

Wagnerian  
Conception  
of the  
World

by

Ramón Bau

## **THE WAGNERIAN CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD**

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We do not dedicate this NS World to praise the best musician (what a horror to call Wagner simply a musician) of our history, nor to speak of his works. Wagner is not the object of this labor, but as Wagnerian art is the unique way to reach a goal, we seek the attainment of the Person, the complete development that leads a human being to become a Person, in our global conception of the world in which the right to be a Person is dictated by the duty of deserving it.

So it is not merely an attempt to praise Wagnerian music, much less to promote opera or classical music, although this would be very positive, but to comprehend the goal we seek and the path to reach it.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON**

If a human being seeks only pleasure and happiness in his life, if his object is to live placidly managing to satisfy physical and psychological needs at the highest possible level, then in this case to keep reading these lines serves very little purpose.

The utilitarian vision of man seen as an economic machine (even considering the word economic not only as cash but in the sense of satisfying needs), claims to obtain the means to live happily, to reproduce and get pleasure. This is absolutely another path from ours.

The World as Representation, Schopenhauer would say, is the world of appearances, of the superficial and material, that has Science at its cusp, the most perfect knowledge of the Representative. But within Knowledge Utility lies hidden, first inevitable step towards the inferior, in the midst of an illusory representation of reality, to fall at last into Happiness and Pleasure as the one end that can be reached in this road of the apparent.

When someone asks you what is your goal in life, more and more people answer "to be happy" and the essence of that happiness is the absence of pain, the fulfillment of needs (utilities) and the Possession of representative

elements, materials, capable of giving this pleasure. And, in any case, to satisfy needs such as security and self-appreciation, without any reference to fulfillment of any Duty or to better his human Quality.

Against this road to the center of the material, there is another way to understand personal development, what Schopenhauer called "The Will," which involves understanding the perishability of everything Representative, and to claim a transcendent action, something that lifts us above the human. It is Struggle as Heroic path, neither egoistic nor useful.

When one accepts that his life has for its goal his elevation to a Person, an act never finished, a permanent struggle between the tendencies to superficial Pleasure and the Will of Schopenhauer, in this moment one needs Wagner.

The Hero is not he who undertakes extraordinary deeds but he who undertakes his own life as a deed contrary to utilitarian Egotism. The heroic deed is a lunge of the Will against Utility, and always a TRAGIC deed. Feeling and Art form this road to real internal essence, against the appearances of material things.

So we either assume a normal purpose in our lives, one that is representative, or else we instead claim to assume the construction of a Person, the heroic way against ownership and material pleasure, and in some manner, in that case, we assume Tragedy as the essence of the superior life.

For those who remember Siegfried, Fafner possesses the Gold, and this Ownership makes him happy, asleep and restful because he has everything in his material possession. That is the human felicity of those who do not seek to be a person.

## **TRAGEDY AS THE ESSENCE OF THE PERSON**

Today the heroic is not the singular heroic act of valour but to assume life as a Tragic deed. In some ways the debate is between the Vulgar and the Tragic, between Utility and the Heroic, between Representation and Will. Each one now has the opportunity to orient his life to utility, that is, to strive to meet his needs and desires. The Tragic Sense of Life is to overcome this temptation and orient life against egotism, in seriousness and surpassment. And this way is a Tragedy in itself.

One should not understand the tragic as sad or pessimistic, this signification coming precisely from the utilitarian vision of life. For utilitarianism everything heroic is sorrowful, implying a renunciation of immediate

material pleasure, in some form sad and pessimistic. The Tragic always signifies Sorrow in part, renunciation of the pleasure that goes with Possession and the fulfillment of egoisms. Yet it absolutely does not mean sadness at all.

Calderón wrote jokingly: "Blessed he who lives deceived," which is the ultimate expression of representation, of utility. He who takes the essence and does not let himself be fooled by the superficial apparent Representation of life is condemned not to be happy, to suffer, since the happiness of vulgarity is fundamentally based on living deceived (in the sleep of the possession of Fafner), in not deepening, in deceiving the essence of the person with arguments of superficial utility.

A friend once said to me: "If my wife is cheating on me I do not want to know, for then I will not suffer." Or to put more rigorously: If I do not know the tragic I can enjoy the comic. If I blockade my deep sensibility I can enjoy the happy appearances of possessions, the instant pleasures that possession gives against the tragedy that Feeling gives.

To possess gives an instant of pleasure, whereas to feel gives a superior essence, but at the same time opens consciousness to suffering, to the tragic. Pleasure against Duty, the Comic against the Tragic.

Unamuno wrote "The Tragic Sense of Life," a book to express this road of "life is tragedy, and tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory nor hope of it." In some sense death marks the end of the tragic. Life is tragic but death is the confirmation of the value of Tragedy against Comedy. If we do not take this spark of life between two voids, if we do not have the Will to Power in this second of personal life, the meaning of life is jocular, is Comic, we are nothing and going to nothing. Only the Tragic sense, the courage and spirit to be Supermen can give sense to this instant of life. To give it meaning through pleasure or representational utility is to lower our human quality.

