and a noble kind of wastefulness. Wagner's power, on the other hand, with its direction and its speed, sometimes makes people want to be afraid and run away. But let anyone be afraid who wants to. We will only grow braver, because we get to stand face to face with a hero who, when it comes to modern culture, "has never learned what fear means."

But he has also never learned to look for rest in history and philosophy. Nor has he picked up from them those quiet influences that tend to freeze a person's will to act, or make him too soft. Neither the

artist who creates nor the artist who fights inside him was ever pulled away from his goal by learning and real culture. As soon as his urge to build takes over, history becomes soft clay in his hands. Then he treats it differently from any scholar. His way is closer to how the ancient Greeks treated their myths. In other words, history is something he can shape and write poems about. Of course he does this with love and a fitting respect, but still with the full right of a creator to do as he chooses. And it is exactly because history is more flexible and changeable than a dream to him that he can give one single, personal story the features of a whole age. That way he tells his story with a vividness that historians simply cannot reach. What work of art of any kind has ever shown the body and soul of the Middle Ages as completely as Lohengrin? And won't The Mastersingers keep teaching people about the nature of Germany's soul, even in the most distant ages to come? Won't they do even more than teach people about it? Won't they show its very ripest fruit? That fruit is the spirit that always wants to improve things rather than tear them down. Even though this spirit lies on a wide, comfortable bed, it has not forgotten how to put up with the noblest kind of discomfort when a worthy and new deed has to be done.

And it was exactly this kind of discomfort that Wagner always felt pulled toward when he studied history and philosophy. In them he found weapons and suits of armor, but more than that, he felt an inspiring breath that seemed to rise from the graves of all the great fighters, sufferers, and thinkers. Nothing sets a person apart from the usual pattern of his time more than the way he uses history and philosophy. As people see things today, history seems to have been given one job: to let modern man catch his breath while he rushes, panting and straining, toward his goal, so that for a little while he can imagine he has slipped off his leash. Think of Montaigne, who lived through the chaos of the Reformation. He was a man who quietly

made peace with himself inside, calmly withdrew into himself, and caught his breath. That is how his best reader, Shakespeare, understood him. And that is what history is to the modern spirit today. For a whole century, the Germans have given themselves over especially to the study of history. This only goes to show that they are the force that holds back, slows down, and calms things in the busy life of modern society. Some people, of course, will count this in their favor. But on the whole, it is a dangerous sign when the mind of a nation prefers to turn toward the study of the past. It is a sign of fading strength, of decline and decay. It shows that the people are dangerously close to falling victim to the first fever that happens to be going around, including the fever of politics. In the history of modern thought, our scholars are an example of this weakness, standing against every effort to reform or to change things in a big way. The task they have chosen for themselves is not the noblest one. They have mostly been happy just to secure a comfortable, smug kind of happiness for people like themselves, and not much more. Every bold, independent step forward leaves them limping behind, even though such a step does not get ahead of history at all. History has very different powers, powers that only people like Wagner have any idea of. But history needs to be written in a much more serious and stern spirit, by much stronger researchers, and with much less optimism than it has been so far. In fact, it needs to be handled completely differently from the way German scholars have handled it up to now. In all their works, there is a constant urge to make things look prettier, to give in, and to be satisfied, and they always seem to approve of whatever happened. It is rare for one of them to suggest that he is satisfied only because things could have turned out worse. Most of them believe, almost without thinking, that everything turned out for the best simply because it happened the way it did, and only once. History is always secretly a Christian argument that God's plan is good. If it were not, and if it were written with more fairness and

deeper feeling, it would be the very last thing on earth to be used the way it is used now: as a drug to dull people against everything new and everything that shakes things up. Philosophy is in the same trouble. All that most people want from it is that it teach them to understand rough facts, very rough facts, so that they can then fit themselves to them. And even its finest teachers push its sleep-making, comforting powers so much to the front that everyone who loves sleeping and lazing around must think that their goal and the goal of philosophy are the same. For my part, the most important question philosophy has to answer seems to be this: how far have things taken on a fixed shape that cannot be changed? And once that question is answered, I think philosophy has the duty to move on, without hesitating and with courage, to the job of improving the part of the world that has been found to still be open to change. And real philosophers do in fact teach this themselves, because they work at trying to change people's views, which change very easily, and they do not keep their opinions to themselves. True followers of true philosophies teach this as well. Like Wagner, they know how to draw from their teacher's ideas a firmer, more unbending will, rather than a drug or a sleeping potion. Wagner is most like a philosopher exactly where he is most powerfully active and heroic. It was as a philosopher that he walked without fear, not only through the fire of different philosophical systems, but also through the fog of science and scholarship, while always staying true to his highest self. And it was this highest self that demanded from his many-sided spirit works as complete as his were. It was this highest self that told him to suffer and to learn, so that he could create such works.

IV.

The story of how real culture has grown since the time of the Greeks is actually quite short. That is, it is short if we only count the ground

it truly gained, and leave out the times when people stood still, slid backwards, hesitated, or wandered off course. The most important event is still the double task of Alexander the Great: spreading Greek ways across the world, and, to make that possible, mixing Eastern ways into Greek culture. The old question of whether a foreign way of life can be planted in new soil is still the problem that modern nations keep trying, and failing, to solve. Until now, the course of history has been driven by these two forces, Greek and Eastern, pushing back and forth against each other in a kind of rhythm. Christianity, for example, looks like something that came out of the ancient East. People thought it through and followed it to its final conclusions with almost excessive thoroughness. As its influence began to fade, the power of Greek culture came back to life. Now we are seeing things so strange that they would just hang in the air as unsolved puzzles, unless we could reach back across a huge gap of time and show how they match similar things in late Greek culture. For instance, there is so much in common between Kant and the early Greek thinkers of Elea, between Schopenhauer and Empedocles, and between Aeschylus and Wagner, that it strikes you sharply how relative all our ideas about time really are. It even seems as if many different things are really one piece, and time is only a cloud that makes it hard for our eyes to see that they are one. In the history of the exact sciences, we may feel most strongly how closely we are tied to the days of Alexander and ancient Greece. It is as if the pendulum of history has simply swung back to the point where it started before it swung out into a distant and mysterious unknown. The picture of our own times is not new at all. To someone who studies history, it always feels like seeing an old, familiar face whose features he recognizes. In our time, the spirit of Greek culture is scattered everywhere. All kinds of forces are crowding against each other, and the products of modern art and science are being passed around like money to trade. Meanwhile, the pale outline of the Greek spirit is starting to appear faintly in the distance, like the

first light of dawn. The earth, which until now has had more than enough of Eastern ways, is beginning to long for the Greek spirit again. Anyone who wants to help her with this will need to be able to act fast and have wings on his heels, like the messenger god. He will have to bring together the huge number of scientific facts, many still undiscovered, and the many clashing kinds of talent, so that he can scout out and govern this whole enormous field. What we need now is a generation of binders of cultures, the opposite of Alexander. They must have the greatest strength to gather up the separate threads of the cloth, tie them together, and join them, so they do not get scattered to the four winds. The goal is not to cut the Gordian knot of Greek culture the way Alexander cut his famous knot with a sword, and then leave the loose ends flapping in every direction. The goal is the opposite: to tie it back together after it has come undone. That is our job today. In Wagner I see one of these binders of cultures. He fastens and locks together everything that is isolated, weak, or broken in any way. If I may use a medical word, he has an astringent power: like a medicine that draws things tight, he pulls together what has fallen apart. And because of this, he is one of the greatest forces for real culture in his time. He is a master of art, religion, and the old stories and traditions of the people. Yet he is the opposite of a person who just knows a bit of everything, or who only collects and sorts things into categories. He builds something with the material he gathers, breathes life into it, and is one who makes the world whole. We must not let ourselves be pulled away from this idea by comparing the great task his genius gave him with the much smaller, more immediate task that people today usually connect with Wagner's name. People expect him to reform the world of the theater. But even if he succeeds at that, how much would that have done toward reaching that higher, more distant goal?

But even this smaller reform of the theater would change and reshape modern people too. Everything in this world is so closely connected that if you pull out even one small rivet from the frame, the whole building cracks and falls apart. What we say here about Wagner's work may sound exaggerated, but it would be just as true of any other real reform. It is completely impossible to bring back the art of drama in its purest and highest form without changing things everywhere: in the customs of the people, in the State, in education, and in the way people deal with each other. Once love and justice have become strong in one area of life, namely in art, they have to spread their influence around them, because that is their inner nature. They can never go back to the stiff stillness they had before, like a butterfly that cannot crawl back into its cocoon. Just to understand how far the way the arts relate to life shows that they are in decline, and how far our theaters are a disgrace to the people who build them and the people who go to them, we would have to learn everything all over again. We would have to see what is normal and everyday as something strange and complicated. Think of what we find: a remarkable lack of clear judgment; a badly hidden hunger for pleasure and entertainment at any price; scholarly fussiness; puffed-up airs of importance; and people who are supposed to represent art playing around with its seriousness. Then there is the crude greed and money-chasing of the people who run the business. And there is the empty-headed thoughtlessness of high society, which only thinks about the people when the people help or block its plans, and which goes to theaters and concerts without a single thought about its duties. All of this makes up the choking, poisonous air of art in our modern times. But once people like our men of real culture have gotten used to this air, they believe it is what keeps them healthy. If, for some reason, they had to do without it for a while, they would feel sick right away. In fact, there is only one quick way to convince yourself how cheap, bizarre and muddled our theater system is, and that is to compare it with the

theater that once flourished in ancient Greece. If we knew nothing about the Greeks, it might be impossible to attack our present situation at all. The objections that Wagner was the first to raise on such a large scale would have been seen as the dreams of people who only feel at home in strange, faraway places. People would have answered: "For human beings as we find them today, this modern kind of art does its job and suits them. And human beings have never been any different." But they have been very different. And even today there are people who are far from happy with the way things are. The fact that Bayreuth exists proves this all by itself. At Bayreuth you will find an audience that is prepared and understands what it is seeing. You will find the deep feeling of people who know they are at the very peak of their happiness, and who pour their whole being into that happiness so they can gather strength for a higher and wider purpose. Here you will find the artist giving himself up in the noblest way, and the finest sight of all: a victorious creator whose works are themselves an overflowing treasure chest of artistic victories. Doesn't it seem almost like a fairy tale to be able to meet such a person face to face? Shouldn't everyone who takes any part in what happens at Bayreuth, whether as a performer or as a listener, already feel changed and made young again, ready to bring reforms and renewals into other areas of life? Hasn't a safe harbor been found for everyone wandering on the high, empty seas, and hasn't calm settled over the face of the waters? When someone leaves these places of deep, powerful solitude and goes back to the very different world below, with its flat plains and lower ground, won't he cry out again and again, like Isolde: "Oh, how could I bear it? How can I still bear it?" And if he cannot stand his joy and his sorrow, or cannot selfishly keep them to himself, then from that moment on he will use every chance he gets to share them with everyone. He will ask: "Where are the people who are suffering under the weight of modern institutions? Where are my natural allies, who will fight beside me against the ever-growing, ever more crushing

demands of modern scholarship? For right now, at least, we have only one enemy. Right now! And that enemy is the gang of so-called art experts, the aesthetes, for whom the word Bayreuth means total defeat. They took no part in organizing it. Instead, they were angry about the whole movement, or else they cleverly used the trick of pretending not to hear, which has now become the favorite weapon of every snobbish opposition. But this shows that their hatred and their dirty tricks failed to destroy Wagner's spirit or to stop his plans from being carried out. It shows even more than that: it gives away their weakness. It shows that everyone who holds power at the moment will not be able to survive many more attacks. The time has come for those who want to win and triumph. The biggest empires are at their mercy. A question mark now hangs over the name of everyone who holds power today, as far as anyone can really be said to hold it here. For example, people say that our schools and universities are falling apart, and everywhere you can find individuals who have secretly abandoned them. If only we could get the people who are already deeply unhappy with things in this area to rebel openly and speak out in public! If only we could take away their timid hearts and their half-heartedness! I am sure that the whole spirit of modern real culture would get its deadliest blow if the silent support these people give it could somehow be taken away. Among scholars, the only ones who would stay loyal to the old order would be those who had caught the fever of politics, or who were hired writers churning out words of any kind. This disgusting system draws its strength from the violence and injustice it depends on, that is, from the State and from Society. It profits by making State and Society ever more wicked and ruthless. Without that support it would be something weak and worn out, and it only needs to be looked down on in order to die. Anyone who is fighting to spread justice and love among human beings must see this system as the smallest of the obstacles in his path. For he will only meet his real enemies after he has stormed and conquered modern

real culture, which is nothing more than the outer walls of their fortress."

