

**CRITICAL CHRONOLOGICAL ANTHOLOGY OF PASSAGES FROM WAGNER'S
WRITINGS AND RECORDED REMARKS (In English translation)**

1851-1860

By

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This anthology is based on a document completed by the author in the early 1990's as a study for his upcoming book *The Wound That Will Never Heal*, which will be the most comprehensive and unified conceptual study of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and his six other repertory operas and music dramas (from *Der Fliegende Hollaender* through *Parsifal*) under one cover. The passages included in this anthology were selected on the basis of their potential or actual value as aids to understanding Wagner's operas and music dramas, and his creative process in general, and will be an appendix of the completed book. I intend to market this anthology, as a compact disc for independent study, with my book.

Three distinct fonts represent different degrees of significance: (1) passages in light print are provided merely for context and for clues to the understanding of more important passages; (2) passages in bold face are important; (3) *italic passages in boldface are crucial to understanding Wagner's artworks and his creative process.*

I have also completed a chronological, annotated anthology of all those passages from the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach which seem to have influenced Wagner's writings, recorded remarks, and his opera and music-drama librettos. Since I intend to collate the Feuerbach anthology with the Wagner anthology by placing specific passages from Feuerbach's writings prior to those passages from Wagner's writings and recorded remarks in which I can demonstrate a direct or indirect influence of Feuerbach upon Wagner, I have placed {FEUER} before every such passage in the Wagner anthology, in preparation for interpolating the appropriate passages from Feuerbach. Though there are hundreds of passages in the Wagner anthology in which a direct influence can be detected, Wagner rarely credits Feuerbach for a specific debt. Wherever Wagner seems to be reacting specifically against Feuerbach, I have placed {*anti-FEUER/NIET*} before such passages in the Wagner anthology. My reason for correlating Nietzsche with Feuerbach is that in virtually every

instance of Wagner's hostility to Nietzsche's mature philosophy, there are corresponding passages in Feuerbach's writings to which Wagner would be similarly hostile. In fact, there are several instances in which Wagner seems to have confused Nietzsche with Feuerbach.

Similarly, I have placed *{SCHOP}* before every passage in the Wagner anthology in which one can detect Schopenhauer's influence. There are several passages in the anthology dating from before Wagner's first known reading of Schopenhauer, in which he seems to have anticipated material he would later find in Schopenhauer's writings. Such instances are preceded by *{Pre-SCHOP}*. Wagner himself is a great help here because he frequently acknowledges his debt to Schopenhauer for specific ideas.

My specific sources, in English translations, are listed below. Eventually I will provide the German original for all these selected passages. In instances such as Stewart Spencer's selections of reminiscences of Wagner, and his collaboration with Barry Millington in selecting Wagner's letters for his anthology, obviously a significant part of the job of selecting appropriate passages from a huge wealth of Wagner material has been done for me, but nonetheless I have chosen only a small portion of passages from among these two collections. There are numerous letters by Wagner to which I have no access, and it is possible that some of these may have considerable value, and therefore will of course eventually be included in this anthology. Though Ashton Ellis's English translation of Wagner's prose works, in eight volumes, is notorious among scholars for its inaccuracy, nevertheless I have found his translation invaluable, and hope eventually to replace any inaccurate translations with more accurate ones. In general, in my interpretation of Wagner's operas, I have only drawn significant conclusions from quotations from Wagner's writings and recorded remarks which have corroborating evidence in numerous similar passages.

I welcome any suggestions for improving this collection. If, for instance, a reader knows of passages from my sources (or other sources not included by me, such as the numerous Wagner letters which have not yet been published, or which at any rate are not contained in my sources listed below) which have crucial importance for grasping the meaning of Wagner's operas or music-dramas, or more generally for understanding his creative process, but which are missing from my anthology, I will gladly consider including them if the reader can make a strong case. I would also like to hear from any readers who detect mistakes. I have, however, avoided including passages from Wagner's writings and recorded remarks which have a purely technical interest, or a biographical interest, which do not enlighten us on the meaning of Wagner's operas and music-dramas, or on his creative impulse.

SOURCES: (including identifying abbreviations employed in the anthology)

- Porges, Heinrich [WWR] *Wagner Rehearsing the 'Ring'*. Trans. by Robert L. Jacobs; Cambridge 1983. Cambridge Univ. Press. Written June through August 1876. Wagner commissioned Porges to record what Wagner said and did during the rehearsals for the *Ring's* premier, as a permanent record of his intentions.
- Spencer, Stewart [WR] *Wagner Remembered*. Edited and Annotated by Stewart Spencer. London and New York. Faber and Faber, 2000. An anthology of reminiscences of Wagner ranging from his early childhood in until his death in 1883, including many conversations.
- Wagner, Cosima [CD] *Cosima Wagner's DIARIES*. In two volumes. Ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack. Trans. By Geoffrey Skelton. New York and London. A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book. Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1978. Written by Cosima from 1869 through 1883.
- Wagner, Richard [BLRW] *The Story of Bayreuth as told in The Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*. Trans. and Ed. By Caroline V. Kerr. New York: Vienna House, 1972. Originally published in Boston by Small, Maynard and Company in 1912.
- _____ [BB] *The Diary of Richard Wagner: The Brown Book 1865-1882*. Presented and annotated by Joachim Bergfeld. Trans. By G. Bird. London: Cambridge University Press, 1980. The Passages included in my anthology were written between 8/19/65 and 4/9/82. This is Wagner's personal diary.
- _____ [CWL] *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*. Trans. by Francis Hueffer. New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1969. Originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1897.
- _____ [ML] *My Life*. Trans. Andrew Gray. Ed. Mary Whittall. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Wagner's autobiography covers the years 1813-1864.
- _____ [RWDF] *Richard Wagner's Letters to his Dresden Friends, Theodor Uhlig, Wilhelm Fischer, and Ferdinand Heine*. Trans. by J.S. Shedlock: New York: Vienna House, 1972. Originally Published in New York by Scribner and Welford in 1890.

[RWMW] *Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck*. Trans. William Ashton Ellis. New York: Vienna House, 1972. Originally Published in New York by Charles Scribner & Sons in 1905. Wagner's letters to M. Wesendonck were written between 1852 and 1875.

[PW] *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*. Eight Volumes. Second Edition. Trans. William Ashton Ellis. Reprinted in St. Claire Shores, Michigan by Scholarly Press in 1972. Translation Originally published in London by Kegan, Paul, Trench, Truebner & Co., Ltd., in 1895. These writings range from 1833 through 1883.

[SLRW] *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. Trans. and Ed. By Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington. New York and London. W.W. Norton & Company, 1987. The letters in this anthology range from 1832 through 1883.

[1851]

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Opera and Drama (PW Vol. II; P. 1)

[P. 10] "... from the moment when I struck in my artistic works that path which in the following pages I advocate as Writer, I fell into the exile from our public artist-world in which I find myself to-day, alike politically and as an artist, and from which it is quite certain that I cannot be redeemed apart from others. – "

[P. 17] *"... the error in the art-genre of Opera consists herein: that a Means of expression (Music) has been made the end, while the End of expression (the Drama) has been made the means"*

[P. 20] {FEUER} "... only in view of the uncommon spread and effectiveness (*Wirkungsfähigkeit*) of Opera, have folk believed that they must make friends with a monstrosity, nay, must even credit its unnatural agency with the possibility of doing something altogether new, unheard, and hitherto undreamt: namely, of erecting the genuine Drama on the basis of Absolute Music.

Since, then, I have made it the goal of this book to prove that by the collaboration of precisely our Music with dramatic Poetry a heretofore undreamt significance not only can, but must be given to Drama; so have I, for the reaching of that goal, to begin with a complete exposure of the incredible error in which those are involved who believe they may await that higher fashioning of Drama from the essence of our modern Opera, i.e. from the placing of Poetry in a contra-natural position toward Music."

[P. 23] "Everything lives and lasts by the inner necessity of its being, by its own nature's Need. It lay in the nature of the art of Tone, to evolve herself to a capability of the most definite and manifold expression; which capability, albeit the need thereof lay hid within her soul, she would never have attained, had she not been thrust into a position toward the art of Poetry in which she saw herself compelled to will to answer claims upon her utmost powers, even though those claims should ask from her a thing impossible."

[P. 32] "That in the Drama itself ... there lay possibilities which could not be so much as approached within that art-form – if it were not to fall to pieces – this, perhaps, is now quite clear to us, but could by no chance occur to the poet or composer of that epoch. (...) Mere stereotyped rhetoric phrases were the prime requirement from the poet, for on this soil alone could the musician gain room for the expansion that he needed, but which was yet in truth entirely undramatic. **To have allowed his heroes to speak in brief and definite terms, surcharged with meaning, would have only drawn upon the poet the charge of turning out wares impracticable for the composer.** Since, then, the poet felt himself constrained to put trite and meaningless phrases in the mouth of his heroes, even the best will in the world could not have enabled him either to infuse a [P. 33] real character into persons who talked like that, or to stamp the sum-total of their action with the seal of full dramatic truth. **His drama was forever a mere make-believe of Drama; to pursue a real dramatic aim to its legitimate conclusions could not so much as occur to him. (...) To him alone – to the Composer – must it therefore fall, to clothe this inner void and nullity of the whole, so soon as ever he perceived it; and thus he found himself saddled with the unnatural task of, from his**

standpoint – from the standpoint of the man whose only duty it should have been to help to realise by the *expression* at his command an already fully-fledged dramatic aim – imagining and calling into life that aim itself.” (...)

(...) “Music, which, as an art of expression, can in its utmost wealth of such expression be nothing more than true, has conformably therewith to concern itself alone with what it should express: in Opera this is unmistakably the Feeling of the characters conversing on the stage, and a music which fulfils this task with the most convincing effect is all that it ever can be. A music, however, which would fain be more than this, which should not connect itself with any object to be expressed, but desire to fill its place, i.e. to be alike that object: such a music is no longer any kind of music, but a fantastic, hybrid emanation from Poetry and Music, which in truth can only materialize itself as [P. 34] caricature. **With all its perverse efforts, Music, the in any way effective music, has actually remained naught other than Expression. But from those efforts to make it in itself a Content – and that, forsooth, the Content of a Drama – has issued that which we have to recognise as the consequential downfall of Opera, and therewith as an open demonstration of the radical un-nature of that genre of art.**”

[P. 70] *{FEUER}* “ ... Instrumental-music, taking the harmonic strains of Dance and Song, separating them into smaller and ever smaller portions, augmenting and diminishing these portions, and building them up again into constantly varying forms, had won itself an idiomatic speech; a speech which, in any higher artistic sense, however, was arbitrary and incapable of expressing the Purely-human, so long as the longing for a clear and intelligible portrayal of definite, individual human feelings did not become its only necessary measure for the shaping of those melodic particles. **That the expression of an altogether definite, a clearly-understandable individual Content, was in truth impossible in this language that had only fitted itself for conveying the general character of an emotion ,-- this could not be laid bare, before the arrival of the instrumental composer with whom the longing to speak out such a content first became the consuming impulse of all his artistic fashioning.**

The history of instrumental-music, from the moment when that longing first evinced itself, is the history of an artistic error; yet of one that ended, not in the demonstration of an impotence of Music's, like that of the Operatic genre, but with the revelation of a boundless inner power. The error of Beethoven was that of Columbus, who merely [P. 71] meant to seek out a new way to the old known land of India, and discovered a new world instead. (...) *For us, too, has there been unveiled the exhaustless power of Music, through Beethoven's all-puissant error. Through his Undaunted toil, to reach the artistically Necessary within an artistically Impossible, is shown us Music's unhemmed faculty of accomplishing every thinkable task, if only she consent to stay what she really is – an art of expression.*”

[P. 72] “In the works of the second half of his artistic life, Beethoven is un-understandable – or rather mis-understandable – mostly just where he desires to express a specific, individual Content in the most intelligible way. He passes over the received, involuntary conventions of the Absolute-musical, i.e. its any recognisable resemblance – in respect of expression and form – to the dance- or song-tune; he chooses instead a form of speech which often seems the mere capricious venting of a whim, and which, loosed from any purely musical cohesion, is only bound together by the bond of a Poetic purpose impossible to render into Music with full poetic plainness.

The greater portion of Beethoven's works of this period must be regarded as instinctive efforts (unwillkuerliche Versuche) to frame a speech to voice his longing; so that they often seem like sketches for a picture, as to whose subject indeed the master was at one with himself, but not as to its intelligible grouping."

[P. 73] "Now, he who made it his business to catch the people's fancy, could think nothing more important than to appear as new as possible in those features of absolute-musical expression which we have just characterised; and seeing that the food for such a newness could only come from the art-domain of Music itself, -- was nowhere to be borrowed from the changing shows of Life, -- that musician was bound to see a most productive quarry in those very works of Beethoven which we have denoted as the sketches for his greater paintings, and in which the struggle for discovery of a new basis of musical language, with its excursions in all directions, often showed itself in certain spasmodic traits (*Kramphaften Zuegen*) that perforce must strike the unintelligent listener as odd, original, bizarre, and in any case quite new. The abrupt contrastment, the hasty intersection, and above all the often wellnigh simultaneous utterance, of accents of joy and sorrow, ecstasy and horror, closely woven each with each, -- such as the master's seeking instinct mingled in the strangest harmonic melismas and rhythms, to form fresh terms for definitely expressing individual moments of emotion, -- all this, seized merely by its formal surface, fell into the technical forcing-pit of those composers who in the adoption of Beethoven's peculiarities espied a rich manuring for the Music-for-all-the-world. Whereas the majority of older musicians could only comprehend and sanction that element in the works of Beethoven which lay the farthest from the master's individual being and appeared but as the crowning flower of [P. 74] an earlier, less anxious period of musical art: the younger note-setters have chiefly copied the externals and singularities of the later Beethovenian manner.

{FEUER} However, as there were only externals to be copied, since the Content of those idioms was doomed to stay the unspoken secret of the master, so necessity commanded that some sort of inner subject, should be sought for them, some subject that, despite its inevitable generality, might afford a pretext for employing those features which pointed so strongly to the particular and individual. This subject was naturally to be found alone beyond the bounds of Music; and this again, for unmixed instrumental-music, could only be within the realm of Phantasy. A programme, reciting the heads of some subject taken from Nature or human Life, was put into the hearer's hands; and it was left to his imaginative talent to interpret, in keeping with the hint once given, all the musical freaks that one's unchecked license (Willkuer) might now let loose in motley chaos."

[P. 81] "... Gluck ... was consciously concerned to reproduce as faithfully as possible by his Musical Expression the emotion indicated in the 'text,' and above all to never sacrifice the purely declamatory accent of the verse in favour of this musical expression. He took pains to speak correctly and intelligibly in his music.

Mozart, by reason of a nature wholly sound at its core, could never speak otherwise than correctly. He pronounced with the selfsame clearness the rhetorical 'pigtail' and the genuine dramatic accent *Instinctively his music ennobled all the conventional stage-characters presented him In this way he was able to lift the characters of 'Don Juan,' for instance, into such a fulness of expression that a writer*

like Hoffmann could fall on the discovery of the deepest, most mysterious relations between them, relations of which neither poet nor musician had been ever really conscious. Certain it is, however, that Mozart could not possibly have made his music characteristic in such sort, [P. 82] had the characters themselves not been already present in the poet's work. The more we are able to look through the glowing tints of Mozart's music to the ground behind, with the greater sureness do we recognise the sharp and definite penstrokes of the Poet, whose lines and touches first prescribed the colours of the Musician, and without whose skill that wondrous music would have straightway been impossible."

[P. 95] "The secret of Meyerbeer's operatic music is – Effect. (...) If ... we wish to define what we understand by this word, we may translate 'Effect' by 'a Working, without a cause' ('Wirkung ohne Ursache')."

[P. 104] {FEUER} "When the Folk invented melodies, it proceeded like the natural bodily-man, who, by the instinctive exercise of sexual functions, begets and brings forth Man; this finished Man, arrived at light of day, reveals himself at once by his outer stature; not first, forsooth, by his inner organism. Greek Art still apprehended this Man by his outer stature alone, and strove to mould his faithful, lifelike counterfeit – at last in bronze and marble. Christianity, on the contrary, proceeded anatomically: it wanted to find man's soul; it opened and cut up his body, and bared all that formless, inner organism at which our gaze rebelled, because it neither is nor should be set there for the eye. In searching for the soul, [P. 105] however, we had slain the body; in hunting for the source of Life we had destroyed its utterance, and thus arrived at nothing but dead entrails, which only in completely unbroken faculty of utterance could be at all conditionments of Life. But the searched-for soul, in truth, is nothing other than the life: wherefore what remained over, for Christian anatomy to look upon, was only – Death.

{FEUER} *Christianity had choked the organic impulse of the Folk's artistic life, its natural force of procreation: it had hacked into its flesh, and with dualistic scissors had played havoc with even its artistic organism."*

[P. 106] {FEUER} "With Beethoven, on the contrary, we perceive the natural thrust of Life, to breed Melody from out music's inner Organism. In his weightiest works, he by no means posits Melody as something ready in advance, but in a measure lets it be born from Music's organs before our very eyes; he [P. 107] inducts us into this act of bearing, inasmuch as he sets it before us in all its organic Necessity. But his most decisive message, at last given us by the master in his magnum opus, is the necessity he felt as Musician to throw himself into the arms of the Poet, in order to compass the act of begetting the true, the unfailingly real and redeeming Melody. It become a human being, Beethoven perforce must become an entire, i.e. a social (gemeinsamer) being, subjected to the generic conditionments of the manly and the womanly. – What an earnest, deep and yearning brooding unveiled at last to the endless-gifted master the limpid melody wherewith he broke into the Poet's words: 'Joy, thou fairest spark of Godhead!' ('Freude, schoener Goetterfunken!'). – With this Melody is solved withal the mystery of Music; we know now, we have won the faculty, to be with consciousness organically working artists. –"

[P. 108] {FEUER} "(...) This form was merely varied in, but has itself remained the irremovable scaffold of the Opera-aria right down to the present day. Within it alone, was

a melodic structure thinkable; and naturally, this stayed always such a structure as was strictly governed by that scaffold in advance. (The musician, seeing that once he stepped within this Form he could no longer invent but merely vary, was robbed in advance of all power for the organic generation of Melody; for true Melody is ... itself the utterance of an inner organism; to arise organically, therefore, it must have shaped for itself its very Form, and a form entirely adequate to explicitly convey [P. 109] its inner essence. On the other hand, the melody that was constructed from the Form, could never be anything but an imitation of the pristine melody which had first spoken in that selfsame form. [* Wagner's Footnote: *The Opera-composer, who saw himself condemned in the Aria-form to an eternal barrenness, sought a field for freer movement of his musical-expression, and sought it in Recitative. Only, this also was a settled form; and if the musician quitted that sheer rhetorical expression which is proper to Recitative, in order to let bloom the flower of keener feeling, he found the admission of Melody driving him back into the Aria-form. If, therefore, he avoided the Aria-form on principle, he could only stay glued to the sheer rhetoric of Recitative, without ever soaring up to Melody; except – mark well! – where with noble self-oblivion he took into himself the Poet's fertilising seed.*] With many opera-composers we therefore see an endeavour to break this Form; yet such an attempt could only have proved artistically successful, provided suitable new forms were found. *Yet again, the new Form could only have been a genuine art-form, provided it showed itself as the explicit utterance of a specific musical Organism; but every musical organism is by its nature -- a womanly; it is merely a bearing, and not a begetting factor; the begetting-force lies clean outside it, and without fecundation by this force it positively cannot bear. – Here lies the whole secret of the barrenness of modern music.*

{FEUER} We have denoted Beethoven's artistic procedure in his weightiest Instrumental works as 'our induction into the act of bearing Melody.' Let us keep well in view this characteristic fact, however, that though only in the progress of his tone-piece, does the master set his full melody before us as a finished whole, yet this melody is to be subsumed as already finished in the artist's mind from the beginning. He merely broke at the outset the narrow Form, -- that very Form against which the opera-composer had striven in vain, -- he shattered it into its component parts, in order to unite them by organic creation into a new whole; and this he did, by setting the component parts of different melodies in changeful contact with each other, as though to show the organic affinity of the seemingly most diverse of such parts, and therewith the prime affinity of those different [P. 110] melodies themselves. Beethoven but discloses to us here the inner organism of Absolute Music: his concern was, in a sense, to restore this organism from its mechanical state (*diesen Organismus aus des Mechanik herzustellen*), to vindicate its inner life, and to show it at its livingest in the very act of Bearing. But what he employed to fertilise this organism, was still the Absolute Melody; he thus put life into this organism only so far as he practised it in Bearing – so to say – and indeed, let it re-bear an already finished melody. Precisely through that process, however, he found himself driven on to supply this musical organism, now freshly quickened into bearing-power, with the fecundating seed as well; and this he took from the Poet's power of begetting. (...)

{FEUER} (...) Just as the living [P. 111] Folk's-melody is inseparable from the living Folk's-poem, at pain of organic death, so can Music's organism never bear the true, the living Melody, except it first be fecundated by the Poet's Thought. Music is the bearing women, the Poet the begetter; and Music had therefore reached the pinnacle of madness, when she wanted, not only to bear, but also to beget.

{FEUER} Music is a woman.

{FEUER} The nature of Woman is love: but this love is a receiving (empfangende), and in receipt (Empfangniss) an unreservedly surrendering, love.

{FEUER} Woman first gains her full individuality in the moment of surrender. She is the Undine who glides soulless through the waves of her native element, till she receives her soul through love of a man. The look of innocence in a woman's eye is the endlessly pellucid mirror in which the man can only see the general faculty for love, till he is able to see in it the likeness of himself. When he has recognised himself therein, then also is the woman's all-faculty condensed into one strenuous necessity, to love him with the all-dominant fervour of full surrender.

{FEUER} The true woman loves unconditionally, because she must. She has no choice, excepting where she does not love. But where she must love, there she experiences a vast constraint (Zwang), which withal develops for the first time her Will. This Will, which rebels against that constraint, is the first and mightiest stirring (Regung) of the individuality of the beloved object; and, taken up by sympathy into the woman, it is that individuality which has gifted her with Will and Individuality. This is the honourable pride (Stolz) of woman, a pride that comes solely from the force of the [P. 112] individuality that has won her and constrains her with all the exigence (Noth) of Love. For sake of the cherished boon she strives against the constraint of Love itself, until, beneath the all-dominance of this constraint, she learns that both it and her own pride are but the energising of the individuality which she has taken up; that Love and the beloved object are one, that without them she has neither force nor will, that from the instant when she first felt pride she was already conquered (vernichtet). The plain avowal of this conquest is then the effective offering of woman's last surrender: her pride ascends with consciousness into that only thing which she can sense, can feel, can think – nay, what she is, – into love for this one man.

A woman who loves not with this pride of surrender, truly does not love at all. But a woman who does not love at all, is the most odious, most unworthy spectacle in the world. Let us adduce the characteristic types of such ladies!

Someone has very appropriately called the modern Italian opera-music a wanton. A courtesan may pride herself on always remaining her self; she never steps outside herself, never sacrifices herself but when she wishes for either pleasure or profit in return, and in this case she only offers to the joys of others that portion of her being which she can lightly enough dispose of, since it has become an object of her own caprice. In the embraces of a courtesan the Woman is never present, but only a portion of her physical organism: from love she reaps no individuality, but gives herself in general to the general world. Thus the wanton is an undeveloped, wasted woman: yet she at least fulfils the physical functions of the female sex, by which we can still – albeit with regret – detect the Woman in her.

French opera-music passes rightly for a coquette. The coquette adores to be admired, nay even loved: but her peculiar joy at being admired and loved she can only taste, providing she herself be snared by neither love nor [P. 113] nor admiration for the object she inspires with each. The profit she seeks is delight in herself, satisfaction of her vanity: the whole enjoyment of her life lies in being admired and loved; and this would be instantly disturbed, were she herself to feel either love or admiration for another. Were she in love, she would be robbed of her self-enjoyment; for in Love she must necessarily forget herself, and make surrender to the distressful, often suicidal enjoyment of another. From nothing, therefore, does the coquette so guard herself, as from Love, in order to preserve untouched the only thing she loves – to wit her Self Wherefore the coquette loves from thievish Egoism, and her vital force is icy coldness.” [P. 119] “Wherever Lessing sets up limits and boundaries for Poetry, he does not mean the dramatic Artwork directly brought before the senses by physical performance, that Artwork which sums in itself each factor of the plastic arts, in highest potency such as it alone can reach, and by its power has first brought to these their higher potentiality of artistic life; but he means the exiguous phantom of this Artwork, the narrating, depicting, literary poem, appealing to the imagination and not the senses – the form in which that force of imagination has been turned into the virtual performer, toward which the poem merely acts as stimulus.

{FEUER} Such an artificial art, ‘tis true, can only produce an effect at all by the exactest observance of boundaries and limits, since she must be ever on her watch to guard the unlimited force of imagination – which has here to play the performer’s [P. 120] role in place of her – from any bewildering digression, and thus to guide it to the one fixed point at which she can display her purposed object as definitely and distinctly as possible. *But it is to the force of imagination alone, that all the egoistically severed arts address themselves; and especially the Plastic art, which can only bring into play the weightiest moment of Art, namely motion, by appealing to the Phantasy. All these arts merely suggest: an actual representation would to them be possible only could they parley with the universality of man’s artistic receptivity, could they address the entire sentient (sinnlichen) organism, and not his force of imagination; for the true Artwork can only be engendered by an advance from imagination into actuality, i.e. physicality (Sinnlichkeit).*

(...)

Purity of the art-variety is ... the first requisite for its comprehensibility, whereas an alloy (Mischung) from other art-varieties can only foul this comprehensibility. (...) He who can only conceive the combination of all the arts into the Artwork as though one meant, for example, that in a picture-gallery and amidst a row of statues a romance of Goethe’s should be read aloud while a symphony of Beethoven’s was being played, such a man does rightly enough to insist upon the severance of the arts, and to wish each unit left to help itself to the plainest possible depicting of its subject in its own way. But, that our modern aestheticians [orig. ed. ‘State-aestheticians’] should rank the Drama also as an art-variety, and as such assign it to the poet for his special property, in the sense that the blending with it of another art, like that of Music, would need apology but could by no means gain acquittal – this is to draw from Lessing’s definition a conclusion for which there is not one trace of support in the original. These people, however, see in the Drama

nothing but a branch of literature, a species of poesy such as the romance or didactic poem”

[P. 124] “Searching the history of the world, since the decay of Grecian art, for an artistic period of which we may justly feel proud, we find that period in the so-called ‘Renaissance,’ a name we give to the termination of the Middle ages and the commencement of a new era. Here the inner man is struggling, with a veritable giant’s force, to utter himself. The whole ferment of that wondrous mixture, of Germanic individual Hero-dom with the spirit of [P. 125] Roman-Catholicising Christendom, is thrusting from within outwards, as though in the externalising of its essence to rid itself of indissoluble inner scruples. Everywhere this thrust evinced itself as a passion for delineation of surface (Schilderung), and nothing more; for no man can give himself implicitly and wholly, unless he be at one within. But this the artist of the Renaissance was not; he only seized the outer surfaces, to flee from his inner discord. (...) ... Poetry was already turning from this mere delineation to his representment (Darstellung), and that by stepping forward from Romance to Drama.”

[P. 126] “But the less these shimmering pictures of Phantasy were able, after many a monstrous divagation, to distract in turn the inner man; and the more this man, beneath the weight of political and religious deeds of violence, found himself driven by his inner nature to an energetic counterthrust: so much the plainer, **in the class of poetry now under notice, do we see his struggle to become master of the multifarious stuff from within outwards, to give his fashionings a firm-set centre, and to take this centre, this axis of his art-work, from his own beholdings, from his firm-set willing of Something in which his inner being may speak out. This Something is the matrix of the newer age, the condensing of the individual essence to a definite artistic will. (...) Of what unspeakable weight it is, for any inquiry into the nature of Art, that this inner urgency of the Poet, such as we may see before our very eyes, could at last content itself with nothing but reaching the plainest utterance through direct portrayal to the senses: in one word, that the romance became a drama! *This mastery of the outward stuff, so as to show the inner view of the essence of that stuff, could only be brought to a successful issue by setting the subject itself before the senses in all***

[P. 127] *the persuasiveness of actuality; and this was to be achieved in Drama and nothing else.*

{FEUER} With fullest necessity did Shakespeare’s Drama spring from Life and our historic evolution: his creation was just as much conditioned by the nature of our poetic art as the Drama of the Future, in strict keeping with its nature, will be born from the satisfaction of a need which Shakespearean Drama has aroused but not yet stilled.”

[P. 154] {FEUER} “All understanding comes to us through love alone, and man is urged the most instinctively towards the essence of his own species. *Just as the human form is to him the most comprehensible, so also will the essence of natural phenomena – which he does not yet know in their reality – become comprehensible only through condensation to a human form. Thus in Mythos all the shaping impulse of the Folk makes toward realising to its senses a broadest grouping of the most manifold phenomena, and in the most succinct of shapes. At first a mere image formed by Phantasy, this shape behaves itself the more entirely according to human attributes, the plainer it is to become, notwithstanding that its Content is in truth a suprahuman and supranatural*

one: to wit, that joint operation of multi-human or omni-natural force and faculty which, conceived as merely the concordant action of human and natural forces in general, is certainly both natural and human, but appears superhuman and supernatural by the very fact that it is ascribed to one imagined individual, represented in the shape of Man. By its faculty of thus using its force of [P. 155] imagination to bring before itself every thinkable reality and actuality, in widest reach but plain, succinct and plastic shaping, the Folk therefore becomes in Mythos the creator of Art; for these shapes must necessarily win artistic form and content, if – which, again, is their individual mark – they have sprung from nothing but man’s longing for a seizable portrait of things, and thus from his yearning to recognise in the object portrayed, nay first to know therein, himself and his own-est essence: that god-creative essence. Art, by the very meaning of the term, is nothing but the fulfilment of a longing to know oneself in the likeness of an object of one’s love or adoration, to find oneself again in the things of the outer world, thus conquered by their representment. In the object he has represented, the Artist says to himself: ‘So art thou; so feel’st and thinkest thou. And so wouldst thou do; if, freed from all the strenuous caprice of outward haps of life, thou mightest do according to thy choice.’ Thus did the Folk portray in Mythos to itself its God; thus its Hero; and thus, at last, its Man.

{FEUER} Greek Tragedy is the artistic embodiment of the spirit and contents of Greek Mythos. As in this Mythos the widest-ranging phenomena were compressed into closer and ever closer shape, so the Drama took this shape and represented it in the closest, most compressed of forms. The view-in-common of the essence of things, which in Mythos had condensed itself from a view of Nature to a view of men and morals, here appeals in its distinctest, most pregnant form to the most universal receptive-force of man; and thus steps, as Art-work, from Phantasy into reality. As in Drama the shapes that had been in Mythos merely shapes of Thought, were now presented in actual bodily portrayal by living men: so the actually represented Action now compressed itself, in thorough keeping with the mythic essence, into a compact, plastic whole. If a [P. 156] man’s idea (Gesinnung) is only bared to us convincingly by his action, and if a man’s character consists in the complete harmony between his idea and his action: then this action, and therefore also its underlying idea – entirely in the sense of the Mythos – gains significance and correspondence with a wide-reaching Content, by its manifesting itself in utmost concentration. (...) The Content of an action is the idea that lies at the bottom of it: if this idea is a great one, wide of reach, and drawing upon man’s whole nature in any one particular line, then it also ordains an action which shall be decisive, one and indivisible; for only in such an action does a great idea reveal itself to us.

Now, by its nature, the Content of Greek Mythos was of this wide-reaching but compact quality; and in their Tragedy it likewise uttered itself, with fullest definition, as this one, necessary, and decisive Action. To allow this Action, in its weightiest significance, to proceed in a manner fully vindicated by the idea of its transactors – this was the task of the Tragic-poet; to bring to understanding the necessity of the action, by and in the demonstrated truth of the idea, – in this consisted the solution of that task.”

[P. 157] *{FEUER}* [re the Romance:] “So soon as the reflective Understanding looked aside from the image, to inquire into the actuality of the things summed-up in it, the

first thing it saw was an ever waxing multitude of units, where the poetic view had seen a whole. Anatomical Science began her work, and followed a diametrically opposite path to that of the Folk's-poem. Where the latter instinctively united, she separated purposely; where it fain would represent the grouping, she made for an exactest knowledge of the Parts: and thus must every intuition of the Folk be exterminated step by step, be overcome as heresy, be laughed away as childish. The nature-view of the Folk had dissolved into physics and chemistry, its religion into theology and philosophy, its commonwealth into politics and diplomacy, its art into science and aesthetics, -- and its Myth into the historic Chronicle.

(...)

{FEUER} *In the Christian Mythos we find that that to which the Greek referred all outer things, what he had therefore made the sure-shaped meeting-place of all his views of Nature and the World, -- the Human being, -- had become the a priori incomprehensible, become a stranger to itself.* The Greek, by a comparison of outward things with Man, had reached the human being from without: returning from his roving through the breadth of Nature, he found in Man's stature, in his instinctive ethical notions, both quieting and measure. But this measure was a fancied one, and realised in Art alone. With his attempt to deliberately realise it in the State, the contradiction between the fancy standard, and the reality of actual [P. 158] human self-will, revealed itself: insofar as State and Individual could only seek to uphold themselves by the openest overstepping of that fancy standard. **When the natural custom had become an arbitrarily enacted Law, the racial commonwealth an arbitrarily constructed political State, then the instinctive life-bent of the human being in turn resisted law and state with all the appearance of egoistic caprice. In the strife between that which man had recognised as good and right, such as Law and State, and that toward which his bent-to-happiness was thrusting him -- the freedom of the individual, -- the human being must at last become incomprehensible to himself; and this confusion as to himself, was the starting-point of the Christian mythos. In this latter the individual man, athirst for reconciliation with himself, strode on towards a longed-for, but yet a Faith-vouchsafed redemption into an extra-mundane Being, in whom both Law and State were so far done away with, as they were conceived included in his unfathomable will. Nature, from whom the Greek had reached a plain conception of the Human being, the Christian had to altogether overlook: as he took for her highest pinnacle redemption-needing Man at discord with himself, she could but seem to him the more discordant and accursed. Science, which dissected Nature into fragments, without ever finding the real bond between those fragments, could only fortify the Christian view of Nature.**

The Christian myth, however, won bodily shape in the person of a man who suffered martyr's death for the withstanding of Law and State; who, in his submission to judgment, vindicated Law and State as outward necessities; but through his voluntary death, withal, annulled [P. 159] them both in favour of an inner Necessity, the liberation of the individual through redemption into God. The enthralling power of the Christian myth consists in its portrayal of a transfiguration through Death. The broken, death-rapt look of an expiring dear one, who, already past all consciousness, for the last time sends to us the lightning of his glance, exerts on us an

impression of the most poignant grief. But this glance is followed with a smile on the wan cheeks and blanching lips; a smile which, sprung in itself from the joyful feeling of triumph over Death's last agony, at onset of the final dissolution, yet makes on us the impression of a foreboding of over-earthly bliss, such as could only be won by extinction of the bodily man. *{FEUER}* And just as we have seen him in his passing, so does the departed one stay pictured in our memory: it removes from his image all sense of wilfulness or uncertainty in his physical life-utterance; our spiritual eye, the gaze of loving recollection, sees the henceforth but remembered one in the soft glamour of unsuffering, reposeful bliss. *{Pre-SCHOP}* *{FEUER}* **Then the moment of death appears to us as the moment of actual redemption into God; for, through his dying, we think alone of the beloved as parted from all feeling of a Life whose joys we soon forget amid the yearning for imagined greater joys, but whose griefs, above all in our longing after the transfigured one, our minds hold fast as the essence of the sensation of Life itself.**

{FEUER} ***This dying, with the yearning after it, is the sole true content of the Art which issued from the Christian myth; it utters itself as dread and loathing of actual life, as flight before it, -- as longing for death.*** For the Greek, Death counted not merely as a natural, but also as an ethical necessity; yet only as the counterpart of Life, which in itself was the real object of all his viewings, including those of Art. The very actuality and instinctive necessity of Life, determined of themselves the tragic death; which [P. 160] in itself was nothing else but the rounding of a life fulfilled, by evolution of the fullest individuality, of a life expended on making tell this individuality. To the Christian, however, Death was in itself the object. for him, Life had its only sacredness and warranty as the preparation for Death, in the longing for its laying down. **The conscious stripping-off the physical body, achieved with the whole force of Will, the purposed demolition of actual being, was the object of all Christian art; which therefore could only be limned, described, but never represented, least of all in Drama. The distinctive element of Drama is its artistic realising of the Movement of a sharply outlined content. A movement, however, can chain our interest only when it increases; a diminishing movement weakens and dissipates our interest, -- excepting where a necessary lull is given expression to in passing. In a Greek drama the movement waxes from the beginning, with constantly accelerated speed, to the mighty storm of the catastrophe; whereas the genuine, unmixed Christian drama must perforce begin with the storm of life, to weaken down its movement to the final swoon of dying-out. The Passion plays of the Middle Ages represented the sufferings of Jesus in the form of a series of living pictures: the chief and most affecting of these pictures showed Jesus hanging on the cross: hymns and psalms were sung during the performance. The Legend, that Christian form of the Romance, could alone give charm to a portrayal of the Christian Stuff, because it appealed only to the Phantasy, -- as alone was possible with this Stuff, -- and not to physical vision. To Music alone was it reserved to represent this Stuff to the senses also, namely by an outwardly perceptible motion; albeit merely in this wise, that she resolved it altogether into moments of Feeling, into blends of colour without drawing, expiring [P. 161] in the tinted waves of Harmony in like fashion as the dying one dissolves from out the actuality of Life.**

Of the myths which have worked decisively upon the life-views and art-fashion-

ings of the modern era we now come to the other circle, and that opposed to the Christian myths. It is the native Saga of the newer European, but all the German peoples.

Like that of the Hellenes, the Mythos of these peoples waxed from beholdings of Nature into picturings of Gods and Heroes. *{FEUER} In the case of one of these sagas – that of Siegfried – we now may look with tolerable clearness into its primordial germ, which teaches us no little about the essence of myths in general. We here see natural phenomena, such as those of day and night, the rising and the setting sun, condensed by human Phantasy into personal agents revered or feared in virtue of their deeds; at last, from man-created Gods we see them transformed into actual human Heroes, supposed to have one-time really lived, and from whose loins existing stems and races have boasted themselves as sprung. (...) A boundless wealth of cherished haps and actions filled out the breadth of this religious Mythos, when fashioned into the Hero-saga: yet how manifold soever these sung and fabled actions might give themselves to be, they all arose as variations of one very definite type of events, which, on closer examination, we may trace back to one simple religious notion. In this [P. 162] religious notion, taken from the beholding of Nature, the most varied utterances of the endless-branching Sagas – amid the undisturbed development of a specific Mythos – had each their ever-fruitful source. Let the shapings of the Saga enrich themselves as they might with fresh stores of actual events, among the countless stems and races: yet the poetic shaping of the new material was instinctively brought about in the one and only way that belonged to the poetic intuition ... , and this was rooted deeply in the same religious beholding of Nature which once had given birth to the primordial Mythos.*

{FEUER} Thus these peoples' poetic shaping-force was a religious one withal, unconsciously common to them and rooted in their oldest intuition of the essence of things. On this root, however, Christianity now laid its hands. (...) Christianity upheaved the religious faith, the ground-view of Nature's essence, and supplanted it by a new belief, a new way of beholding, diametrically opposed to the older. (...) Whereas the religious intuitions of the Folk had earlier formed a girth which bound into one whole each never so varied shaping of the Saga: since the rending of this girdle there now was nothing left beyond a loose entanglement of motley shapes, flitting holdless and disbanded to and fro, in a fancy henceforth merely bent on recreation but no more in itself creative. [P. 163] The Mythos, grown incapable of procreation, dispersed itself into its individual hedged-off fractions; its unity into a thousandfold plurality; the kernel of its action into a mass of many actions. These actions, in themselves but the individualisations of a great root-action – as it were the personal variations of the same one action that had been the necessary utterance of the spirit of the Folk became splintered and disfigured to such a degree, that their separate parts could be pieced together again by arbitrary whim; and this to feed the restless impulse of a Phantasy which, maimed within and reft of power to shape without, could now devour alone the outer matter, but no longer give the inner from itself. (...)

{FEUER} Through the adoption of Christianity the Folk had lost all true understanding of the original, vital relations of this Mythos, and when the life of its single body had been resolved by death into the myriad lives of a swarm of fables, the Christian religious-view was fitted under it, as though for its fresh quickening. By its intrinsic property, this view could do absolutely nothing more, than light up

that corpse of Mythos and deck it with a mystic apotheosis. In a sense it justified the death of Myth, inasmuch as it set before itself those clumsy actions, that tangle of cross-purposes – in themselves no longer explicable or vindicable by any intelligible idea still proper to the Folk – in all their whimsical caprice, and finding it impossible to assign an adequate motive to them, conveyed them to the Christian Death as its redeeming issue. The Christian [P. 164] Ritter-Romance [i.e., chivalrous Romance] gives a faithful expression to the life of the Middle Ages, by beginning with the myriad leavings of the corpse of the ancient Hero-Mythos, with a swarm of actions whose true idea appears to us unfathomable and capricious, because their motives, resting on a view of life quite alien to the Christian's, had been lost to the poet: to expose the utter lack of rhyme or reason in these actions, and out of their own mouths to vindicate to the instinctive Feeling the necessity of their transactors' downfall, -- be it by a sincere adoption of the Christian rules, which inculcated a life of contemplation and inaction, or be it by the uttermost effectuation of the Christian view, the martyr's death itself, -- this was the natural bent and purpose of the spiritual-poem of Chivalry.

(...) In the multifarious intercourse of the Crusades, the orient and the occident had interchanged these stuffs, and stretched their manysidedness to a monstrosity. Whereas in earlier days the Folk included nothing but the homelike in its myths: now that its understanding of the homelike had been lost, it sought for recompense in a constant novelty of the outlandish. In its burning hunger, it gulped down everything foreign and unwonted: its voracious phantasy exhausted all the possibilities of human imagination, -- to digest them into the wildest medley of adventures.

{FEUER} This bent at last the Christian view could no more guide, albeit itself, at bottom, had been its generator; for this bent was primarily nothing but the stress to flee from an un-understood reality, to gain contentment in a world of fancy. But this fancied world, however great the divagations of Phantasy, still must take its archetype from the actual world and nothing else: the imagination finally could only do over again what it had done in Mythos; it pressed together all the realities of the actual world – all that it could comprehend – into close-packed images, in which it individualised the essence of totalities and thus furbished them into marvels of monstrosity. In truth this newer thrust of Phantasy, just as with the Mythos, made again toward finding the reality; and that, the reality of a vastly extended outer world. (...) The passion for adventures, in which men yearned to realise the pictures of their fancy, condensed itself at last to a passion for undertakings whose goal, after the thousand-times proved fruitlessness of mere adventures – should be the knowledge of the outer world, a tasting of the fruit of actual experiences reaped on a definite path of earnest, keen endeavour. Daring voyages of discovery undertaken with a conscious aim, and profound scientific researches grounded on their results, at last uncloaked to us the world as it really is. – By this knowledge was the Romance of the Middle Ages destroyed, and the delineation of fancied shows was followed by the delineation of their reality.

{FEUER} This reality, however, had stayed untroubled, undisfigured by our errors, in the phenomena of Nature alone, unreachable by our activity. On the reality of Human Life our errors had lain the most distorting hand of violence. To vanquish these as well, to know the life of Man in the Necessity of its individual and social

nature; and finally, since that stands within our might, to shape it – this is the trend of humankind since ever it wrested to itself the outward faculty of knowing the phenomena of Nature in their genuine essence; for from this knowledge have we won the measure for the knowledge, also, of the essence of Mankind.

[P. 166] *{FEUER} The Christian life-view – which had unwittingly engendered this outward thrust of man, but of itself could neither feed nor guide it – had withdrawn into itself before this vision, had shrunk into a stolid Dogma, as though for sanctuary against a thing it could not comprehend. It is here that the intrinsic weakness and contradictoriness of this view bewrayed itself. Actual Life, and the ground of its phenomena, to it had ever been a thing incomprehensible. {FEUER} The strife between the law-made State and the selfwill of the Individual it had been the less able to overcome, as the roots of its own origin and essence lay in that strife alone: were the individual man completely reconciled with the commonwealth – nay, should he find therein the fullest satisfaction of his bent toward happiness, then would all necessity of the Christian view be done away with, and Christianity itself would be practically annulled. But as this view had originally sprung from that discord in the human mind, so Christianity, in its bearings toward the world, fed itself on the continuance of that discord, nothing else; and its purposed maintenance must therefore become the life-task of the Church, so soon as ever she grew fully conscious of her life-spring.*

{FEUER} The Christian Church had also striven for unity: every vital manifestment was to converge in her, as the centre of all life. She was not, however, life's central, but its terminal point; for the secret of the truest Christian essence was Death. At the other terminus there stood the natural fount of Life itself, of which Death can only become master through its annihilation: but the power which ever led this life towards the Christian-death, was none other than the State itself. The State was the veritable lifespring of the Christian Church; this latter warred against herself, when she strove against the State. What the Church of the Middle Ages disputed in her despotic but honest zeal for the Faith, was the remnant of old pagan ideas which expressed itself in the individual self-sanction of the worldly rulers. By imposing on these rulers the duty of seeking [P. 167] their authority from divine sanction, through the Church as intermediary, she drove them to consolidate the absolute four-square State, as though she had felt that such a State was needful to her own existence. Thus the Church was obliged at last to help fortify her own antithesis, the State, so as to render possible her own existence by making it a dualistic one; she became herself a political might, because she felt that she could exist in none but a political world. The Christian life-view, -- whose inner consciousness, rightly speaking, did away with the State, -- now that it had condensed into a Church, not only became the vindicatrix of the State, but she brought its standing menace to the freedom of the Individual to such a pitch that henceforth man's outward-thrust turned towards his liberation from Church and State alike, as though to find in human life itself a final realising of the nature of things, which he had now beheld in their true essence.

{FEUER} But first the actuality (Wirklichkeit) of Life and its shows themselves, was to be explored in like fashion as the actuality of natural phenomena had been explored by voyages of discovery and scientific research. Men's thrust, directed heretofore to outward things, now turned back to the actuality of Social Life; and that with all the greater zeal as, after flight to the uttermost ends of the earth, they had never

been able to rid themselves of these social conditions, but everywhere had stayed subjected to them. What man instinctively had fled from, and yet in truth could never flee away from, must at last be recognised as rooted so deeply in our own heart and our involuntary view of the essence of things human, that a flight from it to outer realms was clean impossible. Returning from the endless breadths of Nature, where he had found the imaginings of our Phantasy refuted by the essence of things, we [P. 168] were necessarily driven to seek in a plain and lucid contemplation of human affairs the selfsame refutation for a visionary, a false opinion thereof; for we felt that we must have fed and formed those affairs themselves in the same way as we had earlier formed our erroneous opinions of the phenomena of Nature. The first and weightiest step toward knowledge consisted, therefore, in grasping the phenomena of Life according to their actuality: and that, at first, without passing any judgment on them, but with the single aim to bring before ourselves their actual facts and grouping as perspicuously and truthfully as possible. As long as seafarers had set before themselves the object of discovery according to preconceived opinions, so long did they always find themselves disillusioned by the reality at last perceived; wherefore the explorer of our life-affairs held himself freer and freer from pre-judgment, the surer to reach the bottom of their actual essence. The most unruffled mode of looking at the naked, undisfigured truth henceforth becomes the Poet's plumb-line: to seize and exhibit human beings and their affairs as they are, and not as one had earlier imagined them, is from now the task alike of the Historian and of the Artist who fain would set before himself in miniature the actuality of Life, -- and Shakespeare was the unmatched master in this art, which let him find the shape for his Drama.

{FEUER} Man can only be comprehended in conjunction with [P. 169] men in general, with his Surrounding; man divorced from this, above all the modern man, must appear of all things the most incomprehensible. The restless inner discord of this Man, who between 'will' and 'can' had created for himself a chaos of tormenting notions, driving him to war against himself, to self-laceration and bodiless abandonment to the Christian death, -- this discord was not so much to be explained, as Christianity had sought to do, from the nature of the individual-man himself, as from the confusion wrought on this nature by an unintelligent view of the essence of Society. (...)

{FEUER} Before the gaze of the investigator, in his search for the human being, these historic facts upheaped themselves to so huge a mass [Hoard?] of recorded incidents and actions, that the medieval Romance's plethora-of-Stuff seemed naked penury compared therewith. And yet this mass [Hoard?], whose closer regardal showed it stretching into ever more intricate ramifyings, was to be pierced to its core by the searcher after the reality of man's affairs, in order to unearth from amidst its crushing waste the one thing that might reward such toil, the genuine undisfigured Man in all his nature's verity."

[P. 179] {FEUER} The Greek Fate is the inner Nature-necessity, from which the Greek -- because he did not understand it -- sought refuge in the arbitrary political State. Our Fate is the arbitrary political State, which to us shows itself as an outer necessity for the maintenance of Society; and from which we seek refuge in the Nature-necessity, because we have learnt to understand the latter, and have recognised it as the conditionment of our being and all its shapings.

{FEUER} The Nature-necessity utters itself the strongest and the most invincibly in the physical life-bent (Lebenstrieb) of the Individual, -- less understandably, however, and more open to arbitrary interpretations, in the ethical views of society by which the instinctive impulse of the State-included Individual is finally influenced or judged. *The life-bent of the Individual utters itself forever newly and directly, but the essence of Society is use and wont and its 'view' a mediated one. Wherefore the 'view' of Society, so long as it does not fully comprehend the essence of the Individual and its own genesis therefrom, is a hindering and shackling one; and it becomes ever more tyrannical, in exact degree as the quickening and innovating essence of the Individual brings its instinctive thrust to battle against habit.* Recognising this thrust as a disturbance, from the standpoint of his ethical Wont, the Greek misinterpreted it in this wise: that he traced it to a conjuncture in which the individual agent was conceived as possessed by an influence robbing him of his freedom of action, of that freedom in which he would have done the ethically (sittlich) wanted thing. Since the Individual, through his deed committed against ethical Wont, had ruined himself in the eyes of [P. 180] Society (vor der Gesellschaft); but yet, with [later] conscience of his deed, in so far re-entered the pale of Society as he condemned himself by his own conscience (aus ihrem Bewusstsein selbst): so *the act of unconscious sinning appeared explicable through nothing but a curse which rested on him without his personal guiltiness. This curse – represented in the Mythos as the divine chastisement for a primordial crime, and as cleaving to one special stock until its downfall – is in truth nothing other than an embodiment of the might of Instinct (Unwillkuer) working in the unconscious, Nature-bidden actions of the Individual; whereas Society appears as the conscious, the capricious (Willkuerliche), the true thing to be explained and exculpated. Explained and exculpated will it only be, however, when its manner of viewing is likewise recognised as an instinctive one, and its conscience as grounded on an erroneous view of the essence of the Individual.*

[* Translator's Footnote: "Here the corresponding passage in the D.M. continues thus: 'This knowledge, however, could never be won by the givers and guarders of the Law, under whose hands Society, feeling itself entitled to absolute authority (absolut berechtigt), at last hardened itself into the State, and from whom it was demanded that according to an imagined 'norm' they should make secure against the perceived imperfections of its actual existence that Society itself, which had been unsettled from its habit by the action of the Individual.' "]

Through the Myth of Oedipus, significant in so many other respects, let us make clear to ourselves this relation.

Oedipus had slain a man who affronted and finally drove him into self-defence. In this, public opinion found nothing worthy of condemnation [P. 181] Still less did Oedipus commit a crime, in that, as payment for a benefit conferred upon the land, he took its widowed Queen to wife.

But it transpired that the slaughtered man was not only the husband of this Queen, but also the father – and thus his widowed wife the mother – of Oedipus himself.

To men the reverence of children for their father, their love toward him, and love's eagerness to cherish and protect him in old age, were such instinctive feelings, and upon these feelings was so founded of itself the most essential ground-view

(Grundanschauung) of human beings united by that very view into a Society, that a deed which wounded these feelings in their tenderest spot must perforce appear to them both incomprehensible and execrable. These feelings, moreover, were so strong and insurmountable, that even the consideration, how that father had first attempted the life of his son, could not overpower them; certainly there was recognised in the death of Laius a punishment for that earlier crime of his [i.e., leaving the baby Oedipus maimed, to die, in order to preempt the prophecy that Laius would be killed by his own son], so that we are unmoved by his destruction; nevertheless, this circumstance was incompetent to quiet us in any way concerning the deed of Oedipus, from which nothing could remove the stain of parricide.

Still more violently was roused the public horror, by the circumstance that Oedipus had wedded his own mother and begotten children of her. In the life of the Family – the most natural, albeit the most straitened basis of Society – it had been established quite of itself, that betwixt parents and children, as betwixt the children of one pair, there is developed an inclination altogether different from that which proclaims itself in the sudden, violent commotion of sexual love. In the Family the natural ties between begetter and begotten become the ties of Wont; and only from out of Wont, again, is evolved a natural inclination of brothers and sisters toward one another. But the first attraction of sexual love is brought the stripling by an unwonted object, freshly fronting him from Life itself; this attraction is so overpowering, that it draws him [P. 182] from the wonted surroundings of the Family, in which this attraction had never presented itself, and drives him forth to journey with the un-wonted. This sexual love is the revolutionary, who breaks down the narrow confines of the Family, to widen it itself into the broader reach of human Society. The intuition of the essence of family-love and its distinction from the love between the sexes is therefore an instinctive one, inspired by the very nature of the thing; it rests upon Experience and Wont, and is therefore a view which takes us with all the strength of an insuperable feeling.

Oedipus, who had espoused his mother and begotten children of her, is an object that fills us with horror and loathing, because he unatonably assaults our wonted relations towards our mother, and the views which we have based thereon.

But if these views, now thriven into ethical conceptions (sittlichen Begriffen), were of so great strength only because they had issued instinctively from human nature's feeling, then we ask: Did Oedipus offend against this Human Nature, when he wedded his own mother? – Most certainly not. Else would revolted Nature have proclaimed her wrath, by permitting no children to spring from this union: yet Nature, of all others, showed herself quite willing; Jocasta and Oedipus, who had met as two unwonted objects, loved each other; and it was only at the instant when it was made known to them from without that they were mother and son, that their love was first disturbed. Oedipus and Jocasta knew not, in what social relation they stood to one another: they had acted unconsciously, according to the natural instinct of the purely human Individual; from their union had sprung an enrichment of human Society, in the persons of two lusty sons and two noble daughters, on whom henceforth, as on their parents, there weighed the irremovable curse of that Society. *The hapless pair, whose Conscience (Bewusstsein) stood within the pale of human Society, passed judgment on themselves when they became conscious of their unconscious crime: [P. 183] by their self-annulling, for sake of expiation, they proved the*

strength of the social loathing of their action, -- that loathing which had been their own through Wont, even before the action itself; but in that they had done the deed, despite this social conscience, they testified to the far greater, more resistless might of unconscious individual Human Nature.

How full of meaning it is, then, that precisely this Oedipus had solved the riddle of the Sphinx! In advance he uttered both his vindication and his own condemnal when he called the kernel of this riddle Man. From the half-bestial body of the Sphinx, there front him at first the human Individual in its subjection to Nature: when the half brute-beast had dashed itself from its dreary mountain-stronghold into the shattering abyss below, the shrewd unriddler of its riddle turned back to the haunts of men; to let them fathom, from his own undoing, the whole, the Social Man. When he stabbed the light from eyes which had flamed wrath upon a taunting despot, had streamed with love towards a noble wife, -- without power to see that the one was his father, the other his mother, -- then he plunged down to the mangled carcass of the Sphinx, whose riddle he now must know was yet unsolved.

{FEUER} It is we who have to solve that riddle, to solve it by vindicating the instinct of the Individual from out Society itself; whose highest, still renewing and re-quickening wealth, that Instinct is. --

But let us next pursue the wider circuit of the Oedipus-saga, and see how Society behaved itself, and whither its moral conscience went astray!

From the strifes of the sons of Oedipus there fell to Creon, brother of Jocasta, the rulership of Thebes. As [P. 184] lord, he decreed that the corpse of Polynices, one of these two sons, -- who together with Eteocles, the other, had fallen in mutual combat, -- should be given unburied to the winds and vultures, whilst that of Eteocles was interred with all befitting pomp: whoever should act in contravention of the edict, should himself be buried alive. {FEUER} Antigone, the sister of both brothers, -- she who had followed her blind father into banishment, -- in full consciousness defied the edict, interred the corpse of her outlawed brother, and suffered the appointed punishment. -- Here we see the State, which had imperceptibly waxed from out the Society, had fed itself on the latter's habit of view, and had so far become the attorney (Vertreter) of this habit, that now it represented abstract Wont alone, whose core is fear and abhorrence of the thing unwonted. Armed with the power of this Wont, the State now turns upon Society itself, to crush it; inasmuch as it wards from it the natural sustenance of its being, in the holiest and most instinctive social feelings. (...)

What profit had Creon, from the decreeing of such a ruthless edict? And what made him deem it possible, that such an edict should not be abrogated by the general indignation of his people? Eteocles and Polynices, after the downfall of their father, had agreed to divide their inheritance, the rulership of Thebes, in this wise: that they should administer it by turns. Eteocles, who was the first to enjoy their common birthright, refused to make it over to his brother, when Polynices at the appointed time returned from voluntary exile to enjoy his spell of government. *Thus Eteocles forswore his oath. Did oath-revering Society mete him punishment therefor? No: it supported him in his designs, designs which rested on a broken oath. Had men already lost all reverence for the sacredness of oaths? No, on the contrary: they cried aloud to the Gods, deploring the forswearal, for they feared [P. 185] it would be*

avenged. But, despite their evil conscience, the citizens of Thebes acquiesced in the conduct of Eteocles, because the oath's object, the compact sworn between the brothers, at the moment seemed to them far more flagitious than the consequences of an act of perjury, which might haply be circumvented through gifts and sacrifices to the Gods. What pleased them not, was a change of rulers, a constant innovation, because Wont had already become their virtual lawgiver. Moreover, in this taking sides for Eteocles the citizens evinced their practical sense of the nature of Property, -- which everyone was only too glad to enjoy alone, without sharing it with another. Each citizen who recognised in Property the guarantee of wanted quiet, was ipso facto an accomplice of the unbrotherly deed of Eteocles, the supreme Proprietor. The might of self-serving Wont thus lent support to Eteocles; whilst against it fought the defrauded Polynices with all the heat of Youth. In him there only dwelt the feeling of an injury meet to be avenged: he assembled a host of like-feeling hero-hearted comrades, advanced upon the citadel of broken oaths, and summoned it to drive from out its walls the birthright-robbing brother. This mode of dealing, albeit prompted by a thoroughly justifiable wrath, yet appeared to the good citizens of Thebes as but another monstrous crime; for Polynices was unconditionally a very bad patriot, when he besieged his father-city. The friends of Polynices had gathered from every race: a purely human interest made them favour the cause of Polynices; wherefore they represented the Purely-human, Society in its widest and most natural sense, as against a straitened, narrow-hearted, self-seeking society which was imperceptibly shrinking, under their attacks, into the ossified State. -- In order to end the lengthy war, the brothers called each other forth to single combat: both fell upon the field. --

[P. 186] {FEUER} *The crafty Creon now surveyed these incidents in their conjunction, and recognised therein the essence of Public Opinion; seeing its kernel to be nothing but Wont, Care, and dislike of Innovation. The ethical view (sittliche Anschauung) of the nature of Society -- which had still been so strong in the great-hearted Oedipus that, from loathing at his own unconscious outrage on it, he had annulled himself -- lost its power in exact degree as the Purely-human, which inspired it, came into conflict with the strongest social interest, that of absolute Wont, i.e. of joint self-seeking. Wherever this ethical conscience fell into conflict with the practice of society, it severed from the latter and established itself apart, as Religion; whereas practical society shaped itself into the State. Morality (Sittlichkeit), which in Society had heretofore been something warm and living, in Religion remained merely something thought, something wished, but no longer able to be carried out. In the State, on the contrary, folk acted according to the practical judgments of Utility: and, if the moral conscience came by an offence -- why! It was appeased by religious observances quite innocuous to the State. Herewith the great advantage was this, that one gained someone, both in Religion and State, upon whom to shift one's sins: the crimes of the State the Prince [* Wagner's Footnote: The later Democracy was the open taking-over of the scapegoat's office by the united body of citizens; herewith they admitted that they had so far come to a knowledge of themselves, as to know that they were themselves the basis of the royal Caprice. Here, then, even Religion openly became an art, and the State a cockpit for the egoistic personality. In flight before the individual Instinct, the State fell into the hands of individual Caprice of forceful personalities; after Athens had cheered on Alcibiades to the echo and deified a Demetrius, at last it licked, with ease and com-*

fort, the spittle of a Nero.] must smart for, but the Gods had to answer for offenses against religious ethics. – **Eteocles was the practical scapegoat of the new-made State**, the consequences of his oath-break, the accommodating Gods had had to bring home to him; but the stability of the State – so they hoped, at least, though alas it did not so turn out! – the valiant [P. 187] citizens of Thebes were to enjoy all to themselves. Who ever felt inclined to offer himself anew as such a scapegoat, was therefore to them most welcome ...

{FEUER} (...) Quiet and order, even at the cost of the most despicable outrage on human nature and the wonted morality itself, -- at the cost of a conscious, deliberate murder of a child [P. 188] by its own father, prompted by the most unfatherly self-regard, -- this Quiet and Order were at any rate more worth considering than the most natural of human sentiments, which bids a father sacrifice himself to his children, not them to him. What, then, had this Society become, whose natural moral-sense had been its very basis? The diametrical opposite of this its own foundation: the representative of immorality and hypocrisy. The poison which had palsied it, however, was – use-and-wont. The passion for use-and-wont, for unconditional quiet, betrayed it into stamping down the fount from which it might have ever kept itself in health and freshness; and this fount was the free, the self-determining Individual. Moreover, in its utmost palsy, Society has only had morality brought back to it, i.e. the truly human morality, by the Individual; by the Individual who, of the instinctive thrust of Nature's necessity, has lifted up his hand against and morally annulled it. This glorious vindication of genuine Human Nature, also, is further inscribed in the plainest letters on the world-historical myth we have before us.

Creon had become ruler: in him the people recognised the legitimate successor to Laius and Eteocles; and this he confirmed in the eyes of every burgher, when he doomed the corpse of unpatriotic Polynices to the terrible shame of lack of burial, and thus his soul to eternal unrest. This was an edict of the highest political wisdom: by it Creon cemented his rule, inasmuch as he vindicated Eteocles, who by his oath-break had preserved the Quiet of the burghers; and inasmuch as he thus gave plainly to be understood that he, too was willing to maintain the State in quiet and order by taking on his shoulders the burden of every offence against true human morals. (...)

In this State there was but one sorrowing heart, in [P. 189] which the feeling of Humanity had sought a shelter: -- it was the heart of a sweet maiden, from whose soul there sprang into all-puissant beauty the flower of Love. Antigone knew nothing of Politics: -- she loved. (...) ... she loved Polynices because of his misfortune, and because the highest power of Love alone could free him from his curse. What then, was this love, which was not the love of sex, not love of child to parent, not love of sister for her brother? -- It was the topmost flower of all. Amid the ruins of love of sex, of parents, and of brethren, -- which Society had disowned and the State annulled, -- there sprang, from the ineradicable seed of all these loves, the fullest flower of pure Human-love.