For Schopenhauer the tragic sense amounts to renunciation, to eliminating selfish desires. For Nietzsche, in the Will to Power, it means to overcome oneself through Will. For Nietzsche egotism is not to impose one's own will but to orient this will to the low and miserable rather than use it for Power and superation. For Religion Tragedy is Compassion for the suffering of the world. Each seeks a solution for personal tragedy. In this sense Tragedy is the pure essence of Art, the extreme form of giving rise to the deepest and least selfish, least useful feelings.

And Politics, though not the miserable politics of the immediate, must be an Heroic deed giving to all the possibility of Art and Tragedy. This is Politics to establish the material social conditions that permit every man of the community to be able to develop, if he wishes, his personality and rebel against the dominion of material pleasure, to awaken his feeling against his desire of possession, to reach for the Art of Super-humanity.

The tragic narrates the outbursts of will over the future of men. In Tragedy the Hero rises and looks at the Will that insults and pursues him, and is disposed to renounce even the will to live for his Honour (his Will to overcome). The Hero with this not only redeems his individual faults, but also combats the vulgar debasement of humanity, and teaches us the path of redemption.

## **TRAGIC ART**

Everything we have said so far leads us to understand what we seek: a way to achieve this essentially human sensibility that elevates us and separates us from utilitarian selfishness and allows us to overcome, to be supermen. And this path is through Art, only through Art.

If the heroic deed is political it has a social function, it can be useful for others to come to Art, but in itself this is not the end but the means. The Political is the means by which to achieve the Tragic in each person, to give opportunity for Tragedy.

Tragic Art is then pure Will, pure Sensibility. Where do we find this sublime Art that speaks directly to the spirit? Fundamentally in Music.

"Music floods the human spirit with sweetest dream images, drawn to a different life, unearthly, where he finds refuge from the dismal sorrows of this world," wrote the composer E.T.A. Hoffman.

"Music is not like the other arts, a representation of ideas or a degree of objectification of the will, but represents the will itself, working directly on the Will, that is, on the senses, feelings and emotions of the audience" ("The World as Representation and Will," by Schopenhauer).

"In the succession of harmonies, distinctly named melodies, the will reveals itself with total immediacy" (Nietzsche in "The Birth of Tragedy").

"Music emanates from a force that takes over everything and that no one is capable of explaining." Goethe.

"Music, although an incomprehensible language according to the laws of logic, contains in itself a persuasive force to make itself understood, as those same logical laws do not have" ("Music of the Future" of Wagner).

We thus see the way to Tragic art, or art that speaks to the spirit directly, able to move and elevate the person, has in Music its most direct element, since it does not require an intermediate representation, does not require to pass through the intellect, but goes directly to the will, to the sensible. It does not have the representative support of reason.

With this everything in this concept of music and reason is initiated. Will and Representation. Dionysos and Apollo. We already know how to speak directly to sentiment, but we also need to say things to it, not merely make it vibrate. Tragedy is Reason and Feeling. If the artist wishes to make us feel and furthermore explain the why of things, he must use music and words as well, which is what will tell us the how and why. The Representative expression most directly united with music is poetry. "Examining the poetry of Ezra Pound we realize what we lack in our current poetry. Because if the skeleton of Poundian diction could actually stick to a conversation between intelligent people, the hand of the poet busily puts everything else onto it. I would say all this could be summarized in one word: Music. Pound knew he would have to look where the divorce between the two arts had started, among the troubadours. The troubadours knew how to present music in the moment in which she had begun to disappear as a companion to poetry. (Study of the Poetry of Ezra Pound)

And Schiller tells us about his way of composing poetry in a letter to Goethe in 1796: "At first the feeling wants a determined clear objective from me; this is not formed until later. A certain musical mood precedes and then the poetic idea follows."

The circle is beginning to close: Tragic Art begins with music in Poetry, as the link between Feeling and Reason, both at the service of Art. When all the functions of Man place themselves at the service of artistic expression, when the person feels himself identified with Art, and Art with Folk Community, then religion, art, intelligence, all are part of an intense artistic experience, so that we have Tragic Art.

## **DRAMA THEATRE: HOME OF THE SEARCH**

Wagner was 13 and had already read much Shakespeare, enough to write a drama entitled "Leubaldo and Adelaide" inspired by it. And at 15 years he had translated the first fifteen books of the Odyssey and tried to imitate some tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, devouring the library of his uncle. For several centuries the maximum and most profound sensibility was contained in one part by music and in another by dramatic theatre. From Calderon to Schiller or Ibsen, from Bach to Beethoven, the arts of dramatic poetry and music evolved each in turn. Wagner doubted whether to become a playwright or a musician. Should he express himself through the word or through music? To go to the intellect and explain the intimate problems of being, like Hamlet, or rather to make the soul feel directly like Beethoven? If Shakespeare made us vibrate with his expression of the human drama, Beethoven filled us with pure sentiments.