For us, Bayreuth is the blessing given at the dawn of the fight. No one could treat us more unfairly than by thinking we care only about art, as if art were just a way to heal us or numb us, something we use to push out of our minds all the misery that is still all around us. In the picture this tragic work of art at Bayreuth gives us, we see something else. We see single people struggling against everything that seems to stand against them with a force that cannot be beaten: against power, law, tradition, customs of behavior, and the whole established order of things. People cannot choose a better life than one where they stay ready to give themselves up and to die in their fight for love and justice. When tragedy looks at us with its mysterious eye, that look neither lulls us to sleep nor freezes us. Still, as long as it keeps us in its sight, it asks us to be silent. That is because art does not serve the needs of war. It is only there to make our breaks from the fight better, before the struggle and during it. It makes better those few moments when we look back, and dream of the future, and seem to understand what things stand for, and when we are carried off into a refreshing daydream as tiredness comes over us. Then day and battle break together, the holy shadows fade, and Art is far away from us again. But the comfort she gives stays with people from the first hour of the day and never leaves them. Wherever a person turns, he sees all too clearly his own faults, how little he has to offer, and how unable he is. How much courage would he have left if this blessing had not first lifted him beyond his own small self? The worst torments that trouble him are these: people's beliefs and opinions clash, those beliefs and opinions cannot be trusted, and people's abilities are so unequal. All these things make him long for art. We cannot be happy as long as everything around us suffers and causes suffering. We cannot be good as long as the course of human events is decided by violence, betrayal,

and injustice. We cannot even be wise as long as all of humanity does not compete for wisdom, and does not guide each person toward the most sober and sensible way of living and knowing. So how could anyone bear this feeling of falling short in three ways, unless he could see something grand and valuable in his struggles, his efforts, and his defeats? How could he bear it unless tragedy taught him to take joy in the rhythm of great passions, and in the person they destroy? Art is certainly not a teacher or trainer for how to act in daily life. In that sense, the artist is never an instructor or an adviser. The things a tragic hero fights for are not always worth fighting for. In art, as in a dream, the value we give to things only lasts while we are under its spell. For the moment, we think something is truly worth the effort, and we feel for the tragic hero when he would rather die than give up what he wants. But that value and that force can seldom stay the same when carried over into everyday life. That is why art belongs to the person who is resting and renewing himself. The struggle that art shows us is a simpler version of life's struggle. Its problems are short forms of the endlessly complicated ways people act and want things. But it is exactly because art is, so to speak, the reflection of a simpler world, a quicker answer to the riddle of life, that it gets its greatness and why we cannot do without it. No one who suffers from life can do without this reflection, just as no one can live without sleep. The harder the science of nature's laws becomes, the more deeply we long for this simpler picture, even for just a moment. And the greater the strain becomes between what each person knows about the world in general and his moral and spiritual strength. Art is here to keep the bow from snapping, that is, to keep us from breaking under that strain.

Each person must be given over to something bigger than himself. That is the goal of tragedy. He must forget the terrible fear that death and time tend to stir up in him. For at any moment of his life, at any

tiny piece of time in all his years, something holy may come across his path that will more than repay him for all his struggles and hardships. This is what it means to have a feeling for tragedy. And if all of humanity must die out some day, and who could doubt it, then humanity has been given its highest goal for the future. That goal is to grow, and to live so united that it can face its final end as one whole, with one spirit, sharing one feeling for tragedy. All the things that make human beings nobler are locked up in this one goal. If humanity rejected it completely, that would be the saddest blow the heart of anyone who loves mankind could ever receive. That is how I feel about it! There is only one hope and one promise for the future of humanity, and that is that its feeling for tragedy does not die out. If people ever lost it completely, a cry of pain like nothing ever heard before would have to go up all over the world. For there is no happier joy than the one that comes from knowing what we know: how tragic thinking was born again on earth. This joy does not belong to any one person; it is shared by all. It is the wild cheering of humanity about the hidden bond that links everything human, and about the way it all moves forward together.

V.

Wagner shone the light of his mind onto life, both past and present. His mind was strong enough to reach even the most distant places with its rays. That is why he is one who makes the world whole. Only a person whose eye can take in the hugeness and wildness of what looks like chaos can make the world simple and whole. That person can connect and join together things that used to lie hopelessly far apart. Wagner did this by finding a link between two things that seemed to exist separately, as if they lived in different worlds. He found the link between music and life, and in the same way, between music and drama. He did not invent this link, and he was not the first

to create it. These connections must always have been there, and everyone must have been able to notice them. But a great problem is usually like a precious stone: thousands of people trip over it before one person finally picks it up. Wagner asked himself what it meant that an art like music had become such a very important part of the lives of modern people. You do not need to think badly of life to suspect that there is a riddle behind this question. In fact, it is the other way around. Only when you think carefully about all the great forces in the world, and see life as struggling hard to reach conscious freedom and independent thinking, does music start to look like a riddle. Shouldn't the answer be that music could not have been born in our time? So what does it mean that music is here among us? Is it an accident? One single great artist could be an accident. But the history of modern music shows a whole group of great artists appearing together. Such a group has been matched only once before on earth, and that was in the time of the ancient Greeks. Something like this makes you think that the whole thing may come from necessity rather than accident. What this necessity means is the riddle that Wagner answers.

Wagner was the first to recognize a sickness that is as widespread among people as civilization itself. Language is sick everywhere, and the weight of this terrible disease presses heavily on the whole growth of humankind. Language has moved further and further away from its true job, which is expressing strong feelings. Once it could express those feelings in all their simplicity. But it has always had to strain to do something almost impossible: to communicate the opposite of feeling, which is thought. Because it has been stretched too far in this way, during the fairly short time of modern civilization, its strength has been worn out. Now it can no longer do even the one job that gives it a reason to exist: helping people who suffer to talk with each other about the sorrows of life. People can no longer use lan-

guage to let others know how miserable they are. So they cannot truly express themselves anymore. Under these conditions, which people only dimly sense right now, language has slowly become a power of its own. It is like a ghost with arms that forces and pushes humanity toward the places it least wants to go. As soon as people want to understand each other and join together for a shared cause, they are seized by the madness of general ideas, and even by the mere sound of modern words. Because they cannot truly communicate, everything they make together carries the mark of disagreement. This is not only because it fails to meet their real needs. It is also because of the emptiness of those all-powerful words and ideas mentioned before. So on top of the misery people already have, they add the curse of empty custom. Empty custom means that words and actions agree, while feelings do not agree at all. When any art is dying, there comes a point when its tools and forms pile up in an unhealthy way and grow so bossy and controlling that they crush the gentle souls of artists and turn them into slaves. In the same way, now that language is dying, people have become slaves of words. Under this burden, no one can show who he really is or speak in a simple, natural way. Only a few people manage to keep their true selves as they fight against a so-called real culture. This kind of real culture does not judge its success by working with people's actual feelings and desires in order to train them. Instead, it judges its success by trapping each person in a net of "fixed ideas" and teaching him to think correctly. As if there were any value in turning a person into a being who thinks and reasons correctly before you have managed to make him a creature with true feeling! Now, if the music of our great German masters bursts in on a crowd of people who are this sick, what do these sounds really mean? They mean only true feeling, which is the enemy of all empty custom and of everything fake that pushes people apart and makes them misunderstand each other. This music means a return to nature, and at the same time a cleaning and reshaping of nature. The need for this

return grew in the souls of the most loving people, and through their art, nature, changed into love, makes its voice heard.

Let us take this as one of Wagner's answers to the question, "What does music mean in our time?" He has a second answer too. The link between music and life is not just the link between one kind of language and another. It is also the link between the perfect world of sound and the world of sight. Look at the life of modern man simply as something to watch, and compare it with earlier forms of human life. You will see that it is marked by a poverty and tiredness that words cannot describe, even though it is also unbelievably loud and gaudy, which only a shallow observer enjoys. Look a little more closely at the impression this wild, ever-changing play of colors makes on you. Doesn't the whole thing seem to blaze with the glitter of countless little stones borrowed from older civilizations? Isn't everything you see just a jumble of clashing showing off, copied gestures, and proud shallowness? Isn't it like a ragged clown's suit of patches thrown over people who are naked and shivering? Like a sick person ordered to look as if they are dancing for joy? Like someone who is ill to the bone putting on airs of pride? And the whole thing moves so fast and so confusingly that what lies underneath is hidden and masked: miserable weakness, quarrels that eat people up, busy boredom, and dishonest suffering! The way people look today is all a show and nothing else. In what man now presents to the world, his true self has become hidden and covered up. And whatever traces of real creative talent in art still remain in countries like France and Italy are all being used for this one job: hiding things. Wherever form is still expected, whether in society, in conversation, in writing style, or in dealings between governments, people have come to believe, without noticing it, that form simply means a kind of pleasant pretending. But that is the exact opposite of true form. True form is a necessary relationship between the proportions of a shape. It has

nothing at all to do with ideas like "pleasant" or "unpleasant," because it is necessary and not a matter of choice. And even where civilized people do not openly demand form, you see no more sign of this necessary relationship of proportions. Instead, you notice the same effort toward pleasant pretending that we just mentioned, and it is never as successful there, even if people try harder at it than in the first case. How far this pretending is sometimes pleasant, and why everyone must enjoy seeing modern people at least try to pretend, each person can judge for himself, depending on how modern he himself happens to be. As Tasso says, "Only galley slaves really know each other. And if we misjudge others, it is only out of politeness, hoping that they in turn will misjudge us."

Now, in this world of empty forms and deliberate misunderstandings, what is the point of souls that overflow with music? These souls follow the path of great, free rhythm with noble honesty, with a passion bigger than any one person. They glow with the strong and peaceful fire of music, which rises up into the daylight from their endless inner depths. And what is all this for?

Through these souls, music expresses its longing for the company of its natural partner, which is gymnastics, meaning bodily movement and form. Gymnastics is the shape music needs to take in the world we can see. As music searches for and craves this partner, it becomes the judge of the whole visible world, and of the false world of empty appearances we live in today. This is Wagner's second answer to the question: what does music mean in our time? "Help me," he calls out to everyone who is willing to listen, "help me find that real culture whose existence my music seems to predict, since my music is the language of true feeling, found again. Remember that the soul of music now wants to take on a body. Through all of you, it wants to become visible in movements, actions, institutions, and customs!" Some people understand this call, and there will be more of them.

They have also understood, for the first time, what it means to build a nation on the basis of music. The ancient Greeks not only understood this but actually demanded it. Those wise people would have sentenced the modern state to death just as easily as modern people now condemn the Church. The road to this new goal, which is new but has been reached before, would lead us to this point: we would be forced to admit where the worst faults in our education system lie, and why it has so far failed to lift us out of our lack of culture. The truth is that our education lacks the stirring, creative soul of music. On top of that, its rules and structures were made in a time when the music that Strauss's "We" crowd seems to value so much had not even been born yet. Our education is the most old-fashioned part of our present world. This is especially true when it comes to the one new force for education that makes people today more advanced than people of past centuries. Or at least, this force would make them more advanced than their distant ancestors, if only they did not keep rushing ahead so carelessly, meekly obeying the whip of the moment. Because they have not let the soul of music live inside them, they have no idea what gymnastics means in the Greek and Wagnerian sense. That is why their creative artists are doomed to despair, as long as they try to do without music as their guide in a new world of visible things. Talent may grow as much as anyone wants, but it always comes either too late or too soon, and in any case out of step with the times. For it is mostly useless and stillborn, just as even the finest and greatest works of earlier times, which modern artists use as models, are useless and stillborn, and do not add a single stone to the building that has already been started. If, deep inside, these artists can see no new forms but only the old ones from the past, they may well achieve something for history, but nothing for life. They are already dead before they have even stopped breathing. But think of someone who feels real, fruitful life inside himself, a life that for now can only be described with one word: "Music." Could such a person let himself be