Antigone's love was fully conscious. She knew, what she was doing, -- but she also knew that do it she must, that she had no choice but to act according to love's Necessity; she knew, that she had to listen to this unconscious, strenuous necessity of self-annihilation in the cause of sympathy; and in this consciousness of the Uncon-

cious she was alike the perfect Human Being, the embodiment of Love in its highest fill and potence. – Antigone told the godly citizens of Thebes: Ye condemned my father and my mother, because they loved unwittingly; but yet condemned not Laius, the witting murderer of his son, and ye sheltered Eteocles, his brother's foe: condemn then me, who deal from pure human-love alone, -- so is the measure of your outrage brimmed! – And lo! – the love-curse of Antigone annulled the State! No hand was stirred to save [P. 190] her, when she was led to death. (...) But there, where all Love was born, was also born high Love's avenger. A stripling burned with sudden love towards Antigone; to his father he disclosed his plight, and begged that father's love to spare the victim: harshly was he thrust aside. Then the stripling stormed his loved one's grave, that grave which had erst received her living: he found her dead, and with his sword he pierced his loving heart. But this was the son of Creon, the son of the State personified: at sight of the dead body of the son who through Love perforce had cursed his father, the ruler became again a father. The sword of his son's love drove a deadly gash into his heart: wounded deep within, the State fell crashing to the ground, to become in death a Human Being. –

O holy Antigone! On thee I cry! Let wave thy banner, that beneath it we destroy and yet redeem.!"

[P. 191] {FEUER} *The incomparable thing about the Mythos is, that it is true for all time, and its content, how close soever its compression, is inexhaustible throughout the ages. The only task of the Poet, was to expound it. (...)*

To-day we only need to faithfully expound the myth of Oedipus according to its Inmost essence, and we in it win an intelligible picture of the whole history of Mankind, from the beginnings of Society to the inevitable downfall of the State. The necessity of this downfall was foreboded in the Mythos: it is the part of actual history (der wirklichen Geschichte) to accomplish it.

[P. 192] {FEUER} (...) its [i.e., the State's] kernel, also, is bared us in the Oedipus-saga: as the seed of all offences we recognise the rulership of Laius, since for sake of its undiminished possession he became an unnatural father. From this possession grown into an ownership (Eigenthum), which wondrously enough is looked on as the base of all good order, there issue all the crimes of myth and history. – Let us keep our eye upon the abstract State alone. The Thinkers of this State desired to plane down and equalise the imperfections of actual Society, according to a thought-out 'norm': yet that they retained these very imperfections as a given thing, as the only thing to fit the 'sinfulness' of human nature, and never went back to the real Man himself, -- who from his at first instinctive, but at last erroneous views had called those inequalities into being, exactly as through Experience and the consequent correction of his errors he must also bring about, quite of itself, the perfect Society, i.e., one answering to the real Needs of men, -- this was the grand error through which the Political State evolved itself to the unnatural height whence it fain would guide our Human Nature far below; that nature which it did [P. 193] not understand at all, and understood the less, the more it fain would guide it.

{FEUER} *The Political State lives only on the vices of society, whose virtues are derived solely from the human individuality. Faced with the vices of society, which alone it can espy, the State cannot perceive the virtues which society acquires from that individuality. (...) In their 'Fate' the Greeks mistook the nature of the Individuality,*

because it disturbed Society's moral wont: to battle against this Fate, they armed themselves with the political State. Now, our Fate is the political State, in which the free Individuality perceives its destroying Destiny (Schicksal). But the essence of the political State is caprice, whereas the essence of the free Individuality is necessity. From out this Individuality, which we have recognised as in the right (als das Berechtigte) in its thousand-years' battle with the political State, -- from this to organise Society, is the conscious task imposed upon us for the Future. But, to bring the unconscious part of human nature to consciousness [P. 194] within Society, and in this consciousness to know nothing other than the necessity common to every member of Society, namely of the Individual's own free self-determining, -- this is as good as to say, annul the State; for through Society has the State marched on to a denial of the free self-determining of the Individual, -- upon the death of that, has it lived."

[P. 195] {FEUER} *"It all the more necessarily became the poet's task to display the battle in which the Individual sought to free himself from the political State or religious Dogma, as political life -- remote from which the poet at last could merely lead a life of dreams -- was more and more consciously filled by the changing hazards of that battle, as by its genuine Content. (...) By the nature of the thing, however, the Individuality which the poet led into battle against the State was no purely human one, but an individuality conditioned by the State itself. It was of like genus with the State, included in it, and merely the opposite of the State's extremest apex.*

{FEUER} A conscious individuality, -- i.e., an individuality which determines us in this one particular case, to act so and not otherwise -- we win alone within society, which brings us first the case in which we have to form decisions. The Individuality without Society is completely unthinkable by us, as [P. 196] an individuality; for first in intercourse with other individuals, is shown the thing wherein we differ from them, wherein we are peculiar to ourselves. (...)

{FEUER} The dangerous corner of the human brain, into which the entire individuality had fled for refuge, -- the State [P. 197] endeavoured to sweep it out as well, by the aid of religious Dogma; but here the State was doomed to failure, since it could merely bring up hypocrites, i.e. State-burghers who deal otherwise than as they think. Yet it was from thinking, that there first arose the force to withstand the State. The first purely human stir of freedom manifested itself in warding off the bondage of religious dogma; and freedom of thought the State at last was forced to yield. (...)

*{FEUER} (...) The Individuality, thus merely thought-out but not portrayed, could therefore be exhibited to nothing but the thought, and not to the directly-seizing feeling. Our Drama has therefore been an appeal to the Understanding, -- not to the feeling. It thus has taken the place of the [P. 198] Didactic-poem, which exhibits a subject from the life only as far as it suits the conscious aim, of imparting a thought to the Understanding. But, to impart a thought to the Understanding the poet has to proceed just as circumspectly as, on the contrary, he must go to work with the greatest simplicity and straightforwardness when he addresses himself to the directly seizing Feeling. The Feeling seizes nothing but the actual (das Wirkliche), the physically enacted, the perceivable by the senses: to it one can only impart the fulfilled, the rounded-off, the thing that is just wholly what it is, just what at this instant it can be. *To the Feeling the at-one-with-itself alone is understandable; whatsoever is at variance with itself, what has not reached an actual and definite manifestation, confounds the**

Feeling and drives it into thinking, -- drives it into an act of combination which does away with it as Feeling.

{FEUER} In order to convince it, the poet who turns towards the Feeling must be already so at one with himself, that he can dispense with any aid from the mechanism of Logic and address himself with full consciousness to the infallible receptive powers (Empfaengniss) of the un-conscious, purely human Feeling. (...) But in order to impart the highest thing impartable, and alike the most convincingly intelligible – the purely human Individuality – the modern dramatic poet ... has to move along a directly opposite path. From out the enormous mass of its actual surroundings – in the visible measure-, form-, and colour-giving State, and in History petrified into a State – he has first with infinite toil to reconstruct this Individuality; in order at last ... [P. 199] to do nothing more than exhibit it to the Thought. [Wagner's Footnote: *In 'Egmont' Goethe had employed the whole course of the piece in loosening this purely-human Individuality, with toilsome wealth of detail, from the conditions of its State-historical Surrounding; in the solitude of the dungeon, and immediately before its death, he now wished to show it to the Feeling as coming into oneness with itself: for this, he must reach out hands to Marvel and to Music.*] (...) From the earliest impressions of our youth, we see Man only in the shape and character given him by the State; the individuality drilled into him by the State our involuntary feeling takes for his real essence; we cannot seize him otherwise, than by those distinctive qualities which in truth are not his very own, but merely lent him by the State. To-day the Folk cannot conceive the human being otherwise than in the uniform of his 'class,' the uniform in which, from youth up, it sees his body clad; and *the 'Folk's-playwright,' also, can address himself understandably to the Folk only when not for a single instant does he tear it from this State-burgherly illusion – which holds its unconscious Feeling captive to such a degree, that it would be placed in the greatest bewilderment if one attempted to reconstruct before it the actual human being beneath this visible semblance.* Wherefore, to exhibit the purely-human [P. 200] individuality, the modern poet has to turn, not to the feeling, but to the understanding; since even to himself it is only a thought-out thing. (...)*

*{FEUER} The understanding is thus, from first to last, the human faculty which the modern poet wishes to address; and with it he can only parley through the organ of the combining, dispersing, severing and re-piecing Understanding; through abstract and conditioned Word-speech, which merely describes and filters down the impressions and acquirements of the Feeling. (...) This [i.e., Greek] *Tragedy's basis was the Lyric, from which it advanced to word-speech in the same way as Society advanced from the natural, ethico-religious ties of Feeling, to the political State. The return from Understanding to Feeling will be the march of the Drama of the Future, in so far as we shall advance from the thought-out individuality to the genuine one. But, from the very beginning of his work, the modern poet has to exhibit a Surrounding – the State – which is void of any purely-human sentiment, and therefore is un-communicable through the Feeling's highest utterance. So that he can only reach his purpose, at all, [P. 201] through the organ of the 'combining' Understanding, through un-emotional modern speech; and rightly does the playwright of nowadays deem it unfitting, bewildering and disturbing, to employ Music for an object which can at**

best be intelligibly conveyed as Thought to the Understanding, but never to the Feeling as Emotion.

{FEUER} But what sort of shaping of the Drama, in the sense aforesaid, would be called forth by the going-under of the State, by the rise of an organically healthy Society.

{FEUER} Looked at reasonably, the Going-under of the State can mean nothing else but the self-realisation of Society's religious conviction (Bewusstsein) of its purely-human essence. By its very nature, this conviction can be no Dogma stamped upon us from without, i.e. it cannot rest on historical traditions, nor be drilled into us by the State. So long as any one of life's actions is demanded of us as an outward Duty, so long is the object of that action no object of Religious Conscience; for when we act from the dictates of religious conscience we act from out ourselves, we so act as we cannot act otherwise. But Religious Conscience means a universal conscience (allgemeinsames Bewusstsein); and conscience cannot be universal, until it knows the Unconscious, the Instinctive, the Purely-human, as the only true and necessary thing, and vindicates it by that knowledge. (...) [P. 202] So long, moreover, shall we have states and religions, till we have but one Religion, and no longer any State. But, if this Religion must necessarily be a universal one, so can it be none other than the true and conscience-vindicated nature of Mankind; and every man must be capable of feeling this unconsciously, and instinctively putting it into practice. This common human nature will be felt the strongest by the Individual as his own, his individual nature, such as in him it manifests itself as the trend to life and love: the contentment of this trend, it is, that drives the unit into Society; in which, by very reason that he can satisfy that trend in fellowship alone, he attains quite of himself the religious, i.e. the common conscience, which vindicates his nature. In the free self-determining of the Individuality there therefore lies the basis of the social Religion of the Future ...

{FEUER} ... until now we can only apprehend each human relationship in the shape of a [P. 203] Right conferred by historical tradition, and in its prescription by a statutory 'norm of standing.' But we may guess the measureless wealth of living individual relationships, if we take them as purely-human, ever fully and entirely present; i.e. if we think every extrahuman or non-present thing that in the State, as Property and historic Right, has placed itself between them, has torn asunder their ties of Love, has dis-individualised, Class-uniformed, and State-established them, -- if we think this all sent far away ["fernen"?]. "

[P. 204] {FEUER} "Just as human society received its first ethical concepts from the Family, so did it acquire therefrom its reverence for age. In the Family, however, this reverence was one called forth, conducted, conditioned and motivated, by Love: the father before all loved his son; of love he counselled him; but, also out of love, he gave him scope. In Society this motivating love was lost, in exact degree as the reverence for the person transferred itself to fixed ideas and extrahuman things which -- unreal in themselves -- did not stand toward us in that living reciprocity wherein Love is able to requite our reverence, i.e., to take from it its fear. The father, now become a God, could no more love us; the counsel of our elders, now become a Law, could no longer leave us our free play; the family, become a State, could no more judge us according to the instinctive forbearance of Love, but only according to the chilling edicts of moral

compacts. The State – taken at its widest – thrusts upon us the experiences of History, as the plumb-line for our dealings; yet we can only deal sincerely, when through our instinctive dealings themselves we reach experience; [P. 205] an experience taught us by communications can only be resultful for us, when by our instinctive dealings we make it over again for ourselves. Thus the true, the reasonable love of age toward youth substantiates itself in this; that it does not make its own experiences the measure for youth's dealings, but points it toward a fresh experience, and enriches its own thereby , , ,

{FEUER} The Going-under of the State means therefore the falling-away of the barrier which the egoistic vanity of Experience, in the form of Prejudice, has erected against the spontaneity of individual dealings. This barrier at present takes the place that naturally belongs to love, and by its essence it is lovelessness; i.e. Experience eaten up with its own conceit; and at last, the violently prosecuted will to reap no more experiences, -- the self-seeking narrow-mindedness of Habit, the cruel doggedness of Quiet. – Now, by Love the father knows that he has not as yet experienced enough, but that by the experiences of his child, which in love toward it he makes his own, he may endlessly enrich his being. In the aptitude for rejoicing at the deeds of others, whose import it knows to turn through love into a delight-worthy and delight-giving object for itself, consists the beauty of reposeful age. Where this repose is naturally at hand through Love, it is by no means a hindrance to the activity of youth, but the latter's furtherance. It is the giving space to the activity of youth in an element of Love; by the beholding of this activity, it becomes a highest artistic participation therein, -- becomes the very life-element of Art in general.

[P. 206] {FEUER} Already-experienced age is able to take according to their characteristic import the deeds of youth, by which the latter unconsciously evinces its instinctive thrust, and to survey them in their full conjunction: it thus can vindicate these deeds more completely than their youthful agent, since it knows how to explain and consciously display them. In the repose of age we thus win the 'moment' of highest poetic faculty; and only that more youthful man can make this faculty his own, who wins that repose, i.e. that justness toward the phenomena of Life. –

{FEUER} The loving admonition of the experienced to the inexperienced, of the peaceful to the passionate, of the beholder to the doer, is given the most persuasively and resultfully by bringing faithfully before the instinctive agent his inmost being. He who is possessed with life's unconscious eagerness, will never be brought by general moral exhortations to a critical knowledge (zur urtheilfaehigen Erkenntniss) of his own being, but this can only succeed entirely when in a likeness faithfully held up before him he is able to look upon himself; for right cognisance is re-cognition, just as right conscience is knowledge of our own Unconsciousness. The admonisher is the understanding, the experienced-one's conscious power of view: the thing to be admonished is the feeling, the unconscious bent-to-doing of the seeker for experience. The Understanding can know nothing other than the vindication of the Feeling; for, itself, it is but the quiet which follows on the begetting stir of Feeling. It can only vindicate itself, when it knows itself conditioned by instinctive Feeling; and Understanding justified by Feeling – no longer entangled in the feelings of this unit, but upright towards Feeling in general – is the Vernunft. As Vernunft the Understanding is so far [P. 207] superior to the Feeling, as it can judge all-righteously the agency of individual

feelings, in their contact with their objects and opposites; which latter likewise act from individual feelings. It is the highest social force, itself conditioned by Society alone ...

[P. 208] {FEUER} *“Only in the most perfect artwork therefore, in the Drama, can the insight of the experienced-one impart itself with full success; and for the very reason that, through employment of every artistic expressional-faculty of man, the poet’s aim (Absicht) is in Drama the most completely carried from the Understanding to the Feeling, -- to wit, is artistically imparted to the Feeling’s most directly receptive organs, the senses. The Drama, as the most perfect artwork, differs from all other forms of poetry in just this, -- that in it the Aim is lifted into utmost imperceptibility, by its entire realisation. In Drama, wherever the aim, i.e. the Intellectual Will, stays still observable, there the impression is also a chilling one; for where we see the poet still will-ing, we feel that as yet he can not. The poet’s can-ning, however, is the complete ascension of the Aim into the Artwork, the emotionalising of the intellect (Gefuehlsverdung des Verstandes). His aim he can only reach by physically presenting to our eyes the things of Life in their fullest spontaneity; and thus, by vindicating Life itself out of the mouth of its own Necessity; for the Feeling, to which he addresses himself, can understand this Necessity alone.*

{FEUER} *In presence of the Dramatic Artwork, nothing should remain for the combining Intellect to search for. Everything in it must come to an issue sufficient to set our [P. 209] Feeling at rest thereon; for in the setting-at-rest of this Feeling resides the repose, itself, which brings us an instinctive understanding of Life. In the Drama, we must become knowers through the Feeling. The Understanding tells us: ‘So is it,’ – only when the Feeling has told us: ‘So must it be.’ Only through itself, however, does this Feeling become intelligible to itself: it understands no other language than its own. Things which can only be explained to us by the infinite accommodations of the Understanding, embarrass and confound the Feeling. In Drama, therefore, an action can only be explained when it is completely vindicated by the Feeling; and it thus is the dramatic poet’s task, not to invent actions, but to make an action so intelligible through its emotional Necessity, that we may altogether dispense with the intellect’s assistance in its vindication. The poet therefore has to make his main scope the choice of the Action, – which he must so choose that, alike in its character as in its compass, it makes possible to him its entire vindication from out the Feeling; for in this vindication alone, resides the reaching of his aim.”*

[P. 210] {FEUER} (...) *In a politico-historical drama ... it became the poet’s business to eventually give out his Aim quite nakedly – as such: the whole drama stayed unintelligible and unimpressive, if this Aim, in the form of a human ‘moral,’ did not at last quite visibly emerge from amid the desert waste of pragmatic motives, employed for sheer description’s sake. In the course of such a piece, one asked oneself instinctively: ‘What is the poet trying to tell us?’*

{FEUER} *Now, an Action which is to justify itself before and through the Feeling, busies itself with no moral; its whole moral consists precisely in its justification by the instinctive human Feeling. It is a goal to itself, insofar as it has to be vindicated only and precisely by the feeling out of which it springs. Wherefore this Action can only be such an one as proceeds from relations the truest, i.e. the most seizable by*

the Feeling, the highest to human emotions, and thus the simplest, -- from relations such as can only spring from a human Society intrinsically at one with itself, uninfluenced by inessential notions and non-present grounds of right: a Society belonging to itself alone, and not to any Past.

{FEUER} (...) But the greater and more decisive an action is, and the more it can only be explained from the strength of a necessary feeling: in so much the more definite and wider a connexion does it also stand with the actions of others. A great action, one which the most demonstratively and exhaustively [P. 211] displays the nature of Man along with any one particular line issues only from the shock of manifold and mighty opposites. *But, for us to be able to rightly judge these opposites themselves, and to fathom their actions by the individual feelings of the transactors, a great action must be represented in a wide circle of relations; for only in such a circle, is it to be understood. The Poet's chief and especial task will thus consist in this: that at the very outset he shall fix his eye on such a circle, shall completely gauge its compass, shall scrutinise each detail of the relations contained therein, with heed both to its own measure and to its bearing on the main-action; this done, that he then shall make the measure of his understanding of these things the measure of their understandable-ness as a work of Art, by drawing in this ample circle towards its central point, and thus condensing it into the periphery which gives an understanding of the central hero. This condensation (Verdichtung) is the work proper to the poetising intellect (des dichtenden Verstandes); and this intellect is the centre and the summit of the whole man, who from thence divides himself into the receiver and the imparter.*

{FEUER} *As an object (Erscheinung) is seized in the first place by the outward-turned instinctive Feeling, and next is brought to the Imagination, as the earliest function of the brain: so the Understanding, which is nothing else but the imaginative-force as regulated by the actual Measure of the object, has to advance in turn through the Imagination to the instinctive Feeling – in order to impart what it now has recognised. In the Understanding objects mirror themselves as what they actually are; but this mirrored actuality is, after all, a mere thing of thought: to impart this thought-out actuality, the Understanding must display it to the Feeling in an image akin to what the Feeling had originally brought to it; and this image is the work of Phantasy. Only through the Phantasy, can the Understanding have commerce with the Feeling. The Understanding can only grasp the full actuality of an object, when it breaks the image, in which the object is brought it by the Phantasy, [P. 212] and parcels it into its singliest parts; when it fain would bring these parts before itself again in combination, it has at once to cast for itself an image, which no longer answers strictly to the actuality of the thing, but merely in the measure wherein Man has power to recognise it. Thus even the simplest action confounds and bewilders the Understanding, which would fain regard it through the anatomical microscope, by the immensity of its ramifications: would it comprehend that action, it can only do so by discarding the microscope and fetching forth the image in which alone its human eye can grasp; and this comprehension is ultimately enabled by the instinctive Feeling – as vindicated by the Understanding. This image of the phenomena, in which alone the Feeling can comprehend them, ... this image, for the Aim of the poet, who must likewise take the phenomena of Life and*

compress them from their view-less many-memberedness into a compact, easily surveyable shape, -- this image is nothing else but the Wonder.

[P. 213] {FEUER} *The Wonder in the Poet's work is distinguished from the Wonder in religious Dogma by this: that it does not, like the latter, upheave the nature of things, but the rather makes it comprehensible to the Feeling.*

{FEUER} *The Judaeo-Christian Wonder tore the connexion of natural phenomena asunder, to allow the Divine Will to appear as standing over Nature. In it a broad connexus of things was by no means condensed in favour of their understanding by the instinctive Feeling, but this Wonder was employed entirely for its own sake alone; people demanded it, as the proof of a suprahuman power, from him who gave himself for divine, and in whom they refused to believe till before the bodily eyes of men he had shown himself the lord of Nature, i.e. the arbitrary subverter of the natural order of things. This Wonder was therefore claimed from him one did not hold for authentic in himself and his natural dealings, but whom one proposed to first believe when he should have achieved something unbelievable, something un-understandable. A fundamental denial of the Understanding was therefore the thing hypothecated in advance, both by the wonder-claimer and the wonder-worker: whereas an absolute Faith was the thing demanded by the wonder-doer, and granted by the wonder-getter.*

{FEUER} *Now, for the operation of its message, the poetising intellect has absolutely no concern with Faith, but only with an understanding through the Feeling. It wants to display a great connexus of natural phenomena in an image swiftly understandable, and this image must [P. 214] therefore be one answering to the phenomena in such a way that the instinctive Feeling may take it up without a struggle, not first be challenged to expound it: whereas the characteristic of the Dogmatic Wonder consists just in this, that, through the obvious impossibility of explaining it, it tyrannously subjugates the Understanding despite the latter's instinctive search for explanation; and precisely in this subjugation, does it seek for its effect. The Dogmatic Wonder is therefore just as unfitted for Art, as the Poetic Wonder is the highest and most necessary product of the artist's power of beholding and displaying."*

[P. 215] {FEUER} *"In the interest of intelligibleness ... the poet has so to limit the number of his Action's moments, that he may win the needful space for the motivation of those retained. (...) In order ... to intelligibly enounce a Chief-motive, thus strengthened by taking into it a number of motives which in ordinary life would only utter themselves through numerous moments-of-action, the action thereby conditioned must also be a strengthened, a powerful one, and in its unity more ample than any that ordinary life brings forth; seeing that in ordinary life the selfsame action would only have come to pass in company with many lesser actions, in a widespread space, and within a greater stretch of time. (...) [P. 216] It is just in his busy scattering through Time and Space, that Man cannot understand his own life-energy: but the image of that energy, as brought within the compass of his understanding, is what the Poet's shapings offer him for view; an image wherein this energy is condensed into an utmost-strengthened 'moment,' which, taken apart, most certainly seems wondrous and unwonted, yet shuts within itself its own unwontedness and wondrousness, and is in nowise taken by the beholder for a Wonder but apprehended as the most intelligible representment of reality.*

{FEUER} In virtue of this Wonder, the poet is able to display the most measureless conjunctures (Zusammenhänge) in an all-intelligible Unity. (...) Even his most unwonted shapes, which the poet has to evoke in this procedure, will never truly be un-natural; because in them Nature's essence is not distorted, but merely her utterances are gathered into one lucid image, such as is alone intelligible to the artist-man. The poetic daring, which gathers Nature's utterances into such an image, can first for us be crowned with due success, precisely because through Experience we have gained a clear insight into Nature's essence.

{FEUER} So long as the phenomena of Nature were merely an 'objective' of man's Phantasy, so long also must the [P. 217] human imagination (Einbildungskraft) be subjected to them: moreover, their semblance governed and determined its view of the human phenomenal-world in such a way, that men derived the inexplicable in that world – that is to say, the unexplained – from the capricious orderings of an extranatural and extrahuman Power, which finally in the Miracle upheaved both Man and Nature. When the reaction against belief in miracles set in, even the Poet had to bow before the prosaic rationalism of the claim, that poetry should also renounce its Wonder; and this happened in the times when natural phenomena, theretofore regarded only with the eye of Phantasy, began to be made the object of scientific operations of the Understanding. The scientific Understanding, however, was so long un-settled about the essence of these phenomena, as it believed that only in an anatomical disclosing of all their inner minutiae could it set them comprehensibly before it. Positive about this essence have we only been, from the time when we learnt to look on Nature as a living Organism, not as an aimfully constructed Mechanism; from the time when we grew clear, that she was not a thing created, but herself the forever becom-ing; that she includes within herself the begetter and the bearer, the Manly and the Womanly; that Time and Space, by which we earlier had held her circumscribed, were but abstractions from her own reality; that, further, we may rest content with this knowledge in general, because we no longer need, for its confirmation, to assure ourselves of farthest distances by the calculations of Mathematics, -- since in closest nearness, and in the tiniest act of Nature, we may find proofs for the selfsame thing as that which the remotest distance can only send us in confirmation of our knowledge of Nature. Thenceforth, however, we also know that we are here to enjoy Nature, because we can enjoy her, i.e. we are qualified for such enjoyment. But the most reasonable (vernünftigste) enjoyment of Nature is that which satisfies our universal aptitude for delight: in the universality of man's organs of reception, and in the highest enhancement of their aptitude [P. 218] for delight, lies alone the measure according to which he has to enjoy; and the artist, who addresses himself to this highest aptitude for delight, has therefore to take this measure alone for the measure also of the phenomena he wishes to impart as a connected whole. This measure needs only to so far follow Nature's utterances, in her phenomena, as they have to answer to her intrinsic essence; nor does the poet disfigure that essence through his strengthening and intensifying, but – precisely in his utterance of it – he merely compresses it to a measure answering that of the most ardent human longing to understand a vast connexus of phenomena. It is just the fullest understanding of Nature, that first enables the poet to set her phenomena before us in wondrous shaping; for only in such shaping, do they become intelligible to us as the conditionments of human actions intensified.

{FEUER} Nature in her actual reality is only seen by the Understanding, which de-composes her into her separatest of parts; if it wants to display to itself these parts in their living organic connexion, then the quiet of the Understanding's meditation is involuntarily displaced by a more and more highly agitated mood, which at last remains nothing but a mood of Feeling. In this mood, Man unconsciously refers Nature once more to himself In Feeling's highest agitation, Man sees in Nature a sympathising being; and in truth the character of her phenomena governs also the character of man's mood Only in the utmost egoistic coldness of the Understanding, can he withdraw himself from her immediate sphere of operation, -- albeit even then he must confess to himself, that her more mediate influence still determines him."

[P. 224] {FEUER} "Tone-speech is the beginning and end of Word-speech: as the Feeling is the beginning and end of the Understanding, as Mythos is beginning and end of History, the Lyric beginning and end of Poetry. The mediator between beginning and middle, as between the latter and the point of exit, is the Phantasy."

(...)

{FEUER} The primal organ-of-utterance of the inner man ... is Tone-speech, as the most spontaneous expression of the inner Feeling stimulated from without."

[P. 231] {FEUER} "Our language ... rests upon a State-historico-religious convention Upon no living and ever-present, no really felt conviction does it rest, for it is the tutored opposite of any such conviction. In a sense, we cannot discourse in this language according to our innermost emotion, for it is impossible to invent in it according to that emotion; in it, we can only impart our emotions to the Understanding, but not to the implicitly understanding Feeling; and therefore in our modern evolution it was altogether consequent, that the Feeling should have sought a refuge from absolute intellectual-speech by fleeing to absolute tone-speech, our Music of to-day."

[P. 233] {FEUER} "The poet can only hope to realise his Aim, from the instant when he hushes it and keeps it secret to himself: that is to say, when, in the language [P. 234]

[P. 234] wherein alone it could be imparted as a naked intellectual-aim, he no longer speaks it out at all. (...)

{FEUER} A Tone-speech to be struck-into from the outset, is therefore the organ of expression proper for the poet who would make himself intelligible by turning from the Understanding to the Feeling The strengthened moments-of-action, which the poetising Understanding has descried, can -- by reason of their necessarily strengthened motives -- only come to an intelligible show upon a soil which in itself is raised above the ordinary life and its habitual methods of expression; upon a soil which thus towers (hervorragt) above that of the ordinary means of expression, in the same way as those strengthened shapes and motives tower over those of ordinary life. (...)

[P. 235] {FEUER} If we now pry a little closer into the Poet's business, we shall see that the realisation of his Aim consists solely in the making possible an exhibition of the 'strengthened actions' of his characters (seiner gedichteten Gestalten) through an exposition of their motives to the Feeling

{FEUER} This expression is therefore the prime condition of the realisation of his Aim, which without it could never step from the realm of thought into that of actuality. But the sole effectual Expression, here, is an altogether different one from

that of the poetic Understanding's own organ of speech. *The Understanding is therefore driven by necessity to wed itself with an element which shall be able to take-up into it the poet's Aim as a fertilising seed, and so to nourish and shape this seed by its own, its necessary essence, that it may bring it forth as a realising and redeeming utterance of Feeling.*

{FEUER} This element is that same mother-element, the womanly, from whose womb – the ur-melodic expressional-faculty, -- there issued Word and Word-speech, so soon as it was fecundated by the actual outward-lying objects of Nature; just as the Understanding throve from out the Feeling, and is thus the condensation of this womanly into a manly, into an element fitted to impart. Now, just as the Understanding has to fecundate in turn the Feeling, -- just as amidst this fecundation it is impelled to find itself encompassed by the [P. 236] Feeling, in it justified, by it mirrored back, and in this mirroring recognisable, i.e. first cognisable, by itself, -- just so is the Intellectual Word impelled to recognise itself in Tone, the Word-speech to find itself justified in Tone-speech. [* Wagner's Footnote: *Would it be thought trivial of me, if I were to remind the reader – with reference to my exposition of that myth – of Oedipus who was born of Jocasta, and who begot with Jocasta the redemptrix, Antigone?*] The stimulus which rouses this impulse and whets it to the highest agitation, lies outside the one impelled, and in the object of his yearning; whose charm is brought him first through Phantasy – the all-puissant mediatrix between Feeling and Understanding, -- but this charm cannot content him until he pours himself into that object's full reality. *This charm is the influence of the 'eternal womanly,' which draws the manly Understanding out of its egoism,-- and this again is only possible through the Womanly attracting that thing in it which is kindred to itself: but that in which the Understanding is akin to the Feeling is the purely-human, that which makes-out the essence of the human species as such. In this Purely-human are nurtured both the Manly and the Womanly, which only by their union through Love become first the Human Being.*

{FEUER} The impetus necessary to the poetic intellect, in this its poesis, is therefore Love, -- and that the love of man to woman. Yet not that frivolous, carnal love, in which man only seeks to satisfy an appetite, but the deep yearning to know himself redeemed from his egoism through his sharing in the rapture of the loving woman; and this yearning is the creative moment (das dichtende Moment) of the Understanding. The necessary bestowal, the seed that only in the most ardent transports of Love can condense itself from his noblest forces – this procreative seed is the poetic Aim, which brings to the glorious loving woman, Music, the Stuff for bearing."

[P. 254] The speech of modern daily life differs from the older, poetic speech in this: that, for the sake of an understanding, it needs a far more copious use of words and clauses, than did the other. (...)

[P. 255] *{FEUER} (...) Just as we cut away from these 'moments' of action, and for their sakes from their conditioning motives, all that was accidental, petty, and indefinite; just as we had to remove from their Content all that disfigured it from outside, all that savoured of the State, of pragmatically Historical and dogmatically Religious, -- in order to display that Content as a purely Human one and dictated by the Feeling: so also have we to cut away from the verbal expression all that springs*

from, and answers to, these disfigurements of the Purely-human and Feeling-bidden (des Gefuehlnothwendigen); and to remove it in such a way that this purely-human core shall alone remain. – But the very thing which marred the purely-human content of a verbal utterance, is the same which so stretched out the Phrase that its speaking accent had to be most sparingly distributed, while a disproportionate number of the words must necessarily be left un-emphasised. (...) Certainly, the beauty of a verse has hitherto consisted in the poet's having cut away from his phrase as much as possible, whatever auxiliary words too cumbrously hedged-in its Main-accent: [P. 256] he has sought for the simplest expressions, needing the fewest go-betweens, in order to bring his Accents closer together; and for this purpose *he has also freed his subject-matter, as much as he could, from a burdensome surrounding of historico-social and state-religious relations and conditionings. But the poet has never heretofore been able to bring this to such a point, that he could impart his subject unconditionally to the Feeling and nothing else, -- any more than he has brought his vehicle of expression to a like enhancement; for this enhancement to the highest pitch of emotional utterance could only have been reached precisely in an ascension of the verse into the melody, --* an ascension which, as we have seen because we must see, has not as yet been rendered feasible. Where the poet, however, has believed that he had condensed the speaking-verse itself into a pure moment-of-Feeling, without this ascension of his verse into actual Melody, there neither he, nor the object of his portrayal, has been comprehended either any longer by the Understanding, or by the Feeling. We all know verses of this sort, the attempts of our greatest poets to tune Words, without music, into Tones."

[P. 263] {FEUER} " ... *the Poetic Aim can only be realised through its complete transmission from the Understanding to the Feeling* (...)

(...)

[P. 264] {FEUER} "Until we are able, so to say, to 'feel back' our sensations – made utterly unintelligible to ourselves by State-politics or religious dogmas – and thus to reach their original truth, we shall never be in a position to grasp the sensuous substance of our roots of speech. What scientific research has disclosed to us, can only instruct the Understanding, but never bring the Feeling to an understanding of them; and no scientific instruction, were it made so popular as to reach down to even our Folk-schools, would be able to wake this understanding of our speech. Only from an unruffled, a loving intercourse with Nature, from a necessary Need for purely human understanding of her: in short, it can only come from a Want, such as the Poet feels when he is [P. 265] driven to impart himself with convincing sureness to the Feeling. – *Science has laid bare to us the organism of speech; but what she showed us was a defunct organism, which only the Poet's utmost Want can bring to life again: and that by healing up the Wounds with which the anatomic scalpel has gashed the body of Speech, and by breathing into it the breath that may ensoul it into living motion. But this breath is – Music.* –

Pining for redemption, the Poet stands at present in the winter frost of Speech, and looks yearningly across the snow-flats of pragmatic prose, with which are cloaked the erst so richly dizen'd fields, the sweet countenance of loving Mother Earth. But here and there, under the warm gushes of his sorrowing breath, the stubborn snow begins to melt: and lo! – from out Earth's bosom sprout before him fresh green buds, shooting forth all new and lush from the ancient roots he took for dead, -- until at last the sun of a new and

never-aging human springtide mounts aloft, dissolves away the snow, and lets the buds all burgeon into fragrant blossoms welcoming the sun with smiling eye. –

In those old primal roots, as in the roots of plants and trees – so long as they still can keep an anchorage in the solid soil of Earth, -- there must be dwelling an ever new-creative force, if so be they are not yet torn completely from the soil of the Folk itself. Beneath the frosty mantle of its civilisation the Folk preserves, in the instinctiveness of its natural mode of speech, the roots through which it holds to the soil of Nature; and everyone may come by an instinctive understanding of them, if he turns from the hubbub of our State-society conversation to seek a loving intercourse with Nature, and thus unbars these roots to his Feeling, through an ‘unconscious’ use of their kindred properties. *The Poet, however, is the knower of the unconscious, the aimful demonstrator of the instinctive; the Feeling, which he fain would manifest to fellow-feeling, teaches him the expression he must use; but his Understanding shows him the Necessity of that expression.* If the poet, who thus speaks from consciousness to [P. 266] unconsciousness, would fain take count of the natural sway (Zwang) which bids him use this expression and none other, then he learns to know the nature of this expression; and in his impulse to impart, he wins from that nature the power of mastering this expression itself in all its necessity. – Now, if the poet pries into the nature of the word which is forced upon him by his Feeling, as the only word to fit an object or an emotion woken by that object, he discovers this constraining force in the root of this word, which has been invented or found (erfunden oder gefunden) through the Necessity of man’s earliest emotional stress. If he plunges deeper into the organism of this Root, in order to track the emotion-swaying force he knows must dwell within it, since that force has made so determinant an impression on his Feeling, -- then he perceives at last the fountain of that force in the purely sensuous body of this root, whose primal substance is the open sound.

(...)

But this Open-sound, whose full enunciation becomes quite of itself a Musical Tone, is regulated in the speech-root by the closed sounds (Mitlauter), which convert it from a moment of general expression into the particular expression of this one object, or of this one emotion.”

[P. 273] “We have recognised the consonant as this outer shape of the root-vowel; and, since vowel and consonant alike addressed the Hearing, we were obliged to figure this Hearing as endowed with both a hearing and a seeing faculty, so as to claim the latter’s service for the consonant – as it were, the outer speaking man. (...) But only when it is able to display its utmost quality, in the same fulness and self-dependence as we have allowed the consonant to unfold in the Stabreim [the rhyming of consonants instead of vowels in poetry]; only when it can show itself as not merely a sounding vowel (toender Laut) but a sounding tone (lautender Ton), is it in a position to engross the infinite capacity of the ‘ear’ of that Hearing whose ‘seeing power’ we demanded at its highest for the consonant: only then, can this ‘ear’ be filled to such a pitch, that it falls into that excess of ecstasy where it needs must impart its boon to man’s All-feeling, and rouse it into highest stir. – **Just as that man alone can display himself in full persuasiveness, who announces himself to our ear and eye at once: so the message-bearer of the inner man cannot completely convince our Hearing, until it addresses itself with equal** [P. 274] **persuasiveness to both ‘eye and ear’ of this Hearing. But this happens only through Word-Tone-speech, and poet and musician have hitherto addressed but**

half the man apiece: the poet turned towards this Hearing's eye alone, the musician only to its ear. Yet nothing but the whole seeing and hearing, -- that is to say, the completely understanding Ear, can apprehend the inner man past all mistake. --

That strenuous force which dwelt in the Speech-root, and necessarily determined the poet, in his search for the surest expression of a feeling, to employ this one particular word as alone complying with his Aim, -- that force the poet recognises with full conviction as inherent in the sounding vowel, so soon as ever he sets it before him at its fullest, as the genuine, breath-souled (athembeseelten) tone. In this Tone speaks out the most unmistakably the vowel's emotional content, which an innermost Necessity bade clothe itself in this vowel and none other; just as this vowel, confronted with the outer object, condensed for its outer covering this consonant and none other. *To resolve this vowel into its highest emotional expression, to let its utmost fulness broaden out and consume itself in the heart's-tone of Song: for the poet this means, to make the erewhile Wilful, and therefore disquieting factor of his poetic Expression into an unwilful, into a Thing which as determinately renders back the feeling as it determinately seizes it. (...)*

[P. 275] "(...) The vowel itself is nothing but a tone condensed: its specific manifestation is determined through its turning toward the outer surface of the Feeling's 'body'; which latter ... displays to the 'eye' of Hearing the mirrored image of the outward object that has acted on it. **The object's effect on the body-of-Feeling, itself, is manifested by the vowel through a direct utterance of feeling along the nearest path, thus expanding the individuality it has acquired from without into the universality of pure emotion; and this takes place in the Musical Tone.**"

[P. 277] "The perversity of the makeshift procedure of the lonely Poet and the lonely Musician has hitherto lain in precisely this: to address the Feeling at all seizably, the Poet wandered into that vague diffuseness in which he became the delineator of a thousand details, intended to set a definite shape before the Phantasy as knowably as possible; the Phantasy, bombarded by a host of motley details, at last could only master the proffered object by trying to grasp these perplexing details one by one, and thereby losing itself in the function of pure Understanding; to which latter alone could the poet return, when, dazed by the massy reaches of its own delineations, he finally looked round him for a familiar foothold. On the other hand, the [P. 278] Absolute Musician saw himself driven, in his shapings, to condense an endless element of feeling into a definite point such as the Understanding best might apprehend; for this purpose he had more and more to renounce the fulness of his element, to labour to concentrate the feeling to a thought -- albeit a task impossible in itself, -- and finally to commend to arbitrary Phantasy this imaginary concentrate, only produced through completely discarding all emotional expression and counterfeiting some chosen outward object. -- *Music thus resembled the good God of our legends, who came down from heaven to earth, but, to make himself visible there, must assume the shape and vesture of a common man of every-day: in the oft-times ragged beggar not a creature recognised the God. But the true Poet has one day to come, who with the clairvoyant eye of poet's-Want, in its utmost craving for redemption, shall recognise in the dust-stained beggar the redeeming God; shall take from him his rags and crutches; and, wafted upwards by his longing, shall soar with him to endless spaces, whereon the enfranchised God knows well to breathe*

undreamt delights of blissful Feeling."

[P. 280] *"But that horizontal extension, being the surface of Harmony, is its physiognomy as still discernible by the poet's eye: it is the water-mirror which still reflects upon the poet his own image, while at the same time it presents this image to the view of him whom the poet wanted to address. This image, however, is in truth the poet's realised Aim, -- a realisation which can only fall to the lot of the musician, in his turn, when he mounts from the depths, to the surface of the sea of Harmony; and on that surface will be celebrated the glorious marriage of Poetry's begetting Thought with Music's endless power of Birth.*

The wave-borne mirror-image is Melody. In it the [P. 281] poet's Thought becomes an instinctively enthralling moment of Feeling; just as Music's emotional-power therein acquires the faculty of definite and convincing utterance, of manifesting itself as a sharp-cut human shape, a plastic Individuality. Melody is the redemption of the poet's endlessly conditioned thought into a deep-felt consciousness of emotion's highest freedom (hoechster Gefuehlsfreiheit): it is the willed and achieved Unwilful, the conscious and proclaimed Unconscious, the vindicated Necessity of an endless-reaching Content, condensed from its farthest branchings into an utmost definite utterance of Feeling.

If now we take this melody that appeared on the horizontal plane of Harmony, as the mirrored image of the poet's thought, and is ranged in the primordial Tone-clan by adoption into one particular family of that clan -- the special Key, -- if we take this melody and hold it up against that mother-melody whence Word-speech once was born: then there is evinced the following most weighty difference, which we must here take definitely into view.

*{FEUER} Starting with an infinitely confluent fund of Feeling, man's sensations gradually concentrated themselves to a more and more definite Content; in such sort that their expression in that Ur-melody advanced at last, by Nature's necessary steps, to the formation of Absolute Word-speech. The most characteristic mark of the oldest Lyric is this, that in it the words and verse proceeded from the tones and melody: just as bodily Gesture, starting with the vague suggestions of the dance-movement, only understandable in frequent repetitions, abridged itself to the more measured, more definite Mimetic-gesture. In the evolution of the human race, the more the instinctive faculty of Feeling [P. 282] (Gefuehlsvermoegen) condensed itself to the arbitrary faculty of Understanding; and the more, in consequence, the content of the Lyric departed from an Emotional-content (Gefuehlsinhalt) to become an Intellectual-content, -- so much the more palpably did the Word-poem depart from its original 'hang-together' with that Ur-melody, and merely use it, in a manner, to make its own delivery of a cold Didactic Content as palpable as possible to the rooted habits of the Feeling. Melody itself, such as it once had blossomed from man's primitive emotional Faculty as a necessary expression of feeling, and in its fitting union with word and gesture had developed to that fulness which we still may observe to-day in the genuine Folksmelody, -- this melody those reflective poets-of-the-Understanding (Verstandes-Dichter) were unable to mould or vary to meet the contents of their diction (dem Inhalte ihrer Ausdrucksweise). Still less was it possible for them to find in that mode of diction, itself, a spur to fashioning fresh melodies; since *just the progress of general evolution, in this great Cultural period, was a stepping forth from Feeling into Understanding; and**

the growing intellect would only have felt hindered in its experimentings, had it been in any way driven to invent fresh expressions for emotions which lay so far behind it."

[P. 284] {FEUER} *"But that Melody to whose birth we now are listening, forms a complete contrast to the primal Mother-melody; and after the above more detailed observations, we may briefly denote its course as an advance from Understanding to Feeling, from Word-speech to Melody: as against the advance from Feeling to Understanding, from the Mother-melody to Word-speech. Upon the path of progress from Word-speech to Tone-speech we reached the horizontal surface of Harmony, on which the word-phrase of the poet mirrored back itself as a musical melody. How, starting from this surface, we are to master the whole immeasurable depths of Harmony, that aboriginal womb of all the kin of Tones, and bring it into ever more extended realisation of the poet's Aim; how we are to plunge the poetic Aim, as a begetting 'moment,' into the full profundity of this Urmother-element, in suchwise that we may prompt each atom of its vast emotional chaos to conscious, individual manifestment, yet in a compass never narrowing but ever stretching wider: in a word, the artistic advance that shall consist in broadening a conscious, definite Aim into an infinite and, for all its boundlessness, an exact and definitely manifested emotional-Power, -- this must be the subject of our concluding argument.*

(...)

[P. 285] (...) *This melody was the love-greeting of the woman to the man, and the open-armed 'Eternal Womanly' here showed itself more loveable than the egoistic Man-ly; for it is Love itself, and only as the highest love-entreaty (Liebesverlangen) is the Womanly to be taken, -- be it revealed in woman or in man. For all the wonders of the meeting, the man yet left the loving woman: what to this woman was the highest sacrificial incense of a life-time, to the man was a mere passing fume of love. Only the poet whose Aim we have here expounded, will feel driven so irresistibly to a heart-alliance with the 'eternal womanly' of Tone-art, that in these nuptials he shall celebrate alike his own redemption.*

{FEUER} *Through the redeeming love-kiss of that Melody the poet is now inducted into the deep, unending mysteries of Woman's nature: he sees with other eyes, and feels with other senses. To him the bottomless sea of Harmony, from which that beatific vision rose to meet him, is no longer an [P. 286] object of dread, of fear, of terror, such as earlier it seemed in his imaginings of the strange and unknown element; [* Translator's Footnote: "Siegfried, last scene: 'Wie end' ich die Furcht? Wie fass' ich Muth?" "] now, not only can he float upon the surface of this ocean, but -- gifted with new senses -- he dives into its lowest depth. From out the lonely, fearsome reaches of her mother-home the woman had been self-driven, to wait the nearing of the beloved; now, with his bride, he sinks him down, and learns the hidden wonders of the deep. His insight pierces, clear and tranquil, sheer to the ocean's primal fount; whence he sends the wave-shafts mounting to the surface, to run in ripples in the sun-rays, to softly plash beneath the souging west wind, or manlike rear their crests against the north-wind's storm. For the very winds of heaven, does the poet now command, -- since those winds are nothing but the breath of never-ending Love, of the Love in whose delight the poet is redeemed, and through its might becomes the lord of Nature."*

[P. 287] {FEUER} *"At bottom of this thrust of his [the poet's] there lay an instinctive knowledge of Feeling's nature, which takes in alone the homogeneous (das*

Einheitlich), alone the thing that in its oneness includes alike the conditioned and the conditioner; of Feeling, which seizes the imparted feeling according to its generic essence, so that it refuses to heed the opposites contained therein, qua opposites, but is guided by the nature of the genus in which those opposites are reconciled. The Understanding loosens, the Feeling binds; i.e. the Understanding loosens the genus into the antitheses which lies within it, whereas the Feeling binds them up again into one harmonious whole. This unitarian Expression the poet most completely won, at last, in the ascension of his Word-verse into the melody of Song; and the latter wins its unitarian Expression, its unfailing operation on the Feeling, through instinctively displaying to the senses the inner kinship of its tones.”

[P. 294] “If the poetico-musical ‘period’ has thus been denoted, in accordance with its domination by one Chief-key, then we may provisionally denote that artwork as the most perfect of Expression, in which many such periods present themselves in utmost fulness, for the realisation of a loftiest poetic Aim; and so present themselves that they condition each the other, and unfold themselves to a total breadth of utterance wherein the nature of Man, along one decisory Chief-line, -- i.e. along a line competent to sum in itself Man’s total essence (just as the Chief-key is able to sum in itself all other Keys) – wherein this nature is displayed to Feeling in the surest and most seizable of fashions. This artwork is the perfected Drama, wherein that comprehensive line of human nature will manifest itself to the Feeling in a continuous, mutually conditioning (*sich wohl bedingenden*) chain of moments of feeling: a chain of such strength and force of conviction, that the Action, -- as the necessary, the most definite utterance of the emotional-content of ‘moments’ intensified into a comprehensive joint-motive, -- that that Action may issue from this wealth of conditions as their last instinctively demanded and thus completely intelligible moment.”

[P. 316] {FEUER} “... now, we have plainly to denote this Speaking-faculty of the Orchestra as the faculty of uttering the unspeakable.

This definition, however, is not to convey the idea of a merely imaginary thing, but of a thing quite real and palpable.”

[P. 317] {FEUER} “(...) That this Unspeakable is not a thing unutterable per se, but merely unutterable through the organ of our Understanding; thus, not a mere fancy, but a reality, -- this is shown plainly enough by the Instruments of the orchestra themselves, whereof each for itself, and infinitely more richly in its changeful union with other instruments, speaks out quite clearly and intelligibly. [* {FEUER} Wagner’s Footnote: *This easy explanation of the ‘Unspeakable,’ one might extend, perhaps not altogether wrongly, to the whole matter of Religious Philosophy; for although that matter is given out as absolutely unutterable, from the standpoint of the speaker, yet mayhap it is utterable enough if only the fitting organ be employed.*]”

[P. 324] *This faculty the ear acquires through the language of the Orchestra, which is able to attach itself just as intimately to the verse-melody as earlier to the gesture, and thus to develop into a messenger of the very Thought itself, transmitting it to Feeling:* and, indeed, of that Thought which the present verse-melody – as the utterance of a mixed emotion, not yet fully at one with itself – neither can nor will speak out; but which can still less be imparted by the gesture to the eye, since Gesture is the most present thing [P. 325] of all, being conditioned by the emotion given out in the verse-melody, and

therefore in this instance is as indefinite as itself, or expresses alone this indefiniteness without being able to clearly illustrate the genuine emotion.

{FEUER} In the Verse-melody not only is Word-speech combined with Tone-speech, but also the thing which both these organs express: to wit, the absent with the present, the thought with the emotion. The present part of it is the instinctive feeling, in its necessary pour into the musical expression of the melody; the non-present part is the abstract thought, in its bondage to the word-phrase, as an arbitrary moment of reflection”.

[P. 328] *“Such a melody, once imparted to us by the actor as the outpour of an emotion, and now expressively delivered by the orchestra at an instant when the person represented merely nurses that emotion in his memory, -- such a melody materialises for us the personage’s Thought. Nay, even where the present speaker appears no longer conscious of that emotion, its characteristic sounding by the orchestra is able to stir within us an emotion which – in its filling-out of a conjuncture, its clearing-up of a situation, through suggesting motives that are well enough contained therein but cannot come to vivid light within its representable moments – for us becomes a thought, yet in itself is more than Thought, for it is the thought’s emotional content brought to presence.*

[P. 329] *{FEUER} (...) Music cannot think: but she can materialise thoughts, i.e. she can give forth their emotional contents as no longer merely recollected, but made present. This she can only do, however, when her own manifestment is conditioned by a Poetic Aim, and when this latter, again, reveals itself as no mere thing of thought, but a thing expounded in the first place by the organ of the Understanding, namely Word-speech. A musical motive (Motiv) can produce a definite impression on the Feeling, inciting it to a function akin to Thought, only when the emotion uttered in that motive has been definitely conditioned by a definite object, and proclaimed by a definite individual before our very eyes. The omission of these conditionments sets a musical motive before the Feeling in a more indefinite light; and an indefinite thing may return in the same garment as often as one pleases, yet it will remain a mere recurrence of the Indefinite, and we shall neither be in a position to justify it by any felt necessity of its appearance, nor, therefore, to associate it with anything else. – But a musical motive into which the thought-filled Wordverse of a dramatic performer has poured itself – so to say, before our eyes – is a thing conditioned by Necessity: with its return a definite emotion is discernibly conveyed to us, and conveyed to us through the physical agency of the Orchestra, albeit now unspoken by the performer; for the latter now feels driven to give voice to a fresh emotion, derived in turn from that earlier one, wherefore the concurrent sounding of such a motive unites for us the conditioning, the non-present emotion with the emotion [P. 330] conditioned thereby and coming at this instant into voice; and inasmuch as we thus make our Feeling a living witness to the organic growth of one definite emotion from out another, we give to it the faculty of thinking: nay, we here give it a faculty of higher rank than thinking, to wit, the instinctive knowledge of a thought made real in Emotion.*

(...) ... where gesture lapses into rest, and the melodic discourse of the actor hushes, -- thus where the drama prepares its future course in inner moods as yet unuttered, there may these still unspoken moods be spoken by the Orchestra in such

a way, that their utterance shall bear the character of a foreboding necessitated by the poet's Aim.

A Foreboding is the herald of an emotion as yet unspoken-out, -- because as yet Unspeakable, in the sense of our customary word-speech. Unspeakable, is any emotion which is not as yet defined; and it is undefined, so long as [P. 331] it has not been yet determined through a living object. The first thrill of this emotion, the Foreboding, is thus its instinctive longing for definement through an object (...)

Such a presentiment as this, has the poet to wake within us, in order, through its longing, to make us necessary sharers in the creation of his artwork. (...) In the evocation of moods such as the poet needs must wake in us, if he is to procure our indispensable assistance, absolute Instrumental-speech has already proved itself all-powerful; since precisely the arousing of indefinite, of presaging emotions, has been its most characteristic effect; but this aptitude could only become a weakness, wherever it wanted to give a definite shape, withal, to the emotions it had roused. “

[P. 336] “We have already gained from the Orchestra the capability of awaking forebodings and remembrances. The Foreboding we have taken as the herald of the matter that finally proclaims itself in the gesture and verse-melody, -- the Remembrance, on the other hand, as a derivative from that matter. We must now settle what it is, that has to fill the general body of the drama, and fill it in such a way as to make these forebodings and remembrances a real dramatic necessity, an accessory to its thorough understanding.

The moments in which the orchestra might speak out thus independently, must in any case be such as do not yet permit the full ascension of the spoken thought into the musical emotion, on the part of the dramatis personae. [P. 337] Just as we have watched the growth of the musical melody from out the speaking-verse, and have recognised that growth as conditioned by the very nature of this verse; just as we have had to conceive the vindication of the melody – i.e. the understanding given it by the conditioning word-verse – not merely as a something to be thought or worked out by the artist (kuenstlerisch Auszufuehrendes), but as something necessarily to be brought organically to pass before our very Feeling, an act of birth to be carried on (Vorzufuehrendes) in its presence: so have we to picture the dramatic Situation as growing from conditionments which mount, before our eyes, to a height whereon the Verse-melody appears the only fit, the necessary expression of a definitely proclaimed emotion.

{FEUER} A ready-made melody ... remained unintelligible to us, because open to arbitrary interpretations; a ready-made Situation must remain just as unintelligible, even as Nature herself remained unintelligible to us so long as we looked on her as something made – whereas she is intelligible enough, now that we know her as the Being, i.e. the forever Becom-ing; a Being (ein Seiendes) whose Becoming is ever present to us, alike in farthest as in nighest spheres. By leading forth his Artwork in continuous organic growth, and making our selves organic helpers in that growth, the poet frees his creation from all traces of his handiwork; whereas, should he leave those traces unexpunged, he would set us in that chill of feelingless amazement which takes us when we look upon a masterpiece of mechanism. – Plastic art can display alone the Finished, i.e. the Motionless; wherefore it can never make of the beholder a confident witness to the becoming of a thing. In his farthest strayings, the Absolute Musician fell into the error of copying plastic art in this, and giving the Finished in

place of the Becoming. *The Drama, alone, is the artwork which so addresses itself in Space and Time to our eye and ear, that we take an active share in its becoming, and therefore can grasp the Become as a necessity, as a thing which our Feeling clearly understands.*

[P. 338] {FEUER} *Now, the poet who wishes to make of us the active witnesses and sole enablers of his artwork's Becoming (Werdens), has to guard himself from taking even the smallest step that might break the bond of this organic growth (Werdens) and thus affront our captivated Feeling by an arbitrary demand: his most important ally would be made disloyal to him at once. Organic Growth, however, means a growing from below upwards, an advance from lower to higher forms of organism, a binding of needy moments into one satisfying moment. Wherefore, just as the Poetic Aim was to gather up the moments of the Action and their motives, collecting them from such as were actually to hand in daily life, albeit infinitely scattered there, and ramified past any survey; just as it was to compress these moments and motives, for sake of their intelligible display, and to strengthen them in such cohesion: so for their realisation the poet has to go to work in exactly the same way as with their composition in his thought; for his Aim can only be realised through its making our Feeling a partner in its thinking work of composition (an ihrer gedachter Dichtung).*

{FEUER} *The thing the Feeling grasps the surest, is our ordinary view of daily life, in which we deal from need or inclination precisely as we have been accustomed to. If, then, the poet has gathered his motives from this life and its wonted viewings, he must also bring us the shapings of his fancy, in the first place, with an exterior (Ausserung) which shall not be so foreign to this life as to be completely unintelligible to men involved therein. He has therefore to show his characters at first in predicaments (Lebenslagen) having a recognisable likeness with such as we have found, or at least might have found, ourselves in; only from such a foundation, can he mount step by step to situations whose force and wondrousness remove us from the life of [P. 339] everyday, and show us Man in the highest fulness of his power. Just as, through the removal of everything which might savour of the accidental, in the encounter of strongly pronounced individualities, these situations grow to a height on which they appear to be lifted above the wonted human measure, -- so has the Expression of the doers and the done-by to necessarily lift itself by well-found stages, from one that is still in touch with customary life, to one raised high above it: in fact, to such an one as we have already indicated in the Musical Verse-melody.*

(...) He cannot be rightly heard until this attention is willingly yielded him, -- until our feelings, distracted by the affairs of daily life, just as much collect themselves to a feeling of intent expectancy as the poet, in his Aim, has already collected from that same life the moments and motives of his Dramatic Action. **The willing expectation, or expectant Will of the hearer, is thus the first enabler for the artwork; and it determines the manner of Expression which the poet must bring to meet it,-- not merely so as to be understood, but to be understood in the measure demanded by the hearer's strained expectance of something out of the common."**

[P. 344] {FEUER} *"If ... we wish to accurately denote that Means of Expression which, in virtue of its own unity, shall make possible a Unity of Content, let us define it as one which can the most fittingly convey to Feeling a widest-reaching Aim of the poetic Understanding. Such an Expression [P. 345] must contain the poet's Aim in*

each of its separate ‘moments,’ albeit in each of them concealing that aim from the Feeling, -- to wit, by realising it.”

“Let us not forget, however, that the Orchestra’s equalising moments-of-expression are never to be determined by the caprice of the musician, as a random tricking-out of sound, but only by the poet’s Aim. Should these ‘moments’ utter anything not connected with the Situation of the *dramatis personae*, anything superfluous thereto, then the Unity of Expression is itself disturbed by this departure from the [P. 346] Content. A mere absolute-musical embellishment of drooping or inchoate situations – a favourite Operatic device for the self-glorification of Music, in so-called ‘ritornelles’ and interludes, and even in the song-accompaniments,-- such a trick upheaves at once the Unity of Expression, and casts the interest of the ear on Music no longer as an expression, but, in a manner, as herself the thing expressed. No: those ‘moments,’ too, must be governed by nothing but the poetic-aim, and in such a way that, as either a Foreboding or a Remembrance, they shall always direct our Feeling solely to the dramatic personage and whatever hangs together therewith, or outgoes therefrom. *We ought never to hear these prophetic or reminiscent melodic-moments, except when we can feel that they are complementary to the utterance of the character upon the stage, who either will not or cannot just now expose to us his full emotion.*

{FEUER} These Melodic Moments, in themselves adapted to maintain our Feeling at an even height, will be made by the orchestra into a kind of guides-to-Feeling (Gefuehlsweigweiser) through the whole labyrinthine (vieligewundenen) building of the drama. At their hand we become the constant fellow-knowers of the profoundest secret of the poet’s Aim, the immediate partners in its realisation. (...) ... but when the full colours of [P. 347] the Verse-melody fade down again to a merely tonal Word-speech, then the Orchestra resumes its function of making good the joint emotional-expression through prophetic reminiscences, and of basing necessary transitions of feeling, as it were, upon our own, our ever vigilant sympathy.

These Melodic Moments – in which we remember a Foreboding, whilst they turn our Remembrance into a prophecy – will necessarily have blossomed only from the weightiest motives of the drama, and the weightiest of them, in turn, will correspond in number to those motives which the poet has taken as the concentrated, the strengthened root-motives of a strengthened and concentrated Action, and has planted as the pillars of his dramatic edifice; which pillars he employs, on principle, in no bewildering plurality, but plastically disposes in a number small enough to allow of easy survey. In these root-motives, which are no mere ‘sentences’ but plastic moments-of-Feeling, the poet’s Aim comes out the clearest, as realised through its adoption into Feeling; wherefore the musician, as the realiser of the poet’s aim, has to take these motives, already condensed to melodic moments, and order them so deftly and in fullest accordance with the poetic aim, that their necessary play of repetition will furnish him quite of itself with the highest unity of musical Form, -- a Form which the musician has hitherto put together at his own caprice, but through the poet’s aim can for the first time shape itself into a necessary, a truly unitarian, i.e. an understandable one.

In Opera, hitherto, the musician has not so much as attempted to devise a unitarian Form for the whole artwork: each several vocal piece was a form filled-out for itself, and merely hung-together with the other tone-pieces of the opera through a similarity of outward structure, -- by no means through any true conditionment by an inner Content.

The Disconnected was so peculiarly the character [P. 348] of operatic music. Only the separate tone-piece, had a Form coherent in itself; and this was derived from absolute-musical good pleasure, maintained by custom, and imposed upon the poet as an iron yoke. (...)

In their suggestive, their ever warranted return, analogous to that of the Stabreim, these Chief-motives of the Dramatic Action – having become distinguishable Melodic Moments which fully materialise their Content – now mould themselves into a continuous artistic Form, which stretches not merely over the narrower fragments of the drama, but over the whole drama's self. [* Wagner's Footnote: The unitarian grouping of themes, which the musician endeavoured to establish in the overture, must be given in the drama itself.] And in this binding alliance not only do these Melodic-moments appear mutually explanatory, and thus at-one, but also the motives of Feeling or Show embodied in them – as the strongest motives of the Action, and including within themselves the weaker ones – reveal themselves to the Feeling as mutually conditioned, as at-one by their generic nature. In this alliance is reached at last a realisation of the perfect unitarian Form, and through this Form the utterance of a unitarian Content; and thus this Content is itself first truly rendered possible.

Let us once more sum up this whole matter in one [P. 349] exhaustive definition, and denote the most perfect Unity of artistic Form as that in which a widest conjuncture of the phenomena of Human Life – as Content – can impart itself to the Feeling in so completely intelligible an Expression, that in all its 'moments' this Content shall completely stir, and alike completely satisfy, the Feeling. The Content, then, has to be one that is ever present in the Expression, and therefore the Expression one that ever presents the Content in its fullest compass; for only Thought can grasp the absent [fernen?], but only the present can be grasped by Feeling.

In this unity of the Expression, ever making present, and ever embracing the full compass of the Content, there is at like time solved, and solved in the only decisive way, the ... problem of the unity of Time and Space.