Here and there the dramatic Theatre glimpsed an early form of something extraordinary. Shakespeare wrote iambic verses that take on an incredible musicality when read well in their original English. Calderon shows works of a mystical profundity wrapped in beautiful poetry, in a poetic musicality that makes us follow along wanting to speak for a while with that same musicality. There are dialogues in Hamlet in which we do not know whether what is said or how it is said is more beautiful. And the same occurs with a few other poetic dramas. What does it matter if we have already seen Hamlet when every time we go to see him is an experience, not because of the novelty of the plot but because of the beauty of its dramatic unity. And what does it matter that "El Gran Teatro del Mundo" of Calderon has a known predictable plot from the beginning (marked by knowledge of the Catholic religion) without any possible surprise, as it is not a work of intrigue but of the beauty of a mystical, musical and deep Tragedy. Speech or melody, concept or music, this debate disturbed the young Wagner, who in the end, for personal motives, inclined to music. He attempted to triumph as a musician until his exile in Switzerland gave him time to think and meditate on Art, and comprehend that Tragic Art is neither Music nor Poetry but the trunk common to both. It is Poetry made music and Music with poetry: Tragedy, what he would call Music Drama.

In 1849 he wrote "Art and Revolution" where for the first time he clearly explains Tragic Art in its global conception, the road towards Art capable of bringing man to be Person or Superman.

"We can not do a serious investigation of our Art without observing the connection with the Art of ancient Greece. In reality our Art is but a link in

the chain of European artistic developments and the starting point for this development is in the Greeks" ("Art and Revolution" by Wagner)

He rebels against pure music as an incomplete way. "For music seeks to create effects that can only be achieved by the clear intelligible word of dramatic poetry" ("Opera and Drama" by Wagner)

The Art of the Future has been born, and rises like the Phoenix from the ashes of Greek Tragedy. The inspiration which was the origin of popular and sacred art, that which should be the perfect way, remains perfectly defined in "Art and Revolution": Attic Tragedy.

Wagner blasts Opera, the conception of the human voice as an orchestral instrument, against the egocentric singer and the subordination of drama to tearful drama, against the musical novel. He wrote "Drama and Opera" which is the definitive burial of the operatic conception of his works, so that Wagner will never again be confused with a musician, nor his art with German opera.

## **ATTIC GREEK TRAGEDY**

Where has there been an Art that stems from the feeling of a People, rooted in its own life, an art happy in the tragic, felt, lived, assumed by all the people who seek feeling, not diversion, beauty and spirituality, not the Idea or philosophy? Where has there been an Art in which Poetry and Music were united, in which reason would speak through feeling and not for rational discourse? A religious, spiritual Art united to the deepest questions of communal sentiment, but that at the same time were not beyond the world, but attached to the problems of man.

This miracle has been given only once. In ancient Greek Tragedy, the Athenian Tragedy, Attic.

It is impossible to understand the Art of the Future without understanding what this miracle was, its why and how it degenerated, since its plenitude is the road we seek and its degradation is the reflection of our degradation.

From her origins Greece had the clear idea that Art was the conjunction of two forces, Beauty and Perfection on one side, and savage irrational Sentiment. For this they had two gods: Apollo and Dionysos. Apollo, god of Beauty and perfect knowledge, the Resplendent Sun, the Serene. And Dionysos, the savage, the happiness of spring and oniric feeling. Dionysian



festivals were the reconciliation of Man and Nature, where animals and flowers surrounded man in his natural state.

While for the Asians (and later for our decadent civilization) Dionysos became the justification for inferior orgies and unbridled desire for pleasure and the merely physical, the Greeks were able to understand the natural feeling side, savage and powerful, of man is part of the way to the superior, the divine, not a road of lowering and decay.

Apollo complemented the ecstasy of Dionysos. And in Tragedy Greek Art had a double source of Reason and Sentiment.

Homer is the first example of Apollonian art. Arqilochus is the lyricist of Dionysos, exalted and beautiful, singing his love and desperation with passion. And music was part of this Art. Achilles sang with his lyre in the Iliad, and lyric was always united to music.

From this remote origin Tragedy was born.

Perhaps Euripides' work "The Baccantes" is among those that most clearly shows the Dionysian cult and how those who combat it with the intelligence are culpable. Pentheus reasons against Dionysos, and the god of orgies explains perfectly how distinct the Greek sense of the orgy is from ours:

"-Pentheus: What do you think of orgies?"

-Dionysos: It is forbidden for uninitiated mortals to know them. The orgies of Dionysos are hidden from the impious."