fooled, even for a moment, into building real hopes on this thing that wastes all its energy on making figures, forms, and styles? He stands above all such empty efforts. He no more expects to find artistic wonders outside his ideal world of sound than he expects great writers to grow out of our worn-out, faded language. Instead of listening to false comforts, he would rather turn his unsatisfied gaze calmly and firmly on our modern world. And if his heart is not warm enough to feel pity, then let it at least feel bitterness and hate! It would be better for him to show anger and scorn than to hide in a fake contentment, or to keep drugging himself the way our "art lovers for show" usually do. But if he can do more than condemn and despise, if he is able to love, to feel for others, and to help with the shared work of building something, he must still condemn anyway, in order to clear the road for his willing soul. For music to one day call many people to deeper reverence and let them in on her highest goals, we must first put an end to the whole pleasure-seeking way people now treat such a sacred art. Behind all our artistic pastimes, such as theatres, museums, concerts, and so on, you will find that same "art lover for show." He is the one who must be stopped. The favour the state now shows him must be turned into pressure against him. Public opinion, which puts so much weight on training people in this kind of love of art, must be defeated by better judgment. In the meantime, we should count the open enemy of art as our best and most useful friend. After all, what he attacks is exactly art as the "art lover for show" understands it, and he knows no other kind! Let him be allowed to make our "art lover for show" answer for the foolish waste of money on building his theatres and public monuments, hiring his famous singers and actors, and paying for his completely useless art schools and picture galleries. And that says nothing of all the energy, time, and money that every family throws away on fake "artistic interests." Here you see neither real hunger nor real fullness. Instead, a lifeless, half-dead game is played that only pretends to have both, a game invented

by the idle wish to make an impression and fool other people. Or, worse still, art is taken more or less seriously, and then art itself is expected to stir up a kind of hunger and craving, and to do its job through this artificially created excitement. It is as if people were afraid of sinking under the weight of their own disgust and boredom, and so they call up every possible evil spirit to frighten them and drive them around like wild cattle. People crave pain, anger, hate, the rush of passion, sudden escape, and breathless suspense, and they turn to the artist as the magician who can summon this crowd of demons. In the inner life of our educated classes, art has become a fake need, or a shameful and undignified one. It is either nothing at all or something evil. The higher and rarer artist must be caught in a confusing nightmare not to see all this. Like a ghost, shyly and in a shaky voice, he keeps repeating beautiful words that he says come down to him from higher places, though he can only hear their sound very faintly. But the artist who happens to be shaped in the modern mould looks down on the dreamy fumbling and hesitant speech of his nobler fellow artist. He leads out the whole noisy pack of gathered passions on a leash, so that he can set them loose on modern people whenever he likes. For these modern people would rather be hunted down, wounded, and torn to pieces than live alone with themselves in quiet solitude. Alone with yourself! This thought terrifies the modern soul. It is his one worry, his one horrible fear.

When I watch the crowds that move and hang around the streets of a very crowded city, and I see no other look on their faces than a dazed look, like animals being hunted, I can never stop myself from thinking about how miserable their condition is. For all of them, art exists only to make them even more unhappy, sluggish, and numb, or even more rushed and greedy. That is because false feeling rules them and drills them like soldiers without a break, and it does not even give them time to notice how miserable they are. If they want to speak, empty

custom whispers their lines to them, like a prompter in a theater, and this makes them forget what they first meant to say. If they want to understand one another, their understanding is crippled, as if someone had put a spell on them. They call something their joy when really it is what will ruin them, and then they go ahead and work together, on purpose, to bring about their own destruction. In this way they have been turned into completely and utterly different creatures, and brought down to the level of miserable slaves of false feeling.

VI.

I will give just two examples. They show how badly the feelings of our time have been twisted, and how little our age even notices this twisting. In the past, people who lived off money and finance were looked down on with honest contempt, even though everyone knew they were needed. It was widely agreed that every society has to have its guts, its lower organs, too. But now these money people are the ruling power in the soul of modern humanity, because they are the greediest part of it. In the past, people were especially warned not to take the day or the passing moment too seriously. They were advised to follow the old saying "be amazed by nothing," and to care about things that last forever. Now there is only one kind of seriousness left in the modern mind, and it covers nothing but the news that comes in through the newspaper and the telegraph. Make use of every bright hour, get something out of it, and judge it as fast as you can! You would think modern people had only one good quality left: being quick-witted and ready for anything, what people call "presence of mind." Sadly, it looks much more like a disgusting, endless greed that is present everywhere, and a snooping nosiness that has spread to everyone. Because the real question is whether any mind is present at all these days. But we will leave that question for future judges to settle; they, at least, will have to shake modern people through a sieve

and see what is left. Still, even we can already see that this age is cheap and common. And it is cheap and common because it honors exactly the things that nobler ages looked down on. So when it raids all the treasures of past cleverness and wisdom, and parades around in this richest of fine clothes, it only shows that it has a dark awareness of its own cheapness. It does not wear these clothes to keep warm. It wears them only to fool the people around it. In modern man, the urge to pretend and to hide himself seems stronger than the need to protect himself from the cold. That is why the scholars and philosophers of our time do not turn to the wisdom of India and Greece to become wise and calm. The only point of their work seems to be to win them a fake reputation for learning in their own day. The natural scientists try to label the animal-like outbursts of violence, trickery and revenge in today's dealings between nations and between individual people as fixed laws of nature that can never change. The historians are busily trying to prove that every age has its own special rights and special circumstances. They do this to lay the groundwork for a defense speech, ready for the coming day when our generation will be put on trial. The sciences of government, of race, of trade, and of law all have this same character now: they are getting a defense ready in advance. In fact, it even seems as if the little bit of intelligence still at work today, the part not yet used up by the huge machine of profit and power, has only one job: to defend and to excuse the present.

Someone asks, surprised: "Defend it against what accusers?"

The answer: against its own guilty conscience.

And here we can clearly see the job that has been handed to modern art. Its job is to numb people or make them drunk, to lull them to sleep or to confuse them. By any means at all, it must make the conscience stop noticing! It must help the modern soul get past the feel-

ing of guilt, not lead it back to innocence! And only for a few moments at a time! It must protect people from themselves, so that their deepest heart is kept quiet and they can ignore what it says! There are a few people who truly feel how shameful this job is, and how terribly it humiliates art. Their souls must be filled to the top with sadness and pity, but also with a new and overwhelming longing. Whoever wants to set art free, and give it back the holiness that has now been dragged through the dirt, must first free himself from all contact with modern souls. Only if he himself is innocent can he hope to find the innocence of art. For he must be ready to take on the enormous tasks of cleansing himself and making himself holy. Suppose he succeeded. Suppose he were ever able to speak to people from his freed soul, through his freed art. He would then find himself facing the greatest dangers and caught up in the most terrible of fights. People would rather tear him and his art to pieces than admit that, standing before them, they ought to die of shame. It may well be that freeing art is the only ray of hope lighting up the future. It may be something meant only for a few lonely souls, while the many stay happy to stare into the flickering, smoky flame of their own art, and are able to put up with it. Because they do not want to be shown the truth; they want to be dazzled. In fact, they hate light, especially when it shines on themselves.

That is why they run away from this new bringer of light. But he follows them. The love that gave birth to him drives him to follow them and to win them over until they give in. He calls out to them: "You must go through my sacred mysteries. You need to be cleansed and shaken up by them. Be brave enough to go through this for your own rescue. Leave behind that dimly lit corner of life and nature, the only one that seems familiar to you. I am leading you into a kingdom that is real too. And when I lead you out of my small room back into your daylight, you will be able to judge which life is more real, which one

is truly day and which is night. Underneath the surface, nature is much richer, stronger, more blessed and more frightening than you think. You cannot guess this from the way you live. Oh, if only you could learn to become natural again, and then let yourselves be changed by nature and into nature, through the spell of my passion and my love!"

This is how the voice of Wagner's art calls out to people. We are the children of a miserable age, and the fact that we should be the first to hear this voice shows how much this age deserves pity. It also shows that real music is bound up with fate and with the oldest laws of nature. It is simply impossible to explain why it has appeared among us right now, at this exact time, as nothing but empty, meaningless chance. If Wagner had been an accident, he would surely have been crushed by the greater strength of all the other forces around him. But Wagner's coming seems to have been necessary, and that necessity both justifies it and makes it glorious. If you watch his art grow from its very first beginnings, it is a truly magnificent sight. Even though it came with great suffering, you can see reason, law, and purpose guiding it the whole way. Charmed by such a sight, the watcher will come to enjoy even this painful growth itself, and will see it as a stroke of luck. He will see how everything must work toward the good and the benefit of a talent and a nature that were destined from the start, no matter how hard the trials it has to go through. He will understand how every danger gives it more courage, and every victory makes it wiser. He will see how it swallows poison and sorrow and grows strong on them. The mockery and the stubborn hostility of the world around it only push it and drive it on even harder. If it happens to lose its way, it comes back from its wanderings and its exile loaded with the most precious treasure. If it happens to fall asleep, "it is only gathering its strength again." It hardens the body itself and makes it tougher. It does not wear life out, no matter how long it lasts. It rules

over a person like a passion with its wings tied down, and it lets him fly at just the right moment, when his feet have grown tired in the sand or have been cut by the stones along the road. It can do nothing except give. Everyone must have a share in what it does, and it is never stingy. When it is pushed away, it only gives more lavishly. When the people it favors treat it badly, it simply rewards them with the richest treasures it has. And, as both the oldest and the newest experience shows, the people it favors have never been quite worthy of what it gives them. That is why this destined nature, through which music speaks to our world of appearances, is one of the most mysterious things under the sun. It is like a bottomless depth where strength and goodness lie joined together, and like a bridge between the self and everything that is not the self. Who would dare to say for sure what it exists for? And that is even assuming that we could guess at all what kind of purpose it might have. But a deeply happy hunch leads one to ask a question. Is it possible that the grandest things exist for the sake of the lowest, the greatest talent for the good of the smallest, the highest virtue and holiness for the sake of what is flawed and full of faults? Does real music make itself heard because humankind, of all creatures, deserves least to hear it, even though it may need it most? If you think hard about how strange and wonderful this possibility is, beyond ordinary experience, and then turn from these thoughts to look back at life, you will see a light rising, however dark and foggy life may have seemed just a moment before.

VII.

There is really no other way. Anyone who looks closely at a person like Wagner will, whether he wants to or not, turn his eyes back on himself now and then. He will see how small and weak he is, and he will ask himself: "What does this have to do with you? Why are you even here?" Maybe he will find no answer to these questions. In that

case he will stay puzzled and confused, standing face to face with his own self as if it were a stranger. Then let it be enough for him that he has had this feeling. Let the very fact that he felt strange and awkward in front of his own soul be the answer to his question. Because it is exactly through this feeling that he shows the strongest sign of life in Wagner. It is the very center of Wagner's strength: that almost devilish pull, that gift of giving himself to others, which belongs to his nature. Through it, his nature does not only pass itself on to other people, it also pulls other people into itself. So it becomes great both by giving and by taking. The observer seems to be ruled by Wagner's overflowing, wildly generous nature. But in this way he shares in its strength, and so he becomes powerful through Wagner and even a match for Wagner. And everyone who looks honestly at himself knows that a certain mysterious tension, a kind of opposition, is needed when two people really study each other. Suppose Wagner's art lets us go through everything that happens to a soul on a journey: feeling for others, sharing their fate, and seeing the world through hundreds of different eyes. Then, once we have lived his life in this way, we can look at him from that distance and under those strange influences. Then we feel completely sure that in Wagner the whole visible world wants to become spirit, to be soaked up and lost in the world of sounds. And in Wagner the world of sounds, too, wants to show itself as something we can see. It wants, so to speak, to take on a body. His art always pulls him in two different directions: from the world of playing sounds to the mysterious but related world of things we can see, and back again. He is always forced, and the observer along with him, to turn what is visible back into spirit and into the first, deepest kind of life. And in the same way he is forced to see the most hidden corners of the soul as something solid and to give them a body we can see. This is what makes up the nature of the poet-musician of drama, if by that term we also mean the actor, the poet, and the musician all in one. This idea has to be borrowed from Aeschylus and the Greek

artists of his time, who were the only perfect examples of the poet-musician of drama before Wagner. People have tried to explain the most wonderful kinds of growth by pointing to some inner block or weakness. For example, they have said that for Goethe, poetry was just a place to hide for a talent for painting that had failed. They have said that Schiller's plays were just common speech-making pushed into unusual channels. Wagner himself tries to explain how music grew among the Germans this way: since they lack the charming spark of a natural gift for singing, they were forced to take up instrumental music with the same deep seriousness with which their religious reformers took up Christianity. Now if someone wanted to link Wagner's growth, on the same basis, to an inner block of that kind, they would have to see in him a basic talent for drama. This talent would have had to give up any chance of meeting its needs in the quickest and simplest ways. It would have found its rescue and its way of expressing itself by pulling all the arts toward it, for one great dramatic show. But then one would also have to suppose something else: that the most powerful musician, in despair at having to speak to people who were only half musical or not musical at all, forced a road open for himself into the other arts. He did this to gain the ability to reach people in many different ways, so that he could make them understand him, make the masses understand him. However we picture the growth of the born dramatist, in his final form he is a being with no inner blocks and no empty gaps. The real, freed artist has no choice. He must think in the spirit of all the arts at once. He is the go-between who links worlds that only seem to be separate. He is the one who puts back together the unity and wholeness of the artistic gift, which cannot be guessed or figured out by reasoning, but can only be shown through actual deeds. But the person who watches this deed being done will be overwhelmed by its frightening and tempting charm. In a flash he will be faced with a power that wipes out both his resistance and his reason, and makes every detail of life seem sense-