Time and Space, as abstractions from the real living attributes of the Action, could only chain the attention of our drama-constructing poets because a single, a completely realising Expression did not stand at their service for the poetic Content planned by them. (...) To set the unity of the Drama in the unity of Space and Time, means to set it at naught (in Nichts setzen); for Time and Space are nothing in themselves, and only become some-thing through their being annulled by something real, by a Human Action and its Natural Surrounding. This Human Action must be the thing united in itself, i.e. the thing that hangs-together; by the possibility of making its connexion a [P. 350] surveyable one, is conditioned the assumption of its time-length, and by the possibility of a completely adequate representment of the Scene is conditioned its extension in Space; for it wills but one thing, -- to make itself intelligible to Feeling.

{FEUER} In the singlest Space and the most compact Time one may spread out an Action as completely discordant and disconnected as you please On the contrary, the Unity of an Action consists in its intelligible connexion; and only through one thing can this reveal itself intelligibly, -- which thing is neither Time nor Space, but the Expression. If in the preceding pages we have ascertained what is this

unitarian, i.e. the continuous Expression, which at all times keeps the Continuity in presence; and if we have shown it as a thing by all means possible: then in this Expression we have also won back the severed by the necessity of Space and Time as a thing once more united, and a thing made ever present where needful for an understanding; for its 'necessary' Presence lies not in Time or Space, but in the impression which is made on us within them. The limitations of Space and Time, which arose from lack of this Expression, are upheaved at once by its acquirement; both Time and Space are annihilated, through the actuality of the Drama.

{FEUER} The genuine Drama, then, is influenced no longer by aught that lies outside it; but it is an organic Be-ing and Becom-ing, evolving and shaping itself by those inner conditions which itself lays down for its only contact with outside – in turn conditioning it, -- namely by the Necessity of making its message understandable, and understandable as the thing it is and becomes; whilst it wins its intelligible Shape by bearing from its own, its inmost Need, the all-empowering Expression for its Content.” [P. 351] *“Whoever ... may have understood me to be occupied with setting up an arbitrarily concocted System, according to which all poets and musicians should construct their work in future, – he has wilfully mis-understood me. Moreover, he who chooses to believe that the New, which I haply have said, reposes on an absolute assumption and is not identical with Experience and the nature of the object dealt with, – he will not be able to understand me – The New that I may have said, is nothing other than the Unconscious in the nature of the thing, and has become conscious to me, as a thinking artist, merely because I have grasped in its continuity a thing which artists heretofore have taken only in its severance. I thus have invented nothing new, but merely found that continuity.*

... ‘Has the poet to restrict himself in presence of the musician, and the musician in presence of the poet?’

{FEUER} Freedom of the Individual has hitherto seemed possible through nothing but a – wise – restriction from without: [P. 352] moderation of his impulses, and thus of the force of his abilities, was the first thing required of the unit by the State-community. The full effectuation of an Individuality had to be looked on as synonymous with an infringement of the individuality of others, whereas the individual’s self-restraint was reckoned as his highest wisdom and virtue. – Taken strictly, this virtue preached by sages, besung by didacticists, and finally claimed by the State as the duty of subservience, by Religion as the duty of humility, -- this virtue was a virtue never coming forth; willed, but not practised; imagined, but not realised: and so long as a virtue is demanded, it will never in truth be exercised. Either the exercise of this virtue was an act despotically imposed – and thus without that merit of virtue imagined for it; or it was a necessary, an unreflective act of free-will, and then its enabling force was not the self-restricting Will, -- but Love.

{FEUER} Those same sages and lawgivers who claimed the practice of self-restraint through reflection, never reflected for an instant that they had thralls and slaves beneath them, from whom they cut off every possibility of practising that virtue; and yet these latter were in fact the only ones who really restrained themselves for another’s sake, -- because they were compelled to. Among that ruling and ‘reflecting’ aristocracy the self-restraint of its members, toward one another, consisted in nothing but the prudence of Egoism, which counselled them to segregate themselves, to take no

*thought for others; and this policy of *laissez aller* (Gehenlassen) – clever enough at giving itself a quite agreeable outward show, in forms it borrowed from those of reverence and friendship – yet was only possible to these gentry on condition that other men, mere slaves and chattels, should stand ready to maintain the hedged-off self-dependence of their masters. In the terrible demoralisation of our present social system, revolting to the heart of every veritable Man, we may see the necessary consequence of asking for an impossible virtue, and a virtue which eventually is held in currency by a barbarous [P. 353] Police. Only the total vanishing of this demand, and of the grounds on which it has been based, only the upheaval of the most un-human inequality of men, in their stationings toward Life, can bring about the fancied issue of that claim of self-restriction: and that, by making possible free Love. But Love will bring about that fancied issue in a measurelessly heightened measure, for it is not at all a self-restraint, but something infinitely greater, -- to wit, the highest evolution of our individual powers – together with the most necessitated thrust towards our own self-offering for sake of a beloved object. –*

Now, if we apply this criterion to the case above, we shall see that self-restriction of either the Poet or the Musician, in its ultimate consequences, would only bring about the drama's death, or rather, would withstand its ever being brought to life. (...) If Poet and Musician, however, do not restrict each other, but rouse each other's powers into highest might, by Love; if in this Love they are all that ever they can be; if they mutually go under in the offering that each brings each, -- the offering of his very highest potency, -- then the Drama in its highest plenitude is born.

{FEUER} If the poet's Aim – as such – is still at hand and visible, then it has not as yet gone under into the Musical Expression; but if the musician's Expression – as such – is still apparent, then it, in turn, has not yet been inspired by the Poetic Aim. Only when the expression, as a marked and [P. 354] special thing, goes under in the realisation of this Aim, only then is neither Aim nor Expression any longer at hand, but the reality which each had willed is canned. And this reality is the Drama; in whose presentment we must be reminded no more of Aim or Expression, but its Content must instinctively engross us, as a Human Action vindicated 'necessarily' before our Feeling.

Let us tell the Musician then that every, even the tiniest moment of his Expression in which the poetic-aim is not contained, and which is not conditioned 'necessarily' by that Aim and its realisation, -- that every such moment is superfluous, disturbing, bad, that each utterance of his is unimpressive if it stays unintelligible, and that it becomes intelligible only by taking into it the Poets' aim ... ; that, finally, in the conditionment of his message by this Aim, he will be incited to a far richer exhibition of his powers than ever he was while at his lonely post, where – for sake of utmost understandableness – he was obliged to restrain himself, i.e. to hold himself to a function not belonging to him as Musician: whereas he now is necessarily challenged to the most unrestrained unfoldment of his powers, precisely because he needs and must be nothing but musician.

To the poet let us say, that if his Aim – in so far as it is to be displayed to the ear – cannot be entirely realised in the Expression of his musician ally, then neither is it a highest Poetic Aim at all; that wherever his Aim is still discernible, he has not comp-

letely poetised it; and therefore, that he can only measure the height of poetry to which his Aim has reached, by the completeness wherewith it is realisable in the musical Expression."

[P. 355] "After what has been said above, it might seem almost superfluous to ask the further question: Whether we ought to think of the Poet and Musician as two persons, or as one?"

The Poet and Musician, whom we mean, are very well thinkable as two persons. In fact the Musician, in his practical intermediation between the poetic aim and its final bodily realisation through an actual scenic representation, might necessarily be conditioned by the Poet as a separate person, and indeed, a younger than himself – if not necessarily in point of years, yet at least in point of character. This younger person, through standing closer to Life's instinctive utterance – especially (auch) in its lyric moments, -- might well appear to the more experienced, more reflecting Poet, as more fitted to realise his aim than he himself is; and from this his natural inclination towards the younger, the more buoyant man – so soon as the latter took up with willing enthusiasm the poetic-aim imparted to him by the older – there would bloom that fairest, noblest Love, which we have learnt to recognise as the enabling force of Art-work. By the very fact that the Poet saw his – here necessarily merely hinted – aim completely comprehended by the younger man, and that this younger man was competent to understand it, there would be knit that bond of Love in which the Musician becomes the 'necessary' bearer; for the latter's share in the conception is the bent to spread abroad, with warm and flowing heart, the boon received. Through this bent, incited in another, the Poet himself would win an ever waxing warmth toward his begettal, which must needs determine him to the helpfulest [P. 356] interest in the birth itself. Just the twofold energy of this Love must needs exert an infinite artistic force, inciting, enkindling, and empowering on every hand.

{FEUER} Yet if we consider the present attitude assumed by Poet and Musician toward one another, and if we find it ordered by the same maxims of self-restriction and egoistic severance, as those which govern all the factors of our modern social State: then we cannot but feel that, in an unworthy public system where every man is bent on shining for himself alone, there none but the individual Unit can taken into himself the spirit of Community, and cherish and develop it according to his powers – how inadequate soe'er they be. Not to two, at the hour that is, can come the thought of jointly making possible the Perfected Drama; for, in parleying on this thought, the two must necessarily and candidly avow the impossibility of its realisation in face of Public Life, and that avowal would nip their undertaking in the bud. Only the lonely one, in the thick of his endeavour, can transmute the bitterness of such a self-avowal into an intoxicating joy which drives him on, with all the courage of a drunkard, to undertake the making possible the impossible; for he alone, is thrust forward by two artistic forces which he cannot withstand, -- by forces which he willingly lets drive him to self-offering. [Wagner's Footnote: I am here obliged to make express mention of myself, and, indeed, with a single eye to removing from the reader's mind any suspicion that with the above account of the Perfected Drama I had attempted an explanation of my own artistic works, in any sense as though I had fulfilled my present demands in my own operas, and had thus already brought to pass this hypothetic Drama. No one can be better aware than myself, that the realisation of this Drama*

depends on conditions which do not lie within the will, nay, not even within the capability (Faehigkeit) of the Unit, -- were this capability an infinitely greater than my own, -- but only in Community, and in a mutual co-operation made possible thereby: of both which factors, nothing but the direct antithesis is now at hand. Nevertheless I will admit that my artistic works have been of the greatest weight to me; for alas! So far as I can see around me, they must be my only witnesses to the existence of an endeavour from whose results alone, small as they are, that thing was to be learnt which -- striving from unconsciousness to consciousness -- I now have learnt; and which -- let us hope, for the welfare of Art -- I now can speak aloud with full conviction. Not of my achievements, but of That which they have brought within my consciousness, of That which I now can utter with conviction, am I proud.]

[P. 364] "... the ear, when merely musically excited, demands a satisfaction in the sense of the close-trimmed musical structure to which it has been accustomed, and would be utterly bewildered by the broadening of this structure so as to cover the whole drama; for that broad extension of the musical Form ... can only be taken-in and understood, in all its unity, by a Feeling attuned to the actual Drama. To a Feeling not thus attuned, but pinned down to purely sensuous Hearing, that broad and unitarian Form to which the petty, narrow, disconnected forms had been enlarged, would remain out-and-out unknowable; ergo, the whole musical edifice needs must make the impression of a ragged, piecemeal, unsurveyable chaos, whose being and existence we could account for by nothing so much as the caprices of a fantastic, incompetent and puzzle-brained musician."

[P. 370] *"To raise the strangely potent language of the Orchestra to such a height, that at every instant it may plainly manifest to Feeling the Unspeakable of the Dramatic Situation, -- to do this, as we have already said, the musician inspired by the poet's Aim has not to haply practise self-restraint; no, he has to sharpen his inventiveness to the point of discovering the most varied orchestral idioms, to meet the necessity he feels of a pertinent, a most determinate Expression. So long as this language is incapable of a declaration as individual as is needed by the infinite variety of the Dramatic Motives themselves; so long as the message of the Orchestra is too monochrome to answer these motives' individuality, -- so long may it prove a disturbing factor, because not yet completely satisfying; and [P. 371] therefore in the Complete Drama, like everything that is not entirely adequate, it would divert attention toward itself. To be true to our aim, however, such an attention is absolutely not to be devoted to it; but, through its everywhere adapting itself with the utmost closeness to the finest shade of individuality in the Dramatic Motive, the Orchestra is irresistibly to guide our whole attention away from itself, as a means of expression, and direct it to the subject expressed. So that the very richest dialect of the Orchestra is to manifest itself with the artistic object of not being noticed, in a manner of speaking, of not being heard at all: to wit, not heard in its mechanical, but only in its organic capacity, wherein it is One with the Drama.*

How must it discourage the poet musician, then, were he to see his drama received by the public with the sole and marked attention to the mechanism of his Orchestra, and to find himself rewarded with just the praise of being a 'very clever Instrumentalist'?"

[P. 372] "Let us suppose for an instant, that in some way or other we acquired the power of so working upon performers and performance, from the standpoint of

artistic intelligence, that a highest Dramatic-aim should be fully carried out, -- then for the first time we should grow actively aware that we lacked the real enabler of the artwork, a Public to feel the need of it, and to make its Need the all-puissant fellow-shaper. *The Public of our theatres has no need for Artwork; it wants to distract itself, when it takes its seat before the stage, but not to collect itself; and the Need of the seeker after distraction is merely for artificial details, but not for an artistic unity. If we gave it a whole, the public would be blindly driven to tear that whole to disconnected fragments, or, in the most fortunate event, it would be called upon to understand a thing which it altogether refuses to understand; wherefore, in full consciousness, it turns its back on any such artistic aim. (...)*

[P. 373] (...) We meet the Public of fine taste and feeling, at its most marked degree of active interest in art-production, in the period of the Renaissance. Here we see princes and nobles not only sheltering Art, but so engrossed with its finest and boldest shapings, that the latter must be taken as downright summoned into being by their enthusiastic Need. The noble rank -- nowhere attacked in its position; knowing nothing of the misery of the thralls whose life made that position possible; holding itself completely aloof from the industrial and commercial spirit of the burgher life, living away its life of pleasure in its palaces, of courage on the field of battle, -- this nobility had trained its eyes and ears to discern the beautiful, the graceful, nay, even the characteristic and energetic; and at its commands arose those works of art which signal that epoch as the most favoured artistic period since the downfall of Greek Art. (...)

[P. 374] "But the rulership of public taste in Art has passed over to the person who now pays the artists' wages, in place of the nobility which erstwhile recompensed them; to the person who orders the artwork for his money, and insists on ever novel variations of his one beloved theme, but at no price a new theme itself: and this ruler and this order-giver is -- the Philistine. As this Philistine is the most heartless and the basest offspring of our Civilisation, so is he the most domineering, the cruellest and foulest of Art's bread-givers. True, that everything comes aright to him: only, he will have nothing to do with aught that might remind him he is to be a man, -- either on the side of beauty, or on that of nerve. He wills to be base and common, and to this will of his has Art to fit herself; for the rest, -- why! Nothing comes to him amiss. -- Let us turn our look from him as quickly as may be! --"

[P. 375] {FEUER} "Where now the statesman loses hope, the politician sinks his hands, the socialist beplagues his brain with fruitless systems, yea, even the philosopher can only hint, but not foretell, -- since all that looms before us can only form a series of un-wilful happenings, whose physical show no mortal man may preconceive, -- there it is the artist, whose clear eye can spy out shapes that reveal themselves to a yearning which longs for the only truth -- the human being. The artist has the power of seeing beforehand a yet unshapen world, of tasting beforehand the joys of a world as yet unborn, through the stress of his desire for Growth. But his joy is in imparting, and -- if only he turns his back on the senseless herds who browse upon the grassless waste-heap, and clasps the closer to his breast the cherished few who listen with him to the well-spring, -- so finds he, too, the hearts, ay, finds the senses, to whom he can impart his message. We are older men and younger: let the elder man not think of himself, but love the younger for sake of the bequest he sinks

into his heart for new increasing, -- the day will come when that heirloom shall be opened for the weal of brother Men throughout the world!"

[P. 376] {FEUER} *So neither can the artist prescribe from his own Will, nor summon into being, that Life of the Future which once shall redeem him: for it is the Other, the antithesis of himself, for which he yearns, toward which he is thrust Yet again, this living ocean of the Future cannot beget the mirror-image by its unaided self: it is a mother-element, which can bear alone what it has first received. This fecundating seed, which in it alone can thrive, is brought it by the Poet, i.e. the Artist of the Present; and this seed is the quintessence of all rarest life-sap, which the Past has gathered up therein, to bring it to the Future as its necessary, its fertilising germ: for this Future is not thinkable, except as stipulated by the Past.*

(...) And just as this verse, will the prophetic Artwork of the yearning Artist of the Present once wed itself with the ocean of the Life of the Future. – In that Life of the Future, will this Artwork be what to-day it yearns for but cannot actually be as yet: for the Life of the Future will be entirely what it can be, only through its taking up into its womb this Artwork.

The begetter of the Artwork of the Future is none other than the Artist of the Present, who presages that Life of the Future, and yearns to be contained therein. He who cherishes this longing within the inmost chamber of his powers, he lives already in a better life; -- but only One can do this thing: -- the Artist."

4/18/51

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 221-222)

[P. 221] *"You asked me about 'Judaism'. You know of course that the article was written by me: so why do you ask? It was not out of fear, but to prevent the question from being dragged down by the Jews to a purely personal level that I appeared in print pseudonymously. I harboured a long suppressed resentment against [P. 222] this Jewish business, and this resentment is as necessary to my nature as gall is to the blood. The immediate cause of my intense annoyance was their damned scribblings, so that I finally let fly: I seem to have struck home with terrible force, which suits my purpose admirably, since that is precisely the sort of shock that I wanted to give them. For they will always remain our masters – that much is as certain as the fact that it is not our princes who are now our masters, but bankers and philistines. – Meyerbeer is a special case, as far as I am concerned: it is not that I hate him, but that I find him infinitely repugnant. This perpetually kind and obliging man reminds me of the darkest -- I might almost say the most wicked – period of my life, when he still made a show of protecting me; it was a period of connections and back-staircases, when we were treated like fools by patrons whom we inwardly deeply despised. That is a relationship of the most utter dishonesty: neither party is sincere in its dealings with the other; each assumes an air of devotion, but they use each other only so long as it profits them to do so. I do not reproach Meyerbeer in the least for the intentional ineffectiveness of his kindness towards me, -- on the contrary, I am glad that I am not as deeply in his debt as Berlioz, for ex. But it was time for me to break away completely from so dishonest a relationship: superficially, I did not have the least occasion for doing so, for even the discovery that he was playing me false could not surprise me or, indeed, justify my action, since it was basically I who had to reproach myself for having wilfully allowed*

myself to be deceived concerning him. No, it was for more deep-seated reasons that I felt the need to abandon all the usual considerations of common sense in my dealings with him: I cannot exist as an artist in my own eyes or in those of my friends, I cannot think or feel anything without sensing in Meyerbeer my total antithesis, a contrast I am driven loudly to proclaim by the genuine despair that I feel whenever I encounter, even among many of my friends, the mistaken view that I have something in common with Meyerbeer. With all that I want and feel, I cannot appear before any of these friends with the requisite pureness and clarity until such time as I distance myself completely from this vague image with which so many people still associate me. This is a necessary act if my mature self is to be fully born, -- and -- if God wills it -- I think I shall have been of service to many another person in having performed this act with such zeal! (...) “

5/10/51

Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 223)

[P. 223] “But throughout the whole of this past winter I have been plagued by an idea which finally took possession of me in a sudden flash of inspiration, so much so that I now intend carrying it out. Have I not already written to you concerning a non-serious subject? It was the one about the lad who leaves home ‘to learn fear’ and who is so stupid that he never learns what it is. Imagine my shock when I suddenly discovered that the lad in question is none other than -- young Siegfried who wins the hoard and awakens Bruennhilde! (...) ‘Young Siegfried’ has the enormous advantage of conveying the important myth to an audience by means of actions on stage, just as children are taught fairy-tales. It will all imprint itself graphically by means of sharply defined physical images, it will all be understood, -- so that by the time they hear the more serious ‘Siegfried’s Death’, the audience will know all the things that are taken for granted or simply hinted at there -- and -- I shall be home and dry, -- the more so in that a far more popular work, which is much closer to people’s perception and which deals less with a heroic subject-matter than with the high-spirited and youthfully human ‘Young Siegfried’, will give the performers a practical opportunity to train and prepare themselves for solving the much greater task presented by ‘Siegfried’s Death’. -- Both works, however, will form totally independent pieces, which only on their first airing will be presented to the public in this particular order, but which can thereafter be given on their own -- according to individual preferences and abilities. And never again shall I have to envisage a general, abstract audience, but a specific public to whom I can communicate my intentions directly in order that I may be understood by them. -- (...)”

5/51

YOUNG SIEGFRIED

5/31/51

Letter to Adolf Stahr (SLRW; P. 224-225)

[P. 224] “(...) I am glad that I once insisted so obstinately on the Christian standpoint, and that I did so as an artist -- with the greatest naivete. When I had finished the poem of ‘Tannhaeuser’, somebody demanded that I should let Venus triumph over St. Elizabeth: I found it an admirable [P. 225] suggestion, only I had to say

that, in that case, it would not be ‘Tannhaeuser’ that I wrote. *When ‘Lohengrin’ appeared in print, it met with the most fundamental objection on the part of one of my most intelligent friends: Lohengrin, he said, must finally become human. It was this same objection which comprises your own reproach. I actually began to think the matter over and to avail myself of various suggestions that had been made for changing the work: I made every effort to delude myself into believing in a mortified God etc. – fortunately none of these changes was thought adequate by my friend; if I wished to leave Lohengrin to his fate, I had to send him out into the world just as he was, i.e. as the Christian folk had once made him – if I was not to commit one inconsistency after another. It was with a sense of total intoxication that I plunged into the music: there was nothing else to be done; at least I prevented myself in this way from writing a rationalistic opera.*

I know what you mean when you speak of monotonous, unrhythmical melody: the solution to the underlying question here is one which I think I have given, theoretically, In the third part of my book ‘Opera and Drama’, which is shortly to appear in print. The reason lies not in the music but – since music after all can only ever be language developed to its fullest potential – in the language itself, in the verse. At present we have only inadequately formed verse, not the real thing. My musical expression, moreover, continues to be related only supersensually to language: a substantial, sensual relationship between the two has escaped me until now. But this is not something I have worked out theoretically – in spite of the fact that you will set eyes on my theory before you encounter the practical demonstration from which it derives: the theory came to me through my poem, ‘Siegfried’s Death’, in which I chanced quite spontaneously upon the language necessary for the music.

There is one point on which you perhaps do me an injustice: you call my ‘Lohengrin’ an actual polemic against modern opera; you attribute to me a puritanical zeal in my having written it. So be it! But do not call it an intentional polemic: when I wrote this opera, I was so obsessed by the subject that my only aim was to bring to light a work that was full and luxuriant, and loudly resonant: and this aim was so far removed from all idea of protest that, on the contrary, I failed to see what it was in reality that turned this work into a form of protest.”

6-8/51

A Communication To My Friends (PW Vol. I; P. 267)

[P. 284] “In my own case ... certain critics, who pretend to judge my art-doings as a connected whole, have set about their task with this same uncritical heedlessness and lack of Feeling: views on the nature of Art, that I have proclaimed from a standpoint which it took me years of evolution step-by-step to gain, they seize-on for the standard of their verdict, and point them back upon those very compositions from which I started on the natural path of evolution that led me to this standpoint. When, for instance – not from the standpoint of abstract aesthetics, but from that of practical artistic experience – I denote the Christian principle as hostile to or incapable of Art (*kunstunfaehig*), these critics point me out the contradiction in which I stand towards my earlier dramatic works, which undoubtedly are filled with a certain tincture of this principle, so inextricably blended with our modern evolution. But it never occurs to them that, if they would only compare the new-won stand-

point with that abandoned, the two are certainly distinct enough yet the one is organically connected with the other, and that far rather were the new standpoint to be explained from the old, than were this relinquished to be judged by that adopted. No, — thinking fit to take my older works as planned and carried out in the light of the newer standpoint, they find in them [P. 285] an inconsequence with, a contradiction to my present views, and derive the clearest proof of the erroneous nature of those views from my own contradiction of them in the practice of my art; and thus, in the most easy-going fashion in the world, they kill two birds with one stone, inasmuch as they brand both my artistic and my theoretic labours as the acts of a critically untrained, confused, and extravagant person. But the product of their own acumen they call true ‘Criticism,’ forsooth, and criticism of the ‘historical’ school!

(...) But here comes the point where we must clearly understand each other: my friends must see the whole of me, in order to decide whether they can be wholly my friends. I can no longer content myself with half arrangements; I cannot consent that things which were necessities in my development should appear to good-natured people as accidentals, which they may twist to my advantage according to their degree of inclination toward me. Thus I face towards my Friends, to render them a clear account of my path of evolution, in course of which those apparent contradictions, also, must be thoroughly unriddled. (...)

[P. 286] (...) *The first artistic Will is nothing else than the contentment of the instinctive impulse to imitate what most attracts us.*—

{FEUER} *If I seek to gain myself a fairly satisfactory explanation of the artistic faculty, I can only do so by attributing it chiefly to the force of the receptive faculty (die Kraft des Empfaengnisvermögens). The un-artistic political temperament may be characterised thus: that from youth up it sets a check upon impressions from outside, which, in the course of the man’s development, mounts even to a calculation of the personal profit that this withstanding of the outer world will bring him, to a talent for referring this outer world to himself and never himself to it. On the other hand, the un-political, artistic temperament is marked by this one feature: that its owner gives himself up without reserve to the impressions which move his emotional being (Empfindungswesen) to sympathy. The motive power of these impressions, again, is in direct ratio to the force of the receptive faculty, which latter only gains the strength of an impulse to impart (Mittheilungsdrang) when they fill it to an ecstatic excess (entzueckenden Uebermaasse). The [P. 287] artistic force is conditioned by the measure of this excess, for it is nothing else than the need to make away to others the over-swelling store (Empfaengnis). This force may operate in either of two directions, according as it has been set in motion by exclusively artistic impressions, or finally by impressions also harvested from Life itself. That which first decides the Artist, as such, is certainly the purely artistic impression; if his receptive force be completely absorbed thereby, so that the impressions to be later received from Life find his faculty already exhausted, then he will develop as an absolute artist along the path which we must designate the feminine, i.e. that which embraces alone the feminine element of art. On this we meet all those artists of the day whose deeds make out the catalogue of modern art; it is the world of art close fenced from Life, in which Art plays with herself, drawing sensitively back from every brush with actuality -- not merely the actuality of the modern Present, but of Life in general – and treats it as her absolute foe; believing*

that Life in every age and every land is waging war against herself, and therefore that any toil to fashion Life is labour lost, and consequently unbecoming to the artist. In this class we find above all Painting and, pre-eminently, Music. The case is otherwise where the previously developed artistic receptive-force has merely formed and focussed the faculty for receiving Life's impressions; where in place of weakening, it has the rather strengthened it – in the highest sense of the term. On the path along which this force evolves, Life itself is at last surveyed in the light of artistic impressions, and the impulse towards imparting which gathers from the overflow of those impressions is the only true poetic force. This divorces itself not from Life, but from the standpoint of Art it strives to tender Life a fashioning hand. Let us denote this as the masculine, the generative path of Art. –

[P. 288] {FEUER} Whosoever may choose to think that with my present Communication I propose to make out for myself a title to the halo of a 'Genius,' I flatly and distinctly contradict him in advance. On the contrary, I feel prepared to prove that it is a piece of uncommonly vapid and superficial criticism, to ascribe, as we customarily do, the definitive operation of a particular artistic force to a gift (Befähigung) which we fancy we have fathomed when we briefly call it 'Genius.' In other words, we treat this Genius as a pure and absolute windfall, which God or Nature casts hither and thither at pleasure, often without the favoured bounty falling even to the right man ...

I attribute the force which we commonly call Genius solely to the faculty which I have just described at length. That which operates so mightily upon this force that it must finally come forth to full productiveness, we have in truth to regard as the real fashioner and former, as the only furthering condition for that force's efficacy, and this is the Art already evolved outside that separate force, the Art which from the artworks of the ancient and the modern world has shaped itself into a universal Substance, and hand in hand with actual Life, reacts upon the individual with the character of the force that I have elsewhere named the communistic. Amid these all-filling and all-fashioning influences of Art and Life, there thus remains to the Individual but one chief thing as his own: namely Force, vital force, force to assimilate the kindred and the needful; and this is precisely that receptive-force which I have denoted above, and which – so soon as it opens its arms in love without reserve – must necessarily, with the attainment of its perfect strength, become at last productive force.

{FEUER} In epochs when this force, like the force of Individuality in general, has been entirely crushed out by state-discipline, or by the complete fossilisation of the outward forms of Life and Arts – as in China, or in Europe towards the end of the Roman world-dominion – neither have those phenomena [P. 289] which we christen by The name 'Genius' ever come to light: a plain proof that they are not cast upon life by the caprice of God or Nature. On the other hand, these phenomena were just as little Known in those ages when both creative forces, the individualistic and the communistic, reacted on each other with all the freedom of unfettered Nature, forever fresh-begetting and ever giving birth anew. These are the so-called prehistoric times, the times when Speech, and Myth, and Art were really born. Then, too, the thing we call Genius was unknown: no one man was a Genius, since all men were it. Only in times like ours, does one know or name these 'Geniuses'; the sole name that we can find for those artistic forces which withdraw themselves from the drillground of the State and ruling Dogma, or from the sluggish bolstering-up of tottering forms of Art,

to open out new pathways and fill them with their innate life. Yet if we look a little closer, we shall find that these new openings are in no wise arbitrary and private paths, but continuations of a long-since-hewn main causeway; down which, before and with these solitary units, a joint and many-membered force of diverse individualities has poured itself, whose conscious or unconscious instinct has urged it to the abrogation of those forms by fashioning newer moulds of Life and Art. Here, then, we see again a common force, which includes within its coefficients that individual force we have erst-while foolishly dismissed with the appellation ‘Genius,’ and, according to our modern notions thereof, utterly annuls it. By all means, that associate, communistic force is only brought into play through the medium of the individual force; for it is, in truth, naught other than the force of sheer human individuality in general. The form, however, that comes eventually to manifestment is nowise, as we superficially opine, the work of the solitary individual; but the latter takes his share in the common work – namely that of most palpably revealing, by its realisation, an existing potentiality – only by virtue of that one quality which I have already denoted above, and whose prime energy I wish [P. 290] now to express still more distinctly. An ancient myth which I will now relate – despite the comminations of the historico-political school – shall serve me in the stead of definition.

{FEUER} The fair sea-wife Wachilde had born a son to good King Viking: the three Norns came to greet the child, and dower it with gifts. The first Norn gave it strength of body, the second wisdom; and the grateful father bade them take their seat beside his throne. But the third bestowed upon the child ‘the ne’er contented mind that ever broods the New.’ Viking, aghast at such a gift, refused the youngest Norn his thanks; indignant, she recalled her gift, to punish his ingratitude. The son grew up to strength and mighty stature; and whate’er there was to know, he mastered it betimes. But never did he feel the spur to change or venture; with every turning of his life he was content, and found his home in all. He never loved, and neither did he hate: but since he lit by chance upon a wife, he too begat a son, and sent him to take schooling from the Dwarves, that he might learn what’s fit; -- this son was that Wieland whom Want was once to teach to forge himself his wings. (...)

{FEUER} That one rejected gift: ‘the ne’er contented mind, that ever broods the New,’ the youngest Norn holds out to all of us when we are born, and through it alone might we each one day, become a ‘Genius:’ but now, in our craze for education, ‘tis Chance alone that brings this gift within our grasp, -- the accident of not becoming educated (erzogen). Secure against the refusal of a father who died beside my cradle, perchance the Norn, so often chased away, stole gently to it, and there bestowed on me her gift; which never left poor untrained me, and made Life and Art and mine own self my only, quite anarchic, educators. – “

[P. 293] {FEUER} “... what took my fancy in the tale of Gozzi, was not merely its adaptability for an opera-text [‘Die Feen’ – i.e. ‘The Fairies’], but the fascination of the ‘stuff’ itself. – A Fairy, who renounces immortality for the sake of a human lover, can only become a mortal through the fulfillment of certain hard conditions, the non-compliance wherewith on the part of her earthly swain threatens her with the direst penalties; her lover fails in the test, which consists in this, that however evil and repulsive she may appear to him (in an obligatory metamorphosis) he shall not reject her in his unbelief. In Gozzi’s tale the Fairy is now changed into a snake;

the remorseful lover frees her from the spell, by kissing the snake: thus he wins her for his wife. I altered this denouement by changing the Fairy into a stone, and then releasing her from the spell by her lover's passionate song; while the lover – instead of being allowed to carry off his bride into his own country – is himself admitted by the Fairy-King to the immortal bliss of Fairy-land, together with his fairy wife. – At the present time, this feature seems to me one of some importance: though it was only the music and the ordinary traditions of opera, [P. 294] that gave me then the notion, yet there lay already here the germ of a weighty factor in my whole development.

(...)

The fruit of all these impressions [i.e., the influence of the 'Young Germany' movement, etc.], and all these moods, was an opera: the 'Liebesverbot, or the Novice of Palermo.' I took its subject from Shakespeare's 'Measure for [P. 295] Measure.' It was Isabella that inspired me: she who leaves her novitiate in the cloister, to plead with a hardhearted Stateholder for mercy for her brother, who, in pursuance of a Draconic edict, has been condemned to death for entering on a forbidden, yet Nature-hallowed love-bond with a maiden."

[P. 296] "Even in the case of the *Liebesverbot*, the music had exercised a prior sway upon the fashioning and arranging of the subject-matter; and this music was nothing else than the reflex of the influence of modern French and (as concerns the melody) Italian Opera upon my physically excited receptive faculties. Whosoever should take the pains to compare this composition with that of the *Feen*, would scarcely be able to understand how in so short a time so surprising a reverse of front could have been brought about: the balancing of the two tendencies was to be the work of my further course of evolution as an artist."

[P. 306] {FEUER} "*I cannot conceive the spirit of Music as aught but Love. (...)*

(...)

To the path which I struck with the conception of the *Flying Dutchman* belong the two succeeding dramatic poems, *Tannhaeuser* and *Lohengrin*. I have been reproached as falling back, in all three works, upon a path already trodden bald – as the opinion goes – by Meyerbeer in his *Robert the Devil*, and already forsaken by myself in my *Rienzi*: the path, to wit, of 'romantic opera.' (...)

[P. 307] {FEUER} (...) *The figure of the 'Flying Dutchman' is a mythical creation of the Folk: a primal trait of human nature speaks out from it with heart-enthraling force. This trait, in its most universal meaning, is the longing after rest from amid the storms of life. In the blithe world of Greece we meet with it in the wanderings of Ulysses and his longing after home, house, hearth and – wife: the attainable, and at last attained reward of the city-loving son of ancient Hellas. The Christian, without a home on earth, embodied this trait in the figure of the 'Wandering Jew': for that wanderer, forever doomed to a long-since outlived life, without an aim, without a joy, there bloomed no earthly ransom; death was the sole remaining goal of all his strivings; his only hope, the laying-down of being. At the close of the Middle Ages a new, more active impulse led the nations to fresh life: in the world-historical direction its most important result was the bent to voyages of discovery. The sea, in its turn, became the soil of Life; yet no longer the narrow land-locked sea of the Grecian world, but the great ocean that engirdles all the earth. The fetters of the older world were broken; the*

longing of Ulysses, back to home and hearth and wedded wife, after feeding on the sufferings of the 'never-dying Jew' until it became a yearning for Death, had mounted to the craving for a new, an unknown home, invisible as yet, but dimly boded. The vast-spread feature fronts us in the mythos of the 'Flying Dutchman' that seamen's poem from the world-historical age of journeys of discovery. Here we light upon a remarkable mixture, a [P. 308] blend, effected by the spirit of the Folk, of the character of Ulysses with that of the Wandering Jew. The Hollandic mariner, in punishment for his temerity, is condemned by the Devil (here, obviously, the element of Flood and Storm) to do battle with the unresting waves, to all eternity. Like Ahasuerus, he yearns for his sufferings to be ended by Death; the Dutchman, however, may gain this redemption, denied to the undying Jew, at the hands of – a Woman who, of very love, shall sacrifice herself for him. This yearning for death thus spurs him on to seek this woman; but she is no longer the home tending Penelope of Ulysses, as courted in days of old, but the quintessence of womankind; and yet the still unmanifest, the longed-for, the dreamt-of, the infinitely womanly Woman, -- ...: the Woman of the Future.

This was that 'Flying Dutchman' who arose so often from the swamps and billows of my life, and drew me to him with such resistless might; *this was the first Folk's-poem that forced its way into my heart, and called on me as man and artist to point its meaning, and mould it in a work of art.*

{FEUER} *From here begins my career as a poet, and my farewell to the mere concoctor of opera-texts. And yet I took no sudden leap. In no wise was I influenced by reflection; for reflection comes only from the mental combination of existing models: whereas I nowhere found the specimens which might have served as beacons on my road. My course was new; it was bidden me by my inner mood (Stimmung), and forced upon me by the pressing need to impart this mood to others. In order to enfranchise myself from within outwards, i.e. to address myself to the understanding of like-feeling men, I was driven to strike out for myself, as artist, a path as yet not pointed me by any [P. 309] outward experience; and that which drives a man hereto is Necessity deeply felt, incognisable by the practical reason, but overmastering Necessity.*

(...) The form of the poem of the *Flying Dutchman*, however, as that of all my later poems, down even to the minutiae of their musical setting, was dictated to me by the subject-matter alone”

[P. 312] “... what most irresistibly attracted me was the connection, however loose, between Tannhaeuser and the 'Singers'-Tourney in the Wartburg,' which I found established in the Folk's-book. With this second poetic subject also I had already made an earlier acquaintance, in a tale of Hoffmann's; but, as with Tieck's Tannhaeuser, it had left me without the slightest incitation to dramatic treatment. I now decided to trace this Singers'-Tourney, whose whole entourage breathed on me the air of home, to its simplest and most genuine source; this led me to the study of the mittelhochdeutsch (middle-high-German) poem of the 'Sangerkrieg,' into which one of my friends, a German philologist who happened to possess a copy, was fortunately able to induct me. – This poem, as is well known, is set in direct connection with a larger epos, that of 'Lohengrin.' That also I studied, and thus with one blow a whole new world of poetic stuff was opened out to me; a world of which in my previous search, mostly for ready-made material adapted to the genre of Opera, I had not had the slightest conception.”

[P. 314] “Into this purely historical plot [Friedrich Barbarossa] I wove an imaginary female figure The spirit of this Friedrich, my favourite hero, I now embodied in the person of a Saracen maiden, the fruit of the embraces of Friedrich and a daughter of Araby, during the Kaiser’s peaceful sojourn in Palestine. (...) There, in the court of the dispirited Manfred, she appears as a prophetess, inspires him with fresh courage, and spurs him on to action; she kindles the hearts of the Arabs in Luceria, and, instilling enthusiasm whithersoever she goes, she leads the Emperor’s son through victory on victory to throne. **Her descent she has kept enrapt in mystery, the better to work on Manfred’s mind, by the riddle of her apparition; he loves her passionately, and fain would break the secret’s seal: she waves him back with an oracular saying. His life being attempted, she receives the death-thrust in her own breast: dying, she confesses herself as Manfred’s sister, and unveils the fulness of her love to him. Manfred, crowned, takes leave of happiness forever.**

{FEUER} This picture which my homesick phantasy had painted, not without some warmth of colour, in the departing light of a historical sunset, completely faded from my sight as soon as ever the figure of Tannhaeuser revealed itself [P. 315] to my inner eye. That picture was conjured from outside: this figure sprang from my inmost heart. In its infinitely simple traits, it was to me more wide-embracing, and alike more definite and plain, than the richly-coloured, shimmering tissue – half historical and half poetic – which like a showy cloak of many folds concealed the true, the supple human form my inner wish desired to look on, and which stepped at once before me in the new-found Tannhaeuser. *Here was the very essence of the Folk’s-poem, that ever seizes on the kernel of the matter (Erscheinung), and brings it again to show (Erscheinung) in simple plastic outlines; whilst there, in the history – i.e. the event not such as it was, but such alone as it comes within our ken – this matter shows itself in endless trickery of outer facings, and never attains that fine plasticity of form until the eye of the Folk has plunged into its inner soul, and given it the artistic mould of Myth.*

{FEUER} *This Tannhaeuser was infinitely more than Manfred; for he was the spirit of the whole Ghibelline race for every age, embraced within one only, clearly cut and infinitely moving form; but in this form a human being, right down to our own day, right into the heart of a poor artist all athirst for life. (...)*

For the moment I merely note that, in the choice of the Tannhaeuser-stuff also, I acted entirely without reflection; and thus simply emphasize the fact that I had hitherto proceeded without any critical consciousness, following absolutely the dictates of instinctive feeling. My recital alone will have shown how completely without an axiom I had commenced, in the *Flying Dutchman*, to strike out my new pathway. With the ‘*Sarazenin*’ I was on the point of harking back, more or less, to the road of my *Rienzi*, and again writing a ‘historical Grand Opera in five acts’; only the overpowering subject of Tannhaeuser, grappling my individual nature with far more energetic hold, kept my footsteps firm upon the path which Necessity had bid me strike.”

[P. 325] “A piece intended for the operatic repertoire, to be played before the public throughout a long season, perhaps for ever, in alternation with other pieces of its like, must have no *Stimmung* [drift, tendency, mood, impression, or frame of mind, according to Ellis], and require for its understanding no *Stimmung*, that is of any markedly individu-

al character. To this end, one must provide pieces which are either of a generally current *Stimmung* or, in fact, of none at all, and therefore which do not pretend to arouse the feeling of the public to any particular mood, but afford a pleasurable distraction by the brilliance of their ‘mounting’ and the more or less personal interest taken in the performing virtuosi. (...) [P. 326] “The ‘stimmung,’ however, which my *Flying Dutchman* was at times so fortunate as to arouse, was so pregnant, so unaccustomed, and so searching, that it was highly improbable that those who had experienced it most fully would place themselves in the way of its recurrence at frequent and brief intervals. An audience, in its every member, demands that such impressions shall take it unawares; the sudden shock of this surprise, and its lasting after-effects – which form the object of the artwork – constitute the elevating factor in any dramatic performance. But the same feeling of surprise either does not recur at all, or only after a considerable period has been allowed to intervene, and the events of daily life have gradually effaced the vividness of the first impression; whereas the deliberate attempt to galvanise oneself into this feeling, is one of the pathological symptoms of our modern art-debauchery. With men who follow in their lives the natural course of evolution, the same effect is – strictly speaking – never to be obtained from the performance of one and the same work; their renewed demand can be met alone by a fresh work of art, a work proceeding in its turn from a new developmental phase in the mind of the artist. (...)

(...) In Berlin, where for the rest I was entirely unknown, I received from two persons [P. 327] – a gentleman and a lady, previously total strangers to me, whom the impressions produced by the *Flying Dutchman* had made my instant friends – the first definite expression of satisfaction at the new path which I had struck out, and the first exhortation to continue thereon. **From that time forward I lost more and more the so-called ‘Public’ from my view: the judgment of definite, individual human beings usurped, for me, the place of the never to be accurately gauged opinion of the Mass, which hitherto – without my own full consciousness – had floated before me, in vague outlines, as the object to which I should address myself as poet. *The understanding of my aim became each day more clearly the chief thing to be striven for, and to ensure myself this understanding, involuntarily I turned no longer to the stranger Mass, but to the individual persons whose moods and ways of thought were familiar to me.***

{FEUER} *Again, this better defined position toward those whom I wished to address, exercised a most weighty influence upon the future bent of my constructive faculties (kuenstlerisches Gestaeltungwesen). (...) [P. 328] Thenceforward, by addressing myself instinctively to definite individuals allied to me by community of feeling, I at the same time won the power of casting my subjects in a more distinct and stable mould. Without going to work with any deliberate purpose, I divested myself more and more of the customary method of treating my characters in the gross; I drew a sharper line of demarcation between the surroundings and the main figure, which erewhile had frequently been swamped by them; I raised it into bolder relief, and thus attained the power of rescuing these surroundings themselves from their operatic diffuseness, and condensing them into plastic forms.*

It was under influences such as these, and proceeding as just stated, that I worked away at my Tannhaeuser, and, after many and varied interruptions, completed it.

*With this work, I had passed another stage in the new evolutionary path that I had opened with **The Flying Dutchman**. My whole being had been so consumed with ardour for my task that, as I cannot but call to mind, the nearer I approached its completion the more was I haunted by the fancy that a sudden death would stay my hand from finishing it; so that, when at last I wrote its closing chord, I felt as joyful as though I had escaped some mortal danger. –*

(...) ... for the first time in my life, the strain of cheerfulness (Heiterkeit) inherent in my disposition took visible shape in an artistic plan. Almost without wilful premeditation, I had already of late resolved to write a comic opera, so soon as I could set about it [P. 329] Just as a jovial Satyr-play was wont at Athens to follow on the Tragedy, so ... there suddenly occurred to me the picture of a comic piece which well might form a Satyr-play as pendant to my ‘Sangerkrieg auf Wartburg’ (i.e. Tannhaeuser). This was ‘The Meistersingers of Nuremberg,’ with Hans Sachs at their head. I took Hans Sachs as the last manifestation of the art-productive spirit of the Folk (Volksgeist), and set him, in this sense, in contrast to the pettyfogging bombast of the other Meistersingers; to whose absurd pedanticism, of tabulatur and prosody, I gave a concrete personal expression in the figure of the ‘Marker.’ (...) [P. 330] At last Sachs promises the unhappy wretch [Beckmesser] to hold his peace, provided only that he be allowed to mark according to his mode – as cobbler – the faults which, according to his feeling, he may detect in the Marker’s song: namely, to signal each by a hammer-stroke upon the lasted shoes. (...)

*[P. 331] Such was my swiftly planned, and swiftly traced design. But scarcely had I written it down, when peace forsook me until I had sketched-out the more detailed plan for **Lohengrin**. (...) There was something strange in the fact that, at the very time when I made that refreshing little excursion in the realms of mirth, I was driven back so quickly to the earnest, yearning mood which impelled me to the absorbing task of **Lohengrin**. The reason now is clear to me, why the cheerful mood which sought to vent itself in the conception of the *Meistersinger* could make no lasting stay with me. At that time it took alone the shape of *Irony*, and, as such, was busied more with the purely formal side of my artistic views and aims, than with that core of Art whereof the roots lie hid in Life itself.*

The only form of Mirth (Heiterkeit) which our public of today can understand, and thus the only form in which an underlying truth can appeal thereto, is that of Irony.”

*[P. 333] {FEUER} (...) The medieval poem presented **Lohengrin** in a mystic twilight that filled me with suspicion and that haunting feeling of repugnance with which we look upon the carved and painted saints and martyrs on highways, or in the churches, of Catholic lands. Only when the immediate impression of this reading had faded, did the shape of **Lohengrin** rise repeatedly, and with growing power of attraction, before my soul; and this power gathered fresh force to itself from outside, chiefly by reason that I learnt to know the myth of **Lohengrin** in its simple traits, and alike its deeper meaning, as the genuine poem of the Folk, such as it has been laid bare to us by the discoveries of the newer searchers into Saga lore. After I had thus seen it as a noble poem of man’s yearning and his longing – by no means merely seeded from the Christian’s bent toward supernaturalism, but from the truest depths of universal human nature. – this figure became ever more endeared to me, and ever stronger*

grew the urgency to adopt it and thus give utterance to my own internal longing; so that, at the time of completing my *Tannhaeuser*, it positively became a dominating need, which thrust back each alien effort to withdraw myself from its despotic mastery.

{FEUER} *This 'Lohengrin' is no mere outcome of Christian meditation (Anschauung), but one of man's earliest poetic ideals; just as ... it is a fundamental error of our modern superficialism, to consider the specific Christian legends as by any means original creations. Not one of the most affecting, not one of the most distinctive P. 334] Christian myths belongs by right of generation to the Christian spirit, such as we commonly understand it: it has inherited them all from the purely human intuitions (Anschauungen) of earlier time, and merely moulded them to fit its own peculiar tenets. To purge them of this heterogeneous influence, and thus enable us to look straight into the pure humanity of the eternal poem: such was the task of the more recent inquirer* [* Translator's Footnote: "In view of the author's preface to the two volumes in which this *Communication* was included (see page 25 of the present volume), it would appear that the allusion is to Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*."], *a task which it must necessarily remain for the poet to complete.*

{FEUER} *Just as the main feature of the mythos of the 'Flying Dutchman' may be clearly traced to an earlier setting in the Hellenic Odyssey; just as this same Ulysses in his wrench from the arms of Calypso, in his flight from the charms of Circe, and in his yearning for the earthly wife of cherished home, embodied the Hellenic prototype of a longing such as we find in 'Tannhaeuser' immeasurably enhanced and widened in its meaning: so do we already meet in the Grecian mythos – nor is even this by any means its oldest form – the outlines of the myth of 'Lohengrin.' Who does not know the story of 'Zeus and Semele'? The god loves a mortal woman, and for sake of this love, approaches her in human shape; but the mortal learns that she does not know her lover in his true estate, and, urged by Love's own ardour, demands that her spouse shall show himself to physical sense in the full substance of his being. Zeus knows that she can never grasp him, that the unveiling of his godhead must destroy her; himself he suffers by this knowledge, beneath the stern compulsion to fulfill his loved one's dreaded wish: he signs his own death-warrant, when the fatal splendour of his godlike presence strikes Semele dead. – Was it, forsooth, some priestly fraud that shaped this myth? How insensate to attempt to argue from the selfish state-religious, caste-like exploitation of the noblest human longing, back to the origin and the genuine meaning of ideals which [P. 335] blossomed from a human fancy that stamped man first as Man! Twas no God, that sang the meeting of Zeus and Semele; but Man, in his humanest of yearnings. Who had taught Man that a God could burn with love toward earthly Woman? For certain, only Man himself; who however high the object of his yearning may soar above the limits of his earthly wont, can only stamp it with the imprint of his human nature. From the highest sphere to which the might of his desire may bear him up, he finally can only long again for what is purely human, can only crave the taste of his own nature, as the one thing worth desiring. What then is the inmost essence of this Human Nature, whereto the desire which reaches forth to farthest distance turns back at last, for its only possible appeasement? It is the Necessity of Love; and the essence of this love, in its truest utterance, is the longing for utmost physical reality, for fruition in an object that can be grasped by all the senses, held fast*

*with all the force of actual being. In this finite, physically sure embrace, must not the God dissolve and disappear? Is not the mortal, who had yearned for God, undone, annulled? Yet is not Love, in its truest, highest essence, herein revealed? Marvel, ye erudite Critics, at the omnipotence of human minstrelsy, unfolded in the simple *Mythos of the Folk!* Things that all your Understanding can not so much as comprehend, are there laid bare to human Feeling, with such a physically perfect surety as no other means could bring to pass. --*

*{FEUER} The ethereal sphere, from which the god is yearning to descend to men, had stretched itself, through Christian longing, to inconceivable bounds of space. To the Hellenes, it was still the cloud-locked realm of thunder and the thunderbolt, from which the lusty Zeus moved down, to mix with men in expert likeness: to the Christian, the blue firmament dissolved into an infinite sea of yearning ecstasy, in which the forms of all the gods were melted, until at last it was the lonely image of his own person, the yearning Man, that alone was left to greet him from the ocean of his phantasy. One primal, manifold repeated trait [P. 336] runs through the Sagas of those peoples who dwelt beside the sea or sea-embouching rivers: upon the blue mirror of the waters there draws nigh an Unknown-being, of utmost grace and purest virtue, who moves and wins all hearts by charm resistless; he is the embodied wish of the yearner who dreams of happiness in that far-off land he can not sense. This Unknown-being vanishes across the ocean's waves, so soon as ever questioned on his nature. Thus -- so goes the story -- there once came in a swan-drawn skiff, over the sea to the banks of the Scheldt, an unknown hero: there he rescued downtrodden innocence, and wedded a sweet maiden; but since she asked him who he was and whence he came, he needs must seek the sea once more, and leave his All behind. -- Why this Saga, which I learnt in its simplest outlines, so irresistibly attracted me that, at the very time when I had but just completed *Tannhaeuser*, I could concern myself with naught but it, was to be clearer to my feeling by the immediately succeeding incidents of my life. --*

*(...) The public, by their enthusiastic reception of *Rienzi* and cooler welcome of the *Flying Dutchman*, had plainly shown me what I must set before them if I sought to please. I completely undeceived their expectations: they left the theatre, after the first performance of *Tannhaeuser*, in a confused and discontented mood. -- The feeling of utter loneliness in which I now found myself, quite unmanned me. (...) [P. 337] Not wounded vanity, but the shock of an utter disillusionment, chilled my very marrow. It became clear to me that my *Tannhaeuser* had appealed to a handful of intimate friends alone, and not to the heart of a public to whom, nevertheless, I had instinctively turned in the production of this my work. Here was a contradiction which I could not but deem insoluble. There seemed but one possibility of winning the public also to my side, namely -- to secure its understanding: but I here felt, for the first time with any great distinctness, that the character to which we have grown accustomed in operatic performances was completely at variance with what I demanded of a representation. (...) My claim, however, was diametrically opposed to this whole state of affairs: I required the Actor (*Darsteller*) in the forefront, and the Singer only as the actor's aid; lastly, therefore, a public who should join me in this claim. (...) Thus I could only look upon myself as a madman who speaks to the wind and expects it to understand him; for I was openly speaking of things which were all the more doomed to stay uncomprehended as not even the *tongue* in which I uttered them*

was understood. The gradually awakened interest in my work displayed by a portion of the public, appeared to me like the good-natured sympathy shown to a lunatic by his friends: this sympathy impels us to enter into the spirit of the sufferer's [P. 338] wanderings, to try to unriddle some meaning therefrom, and in this unriddled sense at last to answer, in order thus to make his sad condition a little bearable to him (...) The benevolent intentions of the directorate, and, above all, the friendly zeal and exceptional talent of the performers, succeeded in gradually establishing my opera in public favour. But no more could this success deceive me; I now knew what I and the public were to one another, and even if I had still been left in any doubt, my further experiences would have well enough dispelled it.

The consequences of my earlier blindness as to my true position toward the public now made themselves appallingly evident: the impossibility of procuring *Tannhaeuser* a popular success, or even a circulation among the German theatres, was clear as day; and therewith I was confronted with the complete downfall of my outer circumstances. (...) [P. 339] Henceforth our entire modern art-publicity began to vanish more and more completely from my purview. – But what, then, was my position? And what sort of a mood must that have been which, precisely at this time, and amid these facts and these impressions, urged me on with headlong haste to carry out the project of my *Lohengrin*? – I will endeavour to make it clear to myself and friends, in order to explain the meaning that the Lohengrin legend bore for me, and the light in which alone I could regard it, both as man and artist.

{FEUER} I was now so completely awoken to the utter loneliness of my position as an artist, that the very feeling of this loneliness supplied me with the spur and the ability to address myself to my surroundings. Since this prompting spoke so loud within me that, even without any conscious prospect of compassing an intelligible message, I yet felt passionately impelled to unbosom myself, -- this could only proceed from a mood of wellnigh fanatical yearning, which itself was born of that feeling of isolation. – In Tannhaeuser I had yearned to flee a world of frivolous and repellent sensuousness, -- the only form our modern Present has to offer; my impulse lay towards the unknown land of pure and chaste virginity, as toward the element that might allay a nobler, but still at bottom sensuous longing: only a longing such as our frivolous Present can never satisfy. By the strength of my longing, I had mounted to the realms where purity and chastity abide: I felt myself outside the modern world, and mid a sacred, limpid aether which, in the transport of my solitude, filled me with that delicious awe we drink-in upon the summits of the Alps, [P. 340] when, circled with a sea of azure air, we look down upon the lower hills and valleys. Such mountain-peaks the Thinker climbs, and on this height imagines he is 'cleansed' from all that's 'earthly,' the topmost branch upon the tree of man's omnipotence: here at last may he feed full upon himself, and, midst this self-repast, freeze finally beneath the Alpine chill into a monument of ice: as which, philosopher or critic, he stonily frowns down upon the warm and living world below. The desire, however, that had driven me to those heights, was a desire sprung from art and man's five senses: it was not the warmth of Life, I fain would flee, but the vaporous morass of trivial sensuousness whose exhalations form one definite shape of Life, the life of modern times. Upon those heights, moreover, I was warmed by the sunny rays of Love, whose living impulse alone had sped me up. And so it was, that, hardly had this blessed solitude enwrought me,

when it woke a new and overpowering desire, the desire from peak to valley, from the dazzling brilliance of chaste Sanctity to the sweet shadows of Love's humanest caresses. From these heights my longing glance beheld at last – das Weib: the woman for whom the 'Flying Dutchman' yearned, from out the ocean of his misery; the woman who, star-like, showed to 'Tannhaeuser' the way that led from the hot passion of the Venusberg to Heaven; [P. 341] the woman who now drew Lohengrin from sunny heights to the depths of Earth's warm breast. –

{FEUER} Lohengrin sought the woman who should trust in him; who should not ask how he was hight or whence he came, but love him as he was, and because he was whate'er she deemed him. He sought the woman who would not call for explanations or defence, but who should love him with an unconditional love. Therefore must he cloak his higher nature, for only in the non-revealing of this higher (hoeheren) – or more correctly, heightened (erhoehten) – essence, could there lie the surety that he was not adored because of it alone, or humbly worshipped as a being past all understanding – Whereas his longing was not for worship nor for adoration, but for the only thing sufficient to redeem him from his loneliness, to still his deep desire, -- for Love, for being Loved, for being understood through Love. With the highest powers of his senses, with his fullest fill of consciousness, he would fain become and be none other than a warmly-feeling, warmth-inspiring Man; in a word, a Man and not a God – i.e. no 'absolute' Artist. Thus yearned he for Woman, -- for the human Heart. And thus did he step down from out his loneliness of sterile bliss, when he heard this woman's cry for succour, this heart-cry from humanity below. But there clings to him the tell-tale halo of his 'heightened' nature; he can no appear as aught but suprahuman; the gaping of the common herd, the poisoned trail of envy, throw their shadows even across the loving maiden's heart: doubt and jealousy convince him that he has not been understood, but only worshipped, and force from him the avowal of his divinity, wherewith, undone, he returns to his loneliness. –

It seemed then to me, and still it seems, most hard to comprehend, how the deep tragedy of this subject and this character should have stayed unfelt; and how the story should have been so misunderstood that Lohengrin was looked on as a cold, forbidding figure, more prone to arouse dislike than sympathy. This reproach was first made [P. 342] to me by an intimate friend, whose knowledge and whose intellectual gifts I highly prize. In his case, however, I reaped an experience which has since been verified by repetition: namely, that upon the first direct acquaintance with my poem the impression produced is thoroughly affecting, and that this reproach only enters when the impression of the artwork itself has faded, and given place to cold, reflective criticism. Thus this reproach was not an instinctive act of the immediate-feeling heart, but a purposed act of mediate reflection. In this occurrence I therefore found the tragedy of Lohengrin's character and situation confirmed, as one deep-rooted in our modern life: it was reproduced upon the artwork and its author, just in the same way as it had borne down upon the hero of the poem. The character and situation of this Lohengrin I now recognise, with clearest sureness, as the type of the only absolute tragedy, in fine, of the tragic element of modern life; and that of just as great significance for the Present, as was the 'Antigone' – though in another relation – for the life of the Hellenic State. [Wagner's Footnote: Exactly as my critic, may the Athenian Citizen have felt, who under the immediate influence of the artwork was*

seized with unquestioning sympathy for Antigone, yet in the Areopagus, upon the following day, would certainly have voted to death the living heroine.] From out this sternest tragic moment of the Present one path alone can lead: the full reunion of sense and soul, the only genuinely gladsome element of the Future's Life and Art, each in its utmost consummation.

I must admit that I myself was so far infected with the doubting spirit of Criticism, that I seriously thought of [P. 343] forcing on my poem a complete change of motive. I had fallen, for a short time, so far out of touch with the essence of the story, that I actually strayed into the sketch of a new denouement, according to which Lohengrin should be allowed to put aside his higher nature, so soon as revealed, in favour of a sojourn upon earth with Elsa. The utterly unsatisfactory, and in the highest sense unnatural character of this denouement, however, not only was felt by myself – who had conceived it in a moment of variance with my inner being – but also by my critical friend. We came to the joint conclusion that That which jarred upon our modern critical conscience lay in the unalterable idiosyncrasy of the Stuff itself; but on the other hand, that this 'stuff' exerted so precise and stimulating an effect upon our Feeling that, in truth, it must have for us a meaning sufficient to make its artistic exposition a desirable enrichment of our emotional impressions, and therewith of our powers of emotion. --

In effect, this 'Lohengrin' is an entirely new phenomenon to the modern mind; for it could only issue from the Stimmung and the life-views of an artist who, at none other than the present time, and amid no other relations to Art and Life than those which had sprung from my own particular situation, had developed to exactly that point where this legend faced me with an imperative demand for treatment. Wherefore, only he who is able to free himself from all our modern abstract Generalisms, and look Life straight into the eyes, can understand this Lohengrin. Whoso can only class under one general category the manifold phenomena that spring from the individual fashioning-force of life's most active interactions, can comprehend as good as nothing of them: to wit, not the phenomenon itself, but only the mere category; whereto – as to an order laid down in advance – in truth it does not belong. He to whom there seems nothing comprehensible in Lohengrin beyond the category 'Christian-Romantic,' comprehends alone an accidental surface, but not its underlying essence. This essence, the essence of [P. 344] a strictly new and hitherto unbroached phenomenon, can be comprehended by that faculty alone whereby is brought to man, in every instance, the fodder for his categorical understanding; and this is the purely physical faculty of Feeling. But only an artwork that presents itself in fullest physical show, can convey the new 'stuff,' with due insistence, to this emotional faculty; and only he who has taken-in this artwork in that complete embodiment – i.e. the emotional-man who has thus experienced an entire satisfaction of his highest powers of receiving – can also compass the new 'stuff' in all its bearings.