Pentheus attempts to accuse the Dionysian cult of fomenting vice, and Dionysos clearly indicates that Impiety and vice know nothing of Dionysos, that the basis of the bacchanales is other from them. Dionysos was the vitality and happiness of living in Nature, not material vice.

He who currently buys a book with the dramas of Sophocles and reads them knows nothing of what Greek Tragedy was, and therefore fails to capture its importance and profundity. The Athenian people went to the theatre with a religious spirit, of plenitud, solemnity, each spectator participated absolutely in the drama as something that affected his life and from which he would benefit as a person. The actors were volunteers from the populace, not paid, it was an honour for them to be elected. Tragedy consisted of a series of coordinated elements to obtain the effect of divine Art. The chorus and their songs exposed the feeling of the people before the drama, religious opinion. Dance and music marked the rhythm of the poem: verse, melody, rhythm, music, dance, everything were coordinated to show the sentiments of drama. And most important: Tragedy did not treat with vulgar themes and had absolutely no idea of presenting an intrigue, or a plot in which they are interested in what passes them by. Absolutely the themes were mythic, with

almost religious elements taking into account that for a Greek religion was feelings and ideas, passions and experiences, human themes under divine symbols. For the Greek each god had a human experiential representation, and represented part of his life and of Nature. It is therefore difficult to capture the totality of a Tragedy, since when a name is mentioned in the text we fail to grasp (if we do not read a text commented in depth by a specialist) what is meant and caught by the Greek spectator when hearing of this god or thing. And to read the text was not the goal, but to obtain the feeling of tragedy.

The plot was well known by the spectator from the beginning of the work, and therefore he had no interest whatsoever in knowing the outcome, but in admiring the Art, the how, and in feeling sorrow and in the teaching of the hero.

To reinforce this orientation Euripides always had a prologue to the work where a god explained the entire outcome, noted the reasons and problems of the work, so that interest in what passed were eliminated and replaced by why and how it passed.

The great Tragedians who have left us abundant works were Aeschylus and Sophocles, they were the peaks of their epoch, men of the Athenian Polis, who had fought against the Persians and were well respected by the people. Their tragedies were classes on ethics and feelings. Sophocles was appointed general (political leader) in honour of his Tragedies that were different from the present world. We shall attempt to see, with Sophocles, a few examples of this Tragedy.

His "Ajax" is a work where strength shown as simple and pure, even with the best intentions, is mocked by deception and destiny (in the form of the will of the gods), so that we realize perfectly well that neither intelligence nor strength are pure nor accepted in themselves, nor promise anything. It is Destiny, the dionysian, the tragedy of man which in the end carries our bark of life to ever unwanted seas. Ajax seeks glory innocently and valiantly, but is mocked by destiny to humiliation. His Honour obligates him to go to his death with undeserved dishonour. The gods punish him for his pride in believing himself strong, and the intelligent are also shown ruined for not being more noble.

"Antigone" reflects the same theme: two minds are obfuscated by driving a solvable theme in a reasonable way to tragedy. Once again intelligence does not serve when the passions and destiny mark his road. The just, however reasonable, is on a path of destruction when faced with the gods (or as may be Nature and will).

And without doubt the best work of Sophocles, "Oedipus Rex," where intelligence is absolutely criticised, so that knowledge is against will and the dramatic. Oedipus is intelligent and acts with wisdom and goodness, yet, put precisely, every honourable and logical step of his carries him step by step to perdition. Drama is beyond wisdom. The powers of reality are superior to our pride of knowledge. Struck down by misfortune despite his efforts, Oedipus tears out his eyes, showing his mistake has been to see, to know, when he should have trusted more to his human sense and less to logic.

How can we forget Wotan trusting the intelligence of Logh with the Rhinegold, as this intelligence can do no more than lead to tragedy! All Tragic Art is centered in sentiment and beauty, the human reasons. But this Golden Age falls into the most absolute decadence from Socrates, "the first ugly Greek," as Nietzsche would say about him. It is the great revolution of Philosophy against Art. Socrates imposes the idea that Knowledge is Happiness, that the beautiful is the Certain. With him Greece enters onto the path of Philosophy and abandons the purity of its search for Man through Art. Man becomes Thinker and feelings turn into irrationality. Ugliness is Truth and Beauty is superficial. The new Tragedy no longer looks anything like what we have seen and art ceases to be the center of beauty and vitality, to become Dialogue, Plot.