less and impossible to understand. Carried away from himself, he seems to be hanging in some mysterious fiery element. He stops understanding himself. The measuring stick for everything has dropped from his hands. Everything fixed and set in its ways begins to wobble. Every object seems to take on a strange color and to tell us its story through new signs. One would have to be a Plato to find out, in this mix of delight and fear, how the dramatist pulls this off, and to say to him: "If a man came among us who knew enough to copy or imitate anything at all, we would honor him as something wonderful and holy. We would even pour oil on him and crown his head with a sacred crown. But all the same, we would urge him to leave our group and go to another." Perhaps a member of Plato's ideal community could have trained himself to act that way. But we live in a very different community. We long for the charmer to come to us, and we truly want him, even though we may already be afraid of him. And we want him here only so that our society, and the harmful reason and power that it stands for, can be proven wrong. A kind of human civilization, of human society, morals, order, and general setup that could get along without the imitating artist or actor is maybe not completely unthinkable. But this "maybe" is probably the boldest one ever put forward, and it is the same as the most serious kind of doubt. The only man who should be free to talk about such a possibility is the one who could create and sense ahead of time the highest stage of everything still to come. And then, like Faust, he would either have to go blind or be allowed to go blind. Because we have no right to this blindness. Plato, on the other hand, after he had taken that one look at the ideal Greek world, had the right to be blind to all the real Greek world. That is why the rest of us need art much more. Our eyes first began to see when we were faced with the real, everyday world. And we need the complete dramatist so that he can free us, even if only for an hour or so, from the unbearable strain that comes from knowing about the deep gap between what we are able to do and the duties we

have to carry out. With him we climb to the highest peak of feeling, and only then do we feel as if we have gone back to nature's endless freedom, to the true land of liberty. From this high place we can see ourselves and the people around us rise up as something grand out of a huge mirage. We see the deep meaning in our struggles, our wins and our losses. We begin to enjoy the rhythm of passion and the one it destroys. In every step of the hero we hear the hollow echo of death, and close to death we feel the greatest charm of life. Changed in this way into tragic people, we go back to life with comfort in our souls. We feel a new sense of safety, as if we had found a road that leads out of the greatest dangers, wild extremes, and raptures, back to what is limited and familiar. Back there, our dealings with other people seem to share in a higher kindness, and are at least nobler than they were before. Because back here, everything that seems serious and necessary, everything that seems to lead to a clear goal, looks like nothing but broken-off pieces compared with the path we ourselves have walked, even if only in our dreams. They are broken-off pieces of that whole, grand experience which we cannot even think about without a shiver. Yes, we may even be in danger of being tempted to take life too lightly, simply because in art we were so deadly serious about it, as Wagner says somewhere about certain events in his own life. For if we, who only watch this show of the poet-musician's drama and do not create it, can almost believe that a dream is more real than what we live through when we are awake, how much more sharply must the creator feel this contrast! There he stands, in the middle of all the noisy demands and pushy claims of the day and of the needs of life, in the middle of society and the state. And what does he stand there as? Maybe he is the only one awake, the only being who is really and truly aware, among a crowd of confused and tortured sleepers, among a mass of fooled and suffering people. He may even feel like someone who can never sleep, and imagine that he has to bring his clear, sleepless, aware life into contact with sleep-

walkers and well-meaning ghostly creatures. So everything that others see as ordinary seems eerie to him, and he is tempted to answer the whole thing with proud mockery. But this feeling gets strangely crossed when another force joins his trembling pride: the longing of the heights for the depths, the loving desire for the earth, for happiness, and for the company of others. Then, when he thinks of everything he misses as a lonely creator, he feels as if he ought to come down to earth like a god and carry everything that is weak, human, and lost "up to heaven in fiery arms." He wants this so that he can be loved and not just worshiped, and so that he can lose himself completely in his love. But it is exactly this contradiction that is the miracle in the soul of the poet-musician of drama. If his nature can be understood at all, it must surely be understood here. Because his creative moments in art come when the clash between his feelings is at its strongest, when his proud amazement and wonder at the world join with a burning wish to come close to that same world as a lover. The looks he then turns toward the earth are always like rays of sunlight that "draw up water," make mist, and gather storm clouds. His gaze shines downward, clear-eyed and careful, loving and unselfish all at once. And everything lit up by this double ray of light is called upon by nature to let out its strength and reveal its most hidden secret, and this happens out of shyness. It is more than just a figure of speech to say that he caught Nature off guard with that look, that he caught her naked. That is why she tries to hide her shame by seeming to be exactly the opposite. What was invisible until now, the inner life, looks for its rescue in the world of the visible. What was only visible until now escapes into the dark ocean of sound. So Nature, while trying to hide herself, reveals what her contradictions are like. In a dance that is wild, rhythmic, and gliding, full of ecstatic movements, the born dramatist shows something of what is going on inside him and of what is happening in nature. The rapturous quality of his movements speaks just as clearly of trembling understanding and

powerful insight as it does of love coming near and of giving up the self. Drunken, inspired speech follows the path of this rhythm. Melody rings out together with speech, and melody in turn throws its sparks into the world of images and ideas. A vision like one from a dream floats forward, both like and unlike the picture of Nature and the one courting her. It thickens into more human shapes. It spreads out in answer to its heroic, winning will, and also to a most delightful collapse and stopping of the will. This is how tragedy is born. This is how life is given its greatest knowledge, the knowledge of tragic thought. And this is how, at last, the greatest charmer and helper among human beings, the poet-musician of drama, comes into being.

VIII.

Wagner's real life, meaning the slow growth of the poet-musician of drama inside him, was also a constant struggle with himself. That struggle never stopped until his growth was complete. His fight with the world that stood against him was harsh and terrible. It was terrible only because he heard this same world, this tempting enemy, speaking from inside his own heart. And it was terrible because he carried a fierce demon in his chest: the demon of resistance. Then the main idea of his life took hold of his mind. This was the idea that drama, of all the arts, is the one that can have the most influence over the world. When that idea took over, it stirred up the strongest feelings in his whole being. At first, it did not give him a clear or bright answer about what he should do and want in the future. That was because, at the start, the idea showed up only as a kind of temptation. In other words, it was the voice of his dark, selfish, never-satisfied will, which was hungry for power and fame. Influence, the greatest possible influence, but how? And over whom? From then on, these were the questions and puzzles that never stopped filling his head and his heart. He wanted to conquer and win as no artist had ever done be-

fore. If possible, he wanted to reach, in one single leap, that peak of all-powerful, tyrant-like control that all his instincts secretly longed for. With a jealous and careful eye, he studied everything that was successful. He looked especially closely at everything that this influence might be used on. A dramatist has a kind of magic sight that reads people's souls as easily as a well-known book. With that sight, he examined the nature of the people who watch and listen. He was often disturbed by what he found. Even so, he very quickly found ways to hold them spellbound. These ways were always within his reach. Whatever moved him deeply, he wanted, and he could also create it. At every stage of his career, he understood exactly as much of the artists before him as he himself was able to create, and he never doubted that he could do what they had done. In this way, his nature may have been even more bold and sure of itself than Goethe's. And this is true even though Goethe said about himself: "I always thought I had mastered everything. Even if I had been crowned king, I would have thought I fully deserved the honor." Wagner's skill, his taste and his goals had always fit together as closely as a key fits a lock. They grew together and became free together. But there was a time when this was not the case. What did he care about the weak but noble feeling, lonely and self-centered, that the art lover for show cherishes? That kind of person, lucky enough to have a good education in books and the arts, keeps himself far away from the common crowd. Wagner had no use for that. But there were the fierce storms of feeling that a crowd stirs up when it is gripped by certain high points in dramatic song. There was that sudden, dizzying rush of emotion, completely honest and unselfish. These were really just echoes of his own experiences and feelings, and they filled him with burning hope for the greatest possible power and effect. So he saw grand opera as the tool he could use to express his main ideas. His passions pushed him toward it, and his eyes turned toward the place where it lived. Most of his life, his boldest travels, and his plans, studies, stays in different

places, and the people he got to know can only be explained by these passions. They can also only be explained by the resistance of the outside world, which this poor, restless, passionately innocent German artist had to face. Another artist knew better than he did how to master this trade. It has slowly become known what clever tricks of every kind Meyerbeer used to set up and win each of his great successes. It has also become known how carefully the order of "effects" was planned within the opera itself. Now that this is known, people will start to understand how bitterly hurt and ashamed Wagner felt when his eyes were opened to the tricks of the trade, tricks that were necessary for great success with the public. I doubt that any other great artist in history ever started his career with such amazing false hopes. And I doubt that any other so innocently and sincerely went along with the most disgusting kind of artistic trickery. And yet the way he went about it had something great in it, and so it bore a great deal of fruit. When he saw his mistake, despair made him understand what modern success really means, what the modern public is, and the whole dishonest spirit of modern art. And as he became a critic of "effect," signs that he himself was being made pure began to tremble through him. It seems that from then on, the spirit of music spoke to him with a spiritual charm he had never known before. It was as if he had just gotten up after a long illness and gone outside for the first time. He hardly trusted his own hand and eye, and he seemed to feel his way along, unsure. So it was an almost joyful surprise for him to find that he was still a musician and an artist. And perhaps only then, for the very first time, did he truly become one.

Every later stage in Wagner's growth can be told apart in this way: the two basic forces in his nature kept moving closer together. Their dislike of each other grew weaker. His better self no longer just put up with serving its wilder, lower brother. Instead, it loved him and felt it had to serve him. In the end, the gentlest and purest thing, at the very

highest point of its growth, is always joined to the strongest thing. The stormy instincts keep rushing on as before, but now they take different roads, heading toward the better self. And the better self, in turn, comes down to earth and finds something like itself in everything earthly. If it were possible, along these lines, to talk about the final goals and the final untangling of that growth, and still be understood, then it might also be possible to find vivid words to describe the long stretch of time before that last stage. But I doubt the first thing can be done at all, so I will not try the second. The edges of the stretch of time between the earlier years and the later years can be described, as history, in two sentences. Wagner became a revolutionary against society. And Wagner saw that the only true artistic thing that had ever existed until then was the poetry of the people. Wagner had gone through his own share of despair and regret. After he got past it, one main idea took hold of him, in a new form and stronger than ever before, and it led him to both of these conclusions. That idea was influence: the greatest possible influence, to be used through the stage! But influence over whom? He shuddered when he thought about the people he had been trying to influence up to then. His experience made him see how utterly shameful the place is that art and the artist fill. He saw how a cold, hard-hearted part of society, which calls itself the good people but is really the bad, counts art and the artist among its servants, like slaves in its household, and keeps them both around to feed its need to be fooled. Modern art is a luxury. He saw this, and he understood that it must survive or collapse together with the rich, luxury-loving society it is only one piece of. This society had only one idea: to use its power as harshly and as cunningly as possible to make the powerless, that is, the people, more and more useful to it, more and more lowly and cut off from their own ways, and to raise the modern factory worker out of them. It also robbed the people of the greatest and purest things that their deepest needs had led them to make. These were the things through which they humbly

showed the true and one-of-a-kind art inside their souls: their myths, songs, and dances, and the new things they found in language. Society took all this in order to boil it down into a sweet, pleasure-filled cure for the tiredness and boredom of its own life. That cure is modern art. Wagner traced all of this through the ages. He looked at how this society came to be. He looked at how it learned to draw new strength from areas of power that seemed to be against it. For example, he saw how dying Christianity let itself be used, hiding behind half-measures and tricks, as a shield against the masses and as a prop for this society and its property. And finally he saw how science and learned men meekly agreed to become its hired workers. At the end of his studies, he was shaken with disgust. Because he felt pity for the people, he became a revolutionary. From then on he loved them and longed for them, just as he longed for his art. For sadly, only in them did he now see the only audience worthy of and suited to the power of his great works as he imagined them. Yet the people were a group that was quickly disappearing, hardly recognizable anymore, and deliberately kept apart. So his thoughts all came down to one question: How do the people come into being? How can they be brought back to life?