{anti-FEUER} Here I touch the tragic feature in the situation of the true Artist towards the life of the Present, that very situation to which I gave artistic effect in the Lohengrin story. – The most natural and urgent longing of such an artist is, to be taken up without reserve into the Feeling and by it understood; and the impossibility – under the modern conditions of our art-life – of meeting with this Feeling in such a

state of freedom and undoubting sureness as he needs for being fully understood, -- the compulsion to address himself almost solely to the critical Understanding, instead of to the Feeling: this it is, that forms the tragic element in his situation; this it is, that, as an artist made of flesh and blood, I could not help but feel, and this, that, on the pathway of my further evolution, was to be forced so on my consciousness that I broke at last into open revolt against the burden of that situation. --

I now approach the account of my latest evolutionary period

[P. 345] *Criticism had proved itself unequal to alter the denouement of my Lohengrin, and by this victorious issue of the encounter between my instinctive artistic Feeling and the modern Critical conscience, my zeal for its artistic completion was kindled to yet brighter flame. In this completion, I felt, would lie the demonstration of the rightness of my feeling. It was clear to my inner sense, that an essential ground of misunderstanding of the tragical significance of my hero had lain in the assumption that Lohengrin, having descended from a glittering realm of painlessly-unearned and cold magnificence, and in obedience to an unnatural law that bound him willessly thereto, now turned his back upon the strife of earthly passions, to taste again the pleasures of divinity. As the chief lesson that this taught me, was the wilfulness of the modern critical mode of viewing things, which looks away from the instinctive aspect and twists them round to suit its purpose; and as it was easy for me to see that this misunderstanding had simply sprung from a wilful interpretation of that binding law, which in truth was no outwardly-imposed decree, but the expression of the necessary inner nature of one who, from the midst of lonely splendour, is athirst for being understood through Love: so, to ensure the desired correct impression, I held all the faster to the original outlines of the legend, whose naïve innocence had made so irresistible an impression upon myself. In order to artistically convey these outlines in entire accordance with the effect that they had made on me, I observed a still greater fidelity than in the case of 'Tannhaeuser,' in my presentment of those half-historical, half-legendary features by which alone a subject so out of the beaten path could be brought with due conviction to the answering senses. This led me, in the conduct of the scenes (scenische Haltung) and dialogue (sprachlichen Ausdruck), to a path which brought me later to the discovery of possibilities whose logical sequence was certainly to point me out an utter revolution in the adjustment of those factors which have hitherto made up our [P. 346] operative mode of speech. But toward this path, also, I was led by one sole impulse, namely to convey to others as vividly and intelligibly as possible, what my own mind's eye had seen; and here, again, it was always the subject-matter that governed me in my every choice of form. Utmost clearness was the chief endeavour of my working-out; and that not the superficial clearness wherewith a shallow object often greets us, but the rich and many-coloured light wherein alone a comprehensive, broad-related subject can intelligibly display itself, and yet which cannot help but seem superficial, and often downright obscure, to those accustomed to mere form without contents.*

{FEUER} *It was midst this struggle for clearness of exposition, as I remember, that the essence of the heart of Woman, such as I had to picture in the loving Elsa, first dawned upon me with more and more distinctness. The artist can only attain the power of convincing portraiture, when he has been able to sink himself with fullest sympathy into the essence of the character to be portrayed. In 'Elsa' I saw, from the commence-*

ment, my desired antithesis to Lohengrin, -- yet naturally, not so absolute an antithesis as should lie far removed from his own nature, but rather the other half of his being, -- the antithesis which is included in his general nature and forms the necessarily longed-for complement of his specific man-hood. Elsa is the unconscious, the undeliberate (Unwillkuerliche), into which Lohengrin's conscious, deliberate (willkuerliche) being yearns to be redeemed; but this yearning, again, is itself the unconscious, undeliberate Necessity in Lohengrin, whereby he feels himself akin to Elsa's being. Through the capability of this 'unconscious consciousness,' such as I myself now felt [P. 347] alike with Lohengrin, the nature of Woman also -- and that precisely as I felt impelled to the faithfullest portrayal of its essence -- came to ever clearer understanding in my inner mind. Through this power I succeeded in so completely transferring myself to this female principle, that I came to an entire agreement with its utterance by my loving Elsa. I grew to find her so justified in the final outburst of her jealousy, that from this very outburst I learnt first to thoroughly understand the purely-human element of love; and I suffered deep and actual grief -- often welling into bitter tears -- as I saw the tragical necessity of the parting, the unavoidable undoing of this pair of lovers. This woman, who with clear foreknowledge rushes on her doom, for sake of Love's imperative behest, -- who, amid the ecstasy of adoration, wills yet to lose her All, if so be she cannot all-embrace her loved one; this woman, who in her contact with this Lohengrin, of all men, must founder, and in doing so, must shipwreck her beloved too; this woman, who can love but thus and not otherwise, who, by the very burst of her jealousy, wakes first from out the thrill of worship into the full reality of love, and by her wreck reveals its essence to him who had not fathomed it as yet, this glorious woman, before whom Lohengrin must vanish, for reason that his own specific nature could not understand her, -- I had found her now: and the random shaft that I had shot towards the treasure dreamt but hitherto unknown, was my own Lohengrin, whom now I must give up as lost; to track more certainly the footsteps of that true Woman-hood, which should one day bring to me and all the world redemption, after Man-Hood's egoism, even in its noblest form, had shivered into self-crushed dust before her. Elsa, the Woman, -- Woman hitherto un-understood by me, and understood at last, -- that most positive expression of the purest instinct of the senses, -- made me a Revolutionary at one blow. She was the Spirit of the [P. 348] Folk, for whose redeeming hand I too, as artist-man, was longing. --

But this treasure trove [Hoard? i.e., 'Hort'?] of Knowledge lay hid, at first, within the silence of my lonely heart: only slowly did it ripen into loud avowal!"

[P. 354] "(...) While pondering on the possibility of a thorough change in our theatrical relations, I was insensibly driven to a full perception of the worthlessness of that social and political system which, of its very nature, could beget no other public art-conditions than precisely those I then was grappling with. -- This knowledge was of decisive consequence for the further development of my whole life.

[P. 355] {FEUER} Never had I occupied myself with politics, strictly so called. I now remember that I only turned my attention to the phenomena of the political world in exact measure as in them was manifested the spirit of Revolution -- i.e. as pure Human Nature rebelled against politico-juristic Formalism. (...) I have never been able to relinquish this manner of 'taking sides,' in favour of any politically constructive notion. Therefore was my interest in the world of politics always in so

far of an artistic nature, as I looked beneath its formal expression into its purely human contents. Only when I could strip off from the phenomena their formal shell, fashioned from the traditions of Juristic Rights, and light upon their inward kernel of purely human essence, could they arouse my sympathy; for here I then saw the same impelling motive which drove myself, as artist-man, to wrest from the evil physical form of the Present a new physical mould which should correspond to the true essence of humanity – a mould which is only to be gained through destruction of the physical form of the Present, and therefore through Revolution.

Thus, from my artistic standpoint, and specially on the forementioned path of pondering on the reconstruction of the Stage, I had arrived at a point where I was in a position to thoroughly recognise the necessity of the commencing Revolution of 1848. (...)

[P. 356] (...) My observation of the utter haziness of the views of the contending parties, as to the essential contents of the Revolution, decided me one day to openly declare myself against the purely formal and political conception of this Revolution, and for the necessity of keeping its purely human kernel plainly in the eye. From the results of this step I now saw, for the first time unmistakably, how our politicians were situated with regard to a knowledge of the true spirit of Revolution, and that genuine Revolution could never come from Above, from the standpoint of erudite intellect, but only from Below, from the urgency of true human need. The lying and hypocrisy of the political parties filled me with a disgust that drove me back, at first, into the most utter solitude.

Here my energy, unsatisfied without, consumed itself [P. 357] once more in projects for artistic work. – *Two such projects, which had occupied my thoughts for some time previously, now claimed my attention wellnigh at the same moment; indeed, the character of their subjects made them almost seem to me as one. Even during the musical composition of Lohengrin, midst which I had always felt as thought resting by an oasis on the desert, both these subjects had usurped my poetic fancy: they were 'Siegfried' and 'Frederic Barbarossa.'* –

Once again, and that the last time, did Myth and History stand before me with opposing claims; this while, as good as forcing me to decide whether it was a musical drama, or a spoken play, that I had to write. (...)

{FEUER} Since my return to Germany from Paris, my favourite study had been that of ancient German lore. I have already dwelt on the deep longing for my native home that filled me then. This Home, however, in its actual reality, could nowise satisfy my longing; thus I felt that a deeper instinct lay behind my impulse, and one that needs must have its source in some other yearning than merely for the modern homeland. As though to get down to its root, I sank myself into the primal element of Home, that meets us in the legends of a Past which attracts us the more warmly as the Present repels us with its hostile chill. (...) *In the struggle to give the wishes of my heart artistic shape, and in the ardour to discover what thing it was that drew me so resistlessly to the primal source of old home Sagas, I drove step by step into the deeper regions of antiquity, where at last to my delight, and truly in the utmost reaches of old time, I was to light upon the fair young form of [P. 358] Man, in all the freshness of his force. My studies thus bore me, through the legends of the Middle Ages, right down to their foundation in the old-Germanic Mythos; one swathing after*

another, which the later legendary lore had bound around it, I was able to unloose, and thus at last to gaze upon it in its chastest beauty. What here I saw, was no longer the Figure of conventional history, whose garment claims our interest more than does the actual shape inside; but the real naked Man, in whom I might spy each throbbing of his pulses, each stir within his mighty muscles, in uncramped, freest motion: the type of the true human being.

{FEUER} {Pre-SCHOP} At like time I had sought this human being in History too. Here offered themselves relations, and nothing but relations; the human being I could only see in so far as the relations ordered him: and not as he had power to order them. To get to the bottom of these ‘relations,’ whose coercive force compelled the strongest man to squander all his powers on objectless and never-compassed aims, I turned afresh to the soil of Greek antiquity, and here, again, was pointed at the last to Mythos, in which alone I could touch the ground of even these relations: but in that Mythos, these social relations were drawn in lines as simple, plastic, and distinct as I had earlier recognised therein the human shape itself. From this side, also, did Mythos lead me to this Man alone, as to the involuntary creator of those relations, which in their documento-monumental perversion, as the excrescences of History (Geschichtes-momente), as traditional fictions and established rights, have at last usurped dominion over Man and ground to dust his freedom.

*{FEUER} Although the splendid type of Siegfried had long attracted me, it first enthralled my every thought when I had come to see it in its purest human shape, set free from every later wrappage. Now for the first time, also, did I recognise the possibility of making him the hero of a drama; a possibility that had not occurred to me while I [P. 359] only knew him from the medieval *Nibelungenlied*. But at like time with him, had Friedrich I. [i.e., Friedrich the First] loomed on me from the study of our History: he appeared to me, just as he had appeared to the Saga-framing German Folk, a historical rebirth of the old-pagan Siegfried. When the wave of political commotion broke lately in upon us, and proclaimed itself at first in Germany, as a longing for national unity, it could not but seem to me that Friedrich I. would lie nearer to the Folk, and be more readily understood, than the downright human Siegfried. (...) [Re: Friedrich I.] In order to make plainly understandable both my hero and the relations that with giant force he strives to master, only to be at last subdued by them, I should have felt compelled to adopt the method of Mythos, in the very teeth of the historic material: the vast mass of incidents and intricate associations, whereof no single link could be omitted if the connection of the whole was to be intelligibly set before the eye, was adapted neither to the form, nor to the spirit of Drama. (...) [P. 360] To attain my purpose, I should therefore have had to reduce this mass of relations by free construction, and should have fallen into a treatment that would have absolutely violated History. (...)*

{FEUER} I now returned to ‘Siegfried’ – at the selfsame time as, disgusted with the empty formalistic tendency of the doings of our political parties, I withdrew from contact with our public life – and that with a full conviction of History’s unsuitableness to Art. (...) When outward instigations prompted me to take up the sketch of ‘Friedrich Rothbart,’ I did not for a moment doubt that it could only be dealt with as a spoken play, and by no manner of means as a drama to be set to music.”

[P. 364] {FEUER} “... that which is utterable in the speech of Music, is limited to

feelings and emotions: it expresses, in abundance, that which has been cast adrift from our Word-speech (Wortsprache) at its conversion into a mere organ of the Intellect, namely, the emotional contents of Purely-human speech. What thus remains unutterable in the absolute-musical tongue, is the exact definement of the object of the feeling, and emotion, whereby the latter reach themselves a surer definition. The broadening and extension of the Musical form of speech (musikalischer Sprachausdruck), as called for by Object, therefore consists in the attainment of the power to outline sharply and distinctly the Individual and the Particular; and this it gains alone by being wed to Word-speech. (...) A matter that is only seizable by the Understanding, can be conveyed alone by means of Word-speech; but the more it expands into a phase of Feeling, the more definitely does it also need a mode of expression that Tone-speech alone can, at the last, confer on it with answering fulness. Herewith is laid down, quite of itself, the Matter of what the Word-Tone poet has to utter: it is, the Purely-human, freed from every shackle of Convention.

With the attained facility of speaking in this Tone-speech [P. 365] freely from my Heart, I naturally could only have to give my message also in the spirit of that speech; and where, as artist-man, I felt peremptorily urged to its delivery, **the Matter of my message** was necessarily dictated by the Spirit of the means of expression that I had made my own. *The poetic 'stuffs' which urged me to artistic fashioning, could only be of such a nature that, before all else, they usurped my emotional, and not my intellectual being: only the Purely-human (Reinmenschliche), loosed from all historical formality, could – once it came before my vision in its genuine natural shape, unruffled from outside – arouse my interest, and spur me on to impart what I beheld. What I beheld, I now looked at solely with the eyes of Music; though not of that music whose formal maxims might have held me still embarrassed for expression, but of the music which I had within my heart, and wherein I might express myself as in a mother-tongue. With this freedom of faculty, I now might address myself without a hindrance to that to be expressed; henceforth the object of expression was the sole matter for regard in all my workmanship. Thus, precisely by the acquirement of facility in musical expression, did I become a poet; inasmuch as I no longer had, as fashioning artist, to refer to the mode of expression itself, but only to its object. Yet, without deliberately setting about an enrichment of the means of musical expression, I was absolutely driven to expand them, by the very nature of the objects I was seeking to express.*

Now it lay conditioned in the nature of an advance from musical emotionalism (Empfindungswesen) to the shaping of poetic stuffs, that I should condense the vague, more general emotional contents of these stuffs to an ever clearer and more individual precision, and thus at last arrive at the point where the poet, in his direct concern with Life, takes a firmer hold of the matter to be conveyed through musical expression, and stamps it with his own intent. [P. 366] Whosoever, therefore, will carefully consider the construction (Bildung) of the three accompanying poems, will find that what I drew in haziest outline in the *Flying Dutchman*, I brought with ever plainer definition into stabler form in *Tannhaeuser*, and finally in *Lohengrin*. *Since by such a procedure I was enabled to draw nearer and nearer to actual Life, I must inevitably reach a point of time at last, when, under certain external impressions, a poetic subject such as that of 'Friedrich Rothbart' would present itself to me, for whose modelling I should have had to downright*

renounce all musical expression. But it was precisely here, that my hitherto unconscious procedure came to my consciousness as an artistic Necessity. With this 'stuff', which would have made me altogether forget my music, I became aware of the bearings of true poetic stuffs in general; and there, where I must have left unused my faculty of musical expression, I also found that I should have had to subordinate my Poetic attainments to political abstractions, and thus to radically forswear my artistic nature. – Here it was, also, that I had the most urgent occasion to clear my mind as to the essential difference between the historico-political, and the purely-human life; and when I knowingly and willingly gave up the 'Friedrich,' in which I had approached the closest to that political life, and – by so much the clearer as to what I wished – gave preference to the 'Siegfried,' I had entered a new and most decisive period of my evolution, both as artist and as man: the period of conscious artistic will to continue on an altogether novel path, which I had struck with unconscious necessity, and whereon I now, as man and artist, press on to meet a newer world.

(...)

[P. 367] Seeing that, onward from the said turning-point of my artistic course, I was once for all determined by the stuff, and by that stuff as seen with the eye of Music: so in its fashioning, I must necessarily pass forward to a gradual but complete upheaval of the traditional operatic form. This opera-form was never, of its very nature, a form embracing the whole Drama, but the rather an arbitrary conglomerate of separate smaller forms of song, whose fortuitous concatenation of Arias, Duos, Trios, &c., with Choruses and so-called ensemble pieces, made out the actual edifice of Opera. In the poetic fashioning of my stuffs, it was henceforth impossible for me to contemplate a filling out of these ready-moulded forms, but solely a bringing of the drama's broader Object to the cognisance of Feeling. In the whole course of the drama I saw no possibility of division or demarcation, other than the Acts in which the place or time, or the Scenes in which the dramatis personae change. Moreover, *the plastic unity of the Mythic Stuff brought with it this advantage, that, in the arrangement of my Scenes, all those minor details, which the modern playwright finds so indispensable for the elucidation of involved historical occurrences, were quite unnecessary, and the whole strength of the portrayal could be concentrated upon a few weighty and decisive moments of development. Upon the working-out of these fewer scenes, in each of which a decisive Stimmung was to be given its full play, I might linger with an exhaustiveness already reckoned-for in the original draft;* I was not compelled to make shift with mere suggestions, and – for sake of the outward economy – to hasten on from one suggestion to another; but with needful repose, I could display the simple object in the very last connections required to bring it clearly home to the dramatic understanding. Through this natural attribute of the Stuff, I was not in the least coerced to strain the planning of my scenes into any preconceived conformity with given musical forms, [P. 368] since they dictated of themselves their mode of musical completion. (...) *Thus I by no means set out with the fixed purpose of a deliberate iconoclast (Formumaenderer – Lit: changer of forms) [* Wagner's Footnote: This bugbear of the generality of musical critics, is the role they think necessary to ascribe to me, whenever they pay me the honour of their notice. As they never concern themselves about a whole, it is only the part, the question of Form, that can become the object of their reflection; and the blame, that in matters of music they should be compelled to*

'reflect,' they lay on me, for stepping before them with a 'reflected' music. But herein they make a changeling of me, keeping only the musician in view, and confound me with certain actual brain-grubbers of Absolute Music, who – as such – can only exercise their inventive ingenuity on a wilful variation and twisting-about of forms. In their agony lest I should upset the forms that keep our musical hotch-potch steady, they go at last so far, as to see in every new work projected by me an imminent disaster; and fan themselves into such a fury, that they end by fancying my operas, albeit entirely unknown to the directors, as deluging the German stage. So foolish maketh Fear!] to destroy, forsooth, the prevailing operatic forms, of Aria, Duet, &c.; but the omission of these forms followed from the very nature of the Stuff, with whose intelligible presentment to the Feeling through an adequate vehicle, I had alone to do. A mechanical reflex (unwillkuerliches Wissen) of those traditional forms still influenced me so much in my Flying Dutchman, that any attentive investigator will recognise how often there it governed even the arrangement of my scenes; and only gradually, in Tannhaeuser, and yet more decisively in Lohengrin, -- accordingly, with a more and more practised knowledge of the nature of my Stuff and the means necessary for its presentment – did I extricate myself from that form-al influence, and more and more definitely rule the Form of portrayal by the requirements and peculiarities of the Stuff and Situation.

This procedure, dictated by the nature of the poetic [P. 369] subject, exercised a quite specific influence on the tissue of my music, as regards the characteristic combination and ramification of the Thematic Motifs. Just as the joinery of my individual scenes excluded every alien and unnecessary detail, and led all interest to the dominant Chief-mood (vorwaltende Hauptstimmung), so did the whole building of my drama join itself into one organic unity, whose easily-surveyed members were made-out by those fewer scenes and situations which set the passing mood: no mood (Stimmung) could be permitted to be struck in any of these scenes, that did not stand in a weighty relation to the moods of all the other scenes, so that the development of the moods from out each other, and the constant obviousness of this development, should establish the unity of the drama in its very mode of expression. Each of these chief moods, in keeping with the nature of the Stuff, must also gain a definite musical expression, which should display itself to the sense of hearing as a definite musical Theme. Just as, in the progress of the drama, the intended climax of a decisory Chief-mood was only to be reached through a development, continuously present to the Feeling, of the individual moods already roused: so must the musical expression, which directly influences the physical feeling, necessarily take a decisive share in this development to a climax; and this was brought about, quite of itself, in the shape of a characteristic tissue of principle themes, that spread itself not over one scene only (as heretofore in separate operatic 'numbers'), but over the whole drama, and that in intimate connection with the poetic aim.

(...) I have only, in keeping with the object of the present Communication, to underline the fact that in this procedure also, which had never before [P. 370] been systematically extended over the whole drama, I was not prompted by reflection, but solely by practical experience and the nature of my artistic aim. I remember, before I set about the actual working-out of the Flying Dutchman, to have drafted first the

Ballad of Senta in the second act, and completed both its verse and melody. In this piece, I unconsciously laid the thematic germ of the whole music of the opera: it was the picture *in petto* of the whole drama, such as it stood before my soul; and when I was about to betitle the finished work, I felt strongly tempted to call it a ‘dramatic ballad.’ In the eventual composition of the music, the thematic picture, thus evoked, spread itself quite instinctively over the whole drama, as one continuous tissue; I had only, without further initiative, to take the various thematic germs included in the Ballad and develop them to their legitimate conclusions, and I had all the Chief-moods of this poem, quite of themselves, in definite thematic shapes before me. [Re: the *Flying Dutchman*] *I should have had stubbornly to follow the example of the self-willed opera-composer, had I chosen to invent a fresh motif for each recurrence of one and the same mood in different scenes; a course whereto I naturally did not feel the smallest inclination, since I had only in my mind the most intelligible portrayal of the subject-matter, and not a mere conglomerate of operatic numbers.*

(...) ... my treatment gained a more definite artistic form, especially in *Lohengrin*, through a continual re-modelling of the thematic material to fit the character of the passing situation; and thus the music won a greater variety of appearance than was the case, for instance, in the *Flying Dutchman*, where the [P. 371] reapparance of a Theme had often the mere character of an absolute Reminiscence – a device that had already been employed, before myself, by other composers.

(...)

From the ‘absolute-music’ period of my youth, I recall that I had often posed myself the question: How must I set about, to invent thoroughly original Melodies, which should bear a stamp peculiar to myself? The more I approached the period when I based my musical construction upon the poetic Stuff, the more completely vanished this anxiety for a special style of melody, until at last I lost it altogether.”

[P. 375] “... I derived my artistic bent, not from the Form – as almost all our modern artists have – but from the poetic Stuff. –

{FEUER} When I sketched my ‘Siegfried’ – for the moment leaving altogether out of count its form of musical completion – I felt the impossibility, or at least the utter unsuitability, of carrying-out that poem in modern verse. *With the conception of ‘Siegfried,’ I had pressed forward to where I saw before me the Human Being in the most natural and blithest fulness of his physical life. No historic garment more, confined his limbs; no outwardly-imposed relation hemmed in his movements, which, springing from the inner fount of Joy-in-life, so bore themselves in face of all encounter, that error and bewilderment, though nurtured on the wildest play of passions, might heap themselves around until they threatened to destroy him, without the hero checking for a moment, even in the face of death, the welling outflow of that Inner fount; or even holding any thing the rightful master of himself and his own movements, but alone the natural outstreaming of his restless fount of life. It was ‘Elsa’ who had taught me to unearth this man: to me, he was the male-embodied spirit of perennial and sole creative instinct (Unwillkuer), of the doer of true Deeds, of Manhood in the utmost fulness of its inborn strength and proved loveliness. (...)*

[P. 376] (...) At the primal mythic spring, where I had found the fair young Siegfried-man, I also lit, led by his hand, upon the physically-perfect mode of utterance wherein alone that man could speak his feelings. This was the *alliterative* verse,

bending itself in natural and lively rhythm to the actual accents of our speech, yielding itself so readily to every shade of manifold expression, -- that *Stabreim* which the Folk itself once sang, when it was still both Poet and Myth-maker.”

[P. 377] “For some time past, I have been utterly cut off from ... direct artistic intercourse; I could only address my friends from time to time, and now again, as Essayist. Of the pain this kind of address inflicts upon me, I scarcely need assure those who know me at Artist; they will recognise it in the very style of my literary works, where I must torture myself with circumstantial details to express that which I might show so tersely, easily and trimly in the work of art itself, were only its fitting physical presentment so ready to hand as is its technical description with the pen on paper.”

[P. 378] {FEUER} “(...) *Just as with my ‘Siegfried,’ the force of my desire had borne me to the fount of the Eternal Human; so now, when I found this desire cut off by Modern Life from all appeasement, and saw afresh that the sole redemption lay in flight from out this life, in casting-off its claims on me by self-destruction, did I come to the fount of every modern rendering of such a situation – to Jesus of Nazareth the Man.*

{FEUER} *While pondering on the wondrous apparition of this Jesus, I arrived at a judgment particularly resultful for the Artist, inasmuch as I distinguished between the symbolical Christ and Him who, thought of as existing at a certain time and amid definite surroundings, presents so easily embraced an image to our hearts and minds. When I considered the epoch and the general life-conditions in [P. 379] which so loving and so love-athirst a soul, as that of Jesus, unfolded itself, nothing seemed to me more natural than that this solitary One – who, fronted with a materialism (Sinnlichkeit) so honourless, so hollow, and so pitiful as that of the Roman world, and still more of the world subjected to the Romans, could not demolish it and build upon its wrack an order answering to his soul’s desire – should straightway long from out that world, from out the wider world at large, towards a better land Beyond, -- toward Death. Since I saw the modern world of nowadays a prey to worthlessness akin to that which then surrounded Jesus, so did I now recognise this longing, in correspondence with the characteristics of our present state of things, as in truth deep-rooted in man’s sentient nature, which yearns from out an evil and dishonoured world-of-sense (Sinnlichkeit) towards a nobler reality that shall answer to his nature purified. Here Death is but the moment of despair; it is the act of demolition that we discharge upon ourselves, since – as solitary units – we can not discharge it on the evil order of the tyrant world. But the actual destruction of the outer, visible bonds of that honourless materialism, is the duty which devolves on us, as the healthy proclamation of a stress turned heretofore toward self-destruction. – So the thought attracted me, to present the nature of Jesus – such as it has gained a meaning for our, for the consciousness directed to the stir of Life – in such a fashion that his self-offering should be but the imperfect utterance of that human instinct which drives the individual into revolt against a loveless whole, into a revolt which the altogether isolated can certainly [P. 380] only seal by self-destruction; but yet which in this very self-destruction proclaims its own true nature, in that it was not directed to the personal death, but to a disowning of the lovelessness around (der lieblosen Allgemeinheit).*

In this sense did I seek to vent my rebellious feelings in the sketch of a drama,

'Jesus of Nazareth.' (...)

(...)

[P. 381] Thus did the Dresden rising come upon me; a rising which I, with many others, regarded as the beginning of a general upheaval in Germany. After what I have said, who can be so intentionally blind as not to see that I had there no longer any choice, where I could only now determinately turn my back upon a world to which, in my inmost nature, I had long since ceased to belong? –

With nothing can I compare the feeling of wellbeing that invaded me – after the first painful impressions had been effaced – when I felt myself free; free from the world of torturing and never-granted wishes, free from the relations in which those wishes had been my sole, my heart-consuming sustenance? When I, outlawed and proscribed, [P. 382] was bound no more to any lie of any kind; when I had cast behind me every wish and every hope from this now triumphant world, and with unrestrained downrightness could cry aloud and open to it, that I, the Artist, despised it, this world of canting care for Art and Culture, from the bottom of my heart; when I could tell it that in all its life-veins there flowed no single drop of true Artistic blood, that it could not draw one breath of human sentiment, breathe out one whiff of human beauty: -- then did I, for the first time in my life, feel free from crown to sole, feel hale and blithe in every limb, though I did not even know what hidingplace the morrow might afford me, in which to dare respire the air of heaven."

[P. 389] *"When at every attempt to take it up in earnest, I was forced to look upon the composition of my 'Siegfried's Death' as aimless and impossible, provided I held to my definite intention of immediately producing it upon the stage: I was weighted not only by my general knowledge of our present opera-singers' inability to fulfil a task such as I was setting before them in this drama, but in particular by the fear that my poetic purpose (dichterische Absicht) – as such – could not be conveyed in all its bearings to the only organ at which I aimed, namely, the [P. 390] Feeling's-understanding, either in the case of our modern, or of any Public whatsoever. To begin with, I had set forth this wide-ranging purpose in a sketch of the Nibelungen-mythos, such as it had become my own poetic property. 'Siegfried's Death' was, as I now recognise, only the first attempt to bring a most important feature of this myth to dramatic portrayal; in that drama I should have had, involuntarily, to tax myself to suggest a host of huge connexions (Beziehungen), in order to present a notion of the given feature in its strongest meaning. But these suggestions, naturally, could only be inlaid in epic form into the drama; and here was the point that filled me with misgiving as to the efficacy of my drama, in its proper sense of a scenic exposition. Tortured by this feeling, I fell upon the plan of carrying out as an independent drama a most attractive portion of the mythos, which in 'Siegfried's Death' could only have been given in narrative fashion. Yet here again, it was the Stuff itself that so urged me to its dramatic moulding, that it only further needed Liszt's appeal, to call into being, with the swiftness of a lightning-flash, the 'Young Siegfried,' the Winner of the Hoard and Waker of Bruennhilde.*

Again, I had to go through the same experience with this 'Young Siegfried' that had earlier been brought me in the train of 'Siegfried's Tod.' The richer and completer the means of imparting my purpose, that it offered me, all the more forcibly must I feel that, even with these two dramas, my myth had not as yet entirely passed over into the

sensible reality of Drama; but that Connexions of the most vital importance had been left unrealised, and relegated to the reflective and co-ordinating powers of the beholder. That these Connexions, however, in keeping with the unique character of the genuine Mythos, were of such a nature that they could proclaim themselves alone in actual physical situations (Handlungsmomenten), and this in 'moments' which can only be intelligibly displayed in Drama, -- this quality it was, that, so soon as [P. 391] ever I made its glad discovery, led me to find at last the final fitting form for the conveyance of my comprehensive purpose.

With the framework of this form I now may make my Friends acquainted, as being the substance of the project to which alone I shall address myself henceforward.

I propose to produce my myth in three complete dramas, [Wagner's Footnote: I shall never write an Opera more. As I have no wish to invent an arbitrary title for my works, I will call them Dramas, since hereby will at least be clearest indicated the standpoint whence the thing I offer should be accepted.] preceded by a lengthy Prelude ((Vorspiel). With these dramas, however, although each is to constitute a self-included whole, I have in mind no 'Repertory-piece,' in the modern theatrical sense; but, for their performance, I shall abide by the following plan: --*

At a specially-appointed Festival, I propose, some future time, to produce those three Dramas with their Prelude, in the course of three days and a fore-evening. The object of this production I shall consider thoroughly attained, if I and my artistic comrades, the actual performers, shall within these four evenings succeed in artistically conveying my purpose to the true Emotional (not the Critical) Understanding of spectators who shall have gathered together expressly to learn it. (...)

From this plan for the representation, every one of my Friends may now also deduce the nature of my plan for the poetic and musical working-out; while every one who approves thereof, will, for the nonce, be equally unconcerned with myself as to the How and When of the public realisation of this plan, since he will at least conceive one item, namely, that with this undertaking I have nothing more to do with our Theatre of to-day. Then if my Friends take firmly up this certainty into themselves, they surely will end by taking also thought with me: How and under what circumstances a plan, such as that just named, can finally [P. 392] be carried out; and thus, perhaps -- will there also arise that help of theirs which alone can bring this thing to pass.

So now I give you time and ease to think it out: -- for only with my Work, will Ye see me again!"

8/24/51

Letter to August Roeckel (SLRW; P. 227-228)

[P. 227] "... in the 'communication' already mentioned -- I have most emphatically rejected any suggestion that I might agree with the view that the 'man' be distinguished from the 'artist'; indeed, I have drawn attention to the folly of such a distinction. How disreputable and, to be frank, how worthless the whole of our present-day 'art' has become has only recently become clear to me now that art has cast aside the last vestige of its shame and publicly admitted that it is concerned at all costs simply for its own survival. How unhappy a man of my stamp must feel in these circumstances I scarcely need tell you: I am compelled to resign myself open-eyed to a life of illusion in order to be able to justify an activity which, conversely, is still capable of blinding me to how bad

things are in general. All further theorizing disgusts me: Liszt has inspired me to write a new work. And so I have written the poem of a ‘Young Siegfried’ which, I may say, afforded a good [P. 228] deal of pleasure. **My hero grew up, untamed, in the forest, and was reared by a dwarf (the Nibelung ‘Mime’) in order to kill the dragon which watches over the hoard. This Nibelung hoard constitutes an uncommonly crucial element in the work: crimes of every description are associated with it. Siegfried is more or less the same young lad as the one who is to be found in the fairy-tale, and who leaves home ‘to learn fear’ – which he will never succeed in doing since his intense feeling for nature means that he only ever sees things as they are. (...) Siegfried passes through the fire awakens Bruennhilde – womankind – in the most blissful of love’s embraces. – I cannot intimate any further details here: but perhaps I may be allowed to send you the poem itself. – Only one other thing: -- in our animated conversations we already touched on the subject: -- we shall not become what we can and must be until such time as – womankind has been wakened. –**

9/3/51 **Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 228-229)**

[P. 228] “As long as I work, I can delude myself, -- but as soon as I have to convalesce, I can no longer delude myself, and immediately I feel – dreadfully miserable! – My sole salvation is to keep on thinking of work, and my only pleasure, on resuming that work, is to wear myself out! What a splendid life for an artist to live! How gladly I’d throw it all away in return for a single week of life! (...) ”

[P. 229] (...) Things you simply cannot imagine turn up of their own accord. I tell you, the musical phrases turn up around verses and periods without my needing to make the least effort; everything springs up out of the ground like rank vegetation.”

10/6/51 **Letter to Christian Julius Daniel Stocks (SLRW; P. 229-230)**

[P. 229] “... *singers must, above all, accustom themselves to the fact that they are not supposed to be ‘singing an opera’ but ‘performing a drama’.* – The next most important thing is the staging of the work: I draw your attention most particularly to the fact that the stage directions, as indicated with great precision in the full score, are to be followed with scrupulous fidelity. Other theatres have assured me that this would most certainly be done: but the performances in question have convinced me how wantonly producers behave in this respect. It is absolutely essential that the producer should have a most detailed knowledge of the full score. *My orchestral accompaniment never expresses anything for the ear to hear which is not also intended to be expressed on the stage for the eye to see, be it by means of actions on stage, gestures or simply by facial expressions: if these are either omitted or fail to coincide exactly with the appropriate [P. 230] passage in the orchestra, an understanding of my intentions is rendered impossible.* For his own part, the conductor of the orchestra will therefore have the following task to perform. First of all he must, by dint of assiduous practice alone, ensure that the orchestra is complete master of the work’s technical difficulties. Once he has succeeded in this, the conductor has from then on to deal exclusively with the performers on stage,

taking his instructions solely from what happens on stage, in whose spirit and movement the orchestra must accompany the drama.

11/12/51 Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 232-234)

[P. 232] "... before I wrote the poem of 'Siegfried's Death' – I sketched out the entire myth in its imposing overall context: that poem was an attempt – which I thought of as being feasible on our modern stage – to present a crucial turning-point in the myth by hinting at the overall context. But when I turned to its musical execution and was finally obliged to fix my sights firmly on our modern stage, I felt how incomplete was the product I had planned: all that remained of the vast overall context – which alone can give the characters their enormous, striking significance – was epic narration and a retelling of events on a purely conceptual level. In order, therefore, *to render 'Siegfried's Death' feasible, I wrote 'Young Siegfried': but the more imposing a structure the whole thing assumed, the more it was bound to dawn on me, as I began the scenico-musical realization of 'Young Siegfried', that all I had done was* [P. 233] *to increase the need for a clearer presentation to the senses of the whole of the overall context. I now see that, in order to be fully understood from the stage, I must present the entire myth in visual terms. It was not only this concentration which persuaded me to adopt my new plan, but, more especially, the overwhelming pathos of the material which I shall in this way be able to present on stage and which offers me a wealth of ideas for an artistic reworking which it would be a sin for me not to use.* Imagine the contents of Bruennhilde's narration – in the final scene of 'Young Siegfried' – the fate of Siegmund and Siegelind, Wodan's struggle with his own inclination and with custom (Fricka); the Valkyrie's glorious defiance, Wodan's tragic anger with which he punishes that defiance: *imagine this as I intend it, with the enormous wealth of moments such as these, drawn together into a coherent drama, and, what shall be created is a tragedy of the most shattering effectiveness which, at the same time, will make a clear impression on the senses of all that my audience needs to have absorbed if they are to have no difficulty in understanding 'Young Siegfr.' And S's death' – in their widest sense.* I am now planning to preface these three dramas with a fairly substantial prelude which will have to be performed on its own on a special introductory festival day: it begins with Alberich, fired by erotic desire, pursuing the three watermaidens of the Rhine and being spurned by each of them in turn (in playful high spirits), so that he finally steals the Rhinegold in his fury: -- in itself this gold is only a glittering trinket in the watery depths (Siegfr. Death, Act III, Sc. I), but another power resides within it which can be coaxed from it only by the man who renounces love. – (here you have the structural motif which leads up to Siegf.'s death: imagine the wealth of consequences!) The capture of Alberich, the allocation of the gold to the two giant brothers, the swift fulfilment of Alberich's curse as embodied in these two characters, one of whom immediately kills the other – all this forms the subject of the prelude. – But I have already said too much, precisely because it is bound to be too little for me to give you an intelligible account of the enormous wealth of material here. – But I should like to have the 'Volsungasaga' again; not to model my own work on it (you will easily discover how my poem is related to this legend), but to call to mind again all that I had once before worked out in individual detail. –

But there is something else which persuaded me to expand this plan: the impossibility I felt of being able to perform even ‘Young Siegfried’ in Weimar – or anywhere else – at all adequately. I do not care to suffer – and, indeed, can no longer suffer – the torments of half-measures. – With this new conception of mine I am moving completely out of touch with our present-day theatre and its audiences: I am breaking decisively and for ever with the formal present. You now ask what I intend to do with my plan? – To begin with, I plan to carry it through as far as it lies within my poetic and musical powers to do so: this will occupy me for at least three full years. (...) [P. 234] A performance is something I can conceive of only after the Revolution; only the Revolution can offer me the artists and listeners I need. The coming Revolution must necessarily put an end to this whole theatrical business of ours: they must all perish, and will certainly do so, it is inevitable. Out of the ruins I shall then summon together what I need: I shall then find what I require. I shall then run up a theatre on the Rhine and send out invitations to a great dramatic festival: after a year’s preparations I shall then perform my entire work within the space of four days: with it I shall then make clear to the men of the Revolution the meaning of that Revolution, in its noblest sense. This audience will understand me: present-day audiences cannot. –

However extravagant this plan may be, it is the only one on which I stake my life, my heart and my every thought. If I survive to witness its execution, I shall have lived a glorious life, if not, I shall have died for a beautiful ideal. (...)”

11/20/51 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 234-241)

[P. 236] “In the autumn of 1848 I first sketched out the complete myth of the Nibelungs such as henceforth belongs to me as my own poetic property. My next attempt to present a crucial turning point in the whole vast action, and to present it as a drama suited to our present-day stage, was ‘Siegfried’s Death’: after much uncertainty I finally reached the point in the autumn of 1850 of sketching the music for this drama, when I once again recognized the impossibility of ever seeing it adequately performed, and so I broke off the undertaking there and then. It was in order to rid myself of this mood of despondency that I wrote the book ‘Opera and Drama’. Then, last spring, your article on Lohengrin made such an inspiring impression upon me that – for your sake – I quickly and cheerfully resumed my plans to complete a drama; I wrote to tell you this at the time. But I knew that ‘Siegfried’s Death’ was for the moment impossible; I realized that I should first have to prepare the way for it with another drama, and so I took up a plan I had already been cherishing for some time, and began by making ‘Young Siegfried’ the subject of an opera poem; in it, everything that is either retold in ‘Siegfried’s Death’ or else assumed to be half-familiar to the audience was meant to be presented by means of actual events on stage and given a fresh and light-hearted treatment. The poem was soon sketched and completed. – I was on the point of sending it to you when I began to feel a strange sense of unease: I felt unable to send it to you as it stood without further ado; it was as if I had to explain to you much more – infinitely more – about it, partly concerning the manner of its execution and partly your necessary response to the poem itself. The first thing to emerge here was that, before appearing with this poem in the presence of my friends, I should first have to

[P. 237] communicate a great many other things to them besides: and that was why I wrote the extensive preface to my three older opera poems which I have already mentioned. I now planned to set about the musical composition of the work: and, to my delight, I observed that the music to these verses came quite naturally and easily, entirely of its own accord. But my initial start on the work reminded me that I would undermine my health completely if, without first having taken proper care of it, I yielded at once to the impulse, and – presumably without interruption – completed what I had begun at a single stroke. Only when I moved to the hydropathic establishment did I feel the need finally to send you the poem: -- but, strangely enough, something continued to hold me back: I continued to hesitate, sensing that, on becoming acquainted with the poem, you would initially feel a certain embarrassment at not knowing for certain what you should make of it, nor whether you should place your hopes in it or your mistrust. – Now that I have considered the matter calmly, my plan has finally become clear to me in all its logical consistency. Listen! –

{FEUER} Even this ‘Young Siegfried’ is only a fragment and, as an individual whole, it can only make its rightful and indubitable impression when it assumes its necessary place within the completed whole, a place which – in accordance with the plan I have now conceived – I am now assigning to it, together with ‘Siegfried’s Death’. In both these dramas a wealth of necessary allusions was left simply in narrative form or else had to be worked out for himself by the listener: everything that gives the intrigue and the characters of these two dramas their infinitely moving and far-reaching significance would have had to be omitted from the stage action and communicated on a merely conceptual level. According to my newly acquired and innermost conviction, however, a work of art – and hence the basic drama – can only make its rightful impression if the poetic intent is fully presented to the senses in every one of its important moments: and I least of all can now afford to sin against this insight which I now recognize as true. In order to be perfectly understood, I must therefore communicate my entire myth, in its deepest and widest significance, with total artistic clarity; no part of it should have to be supplied by the audience’s having to think about it or reflect on it: every unbiased human feeling must be able to grasp the whole through its organs of artistic perception, because only then can it properly absorb the least detail. There are, accordingly, two principle moments in my myth which still remain to be depicted on stage, and these are both alluded to in ‘Young Siegfried’: the first in Bruennhilde’s lengthy narration following her awakening (third act): the second in the scene between Alberich and the Wanderer in the second, and between the Wanderer and Mime in the first act. – That my mind was made up in this matter not only as a result of artistic reflection but, more particularly, as a result of the splendid nature of the material, which lends itself uncommonly well to presentation on stage, you will readily understand once you have taken [P. 238] a closer look at that material. Imagine the wondrously ill-starred love of Siegmund and Siegelind: Wodan in his deeply mysterious relationship to that love; then the discord between him and Fricka, his furious self-mastery when – for the sake of custom – he decrees Siegmund’s death; finally, the glorious Valkyrie, Bruennhilde, divining Wodan’s innermost thought, defying the god and being punished by him: imagine the wealth of incentive as indicated in the scene between the Wanderer and the Wala, but then

– more fully – in Bruennhilde’s narration which I have already mentioned – imagine all this as the material for a drama which will precede the two Siegfrieds, and you will conceive that it is not mere reflection but, more particularly, inspiration which has encouraged me to adopt my latest plan!

This plan will now comprise three dramas: 1st, The Valkyrie. 2nd, Young Siegfried. 3rd, Siegfried’s Death. In order to present everything complete, these three dramas must additionally be preceded by a great prelude: The Rape of the Rhinegold. It takes as its subject the detailed depiction of all that occurs in ‘Young Siegfried’ in narrative form, as it relates to the theft of the gold, the origins of the Nibelung hoard, the abduction of this hoard by Wodan, and Alberich’s curse. Thanks to the clarity of presentation which will thus have been made possible, I shall now – by discarding, at the same time, all the narration-like passages which are now so extensive or else by compressing them into a number of much more concise moments – acquire sufficient space to exploit to the full the wealth of emotive associations contained in the work, whereas previously, with my earlier, half-epic mode of presentation, I was obliged to prune everything laboriously and thus to weaken its impact. I mention only one episode:

Alberich comes up out of the depths of the earth to the three daughters of the Rhine; he pursues them with his loathsome attentions; rejected by the first, he turns to the second: joking and teasing him, they all spurn the goblin. Then the Rhinegold begins to gleam; it attracts Alberich; he asks what use it serves? The girls declare that it serves for their enjoyment and sport; its gleam illumines the depths of the floodwaters with its rapturous shimmering: but many are the wonders that could be wrought by means of the gold, great are the power and the might, the riches and the dominion that could be won by the man who knew how to forge it into a ring: but only he who renounces love could understand that! *But so that none may steal the gold, they themselves are appointed its guardians: the man who approaches them has indeed no desire for the gold; Alberich, at least, does not seem to desire it, since he behaves like a man in [P. 239] love.* They laugh at him anew. The Nibelung then grows angry: he forswears love, steals the gold and carries it off into the depths. – Enough of this individual detail! Now my plan for the practical realisation of the whole!

I cannot contemplate a division of the constituent parts of this great whole without ruining my intention in advance. The whole complex of dramas must be staged at the same time in rapid succession, and for that reason I can envisage only the following circumstances as being favourable to the outward feasibility of the plan: -- the performance of my Nibelung dramas must take place at a great festival which may perhaps be organized for the unique purpose of this performance. It must then be given on three successive days, with the introductory prelude being performed on the preceding evening. Once I have achieved such a performance under these conditions, the whole work may then be repeated on another occasion, and only after that may the individual dramas, which in themselves are intended as entirely independent pieces, be performed as people wish: but, whatever happens, these performances must be preceded by an impression of the complete production which I myself shall have prepared.

(...)

However bold, unusual, nay, even fanciful this plan of mine may strike you, you may nevertheless be assured that it is not the result of some superficial and calc-

ulating whim, but that it has impressed itself upon me as a necessary consequence of the nature and content of the subject, which now occupies my mind and drives me to carry it through to completion. To complete it as only I, as poet and musician, may be allowed to do so is for now the only thing I see ahead of me: nothing else must disturb me at present. (...)

[P. 240] But only now do I confess that, at the same time as deciding on this definitive change of plan, I also felt relieved of an almost oppressive sense of embarrassment, -- my embarrassment at expecting the present Weimar Theatre to stage Young Siegfried. Only now, together with this explanation, can I send you the poem of 'Young Siegfried' with a light heart, -- only now that I know you will not read it through with the sense of concern which it would necessarily have caused you, if you had had to think of how I was going to complete it and, more especially, of its performance at the Weimar Theatre -- such as it is at present and such as it must inevitably remain. Let us not delude ourselves in this matter! What you -- and you alone -- have so far done for me in Weimar is astounding. But it was even more successful from my own point of view: without you I should by now have disappeared without trace, instead of which you have, by dint of means which you alone had at your command, ensured that I now enjoy the attention of all lovers of art; indeed, you have acted with such energy and such success that these efforts of yours on behalf of me and my reputation are solely and uniquely to thank for the fact that I am now able even to think of realizing the plans which I have just communicated to you. I can see all this with total clarity and have no hesitation in describing you as the creator of my present position, a position which is perhaps not entirely lacking in future prospects.

But I now go on to ask: -- do you still place your hopes in Weimar?

With sad sincerity I tell you that I am bound to regard your efforts in Weimar as -- fruitless. You know from your own experience that you have only to turn your back for a moment and the most rank baseness springs up from the very ground where you have striven to plant the choicest fruits; you return, and have scarcely reploughed half the ground when you see weeds shooting up again more brazenly than before. You are in Weimar: you praise the Court's love of art -- ? Do you not recall the most illustrious Karl August allowing his friend Goethe to be hounded from the same stage by -- a poodle, -- that same stage on which, in far less favourable circumstances, you now intend to plant the banner of an art for which almost all means of presentation, all use of habit, nay, all hopes of a true (as opposed to artificial) success are missing? -- Indeed, I can look on only in sadness! Beside you I see only stupidity, narrow-mindedness, baseness and -- the empty conceit of jealous courtiers who are envious -- with such lamentable right -- of genius's every success!"

12/18/51

Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 241)

[P. 241] (...) "You will, my dear friend, shortly be hearing of things which will make it clear to you why I have now completely abandoned every attempt to combat the prevailing mood of stupidity, dullness of mind and utter wretchedness, -- why I intend to let what is rotten continue to rot and not waste my remaining powers of production and enjoyment on a painful and utterly futile effort to galvanize the corpse of European civilization. I intend only to live, to enjoy life, i.e. as an artist -- to create and see my works performed: but not for the critical shit-heads of today's populations. -- Since I can-

not communicate my ideas to you here as fully as would be necessary, I must conceal from you for today the key to my intentions – and, I hope, of the common intentions of many others -- , lest I cause any misunderstanding. Recent political events, however, have played a decisive part here, but only in a positive way. Only this much for today: yesterday (17 December 1851), in the presence of Karl and with his support, **Herwegh and I between us reached a decision which – I believe – may become the starting-point of a new phase in world history. We promised each other that we should do everything in our power, and use all the means of persuasion and conviction at our command to ensure that our decision spreads in ever wider circles, in order finally – and I hope in the not too distant future – to come to fruition. From henceforth – except when I am writing my poems and composing music – I shall devote my entire literary activity to this end, an activity whose goal for once is an entirely positive and practical end of incalculable consequence, and at the same time a goal which no reactionary power on earth will be able to impede. (...)**”

12/28/51 Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 242)

[P. 242] “Apropos of the vocal score, I have again been glancing briefly through the music of Lohengrin. – might it not be of interest to you – since you do, after all, write such things – to expatiate upon the work’s formal thematic web, and explain how it is bound to lead to ever new formal structures along the road which I myself have opened up? This struck me at various points in the score, including the opening scene of the second act – Elsa’s appearance on the balcony – in the woodwind prelude – it struck me that a motif is heard here for the first time in the 7th, 8th, and 9th bars of Elsa’s nocturnal appearance, which is later developed, and broadly and brilliantly executed, when, in broad daylight and in all her glory, Elsa makes her way to church. I realized from this that the themes that I write always originate in the context of, and according to the character of, some visual phenomenon on stage. But perhaps you can express yourself better on this than I can. –“

12/30/51 Letter to Ernst Benedikt Kietz (SLRW; P. 243)

[P. 243] *My entire political outlook no longer consists in anything but the bloodiest hatred of our entire civilization, contempt for all that it has produced, and a passionate longing for nature. But that is not something anyone will understand who felt so enchanted by the industrial exhibition. Well, you’ve got your exhibition, an exhibition in the pillory, with all your industrious workers! That I ever set store by the workers as workers is something I must now atone for grievously: with the noises they make, these workers are the wretchedest slaves, whom anyone can control nowadays if he promises them plenty of ‘work’. A slave mentality has taken root in everything with us: that we are human is something nobody knows in the whole of France except perhaps Proudhon at most – and even he is only dimly aware of the fact! – in the whole of Europe, however, I prefer dogs to these doglike men. However, I do not despair of the future; only the most terrible and destructive revolution can make our civilized beasts ‘human’ again.*

I am now thinking a good deal of America! Not because I might find what I am looking for there, but because the ground there is easier to plant. –

(...)

I am planning to make a start soon on my great Nibelung trilogy. But I shall perform it only on the banks of the Mississippi.”

[1852]

1/12/52

Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 246-247)

[P. 246] “It is true, is it not, that it is very unmanly of me to pour out my complaints in this way? That I should do better to imitate the Stoics and smile sweetly when in pain, play the insensate, and pretend I have no feelings, i.e. tell lies and dissemble, in order to be – if not a true human being – at least as great a man as possible, one who is ‘above fate’, i.e. someone who wants to play a role, be other than he is, ‘represent’ something, some phantasm, some idea, such as L. Bonaparte, for ex., ‘society’? – and all for the sake of those dear sweet philistines who can say ‘goodness gracious! What a man!’ No, I want everyone to know – everyone who can take pleasure in my works, i.e. my life and what I do, that what gives them pleasure is my suffering, my extreme misfortune! My dear friend! *I am often now beset by strange thoughts on ‘art’, and on the whole I cannot help finding that, if we had life, we should have no need of art. Art begins at precisely the point where life breaks off: where nothing more is present, we call out in art, ‘I wish’. I simply do not understand how a truly happy individual could ever hit upon the idea of producing ‘art’: only in life can we ‘achieve’ anything. – is our ‘art’ therefore not simply a confession of our impotence? – Indeed! Or such at least is our art, and all the art which springs from our present dissatisfaction with life. It is no more than ‘a desire expressed with the utmost clarity’! I should give up all my art if, by doing so, I could regain my youth, find health, [P. 247] nature, a woman who loved me unreservedly, and fine children! Take it! Give me the rest in return! – Ah, how ludicrous it would be if, with all our enthusiasm for art, what we were fighting over were simply thin air! (...)*”

1/30/52

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 248-249)

[P. 248] {FEUER} “Ortrud is a woman who – does not know love. This says it all – and a most terrible thing it is to say. Her nature is politics. A male politician disgusts us, a female politician appals us: it was this appallingness which I had to portray. There is one love which this woman feels, love of the past, of departed generations, the dreadfully insane love of ancestral pride which can express itself only as a hatred towards all that lives, all that really exists. In a man such love becomes ludicrous, but in a woman it is terrible, because women – given their powerful and natural need for love – must love something, and ancestral pride, a hankering after the past, thus becomes a murderous fanaticism. We know of no more appalling phenomena in the whole of history than women politicians. And so it is not jealousy of Elsa – on Friedrich’s account, for example – which motivates Ortrud, rather does her entire passion reveal itself in the scene in Act II when—following Elsa’s disappearance from the balcony – she leaps up

from the minster steps and calls out to her old, long-vanished gods. She is a reactionary, a woman concerned only for what is outdated and for that reason is hostile to all that is new – and hostile, moreover, in the most rabid sense of the word: she would like to eradicate the world and nature, simply in order to breathe new life into her decaying gods. But this is no idiosyncratic, sickly whim on the part of Ortrud, rather does this passion consume her with the whole weight of a woman's longing for love – a longing which is stunted, undeveloped and deprived of an object: and that is why she is so fearfully [P. 249] impressive. For that reason, there must be nothing in the least trivial about her portrayal: she must never appear to be simply malicious or spiteful; every expression of her scorn, of her malice, must allow us to glimpse the full force of her terrible madness, which can be satisfied only with the destruction of others, or – of herself.”

2/13/52

Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 250-253)

[P. 250] “The conductor of works such as those of Beethoven has until now rarely understood his true task. Clearly what he must do is transmit to the layman an understanding of these same works: since ultimately this is the outcome of a performance which is in perfect accord with the work, the first question to be asked is how such a performance may be achieved? – *What is characteristic about Beethoven's great orchestral works is that they are real poems in which an attempt is made to represent a real object. The difficulty as far as our understanding is concerned lies in accurately identifying the object thus represented. Beethoven was completely imbued with each particular object, his most important tonal creations owe their existence almost exclusively to the individuality of the object which thus imbued him: given his awareness, it seemed to him wholly superfluous to describe this object in further detail, except in his tonal creations themselves. Just as our poems of literature really only communicate themselves to another poet of literature, so Beethoven, involuntarily but in like manner, communicated himself only to the tone-poet. Indeed, the truly absolute musician, i.e. the variationalist of absolute music, could not understand Beethoven any longer, since he was concerned only with the ‘How?’ and not with the ‘what?’: the layman, however, could not help but be totally confused by these tonal creations, or at best he was misled into enjoying what served the tone-poet merely as his expressive material. – Until now the layman has heard Beethoven's tone poems performed only by absolute musicians: and it goes without saying that this could result only in his failing to understand what he was listening to. For the absolute musician it seemed necessary only to identify the ‘How?’: but it was impossible for him to identify even this correctly, chiefly because he did not understand the ‘What’ that ought to be expressed by this ‘How’. ... the conductor strove solely to articulate musical phrases which he himself did not understand and which he had made his own rather as one learns melodious verses by heart according to their sound alone when the verses in question are written in a foreign language unknown to the person reciting the poem. In the process, of course, only the most superficial aspects of the work can be taken into account: the speaker can never articulate and emphasize the words according to his own conviction, but must stick strictly and slavishly to the most random superficiality of sound as represented by the phrase he has learned by heart. Judge then what our*

understanding of a poet would turn out to be if only the sound of the language were to be reproduced and perceived by reciter and listener, as must inevitably [P. 251] be the case if the poem is delivered in a language which neither the reciter (who has learned it by heart on the basis of its sound) nor the listener can understand. This comparison with the character of traditional performances of Beethoven's works will be regarded as an exaggeration only if the language of music – being general -- is granted a greater and more immediate intelligibility than a rational language of words. But it is precisely on this point that we delude ourselves as regards what is considered to be 'understanding': *as long as no actual poetic object is expressed by the language of music, that language may of course be regarded as readily intelligible, since there can be no question here of any real understanding; but if what is expressed by the language of music is determined by a poetic object, this language especially will be utterly unintelligible, as long as the poetic object itself is not at the same time precisely described by other means of expression than those of absolute music.* – Now, in a piece of music by Beethoven, the poetic object can only be conjectured by the tone-poet himself because ... Beethoven communicated himself, involuntarily, only to the tone-poet who feels exactly as he does, who shares the same training, and who has almost the same creative powers; this man alone is capable of giving the layman an understanding of these works, and the principal way he can do so is by offering a clear indication of the object of the tone-poem to both the performers and the audience, thus making good an unintentional defect in the technique of the tone-poet who had omitted to make this indication clear. Any other performance of the true Beethoven tone-poems, however technically perfect it may be, must remain correspondingly unintelligible as long as the conductor's understanding of it is not communicated in the way described. The most striking proof of this fact readily emerges from a closer examination of the attitude of our modern concert-going public towards Beethoven's tone-poems. If these works were really understood by the audience, i.e. in accordance with the poetic object, how is it possible for this same audience to accept a modern concert programme? How is it possible, at one and the same concert, to offer the audience of a Beethoven symphony other musical compositions of the most unmitigated fatuousness? But the fact that present-day-conductors and composers, for the very reason given (namely their inability to recognize the poetic object of these tonal creations), have remained lacking in any real understanding of the same is proved, is it not, by the works which they nowadays compose, and their manner of composition, in spite of Beethoven's admonitory precedent? **Would the vague and disjointed note-spinning of modern instrumental music be possible if composers had understood the true essence of Beethoven's tone-poems? And what this essence entails is that Beethoven's longer compositions are only secondarily music, but that first and foremost they contain a poetic object. Or might it be argued that this object was perhaps taken simply from the music? Would [P. 252] that not be the same as if the poet were to take his theme from language, the painter his from colour? – but the conductor who perceives only music in a piece by Beethoven is just like the reciter who sticks only to the language of a poem, or like a person interpreting a painting who sticks only to the colours on the canvas. In the case of present-day conductors (many of whom do not even understand the music), the situation at best is as follows: -- they can identify the key, the theme, the part-writing, the instrumentation etc. and with that they think they have identified everything that is present**

in the piece of music.

It is the non-musician who has led the way to a true understanding of Beethoven's works: quite involuntarily he desired to know what the composer had actually had in mind when writing the music. This led to the first difficulty. Imagination, in its search for understanding, fell back upon all manner of arbitrary inventions of bizarre features and romantic images. The grotesque and generally trivial nature of the ideas imputed in this way to Beethoven's compositions was soon sensed by those whose feelings in the matter were more refined, and thus such ideas came to be rejected. Since these images were inappropriate, it was thought better to reject all such ideas entirely. And yet a perfectly legitimate feeling lay behind this urge to create such images: but the only person capable of identifying the desired object (an object which the tone-poet himself had had in mind – without necessarily knowing it) was the one man who, in turn, was entirely familiar with the characteristic essence of the work in question. Certainly, the great difficulty in making such an identification once again lay in the character of the object itself, which the tone-poet presented to us in the tone-painting alone: only those who fully recognized this difficulty, too, might successfully hazard an attempt to foster in others a true and necessary understanding. Here you can tell the story of the Ninth Symphony in Dresden – and what really matters – the striking success I had in placing this work in the correct light, in spite of its reputation for being so extremely difficult. You can also mention here that I never again agreed to performing Beethoven's compositions without in some way influencing people's understanding in the way described, and that what drove me to do so was simply my inescapable awareness of the need for such an understanding. What always struck me above all else was the effect which my approach had on practising musicians themselves. Here in Zurich I have enabled the most hidebound dance musicians to achieve things of which neither their audiences nor they themselves had previously had the least idea. [P. 253] (...) My most notable success in describing any poetic object was in the case of the 'Coriolanus Overture'. I may say that those who have read carefully my interpretation of this work and who have followed the argument through, stage by stage, must admit that, without this interpretation of mine, they would never have understood this uniquely graphic piece of music unless they themselves had already succeeded in isolating this one particular scene on the basis of the general description 'Overture to Coriolanus', as I myself succeeded in doing. Given such an understanding, the enjoyment of such a piece of music then becomes overwhelmingly sublime: almost all our musicians now share it. – etc. – etc. –

The aim of this endeavour?? – Drama!!

(...) But you must all stick to the maxim which I advanced in my letter to Brendel, *'music must be singled out, emphasized and encouraged wherever it develops in the direction of poetry, but where it diverges from that direction, the misguided and erroneous nature of the same must be pointed out and condemned. (...)'*

2/52

Explanatory Programme: Tannhaeuser Overture (PW Vol. III, P. 229)

[P. 230] *{FEUER}* "Venus herself it is, this woman who appears to him. ... before the goddess' self he steps with that canticle of love triumphant, and now he sings it in ecstatic praise of her. – As though at wizard spell of his, the wonders of the Venusberg

unroll their brightest fill before him: tumultuous shouts and savage cries of joy mount up on every hand; *in drunken glee Bacchantes drive their raging dance and drag Tannhaeuser to the warm caresses of Love's Goddess, who throws her glowing arms around the mortal drowned with bliss, and bears him where no step dare tread, to the realm of Being-no-more (Nichtmehrseins).* A scurry, like the sound of the Wild Hunt, and speedily the storm is laid. Merely a wanton whirl still pulses in the breeze, a wave of weird voluptuousness, like the sensuous breath of unblest love, still sighs above the spot where impious charms had shed their raptures, and over which the night now broods once more. – But dawn begins to break already: *from afar is heard again the Pilgrims' Chant. As this chant draws closer yet and closer, as the day drives farther back the night, that whirl and sighing of the air – which had [P. 231] erewhile sounded like the eerie cries of souls condemned – now rises, too, to ever gladder waves; so that when the sun ascends at last in splendour, and the Pilgrims' Chant proclaims in ecstasy to all the world, to all that lives and moves thereon, Salvation won, this wave itself swells out the tidings of sublimest joy. 'Tis the carol of the Venusberg itself, redeemed from curse of impiousness, this cry we hear amid the hymn of God. So wells and leaps each pulse of Life in chorus of Redemption; and both dis severed elements, both soul and senses, God and Nature, unite in the atoning kiss of hallowed Love."*

5/31/52

Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 260-262)

[P. 260] {FEUER} *"I am again more than ever moved by the comprehensive grandeur and beauty of my subject [the 'Ring']:* my entire philosophy of life has found its most perfect expression here. (...) [P. 261] After this work I do not suppose I shall ever write another opera poem! It is the finest and most perfect work ever to have flowed from my pen. Once the verses are finished, I shall then return to being a musician once more, and then be only – a performing artist! (...)

{FEUER} (...) I have just read the first two articles by Julius Schaeffer in the N.B.M.Z. [the Neue Berliner Musikzeitung]. (...) ... what he says about the 'dissolution of the individuality of the various tonalities' could be the starting-point for an interesting discussion. In the IIIrd volume of 'Opera & Drama' I demonstrated that harmony becomes something real (rather than purely imaginary) only in the polyphonic symphony, i.e. in the orchestra, so that the purely imaginary individuality of tonalities (apologies to Hitzschold) must merge into the reality of the individuality of the different instruments, their manifold colouring and, finally, their style of execution. By clinging to the 'individuality' of tonalities, people were clinging to a chimera which, it must be said, had earlier become just as much of a dogma with us as the Dear Lord above. On the contrary, it is the instruments themselves and, ultimately, the human voice when singing words which give a particular character to the tonality and to notes in general; thus, for ex., the characteristic individuality of a key such as E major or E flat major emerges most distinctively when played on a violin or a wind instrument, and so it would be a case of doing things by halves if I were to use a key for its own sake and thereby ignore the instrument, or, conversely, to use the instrument for its own sake alone. The instrumental musicians of the earlier century did not know this, they still proceeded on the basis of harmonic dogma: but compare their instrumentation with that of

Beethoven and, finally, with mine! – *The person who, in judging my music, divorces the harmony from the instrumentation does me as great an injustice as the one who divorces my music from my poem, my vocal line from the words! Yet in all these matters I have committed the error of having communicated my theories prematurely,; I still owe the world what really matters, namely the work of art which, I may add, [P. 263] had already matured within me before the theory was ever formulated. (...)”*

8/52

On the Performing of Tannhaeuser (PW Vol. III; P. 167-204)

[P. 178] “... Elizabeth and all the rest become a mere surrounding of the man about whom our urgent Feeling demands to be in so far set at rest, as I shall gain clear knowledge of the impression made by this appalling catastrophe upon its prime originator. After his fanatical defiance of the men’s attack, Tannhaeuser – most terribly affected by Elizabeth’s intervention, the expression of her words, the tone of her voice, and the conscience of his hideous blasphemy against her – has fallen to the ground in final outbreak of the shattering sense of utter humiliation, thus plunging from the height of frenzied ecstasy to awful recognition of his present lot: as though unconscious, he has lain with his face turned earthwards while we listened breathless to the effect proclaimed by his surrounding. Now Tannhaeuser lifts up his head, his features blanched and seared by fearful [P. 179] suffering; still lying on the ground and staring vacantly before him, he begins with more and more impetuous accents to vent the feelings of his bursting heart:

To lead the sinner to salvation,
 God’s messeng’ress to me drew nigh;
 but, ah! That vilest desecration
 should lift to her its scathing eye!
 O Mary, Mother, high above earth’s dwelling –
 who sent’st to me the angel of my weal –
 have mercy on me, sunk in sin’s compelling,
 who shamed the heavenly grace thou didst reveal!