Here are the consequences of this lamentable change: Arguments cease to be elevated, to treat first of vulgar themes, then to become low and often rude. The center of Tragedy passes from Sentiment to Diversion or time passing. From sense to distraction. To be an actor goes from being an honour given to volunteers of the people, to being a paid profession, thus Art becomes Office. From being a religious festival of human formation to be the pastime of a man who works and wants to have a good time. From the entire People attending to those going who have the money to pay the entrance fee. From Communal Art to the Spectacular Individual. The tragic end is finished, those who pay for distraction ask for happy endings. Intrigue to keep the interest of a public without style becomes the principal, and therefore the Prologue that explains the key of the work disappears. The Corypheus (or leader of the chorus) disappears, as the voice of the chorus was the spirit of the Greek People, the moral voice of their conscience, and this did not interest the new mercantile public. Human types cease to be stereotypes and become understood by ignoramus. And through that change of spirit there is the destruction of Tragedy as an artistic Unity. Music disappears from the theatre and soon poetry, music,

dance will be separated, each egoistic in its tendency, since it lacks the impulse of a people who would want everything united to give a global meaning to his Art. Utility becomes more vital than deep Sentiment. When we read this, do we not think of the current theatre? Or what now calls itself theatre is the sublimation of this path to the inferior, the fortune of the artistic lowness then begun. Theatre is now a Spectacle for individuals without any spiritual aspiration whatever. Now it is even worse, with applause normally for defects and ethical limitations in the scenery. Political theatre is an even more degrading step, an intention to publically justify the absolute degradation of immediate utilitarianism. From Greece to our days Tragic Art, this necessity of the spirit and artistic totality, has been shuffling from art to art, trying to find in pure music, in theatric Drama, in literature, in ballet or sculpture, her way, her common thread, seeking this origin of artistic vitalist totality. But since ancient Greece the command has been more with Philosophy, Politics (a grade even lower than Philosophy), Science (a step lower yet) and Economics (already the definitive step to the inferior and miserable) than with Art.

Interestingly, when the decadence began out came Aristophanes, the great comedian. Because where Tragedy ends Comedy begins. The vision of pretensions to copy tragic forms without profundity provokes the acid jokes of a Tragedic-Comic like Aristophanes, a Traditionalist who can no longer weep.

Tragedy "surges from the fountain of Compassion and is pessimistic by nature" Nietzsche would say in his first Schopenhauerian days. Dialogue and Logos are optimistic because they only seek the logical and do not capture the feeling and illogical sorrow, intimate. They have not compassion but reason.

Music disappears and Socrates was already remorseful for having let music behind (see Plato's "Phaeton" where Socrates accuses himself of this), but Dialogue and then intrigue keep on killing everything sensible and musical.

## **RENEWAL OF TRAGIC ART**

The great attempts to renew this idea of global spirituality, of Art for sensibility, have always been with poetry and music.

For centuries the Arts were separate, specialized, creating their own egotism and losing their integration with the other artforms. Fulfilling this egotism each artistic facet developed to express what it can at its highest level, but at

the same time each art came to face its own limitations, a barrier each alone can not cross.

On the other hand Tragedy has been converted first into Drama and then Spectacle, ultimately, in this disgraceful epoch, to end as soap opera. The artistic People becomes a Public, a public that desires diversion and distraction, not to think or meditate. People seek excitement with a serialized sensibility, rather than feel their capacity for emotion through elevation of spirit.

Now, when we see a Greek Tragedy we absolutely can not imagine what that meant for the Athenian People. Only the text has come down to us, without the music or dance that accompanied it, without the stage and its gravity of interpretation, and the text is also replete with references we do not understand (full of page notes explicating them) but which were immediately understood by the Athenian.

Wagner already warned that he who only wants to distract himself does not need an elevated art. Nietzsche reminds us that a Greek did not go to the theatre to escape from boredom but to participate in a sacred act of communal elevation. Poetry continues to be the most elevated reasonable art, least based in the Logos, but this costs it great efforts in order to achieve an intimate emotion through a mere word. Music excites the spirit directly but fails to convey the why and wherefore of such intimate emotion, leaving too many unanswered questions.

Music tried to unite with the word in an artificial way, using the voice as an instrument, a sound of the orchestra. Dramatic Opera only appears little by little, intending to give a dramatic spectacle together with brilliant music. But Opera is born with an enormous burden: music is the center of the spectacle, directed to lovers of music, being only the voice of another orchestral egocentricity, and drama, the plot, is like a work apart from the musical whole, claiming most of the time to be moved by the novelesque and dramatic, not by a sacred elevated message. The novel is the basis of the operatic libretto, as Opera is music with a novel attached.

The operatic spectator tries to hear the music and, when the music sound level lowers, tries to hear the plot of the novel, the ending.

It would be unfair not to recognize in the troubador poetry of medieval Knighthood, sung to the lute and often performed in popular theatres, an intent to achieve this high popular sensibility. But the times and means of a hard turbulent epoch did not allow further development, leaving a very limited aesthetic level.