He always found just one answer. He told himself that if a large number of people suffered from the same sorrow that he suffered from, that number would make up the people. And where the same sorrow leads to the same urges and wishes, people would have to look for the same kind of relief, and they would find the same pleasure in that relief. He asked himself what comforted him most in his sorrow and lifted his spirits, and what worked best against his pain. With joyful certainty, he found that this power lay only in music and myth. He had already seen that myth was made by the people and was their language for crying out in their pain. It seemed to him that music must have started in a similar way, though maybe in a more mysterious one. He soaked his soul in both of these things and healed it

there. They were what he needed most. In this way he was able to work out how much his sorrow was like the sorrow of the people back when they first came into being, and how the people would have to rise again if many people like Wagner were going to appear. What role did myth and music play in modern society, in the places where they had not actually been sacrificed to it? They had met much the same fate, and this only helps show how closely they are related. Myth had been badly cheapened, and its place had been taken over by idle tales and stories. It had been completely stripped of its serious, sacred strength, and turned into a toy and a pretty trinket for the children and women of the suffering people. Music had stayed alive among the poor, the simple, and the lonely. The German musician had never managed to fit himself into the luxury trade of the arts. He himself had become like a fairy tale, full of monsters and mysteries, full of the most moving signs and omens. He was a helpless questioner, something under a spell that needed to be rescued. Here the artist clearly heard the order meant only for him: to reshape myth and make it strong again, to break the spell that lay over music, and to make music speak. He felt his power for drama set free all at once, and he felt the ground laid for his rule over a land no one had found before, the land that lies between myth and music. He now set his new great work before people. It held all the strongest, most powerful, and most enchanting forces he knew. And with it he asked this great and painfully sharp question: "Where are all of you who suffer and think the way I do? Where is that crowd of souls I want to see become a people, so that you can share the same joys and comforts with me? Through your joy you will show me your misery." These were the questions he asked in Tannhäuser and Lohengrin. In these operas he looked around for others like himself. The lonely hermit longed for the crowd.

But how did he feel about all this? Nobody answered him. Nobody had understood his question. That does not mean everyone stayed

quiet. Just the opposite: people gave answers to thousands of questions he had never asked. They chattered about the new masterpieces as if these works had been written only to give people something to talk about. A whole craze for writing and chatting about art swept over the Germans like a disease. And with the lack of modesty that marks both German scholars and German journalists, people started measuring these masterpieces, poking and meddling with them, and with the artist himself too. Wagner tried to help people understand his question by writing about it. But this only caused new confusion and more uproar, because at that time nobody had ever heard of a musician who writes and thinks. People shouted: "He is a theorist who wants to reshape art with his strange, far-fetched ideas. Stone him!" Wagner was stunned. His question was not understood, and nobody felt the need he felt. His masterpieces seemed like a message sent only to people who were deaf and blind. The people he had hoped for seemed to be nothing but a dream he had imagined. He staggered and wavered. Then the idea came to him that maybe everything could be completely overturned, and he no longer pulled back from that thought. Perhaps, on the far side of this revolution and breaking apart, there might be a chance for a new hope. Then again, perhaps there might not. But either way, wouldn't total destruction be better than the miserable way things were now? Not long after that, he was living in exile for political reasons, in terrible hardship.

Only then, after this terrible change in the world around him and in his own soul, does the period of the great man's life begin over which the glory of the highest mastery spreads like a golden glow. Now, at last, the genius of the poet-musician of drama throws off its last disguise. He is alone; the age around him seems empty; he stops hoping. His all-seeing gaze sinks once more into the depths and reaches the bottom. There he sees that suffering is built into the very nature of things. From then on, having become less focused on himself, he

accepts his share of sorrow more calmly. His hunger for great power, which was only left over from his earlier situation, is now poured entirely into the channel of creating art. Through his art he now speaks only to himself, no longer to an audience or to the people, and he tries to give this private conversation all the dignity and other qualities that fit such a mighty dialogue. In the period before this, his art had been different. Back then he had also cared, though in a refined and subtle way, about having an immediate effect. That earlier work was also meant as a question, and it should have drawn an immediate answer. And how often Wagner tried to make his meaning clearer to the people he was questioning! Since they had no experience of having questions put to them, he tried to meet them halfway and to fit in with older ideas about art and older ways of expressing things. When he feared that arguments in his own language would simply fail, he had tried to persuade them and to ask his question in a language that was half foreign to him but familiar to his listeners. Now there was nothing to make him keep up this kindness. All he wanted now was to come to terms with himself, to think about the nature of the world through dramatic action, and to do philosophy in music. Whatever wishes he still had turned toward the newest ideas in philosophy. Whoever deserves to know what went on inside him at that time, or what questions were fought out in the darkest, most sacred inner room of his soul, and not many deserve to know all of this, must hear, watch, and live through Tristan and Isolde. It is the true metaphysical work of all art, a work about the deepest questions of existence. Over it rests the broken gaze of a dying man, with his endless and sweet longing for the secrets of night and death, far away from life. Life, in this work, is like a horrible, ghostly morning light that shines harshly on everything that is evil, deceiving, and tearing people apart. It is also a drama that is strict and severe in its form, overwhelming in its simple greatness, and in tune with the secret it deals with: being dead in the middle of life, being one in two. And yet

there is something even more wonderful than this work, and that is the artist himself. Shortly after finishing it, he was able to create a picture of life as full of clashing colors as The Mastersingers of Nuremberg. In both of these works he seems simply to have been refreshing and preparing himself so that he could calmly finish the gigantic four-part building he had planned and started long before. That was the final result of all his thinking and poetic dreaming over more than twenty years, his Bayreuth masterpiece, The Ring of the Nibelung! Anyone who is amazed that the two operas, Tristan and The Mastersingers, came so quickly one after the other has missed one important side of the life and nature of all great Germans. He does not know the special soil in which that deeply German cheerfulness can grow, the cheerfulness that marked Luther, Beethoven, and Wagner. Other nations completely fail to understand this cheerfulness, and it even seems to be missing in the Germans of today. It is a clear, golden, fully matured mixture, like a well-fermented wine, of simplicity, deep and discerning love, sharp observation, and playful mischief. Wagner has poured it out, like the most precious of drinks, for all those who have suffered deeply in life but who still come back to it with the smile of people getting over an illness. And since he also looked at the world with the eyes of someone who had made his peace with it, he felt more rage and disgust than sorrow, and he was more ready to give up the love of power than to shrink back from it in fear. As he quietly moved his greatest work forward, adding one score after another, something happened that made him stop and listen. Friends were coming. A kind of underground movement of many souls was approaching with a message for him. It was still far from being the people who made up this movement and wanted to bring him news, but it may have been the core and first living source of a truly human community that would reach its full form in some age still far away. For now, they only brought him the promise that his great work could be handed over to the care and keeping of loyal

people, people who would watch over this most magnificent of all gifts to the future and who would be worthy of that task. In the love of his friends, his view of the future began to shine with brighter colors. His noblest concern, the concern that his work should be finished and find a safe home before the evening of his life, was no longer the only thing on his mind. Something happened that he could only understand as a symbol: it was like a new comfort and a new sign of happiness for him. A great German war opened his eyes. He saw that those very Germans, whom he thought so completely run-down and so far below the high standard of true Germanness, an ideal he had shaped both from knowing himself and from carefully studying other great Germans in history, he saw that those very Germans, in the middle of terrible circumstances, were showing two virtues of the highest kind: simple courage and good sense. With his heart leaping for joy, he began to hope that he might not be the last German. He hoped that one day a greater power might stand behind his works than the loyal but small one made up of his little group of friends: a power strong enough to protect his work during the long time before its future glory, as the masterpiece of that future. Perhaps it was not possible to keep this belief armored against doubt forever, especially when it tried to rise to hopes of quick results. It is enough to say that he drew a huge push forward from the world around him, which kept reminding him of a high duty that always had to be carried out.

His work would not have been finished if he had given it to the world only as silent written music on paper. He had to show the world what it could not guess about his works, something only he could reveal: the new style for performing and staging them. That way he could set an example nobody else could set. In this way he could found a tradition of style, not on paper and not through written signs, but through the deep impressions his performances made on people's very souls. This duty had become even more urgent for him, because his other

works had, in the meantime, met the most unbearable and ridiculous fate when it came to how they were performed. They were famous and admired, and yet nobody showed even the smallest sign of anger when they were badly handled. For, strangely enough, the more he gave up hope of success among the people of his time, because he knew them all too well, and the more he said he did not want power, the more both "success" and "power" came to him, or at least everyone told him they had. Again and again he tried to explain, as clearly as he could, how worthless and humiliating such successes were to him. But it was no use. People were so unused to seeing an artist who could tell the difference between the various effects of his own works that they never fully believed even his most serious protests. Once he had understood the connection between our theatre system, its success, and the people of his time, his soul stopped feeling any pull toward the stage at all. He no longer cared about artistic thrills or the cheering of excited crowds. He must even have felt angry to see his art being swallowed up without any taste or judgment by the huge, gaping hole of boredom and the endless hunger for entertainment. Under these conditions every effect turned out flat and pointless. This was especially true because the job was really to feed someone who could never be satisfied, not to fill up someone who was truly starving. Wagner came to see this through an experience that kept repeating itself. Everyone, even the performers and the people putting on the shows, saw his art as nothing more and nothing less than any other kind of stage music, and as fitting perfectly well with the ugly style of old-fashioned opera. Thanks to the efforts of conductors with surface polish, his works were even cut up and chopped about, until, once all their spirit had been stripped away, they were thought to be closer to the level of the professional singer. But when people tried to follow Wagner's instructions exactly, they went about it so clumsily and nervously that they were quite capable of showing the midnight street riot in the second act of The Mastersingers with a group of

ballet dancers. Yet they seemed to do all this in complete good faith, without the slightest bad intention. Wagner worked hard and lovingly to show, through his own example, the right and complete way to perform his works, and he tried to train individual singers in the new style. But these efforts were defeated time after time, simply because of the carelessness and the rigid, iron-hard habits that ruled everywhere around him. On top of that, he was always being drawn into dealing with exactly the kind of theatre he hated most. Hadn't even Goethe, in his own day, once grown tired of going to the rehearsals of his play Iphigenia? "I suffer more than I can say," Goethe explained, "when I have to stumble around with these ghosts, who never seem to act the way they should." Meanwhile, Wagner's "success" in the very kind of drama he disliked most kept growing. It grew so much, in fact, that the biggest theatres began to live almost entirely on the money that Wagner's art, dressed up as opera, brought in. This growing craze among theatre-goers confused even some of Wagner's friends. But this man, who had already put up with so much, still had to bear the most bitter pain of all. He had to watch his friends get drunk on his "successes" and "triumphs" in all the very places where his highest ideal was openly betrayed and smashed. It almost seemed as if a people who were otherwise serious and thoughtful had decided to treat only their most serious artist with steady, deliberate silliness, and to make him the special target of all the vulgarity, carelessness, clumsiness, and spite that the German character is capable of. So when, during the German war, a wave of greater generosity and freedom seemed to sweep through everyone, Wagner remembered the duty he had promised himself to carry out. That duty was to rescue his greatest work from those successes and insults, which came so largely from misunderstanding, and to present it in his own most personal rhythm, as an example for all time. This is how he came up with the idea of Bayreuth. Riding on that wave of better feeling just mentioned, he expected to find a stronger sense of duty even in the people to whom

he wanted to hand over his most precious possession. Out of this double duty grew the event that, like the glow of a strange sunlight, will light up the few years behind us and ahead of us. It was meant to bless a distant and uncertain future. To our time and to the people of our time, that future can be little more than a riddle or something frightening. But to the few who are allowed to help bring it about, it is a first taste of joy to come, a first taste of love on a higher level. Through it they know themselves to be blessed, to bring blessing, and to bear fruit far beyond the length of their own lives. And to Wagner himself, it is only a cloud of distress, worry, deep thought, and sorrow, a new and passionate clash of opposing forces. Yet all of it is bathed in the starlight of selfless loyalty, and this light turns it into a joy beyond words.