These words, with the expression lent them by this situation, contain the pith of Tannhaeuser’s subsequent existence, and form the axis of his whole career; without our having received with absolute certainty the impression meant to be conveyed by them at this particular crisis, we are in no position to maintain any further interest in the hero of the drama. If we have not been here at last attuned to deepest fellow-suffering with Tannhaeuser, the drama will run its whole remaining course without consistence, without Necessity, and all our hitherto-aroused awaitings will halt unsatisfied. Even Tannhaeuser’s recital of his sufferings, in the Third Act, can never compensate us for the missed impression; for that recital can only make the full effect intended, when it links itself to our memory of this earlier, this decisory impression.

What could have determined me, then, to omit this very passage from the second, and all later Dresden performances? (...) The first representative of Tannhaeuser – unable, in his capacity of eminently-gifted singer, to grasp anything beyond the ‘Opera’ proper – could not succeed in seizing the characteristic nature

of a claim which addressed itself more to his acting powers, than to his vocal talent. (...) [P. 180] ... it was just this passage that – seeing it had been robbed, in performance, of its proper import – appeared to me a tedious ‘length,’ i.e. , a void. But I ask any intelligent person to judge my humour toward the external success of my work at Dresden, and whether a twenty-fold performance, with regularly repeated ‘calls’ for the author, could repay me for the gnawing consciousness that a large portion of the received applause was due to nothing but a misunderstanding, or at least a thoroughly defective understanding, of my real artistic aim! If in future my intensions are to be better met, and my aim realised in fact, I must especially insist on a correct rendering of the passage just discussed at length, since it is no longer to be excised. In those days its omission, and the consequent abandonment of its whole import, resulted in all interest in Tannhaeuser completely vanishing at the close of the Second Act, and centering simply in his environment and opposites – thus altogether nullifying my intrinsic aim. In the Third Act Tannhaeuser was met by this lack of interest to such a point, that people troubled themselves about his subsequent fate merely insofar as the fate of Elisabeth and Even Wolfram, now raised into the virtual [P. 181] protagonists, appeared to hang upon it: only the truly marvellous ability and staying-power of the singer of the chief role, when in sonorous and energetic accents he told the story of his pilgrimage, could laboriously re-awaken interest in himself. Wherefore my prayer goes out to every future exponent of Tannhaeuser, to lay utmost weight on the passage in question; his delivery of it will not succeed till, even in the midst of that delivery, he gets full feeling that at this moment he is master of the dramatic, as well as the musical situation, that the audience is listening exclusively to his utterance, and that this latter is of such a kind as to instil the deepest sense of awe. The cries: ‘Ach! erbarm’ dich mein!’ demand so piercing an accent, that he here will not get through as a merely well-trained singer; no, the highest dramatic art must yield him all the energy of grief and desperation, for tones which must seem to break from the very bottom of a heart distraught by fearful suffering, like an outcry for redemption. It must be the conductor’s duty, to see to it that the desired effect be made possible to the chief performer through the most discreet accompaniment, on part alike of the other singers and the orchestra. –

[P. 182] (...) ... then suddenly there rings from out the valley the chant of the Younger Pilgrims, like a voice of promise and atonement; as it enchains the rest, so it falls on Tannhaeuser with a summons from the tempest of his blind remorse. Like a flash from heaven, a sudden ray of hope invades his tortured soul; tears of ineffable woe well from his eyes; an irresistible impulse carries him to the feet of Elisabeth; he dares not lift to her his look, but presses the hem of her garment to his lips with passionate ardour. Hastily he leaps to his feet once more; hurls from his breast the cry: ‘To Rome!’ with an expression as though the whole swift-kindled hope of a new life were urged into the sound; and rushes from the stage with burning steps. This action, which must be carried out [P. 183] with greatest sharpness and in briefest time, is of the most determinant weight for the final impression of the whole Act; and it is this impression that is absolutely indispensable, through the mood in which it leaves the public, for making possible the full effect of the difficult Third Act. –

(...)

For similar reasons to those given above, after the first representation I saw my-

self compelled to effect an omission in Elisabeth's Prayer, namely that marked on pages 396 to 398. That the weightiest motivation of Elisabeth's self-offering and death thus went by the board, must be obvious to anyone who will examine carefully the words and music here. Certainly, if the simple outlines of this tone-piece, completely bare of musical embroidery, are to avoid the effect of monotonous length for that of an outflow of sincere emotion, its delivery demands a conception and devotion to the task such as we can seldom hope to meet among our dainty opera-singeresses. Here the mere technical cultivation of even the most brilliant of voices will not suffice us; by no art of absolute-musical execution can this Prayer be made interesting; but that actress alone can satisfy my aim, who is able to feel-out Elisabeth's piteous situation, from the first quick budding of her affection for Tannhaeuser, through all the phases of its growth, to the final efflorescence of the death-perfumed [P. 184] bloom – as it unfolds itself in this prayer, -- and to feel this with the finest organs of a true woman's sensibility. (...) **Whatever characteristic feature of a dramatic work we deem expedient to omit from the first few representations, can never be restored in subsequent performances. The first impression, even when a faulty one, fixes itself alike for public and performers as a definite, a given thing; and any subsequent change, albeit for the better, will always take the light of a derangement. (...) For this reason I entreat directors and performers to come to an agreement, upon everything I here am bringing under their notice, before the first production. What they are able to achieve, or not, must be definitely established in the stage-rehearsals, if not earlier; and, saving under utmost stress, one should therefore not decide upon omissions with [P. 185] the sorry hope that what has been neglected may be made good again in later performances: for this it never comes to. In like manner one must not at once feel prompted to lop away this or that passage because of insufficient success at the first public performance, but rather have care that its success shall not be lacking in the next; for where one attempts to make an organically-coherent work more palatable through excisions, one merely bears witness to one's own incapacity, and the enjoyment that seems hereby brought within reach at last is no enjoyment of the work as such, but only a self-deception, inasmuch as the work is taken for something other than it really is.**

Now the genuine triumph of the representress of Elisabeth would consist in this: that she not only should give due effect to the Prayer in its entirety, but should further maintain that effect at such a pitch, by the magic of her acting, as to make possible an unabridged performance of its pantomimic postlude. I am well aware that this task is no less difficult than the vocal rendering of the Prayer itself; therefore only where the actress feels quite confident of her effect in this solemn dumb-show, do I wish sanction given to the undocked execution of this scene.

As regards the revision of the opera's close, upon whose observance I rigidly insist, I have first to beg all those who do not like this change – owing to the impressions harboured from its earlier arrangement, -- to consider what I have just said about first performances and repetitions. **The revised Close stands towards its first version as the working-out to the sketch When I first composed the closing scene I had just as complete an image of it in my brain, as I since have worked-out in its second version; [P. 186] not an atom here is changed in the intention, but merely that intention is more distinctly realised. The truth is, I had built too much on certain scenic effects, which proved inadequate when brought to actual execution: the mere**

glowing of the Venusberg, in the farthest background, was not enough to produce the disquieting impression which I meant to lead up to the denouement; still less could the lighting of the windows in the Wartburg (also in the most distant background) and the far-off strains of the Dirge bring the catastrophic moment, which enters with Elisabeth's death, to instantaneous perception by an unbiased spectator not familiar with the literary and artistic details of the subject. My experiences here-
 anent were so painfully convincing, that the very non-understanding of this situation afforded me a cogent reason for remodelling the closing-scene; and in no other way could this be accomplished, than by making Venus herself draw near, with witchcraft sensible to ear and eye, whilst Elisabeth's death is no longer merely hinted at, but the dying Tannhaeuser sinks down upon her actual corpse."

[P. 190] *"As to the 'tempi' of the whole work in general, I here can only say that if conductor and singers are to depend for their time-measure on the metronomical marks alone, the spirit of their work must stand indeed in sorry case; only then will both discern the proper measure, when an understanding of the dramatic and musical situations, an understanding won by lively sympathy, shall let them find it as a thing that comes quite of itself, without their further seeking."*

[P. 191] *"(...) I must tell these Directors ... that they can expect no manner of success from the production of my 'Tannhaeuser', saving when the representation is prepared with the most exceptional care in every respect; with a care such as needs must give this representation, when contrasted with customary operatic performances, the character of something quite Unwonted. And as this character has to be evinced by the whole thing, under its every aspect, it must be also shown on the side of its external mounting; for which I count on no mere tinsel pomp and blinding juggleries, but precisely on a supplanting of these trumpery effects by a really rich and thoughtfully-planned artistic treatment of the whole alike with every detail.*

(...) Nothing I have said about the representation from the [P. 192] musical side can succeed at all, unless the most punctilious carrying-out of every scenic detail makes possible a general prospering of the dramatic whole. The stage-directions in the score, to which I drew his marked attention in my opening statement, will mostly give him an exact idea of my aim; my circumstantial instructions, with reference to certain habitually-omitted passages, may show him what unusual weight I lay on the precisest motivation of the situations through the dramatic action; and he thence may perceive the value I attach to his solicitous co-operation in the arrangement of even the most trifling scenic incidents. (...)

So I beg the stage-director to pay special heed to the scenic action's synchronising in the precisest fashion with the various features of the orchestral accompaniment. Often it has happened to me, that a piece of by-play, a gesture, a significant glance – has escaped the attention of the spectator because it came too early or too late, and at any rate did not exactly correspond in tempo or duration [P. 193] with the correlated passage for the orchestra which was influencing that same spectator in his capacity of listener. Not only does this heedlessness damage the effect of the performer's acting, but this inconsequence in the features of the orchestra confuses the spectator to such a pitch, that he can only deem them arbitrary caprices of the composer. What a chain of misunderstandings is hereby given rise to, it is easy enough to see.

I further urge the regisseur to guard against the processions in 'Tannhaeuser' being carried out by the stage-personnel in the manner of the customary March, now stereotyped in all our operatic productions. Marches, in the ordinary sense, are not to be found in my later operas; therefore if the entry of the guests into the Singers' Hall (Act II. Scene 4) be so effected that the choir and supers march upon the stage in double file, draw the favourite serpentine curve around it, and take possession of the wings like two regiments of well-drilled troops, in wait for further operatic business, -- then I merely beg the band to play some march from 'Norma' or 'Belisario', but not my music. If on the contrary one thinks it as well to retain my music, the entry of the guests must be so ordered as to thoroughly imitate real life, in its noblest, freest forms. Away with that painful regularity of the traditional marching-order! The more varied and unconstrained are the groups of oncomers, divided into several knots of friends or relatives, the more attractive will be the effect of the whole Entry. Each knight and dame must be greeted with friendly dignity, on arrival, by the Landgrave and Elisabeth; but, naturally, there must be no visible pretence of conversation -- a thing that under any circumstances should be strictly prohibited in a musical drama. -- A most important task, in this sense, will then be the ordering of the whole Singers' -- Tourney, the easy grouping of its audience, and especially the portrayal of their changing and waxing interest in the main action. Here the regisseur must tax the full resources of his art; for only through his [P. 194] most ingenious tactics can this complex scene attain its due effect.

He must treat in a similar fashion the bands of Pilgrims in the First and Third Acts; the freer the play, and the more natural the groupings, the better will my aim be answered. (...) **But one most weighty matter still remains for me to clear up with the regisseur: the execution of the opera's first scene, the dance -- if so I may call it -- in the Venusberg. I need scarcely point out that we here have nothing to do with a dance such as is usual in our operas and ballets; the ballet master, whom one should ask to arrange such a dance-set for this music, would soon send us to the right-about and declare the music quite unsuitable. No, what I have in mind is an epitome of everything the highest choreographic and pantomimic art can offer: a wild, and yet seductive chaos of movements and groupings, of soft delight, of yearning and burning, carried to the most delirious pitch of frenzied riot. For sure the problem is not an easy one to solve, and to produce the desired chaotic effect undoubtedly requires most careful and artistic treatment of the smallest details. (...)**

[P. 198] Indisputably the hardest role is that of Tannhaeuser himself, and I must admit that it may be one of the hardest problems ever set before an actor. (...) With fullest unreserve he gives himself to the overpowering impression of re-entered homely Nature, to the familiar round of old sensations, and lastly to the tearful outburst of a childlike feeling of religious penitence; the cry: 'Almighty, thine the praise! Great are the wonders of thy grace!' is the instinctive outpour of an emotion [P. 199] which usurps his heart with might resistless, down to its deepest root. So strong and upright is this emotion, and the felt need of reconciliation with the world -- with the World in its widest, grandest sense -- that he sullenly draws back from the encounter with his former comrades, and shuns their proffered reconciliation: no turning-back will he hear of, but only thrusting-on towards a thing as great and lofty as his new-won feeling of the World itself. This one, this nameless thing, that

alone can satisfy his present longing, is suddenly named for him with the name 'Elisabeth' Wholly and entirely mastered by this latest, this impression never felt before, he shouts for very joy of life, and rushes forth to meet the loved one. {FEUER} *The whole past now lies behind him like a dim and distant dream; scarce can he call it back to mind: one thing alone he knows of, a tender, gracious woman, a sweet maid who loves him; and one thing alone lies bare to him within this love, one thing alone in its rejoinder, -- the burning, all-consuming fire of Life. -- With this fire, this fervour, he tasted once the love of Venus, and instinctively must he fulfil what he had freely pledged her at his parting: 'gainst all the world, henceforth, her doughty knight to be.' This World tarries not in challenging him to the combat. In it -- where the Strong brims Full the sacrifice to it by the Weak -- man finds his only passport to survival in an endless accommodation of his instinctive feelings to the all-ruling mould of use and wont (Sitte). Tannhaeuser, who is capable of nothing but the most direct expression of his frankest, most instinctive feelings, must find himself in crying contrast with this world; and so strongly must this be driven home upon his Feeling, that for sake of sheer existence, he has to battle with his opposite in a struggle for life or death. It is this one necessity that absorbs his soul, when matters come to open [P. 200] combat in the 'Singers'-tourney; to content it he forgets his whole surrounding, and casts discretion to the winds: and yet his heart is simply fighting for his love to Elisabeth, when at last he flaunts his colours openly as Venus' knight. Here stands he on the summit of his life-glad ardour, and naught can dash him from the pinnacle of transport whereon he plants his solitary standard 'gainst the whole wide world, -- nothing but the one experience whose utter newness, whose variance with all his past, now suddenly usurps the field of his emotions: the woman who offers up herself for love of him. -- Forth from that excess of bliss on which he fed in Venus' arms, he had yearned for -- Sorrow: this profoundly human yearning was to lead him to the woman who suffers with him, whilst Venus had but joyed. His claim is now fulfilled, and no longer can he live aloof from griefs as overwhelming as were once his joys. Yet these are no sought-for, no arbitrarily chosen griefs; with irresistible might have they forced an entrance to his heart through fellow-feeling, and it nurtures them with all the energy of his being, even to self-annihilation. It is here that his love for Elisabeth proclaims the vastness of its difference from that for Venus: her whose gaze he can no longer bear, whose words pierce his breast like a sword -- to her must he atone, and expiate by fearsome tortures the torture of her love for him, though Death's most bitter pang should only let him distantly forebode that last atonement. -- Where is the suffering that he would not gladly bear? Before that world, confronting which he stood but now its jubilant foe, he casts himself with willing fervour into the dust, to let it tread him under foot. No likeness shows he to his fellow-pilgrims, who lay upon themselves convenient penance for healing of their own souls: only 'her tears to sweeten, the tears she weeps o'er his great sin,' seeks he the path of healing, amid the horriblemest of torments; for this healing can consist in nothing but the knowledge that those tears are dried. We must believe him, that never did a pilgrim pray for pardon with such ardour. But the more sincere and total his prostration, [P. 201] his remorse and craving for purification, the more terribly must he be overcome with loathing at the heartless lie that reared itself upon his journey's goal. *It is just his utter singlemindedness, recking naught of self, of welfare for his individual soul, but**

solely of his love towards another being, and thus of that beloved being's weal – it is just this feeling that at last must kindle into brightest flame his hate against this world, which must break from off its axis or ever it absolved his love and him; and these are the flames whose embers of despair scorch up his heart. When he returns from Rome he is nothing but embodied wrath against a world that refuses him the right of Being for simple reason of the wholeness of his feelings; and not from any thirst for joy or pleasure, seeks he once more the Venusberg; but despair and hatred of this world he needs must flout now drive him thither, to hide him from his 'angel's' look, whose 'tears to sweeten' the wide world could not afford to him the balm. – Thus does he love Elisabeth; and this love it is that she returns. What the whole moral world could not, that could she when, defying all the world, she clothed her lover in her prayer, and in hallowed knowledge of the puissance of her death she dying set the culprit free. And Tannhaeuser's last breath goes up to her, in thanks for this supernal Gift of love. Beside his lifeless body stands no man but must envy him; the whole World, and God himself, must call him blessed. --

Now I declare that not even the most eminent actor, of our own or bygone times, could solve the task of a perfect portrayal of Tannhaeuser's character on the lines laid down in the above analysis; and I meet the question: 'How could I hold it possible for an opera-singer to fulfil it?' by the simple answer that to Music alone could the draft of such a task be offered, and only a dramatic singer, just through the aid of Music, can be in the position to fulfil it. (...)”

[P. 204] “As to Venus, this role will only succeed when to a favourable exterior the actress joins a full belief in her part; and this will come to her as soon as she is able to hold Venus completely justified in her every utterance, -- so justified that she can yield to no one but the woman who offers up herself for Love. The difficulty in the role of Elisabeth, on the other hand, is for the actress to give the impression of the most youthful and virginal unconstraint, without betraying how experienced, how refined a womanly feeling it is, that alone can fit her for the task. (...) [Re: Wolfram] The lesser vehemence of his directly physical instincts has allowed him to make the impressions of Life a matter of meditation; he thus is pre-eminently Poet and Artist, whereas Tannhaeuser is before all Man. His standing toward Elisabeth, which a noble manly pride enables him to bear so worthily, no less than his final deep fellow-feeling for Tannhaeuser – whom he certainly can never comprehend – will make him one of the most prepossessing figures.”

[!!!!!! NOTE !!!!!: ACCORDING TO L.J. RATHER, WAGNER MAY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO SCHOPENHAUER'S WRITINGS SOMETIME DURING THE FALL OF 1852 BY HERWEGH]

9/12/52

Letter to August Roeckel (SLRW; P. 270)

[P. 270] {FEUER} “(...) Once you are again permitted to concern yourself with literature, I should like you to send me word whether I might from time to time be allowed to send you books. I am sure you would find Feuerbach's writings uncommonly stimulating reading. I would also introduce you to a poet whom I have recently

recognized to be the greatest of all poets; it is the Persian poet 'Hafiz', whose poems now exist in a most enjoyable German adaptation by Daumer. Familiarity with this poet has filled me with a very real sense of terror: we with our pompous European intellectual culture must stand abashed in the presence of this product of the Orient, with its self-assured and sublime tranquility of mind. I expect you would share my astonishment. The only merit of more recent developments in Europe seems to me to lie solely in a kind of universal disintegration, whereas I like to see in the person of this Oriental a precocious striving after individualism"

10/14/52

Letter to Theodor Uhlig (RW: LDF; P. 284-285)

[P. 284] "My principle care is still the *Nibelungen* poem: this is the only thing that really and powerfully elevates me whenever I give myself up to it. The thought of posterity is repugnant to me, and yet this vain illusion comes before me unawares from time to time, when my poem passes from my soul into the world. **All I can and all I have is contained in this one thought: to be able to carry it through and have it performed!!!**

[P. 285] The two *Siegfrieds*, however, must still be thoroughly revised, especially Siegfried's Death. But then – *it will be something!!*

(...)

(...) We visited the Kummers at Tiefenau near Elgg, which delighted them: but it is a fearful place. Heaven preserve me from such a water-establishment. *I would rather burn away in fire – best of all in that of Hafis. Do study Hafis carefully: he is the greatest and most sublime philosopher. Certainly no other writer has given the great question so sure and irrefutable an answer. There is only one thing – that which he commends: and all beside is not a farthing's worth, however high and noble it may call itself.*

Something similar to this will also be shown in my own Nibelungen."

19/28/52

Letter to Robert Franz (SLRW; P. 271)

[P. 271] "What I find so painful is that here, too, I am forced to live at one remove from myself: Lohengrin ought to have been performed long ago and immediately forgotten. If I now feel any desire to present this opera on stage in a decent performance, my only reason for doing so is to make good a past omission, and this involvement with the work is something I can really only relate to the actual performance – as a work of art in itself; *for what I ought now to be achieving as a human being, as a poet and as a musician, in accord with my innermost nature, bears little relationship to Lohengrin, except as a sort of historical consequence, so that, if I do now perform it, people will see in it only a certain part of me, but certainly not the whole of me as I now am. This sense of remoteness, or rather this dislocation of the artist from his work of art is a real curse, which I do not think anyone has felt as keenly as I have, since for me true, pure artistic creativity is little other than a surrogate for something which I know to be my most basic need but a need which I am never allowed to satisfy. But that is enough on this dreary subject: yet those who are incapable of discovering this point for themselves and of sympathising with it from the outset can only ever see me*

in a false and totally alien light. But whoever deludes himself into thinking that I am seeking satisfaction by inventing a new art-form for opera knows not the first thing about me."

11/9/52 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 272)

[P. 272] "My new poems for the two Siegfrieds were finished last week: but I still have to revise the two earlier pieces, 'The young Siegfried' and 'Siegfried's Death', since there are now substantial changes that have to be made to them. I shall not have completed them before the end of the year. The full title is: *The Ring of the Nibelungen*, a stage festival play in three days and a preliminary evening. Preliminary Evening: *The Rhinegold*. First Day: *The Valkyrie*. Second Day: *The Young Siegfried*. Third Day: *Siegfried's Death*. *What fate has in store for this poem – the poem of my life and of all that I am and feel – is something I cannot say at present: but one thing at least is certain – if Germany does not open its borders to me in the immediate future, and if I am forced to continue this artist's life of mine without sustenance or incentive, I shall be driven by my animal instinct for self-preservation to the point when I abandon all art. What I shall then take up to eke out my life, I do not know: but – I shall not write the music for the Nibelungs, and only somebody totally inhuman could demand that I should remain enslaved by my art a moment longer. – "*

11/11/52 Letter to Luise Brockhaus (SLRW; P. 273-274)

[P. 273] "(...) It was about a year ago that I wrote to your Claerchen. I was then staying at a hydropathic establishment with the intention of trying to become a completely healthy human being. Uppermost in my mind was the secret desire to regain my health so as to be able to break totally free from what torments me most in life, namely my art: it was a final desperate struggle to find happiness, a true and noble zest for life such as is ordained only to those [P. 274] who are fully conscious of their health. *That I was deceiving myself in this was soon to become clear: my life is forfeit and, having never enjoyed it, I can now eke it out only by artificial means, in other words – by means of my art. But the despair I feel at confronting the artistic life of Europe with my art is something which can be felt only by those who know to what extent art for me is a substitute for a life of unsatisfied desire: and how superficial, on the other hand, is the judgement of those people who advise me to set about acquiring fame! I pour out into my art the violent need I feel for love, a need which life cannot satisfy, and all I find in return is that people at best mistake me for an energetic – opera reformer!"*

11/18/52 Letter to Theodor Uhlig (SLRW; P. 275)

[P. 275] "(...) I am now working on 'young Siegfried', and shall soon have finished it. Then I shall move on to 'Siegfried's Death' – that will hold me up longer; there are two scenes there which will have to be newly written (the Norns and Bruennhilde's scene with the Valkyries) but above all the ending – in addition to which everything will have to be substantially revised. The whole thing will then be

– out with it! I am shameless enough to admit it! – the greatest poem I have ever written!”

48-52 **THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG (Libretto Text)**

51-7/52 **THE VALKYRIE**

51-11/52 **THE RHINEGOLD**

51-12/52 **SIEGFRIED – First Revision (of ‘The Young Siegfried’);
Second Revision 1856**

51-12/52 **TWILIGHT OF THE GODS – First Revision (?) (originally
‘Siegfried’s Death’); Second Revision 1856 (?)**

12/2/52 (?) **(ML; P. 477-479)**

[P. 477] “Although my plans seemed to preclude for the moment any contact with our execrable artistic institutions, I nonetheless nursed deep within me the conviction that I was by no means writing for my own amusement. I continued to assume that those institutions, like the whole social order of things, would very soon undergo an immeasurable transformation; new conditions would quickly come into being, with new needs, and I believed that the works I had conceived with such recklessness were exactly what would meet those needs, and would produce all at once a totally new relationship of art to artistic institutions. Such bold expectations, about which I naturally could not talk very frankly with any of my friends at the time, were rooted in the way I viewed the world situation at the time. The general failure of all the liberal political movements had definitely not put me off the track; on the contrary, I thought that the real reason for their failure was the insufficient recognition and open advocacy of their true cause: I now saw this to be the whole social movement, which despite its political defeats had not lost force but rather was rapidly spreading. (...) [P. 478] The situation in the rest of the European nations, in which every initiative had been suppressed with the crassest brutality, allowed the supposition that this state of affairs would not endure for very long, and everybody seemed to look forward in tense anticipation to the forthcoming year of decision. In addition to exchanging views on the virtues of hydropathy, I had also discussed this significant political situation with my friend Uhlig: coming to me directly from the Dresden theater and orchestral rehearsals, it had been very difficult for him to accept the probability that such bold hopes for a heroic reversal in human affairs would be realized. He told me I could really have no idea how pitiful people were; yet I managed to benumb him enough to convince him to go along with me in regarding the year 1852 as being pregnant with great decisions. (...) Whenever we found any baseness to complain about, I always cited the hopeful and fateful date, in the belief, more or less, that we should have to stand quietly by, watching the awaited turnabout take its course, until such time as nobody else knew what to do next, and then it would be our turn to act. I cannot say precisely how firmly this tower of hope was founded within me; I soon had to recognize, however, that

my excited nervous condition had a lot to do with the over-confident exuberance of my assumptions and assertions. *The news of the coup d'état of December 2nd in Paris struck me as positively unbelievable: while the world seemed to have been preserved, for me it collapsed completely. When the success of the coup became apparent, and what nobody had previously regarded possible established itself apparently in perpetuity, I turned away indifferently, as if from a riddle whose solution seems scarcely worth the trouble, and no longer tried to figure out what was going on in this strange world. (...)*

[P. 479] Before long I was overtaken with exceptional depression, in which disappointment at external events in the world was admixed with the reaction I now began to feel against the excesses of the water cure as they had affected my health. *I now saw on every side the triumphant return of all those discouraging phenomena, the enemies of all higher aspirations in cultural life, which had seemed to have been forever dispelled by the upheavals of the last few years. I foresaw the time when it would go so badly with us that a new book by Heinrich Heine would be greeted as a sign of ferment."*

12/52

Letter to Ferdinand Heine (RW: LDF; P. 480-481)

[P. 480] "... Papa Fischer blames me so much for my Guide to *Tannhaeuser* -- he always imagines it to be my sole concern to see my operas performed, and that it is therefore 'unwise' to make so many out-of-the-way demands!! I have indeed good ground for shame, to have been misunderstood on the most important points even by you and him. I care absolutely nothing about my things being given! I am only anxious that they should be so given as I intended; he who will not and cannot

[P. 481] do that, let him leave them alone. That is my whole meaning -- and has Fischer not yet found that out?"

[1853]

1/53

Remarks on Performing 'The Flying Dutchman' (PW Vol. III; P. 207-217)

[P. 209] "I ... turn simply to the performers, and among these more particularly to the representant of the difficult principle role, that of the '*Hollander*' (the 'Dutchman'). [P. 210] Upon the happy issue of this title role depends the real success of the whole opera: its exponent must succeed in rousing and maintaining the deepest pity (Mitleid); and this he will be able to, if he strictly observes the following chief characteristics. --

(...) ... a certain terrible repose in his outward demeanour, even the most passionate expression of inward anguish and despair, will give the characteristic stamp to this impersonation. The first phrases are to be sung without a trace of passion (almost in strict beat, like the whole of this recitative), as though the man were tired out; at the words, declaimed with bitter ire ('ha, stolzer Ozean' ('thou haughty Ocean') he does not break as yet into positive passion: more in terrible scorn, he merely turns his head half-round towards the sea. During the ritornello, after 'doch ewig meine Qual' ('but ever lasts my pain'), he bows his head once more, as though in utter

weariness; the words: 'euch, des Weltmeers Fluthen' etc. ('to you, ye waves of earthly sea') he sings in this posture, staring blankly before him. For the mimetic accompaniment of the Allegro: 'wie oft in Meeres tiefsten Grund' etc. ('how oft in Ocean's deep [P. 211] abyssm') I do not wish the singer to cramp too much his outer motion, yet he still must abide by my prime maxim, namely, however deep the passion, however agonised the feeling which he has to breathe into the voice-part, he must for the present keep to the utmost calm in his outer bearing: a movement of the arm or hand, but not too sweeping, will suffice to mark the single more emphatic accents. Even the words: 'Niemals der Tod nirgends ein Grab!' ('Nor ever death, nowhere a grave!') which are certainly to be sung with the greatest vehemence, belong rather to the description of his sufferings than to a direct, an actual outburst of his despair; the latter he only reaches with what follows, for which the utmost energy of action must therefore be reserved. With the repetition of the words: 'diess der Verdammiss Schreckgebot!' ('This was my curse's dread decree!') he has somewhat inclined his head and his whole body: so he remains throughout the first four bars of the postlude; with the tremolo of the violins (E-flat) at the fifth bar he raises his face to heaven, his body still bent low; with the entry of the muffled role of the kettle-drum at the ninth bar of the postlude he begins to shudder, the down-held fists are clenched convulsively, the lips commence to move, and at last (with eyes fixed heavenward throughout) he starts the phrase: 'Dich frage ich' etc. ('Of thee I ask'). This whole, almost direct address to 'God's angel' (den 'Engel Goettes'), for all the terrible expression with which it is to be sung, must yet be delivered in the pose just indicated (without any marked change beyond what the execution necessarily demands at certain places): *we must see before us a 'fallen angel' himself, whose fearful torment drives him to proclaim his wrath against Eternal Justice.* At last, however, with the words: 'Vergeb'ne Hoffnung' etc. ('Thou vainest hope') the full force of his despair finds vent: furious, he stands erect, his eyes still gazing heavenwards, and with utmost energy of grief he casts all 'futile hopes' behind: no more will he hear of promised ransom, and finally (at entry of the kettledrum and basses) he falls of a heap, as [P. 212] though undone. *With the opening of the allegro-ritornel his features kindle to a new, a horrible last hope – the hope of World's-upheaval, in which he too must pass away.* This closing Allegro requires the most terrible energy, not only in the vocal phrasing, but also in the mimic action; for everything here is unmasked passion. Yet the singer must do his best to give this whole tempo, despite its vehemence of phrasing, the semblance of a mere gathering of all his force for the final crushing outbreak at the words: 'Ihr Welten! Endet euren Lauf!' etc. ('Ye worlds! Now end your last career!'). Here the expression must reach its loftiest pitch. After the closing words: 'ewige Vernichtung, nimm' mich auf!' ('Eternal chaos, take me hence!') he remains standing at full height, almost like a statue, throughout the whole fortissimo of the postlude: only with the entry of the piano, during the muffled chant from the ship's hold, does he gradually relax his attitude; his arms fall down; at the four bars of 'expressivo' for the first violins he slowly sinks his head, and during the last eight bars of the postlude he totters to the rock-wall at the side: he leans back against it and remains for long in this position, with arms tight-folded on the breast. –

I have discussed this scene at so much length, in order to show in what sense

I wish the *'Hollaender'* to be portrayed, and what weight I place on the most careful adaptation of the action to the music. In a like sense should the performer take pains to conceive the whole remainder of his role. Moreover, this aria is also the hardest in all the part, and more especially since the public's further understanding of the subject depends upon the issue of this scene: if this monologue, in keeping with its aim, has been thoroughly attuned and touched the hearer, the further success of the whole work is for the major part insured – whereas nothing that comes after could possibly make up for anything neglected here.

In the ensuing scene with Daland the 'Dutchman' retains at first his present posture. Daland's questions from aboard-ship, he answers with the faintest movement of [P. 213] his head. When Daland comes towards him on dry land, the Dutchman also advances to about the middle of the stage, with stately calm. His whole demeanour here shows quiet, restful dignity; the expression of his voice is noble, equable, without a tinge of stronger accent: he acts and talks as thought from ancient habit: so often has he passed through like encounters and transactions; everything, even the seemingly most purposed questions and answers, takes place as if by instinct; he deals as though at bidding of his situation, to which he gives himself mechanically and without interest, like a wearied man. Just as instinctively again, his yearning for 'redemption' re-awakes: after his fearful outburst of despair he has grown gentler, softer, and it is with touching sadness that he speaks his yearning after rest. The question: 'hast du eine Tochter?' ('Hast thou a daughter?') he still throws out with seeming calm; but suddenly the old hope (so often recognised as vain) is roused once more by Daland's enthusiastic answer: 'fuerwahr, ein treues Kind' ('Ay! Ay! A faithful child'; with spasmodic haste he cries: 'sie sei mein Weib!' ('be she my wife!')). The old longing takes him once again, and in moving accents (though outwardly calm) he draws the picture of his lot: 'ach, ohne Weib, ohne Kind bin ich' ('Ah! Neither wife nor child have I'). The glowing colours in which Daland now paints his daughter still more revive the Hollander's old yearning for 'redemption through a woman's truth,' and in the duet's closing Allegro the battle between hope and despair is driven to the height of passion – wherein already hope appears to wellnigh conquer. --

At his appearance before Senta in the Second Act, the Hollander again is calm and solemn in his outer bearing: all his passionate emotions are strenuously thrust back within his breast. Throughout the lengthy first 'fermata' he stays motionless beside the door; at the commencement of the drum-solo he slowly strides towards the front; with the eighth bar of that solo he halts (the two bars'accelerando' for the strings relate to the gestures of [P. 214] Daland, who still stands wondering in the doorway, awaiting Senta's welcome, and impatiently invites it with a movement of his outstretched arms) (...) The remainder of the postlude, together with the ritornello of the following duet, is accompanied on the stage by total immobility and silence: Senta and the Hollander, at opposite extremities of the foreground, are riveted in contemplation of each other. (The performers need not be afraid of wearying by this situation: it is a matter of experience that this is just the one which most powerfully engrosses the spectator, and most fittingly prepares him for the following scene.

(...) [P. 215] ... *his love for Senta displays itself at once in terror of the danger*

she herself incurs by reaching out a rescuing hand to him. It comes over him as a [P. 216] hideous crime, and in his passionate remonstrance against her sharing in his fate he becomes a human being through and through; whereas he hitherto had often given us but the grim impression of a ghost. (...)

The role of Senta will be hard to misread; one warning alone have I to give: let not the *dreamy* side of her nature be conceived in the sense of a modern, sickly Sentimentality! Senta, on the contrary, is an altogether robust (kerniges) Northern maid, and even in her apparent sentimentality she is thoroughly naïve. Only in the heart of an entirely naïve girl, surrounded by the idiosyncrasies of Northern Nature, could impressions such as those of the ballad of the ‘Flying Dutchman’ and the picture of the pallid seaman call forth so wondrous strong a bent, as the impulse to redeem the doomed: with her this takes the outward form of an active monomania (ein kraeftiger Wahnsinn) such, indeed, as can only be found in quite naïve natures. (...) [P. 217] ... I beseech the exponent of Daland not to drag his role into the region of the positively comic: he is a rough-hewn figure from the life of everyday, a sailor who scoffs at storms and danger for sake of gain, and with whom, for instance, the – certainly apparent – sale of his daughter to a rich man ought not to seem at all disgraceful: he thinks and deals, like a hundred thousand others, without the least suspicion that he is doing any wrong.”

2/11/53 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 280-281)

[P. 280] “... the prospect of setting all this [the ‘Ring’] to music now attracts me greatly: as regards the form, it is already fully fashioned in my head, and I have never been so clear in my own mind about the musical execution of a work as I now am in relation to this poem. I need only the necessary incentive in life in order to find the indispensable mood of cheerful serenity which will allow the motives to well up inside me freely and gladly. (...)

Good luck with the ‘flying Dutchman’! I cannot get this melancholy hero out of my head! I keep on hearing ‘Ah, spectral man, who can tell when you’ll find her!’ together with: [P. 281] ‘One chance remains to gain this poor man his peace and salvation!’ but it’s too late now! For me there is no longer any possibility of redemption, except for – death! Oh, how happy I should be to die in a storm at sea, -- but not on my sick-bed!!!

Indeed – I should be glad to perish in the flames of Valhalla! – *Mark well my new poem – it contains the world’s beginning and its end!*

I must now set it to music for the Jews of Frankfurt and Leipzig – it is just the thing for them! – “

4/13/53 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 284-285)

[P. 284] {*anti-FEUER; FEUER*} “(...) You see, my friend, I too am bitterly scorned by our politicians and jurists for my faith: for I believe in the future of the human race, and I derive this faith quite simply from my own essential need; *I have succeeded in viewing natural and historical phenomena with love and with total impartiality as regards their true essence, and I have noticed nothing amiss except for*

– lovelessness. – *But even this lovelessness I was able to explain as an aberration, an aberration which must inevitably lead us away from our state of natural unawareness towards a knowledge of the uniquely beautiful necessity of love; to acquire this knowledge by active striving is the task of world history; but the stage on which this knowledge will one day act out its role is none other than the earth and nature herself, which is the seed-bed of all that will lead us to this blissful knowledge.* The state of lovelessness is the state of suffering for the human race: an abundance of suffering now envelops us, and torments your friend, as well, with a thousand smarting wounds; but you see, it is precisely here that we recognize the glorious necessity of love, we call upon it and welcome each other with a force of love which would not be possible were it not for this painful recognition; and so, *in this way, we acquire a* [P. 285] *strength of which natural man had no inkling, and this strength – increased to embrace the whole of humanity – will one day lay the foundations for a state on earth where no one need yearn for the other world (a world which will then have become wholly unnecessary), for they will be happy – to live and to love. For where is the man who yearns to escape from life when he is in love? – Well then! Now we suffer, now we must lose heart and go mad without any faith in the hereafter: I too believe in a hereafter: -- I have just shown you this hereafter: though it lies beyond my life, it does not lie beyond the limits of all that I can feel, think, grasp and comprehend, for I believe in humanity and – have need of naught else! – (...)*”

5/53

Explanatory Program: The Flying Hollander Overture (PW Vol. III; P. 228-229]

[P. 228] {FEUER} “To force his own undoing, he has called on flood and storm to arm themselves against him: into the yawning whirlpool has he plunged his ship – but the gulf refused to swallow it; against the beetling headland has he urged it, -- but the rocks have never wrecked it. All the fearsome perils of the deep, at which he erst had laughed in madcap lust of venture, they now but laugh at him – and harm him not: *he’s curst to all eternity to hunt the desert seas for spoils that yield him no delight, but ne’er to find the only thing that could redeem him!* (...) [P. 229] Then from the bottom of his misery he cries aloud for ransom: in the aching void of his un-mated being – none but a wife can bring him weal! Where, in what distant land may dwell the rescuer? Where beats a feeling heart for sufferings so great as his? Where is she, she who will not flee in horror from him, like these coward men who shuddering cross themselves at his approach? (...) *What draws him with such might – it is a woman’s look, which, full of sad sublimity and godlike fellow-feeling, thrusts through to him! A heart has opened its unending depths to the unmeasured sorrows of the damned: for him must it make offering, to end alike his sorrows and its life.* At this divinest sight the fated man breaks down at last, as breaks his ship to atoms; the ocean’s trough engulfs it: but he, from out the waves he rises whole and hallowed, led by the victress’ rescuing hand to the daybreak of sublimest love.”

5/53

Explanatory Program: Lohengrin Overture (PW Vol. III; P. 231-233)

[P. 231] {FEUER} *“From out a world of hate and haggling, Love seemed to have vanished clean away: in no community of men did it longer show itself as lawgiver. Yet midst the empty care for gain and owning, the only orderer of world-intercourse, the unslayable love-longing of the human heart began at last to yearn again for stilling of a need which, the more it chafed and burned beneath the weight of actuality, the less was able to be satisfied within that actuality itself. Devout imagination therefore set both source and bourne of this unfathomable love-stress outside that actual world, and, longing for the solace of its senses by a symbol of the Suprasensual, it gave to it a wondrous shape; under the name of the ‘Holy Grail’ this symbol soon was yearned and sought for, as a reality existing somewhere, yet far beyond approach. ‘Twas the precious vase from which the Saviour once had pledged his farewell to his people, the vessel whereinto his blood had poured [P. 232] when he suffered crucifixion for his brethren, the cup in which that blood had been preserved in living warmth, a fountain of imperishable Love. Already had this cup of healing been reft from worthless Man, when once a flight of angels brought it back from Heaven’s height, to lonely men athirst for Love; committed it to keeping of these men, miraculously blest and strengthened by its presence; and hallowed thus the pure to fight on earth for Love Eternal.*

This wonder-working Coming of the Grail in escort of an angel-host, its committal to the care of chosen men, the tone-poet of ‘Lohengrin’ – a Grail’s knight – selected for the subject of a sketch in Tone, as introduction to his drama, and here he may haply be let depict it to the fancy’s eye. (...) [P. 233] Then, smiling as it looks below, the angel-host wings back its flight to Heaven in tender gladness: the fount of Love, run dry on Earth, it has brought unto the world anew; it has left the ‘Grail’ in keeping of pure mortals, whose hearts its very Content now has drenched with blessing. In the clearest light of Heaven’s aether the radiant host melts into distance as it came before.”

8/16/53

Letter to Franz Liszt (CWL; P. 317-318)

[P. 317] *“... my faculties, taken separately, are not great, and I can only be and do something good when I concentrate all those faculties on one impulse and recklessly consume them and myself for its sake. Whatever part that impulse leads me to adopt, that I am as long as necessary, be it musician, poet, conductor, author, reciter, or what not. In that manner I at one time became a speculative art philosopher. But apart from this main current I can create and do nothing except under extreme compulsion, and in that case I should do something very bad and expose the smallness of my special faculties in a deplorable manner. (...) [P. 318] X. and his friends and enemies have not even read my writings as they should be read in order to be understood. Otherwise it would be quite impossible that this wretched ‘separate art’ and ‘universal art’ should be the upshot of all my disquisitions. Honestly speaking, I am sick of discussing with stupid people things which they can never take in, because there is in them not a trace of artistic or really human stuff. (...) Certainly, most CERTAINLY, I should be very glad to know that I had been rightly understood by many people, glad to see and hear that clever, instructive, and enlightening things were written and laid down in a journal devoted to such an object; this, ind-*

eed, would be the reward of my sacrifices. But, good heavens! There is surely no need that I should write, that I should help, again; these things should come to me from another quarter. It cannot possibly suit me to write the same thing over and over again on the chance of being at last understood, besides which I should probably only puzzle people worse and worse.”

8/24/53 – 9/10/53 (ML; P. 498-500)

[P. 498] “... I rushed on to Genoa two days later. Here the long awaited miracle seemed about to take place. To this day, the impression created by the city outweighs all my longing for the rest of Italy. For a few days I was as if intoxicated; but it was no doubt my extreme loneliness amid all these impressions which soon made me feel the alien elements of this world and realize that I would never become part of it. Without any guidance or capacity to hunt down Italian art treasures according to any systematic plan, I abandoned myself rather to what might be called a musical way of sensing these new phenomena and above all else tried to find the point which would help me decide to remain there and calmly enjoy it. For I was still driven to seek some sort of asylum which would afford me the soothing harmony I needed for artistic creation. But soon, as a consequence of over-indulgence in ice-cream, I got an attack of dysentery, which produced a sudden and [P. 499] depressing lassitude after the initial exaltation. I wanted to get away from the horrendous noise of the harbor, beside which my hotel was situated, and seek the most extreme tranquillity. For this purpose I believed an excursion to Spezia would be appropriate, and after a week I proceeded there by steamship. Even this voyage, which lasted only one night, turned into an arduous adventure as a result of violent head-winds. My dysentery was supplemented by seasickness, and by the time I reached Spezia I could hardly take a single step and went to the best hotel, which to my dismay was situated in a narrow and noisy alley. After a sleepless and feverish night, I forced myself to undertake a long walk the following day among the pine-covered hills of the surroundings. Everything seemed to me bleak and bare, and I asked myself why I had come. *Returning that afternoon, I stretched out dead-tired on a hard couch, awaiting the long-desired onset of sleep. It did not come; instead, I sank into a kind of somnambulistic state, in which I suddenly had the feeling of being immersed in rapidly flowing water. Its rushing soon resolved itself for me into the musical sound of the chord of E flat major, resounding in persistent broken chords; these in turn transformed themselves into melodic figurations of increasing motion, yet the E flat major triad never changed, and seemed by its continuance to impart infinite significance to the element in which I was sinking. I awoke in sudden terror from this trance, feeling as though the waves were crashing high above my head. I recognized at once that the orchestral prelude to Das Rheingold, long dormant within me but up to that moment inchoate, had at last been revealed; and I also saw immediately precisely how it was with me: the vital flood would come from within me, and not from without.*

(...) In Genoa I felt once again so agreeably stimulated that I suddenly took it into my head that I had only given way to a foolish weakness, decided to carry out my original plan, and began making arrangements [P. 499] to travel to Nice along the celebrated Riviera di Ponente. *But I had scarcely resumed my original resolve when it dawned on me that the factor which had refreshed and invigorated me was not*

a renewal of my delight in Italy but rather the decision to begin work. For as soon as I made any change in this latter decision, all the old symptoms of dysentery returned at once. I now understood my own condition and forgoing the trip to Nice returned by the most direct route via Alessandria and Novara and by the Borromean Islands, to which I was now supremely indifferent, and so over the Gotthard to Zuerich.”

9/12/53 Letter to Franz Liszt (CWL: P. 322-323)

[P. 322] “I am back in Zurich, unwell, low-spirited, ready to die.

At Genoa I became ill, and was terror-struck by my solitary condition, but I was determined to do Italy, and went on to Spezia. My indisposition increased; enjoyment was out of the question; so I turned back to die or to compose, one or the other; nothing else remains to me.

Here you have the whole story of my journey, my ‘Italian journey.’ “

11-12/53 (ML; P. 505-506)

[P. 505] “At the beginning of November I finally commenced this long-delayed work. Since the end of March 1848, five and a half years had elapsed in which I had completely renounced any musical productivity, and as I now actually succeeded in getting into the right frame of mind to resume it, I can best compare this resumption with a rebirth after a long wandering of the soul in other spheres. As far as the technical aspect of my work was concerned, I soon got into difficulty when trying to transcribe the orchestral prelude I had conceived in that trance-like condition in Spezia in my accustomed manner of sketching it out on two staves. I had to resort to scoring it in full from the very first; this led me to adopt an entirely new method of sketching, whereby I drafted the various orchestral parts extremely cursorily in pencil for immediate reworking in the full score. This later caused me serious difficulties, for the slightest interruption in my work often made me forget the meaning of my cursory sketches, and I then had to struggle to recall it. But I didn’t let that problem arise in the case of *Rheingold*; *the sketch for the whole composition was completed as early as January 16th 1854, and thus the plan for the musical structure of the entire four-part work was prefigured in this work’s thematic relationships. For it was here, in this great prelude, that the thematic foundation for the whole had to be laid.*

I recall a decided improvement in the state of my health during the writing of this work, and so I remember very little of the external life [P. 506] around me throughout the period.”

[1854]

1/15/54 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 297-299)

[P. 297] “As a result of a hasty marriage [at the age of 23] to a woman whom I respect but who is totally unsuited to me, I have become an outlaw for life. **For a long time the**

common pressures of my position in life, together with my ambitious plans and wishes to escape those pressures by becoming famous, were the only thing capable of concealing from me my very real emptiness of heart. *In truth, I reached the age of 36 before I became fully aware of that terrible emptiness: until then my nature was held in a state of balance between two conflicting elements of desire within me, one of which I sought to appease by means of my art, while periodically giving vent to the other by means of passionate, fantastical [and sensual] extravagances. (You know my Tannhaeuser, this idealization of a demeanour which in reality is often quite trivial).*

But then, in Lohengrin perhaps – I had the feeling, nay the certainty, that these two currents came together in a single unity in true love, love which I could know only through yearning but never through actual experience. God, how gladly would I have fled naked into the world and become purely and simply a happily loving and loved human being! Well – that is something I shall never again be able to be: I shall never be happy in love, but only unhappy – an ‘outlaw – an impossible individual’!! –

My dearest friend, -- since that time my art has really been no more than of secondary interest to me, a mere makeshift, nothing more! Yet time and again it has ended up by becoming a very real makeshift, forcing me literally to make shift with it, simply in order for me to exist. *But it is really only out of utter despair that I take up my art again: when this happens, and I again have to renounce reality, -- if I am obliged once more to plunge into the waves of an artist’s imagination in order to find satisfaction in an imaginary world, I must at least help out my imagination and find means of encouraging my imaginative faculties. I cannot then live like a dog, I cannot sleep on straw and drink common gin: mine is an intensely irritable, acute, and hugely voracious, yet uncommonly tender and delicate sensuality which, one way or another, must be flattered if I am to accomplish the cruelly difficult task of creating in my mind a non-existent world.*

Well! Once I had resumed my plans for the Nibelungs and for their actual completion, there was much that I needed to inspire in me the requisite mood of artistic sensuality: -- it was necessary for me to be able to lead a better life than had recently been the case! The success of Tannhaeuser (a work I had sacrificed precisely because of that hope) was now intended to help me: -- I [P. 298] reorganized my domestic arrangements, squandered (my God – squandered!!) what money I had on every conceivable article of luxurious necessity: your visit last summer, yes – your example – everything contributed to a wilful sense of self-delusion on my part (or rather: gave me the desire for self-delusion) concerning my life. I finally stopped asking what things cost, but simply appropriated everything imaginable, everything that was in any way capable of making a favourable impression on me, or giving me a sense of well-being. The culmination of this whim came in St. Moritz, in the midst of my mortification.

My revenues seemed to be utterly infallible. In this unnatural mood of self-content, I again conceived a desire to write music. (...)

You must admit, it’s a real ‘situation’ in which I now find myself!! –

And this torment, distress and concern for a life that I hate, and that I curse! – and for the sake of which I make myself look ridiculous in the eyes of my house-guests, -- and at the same time enjoy the wanton pleasure of having abandoned the most noble work I have so far created to the predictable stupidity of our theatre rabble and to the philistine’s scorn!

God, how do I see myself -- ! If only I had the pleasure of knowing that there was someone else who knew how I see myself! –

Listen, Franz! You must help me now! Things are bad – very bad. If I am to rediscover the means to survive (and the full import of this word is not lost on me!), then something sensible must be done now that I am embarked on a course which involves the prostitution of my art – otherwise that's the end of it. Have you not thought any more about Berlin? Something must now be achieved there if this is not to be the end of everything! –

Above all, however, I must also have money [P. 299] (...)

My dear friend, do not be angry with me! I have a just claim on you, as on my creator! You are the creator of the man I now am: I now live through you – that is no exaggeration. Take care of your creature: I call upon you to do so as a duty which you have to perform. –

You see, it is simply a question of money: there shouldn't be any problem there. I abandon love to take its course – and art?? –

Well, the Rhinegold is finished – more finished than I thought. With what faith, with what joy did I set to work on the music! But it was in a real rage of despair that I continued the work and finally completed it: I , too, alas, learned what distress is caused by gold! Believe me, no work has ever been composed like this before: I imagine my music must be terrible; it is a morass of horrors and sublimities!"

1/25-26/54

Letter to August Roeckel (SLRW; P. 300-312)

[P. 300] “(...) ... at the end of August I repaired to Italy – or at least to such parts as are open to me: Turin, Genoa, Spezzia; I then intended going on to Nice in order to spend some time there; but it was here in this foreign country where such an appalling sense of loneliness preyed upon my mind that I suddenly sank into a deep state of melancholy – which was also the result of a purely physical indisposition – and as a result could not get home quickly enough across Logo maggiore and the Gotthardt (...) Having arrived back here [Zurich], I was overwhelmed at last by so violent a [P. 301] desire to set to work on the musical composition of ‘Rhinegold’ that I was simply not in the right frame of mind to reply to your critical remarks on my poem: it was impossible, I could not! But – after a complete break of 6 years! – I now threw myself passionately into my music, and finally resolved not to write to you until I had finished the composition of the Rhinegold. Well, I have now reached that point; -- and I now understand my reluctance to reply to you sooner, for only now that I have finished composing the work do I suddenly find myself in a position to reply to you; and yet my position has changed in the meantime, with the result that I suspect the best course for me is virtually to ignore your criticisms: you are quite right to criticize me, but I, too, am right to have conceived and completed the matter as best I can and may. In other words – I shall not argue with you, but we may well discuss the affair somewhat!

(...) {FEUER} One thing counts above all else: freedom! But what is ‘freedom’? is it – as our politicians believe – ‘licence?’ – of course not! Freedom is: integrity. He who is true to himself, i.e. who acts in accord with his own being, and in perfect harmony with his own nature, is free; strictly speaking, outward constraint is

powerless unless it succeeds in destroying the integrity of its victim, inducing him to dissemble and to persuade himself and others that he is a different person from the one he really is. That is true servitude. But the victim of constraint need never let it come to this: and the man who – even under constraint – preserves his integrity also preserves his basic freedom; certainly more than the person who no longer notices constraints such as the whole world now contains, since he has already accommodated his very being to their power and perverted his nature for their sake.

{FEUER} I believe that this ‘integrity’ is essentially the same as the ‘truth’ of which we read in books on philosophy and theology. ‘Truth’ is a concept and, by its nature, is simply objectified ‘integrity’; the actual content of this ‘integrity’, however, is ‘reality’ pure and simple, or rather: ‘the real’, ‘what really is’, and only what is ‘material’ is ‘real’, whereas the ‘immaterial’ is certainly also ‘unreal’, in other words merely ‘thought’ or ‘imagined’. If I am therefore justified in calling ‘integrity’ the most comprehensive feeling for reality, at the same time as acknowledging that feeling, then ‘truth’, in the [P. 302] final analysis, is once again merely the concept of that feeling, or at least has become so in philosophy: it is certain, however, that this concept is as remote from reality as ‘integrity’ – in the sense already indicated – is close to it, which is why people have always deluded themselves as to ‘truth’, so that it has actually become the most deceptive thing in the world; like every concept, it has ended up by becoming no more than a word, and on the basis of such ‘words’ it is of course easy enough to ‘construct a system’, but in doing so one loses hold of reality. Our surest grasp of reality is through feeling, and true feeling is perceived exclusively through the senses. {FEUER} It must be added that what we understand here by ‘senses’ is not what philosophers and theologians mean when they speak with total contempt of the animal senses, but the human senses which, as is well known, are capable of measuring the stars and imagining their courses. – Now, we shall soon find ourselves in agreement about the ‘world’, inasmuch as it is the object of our feeling of integrity, if we allow ourselves to be guided by our only reliable source of experience, namely feeling, and pay heed solely to the impressions received from that source. {FEUER} {Pre-SCHOP} The individual, acting in accordance with his own natural temperament, makes use of endless expedients in order to grasp the world as a whole: these expedients, in all their most manifold complexities, are the ‘concepts’ already described: so proud do we deem ourselves in our ability to grasp a whole by means of concepts that, believing we have the whole, we involuntarily forget that what we have is merely a concept, in other words our pleasure comes simply from an instrument of our own making, while in the meantime we have strayed further than ever from the reality of the world. But the man who in the long term can find no real pleasure in the madness of this self-delusion will no doubt end up by realizing how unsatisfactory is his own nature; he will perceive how arrogant and unedifying is his self-delusion, and he will finally recognize the need to approach reality once again in total consciousness and with the aid of feeling. {FEUER} But how is this reality to be grasped once more, since – as an imaginary whole – it had presented itself not to our feelings but solely to our intellect? It can be grasped of course only if we recognize that the essence of reality lies in its endless multiplicity. This inexhaustible multiplicity which incessantly reproduces and renews itself can be apprehended, however, by feeling, which perceives it simply as a separate, ever-changing phenomenon: this sense of change is the essence

of reality, whereas only what is imagined is changelessly unending. Only what changes is real: to be real, to live – what this means is to be created, to grow, to bloom, to wither and to die; without the necessity of death, there is no possibility of life; that alone has no end which has no beginning – but nothing real can be without a beginning, only what has been conceived in the mind. Therefore, to be consumed by truth is to abandon oneself as a sentient human being to total reality: to experience procreation, growth, bloom – withering and decay, to apprehend them unreservedly, in joy and sorrow, and to [P. 303] choose to live – and die – a life of happiness and suffering. This alone is ‘to be consumed by truth’. – {anti-FEUER?} But in order to make such a consummation possible, we must abandon completely our search for the ‘whole’: the whole reveals itself to us only in the individual manifestation, for this alone is capable of being ‘apprehended’ in the true sense of the word; we can really ‘grasp’ a phenomenon only if we can allow ourselves to be fully absorbed by it, just as we must in turn be able to assimilate it fully within us. How is this marvellous process most fully achieved? Ask Nature! Only through love! – everything that I cannot love remains outside me, and I remain outside it: the philosopher may no doubt imagine that he can grasp what is going on here, but not the true human being. {FEUER} But the full reality of love is possible only between the sexes: only as man and woman can we human beings really love, whereas all other forms of love are mere derivatives of it, originating in it, related to it or an unnatural imitation of it. It is wrong to regard this love as only one manifestation of love in general, and to assume that other and higher forms must therefore exist alongside it. {FEUER} Certainly, he who, like the metaphysician, places abstraction before reality and derives sentient reality from ideality – he who thereby prefers logic to genetics – may be right to imagine that the concept of love existed before the actual expression of love, and accordingly to speak of the revelation of a pre-existing, non-sensuous love by means of real, sensual love: but he will then do well to despise this love as he despises the senses in general. Yet it would be safe to bet that he himself had never loved or been loved in the way that others can love, otherwise he would have realized that in despising this feeling what he had in mind was only animal love, and animal sensuality in general, rather than human love. {FEUER} The highest satisfaction of individual egoism is to be found in its total abandonment, and this is something which human beings can achieve only through love: but the true human being is both man and woman, and only in the union of man and woman does the true human being exist, and only through love, therefore, do man and woman become human. Whenever we speak nowadays of ‘humankind’, it must be admitted that we are so insensately stupid that we always think involuntarily only of men. But it is the union of man and woman, in other words, love, that creates (physically and metaphorically) the human being, and just as the human being can conceive of nothing more creatively brilliant than his own existence and his own life, so he can never again surpass that act whereby he became human through love; he can only repeat it – {FEUER} just as our entire lives are a constant repetition of the multiplicity of details of individual moments in our lives – and it is this repetition which alone makes possible the unique nature of this love whereby it resembles the ebb and flow of the tide, changing, ending, and living anew. It is therefore a grievous [P. 304] misconception of love to regard as a weakness this quality according to which it can constantly repeat itself and be constantly renewed: whereas conceptual love abstracted from

real love, like the love of God-knows-what-universal-abstraction, is imagined as the one genuine form of love precisely because it has permanence. The mere possibility of its indefinite continuance proves how non-essential is this kind of love. {FEUER} 'Eternal'; -- in the true sense of the word -- is that which negates finitude (or rather: the concept of finitude): the concept of finitude is unsuited to 'reality', for reality, i.e. something that is constantly changing, new and multifarious -- is precisely the negation of all that is merely imagined and conceived as finite: the infinitude of metaphysics is eternal unreality. {FEUER} The finite is merely an idea, albeit one that can cause us considerable disquiet; and yet it can do so only when we are unable to apprehend reality through the emotions: if, on the other hand, the reality of love draws upon us with the full force of its presence, it will negate the concept that disquiets us and destroy finitude by preventing all idea of it from entering our minds. Thus only reality is eternal, the most perfect reality, however, comes to us only in the enjoyment of love; it is thus the most eternal of all sentiments. -- {FEUER} {Pre-SCHOP} Egoism, in truth, ceases only when the 'I' is subsumed by the 'you': this 'I' and 'you', however, no longer show themselves as such the moment I align myself with the wholeness of the world: 'I' and 'the world' means nothing less than 'I' alone; the world will not become a complete reality for me until it becomes 'you', and this is something it can become only in the shape of the individual whom I love. This phenomenon may be repeated in a child or in a friend; but we shall only ever be able to love the child or the friend fully once we have learned to love at all, and this is something that man, for ex., must learn from woman; there is no doubt but that our love for a child or for a friend is merely a kind of makeshift solution, which is most clearly recognized as such by those who have found perfect happiness in sexual love; this is simply one feature of the multiplicity of human nature which allows a place even for abnormalities, abnormalities of the most ridiculous as of the most tragic kind.

(...) Not only you, but I, too, -- like everyone else -- now live in circumstances and conditions which force us to depend upon surrogate measures and makeshift solutions; for you, no less than for me, the truest, most real life can be only something imaginary, something we long for. I had reached the age of 36 before I divined the true reason for my creative impulse: until then I had regarded art as the end and life as a means to that end. But I made this discovery too late, with the result that my new instinct for life was bound to end in tragedy. {anti-FEUEr} By taking a broader view of today's world, we can further see that love has now become wholly impossible [P. 305] {FEUEr} If it is a question, therefore, of seeking to save ourselves by means of some makeshift solution, I can find none better than a totally honest approach to the above-described state of affairs, and a frank admission of the truth, even if there be no other personal gain to be had from this than the pride of knowing the truth, and, ultimately, the will and the endeavour to pass on that knowledge to the rest of mankind and thus set them on the path that will lead to their redemption. In this way we are certainly working for the whole of mankind, but it is purely as a makeshift solution, since we know that it is not on his own that the individual can be happy, but only when the whole of mankind is happy, for only then may he, too, feel satisfied. You see that in this I share your point of view entirely, except that I regard this point of view not as an end in itself but simply as a means, as a way to achieve my goal: this goal, however, has not yet been recognized as such by the majority of people: but I

have indicated above what I understand it to be; it is to render love possible as the most perfect realization of reality – truth; not a conceptual, abstract, non-sensuous love (the only kind possible now) but the love of ‘I’ and ‘you’.