Romanticism began, for the first time, a profound search for this path towards Tragedy. By focusing man again on sensibility against the Logos and mere Beauty, by again including Dionysos with Apollo, depreciating Socrates, it came much closer to the center of the solution. But romanticism was still in danger of the sensory, of sensory nonsense. It was necessary to unite Apollo to Dionysos as well, to give beauty and perfection to sensibility. The road is difficult, for if we see a work such as "The Furtive Hunter" of Weber and then the "Tannhauser" of Wagner, we can see the plot has similar themes but whereas in Weber the music describes the exterior, the ambience and the popular, in Wagner it seeks to express the interior sentiments of man. And if we take "Aida" we shall see beautiful music with a paid spectacle.

Ibsen knew how to express Ideas in his personages, to make a sensible intelligent Theatre, but the word was an insufficient means for expressing those sentiments in their totality.

Beethoven attempted to express innermost feelings in his music, but when he wanted to express his supreme joyful song, he had to resort first to the word: The poetry of Schiller in his ending of the Ninth Symphony.

In that moment of sincere searching, when Wagner meditated in his Swiss exile, he intuited the solution: Music Drama.

The total union of all the arts to express Tragedy, a return to the spirit of Greece but with contemporary media. Plastic Arts, Dance, Music, Poetry, Ideas, everything united in one direction, everything at the service of an artistic ideal. And for him to ignore novelesque themes, not to try for a denouement in Tragedy, nor for a personal idea, but to center it in Human Values, in Myth, in Religion (taking with this name the Superhuman sentiment).

Feuerbach writes in his work "The Vatican Apollo" in this regard: "No wonder, given their similarities, which have deep roots, the particular arts end up melting back again into an inseparable whole, a new form of Art. The Olympic Games reunited the separated Greek cities into a politico-religious unity. The Dramatic Festival is like a festivity of the reunification of the Greek arts."

While Weber composed music for his "Euryanthe" before they even had the text of that work, Wagner began his work by reading the Poem, and this Poem was born from a sensibility and a felt perception through an experience reflected in a poem, not born from hearsay or stories, rather it

concerned the telling of a design. Wagner writes in "The Music of the Future": "With the Flying Dutchman and all the following works I abandoned forever the camp of History in the plot, penetrating into the domain of Myth or Legend." Myth, which is also the center of the Tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus, or the songs of Pindar, goes directly into the sacred, which for a Greek was the human in its ultimate depth, the human Ideal, not the Ideal of the Logos (in Knowledge) but in Beauty and Sensibility, the Passions and Destiny.

Wagner is the first to comprehend the greatness of Attic Tragedy, her sensible and poetic unity, her religious basis and her total union with the people on a road of elevation, not with an intent to lower art to the people. An example of this gaze of Wagner at Greek Tragedy may be found even in the form of composition of one of the Wagnerian masterpieces, the so-called Tetralogy: A work that took the form of a great Greek Trilog with its Prologue. "The Rhinegold" is in itself a great Prologue that summarizes the basis of the work, its leitmotiv and its reason for being, that of Gold and Love in conflict, with the gods, giants and dwarfs, all quasi-religious representations in the Greek sense, or paradigms of values and feelings. The Greeks used to group their works into complete Trilogies, and then this great creation of the New Tragedy in Wagner with his Trilogy of the Nibelung, with his Prologue, summary of the Rhinegold.

Alexander, Palamedes and The Trojan Women are the famous trilogy of Euripides on the drama of Troy. Three tragedies were presented jointly in the Dionysian festivals, so that it was important to attend all three to understand the drama as a whole, yet in The Trojan Women, for example, the play begins with a long dialogue between Poseidon and Athena, which explains the summary of what happened before and is much like what Wagner in turn did in his Trilogy.

It is of interest that in the same way as the Olympics, extraordinary and mystical holiday in Greece, have now become competitions/show of the lowest human quality with no elevation at all, into a sporting event for the masses with a desire for distraction and focused on advertising money, in the same way we can now understand what a Greek felt in an Olympiad, considering what is meant by the same name at present, so something similar happened with Tragedy. It is difficult to understand its original essence based on reading the text and on the understanding of them through the mentality of the current theatre.

Opera is a bad simian copy of Tragedy, as the Olympics of Samaranch & Co. (Olympic Business Corporation) is a bad mercenary copy of the Greek Olympic Games.

## **REBELLION OF THE PHILOSOPHERS**

With the Logos, Reason, begins the reign of the Representative. Socrates, and Aristotle after him, killed Tragedy in Greece along with instinct, the feeling of Natural joy, the vitality of the irrational, to conclude with the Thinker as Ideal of Beauty.

Nietzsche was undoubtedly the great denouncer of this tyranny, of the ugly but wise against the Beautiful and Vital. It is the rational against Apollo-Dionysos. The whole post-socratic future is a chain forged by Philosophy, while Art will remain in the background, subjected to thought, as a deluxe activity, secondary, dilettante for idle minds. Therefore every Art will develop closed in itself, wisely exploring its technical possibilities, but increasingly neglecting her origin as expression of vital mythic sentiment. In the actual world this journey of Art towards Utility has reached its absolute apogee with decorative art, or conceptualist art, expression of ideas or colors, of abstractions and politics, garbage art of the Market economy. "The 2,000 years transpired since the decadence of Greek Tragedy to our time belongs to Philosophy and not to Art." (R. Wagner in "Revolution and Art").