It hardly needs saying that tragedy is like the air the world breathes; it is the breath that fills the world's lungs. Some people feel this deep in their souls. They know what it is to carry the heavy burden of being tragically fooled about what life is for. They know how plans get twisted and broken, and what it means to give things up and be made pure through love. Anyone like that will surely feel a faint memory of Wagner's own heroic life in the great works this great man is now giving us. It will feel as if Siegfried were telling us about his deeds from somewhere far away. Even the happiest and most moving memories are always wrapped in deep mourning, like the end of summer, when all of nature lies still in the dark evening light.

IX.

Some people may have been pained by thinking about how Wagner grew and changed as a man. All of them will find it calming and healing to think about what he was as an artist instead. They can see how his talent and his boldness reached such a high level of independence. Suppose art means only the ability to share with others what you

yourself have lived through. And suppose any work of art defeats itself if it fails to make itself understood. In that case, Wagner's greatness as an artist would surely lie in the almost superhuman, almost demon-like power of his nature to reach other people. He could express himself in every kind of language at once, and he could make his most private and personal experiences known as clearly as possible. By the time he came along, people had come to believe that an artist must stick to one single art as a fixed rule. So his arrival in the history of art looks like nothing so much as a volcano erupting, as if all of Nature's artistic powers burst out together in one person. That is why it is hard to settle whether he should be called a poet, a painter, or a musician, even if we use each of these words in its widest meaning. Maybe a new word would have to be invented to describe him.

Wagner's gift as a poet shows in the way he thinks in things you can see and real events, not in ideas. In other words, he thinks in myths, the way the people have always done. People raised in an artificial, made-up kind of culture would like us to believe that some particular thought lies hidden underneath every myth. But that is not true. A myth is a thought in itself. It gives us a picture of the world, but it does so through a chain of events, actions, and sufferings. The Ring of the Nibelung is a huge system of thought, but without the dry, abstract quality such systems usually have. Perhaps a philosopher could give us an exact match for it in pure thought. He could strip away all the pictures taken from life and all the living actions. Then we would have the same thing shown in two completely different forms. One form would be for the people. The other would be for the very opposite of the people, that is, for men of theory. But Wagner does not speak to this second group. The man of theory can understand as little about poetry or myth as a deaf man can understand about music. Both of them notice only movements that seem meaningless to them.

You cannot fully appreciate one of these two very different forms while standing in the other one. As long as the poet's spell is on you, you think along with him, as if you were only a creature that feels, sees, and hears. The conclusions you reach this way come simply from linking together the things you see happen. So they are not logical causes and effects, but real ones, the kind that happen in events themselves.

So suppose the heroes and gods in mythical dramas, the way Wagner understood them, spoke plainly in ordinary words. There would be a danger, because spoken words tend to wake up the thinking, theory-making side of us. We might find ourselves carried out of the world of myth and into the world of ideas. Then we would not understand the drama more easily. In fact, we would probably not understand it at all. So Wagner pushed language back to an earlier, more primitive stage in its growth. At that stage it had almost nothing abstract in it, and it was still poetry, pictures, and feeling. Wagner took on this huge and frightening job without fear, and that shows how strongly the spirit of poetry was driving him. He was like someone who has to follow a ghostly guide wherever it leads him. Every word in these dramas had to be something that could be sung, and the gods and heroes had to be able to make those words their own. That was the task Wagner gave his writing skill. Anyone else in his place would have given up hope, because our language seems almost too old and worn out to demand from it what Wagner demanded. And yet, when he struck the rock, a rich stream of water poured out, the way it did for Moses in the old story. Wagner loved his language and asked a great deal of it. Because of exactly that, he suffered more than any other German from the way it had decayed and grown weak. He suffered from all the forms it had lost or had damaged, from its awkward little connecting words and clumsy sentence building, and from its unmusical helper verbs. All these things, he felt, came into the language through sin

and corruption. On the other hand, he was very proud to point out how many old and strong elements still survive in everyday German. In the strong sound of its root words he saw an amazing closeness and connection to real music. This quality set German apart from the Latin-based languages, which are very twisted and full of artificial speech-making. Wagner's poetry clearly shows how much he loved the German language. He handled it with a warmth and honesty you will hardly find in any other German writer, except maybe Goethe. If you list his qualities, you get these: forceful wording, bold shortness, powerful and varied rhythm, an amazing supply of strong and striking words, simple sentence building, an almost one-of-a-kind talent for capturing shifting feelings and hunches, and along with all this, a completely pure and overflowing stream of everyday speech. And even after listing all that, the greatest and most wonderful quality is still left out. Anyone who reads two poems like Tristan and The Mastersingers one after the other will be just as amazed and puzzled by the language as by the music. He will wonder how one creative mind could have so completely mastered two worlds that are so different in form, color, and arrangement, and also in soul. This is the most wonderful thing Wagner's talent achieved. Giving every work its own language style, and finding a fresh body and a new sound for every thought, is something only a great master can pull off. When this rarest of all powers shows up, negative criticism looks small and pointless if all it does is attack certain excesses and odd habits in his handling of words, or the fairly frequent unclear phrases and vague ideas. Besides, what seemed to shock and outrage his harshest critics was not really the language. It was the spirit of Wagner's operas, meaning his whole way of feeling and suffering. It would be best to wait until these same critics have gained a different spirit themselves. Then they will also speak a different language. And by then, I think, the German language will be doing better than it is now.

But first of all, anyone who studies Wagner as a poet and as a painter with words should remember one thing. None of his dramas were meant to be read. So it would be unfair to judge them the same way we judge a spoken play. A spoken play works on our feelings through words and ideas, and so it has to follow the rules of public speaking. But in real life, people in the grip of strong feeling are rarely eloquent. In a spoken play, though, they have to be, or they could not express themselves at all. Now, when the language of a nation is already falling apart and getting worse, the writer of spoken plays is tempted to give too much new color and shape to both his words and his thoughts. He wants to raise the language up so that it can carry noble feelings, and by doing that he risks becoming hard to understand. He also tries to make passion seem noble by using grand phrases and clever images, and that brings another risk: he may seem false and artificial. After all, in real life passions do not speak in neat sentences, and when poetry strays too obviously from reality, it makes us doubt that the feelings are genuine. Wagner was the first to spot what was really missing in spoken drama, and so he presents every action on stage in three ways at once: in a word, in a gesture, and in a sound. In fact, music manages to carry the deepest emotions of the performers straight to the audience. At the same time, the audience sees proof of what the actors feel in the way they stand and move. Then, right after, comes a third proof, a weaker one: the spoken word, which turns those feelings into conscious will. All these effects do their work at the same moment, without getting in each other's way at all. Together they push the listener toward a completely new kind of understanding and sympathy. It is as if his senses had suddenly become more spiritual and his spirit more physical. It is as if everything inside him that wants to break out, everything that makes him thirst for knowledge, had been set free and was rejoicing as it finally understood. In a Wagner drama, every important element reaches the audience with total clarity. Music lights it up and runs all the way through it, like a

fire burning inside. Because of this, Wagner can do without the tricks that a writer of spoken plays usually needs to give the action light and warmth. All the dramatist's usual tools could be simpler. And the builder's feeling for rhythm could once again dare to show itself in the overall shape of the building. There was no longer any need for "the deliberate confusion and tangled mix of styles" that the ordinary playwright used to stir up a feeling of wonder and gripping suspense, which he finally raised into delighted amazement. A sense of ideal distance and height no longer had to be created with tricks and gimmicks. Language pulled back from the wide, sprawling spaces of speechmaking into the firm, tight limits of the language of feeling. The actor now said much less about everything he did and felt during the show. Yet his deepest feelings, which the ordinary playwright had ignored until then for fear of seeming undramatic, could now move the audience to passionate sympathy. Meanwhile, the gestures that went along with the words could be kept to the finest, gentlest shifts. Now, when passions are sung, they need a bit more time than when they are spoken. Music, so to speak, stretches out how long a feeling lasts. As a rule, this means that an actor who is also a singer has to get past the restless, jerky, shapeless liveliness that spoken drama suffers from. He feels even more pushed toward a certain nobility in how he carries himself, because music wraps his feelings in a purer air and so brings them closer to beauty.

Wagner gave his actors and singers extraordinary tasks. For ages to come, these tasks will make them compete with one another to bring each of his heroes to life as clearly, as perfectly, and as faithfully as possible, matching the perfect embodiment that the music of the drama already sketches out. Following this guide, the eyes of painters and sculptors will at last see the wonders of another visible world. Before them, this world was seen for the first time only by the creator of works like The Ring of the Nibelung. He is a creator of the highest

rank, who, like the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus, shows the way to an art that is still to come. Won't jealousy wake up even the greatest talent, if a painter or sculptor ever compares the effect of his works with the effect of Wagner's music? There is so much pure, sunny happiness in that music that whoever hears it feels as though all earlier music had been a foreign, stumbling, and cramped language. It feels as though, in the past, music had only been a toy to play with in front of people who did not deserve to be treated seriously. Or it had been a tool for training and teaching people who did not even deserve to play. With this earlier kind of music, the joy we always feel when listening to Wagner's works lasts only a short while. Then it seems as if that joy is caught by certain rare moments of forgetting. In those moments, the music seems to be talking with its own inner self and lifting its eyes upward, like Saint Cecilia in Raphael's painting, turning away from the listeners and from everyone who wants it to give them distraction, happiness, or lessons.

In general, we can say this about Wagner the musician: he gave the power of speech to everything in nature that until then had not wanted to speak. He refuses to accept that anything has to stay silent. He turns to the dawn, the forest, the mist, the cliffs, the hills, the shiver of night and the moonlight, and he notices a longing that they all share: they too want to sing their own tune. The philosopher says that it is will that struggles to exist in all of nature, both living and non-living. The musician adds: and wherever this will shows itself, it longs to exist as melody.

Before Wagner came along, music mostly stayed inside narrow limits. It dealt with the lasting, settled states of a person, or with what the Greeks called steady mood. Only with Beethoven did music begin to find the language of passion, of strong and burning will, and of the dramatic events that happen inside people's souls. In earlier times, what people wanted from music was to express a mood: a calm and

heavy one, a cheerful one, a worshipful one, or a sorry and regretful one. The goal was to use a certain noticeable sameness in the way the music was handled, and to keep that sameness going for a long time, so that the listener was forced to understand what the music meant and to take on its mood. Each of these ways of expressing a mood or atmosphere needed its own clear and particular way of handling the music. Other ways were simply fixed by empty custom. How long a piece should last was left up to the musician. His aim was not only to put the listener in a certain mood, but also to keep that mood from becoming boring by dragging it out too long. Music moved a step further when pieces expressing opposite moods were set to follow one after another, and people discovered the charm of light and shade, that is, of contrast. Another step forward came when a single piece of music was allowed to hold a contrast of steady moods inside it, for example, a struggle between a male theme and a female theme. But all of these are rough, early stages in the growth of music. Fear of passion led to the first rule, and fear of boredom led to the second. Any deep feeling, and any feeling that went too far, was thought of as "improper." But the art of steady mood had been used again and again to run through every possible version of the moods and situations that empty custom had declared fitting. And so, even though its masters were amazingly clever and inventive, its power finally ran out. Beethoven was the first to make music speak a new language, one that had been forbidden until then: the language of passion. But his art was built on the rules and customs of steady mood, and he had to try to defend his work in terms of those rules. Because of this, his growth as an artist was full of strange difficulties and unclear moments. Something dramatic inside the music was struggling to find a new shape, because every passion moves like a drama, with a beginning, a rise and an end. But the old pattern of "mood music" stood in its way and objected, almost the way morality fights against new ideas and against wrongdoing. So it almost looked as if Beethoven had given

himself a task that contradicted itself: expressing passion in the language of steady mood. However, this view does not fit Beethoven's last and greatest works. In those, he truly did find a new way to express the huge, soaring arch of passion. He simply picked out certain parts of that curve, showed them to his listeners as clearly as he possibly could, and then left it to them to guess the whole arch. If you looked at it only on the surface, the new form seemed like a pile of several separate pieces of music. Each one seemed to stand for a fixed, lasting situation, but really each was only a passing moment in the dramatic journey of a passion. A listener might think he was hearing the old "mood" music again, except that he could not understand how the different parts were connected to each other, and the parts no longer followed the old official rules. Even among lesser musicians, a certain scorn grew for the rule that a piece should be built as a balanced whole, and the order of the parts in their works stayed random. Then, because of a misunderstanding, the discovery of this grand way of handling passion led back to using a single movement, with whatever setting the composer liked, and so the tension between the parts disappeared completely. That is why the symphony, as Beethoven understood it, is such a wonderfully unclear creation, especially when, here and there, it makes shaky attempts to express Beethoven's passion. The tools do not suit the goal. And on the whole, the goal is not clear enough to the listener, because it was never really clear even in the composer's own mind. But the demand that something definite must be shared, and that it must be shared as clearly as possible, becomes more and more important the higher, harder and more demanding the kind of work is.