Thus I can regard the prodigious efforts of the human race, and hence of each and every present-day science, merely as ways and means whose goal in itself is so infinitely simple and yet so divine an outcome. Thus I respect every one of these exertions, and acknowledge that every step is necessary, rejoicing heartily when each new step is taken: I myself, however, have this simple goal so clearly in sight that I find it impossible to tear my eyes away from it in order to participate in this striving (which is basically unconscious of its goal): only the pressure of a great movement could bring about such an act of self-denial on my part; I shall welcome it, if and when it comes, as the sole means of redemption for me. – But will you now hold it against me if I simply shrug off with a smile your advice to abandon my dreams and egotistical fancies, and devote myself instead to what alone is real, life itself and its aspirations, and if I prefer to believe that I may devote myself to total reality much more decisively, more consciously, and more immediately by applying every expression of my life, including the most anguished, solely to that goal and to publicizing it? **You will, I hope, agree with me if, for ex., I deny ‘Robespierre’ that tragic significance which he has hitherto had for you, or admit it only with considerable reservations. This type of character is so deeply unsympathetic to me because in none of the individuals who take after him can I find the least idea of what constitutes the true import of man’s striving since the time of our degeneracy from nature.** What is tragic about Robespierre is really the unbelievable wretchedness which this man displayed when, having reached the goal of his ambitions, he stood there totally ignorant of what he should do with the power he had achieved. He only becomes tragic because he admits as much to himself and because he was destroyed [P. 306] by his inability to do anything or to bring any happiness to people’s lives. That is why I find his case the exact opposite of what you conceive it to be: he was not conscious of any higher purpose in the attainment of which he had recourse to unworthy means; no, it was in order to conceal his lack of any such purpose and his very real want of resource that he had recourse to the whole terrible machinery of the guillotine; for it has been shown that the ‘terreur’ was manipulated purely as a means of governing and of maintaining power, without any real passion, but purely for political – i.e. ambitious and selfish reasons. And so this deeply pitiful man – who ended up having to make an ostentatious display of his tasteless ‘vertu’ – really had no other aim than the means he adopted, as is always the case with purely political heroes who are quite justifiably destroyed by their own impotence, so that it is to be hoped that this entire class of men will soon disappear completely from history. {FEUER} *On the other hand, I remain convinced that my lohengrin (according to my own conception of it) symbolizes the most profoundly tragic situation of the present day, namely man’s desire to descend from the most intellectual heights to the depths of love, the longing to be understood instinctively, a longing which modern reality cannot yet satisfy.*

But I have held forth on this matter at sufficient length in my preface [i.e., ‘A Communication to My Friends’]. All that remains for me to indicate here is what, given my present standpoint, I must now feel urged to do if I and the rest of mankind are to draw nearer the goal which I now know has been set for mankind – but from which I, as an individual, must necessarily remain cut off as long as others continue to cut

themselves off from it – without having recourse to means of which I can no longer avail myself. This is where my art must come to the rescue: and the work of art that I had no choice but to conceive in this sense is none other than my Nibelung poem. I am almost inclined to believe that it was less the lack of clarity of the present version of the poem than your own point of view (which you have adopted with such earnestness and which is really quite remote from my own) which is to blame for your failure to understand a number of points in it. Such errors are of course possible only in the case of a reader who is himself a creative artist and who recreates the work from within himself: whereas the naïve individual assimilates the matter as it is, without any clear consciousness but at least with greater ease. For me my poem has only the following meaning:

{FEUER} Depiction of reality in the sense indicated above. – Instead of the words: ‘a gloomy day dawns on the gods: in shame shall end your noble race, if you do not give up the ring!’ I now make Erda say merely: ‘All that is – ends: a gloomy day dawns on the gods: I counsel you, shun the ring!’ – We must learn to die, and to die in the fullest sense of the word: fear of the end is the source of all lovelessness, and this fear is generated only when love itself is [P. 307] beginning to wane. {FEUER} How did it come about that a feeling which imparts the highest bliss to all living things was so far lost sight of by the human race that everything that the latter did, ordered and established was finally conceived only out of a fear of the end? My poem shows the reason why. It shows nature in all its undistorted truth and essential contradictions, contradictions which in their infinitely varied manifestations embrace even what is mutually repellent. But it is not the fact that Alberich was repulsed by the Rhine-daughters which is the definitive source of all evil – for it was entirely natural for them to repulse him; no, Alberich and his ring could not have harmed the gods unless the latter had already been susceptible to evil. Where, then, is the germ of this evil to be found? Look at the first scene between Wodan and Fricka – which leads ultimately to the scene in the 2nd act of the Valkyrie. {FEUER} The firm bond which binds them both, sprung from the involuntary error of a love that seeks to prolong itself beyond the stage of necessary change and to obtain mutual guarantees in contravention of what is eternally new and subject to change in the phenomenal world – this bond constrains them both to the mutual torment of a loveless union. {FEUER} As a result, the remainder of the poem is concerned to show how necessary it is to acknowledge change, variety, multiplicity and the eternal newness of reality and of life, and to yield to that necessity. Wodan rises to the tragic heights of willing his own destruction. This is all that we need to learn from the history of mankind: to will what is necessary and to bring it about ourselves. {FEUER} The final creative product of this supreme, self-destructive will is a fearless human being, one who never ceases to love: Siegfried. – That is all – It may be added as a matter of detail that the pernicious power that poisons love is concentrated in the gold that is stolen from nature and put to ill use, the Nibelung’s ring: the curse that clings to it is not lifted until it is restored to nature and until the gold has been returned to the Rhine. This, too, becomes clear to Wodan only at the very end, once he has reached the final goal of his tragic career; in his lust for power, he had utterly ignored what Loge had so frequently and so movingly warned him of at the beginning of the poem; initially – thanks to Fafner’s deed – he learned to recognize the power of the curse; but not until the ring proves the ruin of Siegfried,

too, does he see that only by restoring to the Rhine what had been stolen from its depths can evil be destroyed, and that is why he makes his own longed-for downfall a pre-condition of the extirpation of a most ancient wrong. Experience is everything. {FEUER} Not even Siegfried alone (man alone) is the complete 'human being': he is merely the half, only with Bruennhilde does he become the redeemer: one man alone cannot do everything; many are needed, and a suffering, self-immolating woman finally becomes the true, conscious redeemer: for it is love which is really 'the eternal feminine' itself. So much for the broadest [P. 308] and most general aspects of the poem: they contain within them all the individual and more specific details.

I cannot but think that you have taken this to be my meaning: only it seems to me that you have placed more weight on the middle and intermediary links in this great chain than is due to them as such; it is as though you had to do so in order to justify your own preconceived interpretation of my poem. On the whole I am out of sympathy with the specific objections which you have levelled against any ostensible lack of clarity in individual episodes. On the contrary, I believe it was a true instinct that led me to guard against an excessive eagerness to make things plain, for I have learned to feel that to make one's intentions too obvious risks impairing a proper understanding of the work in question; in drama – as in any work of art –, it is a question of making an impression not by parading one's opinions but by setting forth what is instinctive. It is precisely this that distinguishes my poetic material from the political material which is virtually all that is current today. By insisting, for ex., that Wodan's appearance in 'Young Siegfried' should be invested with a greater sense of motivation than is at present the case, you risk destroying the intentional sense of instinctiveness in the development of the whole which I have been at pains to achieve. Following his farewell to Bruennhilde, Wodan is in truth no more than a departed spirit: true to his supreme resolve, he must now allow events to take their course, leave things as they are, and nowhere interfere in any decisive way; that is why he has now become the 'Wanderer': {FEUER} observe him closely! He resembles us to a tee; he is the sum total of present-day intelligence, whereas Siegfried is the man of the future whom we desire and long for but who cannot be made by us, since he must create himself on the basis of our own annihilation. In such a guise, Wodan – you must admit – is of extreme interest to us, whereas he would inevitably seem unworthy if he were merely a subtle intriguer, which is what he would be if he gave advice which was apparently meant to harm Siegfried but which in truth was intended to help not only Siegfried but, first and foremost, himself: that would be an example of deceit worthy of our political heroes, but not of my jovial god who stands in need of self-annihilation. See how he confronts Siegfried in the third act! Faced with the prospect of his own annihilation, he finally becomes so instinctively human that – in spite of his supreme resolve – his ancient pride is once more stirred, provoked moreover (mark this well!) by – his jealousy of Bruennhilde; for she it is who has become his most vulnerable spot. He refuses, so to speak, to be thrust aside, but prefers to fall – to be conquered: but even this is so little premeditated on his part that, in a sudden burst of passion, he even aspires to victory, a victory which – as he says – could only make him more wretched than ever. – In announcing my intentions I was obliged to keep within extremely narrow bounds in accordance with my own feelings on the matter: none the less, my hero should not leave behind the impression of a totally unconscious [P. 309] individual: on the contrary, in Siegfried I have tried to

depict what I understand to be the most perfect human being, whose highest consciousness expresses itself in the fact that all consciousness manifests itself solely in the most immediate vitality and action: the enormous significance I attach to this consciousness - which can almost never be stated in words - will become clear to you from Siegfried's scene with the Rhine-daughters; here we learn that Siegfried is infinitely wise, for he knows the highest truth, that death is better than a life of fear: he, too, knows all about the ring, but pays no heed to its power, because he has better things to do; he keeps it simply as a token of the fact that he has not learned the meaning of fear. You will admit that all the splendour of the gods must inevitably grow pale in the presence of this man. Above all, I am struck by your question why, since the Rhinegold is returned to the Rhine, the gods nevertheless perish? - I believe that, at a good performance, even the most naïve spectator will be left in no doubt on this point. {FEUER} It must be said, however, that the gods' downfall is not the result of points in a contract which can of course be interpreted and twisted and turned at will - for which one would need only the services of a legally qualified politician acting as a lawyer; no, the necessity of this downfall arises from our innermost feelings - just as it arises from Wodan's feelings. Thus it was important to justify this sense of necessity emotionally, and this comes about as a matter of course providing only that the spectator follow the course of the entire action through each of its simple and natural motives, and that he follow it, moreover, from beginning to end with complete sympathy: when Wodan finally gives expression to this sense of necessity, he is merely repeating what we ourselves already deem to be necessary. When, at the end of the Rhinegold, Loge calls after the gods as they enter Valhalla: 'They are hurrying to meet their end who think their might will last', he is simply expressing our own feelings at this moment, for anyone who follows the prelude sympathetically, rather than hypercritically and analytically, and who allows the events to work upon his emotions will be bound to admit the truth of Loge's remark.

{FEUER} Let me now say something about Bruennhilde. This figure, too, you have misunderstood inasmuch as you find her refusal to hand over the ring to Wodan harsh and unyielding. Did you not feel that Bruennhilde has cut herself off from Wodan and all the other gods for the sake of - love, because - where Wodan clings to plans - she only - loved? Moreover, from the moment Siegfried awakens her, she has no longer any other knowledge save that of love. Now - the symbol of this love - after Siegfried has left her - is the ring: when Wodan demands it back from her, all she can think of is the reason for having left Wodan (when she acted out of love), and there is only one thing that she now knows, namely that she had renounced her divinity for the sake of love. But she knows that love is uniquely divine. Valhalla's splendour may fall in ruins, but she will not sacrifice the ring - (love --). I ask you, would she not stand before us as pitiful, mean and common if she were to refuse to return [P. 310] the ring because she had learned (from Siegfried, say) of its magic spell and of the power of its gold? You cannot seriously believe such a thing of this glorious woman? - But if you shudder at the thought that this woman should cling to this accursed ring as a symbol of love, you will feel exactly as I intended you to feel, and herein you will recognize the power of the Nibelung curse raised to its most terrible and most tragic heights: only then will you recognize the need for the whole of the final drama, 'Siegfried's Death'. This is something we must experience for ourselves if we are to be made fully cons-

cious of the evil of gold. Why does Bruennhilde yield so quickly to Siegfried when he comes to her in disguise? Precisely because the latter has torn the ring from her finger, since it was here alone that her whole strength lay. The terrible and daemonic nature of this whole scene has escaped you entirely: a 'stranger' passes – effortlessly – through the fire which, in accord with his destiny and our own experience, none but Siegfried should or could traverse: everything collapses at Br.'s feet, everything is out of joint; she is overpowered in a terrible struggle, she is 'God-forsaken'. And it is Siegfried, moreover, who in fact orders her to share his couch with him. – Siegfried whom she (unconsciously – and therefore all the more bewilderingly) almost recognizes, by his gleaming eye, in spite of his disguise. (You feel that something 'inexpressible' is happening here, and so it is very wrong of you to ask me to speak out on the subject!)

(...) It worried me that you could have so totally misunderstood certain aspects. But it certainly made clear to me that only when completed could the work hope to avoid being misunderstood: having then been seized by a violent desire to begin the music, I cheerfully abandoned myself to that urge before finally starting this letter. The completion of the Rhinegold (a task as difficult as it was important) has restored my sense of self-assurance, as you can see. I have once again realized how much of my work's meaning (given the nature of my poetic intent) is only made clear by the music: I can now no longer bear to look at the poem without the music. In time I believe I shall be able to tell you about its composition. For now let me add merely that it has become a close-knit unity: there is scarcely a bar in the orchestra which does not develop out of preceding motifs. But it is impossible to explain this in a letter.

(...) How I shall finally bring off a performance admittedly remains an enormous problem. But I shall tackle it when the time comes, since I can envisage no other aim that would be appropriate to my life. I am fairly certain that all the purely mechanical aspects of the enterprise can be brought off: but – my performers?! The very thought provokes a deep [P. 311] sigh from me. I must of course stick to young artists who have not already been totally ruined by our operatic stage: I am certainly not thinking of so-called 'celebrities'. But I shall have to wait and see how best to train my young people; what I should like is to keep my troupe together for a year without allowing them to perform in public; during that time I would work with them every day, giving them both a humane and an artistic training and gradually allowing them to ripen into their task. Even under the most favourable conditions I could not count on a first performance before the summer of 1858. But no matter how long it takes, I continue to be attracted by the idea of giving myself a reason for living in the form of concentrated activity in pursuance of an object that is unique to me. (...) Believe me, I have already contemplated 'a life in the country': two years ago I visited a hydropathic establishment with the intention of becoming a radically healthy human being; I was prepared to give up my art and everything else if only I could return to being a child of nature. My dear friend, how I was forced to laugh at this naïve wish of mine, when I found myself on the verge of madness! None of us shall see the promised land: we shall all die in the wilderness. We are ripe for the madhouse, as the saying goes: we'll never recover. Since life is as it now is, nature permits only abnormalities to thrive, at best we are forced to be martyrs; he who wishes to avoid his vocation in life thereby rails against the possibilities of

his existence. I can no longer exist except as an artist: everything else – now that I can no longer encompass love and life – disgusts me, or else is of interest only inasmuch as it has a bearing on art. The result of course is a life of torment, but it is the only possible life. I may add in this context that I have had some strange experiences with my nerves: when I suffer pain (which is now my normal state), I am bound to regard my nerves as completely shattered: wondrous to tell, however, these nerves of mine have performed a wonderful service whenever the need has arisen, inspiring me with beautiful and apt ideas, so that I then experience a clear-sightedness and an agreeable sensation of receptivity and creativity such as I have never known previously. Shall I then say that my nerves are shattered? No, I cannot. **I see only that my normal condition – given the way my temperament has now developed – is a state of exaltation, whereas ordinary peace and quiet is its abnormal state. Indeed, I feel well only when I am ‘beside myself’: only then do I feel to be myself. (...)**

[P. 312] *{anti-FEUER} I am not so out of touch with nature as you suppose, even though I myself am no longer in a position to have scientific dealings with it. In these matters I look to Herwegh, who is also living here and who for some time now has been engaged in a most thorough study of nature: through this friend of mine I have learned some of the most beautiful and important things about nature, which influences me on many vital points. It is only when nature is expected to replace real life – love – that I ignore it. In this respect I resemble Bruennhilde with the ring. I would rather perish or be denied all enjoyment than renounce my belief.”*

6/54

Gluck’s Overture to Iphigeneia in Aulis (PW Vol. III; P. 153-163)

[P. 163] “Now to anyone who wished to furnish this overture with a musical Close, for sake of a special concert-performance, there presented itself the difficulty – providing he correctly grasped its contents – of bringing about a ‘satisfaction’ which not only is absolutely unaimed-at by either the general plan or the character of the motive, but must altogether do away with a correct impression of the work. Was one of these motives to finally obtain precedence, in the sense of ousting the others, or even of triumphing over them? That would be a very easy matter for all the Jubilee-overture-writers of our day; only I felt that I thus should just have not given my friend a notion of Gluck’s music – which was really my sole object in the undertaking.

So the best idea seemed one that came to me of a sudden, and helped me out of my Want. I resolved to admit no ‘satisfactory ending,’ in the wonted overture-sense of today; but, by a final resumption of the earliest motive of them all, to simply terminate the changeful play of motives in such a way that we reach at last an armistice, though no full peace. For that matter, *what lofty artwork ever gives a full, a satisfying peace? Is it not one of the noblest of art’s functions, to merely kindle in a higher sense?”*

9-12/54

**!!!!!! NOTE !!!!! – ACCORDING TO HIS OWN TESTIMONY,
WAGNER READS SCHOPENHAUER FOR THE FIRST TIME**

9-10/54

(ML; P. 508-511)

[P. 508] {SCHOP} “... I plunged deeply into my work, and on September 26th completed the exquisite fair copy of the score of *Rheingold*. In the tranquillity and stillness of my house I now also became acquainted with a book, the study of which was to assume vast importance for me. This was Arthur Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Idea*.

{SCHOP} Herwegh told me about this book, which had in a certain sense been [P. 509] discovered only recently, though more than thirty years had elapsed since its initial publication. It was only through an article relating these circumstances, by a Herr Frauenstaedt, that his own attention had first been directed to the work. I felt myself immediately attracted by it and began studying it at once. I had repeatedly experienced an inner impulse to come to some understanding of the true meaning of philosophy. *Several conversations with Lehrs in Paris during my earlier days had awakened this desire within me, which up to this time I had tried to satisfy by attempts to get something out of the Leipzig professors, then from Schelling, and later from Hegel; those attempts had all daunted me before long, and some of the writings of Feuerbach had seemed to indicate the reasons for it.* But now, apart from the interest elicited by the strange fate of this book, I was instantly captivated by the great clarity and manly precision with which the most abstruse metaphysical problems were treated from the beginning. As a matter of fact, I had already been struck by the verdict of an English critic, who had candidly confessed that his obscure but unconvinced respect for German philosophy had been attributable to its utter incomprehensibility, as represented most recently by the works of Hegel. In reading Schopenhauer, on the other hand, he had suddenly realized that it had not been his dim-wittedness but rather the intentional turgidity in the treatment of philosophical theories which had caused his bafflement. *Everyone who has been roused to great passion by life will do as I did, and hunt first of all for the final conclusions of the Schopenhauerian system; whereas his treatment of aesthetics pleased me immensely, particularly his surprising and significant conception of music. I was alarmed, as will be everyone in my frame of mind, by the moral principles with which he caps the work, for here the annihilation of the will and complete self-abnegation are represented as the only true means of redemption from the constricting bonds of individuality in its dealings with the world. For those seeking in philosophy their justification for political and social agitation on behalf of the so-called ‘free-individual’, there was no sustenance whatever here, where what was demanded was the absolute renunciation of all such methods of satisfying the claims of the human personality. At first, this didn’t sit well with me at all, and I didn’t want to abandon the so-called ‘cheerful’ Greek view of the world which had provided my vantage point for surveying my ‘Art-work of the Future’;.* Actually, it was Herwegh who made me reflect further on my own feelings with a well-timed word. This insight into the essential nothingness of the world of appearances, he contended, lies at the root of all tragedy, [P. 510] and every great poet, and even every great man, must necessarily feel it intuitively. I looked at my *Nibelung* poems and recognized to my amazement that the very things I now found so unpalatable in the theory were already long familiar to me in my own poetic conception. Only now did I understand my own

Wotan myself and, greatly shaken, I went on to a closer study of Schopenhauer's book. I now saw that before all else I had to comprehend the first part of the work, which elucidates and enlarges upon Kant's doctrine of the ideality of the world, which hitherto had seemed so firmly grounded in time and space. I considered I had taken the first step toward such an understanding simply by realizing its difficulty. From now on this book never left me entirely through the years, and by the summer of the next year I had already gone through it for the fourth time. Its gradual effect on me was extraordinary and, at any rate, decisive for the rest of my life. Through it, I was able to judge things which I had previously grasped only intuitively, and it gave me more or less the equivalent of what I had gained musically from the close study of the principles of counterpoint, after being released from the tutelage of my old teacher Weinlig. All my subsequent occasional writings about artistic matters of special interest to me clearly demonstrate the impact of my study of Schopenhauer and what I had gained by it. Meanwhile, I felt impelled to send the esteemed philosopher a copy of my Nibelung poem; I appended to the title in my own hand only the words 'With admiration', without any other communication. This was in part a result of the great inhibition I felt about confiding in him, and also due to the feeling that if Schopenhauer could not figure out from reading my poem what kind of person I was, the most comprehensive letter on my part would not help him to do so. Thus I also renounced any vain wish to be honored by a written response from him. Yet I learned later through Karl Ritter and also through Dr. Wille, both of whom looked up Schopenhauer in Frankfurt, that he had expressed himself very favorably and meaningfully about my poem.

{SCHOP} In addition to these studies, I continued with the composition of the music for Walkure, living in great seclusion, and spending my leisure time in long walks in the surrounding countryside. As usually happened with me whenever I was actively engaged in musical production, my poetic impulses were also stimulated. It was no doubt in part the earnest frame of mind produced by Schopenhauer, now demanding some rapturous expression of its fundamental traits, which gave me the idea for a Tristan and Isolde. I had been quite familiar with the subject from my Dresden studies, but my attention had been drawn to it more recently [P. 511] by Karl Ritter's telling me of his plan to dramatize it. At the time I had pulled no punches in pointing out to my young friend where the defects in his draft lay. He had confined himself to the adventurous incidents in the romance, while I had been immediately struck by its innate tragedy and was determined to cut away all the inessentials from this central theme. Returning from a walk one day, I jotted down the contents of the three acts in which I envisaged concentrating the material when I came to work it out at some future date. {FEUER} I wove into the last act an episode I later did not use: this was a visit by Parzival, wandering in search of the Grail, to Tristan's sickbed. I identified Tristan, wasting away but unable to die of his wound, with the Amfortas of the Grail romance. For the moment I was able to force myself not to devote further attention to this conception, in order that my great musical project be not interrupted."

10/7/54 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 319)

[P. 319] {anti-FEUER} {SCHOP} “... let us treat the world only with contempt; for it deserves no better: but let no hopes be placed in it, that our hearts be not deluded! It is evil, evil, fundamentally evil, only the heart of a friend and a woman’s tears can redeem it from its curse. But nor can we respect it like this, and certainly in nothing that resembles honour, fame – or whatever else these foolish things are called. – It belongs to Alberich: no one else!! Away with it! (...) I hate all appearances with lethal fury: I’ll have no truck with hope, since it is a form of self-lying.”

10/26/54 Letter to Hans Von Bulow (SLRW; P. 321-322)

[P. 321] [In response to a musical composition by Von Bulow, Wagner says:] “If ... I have any serious reservations – as regards the rules – they concern your attitude towards harmonic euphony: I confess that the only impression I have been able to form here is that of highly meaningful music performed on instruments that are out of tune, for it is precisely here that I most look for the determinative sensuous impression of an outstanding performance before I can rid myself of the fear that now besets me. I know only too well from experience that there are objects which can be depicted in music but which can be expressed only if the composer invents harmonies that will grate upon the ear of the musical philistine. But, having recognized this in the course of my own compositions, I nevertheless found myself constantly guided by a quite special instinct which led me to conceal the harmonic dissonances as much as possible and finally to place them in such a way that (to my own mind) they were finally no longer felt as such. Now, I cannot avoid the feeling that you yourself have adopted an almost opposite approach, in other words you believe it is important that the dissonance be felt as a dissonance, and the worst example of this seems to me where all your powers of invention are concentrated in expressing just such a dissonance. (...) [P. 322] ... I soon fell back into my old weakness of believing that art consists in communicating the strangest and most unusual feelings to a listener in such a way that his attention is not distracted by the material that he is listening to, but that he yields unresistingly, as it were, to an ingratiating allurements and thus involuntarily assimilates even what is most alien to his nature. –

You see, Hans, I have been through similar experiences myself during my earliest period as a composer, when I regarded everything as being of secondary importance to the discovery of some such harmonic joke. At that time I could do nothing properly and would certainly not have been capable of writing a piece of music that was as well-constructed and that attested to such mastery as does your Fantasy. But in your own case it astonishes me: certainly, you are mistaken about yourself, you are far too inventive, to take any serious pleasure in such antics.

You see, there is something typically Jewish about the cold and indifferent way in which others invariably pay heed only to what is different about the things we have to tell them, and about the way they talk to us as though what really mattered did not exist. – “

12/16?/54

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 323-324)

[P. 323] {SCHOP} “Apart from making – slow – progress on my music, I have now become exclusively preoccupied with a man who – albeit only in literary form – has entered my lonely life like a gift from heaven. It is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant, whose ideas – as he himself puts it – he is the first person to think through to their logical conclusion. The German professors have – very wisely – ignored him for 40 years: he was recently rediscovered – to Germany’s shame – by an English critic [Editors’ Footnote: John Oxenford, ‘Iconoclasm in German Philosophy’ in *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* of April 1853]. What charlatans all these Hegels, etc. are beside him! *His principle idea, the final denial of the will to live, is of terrible seriousness, but it is uniquely redeeming. Of course, it did not strike me as anything new, and nobody can think such a thought if he has not already lived it. But it was this philosopher who first awakened the idea in me with such clarity. When I think back on the storms that have buffeted my heart and on its convulsive efforts to cling to some hope in life – against my own better judgment --, indeed, now that these storms have swelled so often to the fury of a tempest, -- I have yet found a sedative which has finally helped me to sleep at night; it is the sincere and heartfelt yearning for death: total unconsciousness, complete annihilation, the end of all dreams – the only ultimate redemption! –*

(...) And so I find myself growing increasingly mature: if I still toy with art, it is only as a way of passing the time. You will see from the accompanying sheet how I now seek to amuse myself. –

For the sake of young Siegfried, the fairest of my life’s dreams, I expect that I must still complete the Nibelung pieces: the Valkyrie has exhausted me too much for me to begrudge myself this relaxation; I have now reached the second half of the last act. But it will be 1856 before I have completed the whole thing, and 1858, the tenth year of my hegira, before I can perform it, -- if fate so decrees. But since I have never in my life enjoyed the true happiness of love, I intend to erect a further monument to this most beautiful of dreams, a monument in which this love will be properly sated from beginning to end: I have planned in my head a Tristan and Isolde, the simplest, but most full-blooded musical conception; with the ‘black flag’ which flutters at the end, I shall then cover myself over, in order – to die. –“

[1855]

3/55

Letter to Franz Liszt (CWL: P. 73)

[P. 73] {FEUER} {SCHOP} “A thousand thanks to dear M. for her beautiful and kind lines. You all appear to me like a family of saints. *Ah, we are all holy martyrs; perhaps I shall one day be a real one, but in that case all will be over for me with art – that beautiful delusion, the last and the most sublime, to hide from us the misery of the world.*”

5/12/55

Letter to Jacob Sulzer (SLRW; P. 338-340)

[P. 338] {FEUER} {SCHOP} “That I again allowed myself to be seduced into consorting with a world with which I had in fact broken off all relations long ago rests upon an inconsistency in my nature which, to my great regret, has existed for as long as I can remember. My dealings with the public world of art have necessarily brought me to the point where all I can feel for it is contempt, a contempt which every serious thinking person must feel nowadays. The repeated discovery that I can only besmirch myself, i.e. insult my conscience, through contact with this art has already inspired in me the wish to shuffle off the artist in me, in order to stifle a yearning which I can never seek to appease without suffering renewed torments. *But all I could probably then become, were I really able to break free from my art, would be a Schopenhauerian saint! Well, I need not worry on that score, since as long as there is a glimmer of life in me, these artist’s illusions of mine will almost certainly not release their hold on me; they are really a kind of decoy with which my instinct for self-preservation repeatedly lures my better judgment into its service. I can really imagine nothing pure and clear that is not immediately contaminated by such images and which, once my insight has passed, repeatedly makes me an artistic visionary once again. The stupidest thing of all is that I can see all this quite clearly and know that I am always the victim of a certain delusion, but, instead of perceiving this delusion as such and protecting myself against it, I allow this, too, to become an image which provokes me with the outline and colour I need to portray it, at which point I then turn round to face life once more in all its most sensual and captivating impressions and connections, in order that the dance may start up all over again.*

{FEUER} {SCHOP} *And so this artistic nature of mine is very much a daemon which repeatedly blinds me to the clearest insights and draws me into a maelstrom of confusion, passion and folly, and, finally, restores me to a world which I had really overcome long ago and whose nullity and emptiness is perhaps more obvious to me than it is to many others, since, ultimately – given the lively sensitivity of my own feelings --, it must necessarily reveal itself to me as utterly pitiful. And so there are often moments in my life when I feel so completely annihilated by this insight that I suddenly begin to ask myself whether I can go on living. You will perhaps laugh when I tell you that such moments occur above all when I see an animal being tormented: I cannot begin to describe what I then feel and how, as if by magic, I am suddenly permitted an insight into the essence of life itself in all its undivided coherency, an insight which I no longer see as mawkish sentimentality but which I recognize as the most genuine and profound way of looking at things, which is why I have taken such a great liking to Schopenhauer in particular, because he has instructed me on these matters to my total satisfaction (?).*

[P. 339] {FEUER} {SCHOP} *It is at moments such as these that I see the ‘veil of Maya’ completely lifted, and what my eyes then see is terrible, so dreadful that – as I say – I suddenly ask myself whether I can go on living; but it is at this moment that another veil descends, a veil which – however dissimilar it may appear – is ultimately always the same ‘veil of Maya’, in all its artistic forms, which casts me back into the world of self-deception where – gladly (because necessarily), I freely admit, -- I then allow myself to become entangled, often to the point of utter distraction.*

Well, it really is a pretty awful business! There is no doubt but that I cause many people pain in this way; but it is equally certain that I cause nobody such hellish torments as I inflict upon myself; it is the artist in me who is almost entirely to blame for this; and so, if there is anyone who can derive any pleasure from what I have created, he really has nothing to complain about if I cause him distress, since I certainly suffer more as a result than he himself.

I scarcely think you will understand all that I am saying, for – do not be alarmed – I am bound to think of you as far more worldly than I know myself to be; for you even set store by honour and reputation, i.e. recognition by those very people who are simply not in a position to recognize us, since they are incapable of knowing us. (...) As long as my head is filled with such an insane project as the completion of my Nibelung plays, I can feel only gratitude that I have friends who wish outward successes upon me: if only these outward successes had a little more meaning and sense! That is what is so insane about this whole affair, namely that we must always speculate with counterfeit money, if we have to speculate at all – which is precisely what is so stupid.

[P. 340] (...) {FEUER} {SCHOP}... *I have become dashed indifferent to politics and expect nothing from either the continued existence or from the overthrow of existing conditions.*

(...) {FEUER} ... *for a long time my artistic nature forced me to live a life of hope, a hope which was unique to me only insofar as I could hope on behalf of the whole world; the monstrous shapes of this great universal hope I once reduced to the form of certain demands, on which we could of course never agree. Well, I have now renounced this hope, together with all of my demands: what remains is a certain insight and the sincere wish not to be distracted too often from this insight by various kinds of new, but very fleeting, illusions ...*

3-6/55? (ML; P. 520-521)

[P. 520] “Berlioz informed me that it was utterly impossible to get anything unfavorable to Meyerbeer accepted in a Paris paper. It was less easy to communicate with him on more serious artistic concerns, for on such matters he always showed himself to be the glib Frenchman, expressing himself with well-honed arguments, and in his own certainty never entertaining any suspicion that he might not have understood his interlocutor properly. Once, when I had warmed to the subject, and to my astonishment suddenly found myself a master of the French language, I tried to express myself to him on the mystery of ‘artistic [P. 521] conception’. I sought by this term to designate the strength of the impressions life makes on our inner self, which hold us captive in their way until we disburden ourselves of them by the unique development of forms out of the innermost soul, which those external impressions have by no means summoned up but merely stirred from their deep slumber, so that the artistic form takes shape not as the effect of the impressions received from life but rather as a liberation from them. Hereupon Berlioz smiled in an understanding and condescending way and said: ‘Nous appelons cela: digérer’ [i.e., ‘we call that: digestion’]. My amazement at this rather abrupt summary of my painstaking explanation was substantiated in due course by the outward behavior of my new-won friend. I invited him to my last concert

and thereafter to a modest farewell supper which I gave for my few friends in my lodgings. He soon left this latter function, pleading illness; those friends remaining behind made no secret of their conviction that Berlioz had been annoyed by the enthusiastic farewell accorded me by the public.”

6/7/55

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 343-347)

[P. 343] {FEUER} “(...) In the Ninth Symphony (as a work of art), it is the last movement with its chorus which is without doubt the weakest section, it is important only from the point of view of the history of art since it reveals to us, in its very naïve way, the embarrassment felt by a real tone-poet who (after Hell and Purgatory) does not know how finally to represent Paradise. *And indeed, my dearest Franz, there is a considerable difficulty with this ‘Paradise’, and if there is anyone who can confirm this for us, it is – remarkably enough – Dante himself, the singer of a Paradiso which I have no doubt is similarly the weakest part of his Divine Comedy. I have followed Dante through Hell and Purgatory with the deepest fellow-feeling; having emerged from the pit of hell, I washed myself with fervent emotion, together with the poet, at the foot of Mount Purgatory – in the waters of the sea, I then savoured the divine morn, the pure air, rose up from one cornice to the next, mortified one passion after another, struggled to subdue my wild instinct for survival, until I finally stood before the flames, abandoned my final wish to live and threw myself into the fiery glow in order that, sinking into rapt contemplation of Beatrice, I might cast aside my entire personality, devoid of will. But that I was roused once more from this ultimate self-liberation in order, basically, to revert to being what I had been before, simply in order that, on the basis of the most laboured sophisms unworthy of a great mind, and of what I can call only the most infantile inventions, the Catholic doctrine of a God who, for his own self-glorification, has created the existential hell that I have had to suffer should be confirmed in this highly problematical and, for my own part, utterly unacceptable way – this has left me feeling very unsatisfied.* In order to do justice to Dante (as with Beethoven), I had to revert to an historical standpoint; I had to imagine myself living at the time of Dante and bear in mind the actual aim of his poem, which clearly sets out to produce a specific effect upon his contemporaries, and in particular upon Church reform; I was forced to admit that in this sense he had the uncommon knack of expressing generally valid, popular ideas with unfailing accuracy, and where I most agreed with him was in his praise of those saints who voluntarily chose a life of poverty. And even in his sophistry I was forced to admire his profound poetic imagination and power of presentation (just as [P. 344] I admire Beethoven’s musical skill in the last movement of his Ninth Symphony); I was finally forced to feel the most profound and sublime emotion by virtue of his splendidly inspired idea of turning his childhood sweetheart Beatrice into the figure in whom divine teachings are revealed to him, and, inasmuch as this teaching is designed to encourage the emancipation of personal egoism through love, I am delighted to acknowledge this teaching of Beatrice. But the fact that Beatrice emerges from a car in a Church pageant and, instead of offering us this pure and simple teaching, makes an ostentatious display of all the subtleties of Church scholasticism – this, in spite of the poet’s assurances that she grows increasingly

radiant and glowing, makes me regard her as increasingly cold and, finally, as an object of such indifference that, as a plain reader, I may well acknowledge that Dante proceeds here entirely in accordance with his own age and his own aims, but, as a sympathetic fellow-poet, I wish that I could have lost my private consciousness, and hence consciousness in general, in that refining fire, for, had I done so, I should have felt undeniably better than I do in the company of a Catholic God, even if Dante portrays Him with the same degree of skill as you yourself will no doubt show in attempting to celebrate Him in your choruses.

What I am offering you here is simply an accurate reflection of the impression that the Divine Comedy has had upon me, since, in the 'Paradiso', the poem seems to me to amount to no more than a 'divine comedy' which is ruined for me both as a participant and as a spectator. {FEUER} *The really perplexing problem among all these other questions is always how, in this terrible world of ours, beyond which there is only nothingness, it might be possible to infer the existence of a God who would make life's immense sufferings merely something apparent, while the redemption we long for is seen as something entirely real that may be consciously enjoyed. This may not be a problem for philistines – especially for the English variety: the reason they get on so splendidly with their God is because they enter into a contract with Him, according to whose terms they have to fulfil a certain number of contractual points, so that, finally, as a reward for various shortcomings in this world, they may enjoy eternal bliss in the world to come. But what do we have in common with such vulgar ideas? (...) {SCHOP}... man (like any other animal) is a will to live; his organs are created to meet various needs, and one of these organs is his intellect, i.e., the organ for comprehending whatever is external to it, with the aim of using such objects to satisfy life's need, according to its strength and ability. A normal man is therefore one in whom this organ – which is directed [P. 345] outwards and whose function is to perceive things, just as the stomach's function is to digest food – is equipped with sufficient ability to satisfy a need that is external to it, and – for the normal person – this need is exactly the same as that of the most common beast, namely the instinct to eat and to reproduce; for this will to live, which is the actual metaphysical basis of all existence, demands solely to live, i.e. to eat and reproduce itself perpetually, and this tendency is demonstrably one and the same whether it be found in the dull rock, in the more delicate plant, or, finally, in the human animal; the only difference lies in the organs which man, having reached the higher stages of his objectification, must use in order to satisfy more complicated needs which, for that reason, are increasingly contested and harder to meet. Once we have gained this insight (and it is an insight which has been confirmed by the tremendous findings of modern science), we shall suddenly understand what it is that is characteristic about the lives of by far the greater part of mankind of all ages, and we shall no longer be surprised if we always think of them as beasts: for this is the normal human condition. {FEUER} {SCHOP} But just as the vast majority of people remain below this norm, inasmuch as their complex cognitive organ is not even developed to the point where it can adequately meet their normal needs, so we also find (albeit only rarely, of course) abnormal individuals in whom the cognitive organ, i.e. the brain, has evolved beyond the ordinary and adequate level of development found in the rest of humanity, just as nature, after all, often creates monsters in which one organ is much more developed than any other. Such a*

monstrosity – if it reaches its highest level of development – is genius, which essentially rests upon no more than an abnormally fertile and capacious brain. This cognitive organ, which originally and in normal circumstances looks beyond itself in order to meet the needs of the will to live, gains such lively and fascinating impressions from outside –in the case, that is, of abnormal development – that there are times when it breaks free from its role of serving the will – which had after all created it solely for that purpose – and is thus able to perceive the world undistorted by the will, i.e. aesthetically; the objects of the world of external phenomena are thus seen undistorted by the will and are its ideal images, which it is the artist's task to capture and set down, as it were. In the case of a strong individual, his interest in the world of external phenomena is necessarily encouraged by this act of observation, and it grows to the point where he permanently forgets the original needs of his own personal will, in other words he begins to sympathize with the things outside him, and he does so for their own sake and not because of any personal interest in them. The question must then be asked what we see in this abnormal state, and whether our sympathy can be regarded as participating in the joy of others or, rather, in their suffering? The answer to this question is provided by the true geniuses and the true saints of all ages, who tell us that they have seen only suffering and felt only fellow-suffering. In other words, they have recognized the normal [P. 346] condition of all living things and seen the cruel, eternally contradictory nature of the will to live, which is common to all living things and which, in eternal self-mutilation, is blindly self-regarding; the appalling cruelty of this will, which even in sexual love wills only its own reproduction, first appeared here reflected in that particular cognitive organ which, in its normal state, recognized itself as having been created by the will and therefore as being subservient to it; and so, in its abnormal, sympathetic state, it developed to the point of seeking lasting and, finally, permanent freedom from its shameful servitude, a freedom which it ultimately achieved only by means of a complete denial of the will to live.

{FEUER} This act of denying the will is the true action of the saint: that it is ultimately accomplished only in a total end to individual consciousness – for there is no other consciousness except that which is personal and individual – was lost sight of by the naïve saints of Christianity, confused, as they were, by Jewish dogma, and they were able to deceive their confused imagination by seeing that longed-for state as a perpetual continuation of a new state of life freed from nature, without our judgment as to the moral significance of their renunciation being impaired in the process, since in truth they were striving only to achieve the destruction of their own individuality, i.e. their existence. This most profound of all instincts finds purer and more meaningful expression in the oldest and most sacred religion known to man, in Brahman teaching, and especially in its final transfiguration in Buddhism, where it achieves its most perfect form. {FEUER} Admittedly, it puts forward a myth in which the world is created by God; but it does not praise this act as a boon, but presents it as a sin committed by Brahma for which the latter atones by transforming himself into the world and by taking upon himself the immense sufferings of the world; he is redeemed in those saints who, by totally denying the will to live, pass over into 'nirvana', i.e., the land of non-being, as a result of their consuming sympathy for all that suffers. The Buddha was

just such a saint; according to his doctrine of metempsychosis, every living creature will be reborn in the shape of that being to which he caused pain, however pure his life may otherwise have been, so that he himself may learn to know pain; his suffering soul continues to migrate in this way, and he himself continues to be reborn until such time as he causes no more pain to any living creature in the course of some new incarnation but, out of fellow-suffering, completely denies himself and his own will to live. *How sublime and uniquely satisfying is this teaching in contrast to the Christian-Judaic dogma according to which each human being – for in this case, of course, the suffering beast exists only to serve man! – merely has to behave himself in the eyes of the Church throughout the short space of his life on earth, in order to lead an extremely easy life for the rest of eternity, whereas those who have not followed the teachings of the Church in this brief life will suffer equally eternal torment as a result! We may allow that Christianity is such [P. 347] a contradictory phenomenon because we know it only through its contamination by narrow-minded Judaism and through its resultant distortion, whereas modern research has succeeded in proving that pure, uncontaminated Christianity is no more and no less than a branch of that venerable Buddhist religion which, following Alexander's Indian campaign, found its way, among other places, to the shores of the Mediterranean. In early Christianity we can still see clear traces of a total denial of the will to live, and a longing for the end of the world, i.e. the cessation of all life. The unfortunate part about it, however, is that such profound insights into the nature of things are vouchsafed only to those individuals who are totally abnormal in the sense described above, as a result of which they can be fully understood by them and by them alone; in order to convey these insights to others, the sublime founders of the world's religions must therefore speak in such images as are accessible to people's ordinary – normal – powers of comprehension; whereas much is distorted in this way (although the Buddha's teaching relating to the transmigration of souls almost certainly expresses the truth), the vulgarity and licentiousness of general egoism that characterizes normal people means that, in the end, the image is necessarily distorted to the point of grotesqueness, and – I feel sorry for the poet who takes it upon himself to restore this grotesque distortion to its original form. It seems to me that Dante, especially in the Paradiso, has not entirely succeeded in this: in his account of the divine natures he often strikes me as a childish Jesuit. {SCHOP} But you, my worthy friend, may have more success here, and since you are planning to depict this image in music, I can almost predict your success in advance, since music is the real artistic likeness of the world itself, for those who are initiated into its mysteries no error is possible here."*

Late 55 (?) Letter to Roeckel (in WAGNER AN ROECKEL, P. 54-64 as Quoted by L.J. Rather in *The Dream of Self-Destruction*, P. 87-89)

{SCHOP} *"The normal human's organs, specifically the brain, are solely at the will's service. The dissociation of cognition from the will's service is an abnormal act, which occurs only in abnormally organized beings (as a monstrosity). In this state, at highest potency in genius, cognition becomes aware of precisely what the normal state of affairs is, and thus recognizes that the brain, freed now in the genius, is elsewhere*

solely in the will's service, and asks what this all-forming, all dominating will has so far shown itself to be, up to the point where it falls silent.

{SCHOP} With shame we see it wills only to continue living, to feed (by destroying others) and reproduce itself. As really active, we can't become aware of anything beyond. In the abnormal state in which we become aware of this, we must ask if it's not a highly questionable matter to serve a will so constituted. We find the same will present in all perceptible phenomena, that all individual phenomena are thus only our apperception in accordance with the basic forms of perception, recognizing the individualizations of the will which perpetually consumes itself to reproduce itself, hence of being in constant conflict, eternal contradiction with itself; the only visible outcome of this contradiction is pain and suffering. To what height are we impelled by this will? To where we now stand, the possibility (in abnormal cases) of setting free one of its organs, cognition, and recognizing the will's nature.

{SCHOP} We feel only the horror of that will by virtue of this knowledge, and thus compassion (though com-pleasure is not felt), so knowledge here acquires its moral significance, till now unrecognized. In the highest, happiest stage we have sympathy for all the living, found in unknowing service to the will; here's the source of sublime virtue, salvation, the perfect union with all that is separated by the illusion of individuality.

{SCHOP} In a concern [should we be concerned] for making things somewhat more pleasing, for softening the everlasting conflict of the will with itself, the frightful perpetual devouring and reproduction, through more humane arrangements? Who believes and hopes for this has achieved none of the knowledge in question; his knowledge is still fully in the will's service, through which individuation's fraud still deceives our captured knowledge about its nature. Thus, the highest outcome of knowing, compassion, remains the only one possible salvation: conscious denial of the will, awareness of its reprehensible character and refusal to share in it; this primarily, is solely conceivable and feasible for us as compassionate renunciation of the individual will. But this is in fact precisely a denial of the will in general, its annihilation."

10/3/55

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 351-352)

[P. 351] "So, my dearest Franz! Today I am sending you the completed first two acts of the 'Valkyrie' I am worried that the second act contains so much material; there are two crises here of such import and such power that there is really enough material for two acts; but they are both so interdependent, and the one follows so immediately upon the other that it would be quite impossible to keep them apart. If it is presented as I require —and if all my intentions are fully understood — it is bound to produce a sense of shock beyond anything previously experienced. But a thing like this is written only for those people who can bear up under a certain strain (that is for no one!); the fact that the incompetent and the infirm will complain will certainly not be allowed to affect my decision. But whether it has all turned out satisfactorily — even according to my own intentions — only you can say; I can simply not do it differently. In disconsolate and dispassionate hours [P. 352] what I was most afraid of was Wodan's great scene, and especially the revelation of his fate

to Bruennhilde, indeed, in London I was once on the point of discarding this scene entirely; in order to resolve the matter, I went back to my sketch once again and declaimed the scene to myself, bringing to it all the necessary expression; fortunately, I discovered in this way that my spleen was unjustified, and that, on the contrary, a proper rendition produces a most musical and riveting effect. In certain passages I have given more precise indications as to how I intend them to be played, but there is a great deal still to be done, and it will one day be a major task to initiate some talented singer and actor into the very heart of my intentions by conveying my ideas to him in person. I am confident that you will see what is needed immediately. *This is the most important scene for the development of the whole of the great four-part drama and, as such, will presumably soon receive the necessary interest and attention. (...)*"

[1856]

5/16/56? (ML; P. 528-529)

[P. 528] {FEUER} *"Burnouff's Introduction a l'histoire du Bouddhisme was the book that stimulated me most; I even distilled from it the material for a dramatic poem, which has remained with me ever since, if only in a very rough outline, and might one day even be brought to fruition. I gave it the title Die Sieger ['The Victors']; it was based on a simple legend of a Jandala maiden, who is received into the elevated order of mendicants known as the Cakyamounis as a result of her painfully intense and purified love for Ananda, the chief disciple of the Buddha. Apart from the beauty and the profound significance of the simple tale, I was influenced to choose it as much by its peculiar aptness for the musical procedures that I have since developed. To the mind of the Buddha, the previous lives in former incarnations of every being appearing before him stand revealed as clearly as the present. The simple story owed its significance to the way that the past life of the suffering principal characters was entwined in the new phase of their lives [P. 529] as being still present time. I perceived at once how the musical remembrance of this dual life, keeping the past constantly present in the hearing, might be represented perfectly to the emotional receptivities, and this decided me to keep the prospect of working out this task before me as a labor of especial love.*

I thus had two new subjects, *Tristan* and *Die Sieger*, etched upon my imagination as a continuing preoccupation from then on, alongside the *Nibelungen*, the unfinished portion of which lay before me in gigantic dimensions. The more these projects absorbed me, the more I writhed with impatience at the continual interruptions of my work by these horrible attacks of illness."

5/56 Sketch for THE VICTORS (PW Vol. VIII; P. 385-386)

[P. 385] "The Buddha on his last journey. – Ananda given water from the well by Prakriti, the Tchandala maiden. (...)

(...)

{FEUER} *Prakriti goes to Buddha, under the tree at the city's gate, to plead for union with Ananda. He asks if she is willing to fulfil the stipulations of such union?*

Dialogue with twofold meaning, interrupted by Prakriti in the sense of her passion; she sinks horrified and sobbing to the ground, when she hears at length that she must share Ananda's vow of chastity. Ananda persecuted by the Brahmins. Reproofs against Buddha's commerce with a Tchandala girl. Buddha's attack on the spirit of Caste. He tells of Prakriti's previous incarnation; she then was the daughter of a haughty Brahmin; the Tchandala King, remembering a former existence as Brahmin, had craved the Brahmin's daughter for his son, who had conceived a violent passion for her; in pride and arrogance the daughter had refused return of love, and mocked at the unfortunate. This she had now to expiate, reborn as Tchandala to feel the torments of a hopeless love; yet to renounce withal, and be led to full redemption by acceptance into Buddha's [P. 386] flock. Prakriti answers Buddha's final question with a joyful Yea. Ananda welcomes her as sister. Buddha's last teachings. All are converted by him. He departs to the place of his redemption."

8/23/56

Letter to August Roeckel (SLRW; P. 356-359)

[P. 356] "My dearest friend, your letter, far from making me feel argumentative, has rather served to confirm me in my belief that in this world nothing is ever gained by disputation. That which is most unique to us as individuals we owe not to our conceptualizations but to our intuitions: but these latter are so much our own that we can never fully express them nor adequately communicate them, for even the most complete attempt to do so – in what the artist [P. 357] does, namely his work of art – is ultimately apprehended by others, in turn, purely in accordance with their own particular way of apprehending things. {FEUER} *But how can an artist hope to find his own intuitions perfectly reproduced in those of another person, since he himself stands before his own work of art – if it really is a work of art – as though before some puzzle, which is just as capable of misleading him as it can mislead the other person.* And how, in turn, can we reach a clearer understanding of this singular state of affairs except, at best, by falling back on our own intuitions. {anti-FEUER} {SCHOP} *I can speak with some authority on this subject since I have made the most surprising discoveries on this very point. Rarely, I believe, has anyone suffered so remarkable a sense of alienation from self and so great a contradiction between his intuitions and his conceptions as I have done, for I must confess that only now have I really understood my own works of art (i.e. grasped them conceptually and explained them rationally to myself), and I have done so with the help of another person, who has furnished me with conceptions that are perfectly congruent with my own intuitions. The period during which I worked in obedience to the dictates of my inner intuitions began with the flying Dutchman; Tannhaeuser and Lohengrin followed, and if there is any single poetic feature underlying these works, it is the high tragedy of renunciation, the well-motivated, ultimately inevitable and uniquely redeeming denial of the will. It is this profound feature that gives sanction to my poem and to my music, without which they would have no ability to stir us. Now, nothing is more striking in this context than the fact that, in all the conceptions that I held and which were devoted to speculating upon and reaching an understanding of life, I was working in direct opposition to my own underlying intuitions. While, as an artist, my intuitions were of such compelling certainty that all I created was influenced by them, as a*

philosopher, I was attempting to find a totally contrasting explanation of the world which, though forcibly upheld, was repeatedly – and much to my amazement – undermined by my instinctive and purely objective artistic intuitions. My most striking experience in this respect came, finally, through my Nibelung poem; it had taken shape at a time when, relying upon my conceptions, I had constructed a Hellenistically optimistic world for myself which I held to be entirely realizable if only people wished it to exist, while at the same time seeking somewhat ingeniously to get round the problem why they did not in fact wish it to exist. I recall now having singled out the character of my Siegfried with this particular aim in mind, intending to put forward here the idea of a life free from pain; more than that, I believed I could express this idea even more clearly by presenting the whole of the Nibelung myth, and by showing how a whole world of injustice arises from the first injustice, a world which is destroyed in order -- to teach us to recognize injustice, root it out and establish a just world in its place. Well, I scarcely noticed how, in working out this plan, nay, basically even in its very design, I was unconsciously following a quite different, and [P. 358] much more profound, intuition, and that, instead of a single phase in the world's evolution, what I had glimpsed was the essence of the world itself in all its conceivable phases,, and that I had thereby recognized its nothingness, with the result, of course – since I remained faithful to my intuitions rather than to my conceptions --, what emerged was something totally different from what I had originally intended. But I also recall once having sought forcibly to assert my meaning – the only time I ever did so – in the tendentious closing words which Bruennhilde addresses to those around her, a speech in which she turns their attention away from the reprehensibility of ownership to the love which alone brings happiness; and yet I had (unfortunately!) never really sorted out in my own mind what I meant by this 'love' which, in the course of the myth, we saw appearing as something utterly and completely devastating. What blinded me in the case of this one particular passage was the interference of my conceptual meaning. Strange to relate, this particular passage continued to torment me, and it required a complete revolution in my rational outlook, such as was finally brought about by Schopenhauer, to reveal to me the cause of my difficulty and provide me with a truly fitting key-stone for my poem, which consists in an honest recognition of the true and profound nature of things, without the need to be in any way tendentious.

This sequence of events is by no means without interest, and my reason for telling you of it now is to make clear to you, at least, how I have come to interpret the problem of differentiating between intuitions and concepts – a problem resolved for me by Schopenhauer's profound and happy solution – not simply as a conception but as an experience, the truth of which has now impressed itself upon me with such compelling conviction that, especially now that I have admitted to myself the true nature of the situation, I am perfectly content to accept it for myself and not be misled into presuming to force it upon others by a process of dialectic reasoning. *I myself recognize all too well that such a conviction could never have been forced upon me if it had not already corresponded to my own deepest intuitions; equally, I recognize that it cannot be forced upon anyone else either, unless he has grasped it intuitively before he recognizes its conceptual validity. We cannot accept a thing conceptually if we have not already grasped it intuitively: this state of affairs is too self-evident for anyone who has seen it clearly for himself, especially if he feels as little of a*

philosopher as I do, to expose himself in public as a dialectician. I can speak only in works of art. Nevertheless, I ask you, in order to bring the matter to a summary conclusion: -- can you conceive of a moral action except in the sense of renunciation? and what is the greatest holiness, i.e. the most perfect redemption, if this principle is not acknowledged as the basis for all our actions? But even with such simple [P. 359] questions as these I am already straying too far from my purpose, and becoming more abstract than is good for me. Let me tell you, therefore, something about my concrete existence.

I am only an artist: -- that is my blessing and my curse; otherwise I should gladly become a saint and know that my life was settled for me in the simplest way possible; as it is, I run round in circles, fool that I am, in search of peace and quiet, i.e. the complicated peace of an undisturbed and tolerably comfortable existence, in order -- to be able to work, and to be only an artist. (...)

(...) For my own part, what I chiefly desire for myself is the soundness of health necessary to complete all the plans of which I am still full; unfortunately, I am fuller than I need be, since, *in addition to the Nibelung dramas, I have in my head a Tristan and Isolde (love as fearful torment) and my latest subject 'The Victors' (supreme redemption, Buddhist legend), both of which are clamouring for attention, so that it requires great obstinacy on my part to suppress them in favour of the Nibelungs.* --

(...) Remain cheerful and clear-headed, and suit your philosophy to your needs: ultimately we know only what we want to know, for this much at least you will admit, namely that, for all our knowledge, we are nothing but the will incarnate, and, as such, the most powerful but certainly not the wisest, of all beings."

12/6/56 Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 361)

[P. 361] "{FEUER} (...) *During the next few days I shall finish the first scene [of 'Siegfried']. It is strange, but only in the course of composing the music does the essential meaning of my poem dawn upon me; secrets are continually being revealed to me which had previously been hidden from me. In this way everything becomes much more passionate and more urgent.* But on the whole it requires a good deal of obstinacy on my part if I am ever to finish it all: and you yourself have not exactly inspired me with any great desire to do so. --

But I also believe I am doing all this only for myself, as a means of getting through life. So be it! -- "

12/19/56 (?) (ML; P. 549-551)

[P. 549] "A severe cold caused me a very high fever for several days; by the time I recovered my birthday had arrived: sitting on the terrace once again that evening, I was surprised to hear the song of the three Rhine Maidens from the close of *Das Rheingold* wafting up to me across the gardens from a little distance. (...) In the course of the winter we had been able to offer our friends some modest excerpts from this music; and now, on this birthday evening the singing of my thoughtful lady friends surprised and touched me very much, and I suddenly felt a curious

disinclination to continue the composition of my *Nibelungen*, and in its place an inclination all the more intense to start work on *Tristan* at once. I decided to yield to this long-held, secret desire and set to work at once on this new task, which I still insisted on considering a temporary interruption of the vaster one. In order to prove to myself that I was not being scared away from the older work by any feeling of weariness with it, I determined to complete the composition of the second act of *Siegfried* at all costs [finished 8/9/57], despite the fact that I had only just begun it; this I did with great gusto, while I let *Tristan* ripen within me.

The decision to take up *Tristan* was also influenced in part by some external motives which made the enterprise of executing the work appear to me to be an attractive and advantageous prospect. These factors came to maturity when Eduard Devrient paid me a visit at the beginning of July and stayed three days. He informed me that my submission to the Grand Duchess of Baden had been accorded a favorable reception. On the whole, I gained the impression that he had been commissioned to reach some kind of agreement with me concerning a major undertaking; I let him know that I had it in mind to interrupt my big Nibelung work with a drama which, by its scale and requirements, would again bring me into contact with theaters as they were then constituted. *I would certainly be doing myself an injustice if I were to say that this external motive was the sole reason for my deciding to carry Tristan out; yet I must admit that a palpable change had taken place with respect to the mood in which I had set forth upon the other, vaster work several years before.*

At that time I had just completed my writings on art, in which [P. 550] I had tried to explain the reasons for the decay of our public art forms, particularly the theater, by a broad investigation of the relationship between those reasons and the general conditions of culture. In those days it would have been impossible for me to commence a work for which I could contemplate immediate performance at any of our theaters. Only a complete renunciation of this prospect, as I have previously demonstrated, could induce me to take up my creative work once again,. As to a performance of my Nibelung dramas, I had been obliged to face the fact squarely that such a performance could only take place under very special auspices of the kind that I later specified in the preface to the dramatic poem when it was published. Yet the successful diffusion of my older operas had colored my frame of mind in such a way that, as I approached the completion of this huge work with more than half of it behind me, I could not help seriously considering the possibilities for its production. Up to then, Liszt had nourished this secret hope in my heart by his confidence in the Grand Duke of Weimar; but the latest experiences had proved all these hopes entirely illusory, whereas on the other hand it was widely confirmed to me that, if I produced a new work similar to *Tannhaeuser* or *Lohengrin*, it would be welcomed everywhere. The manner in which I finally executed the plan for *Tristan* shows clearly how little I thought of our theaters and their capacities while doing so. Yet inasmuch as I was forced to struggle with the difficulties of my financial situation the whole time, I managed to cajole myself into believing that by interrupting the composition of my *Nibelungen* to attack *Tristan* I was acting in a practical way as a prudent planner should. Devrient in turn was very glad to hear about such an allegedly practical undertaking on my part (...)

[P. 551] From this time forward my resolve to get started on the composition of *Tristan* was inscribed in bold letters on my plan of life. For the moment I had to be grateful to all this for sustaining the good mood in which I now was able to bring the second act of *Siegfried* to a close. My daily walks on the bright summer afternoons were directed toward the tranquil Sihltal, in whose bosky surroundings I listened long and attentively to the song of the forest birds. In doing so I was astonished to hear entirely new melodies from singers whose forms I could not see and whose names were even less familiar. Whatever I brought home with me from their melodies I put into the forest scene of *Siegfried* in artistic imitation. By the beginning of August, I had managed to complete the composition of this second act with meticulous sketches. I was glad that I had reserved the third with the awakening of Bruennhilde for subsequent recommencement; for it seemed to me as if I had now solved the principle problems in carrying out the work, and that what remained was to extract the pure pleasure from doing it.

Thus armed with the conviction that I was correctly husbanding my artistic powers, I was ready to begin work on *Tristan*.”

[1857]

2/57

On Liszt's Symphonic Poems (PW Vol. III; P. 235-253)

[P. 238] {FEUER} “No doubt you ... noticed how chary I often was with words, and you surely held this for nothing but the hush of deep emotion? And such, at first, it really was; yet I must tell you, this hush of mine is now maintained with consciousness, through my having come to a more and more fixed conviction that the own-est essence of our thoughts [*Anschauungen*; i.e. intuitive vision] is unconveyable in direct ratio as they gain in depth and compass and thus withdraw beyond the bounds of speech – of speech, which does not belong to our own real selves, but is given us second-hand to help our converse with an outer world that, at bottom, can only understand us clearly when we place our-selves entirely on the level of life's vulgar needs. The more our thoughts depart from that level, the more laborious becomes the effort to express them: until at last the philosopher, at risk of being not understood at all, uses language merely in its inverse sense, or the artist takes refuge in the wondrous workshop of his art, quite useless for the life of everyday, to forge himself an expression of what even then – and in the best of cases – can be understood by none but those who already share with him his thought. Now Music is indisputably the fittest medium for the thought (*Anschauung*) that cannot be conveyed by Speech, and one well might call the inmost essence of all Beholding (*Anschauung*) Music. If, then, when Liszt placed his works before me I received that message which Music alone can convey, the circuit was completed; and to me it must appear not only foolish, but impossible, to try to speak about That which had become music for very reason that it could not be spoken out. Who has not already attempted to describe [P. 239] musical impressions by means of words? Only those who have absolutely not received the true impression, can imagine they have succeeded”

[P. 242] {FEUER} “Ah! ***, were there no Form, there would certainly be no artworks, but quite certainly no art-judges either; and this is so obvious to these latter

that the anguish of their soul cries out for Form, whereas the easy-going artist – though neither could he, as just said, exist without Form in the long run – troubles his head mighty little about it when at work. And how comes this about? Apparently because the artist, without his knowing it, is always creating forms, whereas these gentlemen create neither forms nor anything else. So that their cry looks very much as though they expected the artist, beyond his creation of the whole thing, to prepare a little tidbit for the gentlemen, who otherwise would have nothing at all for themselves. Indeed this polite attention has always been shown them by those who never could turn out anything for themselves, and therefore helped themselves along with – forms; and what that means we know well enough, don't you think? Swords without blades! But when there comes a man who can [P. 243] forge him blades (I have just been in the smithy of my young Siegfried, you see!) the boobies cut their fingers by fumbling at them in the same way as they clutched the proffered empty hilts before; then they naturally grow cross because the spiteful smith retains the hilt within his hand, as is necessary for bearing arms, and they cannot even get a sight of the only thing the others had reached out to them. Look you, that's the whole history of this outcry about absence of Form! But has anybody ever seen a sabre borne without a hilt? Does not its swift and steady slash bear witness, on the contrary, that it is mounted in a good strong hilt? No doubt, this hilt does not grow visible and tangible for others, until the sword has been laid down; when the master is dead and his weapon has been hung up in the armoury, at last one perceives the handle (Griff) too, and haply plucks it from the blade – as an abstraction ('Begriff') – yet can't imagine that the next man who sallies forth to fight must necessarily bear his sword-blade also in a hilt."