And that Philosophy is gradually degraded into Science ("The Critique of Pure Reason" and Marxism are the two attempts to reduce the Logos to Science) and Science immediately becomes Technology, Utility, and at last Economics. Today Art results from an economic, material world expressing the style of a Bank with which business structures are decorated. Utilitarian Philosophy is what is now called Politics: "Politics is always to be predisposed for the immediate and possible, since only that can result in success, and without success political activity is meaningless" (Wagner in his letter to Roeckel, 1862). Success in the immediate is the Value of the economic, ultimately the birth of economic man, the end of the Superman.

All of the degradation of Humanity is born of forgetting the Tragic Way to follow the Way of Utility. From Art to Economics. Hence our struggle is to return to the Vital, to the Sensible, to the Human, not as a reflection of



Rights and Ideas, but as development of superior emotional sensible potentials. And Wagner is the only way that leads to Monsalvat, the refuge of the Grail, the Spirit or the Superman.

First Schopenhauer, then Nietzsche and Feuerbach or Kierkegaard were the first to break the spell of the Logos as an oppressor of the Person, and to return vitalism and Will to reign in cooperation with Reason. The duo Apollo/Dionysos, who should never have been torn apart, have returned. "Beauty in Action is Art," Wagner said, that is, Apollo with Dionysos. While Descartes, Kant, Hegel and, above all, Marx, represented the wrong way, the continuing effort to reduce man to an Economic Logos, to a tool of reason. But if Schopenhauer and Feuerbach thought about the tyranny of thought, and Nietzsche concerned himself with "The Birth of Tragedy," which was what Wagner was contemplating and writing about in his exile, nevertheless, ONLY Wagner was able TO BUILD: this new world, this Art of the Future. Wagner is not a philosopher, he is the maximum realizer of an artistic path for the Redemption of Man.

"There where Art one day ended, Philosophy and Politics began. There where politics and philosophy today end the artist must begin" (Wagner in "Art and Revolution"). This is the great Revolution, the Regeneration of Tragedy, a future of sensibility and vitality for a humanity redeemed from materialism and reasonable utilitarianism.

Wagner is not only the discoverer of the path of Redemption through tragic Total Art, but also the one who achieved the most difficult: to produce the supreme summit of this Art, the most extraordinary dramas, studded with sublime music and penetrating poetry.

Not a single play of Wagner after "The Flying Dutchman" makes a single concession to the vulgar or superficial, to music nor fame nor to the public. Each work is a perfect result of an Ideal carried to the extreme, constructed with an extraordinary poem, a music in the service of sentiments outlined in this poem, a neat expressive theatrical plasticity, in short, a work of Total Art without fissures or highs and lows. This is what the followers of Gold can not forgive Wagner for, those who renounce Love in favor of Utility. They can not fight Wagner because they must combat his Art, not his ideas, and that Art is invincible in its quality.

## **NIETZSCHE VS. WAGNER**

It is well known that Nietzsche was the first thinker of importance to support Wagner in an absolute, total way. Wagner was already widely known, exiled in Tübingen, where he had already fully ripened the foundations of his Tragic Art, though he had certainly not yet obtained any public impact among German philosophical or university circles for his idea of Music Drama. He was even still despised by intellectual society, though he was known as an artist. In this crucial moment the only deep-rooted, absolute and important support he received from a famous intellectual is neither more nor less than that from a professor of philology at Basle, famous for being among the youngest in Germany (24 years), a brilliant young man known in the German academic world and respected as a Hellenist: Friedrich Nietzsche, who against all the advice of his protectors (he especially had to go against Ritschl who had helped him achieve his chair), launched in 1870 a series of university conferences ("Greek musical drama" and "Socrates and tragedy") to defend Wagner's artistic vision. This encouraged Wagner to write a comprehensive book to uphold his dramatic idea. And Nietzsche in 1872 edited "The Birth of Tragedy," which is the philosophical and erudite foundation on which the Wagnerian ideas on the subject are based. This book will cost Nietzsche a series of brutal attacks from every German Hellenist, and a long battle against professors who considered his ideas to be too revolutionary, the ideas of Wagner in reality. For while the German intellectual environment could keep an exile in Switzerland, without Hellenist qualifications or training, from expressing an artistic theory based on a conception of Greek tragedy, it could not accept that this should then instead become an intellectual proposal. Once again here appears the Socratic idea: Art is secondary, what matters is that the Logos is in control. They could allow Wagner his artistic caprice, but to use Art in a struggle against the Logos, against Reason in favor of feeling, never!