That is why Wagner put all his effort into one single goal: finding the means that would make his music as clear as possible. To do this, above all, he had to free himself from all the old habits and demands of the old "mood music." He had to give his works, which were music-

al pictures of feelings and passion, a way of speaking that could not be misunderstood. If we now look at what he actually achieved, we see that what he did for music is almost as important as what was done for sculpture by the sculptor and inventor who first made statues that could be seen from all sides, "sculpture in the round." Next to Wagner's music, all earlier music seems stiff and unsure, as if it were ashamed and did not want to be looked at from every side. With the greatest skill and exactness, Wagner uses every shade and color of feeling. Without the slightest hesitation, and with no fear that it might slip away from him, he grabs the most delicate, the rarest, and the gentlest emotion and holds it tight, as if it had turned solid when he touched it, even though to everyone else it may seem as fragile as a butterfly. His music is never vague or dreamy. Everything that is allowed to speak through it, whether a person or something in nature, has its own personal passion. In his hands, storm and fire gain the commanding strength of a person's own will. Above all the shouting characters and their clashing passions, above the whole rushing flood of opposites, there floats a mighty, all-embracing musical mind, perfectly calm, which keeps turning war into harmony. Taken as a whole, Wagner's music mirrors the world as the great poet of Ephesus saw it: a harmony that comes out of struggle, where justice and hostility are joined together. I admire the skill it takes to draw the great single line of one shared passion out of a tangle of passions that all seem to be pulling in different directions. I see proof that this could really be done in every single act of a Wagner drama, which tells the personal story of each character side by side with the story of the whole group together. Right from the start we know we are watching many crossing currents ruled by one great, powerful stream. At first this stream moves unsteadily over hidden rocks, and the rushing water seems to be torn apart, as if it were heading toward different places. But little by little we notice the main, shared movement getting stronger and faster. The wild, twisting fury of the fighting waters turns into one

wide, steady, and frightening flow toward a goal we cannot see. And suddenly, at the end, the whole flood, in all its width, plunges down into the depths, rejoicing like a demon over the abyss and all its roaring. Wagner is never more truly himself than when he is buried under difficulties and can use his power on a huge scale, with all the joy of someone who makes the laws. To bring restless, fighting crowds into one simple rhythm, and to make one will rule over a confusing mass of demands and wishes: these are the jobs he feels he was born for, and in doing them he finds his freedom. And through it all he never runs out of breath, and he never reaches his goal gasping. He worked just as hard to place the strictest rules on himself as he did to make those rules lighter for others. Life and art feel heavy to him when he cannot play with their hardest questions. Think about the link between the melody of singing and the melody of speech. You will see how he tried to take the pitch, the strength, and the speed of a passionate person's voice as his natural model, and to turn it into art. Then think about the job of fitting this singing passion into the overall orchestral order of music. Then you get some idea of the enormous difficulties he had to overcome. In this work, his inventiveness in small things and in big ones, his knowledge of everything, and his hard work are so great that when you look at one of Wagner's scores, you almost start to believe that no real work or effort ever existed before him. It almost seems as if he too could have said, about the hardships of art, that the true virtue of a playwright lies in giving up oneself. But he would probably have added: "There is only one real kind of hardship, the hardship of the artist who is not yet free. Virtue and goodness are small, easy achievements."

If we look at him as an artist in general, and compare him with a more famous figure, we see that Wagner is quite a lot like Demosthenes, the great speaker of ancient Greece. In Wagner, too, we find a fearsome seriousness of purpose, and a strong, gripping mind that

always gets a full hold on a thing. In him, too, we find the hand's quick grab and a grip like iron. Like Demosthenes, he hides his art, or makes you forget it, by the commanding way he points you toward the subject he is dealing with. And yet, like that great figure before him, he is the last and greatest of a whole line of artistic minds, and so he has more to hide than those who came before him. His art works like nature, like nature found again and brought back to health. Unlike all earlier musicians, there is nothing showy or puffed-up about him. Those earlier musicians did not mind sometimes playing around with their art and showing off their skill. With Wagner's art, you do not think of mere interest or entertainment, and you do not think of Wagner himself or of art in general. All you are aware of is how deeply necessary it all is. No one will ever be able to fully grasp how much strictness, steadiness of will, and self-control this artist needed while he was growing, so that at his peak he could do what had to be done joyfully and freely. It is enough if we can understand how, in some ways, his music, with a kind of cruelty toward itself, decides to serve the path of the drama, which is as merciless as fate. In truth, though, his art was always longing to wander freely in the open air and across the wild lands.

X.

An artist who has this kind of control over himself ends up ruling over all other artists, even if he doesn't especially want to. He is the only one for whom the people he has won over, his friends and followers, are no danger and no brake holding him back. Weaker people, who learn to lean on their friends, pay for that support by losing their independence. It is amazing to see how carefully, all through his life, Wagner avoided anything like becoming the leader of a party. And this was true even though, at the end of every stage in his career, a circle of followers formed around him, probably hoping to hold him fixed at

his latest stage of growth. But he always managed to tear himself free from them, and he never let himself be tied down. The ground he covered was too huge for anyone to keep up with him easily, and his path was so unusually steep that even his most loyal follower would have run out of breath. At almost every step of Wagner's journey, his friends would have liked to lecture him, and his enemies would gladly have done the same, though for different reasons. If his nature as an artist had been even a little less pure than it was, he would have reached the top position in the art and music world of his time much sooner than he did. It's true that he has reached it now, but in a much higher sense. Today every performance in any area of art bows down, so to speak, before the judge's seat of his genius and his artistic temperament. He has won over even the most stubborn people of his time. There isn't a single gifted musician among them who, deep down in his heart, would not gladly listen to him. Each of them finds Wagner's music more worth hearing than his own work and all other music put together. Many who want to make their mark by any means possible even fight against Wagner's hidden charm. Without realizing it, they side with the older masters, and they would rather say their "independence" comes from Schubert or Handel than from Wagner. But it does no good! Because they keep fighting against what their own conscience tells them, they become smaller and pettier artists. They ruin their own natures by forcing themselves to put up with allies and friends they don't really want. And in spite of all these sacrifices, they may still find, in their dreams, that their ear is turning to listen to Wagner. These opponents deserve our pity. They think they lose a lot when they lose themselves, but in this they are wrong.

It clearly makes no difference to Wagner whether musicians write music in his style, or whether they write music at all. In fact, he does everything he can to break down the idea that a school of composers must now follow behind him. Still, where he does have a direct influ-

ence on musicians, he tries to teach them the art of great performance. In his view, art has now reached a point where honestly trying to become a skilled, masterful performer or interpreter is far more worth talking about than the urge to be a creator no matter what. That's because, at this stage of art, everyone creating has a terrible effect. It leads to far more works being produced, and so it wears out the tools and tricks of genius by using them every day, which weakens the true greatness of their effect. Even what is good in art becomes unnecessary and harmful when it comes from copying what is best. Wagner's goals and his methods are made of one single piece. To see this, all you need is honesty about art. And it would be dishonest to take his methods and use them for other, less important goals.

So, if Wagner refuses to carry on living surrounded by a crowd of composers, he is all the more eager to give every talented person a new duty: to join him in searching for the rules of style for staging drama. He feels deeply that he needs to set up a lasting tradition of style for his art. Through that tradition, his work could live on, in a pure form, from one generation to the next, until it reaches the future that its creator planned for it.

Wagner is driven by a fearless longing to share everything that has to do with laying down this style we just mentioned, and so everything that has to do with keeping his art alive. He wanted to make his work, as Schopenhauer would put it, a sacred treasure and the true fruit of his life. He wanted it to be something passed down to all humanity, and to keep it safe for people in the future who would be better able to value it. These were the highest goals of his life. For them he wore a crown of thorns, meaning he suffered greatly, and one day that crown will sprout leaves of bay, the leaves of a victor's wreath. Think of an insect that, in its final form, puts all its strength into one single task: finding a safe place for its eggs and making sure its young, born after its death, will do well. Only then does it die content. In the same

way, Wagner fought with just as much determination to find a safe place for his works.

This goal mattered to him more than anything else, and it kept pushing him to find new ways forward. The more clearly he saw that he was in conflict with an age that was both twisted and unwilling to listen to him, the more he drew on his almost devilish gift for getting his ideas across to others. Little by little, though, even this same age began to notice his tireless efforts, to respond to his clever approaches, and to start listening to him. Whenever a chance came up, small or great, no matter how far away, that gave Wagner a way to explain his ideas, he took it. He rethought his ideas to fit every new situation, and he could make them speak even through the poorest, humblest form. Whenever a person who could only half understand him opened up to him, he never failed to plant his seed in that person. He saw hope in things that made the average, cool-headed observer just shrug his shoulders. He got things wrong again and again, but only so that he could, in the end, win his point against that same observer. A wise thinker really only spends time with living people so that he can add to what he knows. In the same way, the artist almost seems unable to spend time with the people of his day at all, unless they can help him make his work last forever. He can only be loved with a love for this lasting quality of his work. So the only kind of hatred toward him that he really notices is the hatred that would tear down the bridges carrying his art into the future. Think of the students Wagner trained for his own purpose; the individual musicians and actors he advised, whose ears he corrected and improved; the small and large orchestras he conducted; the towns that saw him seriously doing the work of his calling; the princes and ladies who, half to show off and half out of love, took part in shaping his plans; and the different European countries where he lived for a time as the judge and the guilty conscience of their arts. All of these gradually became

the echo of his ideas and of his tireless efforts to make something grow and bear fruit in the future. This echo often sounded so out of tune that it confused him. Still, the huge power of his voice, crying out into the world again and again, was bound to make things ring back in the end. Soon it will be impossible to ignore him or to misunderstand him. It is this echo that is even now making the art institutions of modern people shake. Every time the breath of his spirit blew into these hiding places, everything that was overripe or dried up fell to the ground. But the growing doubt that people now feel everywhere says even more than all this shaking. Nobody dares to predict anymore where Wagner's influence might suddenly break out next. He simply cannot separate the saving of art from any other kind of saving or ruin. Wherever modern life hides a danger, he looks at it with the sharp eye of suspicion and sees a danger to art. In his imagination he takes the whole building of modern society apart, and he lets nothing rotten, no weak beam, get past him. If along the way he happens to find walls that keep out the weather, or anything like solid foundations, he right away looks for ways to turn them into defenses and shelters for his art. He lives like a person on the run who does not want to save his own life, but to protect a secret. He is like an unhappy woman who does not want to save her own soul, but the soul of the child lying in her lap. In short, he lives like Sieglinde, "for the sake of love."

Life must truly be full of pain and shame for someone who can find no rest and no shelter in this world, and yet must still turn to it, demand things from it, look down on it, and still be unable to do without the very thing he looks down on. This is what really makes up the misery of the artist of the future. Unlike the philosopher, he cannot carry on his work alone, shut away in a study. He needs human beings to carry his message to this future. He needs public institutions to make sure that future comes. He needs, so to speak,

bridges between today and the time to come. His art cannot, like the philosopher's, be loaded onto the boat of written pages and sent off. Art needs skilled people, not letters and musical notes, to pass it on. Over whole stretches of Wagner's life you can hear a low sound of distress. He was upset that he could not find these skilled performers, in front of whom he longed to show real examples of his work, instead of being stuck with written symbols. He longed to practice his art in front of them, instead of showing a pale copy of it to people who read books, and who, generally speaking, are therefore not artists.