[P. 245] "(...) [Re: Beethoven's 'Overture to Leonora':] ... who, at all capable of understanding such a work, will not agree with me when I assert that the repetition of the first part, after the middle section, is a weakness which distorts the idea of the work almost past all understanding; and that the more, as everywhere else, and particularly [P. 246] in the coda, the master is obviously governed by nothing but the dramatic development? But whoso has brains and lack of prejudice enough to see this, will have to admit that the evil could only have been avoided by entirely giving up that repetition; an abandonment, however, which would have done away with the overture-form – i.e. the original, merely suggestive (nur motivirte), symphonic dance-form – and have constituted the departure-point for creating a new form.

{FEUER} What, now, would that new form be? – Of necessity a form dictated by the subject of portrayal and its logical development. And what would be this subject? – A poetic motive. So! – prepare to be shocked! – 'Programme-music.'

{FEUER} That looks like a perilous conclusion; and whoever chanced to hear it, might raise an outcry about the suggested abolition of music's independence. Heigho! Let us examine a little closer what this cry, this alarm may have to say for itself. This most superb, incomparable, most independent and peculiar of all the arts, -- the art of Music, -- were it possible for it ever to be injured, save by bunglers never consecrated to its sanctuary? Do they mean to tell us that Liszt, the most musical of all musicians to me conceivable, could be that sort of bungler? {FEUER} {SCHOP} Hear my creed: Music can never and in no possible alliance cease to be the highest, the redeeming art. It is of her nature, that what all the other arts but hint at, through her

and in her becomes the most undoubtable of certainties, the most direct and definite of truths. Look at the very coarsest dance, listen to the vilest doggerel: its Music (if only she has taken it seriously, and not intentionally caricatured it) ennobles even that; for just by reason of her own peculiar earnestness, she is of so chaste and wonderful a nature that she transfigures everything she touches. But it is equally manifest, equally sure, that Music will only let herself be seen in forms erst borrowed from an aspect or utterance of Life, which, originally strangers to Music, obtain through her their deepest meaning as if through revelation of the [P. 247] music latent in them. Nothing is less absolute (as to its appearance in Life, of course) than Music, and the champions of an Absolute Music evidently don't know what they're talking about; to utterly confound them, one would only have to bid them show us a music without the form which it has borrowed from either bodily motion or spoken verse (as regards the causal connexion). – Now we have recognised the march- and dance-form as the irremovable foundation of pure Instrumental-music, and we have seen this form lay down the rules of construction for even the most complex tone-works of every kind so rigorously, that any departure from them, such as the non-repetition of the first period, was considered a transgression into formlessness and had therefore to be avoided by the daring Beethoven himself – to his otherwise great detriment. On this point, then, we are at one, and admit that in this human world it was necessary to afford divine Music a point of attachment, nay – as we have seen – a 'conditioning moment,' before ever she could come to an appearance. I ask now, whether March or Dance, with all the mental pictures of those acts, can supply a worthier motive of Form than, for instance, a mental picture (Vorstellung) of the main and characteristic features in the deeds and sufferings of an Orpheus, a Prometheus, and so forth? I further ask: if Music's manifestation is so governed in advance by Form, as I have already proved to you, whether it is not nobler and less trammelling for her to take this Form from an Orpheus or Prometheus motive, than from an imagined march or dance motive? Surely no one will have an instant's doubt about it, but rather allege the difficulty of obtaining an intelligible musical form from these higher, more individualised concepts (Vorstellungen), since it has hitherto appeared impossible to group them for the ordinary understanding (I don't know whether I am expressing myself correctly) without employing these lower, more general motives of form.

The ground of this apprehension consists herein: [P. 248] unqualified or fantastic musicians denied that higher consecration, have set before us tone-works departing to such an extent from the customary Symphonic (dance-) form, of which they simply had not gained the mastery, that the composer's aim stayed absolutely unintelligible if his bizarre dance-forms were not followed step by step with an explanatory programme. Hereby we felt that Music had been openly degraded, though solely because on the one hand an unworthy idea had been given her to express, on the other, this idea itself had not come to clear expression; which mostly arose from all its scanty stock of intelligibility having been derived from the traditional, but arbitrarily mangled dance-form, and bungled in its application. But let us not trouble our head with these caricatures, which are to be found in every art you choose to name; let us keep to the infinitely richer, more developed powers of Expression which Music has reaped from the efforts of great geniuses, down to our own times. *We must place our doubt, then, less in Music's capability (for things un-*

dreamt have been already compassed in the older cramping forms) than in the artist's possession of the needful poetico-musical attribute, the gift of beholding the poetic subject in such a way as to serve the musician for moulding his intelligible musical forms. And here in very deed resides the secret and the problem; its solution could be reserved for none but a highly-gifted chosen man, who, whilst out and out musician, is at like time out and out a seer (anschauender Dichter). What I mean, it is difficult to make clear; I leave to our daily increasing body of great aesthetes, to puzzle out its dialectic term. Thus much I know, however, that everyone endowed with head and heart will understand me when he hears Franz Liszt's 'Symphonic Poems,' his 'Faust,' his 'Dante,'; for it is these, that were the first to clear my notions of the problem itself.

I pardon everybody who has hitherto doubted the benefit of a new art-form for instrumental music, for I must own to having so fully shared that doubt as to join [P. 249] with those who saw in our Programme-music a most unedifying spectacle – whereby I felt the drollness of my situation, as I myself was classed among just the programme-musicians, and cast into one pot with them. Whilst listening to the best of this sort, nay, often even works of genius, it had always happened that I so completely lost the musical thread that by no manner of exertion could I re-find and knit it up again. This occurred to me quite recently with the love-scene, so entrancing in its principal motives, of our friend Berlioz' 'Romeo and Juliet' symphony: the great fascination which had come over me during the development of the chief-motive, was dispelled in the further course of the movement, and sobered down to an undeniable malaise; I discovered at once that, while I had lost the musical thread, (i.e. the logical and lucid play of definitive motives), I now had to hold on to scenic motives not present before my eye, nor even so much as indicated in the programme. Indisputably these motives existed in the famous balcony-scene of Shakespeare's; but in that they had all been faithfully retained, and in the exact order given them by the dramatist, lay the great mistake of the composer. The latter, if he wished to use this scene as the motive of a symphonic poem, ought to have felt that, for expressing pretty much the same idea, *the Dramatist must lay hands on quite other means than the Musician; he stands much nearer to the life of everyday, and is intelligible solely when the idea with which he presents us is clothed in an Action whose various component 'moments' so closely resemble some incident of that life, that each spectator fancies he is also living through it. The Musician, on the contrary, looks quite away from the incidents of ordinary life, entirely upheaves its details and its accidentals, and sublimates whatever lies within it to its quintessence of emotional-content – to which alone can Music give a voice, and Music only. A true musical poet, therefore, would have presented Berlioz with this scene in a thoroughly compact ideal [P. 250] form;* and in any case a Shakespeare, had he meant to hand it over to a Berlioz for musical reproduction, would have written it just as differently as Berlioz' composition should now be different, to make it understandable per se. (...)

Why I adduced this instance from the 'love-scene,' was merely to give you a notion of the extreme difficulty of solving the problem, and to show you that in reality it involves a secret – comparable to that invisible 'hilt' of which I spoke above, but which, in view of the blade's effects, I assume as held securely in Liszt's

hand, and indeed so peculiarly fitted to just his hand that it is altogether hidden from our eyes therein. But this secret is withal the essence of the Individuality and its way of looking at things (*der ihr eigenen Anschauung*), which would forever remain a mystery to us, did it not reveal itself in the gifted individual's artworks. Farther than this artwork and its impression on ourselves – we cannot go; the amount of generally-applicable artistic rules to be drawn therefrom is precious little, and those who think to make much capital out of it, have simply missed the main affair. (...)

(...) [P. 251] If, then, I am silent as to what Liszt imparted to me through his Symphonic Poems, I will merely conclude by telling you something about the formal side of their message. – In this regard *I was above all struck by the great, the speaking plainness with which the subject (der Gegenstand) proclaimed itself to me: naturally this was no longer the subject as described by the Poet in words, but that quite other aspect of it, unreachable by any manner of description, whose intangible vaporous quality makes us wonder how it can display itself so uniquely clear, distinct, compact and unmistakable, to our Feeling.* (...) [P. 252] ... on the next day, even after being carried away by the performance, it perhaps will occur to many a musician to pounce upon this or that 'peculiarity,' 'harshness,' or 'abruptness'; and particularly the rare, unwonted harmonic progressions may then give many people ground for hesitation. One might inquire how it came to pass then, that they found nothing to offend them during the performance itself, but simply abandoned themselves to the fascination of a new and unwonted impression, which we may well opine could not have been produced without the aid of those 'peculiarities' and so forth? As a matter of fact, it is the characteristic of every new, unwonted and determinant impression, that it has about it something strange to us, something which rouses our mistrust; and this, again, must reside in that secret of the Individuality. In respect of what we are, we are surely all alike, and the race (*die Gattung*) may be the only true thing here; but in respect of how we look at things we are so unlike that, taken strictly, we remain forever strangers to each other. But in this consists the Individuality, and however objective may have been its path of evolution – i.e. however wide-embracing our field of vision (*Anschauung*) may have grown, however filled by nothing but the Object – there will always cleave to that *Anschauung* a something which remains peculiar to the special individuality. Yet only through this one thing of its own, does the personal *Anschauung* impart itself to others; whosoever would make the one his own, can do so only by taking up with the other; [P. 253] to see what another individual sees, we must see it with his eyes – and this takes place through Love alone. Wherefore by our very love for a great artist we as good as say that, in taking his creation to our heart, we adopt withal those individual peculiarities of view which made that creation possible to him. – Now, as I have nowhere more distinctly felt this love's enriching and informing power, than in my love for Liszt, in consciousness thereof I fain would bid those doubters: Only trust, and ye will marvel at the gain your trust will bring you!"

[1858]

1/23-24/58

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 375-376)

[P. 375] “Dear Franz, a kind fate has brought me another friend to stand beside me during this curious period when I must reach the final and most important decisions of my life. How comforting it is to make the acquaintance of a poet like *Calderon* at a mature stage of life. (...) I have attempted to place *Calderon* in a class of his own. Through him,

[P. 376] the essential significance of the Spanish character has been revealed to me: a unique and incomparable bloom, showing such speed of development that it was soon bound to end in the destruction of matter and – in denial of the world. The fine and deeply passionate spirit of this nation has seized upon the concept of ‘honour’ to express an idea in which all that is most noble and, at the same time, most terrifying assumes the form of a second religion. The most terrible selfishness and, at the same time, the greatest self-sacrifice seek satisfaction here. Never could the nature of the real ‘world’ find a more sharply defined, more blinding and more commanding, but – at the same time – a more crushing and more terrifying expression than it does here. **The poet’s most affecting portrayals take as their starting-point the conflict between ‘honour’ and a deeply human sense of fellow-suffering; ‘honour’ determines those actions which are acknowledged and praised by the world; injured fellow-feeling seeks refuge in an almost unspoken melancholy which, for that very reason, is the more deeply embracing and the more truly sublime: in it we see how terrible and how empty is the world’s true essence. It is this strangely affecting awareness that confronts us in *Calderon* in such enchantingly and creatively formative a way, and there is no other poet in the world to equal him in this. Now, it is the Catholic religion that seeks to bridge this deep divide, and nowhere could it achieve a more profound significance than here, where the contrast between the world and fellow-suffering assumes so clear, distinct and vivid an outline, in a way that is true of no other nation. *How significant it is that almost all the great Spanish poets took holy orders during the second half of their lives. And how singular that, following their complete spiritual victory over life, these poets were then able to depict this self-same life with a certainty, purity, warmth and clarity that they never had in the hurly-burly of life; indeed, they produced their most gracious and witty creations against a background of spiritual seclusion.* Faced by this wonderfully significant figure, I now find every other national literature deeply insignificant by contrast; and if nature produced only one such individual as Shakespeare among the English, we can now see how unique this poet was; indeed, the fact that the glorious English nation continues to thrive and prosper so splendidly by exploiting the world for financial gain, whereas the Spanish nation has gone to rack and ruin, this fact, I say, affects me very deeply because this phenomenon, too, clearly reveals what it is that the world regards as important.”**

2/8/58

Letter to Marie Wittgenstein (SLRW; P. 377-378)

[P. 377] “... people like me very much! This may be because of my incredible outspok-

eness and self-abandon in all that I say, so that, given their common attitude to life, people can respond only with an almost apprehensive concern which more or less expresses their belief that such a man as I, who thinks so little of himself but only of the object that absorbs him, must necessarily have to put up with a great deal of suffering, which invites them to feel compassion towards me, a sentiment that is very close to love. In consequence, *the admiration which great artists inspire is almost entirely lacking with me; for pre-eminent and exceptional talents are similarly lacking in me. I have only the bond that concentrates more ordinary gifts into a single forceful action, so that, when this action finally ensues, these gifts of mine produce things that are technically beyond the individual talent. This, I believe, is total self-oblivion, obliviousness to the world around me, complete absorption in the object in question, an object which must be vast and profound simply because any lesser object could not produce this effect upon me.* This was brought home to me by Berlioz, who is my opposite in this respect. This man undoubtedly has all the gifts of genius, without its spirit, which is the bond of which I spoke. He sees only the detail of his subject before him, and is significant because of his ability to master this detail in such a lively fashion. He read me his libretto [Les Troyens], and in doing so increased my concern for him to the extent that I almost hope I may never meet him again, since my distress at not being able to help a friend would finally become painfully unbearable. This libretto is clearly the pinnacle of his misfortune, for nothing else can ever come near it. To see this unfortunate fabrication (which is bound to strike every listener as such) regarded by him as the ultimate and finest achievement of his artistic career, a career to which he intends to sacrifice everything since he means this to be his final work, is bound to fill me with more than a sense of sadness. The way he recited the text was significant; he read it very effortfully, with strong emphasis and with a great show of enthusiasm, but without ever revealing the least sign of any real enthusiasm, so that his delivery often reminded me of bad actors who have been given the wrong role to play. There was no sense of passion, apart from the obstinacy of his outlook which, in turn, nowhere appeared truly sure [P. 378] of itself. I had great difficulty explaining to him my painful bemusement at the curious nature of the whole thing, which I did by expressing doubts and misgivings about individual details; but it is never possible to make oneself understood in this way, if the work as a whole has to be spared from criticism. I left with a feeling of great sorrow, but at least he spared me the possible embarrassment of my having to tell him how I felt since, for his own part, he never shows any genuine interest or fellow-feeling: I do not think he knows what love is; that is the key to the tormenting riddle of his nature. And so it is hard for his friends to satisfy him. He places us in the embarrassing position of having to deceive ourselves and, ultimately, the world as well, lest we destroy his illusions about himself and about us: it is clear at a glance that any attempt to disillusion him would immediately bring about a breach and the loss of his friendship, for there has never been anyone in the world to whom he might be capable of sacrificing himself and his outlook. In certain circumstances, and if one remains completely silent, one may well resolve to leave the world to its illusions simply by being silent, but it is more difficult to try to delude oneself, and this elaborate exercise is one that is totally repugnant to me; but since there is no other way of preserving Berlioz's delusions about himself, I can only hope that I never

again find myself in the painful position of having to serve a friend in this way. God, what a blessing is my relationship with Liszt by contrast! I freely admit that I believe that the highest ideal attainable in life is to be able to be boundlessly true and honest. Every relationship that I value has this meaning for me, and I measure the extent of its value simply by whether I feel I can be outspokenly honest or not; whereas the greatest torment I know consists in having to leave people in a state of uncertainty about me, if not by dissembling to them, at least by self-restraint; and it is this sense of compulsion that characterizes all our relationships in life, *for the only gift that nature has given us is the gift of reason as a defence mechanism with which to deceive others*. Indeed, the constant growth of my friendship for Liszt is based almost solely on an increasing lack of constraint in our honesty and outspokenness towards each other; love is a prime requirement here, but so, too, with natures like our own, are intellectual breadth and constitutional productiveness, for it is only as a result of these qualities that love gains that undaunted power which, in the case of paltry intellects, inevitably soon falls short. And so, with us, the one complements the other; where we appear to differ utterly, it needs only total honesty in order to produce an immediate understanding. You are therefore quite right to idolize our friendship; you will not soon see its like again. –
(...)”

4/7/58

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 382-383)

[P. 382] “What was that foolish quarrel about Goethe yesterday? That Goethe can be adapted by philistines to suit the world rests ultimately upon a misunderstanding of the poet; but the fact that such a misunderstanding was possible makes me somewhat wary of him, and especially of his interpreters and apologists. Well, as you know, I accepted all of this yesterday, including your great delight in Faust; **but finally having to listen to people saying time after time that Faust was the most significant human type ever created by a poet, this – (very foolishly) – made me angry. I cannot allow my friends to delude themselves on this point. Faust’s despair about the world rests initially either upon his knowledge of the world, -- in which case he is to be pitied, following his transformation, for rushing headlong into the world he despises and for living it up, and he is, in my view, one of those people who despise their fellow men while at the same time knowing of no other ambition throughout their lives than to delude others and enjoy their admiration; -- or else, and this is how it is, Faust is simply a scholar with fanciful ideas who has yet to experience the real world, in which case he is simply cripplingly immature, and we may regard it as a good thing that he is sent out into the world in order to learn what he can from it. But it would have been better if he really had learned all that there was to learn, and learned it, moreover, at the first, wonderful, opportunity, through Gretchen’s love. But, ah, how happy the poet is when he has removed Faust from the soulful depths of this love and allowed him to wake up one fine morning with not a trace of the whole affair to cloud his memory, so that the real world, the world of classical art, the practical world of industry can now be acted out before his highly objective gaze in the greatest possible comfort. As a result I can regard this Faust really only as a missed opportu-**

ity; and the opportunity that has been missed is nothing less than the unique chance of salvation and redemption. This is something that the grey-haired sinner feels for himself in the end, when he seeks, somewhat obviously, to make good his earlier omission in the final tableau, -- so extraneous, after death, when it no longer embarrasses him but where it can only be an agreeable experience to let the angel draw him to its breast and no doubt waken him to a new life. -- Well, I thoroughly approve of all this, and Goethe is certainly no less great as a poet, since he always remains true to life, indeed, he cannot be otherwise; *people may after all call it objective if the individual never succeeds in absorbing the object, i.e. the [P. 383] world (which can be achieved only by the most active fellow-suffering), but instead simply imagines the object, and loses himself in it by contemplating and perceiving it rather than by sympathizing with it (for in that way he would become the world itself -- and this identification of the individual with the world is the business of the saint, not of the Faust poet, who has ended up as a model for philistines to emulate);* finally, what I always like about Goethe is that he always felt the inappropriateness of his behaviour and yet found no comfort in expressly avoiding all contact with fellow-suffering, -- as I say, Goethe for me is a gift of nature by means of which I learn to understand the world, and in this he is almost unique. He did what he could, and -- all honour to him! -- *{FEUER} But why attempt to turn his pitiful Faust into one of the noblest types of humankind? It is because the world grows fearful when it stands before the abyss that is the great problem of why we exist; how grateful people are when Faust finally steps back from the void and, having refused to quit the world, resolves to accept it as it is. Yes, if only you knew that from now on his only guide is Mephistopheles, you could prepare yourselves for the eternal torments of the father of lies, after the blessed redemptress, the glorious figure of Gretchen, has turned her back on you, she who is exalted by suffering. Goethe knew this very well, but you should know it, too! (...)*

(...) ... when I look into your eyes, I am lost for words; everything that I might say then becomes meaningless! You see, everything then becomes so indisputably true, I am then so sure of myself, whenever these wonderful, hallowed eyes rest upon me and I grow lost in contemplation of them! Then there is no longer any object nor any subject; everything then becomes a single entity, deep, immeasurable harmony! There I find peace, and in that peace the highest and most perfect life! *{FEUER} He is a fool who would seek to win the world and a feeling of peace from outside himself! A blind man who would not have recognized your glance nor found his soul within it! Only inside, within us, deep down does salvation dwell! -- “*

4/12/58

Letter to Carolyn Savn-Wittgenstein (SLRW; P. 384-385)

[P. 384] *{FEUER} “All that goes on in the world is of no particular appeal to me; the more intimate side of life -- which is all that people like us are concerned about any longer -- is always lost sight of here; the more people I show my face to, the less am I understood. In public it is only the mask that counts, for even if one were to appear before them without a mask, people would still see it as a mask, since this is all they have ever known. What increasingly attracts me to great poets is what they conceal by their silence rather than what they express, indeed, it is almost more from a poet’s*

silence than from what he says that I learn to acknowledge his greatness: and it is this that makes Calderon so great and so precious to me. What makes me love music with such inexpressible joy is that it conceals [P. 385] everything, while expressing what is least imaginable: it is thus, strictly speaking, the only true art, the other arts being merely adjuncts. What I concealed that evening I revealed to the assembled guests in loud and sonorous tones by means of my Beethoven”

9/18/58 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (Quoted by Robert Donington in his “Wagner’s ‘Ring’ and its Symbols”; P. 152)

[P. 152] {FEUER} *“I had been distressingly but more or less decidedly disengaging myself from the world; everything in me had turned to negation and rejection; even my artistic creativeness was distressing to me, for it was longing with an insatiable longing to replace that negation, that rejection, by something affirmative and positive, the marriage of myself to myself (‘sich-mir-vermaehlende’).”*

9/30/58 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 46)

[P. 46] {anti-FEUER} {SCHOP} *“... all around me is quite doleful; what has any manner of significance, helpless and suffering: and only the insignificant can thoroughly enjoy existence. Yet what recks Nature of it all? She goes her blind way, intent on nothing but the race: i.e., to live anew and anew, commence ever again: spread, spread – utmost spread; the individual, on whom she loads all burdens of existence, is naught to her but a grain of sand in this spread of the species; a grain she can replace at any moment, if she only gives an extra twist to the race, a thousand- and a million-fold! Oh, I can’t stand hearing anyone appeal to Nature: with finer minds ‘tis finely meant, but for that very reason something else is meant thereby; for Nature is heartless and devoid of feeling, and every egoist, ay, every monster, can appeal to her example with more cause and warranty than the man of feeling. – What, then, is such a marriage, which we contract for life in giddy youth at the first stir of the sexual impulse? And how seldom are parents made prudent by their own experience; when they themselves at last have steered out of misery and into ease, they forget all about it, and heedlessly allow their children to plunge into the selfsame track! – Yet it is just like everything in Nature: for the individual she holds misery, death and despair, in readiness, and leaves him to lift himself above them by his highest effort of resignation: she cannot prevent that succeeding, but looks on in amazement, and says perhaps: ‘Is that what I really willed?’ –“*

10/1/58 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 422-424)

[P. 422] {FEUER} {SCHOP} *“(...) It is dreadful to see how our lives – which, on the whole, remain addicted to pleasure – rest upon such a bottomless pit of cruellest misery! This has been so self-evident to me from the very beginning, and has become even more central to my thinking as my sensibility has increased that I really do believe that the legitimate reason for all my sufferings lies in the fact that I still cannot positively abandon my life and all its aspirations. (...) Whenever I perceive*

evident contentment, or the intention of ensuring the same, I turn away with a certain sense of inner horror. As soon as another's existence seems to me to be lacking in suffering and carefully calculated to keep all suffering at bay, I can follow it only with unsmotherable bitterness, so remote is it from what I regard as the real solution to man's task. And so, without feeling any envy, I have nevertheless felt an instinctive hatred of the rich: I admit that not even they can be called happy, in spite of their possessions; but they have the quite obvious intention of wishing to be so; and it is this which alienates me from them. With subtle intent they avoid anything that could possibly make them feel sympathetic towards the misery upon which all their longed-for contentment rests, and it is this alone that keeps me a world apart from them. I have observed the way in which I am drawn in the other direction with a force that inspires me with sympathy, and that everything touches me deeply only insofar as it arouses fellow-feeling in me, i.e. fellow-suffering. I see in this fellow-suffering the most salient feature of my moral being, and presumably it is this that is the well-spring of my art.

But what characterizes fellow-suffering is that it is by no means conditioned in its affections by the individual qualities of the suffering object but rather by the perception of suffering itself. In love it is otherwise: here we advance to a feeling of fellow-joy, and we can share the joy of an individual only if we find the latter's particular characteristics acceptable in the highest degree, and homogeneous. This is more likely in the case of common types, since here it is purely sexual relations which are almost exclusively at work. The more noble the nature, the more difficult it is to achieve fellow-joy through [P. 423] redintegration: but, if we succeed, there is nothing equal to it! Fellow-suffering, by contrast, is something we can feel for even the commonest and least of beings, a being which, apart from its suffering, is totally unsympathetic towards us, indeed, may even be antipathetic in what it is capable of enjoying. The reason for this, at all events, is infinitely profound and, if we recognize it, we shall thereby see ourselves raised above the very real barriers of our personality. For what we encounter when we exercise fellow-suffering in this way is suffering as such, divorced from all personality.

In order to steel themselves against the power of fellow-suffering, people commonly assert that it is demonstrably the case that lower natures feel suffering far less keenly than a higher organism: they argue that, as the sensibility that first makes fellow-suffering possible increases, so, proportionately, does suffering gain in reality: in other words, the fellow-suffering that we expend on lower natures is a waste of emotional effort, being an exaggeration, and even a pampering of feeling. — This opinion, however, rests upon a fundamental error which is at the basis of every realistic philosophy; for it is precisely here that we see idealism in its truly moral stature inasmuch as it reveals the former as an example of egoistical narrow-mindedness. The question here is not what the other person suffers but what I suffer when I know him to be suffering. After all, we know what exists around us only inasmuch as we picture it in our imagination, and how I imagine it is how it is for me. If I ennoble it, it is because I myself am noble, if I feel the other man's suffering to be deep, it is because I myself feel deeply when I imagine his suffering, and whoever, by contrast, imagines it to be insignificant reveals in doing so that he himself is insignificant. Thus my fellow-suffering makes the other person's suffering

an actual reality, and the more insignificant the being with which I can suffer, the wider and more embracing is the circle which suggests itself to my feelings. – But here lies an aspect of my nature which others may see as a weakness. I admit that unilateral actions are much impeded by it; but I am certain that when I act, I then act in accordance with my essential nature, and certainly never cause pain to anyone intentionally. This consideration alone can influence me in all my actions: to cause others as little suffering as possible. On this point I am totally at one with myself, for only in this way can I hope to give others joy, as well: for the only true, genuine joy is to be found in the conformity of fellow-suffering. But I cannot obtain this by force: it must be granted me by the other person's friendly nature, which is why I have only ever encountered a single perfect example of this phenomenon!

{anti-FEUER} But I am also clear in my own mind why I can even feel greater fellow-suffering for lower natures than for higher ones. A higher nature is what it is precisely because it has been raised by its own suffering to the heights of resignation, or else has within it – and cultivates – the capacity for such a development. Such a nature is extremely close to mine, is indeed similar to [P. 424] it, and with it I attain to fellow-joy. That is why, basically, I feel less fellow-suffering for people than for animals. For I can see that the latter are totally denied the capacity to rise above suffering, and to achieve a state of resignation and deep, divine calm. And so, in the event of their suffering, as happens when they are tormented, all I see – with a sense of my own tormented despair – is their absolute, redemption-less suffering without any higher purpose, their only release being death, which confirms my belief that it would have been better for them never to have entered upon life. And so, if this suffering can have a purpose, it is simply to awaken a sense of fellow-suffering in man, who thereby absorbs the animal's defective existence, and becomes the redeemer of the world by recognizing the error of all existence. (This meaning will one day become clearer to you from the Good Friday morning scene in the third act of Parzival.). But to see the individual's capacity for redeeming the world through fellow-suffering atrophy, undeveloped and most assiduously neglected, makes me regard people with utter loathing, and weakens my sense of fellow-suffering to the point where I feel only total insensitivity towards their distress. It is in his distress that the individual's road to salvation is to be found, a road which is not open to animals; if he does not recognize this to be so but insists upon considering it to be locked and barred to him, I feel an instinctive urge to throw this door wide open for him, and am capable of going to lengths of great cruelty in order to make him conscious of the need to suffer. Nothing leaves me colder than the philistine's complaint that he has been disturbed in his contentment: any compassion here would be pure complicity. Just as my entire nature involves shaking people out of their common condition, here, too, I feel an urge simply to spur them on in order to make them feel life's great anguish! –
(...)"

10/3/58

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 52-53)

[P. 52] "... for ever and ever to be fighting for provision of the needful, often obliged for whole long periods to think of absolutely nothing but how to set about obtaining outward quiet and the requisites of existence for a little time ahead; and for that to

have so entirely to depart from my own way of feeling, to appear to those through whom I want myself maintained so altogether different from what I am, -- it truly is revolting. And added to it all, to be framed the very way to recognise it as none other. All these cares come so naturally to a man who views life as an end in itself, who finds in concern for provision of the needful the best of sauces for his imaginary enjoyment of the finally procured. For which reason, also, no one else can quite understand why this is so absolutely repugnant to a man like me, seeing that is the lot and condition of all men; that for once in a way a man should just not view life as an end in itself, but as an unavoidable means to a higher end -- who will comprehend that right earnestly and clearly? -- There must be something peculiar about me, that I should have put up with all this so long already, and moreover should still go on doing so. -- The hideous part of it is the growing more and more aware that really not one human creature -- certainly, no male -- is quite sincerely and seriously interested in me; with Schopenhauer, I begin to doubt the possibility of any genuine friendship, to rank as utter fable what is dubbed so. *{anti-FEUER} People have no idea how little such a friend is actually able to place himself in the other's position, to say nothing of his mode of thought. But that, too, is quite explainable: by the nature of things, this superlative friendship can be nothing but an ideal; whereas Nature, that hoary old sinner and egoist, with the best of will -- if she could [P. 53] possibly have it -- can do no else than deem herself the whole exclusive world in every individual, and merely acknowledge the other individual so far as it flatters this illusion of Self. 'Tis so, and yet, one holds on! God, what a worth it must have, the thing for whose sake one holds on, with such a knowledge! -- "*

10/5/58

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 424-426)

[P. 424] *{FEUER} "(...) Cakyamuni was initially totally opposed to the idea of admitting women into the community of saints. He repeatedly expresses the view of them that, by nature, women are far too subject to their sexual identity, and hence to whim and caprice, and far too attached to worldly existence to be able to achieve the composure and deep contemplativeness necessary for the individual to renounce his natural inclination and achieve redemption. It was [P. 425] his favourite pupil, Ananda, -- that same Ananda to whom I have already allotted a part in my 'Victors' -- who was finally able to persuade the master to relent and open up the community to women. With this I gained something uncommonly important. Without any sense of unnaturalness, my plan has been vastly and hugely expanded. The difficulty here was to make the Buddha himself -- a figure totally liberated and above all passion -- suitable for dramatic and, more especially, musical treatment. But I have now solved the problem by having him reach one last remaining stage in his development whereby he is seen to acquire a new insight, which -- like every insight -- is conveyed not by abstract associations of ideas but by intuitive emotional experience, in other words, by a process of shock and agitation suffered by his inner self; as a result, this insight reveals him in his final progress towards a state of supreme enlightenment. Ananda, who is closer to life and directly affected by the violent love of the Chandala girl, becomes the agent of this ultimate enlightenment. -- Deeply stirred and shaken, Ananda can return this love only in his*

own, supreme, sense, as a desire to draw his beloved to him in order to share with her his ultimate salvation. The master responds to this without harshness but as though lamenting an error, an impossibility. Finally, however, when Ananda begins to think in his deepest sadness that he must abandon all hope, Cakya, drawn to him by his fellow-suffering and as though by some new and ultimate problem whose solution detains him in life, feels called upon to test the girl. The latter now arrives to appeal to the master in her deepest grief, begging him to marry her to Ananda. He expounds the conditions, renunciation of the world, and withdrawal from all the bonds of nature; on hearing the principal commandment, she is sincere enough in her resolve to collapse in a faint; after which there unfolds (perhaps you recall it?) the colourful scene with the Brahmans who reproach him for his dealings with such a girl, claiming that this is proof of the error of his teaching. In rejecting all human pride, his growing sympathy with the girl, whose earlier existences he reveals to himself and his opponents, grows so strong that, when she herself – having recognized the whole vast complex of universal suffering on the basis of her own individual suffering – declares herself ready to swear that oath, he accepts her into the number of the saints, as though by way of his own final transfiguration, and thus regards his own course through life – which has been one of redemption and devotion to all living things – as now complete, since he has been able to promise that womankind, too, may now be – directly – redeemed.

(...)

{FEUER} My child, the glorious Buddha was no doubt right when he strictly excluded art. Is there anyone who feels more clearly than I that it is this unhappy art that everlastingly restores me to life's torment and all the contradictions of [P. 426] existence? If I did not have this wondrous gift of an over-predominant visual imagination, I could follow my heart's instinctive urge, in accordance with my own clear-eyed insight, -- and become a saint; and as a saint I could say to you: come here, leave behind you all that holds you back, burst the bonds of nature: in return for this I will show you the road to salvation! – Then we should be free: Ananda and Savitri! (...)"

10/31/58

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 68)

[P. 68] *{FEUER} "(...) Everything is Wahn, everything self-delusion! We are not made to square the world to us."*

12/1/58

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 432)

[P. 432] *{FEUER} {anti-SCHOP} "(...) During recent weeks I have been slowly rereading Schopenhauer's principal work, and this time it has inspired me, quite extraordinarily, to expand and – in certain details – even to correct his system. The subject is uncommonly important, and it must, I think, have been reserved for a man of my own particular nature, at this particular period of his life, to gain insights here of a kind that could never have disclosed themselves to anyone else. It is a question, you see, of pointing out the path to salvation, which has not been recognized by any philosopher, and especially not by Sch., but which involves a total pacification of the will through love, and not through any abstract human love, but a love engendered on*

the basis of sexual love, i.e. the attraction between man and woman. It is significant that in reaching this conclusion (as a philosopher, not as a poet, for as such I have my own material) I have been able to use the material of the concepts which Sch. himself provides. The presentation of this argument will take me very deep and very far: it involves a more detailed explanation of the state in which we become capable of recognizing ideas, and of genius in general, which I no longer conceive of as a state in which the intellect is divorced from the will, but rather as an intensification of the individual intellect to the point where it becomes the organ of perception of the genus or species, and thus of the will itself, which is the thing in itself; herein lies the only possible explanation for that marvellous and enthusiastic joy and ecstasy felt by any genius at the highest moments of perception, moments which Sch. seems scarcely to recognize, since he is able to find them only in a state of calm and in the silencing of the individual affects of the will. Entirely analogous to this view, however, I have succeeded in demonstrating beyond doubt that in love there lies the possibility of raising oneself about the individual impulse of the will to a point where total mastery over the latter is achieved, and the generic will becomes fully conscious of itself, a consciousness which, at this level, is necessarily synonymous with total pacification. All this will become clear even to the inexperienced person, provided that my presentation of it proves successful. The result, however, will inevitably be very important, and fill in the gaps in Schopenhauer's system in a thorough and satisfactory manner. We shall see if ever I feel inclined to do anything about it." [* Editors' Footnote: "Wagner got no further than drafting a letter to Schopenhauer (SS XII, 291), although the idea adumbrated here continued to influence his thinking for the remainder of his life and helps to explain his ability to reconcile the otherwise conflicting philosophies of Feuerbach and Schopenhauer."]

12/8/58 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 78)

[P. 78] {FEUER} {anti-SCHOP} "(...) With reading, too, I stay most limited; little tempts me. *In the long run I always hark back to my Schopenhauer, who has led me to the most remarkable trains of thought, as lately indicated, in amendment of some of his imperfections. The theme becomes more interesting to me every day, for it is a question here of explications such a I alone can give, since there never was another man who was poet and musician at once in my sense, and therefore to whom an insight into inner processes has become possible such as could be expected of no other.*"

12/20/58 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 434)

[P. 434] {FEUER} "(...) *A concept cannot cause suffering; but in music every concept turns into a feeling; it consumes and burns till it becomes a bright flame, and the new and wondrous light can laugh out loud! –*

{FEUER} I then studied a good deal of philosophy and reached conclusions which complement and correct my friend Schopenhauer. But I prefer to ruminate on such matters rather than to write them down. On the other hand, poetic projects are again crowding into my mind in a most lively fashion. *Parzival has preoccupied me very much: in particular, there is a curious creature, a strangely world-demonic*

woman (the messenger of the grail) who strikes me with increasing vitality and fascination. If ever I manage to write this poem, I am sure to produce something very original. (...)

I notice on this occasion a quite fatalistic resistance even to the completion of Tristan; but this cannot persuade me to work any faster. On the contrary, I compose as though I had no plans to work on anything else for the rest of my life. By way of compensation, it will be more beautiful than anything I have yet done; the smallest phrase takes on the meaning of an entire act, so carefully do I execute it.”

[1859]

1/19/59

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 441-443)

[P. 441] {anti-FEUER} {SCHOP} “(...) *When I am calm at last and can abandon myself to the enjoyment of my own creations, as happens when I am scoring a work, I often sink, at the same time, into an infinity of thoughts which involuntarily represent for me the entirely characteristic and, as far as the world is concerned, perpetually unfathomable nature of the poet or artist. I then perceive quite clearly what it is that is so wonderful and so completely contrary to people’s normal view of life, namely the fact that, whereas the world gets by and is held together solely by dint of experience, the poet’s intuition precedes all experience and, on the basis of his own unique potentiality, comprehends what it is that gives all experience its significance and meaning. If you were a well-practised philosopher, I should refer you to the fact that what we have here is the best possible example of that same phenomenon which alone makes cognition possible, whereby the entire framework of space, time and causality in which the world is represented to us is prefigured in our brain as the latter’s most characteristic functions, so that these conditional qualities of all objects, namely their spatiality, temporality and causality, are already contained within our heads before we recognize these objects, since without them we should have no means of recognizing them at all.*

{anti-FEUER} {SCHOP} *But what is raised above space, time and causality, and what does not require these expedients for us to recognize it, in other words, what is unconditioned by finality, of which Schiller says so memorably that it is [P. 442] uniquely true because it has never existed; this is something that can never be grasped by any common philosophy, but is prefigured by the poet with that same prefiguredness that lies within him, conditioning all that he creates and enabling him to represent this something with infallible certainty, -- this something, I say, which is more definite and more certain than any other object of our cognition, in spite of the fact that it involves no property of the world as we apprehend it through experience. –*

{anti-FEUER} *It must inevitably strike him as an absolute miracle when this previously glimpsed, substantial something finally becomes a part of his own experience. His idea of it will then play a large part in his shaping of the experience; the purer and loftier the former, the more remote from the world and the more incomparable will be the latter. It will purify his will; his aesthetic interest will become a moral one; and his supreme poetic idea will be joined by a supreme moral consciousness. It will then be his task to put it to the test in the moral world, where he will be guided by that same foreknowledge which, in the form of his recognition*

of the aesthetic idea, persuaded him to represent the idea in a work of art, and which made it possible for him to experience it. –

{anti-FEUER} The common world, which is entirely subjected to the influence of experience forced upon it from without, and which can grasp nothing that has not been more or less physically and palpably suggested to it, can never understand the poet's attitude towards the world of his own experience. Such people will never be able to explain to themselves the striking certainty of his creations except by supposing him to have encountered them in his experience with the same immediacy with which they note everything down in their memory.

{anti-FEUER} This is a phenomenon which I have perceived most strikingly in the case of my own works. My poetic conceptions have constantly been so far in advance of my experiences that I can regard my moral education as having been almost entirely determined and brought about by these conceptions. Flying Dutchman, Tannhaeuser, Lohengrin, Nibelungs, Wodan, -- they were all in my head before they were part of my experience. It will no doubt be easy for you to appreciate the curious relationship in which I now stand to Tristan. I can say so quite openly – since this is a phenomenon that belongs if not to the world then to the votive spirit –: Never has an idea so clearly become a part of experience. How far the two were mutually predeterminative is such a strange and subtle question that every ordinary mode of perception will conceive of it only in the most inadequate and distorted form. Now that Savitri – and Parzival – fill my mind with a sense of presentiment and strive [P. 443] initially to form themselves into a poetic idea -- : now, given my artistically completed work, to bend over my Tristan with a sense of calm that thinks in visual images, -- now, who can guess what miracle must imbue me as I do so and wrest me from the world so that I can almost think of it as having been overcome? You can guess it, you know it! Yes, and in that you are no doubt alone! –

(...)"

1/19/59

(Continuation of above:) Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 97-98)

[P. 97] “For if another guessed it, knew it, then no one would chafe at us more; and every triste [sad] experience, invading his heart from without, he must needs offer up with a noble's sense of exaltation as a sacrifice due to, and in sympathy with, the higher ends of the World-spirit, which moulds from out itself experiences wherein to suffer, and through those sufferings to lift itself still higher. But -- who will comprehend it? – *would there be such nameless sorrow in the world, if our cognition were so much alike as the eudaemonistic will is like in all of us? In this alone resides men's misery: if we all cognised the idea of the world and of Existence alike and accordantly, that misery would be impossible. But whence the hurly-burly of religions, dogmas, opinions and eternally warring views? So let the clearer-sighted save himself; and above all – let him dispute no more! Let him mutely suffer of the madness that grins around him, [P. 98] thrusts at him in every shape, in every reference, demanding, where it is blind, coveting where it misjudges. Here nothing helps but – silence and endurance!*”

1/25/59

Letter to Albert Niemann (SLRW; P. 445-447)

[P. 445] “Nothing affected Rienzi so deeply in his youth as the brutal killing of his little brother by the soldiers of the nobili, against whom he was unable to obtain justice. **Starting out from a desire for vengeance, but failing to find satisfaction anywhere, he began to ponder the matter and learned to recognize its causes in the general misery of his age and, more especially, of his own fatherland. In order to account for this, he familiarized himself with his country’s history; going back from one source to another, he finally reached Roman antiquity and immersed himself enthusiastically in contemplation of the grandeur and greatness of ancient Rome, and, on turning back to the present, became conscious of a tremendous decline, so that, where he had previously brooded on the reasons for his own unsatisfied vengeance, he now saw the general decay of the entire world, a decay from which he resolved to free it. And so the original motive of ‘vendetta’ became a purified patriotism of visionary sublimity which, once he had suppressed all memory of the injury which he himself had suffered, gave him the wonderful power which, for a time, he exercised over his people.** – His counterpart is the figure of Adriano. In the latter’s case it is his enthusiasm which is the starting-point for his actions, an enthusiasm which Rienzi is able to inspire in him on the strength of the young man’s love of Irene. **But instead of maintaining this enthusiasm, which in Rienzi finally overrides all natural and personal relationships, Adriano sinks back down to the level from which Rienzi had set out in order to rise to his present greatness. ‘Blood’ comes between them, and Adriano cannot rise above the feeling of ‘vendetta’; he remains ensnared in mere family ties, whereas Rienzi has only the state as a whole in mind,** with the result that, fired by his passionate thirst for vengeance and scarcely restrained by his love, Adriano perishes powerless and demented, while Rienzi, launching into the battle hymn, allows himself and the Capitol to be destroyed by an ungrateful and misguided populace. --

(...)

[P. 446] He now speaks to Adriano in a mild and serious tone; he is above all prejudice, and rejoices in the possibility of winning over a son of his mortal enemy to his righteous cause, rather than exacting vengeance upon him. But it is precisely this which reminds him of the blood that has been spilt: it then flares up, more terribly than before. In his account of his brother’s death, he reveals to us, as though himself bleeding, the mysterious origins of the demon he has subdued. Let him be terribly moved. The more awful his suffering appears to us here, the quicker we shall recognize Rienzi’s entire great, fully purified nature when Adriano asks him: ‘what shall I do to expiate our shame?’ and, suddenly raising himself to his full height, he replies with the inspiring exhortation: ‘be mine! Be a Roman!’ – This must create such a powerful impression that it strikes the youth like a lightning flash, so that he calls to Rienzi, beside himself with emotion: ‘let me be a Roman’. –

After this rough outline, I shall now single out for you all that relates to this one principal motive. – When the nobili (in the 2nd act) trespass against his person and against the freedom of the state, he is assured and firm in dealing with them; no inner reproach clouds his judgment, which he pronounces briefly and grimly. But when he is alone for a

moment, his first thought is ‘my poor brother! not by me but by Rome herself are you avenged!’ And so his desire for personal vengeance has not yet been entirely suppressed, and when Adriano rushes in, beside himself, in order to save his father’s life, he touches on a spot that Rienzi himself has left uncovered. It is through this feeling that Rienzi is really reformed once more, in order, as it were, to destroy the last remaining seeds of personal vengeance. And so he quickly resolves, at the risk of his own safety, to pardon the nobili. – He is now completely stainless. But woe betide them if they relapse! For then he may no longer be the avenging brother but only the avenging godhead! – Thus the third act finds him resolute and unswerving in the face of their repeated betrayal. Here he is of annihilating greatness and terribleness in contrast to Adriano, for, while the latter increasingly forgets Rome, his fatherland and freedom simply in order to see his slain father once more, Rienzi now puts all thought of fraternal vengeance behind him and is now fully conscious in himself of representing only Rome, his fatherland and freedom.

But Rome, the fatherland and freedom now exist in him and in him alone. The populace itself knows none of this; they stand in a state of half-awareness on the side of Adriano, for they, too, can see only their own brothers and sons who have fallen in battle and for whose deaths they now make Rienzi responsible. His downfall is therefore certain. The great purity that he has now gained and his transfigured majesty help to delay it, but they cannot prevent it from happening. Scarcely has he won over the conspirators outside the church by his all-powerful grandeur and enthusiasm when everyone recoils before him, stupidly and aghast at his excommunication. **For he now sees that only his idea was real, not the common people. He remains great and noble, but as rigid as a statue, his gaze fixed firmly in front of him in sublime and rapt contemplation, just like his idea, which has similarly grown petrified like some monument and which the world cannot grasp. But once again the marble melts; Irene throws herself upon his breast. He sees that he is not alone; smiling gently he recognizes his sister and now knows that there is, after all, ‘a Rome’. – In his prayer in the 5th act he communes alone with the God who once spoke to him and who has always spoken to him, of that noble idea. It is, as it were, the ‘idea’ which the whole world has failed to understand that now speaks to itself. Nobility, purity, deeply felt religious fervour, the desire for dissemination, finally to be lost entirely within himself, to be totally self-absorbed: -- during the postlude to the prayer, therefore, he should incline his head and whole body towards the ground. –**

{FEUER} Final, painfully animated enjoyment of this idea in his scene with Irene. An exalted and sublime joy in the overall mood here. Profound delight in his sister who has renounced her love and thus, like her brother, has enabled the idea to triumph over passion. If, by dint of prudent economy, your vocal powers are undiminished by the time you reach this scene, it is bound to be one of the most enthralling in the whole piece. –

(...)

Whether I have made myself clear, I do not know, but I have certainly warmed to this youthful subject of mine, which only now do I myself properly understand.”

[P. 448] “But the endless pain of this intermediate state, when desire stirs again and each time comes up against the same old obstacle, has a deeply depressing effect upon me. Then work is the only answer. But what work! I feel as though I shall never have done with it; as though I wanted to force death to catch me in the act! Never before have I worked so intimately; every stroke of my pen has the significance of an eternity for me; and I do not continue until I feel attracted by what I have written. It is a strange feeling to survey the thing as a whole and realize that never before have I written anything of such musical unity, of such inexhaustible fluency. Tristan will be beautiful! But it is eating into me. Who knows whether there will be any part of me left? – “

4/10/59 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 118)

[P. 118] “The third act is begun [yesterday]. It shows me distinctly that I shall invent no new thing any more; that one supreme blossom-tide awoke within me such a multitude of buds, that I now have merely to stretch back my hand, to rear the flower with easy tilth. (...)”

4/15/59 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 121-122)

[P. 121] “... it was rash of me to publish the Tristan thus early. Between a poem altogether built for music and a purely poetic stage-play the difference in plan and execution must be so fundamental, that, if the former is viewed with the same eye as the latter, its true import must stay almost entirely lost, that is, until completed by its music. Recall what I wrote in the letter on Liszt, apropos of Berlioz’ Romeo and Juliet scene, about the binding difference here. It is precisely those many little touches whereby the poet must bring his ideal object quite close to the common experience of life that the musician leaves out, laying hand instead on the infinite detail of music, thereby to present the ideally distant object convincingly to men’s emotional experience. But that makes an immense alteration in the form of the poetic work itself. Without the mass of small, nay, trifling details from the common wont of life, from politics, society, eh, the home and its needs, which Goethe employs in his Tasso, he would be unable to clothe his idea in pure-poetic guise at all. Here is the point, moreover, where everyone is with him, where each may fasten on a notion, an experience, and at last feels so at home that he can be imperceptibly led to what the poet really wills. Naturally, it always ends with each man’s being left exactly where his feet will carry him no farther; still, each has an understanding of it after his kind. And the same thing happens when the music is furnished to my work: then melodic phrases enter into play and inter-play, engross and incite; one holds to this theme, another to that: they hear and guess, and provided they’re able, they also grasp the object, the idea, at last. But without the music, that handle still lacks; unless we’re to suppose a reader so gifted as to feel out [P. 122] the convincing trend from the uncommonly simplified plot itself.”

4/59 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 452)

[P. 452] *“Child! This Tristan is turning into something terrible!*

This final act!!! -----

I fear the opera will be banned – unless the whole thing is parodied in a bad performance -- : only mediocre performances can save me! Perfectly good ones will be bound to drive people mad. – I cannot imagine it otherwise. This is how far I have gone!! Oh dear! –

I was just in full career!

Adieu!”

4/26/59

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 453)

[P. 453] *“(…) On the whole I am feeling somewhat dull-witted and morose. I have been engaged on this work too long, and I feel very much as though my creative powers are still feeding on the shoots and blossoms which were produced over a short period as though by some fructifying storm. As a result I cannot really get down to any truly creative work; the longer it takes, the more favourable my mood must remain if my inner resources are to be kept alert, and those moods cannot be provoked at will on the strength of mere reflection, as so much else can, especially in relation to the world. It is true that I work every day, but only briefly and there is little to show for it, just as the flashes of inspiration are brief and few in number; often I would prefer to do nothing at all, were it not that I am spurred on by my dread of a totally empty day.*

(…)”

4/26/59

[Other Extracts from above:] Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 124-126)

[P. 124] *“An odd case is that of a man like me. One doesn’t lead a natural life at all; yet, to make it semi-natural, it would have to be much more artificial; somewhat as my artwork itself, which also finds no parallel in Nature and Experience, yet receives its new, its higher life precisely through the most consummate application of Art.*

[P. 125] *(…) Nothing goes naturally and of itself, with me, not even my artistic creation. (…)*

(…) {FEUER} There’s no help for it; one must be able to avow all to oneself, the whole misery of the world and existence, fully and entirely to gain the power to taste the only thing that lifts above it.

That is my whole philosophy, in face of those also [P. 126] who labour to make Life endurable by declining to admit its badness, or wilfully shutting their eyes to it. What they then feign to enjoy, still stays just nothing save the self-sufficiency of their illusion; but the otherwise-minded well knows what he has to rejoice at, namely the overcoming of grief; which alone yields strength, and pride, and – happiness . --- “

5/8/59

Letter to Franz Liszt (SLRW; P. 454-456)

[P. 454] “Children! Children! I fear I have been left in the lurch far too long, and that you will suddenly be made to feel that, in my case, it is ‘too late’. People are now saying to me: ‘Finish Tristan, then we shall see!’ – That is all very well. But what would happen if I were not to finish Tristan, because I could not finish it? I feel as though I am now about to pine away finally and collapse within sight of my – goal (?). (...) And so people say: -- well, why don’t you work, then things will get going again! Admirable advice; but, poor devil that I am, I have absolutely no routine, and if things do not happen of their own accord, I cannot make them happen. (...) Only work is said to help me: but what will help me to be able to work? – Clearly I have too little of what you have too much! –

[P. 455] (...) Having reached the last act of this child of sorrow, I am at the very brink of ‘to be or not to be’ – slight pressure on some spring of common chance, to which I am so pitilessly exposed, and this child may perish in the final throes of birth. With me everything can change in the twinkling of an eye; I may go on, or I may come to a complete standstill. For you see, Franz, I am in a bad way!

(...)

(...) And so I find myself talking about Dante after all, although I had absolutely no desire to speak of it today, since I care for it too much to implicate it in my present mood. But I do want to say at least this, that we had better keep to ourselves the words of dedication which you wrote in my copy [* Editors’ Footnote: ‘As Virgil guided Dante, so have you guided me through the mysterious regions of those worlds of sound that are steeped in life. – From my innermost heart I call out to you: ‘Tu se lo mio maestro, e il mio autore!’ and dedicate this work to you in steadfast loyal love’ (Liszt-Briefe II, 264). The score of Liszt’s symphonic poem *Hamlet* (autograph dated June 1858) contains some marked resemblances to that of *Tristan und Isolde*] ; I, at least, shall not divulge them to a living soul. They have made me positively blush for shame, believe me! I cannot tell you forcibly enough how pitiful I feel as a musician; from the bottom of my heart I consider myself an absolute bungler. You ought to see me sitting here on occasion, thinking to myself, ‘that will do’ – and then going over to the piano to put together some miserable rubbish which I am then stupid enough to abandon. Can you imagine what I feel then -- ! It is the sincere conviction that I am musically worthless! And now you come along exuding music from every pore in streams, springs and waterfalls, -- and I have to listen while you say things like this to me. I find it very difficult to believe that this is not the purest irony, and I have to recall your friendship for me very clearly and very fully in order to convince myself that it was not your wish simply to make fun of me. – My [P. 456] dearest friend, it is an odd story, but, believe me, I am worth very little. I do now believe quite genuinely that Reissiger helped me with *Tannhaeuser* and *Lohengrin*. And you have certainly helped me on my new works, but now that you leave me in the lurch, I can write no more.”

5/30/59

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 456-460)

[P. 456] “(...) I am now engaged in working out the first half of the act [‘Tristan’ Act Three]. The passages which describe suffering always hold me up a great deal; at best I can only ever complete a very little at a single sitting. The fresh, lively and

fiery sections then go incomparably faster; and so, even during the technical working out, I live through every moment 'in suffering and in joy', and become entirely dependent on the object at hand. This last act is now a [P. 457] real intermittent fever: -- the deepest and most unprecedented suffering and yearning, and immediately afterwards, the most unprecedented triumph and jubilation. {FEUER} *God knows, no one has ever taken the matter so seriously before, and Semper is right. It is this thought that has most recently turned me against Parzival again. You see, it has again dawned upon me of late that this would again be a fundamentally evil task. Looked at closely, it is Anfortas who is the centre of attention and principal subject. Of course, it is not at all a bad story. Consider, in heaven's name, all that goes on there! It suddenly became dreadfully clear to me: it is my third-act Tristan inconceivably intensified. With the spear-wound and perhaps another wound, too, -- in his heart --, the wretched man knows of no other longing in his terrible pain than the longing to die; in order to attain this supreme solace, he demands repeatedly to be allowed a glimpse of the Grail in the hope that it might at least close his wounds, for everything else is useless, nothing -- nothing can help him: -- but the Grail can give him but one thing only, which is precisely that he cannot die; its very sight increases his torments by conferring immortality upon them. The Grail, according to my own interpretation is the goblet used at the Last Supper in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the saviour's blood on the Cross. What terrible significance the connection between Anfortas and this miraculous chalice now acquires; he, infected by the same wound as was dealt him by a rival's spear in a passionate love intrigue, -- his only solace lies in the benediction of the blood that once flowed from the Saviour's own, similar, spear-wound as He languished upon the Cross, world-renouncing, world-redeeming and world-suffering! Blood for blood, wound for wound -- but what a gulf between the blood of the one and that of the other, between the one wound and the other! Wholly enraptured, he is all devotion and all ecstasy at the miraculous proximity of the chalice which glows red in its gentle, blissful radiance, pouring out new life -- so that death cannot come near him! He lives, lives anew, and more terribly than ever the sinful wound flares up in him -- His wound! His very devotions become a torment! Where is the end to it, where is redemption? The sufferings of humanity endlessly drawn out! -- Would he, in the madness of his despair, wish to turn away for ever from the Grail and close his eyes to it? He would fain do so in order to die. But -- he himself was appointed guardian of the Grail; and it was no blind, superficial power which appointed him, -- no! it was because he was so worthy, because there was no one who knew the Grail's miraculous nature as profoundly and as intimately as he knew it, just as his whole soul now yearns, again and [P. 458] again, to behold the vision that destroys him in the very act of worship, vouchsafing heavenly salvation and eternal damnation!*

And you expect me to carry through something like this? And set it to music, into the bargain? -- No thank you very much! I leave that to anyone who has a mind for such things; I shall do all I can to keep my distance from it! --

Let someone do it who will carry it through a la Wolfram; it will then cause little offence, and in the end may perhaps sound like something, maybe even something quite pretty. But I take such things far too seriously. Yet just look at the extent to which Master Wolfram has made light of it, by contrast! That he has under-

stood absolutely nothing of the actual content is of no great matter. He tacks one event on to the next, one adventure to another, links together the Grail motif with all manner of strange and curious episodes and images, gropes around and leaves any serious reader wondering whatever his intention can have been? To which he is bound to reply that he himself in fact knows no more about what he is doing than the priest understands the Christianity that he serves up at the altar without knowing what is involved. – That's how it is. Wolfram is a thoroughly immature phenomenon, although it must be said that his barbaric and utterly confused age is largely to blame for this, fluctuating as it did between early Christianity and a more modern political economy. Nothing could ever come to fruition at such a period; poetic profundity was immediately submerged in insubstantial caprice. I almost agree now with Frederick the Great who, on being presented with a copy of Wolfram, told the publisher not to bother him with such stuff! – *Indeed, it is sufficient to have given new life to such a subject on the basis of the genuine features of the legend, as I have now done with this Grail legend, and then to take a quick look at how such a poet as Wolfram has depicted the very same thing ... in order to be utterly repelled by the poet's incompetence. (The same thing happened to me with Gottfried v. Strassburg in the context of Tristan). Consider only this one point, that, of all the interpretations to which the Grail has been subjected in various legends, this superficial 'deep thinker' should have chosen the most meaningless of all. That this miraculous object should be a precious stone is a feature which, admittedly, can be traced back [P. 259] to the earliest sources, namely the Arabic texts of the Spanish Moors. One notices, unfortunately, that all our Christian legends have a foreign, pagan origin. As they gazed on in amazement, the early Christians learned, namely, that the Moors in the Caaba at Mecca (deriving from the pre-Muhammadan religion) venerated a miraculous stone (a sunstone – or meteorite stone – but at all events one that had fallen from heaven). However, the legends of its miraculous power were soon interpreted by the Christians after their own fashion, by their associating the sacred object with Christian myth, a process which, in turn, was made easier by the fact that an old legend existed in southern France telling how Joseph of Arimathea had once fled there with the sacred chalice that had been used at the Last Supper, a version entirely consonant with the early Christian Church's enthusiasm for relics. Only now did sense and reason enter into it, and I feel a very real admiration and sense of rapture at this splendid feature of Christian mythogenesis, which invented the most profound symbol that could ever have been invented as the content of the physical-spiritual kernel of any religion. Who does not shudder with a sense of the most touching and sublime emotion to hear that this same goblet, from which the Saviour drank a last farewell to his disciples and in which the Redeemer's indestructible blood was caught and preserved, still exists, and that he who is pure in heart is destined to behold it and worship it himself. Incomparable! And then the double significance of this one vessel which also served as a chalice at the Last Supper -- , without doubt the most beautiful sacrament of Christian worship! Whence, also, the legend that the Grail (Sang Real) [royal blood] (whence San(ct) Gral) alone sustains the pious knights, vouchsafing them food and drink for their repasts. – And all this has been so senselessly misinterpreted by our poet, who took only the inferior French chivalric romances as his subject-matter and repeated them like a parrot! You can infer from this what the rest must be like! Only individual descriptions are in any way attractive, but this is the forte*

of all medieval poets, for whom the predominant mood is a finely felt pictoriality. But each work as a whole always remains confused and silly. *I would have to make a completely fresh start with Parzival! For Wolfram hadn't the first idea of what he was doing: his despair in God is stupid and unmotivated, and his conversion is even more unsatisfactory. The thing about the 'question' is that it is so utterly preposterous and totally meaningless. I should simply have to invent everything here. And then there is a further difficulty with Parzival. He is indispensably necessary as the redeemer whom Anfortas longs for: but if Anfortas is to be placed in his true and appropriate light, he will become of such immense [P. 460] tragic interest that it will be almost impossible to introduce a second focus of attention, and yet this focus of attention must centre upon Parzival if the latter is not simply to enter at the end as a deus ex machina who leaves us completely cold. Thus Parzival's development and the profound sublimity of his purification, although entirely predestined by his thoughtful and deeply compassionate nature, must again be brought into the foreground. But I cannot choose to work on such a broad scale as Wolfram was able to do: I have to compress everything into three climactic situations of violent intensity, so that the work's profound and ramified content emerges clearly and distinctly; for my art consists in working and representing things in this way. And – am I to undertake such a task? God forbid! Today I take my leave of this insane project, Geibel can write about it and Liszt can compose it! – When my old friend Bruennhilde leaps into the funeral pyre, I shall plunge in after her, and hope to die a Christian! So be it! Amen!*
 (...)”

7/9/59

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 156-157)

[P. 156] “(...) Just think: while working out the herdsman's merry welcome of Isolde's ship the other day, there suddenly occurs to me a still more jubilant melodic strain, almost heroically jubilant, and yet quite popular in cut. I was on the point of turning the whole thing inside out, when I at last discovered that this melody does not belong to Tristan's herdsman, but is Siegfried's to the life. I at once looked up the closing verses of Siegfried with Bruennhilde, and saw that my melody belongs to the words:

“Sie ist mir ewig,
 ist mir immer,
 Erb' und Eigen,
 Ein' und All' “ – etc.

That will have an incredibly dauntless and jubilant air. – If at a whiff I was back in my Siegfried, ought I not still to believe in my life, then, in my – holding out? –

Your having found such pleasure in Koppen's book (cf p. 53) shows me how well you know how to read: I was provoked by so much in the book because I could not stop myself from reflecting how difficult it must make a clear knowledge of Buddha's doctrine to others; so I'm glad you were not thrown off the scent. **Yes, child, that is a view of the world compared wherewith all other dogmas must surely look parochial and petty! The philosopher with his broadest thought, the explorer of Nature with [P. 157] his most extensive deductions, the artist with his most transcendent fantasies, the man with the widest heart for all that breathes and suffers, --**

all find in this wondrous, this quite incomparable world-myth a home the least confined, and in it their whole full selves again. – “

8/24/59

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 460)

[P. 460] “But child, whatever possesses you to think of me as a ‘philosopher’, or even the wish to do so? Am I not after all the stupidest person imaginable? *Judged by the standards of a wise man, I must straightway seem criminal, simply because I know so much and so many things, and, more especially, know that wisdom is so desirable and so wholly admirable. But this, in turn, gives me my characteristic ability to leap over abysses which the wisest of men are not even aware of. That is why I am a poet, and – what’s worse – a musician. Just consider my music, with its delicate, oh so delicate, mysteriously flowing humours penetrating the most subtle pores of feeling to reach the very marrow of life, where it overwhelms everything that looks like sagacity and the self-interested powers of self-preservation, sweeping away all that belongs to the delusive madness of personality and leaving only that wondrously sublime sigh with which we confess to our sense of powerlessness -- : how shall I be a wise man when it is only in such a state of raving madness that I am totally at home?*
(...)”