For years Nietzsche was a constant friend of Wagner, but it was impossible that this situation should last for long. Nietzsche was not Schopenhauer, he had a much more radical vision which would reach the death of God, to the ultimate consequences of vitalism, completely confronting the idea of Redemption that Wagner expounded in his works. Works like "The Genealogy of Morals" already reflect the absolute rupture between tragic art and tragic thought. Two paths begun together but each followed to its own destiny.

Yet Wagner was faithful to his conception: Tragic Art as basis of the redemptive way. Therefore he did not pay the least attention to Nietzsche's

subsequent changes, given that his problem was to base artistic revocation on artistic realities, not to debate (the Logos yet again) about philosophy. Instead Nietzsche brutally attacked Wagner in several libels of the worst kind, until later he was finally left to deal with the Wagner Case. The anti-Wagnerian libels of Nietzsche must be seen within the psychological perspective of Nietzsche: He had been a faithful humble Wagnerian (his "camel" as Nietzsche himself would say in "Thus Spake Zarathustra"), he had found in Wagner and his circle friendship and vital warmth (he himself would always recognize that his years of visits to Tribschen had been the most marvellous of his life), so to break those emotional chains would cost him much effort. The anti-Wagnerian libels are only brutal because they reflect the internal struggle, the pain and hardship of combat between fidelity to his own thought on one side and friendship with the pleasure of being with Wagner on the other. The break on Nietzsche's part was painful and radical, even the roaring of a Lion according to Nietzsche himself. Whereas Wagner had nothing to grieve from the break as he was not dependent on Nietzsche for anything.

Wagner shows the way of the simple sensible man, who finds the basis of his Dynamism in Love and Piety, so that his combative vitality is neither aggressive nor radical but instead elevated and sensitive. Wagner is Apollo together with Dionysos, but with a Dionysos controlled by the Apollonian, as in Greek Tragedy. Nietzsche is a thinker in despair, he is Radicalism, pure Dionysos, untrammled, the explosion of the Dionysian, and as such a dangerous radical medicine: killing or curing, with nothing in between and with very little variation in dosage.

I do not believe in choosing between them, but no doubt our Revolution has much more of Wagner than of Nietzsche, more of Art than of Philosophy, more of Redemption through Sensibility than of appeals to vitalist nihilism, even tempered by this idea of the Superman, road to the elevation of man, thus uniting Nietzsche somewhat with the road to the Wagnerian Montsalvat.

## **NATIONAL SOCIALISM AS THE TRAGIC PATH**

We have already seen that for Wagner the Revolution is the Return to the Tragic, Art and Humanity. It is the struggle against Economics as the God of the utilitarian Logos, to resume a new upward direction after centuries in which the material has been valued as the maximum index of progress. The

Revolution is to again take hold of the happy, vital and sensitive spirit of a healthy, ethical and artistic people.

This Ethical Vitalism, which finds its artistic peak in Wagner, does not come alone, but accompanied by a whole series of romantic artists, writer and thinkers. And it is this varied source, sometimes in conflict with itself, that gives rise to National Socialism and, in reality, to all fascisms.

Not only was Hitler a Wagner fanatic, this is not the highpoint of the union of NS with Wagnerianism. It matters not that the family of Wagner were almost all of them NS and that Winifred Wagner has been a declared National Socialist until her death. It is not the personal relations of Wagner and his circle with NS that matters most. What is important is that the most profound National Socialist concept, which is no longer political but a World Outlook, is based on the Tragic conception of Life and on redemption through Art.

This is the point. While democracy or Marxist socialism base their final concept on Redemption by Utilitarian Progress, by the material as the way to the ideal of the Logos, Happiness, for we National Socialists the road is the opposite: we seek the elevation of feeling and the human, and for this we use the material as a means. NS Politics is a road to the non-political, whereas the politics of the System is the End in itself, the Possession of the material for Happiness understood as Pleasure.

And so when we see today, in recent years (never before) those thugs and people of such base character using and presenting themselves as nazis, we understand these words and things are nothing more than Logos, and that if they lose their Apollonian meaning, their sensible essence, they have no more value than Representation, the superficial. If National Socialism loses its Will, its intimate Essence, it is nothing and already only its Appearance, which like the skin of a snake, may cover any stupidity, any wolf or cretin. When we see the miserable corrupt human waste covered with Nazi swastikas or nazi language, then we most comprehend the necessity of knowing this Tragic Cosmivision, this Road of Montsalvat, difficult and lengthy, interior and closed, in order to come to understand the Great Miracle of Hitler, to merit arriving at the reality, the Appearance, the politics, the intimate Will of the Tragic, or to bring Heaven down to Earth, in Christian language. To make Man into Superman, the human into a Person.

In this sense National Socialism is Wagnerianism in Action, as Art is Beauty in Action. The union of Apollo and Dionysos, once Greek Tragedy and then Wagnerian Music Drama.