When we look at Wagner as a writer, we see a brave fighter whose right hand has been cut off, so to speak, and who has kept on fighting with his left. In his writings he is always suffering, because a fate that is passing but impossible to overcome has taken away his own proper way of getting his ideas across. That proper way would be to show them through powerful, revealing, triumphant examples on the stage. His writings do not lay down any strict or final rules. Those rules are found in his works as a whole. The written side of him is his attempt to understand the instinct that drove him to create his works, and to catch a glimpse of himself through them. When he managed to turn his instincts into clear knowledge, he always hoped that the opposite would happen in the minds of his readers: that his knowledge would turn back into instinct inside them. That was the reason he wrote. Suppose it turns out in the end that Wagner was trying to do the impossible here. Even then, he would only be sharing the fate of everyone who has thought deeply about art. And even then he would be ahead of most of them in one way: he carried inside him the strongest instinct for all the arts. I know of no written theory of art that sheds more light than Wagner's. Everything that can possibly be learned about how a work of art comes into being is found in his writings. He is one of the truly great, who came among us as a witness, and who keeps improving his testimony and making it clearer and freer all the

time. Even when he stumbles as a scholar, sparks fly up from the ground where he falls. Essays such as "Beethoven," "On Conducting," "On Actors and Singers," and "State and Religion" leave no room for argument. Like holy relics in their caskets, they make everyone who comes near them feel calm, serious, and full of respect. Others, especially the earlier ones, including "Opera and Drama," stir you up and unsettle you. Their rhythm is so uneven that, as prose, they are confusing. Their line of argument keeps breaking off, and bursts of feeling slow them down more than they speed them up. A kind of unwillingness on the writer's part seems to hang over them like a dark cloth over a coffin, as if the artist were a little ashamed of getting into abstract debates. What will probably weigh most heavily on a reader who only half understands him is the tone of commanding dignity that belongs to Wagner alone, and that is very hard to describe. To me it always feels as if Wagner were speaking to enemies the whole time. The style of all these essays is more like spoken language than written language. So they will seem much easier to understand if you hear them read aloud, as though in front of his enemies, people he cannot be friendly with and toward whom he must therefore keep a certain distance and coolness. But the overwhelming passion of his feelings keeps breaking through this deliberate disguise. Then the stiff, heavy sentences, bloated with extra words, disappear, and his pen races off sentences and even whole pages that rank among the best German prose ever written. But let us even admit that when he wrote those passages he was speaking to friends, and that the shadow of his enemies had lifted for a while. Even so, all the friends and enemies that Wagner has as a writer share one thing. This thing sets them completely apart from "the people" for whom he worked as an artist. Because their education has been over-refined and useless, they have lost the basic qualities of the national character. Anyone who wants to speak to them has to speak in a way that is not the way of the people. That is, he has to write like our best prose writers, and like Wagner

himself. Still, it is obvious that he forced himself against his nature to write that way. Yet the strength of his almost motherly instinct for caution, which is ready to make any sacrifice, tends rather to put him back among the scholars and learned men. As a creator, he always longed to say goodbye to them. He gives in to the language of educated people and to all the rules for using it, even though he was the first to see how deeply that language fails as a way of really reaching people.

For if anything sets his art apart from every other art of modern times, it is this: it no longer speaks the language of any one social class, and it refuses to accept the split between "educated" and "uneducated." So it stands in contrast to every kind of real culture that came from the Renaissance, which still bathes us modern people in its light and shadow even today. Because Wagner's art sometimes carries us beyond itself, we are able to get an overall view of what that Renaissance culture is like as a whole. We see Goethe and the Italian poet Leopardi as the last great stragglers of the Italian scholar-poets. We see Faust as the living form of a problem the people could never care about: a man of theory who is thirsty for real life. Even Goethe's songs imitate the songs of the people, rather than setting a high standard before the people that they are expected to reach. And the poet knew very well how true his words were when he seriously told his followers: "My works cannot become popular. Anyone who hopes and tries to make them popular is mistaken."

An art could appear that was so clear and so warm that it would flood the lowly and the simple-minded with its light, and also melt the pride of the learned. Something like that had to be lived through; no one could have guessed it beforehand. But even in the mind of someone who lives through it today, it must overturn every idea he already had about education and real culture. To such a person, it will seem as if the curtain hiding the future has been torn in two. Behind

it lies a future in which there is no highest good and no highest joy that does not belong to everyone. Then the shame attached to the word "common" will be done away with.

If our sense of what is coming reaches this far into the distant future, then everyone with clear eyes will see the terrible social madness of our present age. They will stop closing their eyes to the dangers that surround an art which seems to have its roots only in the far-off future. It is like a tree that spreads its budding branches before our eyes while it has not yet shown us the soil it draws its sap from. How can we protect this art, which has no home here, through the ages until that distant future arrives? A revolution seems to be coming everywhere, as unstoppable as a flood. How can we hold back that flood, so that the blessed hope and promise of a better future, of a freer human life, is not swept away along with everything that is bound to die and deserves to die?

Anyone who asks this question shares Wagner's worry. Like Wagner, he will feel driven to look for powers already in place that are willing to protect the noblest passions of human beings during a time of earthquakes and upheavals. This is the only sense in which Wagner, through his writings, asks the scholars a question: will they keep the gift he leaves them, the precious Ring of his art, among their other treasures? Wagner also has an amazing trust in the German spirit and in the goals of German politics. To me, this trust seems to come from his belief that the people of the Reformation have the strength, gentleness, and courage needed to turn "the rushing flood of revolution into the quiet bed of a calmly flowing river of humanity." I could almost believe that this, and only this, is what he meant to say through the symbol of his Imperial March.

Usually, though, the creative artist's generous feelings and his love for humanity are too large for him to keep his eyes fixed only within the

borders of one nation. His thoughts, like those of every good and great German, go beyond being German. The language of his art does not speak to particular peoples. It speaks to humanity as a whole.

But it speaks to the people of the future.

This is the belief that truly belongs to him. It is both his torment and what sets him apart. No artist from any time in the past has ever been given such a strange share of genius. No one but him has ever had to mix this most bitter ingredient into the sweet drink of the gods that his enthusiasm gave him. You might expect that he took up this belief to defend himself, as a misunderstood and mistreated artist, someone running away from his own age. But that is not the case. Whether his fellow men praised him or failed him could neither create this belief nor destroy it. Whether this generation honored him or insulted him, he did not belong to it. That was the conclusion his instincts led him to. And anyone who does not believe in Wagner can never be made to accept that any generation will ever belong to him. Still, even this doubter can at least ask: what kind of generation will it be in which Wagner will recognize his "people"? In what generation will he see the model of all those who share a common suffering and want to escape from it through an art they all share? Schiller was certainly more hopeful and cheerful. He did not ask what the future would have to be like if the artist's instinct that predicts it turned out to be right. Instead, his command to every artist was this:

Fly up high in a bold flight, far beyond the sight of your own time! In your shining mirror, a glimpse of a far-off dawn will appear.

XI.

May good common sense keep us from ever thinking that humanity will one day find a final, perfect order of things, and that happiness will then shine down on us evenly forever, like the sun's rays in the

tropics. Wagner has nothing to do with that kind of hope. He is not a dreamer of perfect worlds. If he could not do without believing in a future, it only meant this: he saw certain qualities in modern people that he did not think were part of their true nature. These qualities did not seem to him to be a necessary part of how people are made. In fact, he saw them as changeable and temporary. And precisely because of these qualities, art would find no home among people today, so he himself had to be the forerunner and prophet of another age. The future generations his instinct led him to expect will not be given a golden age or a sky without clouds. We can get a rough idea of what these people will be like from the hidden signs in his art, as far as you can figure out what kind of pain someone has from the kind of relief they look for. Nor will superhuman goodness and fairness stretch over this future land like a rainbow that lasts forever. Perhaps this coming generation will, on the whole, seem more wicked than ours, because in good and in evil alike it will be more honest and direct. If its soul were ever able to speak out fully and without shame, it might even shake us and frighten us, as if the voice of some evil spirit that had been hidden until now suddenly cried out among us. For how do these statements sound to us? That passion is better than coldly holding back one's feelings or being a hypocrite. That being honest and direct, even in doing wrong, is better than losing yourself in trying to follow traditional morals. That a free person can be good just as easily as evil, but a person who has not freed himself is a disgrace to nature and has no share in happiness, either in heaven or on earth. And finally, that everyone who wants to be free has to become free by their own effort, because freedom is never handed to anyone as a gift from heaven. However harsh and strange these statements may sound, they are still echoes from that future world, a world that truly needs art and expects real joy from having it. They are the language of nature, brought back again even among human beings. They stand for what I

have already called true feeling, as opposed to the false feeling that rules today.

But real relief, or real salvation, exists only for what is natural. It does not exist for what goes against nature or what grows out of false feeling. When everything unnatural becomes aware of itself, it wants only one thing: to stop existing. What is natural, on the other hand, longs to be changed and made glorious through love. The unnatural would rather not be at all; the natural would rather be different. Whoever has understood this should quietly call to mind the simple themes of Wagner's art. Then he can ask himself whether it was nature, or the opposite of nature, that tried through these themes to reach the goals just described.

A desperate wanderer is set free from his misery by the caring love of a woman who would rather die than betray him: that is the story of The Flying Dutchman. A young woman in love gives up all hope of happiness for herself. Through a holy change, her love for one man turns into a selfless love for others. She becomes a saint, and she saves the soul of the man she loves: that is the story of Tannhäuser. The highest and most noble being comes down among people, humbly asking to be accepted, and asks that no one question where it came from. But when that deadly question is finally asked, it sadly goes back to its higher home: that is the story of Lohengrin. A woman's loving heart, and the people too, happily welcome a new and kind-hearted genius, even though the keepers of tradition and old habits reject him and insult him: that is the story of The Mastersingers. Two lovers do not know that they are loved. Instead, each believes the other has deeply hurt and scorned them. So each one demands that the other drink a cup of deadly poison. On the surface, this is meant to pay for the insult. But really it comes from an urge that neither of them understands: through death, they want to escape any chance of being separated or betrayed. Because they think death is

coming, their chained-up souls are set loose, and they get one short moment of thrilling happiness, as if they had truly escaped from the present, from false appearances, and from life itself: that is the story of Tristan and Isolde.

In The Ring of the Nibelung, the tragic hero is a god whose heart longs for power. He tries every road to get it, and in the end he ties himself to too many deals and promises. He loses his freedom, and at last he is struck by the curse that always comes with power. He realizes he is no longer free because he no longer has any way to take hold of the golden Ring. That Ring stands for all power on earth, and as long as his enemies hold it, it is also the greatest danger to him. He is overcome by fear of the end, the twilight of all the gods. He is also overcome by despair, because all he can do is wait for the end without fighting it. He needs a free and fearless man who, without the god's advice or help, and even if he has to fight against gods, can do alone what a god's powers cannot do. He does not see that this man is coming. And just as a new hope starts to take shape in him, he has to obey the deals that bind him: with his own hand he must kill the one he loves most, and his purest pity must be punished by his own grief. After that, he begins to hate power, because power carries evil and slavery inside it. His will is broken, and he himself starts to long for the end that threatens him from far away. Right then, something happens that he had wanted more than anything for a long time: the free and fearless man appears. This man rises up against everything that is accepted and settled. His parents pay for having been joined by a bond that went against the order of nature and against custom. They die, but Siegfried lives on. When Wotan sees how splendidly Siegfried grows and flourishes, the hatred leaves his soul, and he watches the hero's life with a father's love and worry. He watches how Siegfried forges his sword, kills the dragon, takes the ring, escapes the most cunning trap, and wakes Brünnhilde. He watches how the curse that

lives in the ring slowly catches up with Siegfried. He watches how Siegfried, loyal even within his loyalty, out of love hurts the one he loves most. He watches how Siegfried is wrapped in the shadow and cloud of guilt, then rises out of it shining brighter than the sun, and finally goes down, setting the whole sky on fire with his burning glow and cleansing the world of the curse. All of this is seen by the god, whose ruling spear was broken in the fight with this freest of men, and who lost his power because of him. And the god is filled with joy at his own defeat. Full of feeling for both the victory and the pain of the one who beat him, his eyes burning with a joy that hurts, he looks back on these last events. He has become free through love, free from himself.

And now ask yourselves, you people of today: Was all this written for you? Do you have the courage to point up at the stars of this whole heavenly dome of beauty and goodness and say, "This is our life, and Wagner has placed it up there beneath the stars"?

Where are the men among you who can understand the godlike figure of Wotan through their own lives, and who, like him, keep growing greater even as they step back? Which of you would give up power, knowing and having learned that power is evil? Where are the people who, like Brünnhilde, give up their knowledge for the sake of love, and in the end take from their own lives the highest wisdom: "Love that suffered, the deepest sorrow, opened my eyes"? And where are the free and fearless ones, growing and blooming in an innocent kind of selfishness? And where among you are the Siegfrieds?

Whoever asks these questions and gets no answer will be forced to look around for signs of the future. And suppose his eyes, looking far off into an unknown distance, should catch sight of exactly that "people" which his own generation can read in the signs hidden in Wagner's art. Then he will also understand what Wagner will mean to

that people, something he cannot be for all of us. He will not be the prophet of the future, as he might perhaps like to seem to us, but the one who explains the past and makes it clear.

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