10/29/59

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 474-477)

[P. 474] “I am now becoming increasingly aware of a quality which I have acquired in my art, since it also determines me in my life. From the very beginning it has been a part of my nature for my moods to change rapidly and abruptly from one extreme to another: states of extreme tension, after all, can scarcely do otherwise than impinge on each other; indeed, it is because of this that we are so often able to preserve our own lives. By the same token, true art has basically no other object than to show these heightened moods in their extreme relation to each other: the only thing that can matter here – the important decision – is the result solely of these extreme contrasts. In the case of art, however, the material use of these extremes may well result in a pernicious mannerism which may degenerate to the level of a straining after superficial effects. I have noticed how the newer French school in particular, with Victor Hugo at its head, is clearly caught up in this {FEUER} I recognize
[P. 475] *now that the characteristic fabric of my music (always of course in the closest association with the poetic design), which my friends now regard as so new and so significant, owes its construction above all to the extreme sensitivity which guides me in the direction of mediating and providing an intimate bond between all the different moments of transition that separate the extremes of mood. I should now like to call my most delicate and profound art the art of transition, for the whole fabric of my art is made up of such transitions: all that is abrupt and sudden is now repugnant to me; it is often unavoidable and necessary, but even then it may not occur unless the mood has been clearly prepared in advance, so that the suddenness of the transition appears to come as a matter of course. My greatest masterpiece in the art of the most delicate and gradual transition is without doubt the great scene in the second act of Tristan and Isolde. The opening of this scene presents a life overflowing with all the most violent*

*emotions, -- its ending the most solemn and heartfelt longing for death. These are the pillars: and now you see, child, how I have joined these pillars together, and how the one of them leads over into the other. This, after all, is the secret of my musical form, which, in its unity and clarity over an expanse that encompasses every detail, I may be bold enough to claim has never before been dreamt of. If only you knew how that guiding emotion has inspired me to invent musical devices that would never have occurred to me previously (devices in rhythm, as well as harmonic and melodic development), you would realize that even in the most specialized branches of art no truth is ever invented that does not derive from such grand primary motives. -- That, then, is art! But this art is very much bound up with my own life. Extreme moods in a state of violent conflict will no doubt always remain part of my nature: but it is embarrassing to have to consider their effects upon others. To be understood is so indispensably important. Just as, in art, it is the most extreme and the grandest of life's moods that must be made intelligible (moods which on the whole remain unknown in ordinary people's lives, except in rare times of war and revolution), this understanding can be achieved only through the most well-defined and most compelling motivation of these transitions, and my entire work of art consists very much in producing the necessary and willing emotional mood by means of this motivation. Nothing has horrified me more than when cuts have been made in my operas, as, for ex., in *Tannhaeuser*, the opera in which I first worked with a growing sense of the beautiful and convincing need for transitions, and where, between the outburst of horror at *Tannhaeuser's* dreadful confession and the devout attention with which Elisabeth's intercession is finally heard, I had composed a most significantly (and musically) motivated transition of which I have always been proud and which has never failed to make a convincing impression. You can well imagine how I felt when I discovered that (as in *Berlin*) people saw nothing here but long-windedness [P. 476] and straightway struck out one of the most essential sections of my work of art? --*

That is how it is with me in art. And in life? Did you not often witness the way in which people found that what I had to say was presumptuous, tiresome and unending whenever I was guided by the very same instinct, and wished only to guide the conversation gradually round, after some agitated or unusual remark, towards some conciliatory and conscious understanding? --

Do you still recall that last evening with Semper? I had suddenly lost my temper and insulted my adversary in a strongly worded attack. Scarcely had the words left my lips when my anger immediately abated, and all I could see -- and feel -- was the need of reconciliation and to restore a proper sense of composure to the conversation. At the same time, however, I was guided by a very clear feeling that this could not be sensibly achieved by suddenly falling silent, but only by a gradual and conscious transition; I recall, even while I was still speaking my mind quite forcefully, that I was already conducting the conversation with a certain artistic consciousness which, had I been allowed to have my way, would most certainly have led to an intellectually and conciliatory conclusion and have ended on a note of understanding and appeasement. (...)

Do you perhaps think that experiences like these are very painful to me? -- In truth, I love my fellow humans, and it is no timid, egotistical instinct which increasingly drives me from their society. It is not injured vanity that makes me sensitive to reproaches that I talk too much, but the sad feeling -- what can I be to people and what can they be

to me if, in my dealings with them, I seek not to achieve an understanding but only to maintain my opinion unaltered? On subjects that are alien to me and of which I have neither experience nor an unerring feeling, I would certainly never expatiate unless it were to learn more about them: but whenever I feel that I have something sensible and coherent to say on a subject that is familiar to me, simply to allow the other person to destroy the development of my argument so as to give him the appearance of being in the right by holding the opposite view – [P. 477] well, that really invalidates every word that might ever be spoken in society in general. I now decline all society – and feel much better for it.

But perhaps I am again talking too much today, and making too many connections between things that ought to remain apart? (...) *Everything with me is so very much linked together within an overall context: this has its grievous disadvantages, since it means that common afflictions that may (possibly) be easy enough to remove can often exert a quite disproportionate influence upon me; but it also has the advantage that I acquire from within this same context the means by which to reassure myself; just as everything flows towards my ultimate task in life, my art, so, in turn, this art is the source of that clear spring which bedews the parched byways of my life. As a result of my sincere wish to exercise a calming and conciliatory influence upon your feelings of sympathy for me, I have today been enabled to gain an awareness of this supreme artistic quality of mine which I find developed in my new works to increasing advantage, and thus I have been allowed to address you as though from the sanctuary of my art, without the least constraint and without even the least friendly deception, but entirely truthfully and unaffectedly.*
(...)"

[1860]

1/60

Explanatory Programme: Prelude to 'Tristan und Isolde' (PW Vol. VIII; P. 386-387)

[P. 386] "An old, old tale, exhaustless in its variations, and ever sung anew in all the languages of medieval Europe, tells us of Tristan and Isolde. For his king the trusty vassal had wooed a maid he durst not tell himself he loved, Isolde; [P. 387] as his master's bride she followed him, for, powerless, she needs must do the wooer's bidding. Love's Goddess, jealous of her dethroned rights, avenged herself: the love-drink destined by the careful mother for the partners in this merely political marriage, in accordance with the customs of the age, the Goddess foists on the youthful pair through a blunder diversely accounted for; fired by its draught, their love leaps suddenly to vivid flame, and each avows to each that they belong to none save one another. Henceforth no end to the yearning, longing, bliss and misery of love: world, power, fame, splendour, honour, knighthood, loyalty and friendship, all scattered like a baseless dream; {FEUER} {SCHOP} *one thing alone left living: desire, desire, unquenchable, longing forever rebearing itself, -- a feverish craving: one sole redemption – death, surcease of being, the sleep that knows no waking!*

{FEUER} {SCHOP} *Here, in Music's own most unrestricted element, the*

musician who chose this theme as introduction to this love-drama could have but one care: how to restrain himself, since exhaustion of the theme is quite impossible. So in one long breath he let that unslaked longing swell from first avowal of the gentlest tremour of attraction, through half-heaved sighs, through hopes and fears, laments and wishes, joy and torment, to the mightiest onset, most resolute attempt to find the breach unbarring to the heart a path into the sea of endless love's delight. In vain! Its power spent,, the heart sinks back to pine of its desire – desire without attainment; for each fruition sows the seeds of fresh desire, till in its final lassitude the breaking eye beholds a glimmer of the highest bliss: it is the bliss of quitting life, of being no more, of last redemption into that wondrous realm from which we stray the farthest when we strive to enter it by fiercest force. Shall we call it Death? Or is it not Night's wonder-world, whence – as the story says – an ivy and a vine sprang up in lockt embrace o'er Tristan and Isolde's grave?"

3/3/60 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 486)

[P. 486] {FEUER} *"Everything is alien to me, and I often gaze around me, yearning for a glimpse of the land of nirvana. But nirvana quickly turns back into Tristan; you know the Buddhist theory of the origin of the world. A breath clouds the clear expanse of heaven:*

[Note: Wagner places here musical notation for the opening notes of the 'Tristan Prelude']

*It swells and grows denser, and finally the whole world stands before me again in all of its impenetrable solidity. That is my age-old destiny, as long as I continue to have such unexorcised ghosts around me! –
(...)"*

4/10/60 Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 489)

[P. 489] *"This court of Frau Venus was clearly the weak point in my work: lacking a good ballet, I resorted at the time to a few coarse brush-strokes, and in that way spoiled a great deal: in particular, the Venusberg left a very dull and indecisive impression, and, as a result, I lost an important foundation upon which the whole of the subsequent tragedy should have been built to shattering effect. All those decisive reminiscences and reminders whose aim is to fill us with a powerful sense of horror (since only in this way can we explain the course of the action) lost almost all their effectiveness and significance: fear and a constant sense of unease failed to make themselves felt. But I now also recognize that at the time that I wrote Tannhaeuser I was not yet able to do the sort of thing that is necessary here: for this I should have required a far greater mastery such as I have only now acquired: only now that I have written Isolde's final transfiguration have I been able to find the right ending for the Flying Dutchman Overture, as well as – the horrors of the Venusberg. One becomes all-powerful only by playing with the world. I shall have to invent everything here myself in order to be able to prescribe every last nuance to the ballet master"*

5/2/60

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 226-227)

[P. 226] "... I renounce all possibility of ever hearing my works, and consequently of disclosing them completely to the world. 'Tis a sacrifice, and yet – so far as my own pleasure is concerned – perhaps a mere alluring dream; for the voice distinctly tells me, I shall never reach enjoyment or satisfaction through performance of my works, and there will always be left a secret pang that tortures me the more as I must conceal and deny it, no doubt, not to rank as an utter madman. And if I renounced that: -- oh, the vision of bliss that dawns on me then! In the first place, total personal poverty; not another care for the least possession. A family that adopts me, still my very modest needs, to which in exchange I transfer all that ever may be mine; there to do and follow naught beyond the writing of my final works, everything I still have in my head. Then I also leave it calmly to my saving daemon, to summon him who shall disclose my works to the world some day – it being left to my good pleasure to have him presented to me, or to let things pass without a murmur if I thought the man impossible. That – that were my wish, my settled choice – had I a voice in it! –

The choice's settlement will indicate which was more needful. If none but I can reproduce my works, it will happen; I'm certain of that! – If none but I can write the works I have still in my head, -- then that will happen. Now, which would be the harder task? Or – which would be of greater moment? I rather incline to the former. {FEUER} *Probably it is more indifferent to the World-spirit, whether a few extra new works of this kind shall be bestowed on the world, than that the essence of this kind of work should be disclosed to the world wholly intelligibly. Oh, it is* [P. 227] *obvious: with the essence of a thing one never reckons quantity; that's inessential, but the main affair is the inner capacity of the entire kind. If I completely disclose this, I thereby fire the consciousness of other units, who will then be able to multiply the spark. Thus may we also account for the uncommon individuality and multiplicity of the Italian school of painting, the Spanish school of poetry, and so on. Consequently (I believe I am safe in assuming) it is of the greater moment to the World-spirit that I should disclose my finished works to the world through perfect performances; and on the widest possible terrain, since the few on whom the spark can fall to use are very rare, very dispersed alike in time and space. With new works, on the other hand, in a certain very deep sense – intelligible to the World-spirit alone – I now can but repeat myself, no other essentiality can I reveal any more."*

7/22/60

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 497-498)

[P. 497] {SCHOP} "But I have a friend to whom I am growing more and more attached. It is my old friend Schopenhauer, so sullen in appearance and yet so deeply affectionate a person. Whenever my feelings have ranged most widely and deeply, a unique sense of self-renewal overcomes me each time I open that book of his, for here I find myself a whole person once more and see myself fully understood and clearly expressed, but in a quite different language, which soon transforms my suffering into an object of understanding, and, on [P. 498] the basis of what I feel, soon changes everything into marmoreal, cool and comforting intellect, an

intellectual understanding which, by revealing me to myself, at the same time reveals the whole world to me! It is a quite wonderful reciprocal action, an exchange of the most supremely inspiring kind: and its effect is always fresh, since it continues to grow in strength. It is this that restores my sense of peace, and even contempt resolves itself as love: for all flattery is at an end; clear understanding makes my suffering less intense: the folds are smoothed away, and sleep again assumes its restorative power. And how good it is that the old man knows nothing at all of what he is to me, nor what I am through him."

7/22/60

**(Continuation of above) Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW;
P. 234-235)**

[P. 234] "Even yourself, can you actually form a clear conception of my life? I scarce can credit it, for perhaps it is not possible. I have lived to make the strange experience that I must end by withdrawing from almost every sign of sympathy extended to me, because I'm pulled up everywhere at last against a point where my odd position toward the world, and everything I do therein, falls victim to misunderstandings so manifest that I can but feel how people really take me – strictly speaking – for a sort of hypocrite. It is becoming very difficult, however, even to explain what I mean by that; so that this perception in turns remains my secret, and the only consolation left me in face of the world is a curious one: that what it fancies it beholds in me is a thing it treats as common to us all, quite natural, and therefore not particularly blamable. –

[P. 235] No one, I am sure, could have less gladness, pleasure, or merely recreation, fleeting stimulus of any sort or kind, than I. Whatever I do or try to, never for a moment does it enter my head to prepare myself a pleasure, an enjoyment, by it; were it only since I've learnt to see more and more distinctly that what I sought has never thriven, but always turned into the opposite. To me this is so evident, that after a trip to Fontainebleau the other day – whither I had been attracted by the promise of fine trees – I took a firm resolve to think of no further distraction of any kind this summer, because so much, regarding which I've grown extremely sensitive, made me finish by recognising even in that trip an experience more replete with pain than pleasure. Not a soul invades my solitude whom I'm not more pleased to see depart; at any stirring of the inextinguishable desire for intimacy, or were it but some trifling change, I have come to impress on myself that all conceivable fulfilment could only give me pain, and quietly hide at home, aware that I should never, find the very tiniest refreshment tho' I sought it. I expect there's hardly anybody who can figure this entire and utter resignation, and least of all if one has children! – And with all this unheard joylessness of existence to be moving in a world still, amid requirements and regards that almost always cast on me the light, in others' eyes, of one who shows himself inordinately grasping, -- at last that leads me to the strangest sentiments in respect of this world. I tell you openly, the bitterness I have often confessed to you is disappearing more and more from me, and contempt is usurping its place. This feeling is not passionate: [P. 236] no, it gives me more and more tranquility; but no longer is there a relation of mind to anyone whatever, in which this feeling doesn't take the upper hand completely. And that spares my heart much: it's far less vulnerable now; -- I can despise where formerly I was enraged! –

So I pour my heart out much less freely, also, reflecting that I'm not the man for

understanding through my actions, and hoping that something at least of my works will meet with understanding some fine day. Yet I may tell you thus much: my sense of purity alone confers on me this power. I feel myself pure at heart: in my inmost depth I know that I have ever wrought for others only, never for myself; and my perpetual sorrows are my witness. –
 (...)”

8/60

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (SLRW; P. 498-501)

[P. 498] “What a poet I am! Heaven help me, I am growing quite presumptuous! – It is this interminable translation of Tannhaeuser that has made me so conceited: not until I had to go through the work word by word did I finally realize how concise and unalterable this poem already is. Take away a word or a meaning, and both I and my translators were forced to admit that an essential element would be lost. Initially I believed that it would be possible to make small alterations: we were forced to abandon each and every one of them as impossible. I was most surprised at this, and then found, in comparison, that I really know of very little else to which I can ascribe this same quality. In a word, I soon had no choice but to admit to myself that the poem could simply not be improved on. What do you say to that? **I can better improve on the music. The orchestra in particular will be given a number of more expressive and richer passages. Only the scene with Venus will be completely rewritten. I found Frau Venus somewhat stiff; a few good qualities, but no real life. Here I have added quite a number of new verses: the goddess of joy will be almost touching, and Tannhaeuser’s torment will be real, so that his cry of [P. 499] Mary burst forth from his soul like a cry of deepest anguish. This is something I could not have done previously. In order to compose the music, I shall need to be in a very good mood indeed, and have no idea as yet where I shall find it! –**

(...) {FEUER} *Lohengrin affected me very deeply yesterday, and I cannot help thinking it the most tragic of all poems, since reconciliation is really to be found only if one casts a terribly wide-ranging glance at the world.*

{FEUER} *Only a profound acceptance of the doctrine of metempsychosis has been able to console me by revealing the point at which all things finally converge at the same level of redemption, after the various individual existences – which run alongside each other in time – have come together in a meaningful way outside time. According to the beautiful Buddhist doctrine, the spotless purity of Lohengrin is easily explicable in terms of his being the continuation of Parzival – who was the first to strive towards purity. Elsa, similarly, would reach the level of Lohengrin through being reborn. Thus my plan for the ‘Victors’ struck me as being the concluding section of Lohengrin. Here ‘Savitri’ (Elsa) entirely reaches the level of ‘Ananda’. In this way, all the terrible Tragedy of life would be attributable to our dislocation in time and space: but since time and space are merely our way of perceiving things, but otherwise have no reality, even the greatest tragic pain must be explicable to those who are truly clear-sighted as no more than an individual error: I believe it is so! And, in all truth, it is a question simply of what is pure and noble, something which, in itself, is painless. –*

I can do nothing but prattle when writing to you: nothing else is worth the effort! And only with you do I enjoy prattling on about such things! {FEUER} *Time and space – which, after all, bring nothing but torment and distress – then disappear for me! (...)*

Tristan is and remains a miracle to me! I find it more and more difficult to understand how I could have done such a thing: when I read through it again, my eyes and ears fell open with amazement! How terribly I shall have to atone for this work one day, if ever I plan to perform it complete: I can see quite clearly the most unspeakable sufferings ahead for me; for if I am [P. 500] honest with myself, I have far overstepped the limits of what we are capable of achieving in this field; uniquely gifted performers, who alone would be equal to the task, are incredibly rare in the world. And yet I cannot resist the temptation, if only to hear the orchestra!! –

{FEUER} *Parzival has again been stirring within me a good deal; I can see more and more in it, and with ever-increasing clarity; one day, when everything has matured within me, it will be an unprecedented pleasure to complete this poem. But many a long year must pass before then! And I should like to be satisfied for once with the poem alone. I shall keep my distance from it as long as I can, and occupy myself with it only when it really forces itself on my attention. This strange creative process will then allow me to forget just how wretched I am. (...) Did I not tell you once before that the fabulously wild messenger of the Grail is to be one and the same person as the enchantress of the second act. Since this dawned on me, almost everything else about the subject has become clear to me. This strangely horrifying creature who, slave-like, serves the Knights of the Grail with untiring eagerness, who carries out the most unheard-of tasks, and who lies in a corner waiting only until such time as she is given some unusual task to perform – and who at times disappears completely, no one knows how or where?*

Then all at once we meet her again, fearfully tired, wretched, pale and an object of horror: but once again untiring in serving the Holy Grail with doglike devotion, while all the time revealing a secret contempt for its knights: her eye seems always to be seeking the right one, -- and she has already deceived herself once – but did not find him. But not even she herself knows what she is searching for: it is purely instinctive.

{FEUER} *When Parzival, the foolish lad, arrives in the land, she cannot avert her eyes from him: strange are the things that must go on inside her; she does not know it, but she clings to him. He is appalled – but he, too, feels drawn to her: he understands nothing. (Here it is a question of the poet having to invent everything!) Only the manner of execution can say anything here! – But you can gain an idea of what I mean if you listen to the way that Bruennhilde listened to Wotan. – This woman suffers unspeakable restlessness and excitement: the old esquire had noticed this on previous occasions, each time that she had shortly afterwards disappeared. This time she is in the tensest possible state. What is going on inside her? Is she appalled at the thought of renewed flight, does she long to be freed from it? Does she hope – for an end to it all? What hopes does she have of Parzival? Clearly she attaches unprecedented importance to him? – But all is gloomy and vague: no knowledge, only instinct and dusky twilight? – Cowering in a corner, she witnesses Anfortas's agonized scene.: she gazes with a strangely inquisitive look (sphinx-like) at Parzival. He, too, is – stupid, understands nothing, stares in amazement – says nothing. He is driven out. The*

messenger of the Grail [P. 501] sinks to the ground with a shriek; she then disappears. (She is forced to wander again.)

Now can you guess who this wonderfully enchanting woman is whom Parzival finds in the strange castle where his chivalrous spirit leads him? Guess what happens here, and how it all turns out. I shall say no more today! – “

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Music of the Future (PW Vol. III; P. 293-344)

[P. 296] {FEUER} *“If we may broadly denote the whole range of Nature as an evolutionary march from unconsciousness to consciousness, and if this march is shown the most conspicuously in the human individual, we may take its observation in the life of the Artist as one of the most interesting, because in him and his creations the World itself displays itself and comes to consciousness. But in the Artist, too, the bent to represent is by its nature thoroughly unconscious, instinctive; and even where he needs deliberation (Besonnenheit), to shape the picture of his intuition to an objective work of art by aid of his own familiar technique, the decisive choice of his expressional means will not be settled by Reflection proper, but rather by an instinctive bent that makes out the very character of his specific gift. The necessity for a lengthy bout of reflection will only come upon him where he stumbles on some great obstacle to the application of his expressional means he needs; thus where the means of realising his artistic aim are persistently made hard of access for him, or finally debarred. In the last-named case will be found, in a progressive ratio, the artist who requires not merely lifeless tools, but a living combination of artistic forces to realise his aim. Such a combination is needed by the dramatic poet in the most emphatic sense, to bring his poem to its most intelligible expression; for this he is directed to the Theatre, which, as the epitome of the arts of re-presenting (als Inbegriff der darstellenden Kunst), itself makes out a definite branch of art, with laws peculiar to itself. The dramatic poet approaches this Theatre as a ready-made art-medium; with it, with all its idiosyncracies, has he to blend himself, to see a realisation of his artistic aim. If the poet’s tendencies entirely concur with those of the Theatre, there can be no question of the aforesaid conflict; and one has merely to weigh the character of that concurrence, to ascertain the value of the work of art thus brought to light of day. If on the contrary those [P. 397] tendencies are radically divergent, it is easy to imagine the distress (Noth) of the artist who, for expressing his artistic aim, sees himself constrained to employ an art-organ which primarily belongs to quite another aim than his.*

The enforced perception that I myself was in such a plight, compelled me at a certain epoch of my life to halt upon the road of more or less unconscious artistic production, and devote a lengthy period of reflection to bringing the problem of this situation to my personal consciousness, through an investigation of its causes. I may assume that the problem in question had never yet thrust itself so obtrusively upon an artist, as now upon me, since the artistic elements involved had surely never been so diverse and peculiar; seeing that on the one side Poetry and Music, on the other the modern Lyric Stage, the most dubious and equivocal institute of public art in latter days – the Opera-house – were to strike up an alliance.”

[P. 302] {FEUER} *“The disadvantage under which the German had laboured hitherto, as compared with the Romanic peoples, would .. be turned to an advantage. Whereas the*

Frenchman, for instance – confronted with a fully developed, entirely self-contained and congruent form, and yielding a willing obedience to its seemingly unalterable laws – feels himself committed to a perpetual reproduction of that form, and thus (in a higher sense) to a certain stagnation of his inner productivity; the German, recognising all the advantages of such an attitude, would perceive withal its serious mischiefs; its lack of freedom would not escape him, and there would open up the outlook of an ideal art-form, embracing each eternal truth of every single art-form, but liberated from the fetters of the accidental and untrue. The immeasurable importance of this art-form would then consist herein: purged of the cramping element of narrower nationality, it would be a universally understandable form, accessible to every nation. Though as regards Literature the diversity of European tongues presents an obstacle, yet in Music, that language understandable by all the world alike, there would be supplied the great conforming force, which, resolving the language of abstractions into that of feelings, would transmute the inmost secret of the artist's thought (Anschauung) into a universal message; [P. 303] particularly when its plastic expression, as furnished by the dramatic show, should raise that message to a plainness hitherto claimed by the art of Painting as her unique and peculiar province."

[P. 304] (...) *The peculiar feeling of gnawing pain, that seized me when conducting our ordinary operas, was often interrupted by an enthusiastic sense of ineffable wellbeing when here and there, at the very moment of performance of nobler works, I came by an inner consciousness of the quite unparalleled effect of certain combinations in dramatic music; an effect of such depth, such inwardness, and yet so direct a vividness, as no other art is able to produce. That such impressions, revealing undreamt possibilities as it were by a lightning-flash, could ever and anon present themselves to me – this it was that chained me ever and again to the theatre, intense as was the disgust with which I was filled, on the other hand, by the typical spirit of our opera performances. (...) When twenty years back I stayed in Paris for a considerable time, the [P. 305] consummateness of musical and plastic mise en scene at the performances of the Grand Opera could not fail to produce a most dazzling and stimulating impression on me. The highest grade of influence, however, had already been exerted on me in my earlier youth by the achievements of a dramatic singer of – for me – quite unmatched worth, the Schroeder-Devrient. (...) The quite incomparable dramatic talent of this lady, the quite inimitable harmony and individual characteristiqu of her impersonations, which I actually beheld with living eyes and ears, cast a spell over me that gave the bent to my whole future artistic course. The possibility of such achievements had opened out before me; and, with her in eye, there matured in me a standard not only for the musico-dramatic representation, but also for the poetico-musical conception, of an artwork to which I scarce could any longer give the name 'opera.' I was distressed to see this artist compelled to digest the least significant products on all the field of operatic composition, to gain the matter for her talent of portrayal; and again, astounded at the sincerity and entrancing beauty which she infused into her impersonation of Romeo in Bellini's feeble work, I said to myself withal: what an incomparable artwork must that be, which in all its parts should be fully worthy of the talent of such an executant artist, and still more, of an association of artists like her. Now the higher my idea of what could be done in the opera-genre was raised by such impressions, and the more I conceived that idea to be truly*

realisable by turning into the channel of this musical drama the whole rich stream of German music, swelled full by Beethoven, the more depressing and repellent must be my daily intercourse with actual Opera, which lay so infinitely distant from the ideal I harboured within my heart.”

[P. 308] “Now it was above all weight for me, that I fancied I must recognise how the single, separately prosecuted art-varieties, however much their power of expression was eventually developed and intensified by mighty geniuses, yet, without falling into unnaturalness and positive abnormality, could never and by no manner of means replace that all-enabled Artwork, which had been possible to nothing but their combination. {FEUER} *With the sayings of the most eminent art-critics at my hand – with the investigations of a Lessing, for instance, anent the boundaries of Poetry and Painting – I believed I had reached the insight that each single art-branch evolves along a line of force which finally brings it to its limit, and that it cannot overstep this limit without danger of losing itself in the unintelligible and absolutely fantastic, nay, absurd. At this point I thought I plainly saw in it a longing to reach out its hand to the other, the correlated art-variety – from this point on, the only capable one; and though, in regard of my ideal, it must actively interest me to follow these tendencies in each particular art-variety, I finally believed I could prove such a tendency to exist the plainest and most strikingly (especially in view of the uncommon significance of the newer music) in the relation of Poetry to Music. Whilst trying in this wise to picture to myself that Artwork in which all the single art-varieties should combine for their own highest completion, I lit upon a conscious glimpse of that very ideal which had unconsciously been forming in my mind and hovering before the longing artist. Since I could not assume the possibility of a complete appearance of this ideal Artwork in the [P. 309] Present – particularly when I remembered the thoroughly false position of the Theatre, as regards our public life – I called my ideal the ‘Artwork of the Future.’* “

[P. 312] {FEUER} “... in his diction the poet seeks to replace the abstract, conventional meaning of words by their original sensuous meaning, and through a rhythmic arrangement of his verse, as finally through the wellnigh musical adornment of rhyme, to ensure for his phrase an effect that shall take the Feeling captive and control it as if by a spell. In this tendency of the poet, essential to his very being, we see him arrive at last at the limit of his art-branch, where he comes already into immediate contact with Music; and thus that work of the poet’s must rank as the most excellent, which in its final consummation should become entirely music.

I therefore believe I must term the ‘mythos’ the poet’s ideal Stuff – that native, nameless poem of the Folk, which throughout the ages we ever meet new-handled by the great poets of periods of consummate culture; for in it there almost vanishes the conventional form of man’s relations, merely explicable to abstract reason, to show instead the eternally intelligible, the purely human, but in just that inimitable concrete form which lends to every sterling myth an individual shape so swiftly cognisable. (...)

“... I plunged into an examination of the technical possibilities of such a Form, with the end-result [P. 313] that only the extraordinarily rich development – entirely unknown to former centuries – attained by Music in our times could bring about the baring of those possibilities.

(...)

Since the rebirth of the fine arts among the Christian nations of Europe, two art-varieties have undeniably obtained an altogether new development, perfect beyond anything they had reached in classical antiquity; I speak of Painting and Music. (...) In a still higher and – I believe – still more important measure, have we to make the same assertion regarding Modern Music. Harmony, entirely unknown to the ancients, its inconceivable expansion and aggrandisement through Polyphony, are the invention and the most peculiar work of latter-centuries.”

[P. 316] “Through the formation of the string-instrument quartet, the polyphonic line of treatment was extended also to the orchestra, its different voices being handled in the same independent fashion as the singing voices in Church-music; thus the orchestra was emancipated from the subordinate position it theretofore had occupied, and occupies in Italian Opera till this very day, as a mere rhythmic-harmonic accompaniment. Now it is highly interesting, and our only means of enlightenment as to the essence of all musical Form, to note how every effort of the German masters was directed to giving the simple dance-melody, delivered independently by instruments, a gradually richer and broader evolution. This melody originally consisted of a very brief ‘period,’ essentially composed of only four bars, though that number became doubled or even quadrupled; our masters’ main aim seems to have been to give it a greater extension, and thus to reach a broader, ampler form wherein to deploy their [P. 517] harmony. The art-form peculiar to Fugue, when applied to Dance-melody, gave occasion for also lengthening the duration of the whole piece, as follows: this melody was delivered by each ‘voice’ in turn, now in diminution, now in augmentation; shown in changing lights, through harmonic modulation; and its motion kept in constant interest, through contrapuntal figures and counter-themes. A second procedure consisted in this: one fitted several dance-melodies to each other, allowing them to alternate in accordance with the character of their expression, and linking them by transitional passages, in which the art of Counterpoint was of particular assistance. Upon this simple groundplan was built the peculiar artwork of the Symphony. Haydn was the genius who first developed this form to broader compass, and gave it power of deep expression through an exhaustless play of motives, as also of their transitional links and workings-out. Though the Italian operatic melody had received in the mouth of talented and feeling singers, and borne on the breath of the noblest organ, a graceful sensuous coloring as yet unknown to German musicians – a colouring whose sweet euphony was absent from their instrumental melodies. It was Mozart who became aware of this charm, and, while he brought to Italian Opera the richer development of the German mode of instrumental composition, he imparted in turn to the orchestral melody the full euphony of the Italian mode of song. *The ample heritage and promise of both these masters was taken up by Beethoven; he matured the Symphonic artwork to so engrossing a breadth of form, and filled that form with so manifold and enthralling a melodic content, that we stand to-day before the Beethovenian Symphony as before the landmark of an entirely new period in the history of universal Art; for through it there came into the world a phenomenon not even remotely approached by anything the art of any age or any people has to show us.* {FEUER} *In this Symphony instruments speak a language whereof [P. 318] the world at no previous time had any knowledge: for here, with a hitherto unknown persistence,*

the purely-musical Expression enchains the hearer in an inconceivably varied mesh of nuances; rouses his inmost being, to a degree unreachable by any other art; and in all its changefulness reveals an ordering principle so free and bold, that we can but deem it more forcible than any logic, yet without the laws of logic entering into it in the slightest – nay, rather, the reasoning march of Thought, with its track of causes and effects, here finds no sort of foothold. So that this Symphony must positively appear to us a revelation from another world; and in truth it opens out a scheme (Zusammenhang) of the world's phenomena quite different from the ordinary logical scheme, and whereof one foremost thing is undeniable: – that it thrusts home with the most overwhelming conviction, and guides our Feeling with such a sureness that the logic-mongering Reason is completely routed and disarmed thereby.

{FEUER}The metaphysical necessity for the discovery of this quite new faculty of speech precisely in our times, appears to me to lie in the daily more conventional drift of modern word-languages. If we look closer at the evolutionary history of these languages, even to-day we meet in their so-called word-roots a rudiment that plainly shows us how at the first beginning the formation of the mental concept of an object ran almost completely parallel with the subjective feeling of it; and the supposition that the earliest Speech of man must have borne a great analogy with Song, might not perhaps seem quite ridiculous. Starting with a physical meaning for his words, in any case quite subjectively felt, the speech of man evolved along a more and more abstract line; so that at last there remained nothing but a conventional meaning, depriving the Feeling of any share in understanding the words, just as their syntax was made entirely dependent on rules to be acquired by learning. In necessary agreement with the moral evolution of mankind, there grew up equally in speech and manners a Convention, whose laws were no [P. 319] longer intelligible to natural Feeling, but were drilled into youth by maxims comprehensible to nothing but Reflection. Now ever since the modern European languages – divided into different stocks, to boot – have followed their conventional drift with a more and more obvious tendency, Music, on the other hand, has been developing a power of expression unknown to the world before. 'Tis as though the purely-human Feeling, intensified by the pressure of a conventional civilisation, had been seeking an outlet for the operation of its own peculiar laws of speech; an outlet through which, unfettered by the laws of logical Thought, it might express itself intelligibly to itself. The uncommon popularity of Music in our times; the constantly increasing interest, spreading through every stratum of society, in the products of the deepest-meaning class of music; the ever growing eagerness to make musical training an integral part of education: all this, so manifest and undeniable in itself, at like times proves the correctness of the postulate, that Music's modern evolution has answered to a profoundly inward need of mankind's, and that, however unintelligible her tongue when judged by the laws of Logic, she must possess a more persuasive title to our comprehension than anything contained within those laws.

In face of this irrefutable conclusion, there would henceforth stand only two ways open to Poetry. Either a complete removal into the field of Abstraction, a sheer combining of mental concepts and portrayal of the world by expounding the logical laws of Thought. And this office she fulfils as Philosophy. Or an inner blending with Music, with that Music whose infinite faculty has been disclosed to us by the Symphony of Beethoven.

{FEUER} Poetry will lightly find the path thereto, and perceive her final ascension into Music to be her own, her inmost longing, so soon as she grows aware of a need in Music, herself, which Poetry alone can still. {FEUER} {SCHOP} To explain this need, let us first attest that ineradicable attribute of all human apperception which spurs it to find out the laws of [P. 320] Causality, and in presence of every impressive phenomenon to ask itself instinctively the question 'Why?' Even the hearing of a Symphonic tone-piece does not entirely silence this question; rather, since it cannot give the answer, it brings the hearer's inductive faculty into a confusion which not only is liable to disquiet him, but also becomes the ground of a totally false judgment. To answer this disturbing, and yet so irremissible question, so that in a manner of speaking it is circumvented from the first, can only be the poet's work. But it can succeed in the hands of none but that poet who is fully alive to Music's tendency and exhaustless faculty of Expression, and therefore drafts his poem in such a fashion that it may penetrate the finest fibres of the musical tissue, and the spoken thought entirely dissolve into the feeling. Obviously, no other form of poetry can help us here, save that in which the poet no longer describes, but brings his subject into actual and convincing representation to the senses; and this sole form is Drama. Drama, at the moment of its actual scenic representation, arouses in the beholder such an intimate and instant interest in an action borrowed faithfully from life itself, at least in its possibilities, that man's sympathetic Feeling already passes into that ecstatic state where it clean forgets the fateful question 'Why?', and willingly yields itself, in utmost excitation, to the guidance of those new laws whereby Music makes herself so wondrously intelligible and – in a profounder sense – supplies withal the only fitting answer to that 'Why?'

(...) I am again approaching that state of mind which obsessed me when at work on those [P. 321] theoretic writings some years ago, and so strangely weighed upon my brain that I have called it an abnormal state – into which I entertain a lively horror of falling back. –

{FEUER} I called that state of mind abnormal, because it drove me to treat as a theorem a thing which had become quite positive and certain to me in my artistic intuition (Anschauung) and production, so as to make it equally clear to my reflective consciousness, and for this I needed abstract meditation. But nothing can be more alien and distressful to the artist's nature than such a course of thought, so thoroughly opposed to his customary method. He therefore does not surrender himself to it with the needful coolness, the property of the theorist by profession; rather is he thrust on by a passionate impatience, which prevents him from devoting the requisite time to a careful handling of style; he fain would give entire in every sentence the view (Anschauung) that embraces the whole picture of his subject; doubt, as to whether he has succeeded in this, drives him to a constant repetition of the attempt – which fills him at last with a heat and irritation that should be absolute strangers to the theorist. Then he grows alive to all these faults and evils, and freshly harassed by this feeling of them, he hurriedly ends his work with a sigh, that after all he will probably be understood by none but those who already share with him the same artistic view.

Thus my mental state was like a brain-cramp; I was trying to speak out theoretically what the aforesaid disparity between my artistic tendencies and the tendencies of our public art, and especially the Opera-house, seemed to preclude me

from conveying on the inerrably convincing path of direct artistic production. For refuge from this torturing state, I felt driven back to the normal exercise of my artistic powers. I sketched and carried out a dramatic plan of such considerable dimensions that, in mere obedience to the claims of my subject, I deliberately removed myself from all possibility of grafting this work upon our Opera-repertoire, as it now is. This musical [P. 322] drama, embracing a whole elaborate Tetralogy, was to be performable in public only under the most unusual circumstances. That ideal possibility, remote from every influence of Modern Opera, both flattered my fancy and raised my spirits to such a pitch that, chasing away all theoretic crotchets and devoting myself thenceforward to unbroken artistic production, I could drop back into my own true nature as though recovering from a serious illness. The work of which I speak, and the greater part of whose musical composition I have since already finished, is called ‘*Der Ring des Nibelungen*.’ “

[P. 324] {FEUER} “... *unmoved by the somewhat flattering recognition of my aptitudes, I had only to rejoice that I had set out with a right instinct when I deemed it possible for an equal interpenetration of Poesy and Music to bring about an artwork that should produce an irresistibly convincing impression at the moment of its stage-performance, an impression such as to resolve all arbitrary Reflection into purely-human Feeling. That I saw this effect attained in part, notwithstanding many great flaws in the performance – upon whose absolute correctness, on the other hand, I needs must set so great a store – inspired me with even bolder views of Music’s all-enabling efficacy; [P. 325] and these I finally will endeavour to explain to you at greater length.*”

[P. 326] {FEUER} “... ‘Der fliegende Hollaender,’ ‘Tannhaeuser’ and ‘Lohengrin’ were written, composed and, with the exception of ‘Lohengrin,’ produced upon the stage before I commenced my theoretic writings. By them (if that were fully possible at mere hand of the subject-matter) I might therefore demonstrate the evolutionary march of my artistic productivity, up to the point where I saw myself prompted to take theoretical stock of my own procedure. This I mention, however, merely to draw your attention to the great mistake which people make, when they think needful to suppose that these three works were written with conscious purpose after abstract rules imposed upon myself. *Let me rather tell you that even my boldest conclusions as to the attainable, dramatico-musical form were thrust upon me through my at like time carrying in my head the plan for my great Nibelungen drama, a portion of which I had even turned into verse already; and there [in my head] I was maturing it in such a fashion, that my theories were wellnigh nothing but an abstract expression of the productive process going on within me.* Hence my system proper, if so you choose to call it, finds in those first three poems but a most conditional application.

It is otherwise with the last of the poems I place before you, with ‘Tristan und Isolde.’ This I drafted and carried out after I had already completed the musical setting of the great portion of my Nibelungen pieces. The outer motive for this break in that great labour, was the desire to furnish a work whose stage requirements and smaller compass should make it sooner and more easily performable; a wish inspired on the one hand by the need to at last hear something of my own once more, while on the [P. 327] other, the aforesaid encouraging accounts of performances of my older works in Germany now gave it a semblance of possible fulfilment.

Upon that work I consent to your making the severest claims deducible from my theoretic premises: not because I formed it on my system, for every theory was clean forgotten by me; but since here I moved with fullest freedom and the most utter disregard of every theoretic scruple, to such an extent that during the working-out I myself was aware how far I had outstripped my system. Believe me, there is no greater sense of wellbeing than this complete inhesitancy of the artist when producing, as felt by me whilst working out my 'Tristan.' It perhaps was only possible because a previous period of reflection had strengthened me in much the way my master once said he had done by a course of the hardest contrapuntal exercises, namely, for writing fugues, but for that which a man can only make his own by rigorous practice: self-reliance, sureness!"

[P. 328] {FEUER} "... I once for all forsook the realm of history, even in my choice of stuff, for that of legend (Sage). (...)

{FEUER} *All that detailed description and exhibition of the Historico-conventional which is requisite for making us clearly understand the events of a given, remote historical epoch, and which the historical novelist or dramatist of our times has therefore to set forth at such exhaustive length – all this I could pass over. And thus not only for the poem, but in particular for the music, there was removed any compulsion to adopt a mode of treatment quite foreign to them, and above all quite impossible to Music. The legend, in whatever age or nation it occurs, has the merit of seizing nothing but the purely-human Content of that age and nation, and of giving forth that content in a form peculiar [P. 329] to itself, of sharpest outline, and therefore swiftly understandable. A ballad, a refrain of the Folk, suffices to acquaint us with this telling character in the twinkling of an eye. This legendary colouring, for the display of a purely-human event, has in particular the real advantage of uncommonly facilitating the task I assigned to the poet above, the task of silencing the question 'Why?' Just as through the characteristic scene, so also through the legendary tone, the mind is forthwith placed in the dream-like state wherein it presently shall come to full clairvoyance, and thus perceive a new coherence in the world's phenomena: a coherence it could not detect with the waking eye of everyday, wherefore it had ever asked about the Why as though to conquer its abashedness in presence of the world's incomprehensible, of that world which now becomes to it so clear and vividly intelligible. How Music is at last to fully round this quickening spell, you now will lightly comprehend.*

{FEUER} *But even for the poet's manipulation of the stuff, its legendary character affords the essential advantage that whereas the simple sequence of the plot, so easily surveyable in all its outward bearings, renders it needless to linger on any outer explanation of its course, on the other hand the poem's far largest space can be devoted to exhibiting the inner springs of action, those inner soul-motives which are finally and alone to stamp the Action as a 'necessary' one – and that through the sympathetic interest taken in these motives by our own inmost hearts.*

In looking through the poems now placed before you, you will readily notice that I but very gradually grew conscious of the advantage just referred to, and but gradually learned to profit by it. Even the outward volumen, increasing with each poem, will afford you evidence of this. You will soon perceive that my initial bias against giving the poem a broader reach sprang chiefly from my keeping at first too

much in eye the traditional Form of opera music, which had hitherto made a poem impossible that did not allow of numberless word-repetitions. In the [P. 330] 'Flying Dutchman' my only care, in general, was to keep the plot to its simplest features, to exclude all useless detail such as the intrigues one borrows from common life, and in return to more fully develop those traits which were to set in its proper light the characteristic colouring of the legendary stuff, since here they seemed to me to altogether coincide with the idiosyncrasy of the inner motives of action; and to do this in such a way, that that Colour itself should be turned into Action.

{FEUER} You perhaps will find the plot of 'Tannhaeuser' already far more markedly evolving from its inner motives. Here the decisive catastrophe proceeds without the least constraint from a lyric tournament of bards, in which no other power save the most hidden inner workings of the soul drives toward the decisive blow, and in such a manner that even this denouement's form belongs purely to the lyric element.

{FEUER} The whole interest of 'Lohengrin' consists in an inner working within the heart of Elsa, involving every secret of the soul: the endurance of a spell of wondrous power for blessing, that fills her whole surrounding with the most persuasive sense of truth, hangs solely on her refraining from the question as to its Whence. Like a cry from the inmost want (Noth) of woman's heart, this question struggles loose – and the spell has vanished. You may guess how singularly this tragic 'Whence?' concurs with that aforesaid theoretic 'Why?'

{FEUER} I too ... felt driven to this 'Whence and Wherefore?' and for long it banned me from the magic of my art. But my time of penance taught me to overcome the question. All doubt at last was taken from me, when I gave myself up to the 'Tristan.' Here, in perfect trustfulness, I plunged into the inner depths of soul-events, and from out this inmost centre of the world I fearlessly built up its outer form. A glance at the volumen of this poem will show you at once that the exhaustive detail-work which an historical poet is obliged to devote to clearing up the outward bearings of his plot, to the detriment [P. 321] of a lucid exposition of its inner motives, I now trusted myself to apply to these latter alone. Life and death, the whole import and existence of the outer world, here hang on nothing but the inner movements of the soul. The whole affecting Action comes about for reason only that the inmost soul demands it, and steps to light with the very shape foretokened in the inner shrine.

{FEUER} Perhaps in the execution of this poem much will strike you as going too far into subtle (intime) detail; and even should you concede this tendency as permissible to the poet, you yet might wonder how he could dare hand over to the musician all this refine-ment of minutiae, for carrying out. In this you would be possessed by the same bias as led myself, when drafting the 'Flying Dutchman,' to give its poem nothing but the most general of contours, destined merely to play into the hands of an absolute-musical working-out. But in this regard let me at once make one reply to you: whereas the verses were there intended as an underlay for Operatic melody, to be stretched to the length demanded by that melody through countless repetitions of words and phrases, in the musical setting of 'Tristan' not a trace of word-repetition is any longer found, but the weft of words and verses foreordains the whole dimensions of the melody, i.e. the structure of that melody is already erected by the poet.

{FEUER} Should its present application have turned out thoroughly successfully, from that alone you might bear me witness that this procedure of mine must effect a far more intimate amalgamation of poem and music, than could the earlier one; and if I may venture at like time to hope that you will set a greater value on my execution of the 'Tristan' poem in itself, than on kindred efforts with my earlier works, this very circumstance would lead you to conclude that its full foreshadowing of the musical form must at least have been of profit to the poetic workmanship itself. If, then, the complete foreshadowing of the musical form is able to lend a special value to the very poem, and that in entire accordance with the poet's will, the only further question would [P. 332] be; whether the melody's musical form does not thereby suffer harm itself, through forfeiting its freedom of movement and development?

{FEUER} On this, please take your answer from the musician; with the deepest feeling of its rightness, he boldly makes assertion that melody and its form, by this procedure, are brought a wealth and inexhaustibility such as one could not so much as form a notion of without it.

I fancy I shall do best by closing my communication to you with the theoretic argument for this assertion. I will attempt it by henceforth confining myself to just the musical form, the melody. –

In the shrill and frequent outcry of our shallow musical dilettanti for 'Melody, Melody!' I find evidence that they take their idea of Melody from musical works in which, by side of the melody, there stretches an expanse of unmelodiousness, setting the melody they mean in the light they love so dearly. In the Opera-house of Italy there gathered an audience which passed its evenings in amusement; part of this amusement was formed by the music sung upon the stage, to which one listened from time to time in pauses of the conversation; during the conversation and visits paid from box to box the music still went on, and with the same office as one assigns to table-music at grand dinners, namely to encourage by its noise the otherwise timid talk. The music which is played with this object, and during this conversation, fills out the virtual bulk of an Italian opera score; whereas the music which one really listens to, makes out perhaps a twelfth part thereof. An Italian opera must contain at least one aria to which one is glad to listen; if it is to have a success, the conversation must be broken, and the music listened-to with interest, at least six times; whilst the composer who is clever enough to attract the audience's attention a whole twelve times, is lauded as an inexhaustible melodic genius. Now how are we to blame this public if, suddenly confronted with a work which claims a like attention throughout its whole extent and for each of [P. 333] its parts, it sees itself torn from all its habits at musical performances, and cannot possibly take as identical with its beloved melody a thing which in the luckiest event may pass for a mere refinement of that musical noise – that noise whose naïve use before had facilitated the most agreeable interchange of small talk, whereas it now obtrudes the upstart claim of being really heard? It must cry out again and again for its six to twelve melodies, if only to gain the stimulating and protective intervals for conversation, the main end and object of the opera-evening.

To tell the truth, what a curious bias takes for wealth, to the better-educated mind can only appear as penury. The loud requirements founded on this error, one

may forgive to the great Public proper, but not the Art-critic. Let us therefore try to get to the bottom of this error, so far as that is possible.

We will start with the axiom that music's only form is melody, that it is not even thinkable apart from melody, that music and melody are absolutely indis severable. Therefore, taken in a higher sense, to say that any music has no melody can only mean: the musician has not arrived at the full construction of a form such as to seize and definitely impress the Feeling; a statement which simply announces the composer's lack of talent, his want of originality, compelling him to cobble up his piece from melodic phrases often heard before, and therefore leaving the ear indifferent. In the mouth of the less-educated friend of Opera, however, and as touching any specimen of genuine music, this remark stands self-confessed as meaning merely a given narrow form of melody which ... belongs to the childhood of musical art; wherefore the delight in nothing else but it must likewise seem to us truly childish. Here, then, it is less a question of Melody, than of its first restricted dance-form.

{FEUER} Now I do not really wish to say anything depreciatory about this earliest rudiment of melodic form. I believe I have already proved that it is the basis of the finished [P. 334] artform of the Beethovenian Symphony, and upon that assumption we have to thank it for something quite astounding. But one thing has to be borne in mind: namely that this form, which Italian Opera has preserved in all its pristine undevelopedness, has received in the Symphony a maturing and expansion such as to give it, in comparison with that earlier form, the relation of the flower-crowned plant to the sucker. *I therefore fully endorse the significance of that original melodic form, the dance-form, and – true to the maxim that, let a form be never so developed, it needs must bear its origin still stamped upon it – I claim to trace that dance-form in the Beethovenian Symphony; nay, I hold that this Symphony, as a melodic aggregate (Komplex), should be looked upon as nothing other than the idealised Dance-form itself.*

(...) With Beethoven's forerunners we see these nasty gaps still stretching between the melodic chief-motives even in Symphonic movements: though Haydn, indeed, was mostly able to give these interspaces a very interesting stamp, Mozart – who here approached much nearer to the Italian notion of melodic form – had often, nay, almost habitually relapsed into that banal build of phrases which constantly shows his Symphonic movements in the light of so-called table-music, i.e. a music which, between attractive melodies, offers also an attractive hubbub for conversation's sake: on myself at least, the perpetually recurring and noisily garrulous half-closes of the Mozartian Symphony make the impression as if I were hearing the clatter of a prince's plates and dishes set to music. *The distinctive and masterly procedure of Beethoven, on the contrary, was directed to entirely banishing those fatal interspaces, and giving to the connecting-links between [P. 335] the chief melodies the full character of Melody themselves.*

{FEUER} *The quite new result of this procedure, then, was to stretch out the melody through richest evolution of all the motives lying in it, to one vast, one solid piece of music, which in itself is nothing but one sole continuous melody. Now it is surprising that this procedure, acquired upon the field of Instrumental-music, should have been fairly approximately applied to mixed Choral and Orchestral music, but never properly as yet to Opera. In his great Mass Beethoven has employed the choir*

and orchestra almost exactly as in the Symphony: this Symphonic mode of treatment was possible because in the generally known, and now almost purely symbolical text-words of the Church a form was given him which he could divide, reduplicate and re-unite almost in the same way as with Dance-melody itself. But no sensible musician could possibly think of treating the text-words of a dramatic poem in this fashion, since it is their duty to contain, no mere symbolic import, but a definite logical train of thought. It could only have been done with those very text-words which, on the other hand, were planned for [P. 336] the mere traditional forms of Opera. Yet there must remain open the possibility of obtaining in the dramatic poem itself a poetic counterpart to the Symphonic form, which, while completely filling out that ample form, should at like time answer best the inmost statutes of dramatic form.

(...)

I called the Symphony the attained ideal of melodic Dance-form. As a matter of fact, the Beethovenian Symphony contains in that part called 'Menuetto' or 'Scherzo' a quite primitive piece of real dance-music, which could very well be danced to. An instinctive need seems to have led the composer into quite immediate contact with the material basis of his work, for once in its course, as though his foot were feeling for the ground that was to carry him. In the remaining movements he sets an ever greater distance between himself and the possibility of a genuine dance being executed to his melody – unless, indeed, it were so ideal a dance as to bear the same relation to the primitive dance as the Symphony to the original Dance-tune. **Hence, too, a certain reluctance to overstep certain bounds of musical expression, and in particular to pitch too high the passionate, tragic tendency, since it would rouse emotions and awaitings in his hearer such as to wake that troubling question of the 'Why?' – which the Musician was not the person to answer satisfactorily.**

But the dance to thoroughly carry out this music, that ideal form of Dance, is in truth the Dramatic action. It really bears precisely the same relation to the primitive dance, as the Symphony to the simple Dance-tune. Even the primal folk-dance already expresses an action, for the most part the mutual wooing of a pair of lovers; this simple story – purely physical in its bearings – when ripened to an exposition of the inmost motives of the soul, becomes nothing other than the Dramatic Action. You will spare me, [P. 337] I trust, from proving that this is not adequately represented by our Ballet. The Ballet is own brother to the Opera, offspring of the same mistakes as she; wherefore we see them going hand in hand for choice, as if to cloak their facing nakedness.

{FEUER} Not a Programme, which rather prompts the troublous question 'Why?' than stills it – not a Programme, then, can speak the meaning of the Symphony; no, nothing but a stage-performance of the Dramatic Action itself.

(...) {FEUER} The poet who is fully alive to the inexhaustibly expressive power of Symphonic Melody, which with one harmonic turn can change the tone of its expression in the thrillingest of manners, will be moved to meet its finest, rarest nuances half-way; no longer will he be tortured by the older narrow form, of Opera-melody, into furnishing a mere dry canvas bare of contents; rather will he eavesdrop from the musician the secret hidden from the latter's self, the secret that Melodic Form is capable of infinitely richer evolution than the musician had as yet deemed possible

within the Symphony itself; and, presaging this evolution, he will already strike the fetters from his poem's freedom.

{FEUER} Thus, where the Symphonist still timidly groped back to the original dance-form – never daring, even for his expression, to quite transgress the bounds which held him in communication with that form – the Poet now will cry to him: 'Launch without a fear into the full flood of Music's sea; hand in hand with me, you can never lose touch of the thing most seizable of all by every human being; for through me you stand on the solid ground of the Dramatic Action, and that Action, at the moment of its scenic show, is the most directly understandable of all poems. Stretch boldly out your melody, that like a ceaseless river it may pour throughout the work: in it say you what I keep silent, since you alone can say it: and silent shall I utter all, since my hand it is that guides you.'

[P. 338] {FEUER} Of a verity the poet's greatness is mostly to be measured by what he leaves unsaid, letting us breathe in silence to ourselves the thing unspeakable; the musician it is who brings this untold mystery to clarion tongue, and the impeccable form of his sounding silence is endless melody.

Necessarily, the Symphonist will not be able to shape this melody without his own peculiar implement; that implement is the orchestra. That he will employ it in a sense quite other than the Italian Opera-composer, in whose hands the orchestra is nothing but a huge guitar for accompanying the Aria, I scarcely need impress upon you.

{FEUER} It will enter much the same relation to the drama meant by me, as the Tragic Chorus of the Greeks to theirs. This Chorus was always in attendance; to it were bared the motives of the dramatic action going-on before its eyes; these motives it sought to penetrate, and thence to form a judgment of the action. Only, this interest of the Chorus's was more of a reflective kind, throughout; itself had neither part nor lot in action or in motives. The orchestra of the modern Symphonist, on the contrary, will take so intimate an interest in the motives of the plot, that whilst, as embodied harmony, it alone confers on the melody its definite expression, on the other hand it will keep the melody in the requisite unceasing flow, and thus convincingly impress those motives on the Feeling. If we must regard as the ideal art-form that which can be grasped without a shadow of reflection, and through which the artist's Beholding (Anschauung) is conveyed the clearest to the unimpeded Feeling; if, subject to the above provisoes, we mean to recognise the Musical Drama as that ideal art-form; then the Symphonist's orchestra is the wondrous instrument for the only possible presentment of that form. Faced with it and its significance, it is obvious that the Chorus – which in Opera has climbed the stage itself already – will entirely lose the meaning of its antique prototype. The Chorus now can only be included as an active personage; and where its presence as such is not required, in future it must seem to us superfluous and disturbing, since its ideal interest [P. 339] in the action will have passed completely to the Orchestra, and there be manifested in continual, but never troubling presence.

{FEUER} I have recourse to metaphor once more, to give you finally a picture of the melody I mean, the melody encompassing the whole dramatic tone piece; and for this I will keep to the impression which it is to produce. Its endless wealth of detail is in nowise to reveal itself merely to the connoisseur, but also to the most naïve layman, if only he has come to the needful collectedness of spirit. First of all, then, it should exert

on him somewhat the effect produced by a noble forest, of a summer evening, on the lonely visitant who has just left the city's din behind; the peculiar stamp of this impression – which I leave the reader to elaborate in all its psychological effects – is that of a silence growing more and more alive. For the general object of the artwork it may be quite sufficient to have produced this root-impression, and by it to lead the hearer unawares and attune him to the further aim; he therewith takes the higher tendency unconsciously into himself. But when, overwhelmed by this first general impression, the forest's visitor sits down to ponder; when, the last burden of the city's hubbub cast aside, he girds the forces of his soul to a new power of observing; when, as if hearing with new senses, he listens more and more intently – he perceives with ever greater plainness the infinite diversity of voices waking in the wood. Ever and ever a new, a different voice peers forth, a voice he thinks he has never heard as yet: as they wax in number, they grow in strange distinctness; louder and louder rings the wood; and many though the voices be, the individual strains he hears, the glinting, overbrimming stream of sound seems again to him but just the one great forest-melody: that melody which from the very first had chained him to devotion, as once the deep-blue firmament of night had chained his eye when brighter and ever clearer he beheld its countless multitude of stars, the longer he had plunged his gaze into the spectacle.

[P. 340] *This melody will echo ever in him, but hum it he cannot; to hear it whole once more, he must go into the wood again, and on a summer evening. How foolish, if he tried to trap one of the sweet wood-warblers, perchance to have it trained at home to chirp a morsel of that great wood-melody! What else would he hear for his pains, but, say now! – which particular melody? – “*

[P. 341] {FEUER} *“Manifestly, what I have here depicted as the strictest consequence of idealistic principles, had lain at the heart of our great masters from all time. Neither did these conclusions as to the possibility of an ideal Artwork occur to myself as the result of abstract Reflection, but I was led to them, most assuredly, by what I observed in the works of our masters. Though there stood before great Gluck himself merely the narrowness and buckram of the operatic forms he found to hand, and in nowise radically enlarged – forms mostly standing quite disjointed side by side – yet his followers already knew to enlarge them step by step and link them with each other, to such a degree that, whenever an important dramatic situation gave occasion, they were fully sufficient for the highest end. No one is more enchanted than I, to recognise the great, the powerful and beautiful dramatic music we find in many works by honoured masters: to me it seems unnecessary to give you here a list of specimens. Nor do I conceal from myself that even in the feebleness of frivolous composers I have met with isolated effects that made me marvel at the incomparable might of Music ... ; for, in virtue of her invulnerable definiteness of melodic expression, she raises even the least talented singer so high above the level of his personal attainments, that he produces a dramatic effect forever unapproachable by even the grandest artist of the spoken Play. But what disheartened me the more, was this: in Opera I could never meet all these inimitable excellences of Dramatic Music developed to one pure style, embracing equally each portion of the work. In the most important works, immediately beside the noblest and most perfect, I found the incomprehensibly senseless, the inexpressibly conventional, nay, the frivolous. Though the hideous juxtaposition of absolute Recitative and absolute Aria is retained almost everywhere, [P. 342]*

preventing any finished style, and everlastingly breaking and barring the musical flow (through the fundamental error of a faulty poem), yet in our great masters' finest Scenas we often find this evil quite overcome; to the Recitative itself there has been given already the stamp of a rhythmic melody, and it opens imperceptibly into the broader structure of the melody proper. (...)

(....) But the worst feature of the whole thing is this: that after all the noble, perfect work already achieved by great masters, bringing Opera so near the consummation of a purer style, these relapses could happen again and again; nay, that Un-nature herself could sally forth more brazenly than ever.

Indisputably, the taproot of the evil is a humiliating regard on the artist's part for the temper of the average [P. 343] Opera-public, which always gains the upper hand at last in weaker natures. (...)

{anti-FEUER} These 'concessions' which my first beloved model, Weber, still thought needful to make to the Opera-public – I may pride myself, I believe, that you will find none of them in 'Tannhaeuser'; and, as regards the form of my opera, perhaps this constitutes its most essential difference from the works of my forerunners. For this I really needed no remarkable courage; for, precisely through my observation of the effect of the best class of operatic work upon the public, I have learnt to form the most favourable opinion of this public. The artist who addresses himself, not to the abstract, but to the intuitive apperception, of rooted purpose sets his work before the Public, and not before the Art-judge. The only thing that can trouble the Artist, is the question how far this public has become infected by the critical element, thereby losing the ingenuousness of purely-human insight (Anschauung). (...) If ... we note the public's infinitely greater certainty in presence of the spoken Play, and how nothing in the world can here induce it to hold a foolish plot for sensible, an inappropriate speech for fitting, a wrong emphasis for telling: this fact alone will give us the solid fulcrum for bringing Opera, as well, into a sound relation [P. 344] with the Public, a relation favourable to a thorough understanding.

(...) My aim here, then, is to engross the Public in the dramatic action before all else; and in such a manner that not for an instant may it be compelled to lose sight of that action, but, on the contrary, the whole musical adornment may seem to it a mere means for displaying that action. It therefore was the refusal of concessions in the subject-matter, that enabled me also to reject every concession in its musical setting; and in these two points together you might find the most valid definition of my 'innovations,' but by no means in an absolute-musical caprice such as people have thought fit to foist upon me under the name of 'Music of the Future.' "

12/23/60

Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (RWLMW; P. 258-260)

[P. 258] "How curiously it fares with me! All that sets the world in motion, almost without an exception, leaves me cold and unmoved. Fame has no sway at all, with me; Profit only in so far as I may need it to keep me independent: [P. 259] of taking any serious step for either, I never could dream. To prove my point is also quite indifferent to me since I've quite learnt how unutterably few men are capable of so much as understanding their fellows. Further, my very natural and pardonable

craving, to witness a fully adequate representation of each of my works, has very much cooled down of late, and particularly in this last year; renewed contact with bandsmen, singers, and so on, has again wrung many a sigh from me, and fed my resignation with strong food on this side too. More and more have I to mark how measurelessly far I've strayed from this – in our modern life the quite invariable – basis of even my own art-fashionings, and willingly do I admit that if I suddenly cast a glance now on my Nibelungen or the Tristan, I startle as if from a dream, and ask myself: 'Where wast thou? – Thou wast dreaming! Set wide thine eyes and see: lo! This is the reality.' –

Yes, I will not deny it, I strictly hold my later works for downright inexecutable. And if the inner prompting ne'ertheless revives, to realise a possibility e'en here, in turn that's only possible through letting my poor brain roam off again into the dream-world; where untold, never-precedented aids arise, and I trust myself with the enormous power to draw them to me. Faced with an unbroken series of experiences, however, of incredible weakness and superficiality in all the persons and relations whereon the possibility of my assumptions had reposed, here also Resignation gains more and more predominance, and lends me that passivity which turns with terror from a useless strife. I have come to thinking very little of it now. –

(...) I squander myself and my forces – and literally for a thing that leaves me quite indifferent. –

In truth that is my case! –

Yet see! – how the whole breadth of heaven parts this from the view which not alone the world, but all my own acquaintances, nay, e'en my most devoted friend, still take of me. I can truthfully say that it is almost solely this mad but ineradicable opinion of everybody who draws near me, that gives me pain: I may preach, waste anger, argument, or indignation, -- I'm ever answered by the smile of pity for a momentary loss of temper! If people then could only plumb my silence, when, pale and outwardly indifferent, I suddenly break off to withdraw into my shell!"