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Platonic Musical Education in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*

La educación musical platónica de *Richard Wagner en Bayreuth*
Educação musical platônica em *Richard Wagner em Bayreuth*

Jozef Majerník *

Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia

Resumen

En este artículo se propone una nueva interpretación de *Richard Wagner en Bayreuth (WB)*: lejos de ser un artefacto de devoción juvenil de parte de Nietzsche por Wagner, el texto está más allá de cualquier idolatría y utiliza el arte de Wagner como vehículo para una renovación de la educación musical del tipo propuesto por Platón en la *República* y las *Leyes*. Después de documentar la independencia intelectual que tenía Nietzsche de Wagner ya en el período de *WB*, se discuten las nociones de 'sentimiento correcto' y 'sentimiento incorrecto', aparentemente tomadas de Wagner, pero utilizadas por Nietzsche de una manera muy diferente. La noción de 'sentimiento correcto' sirve entonces de puente para una lectura de la educación musical de Platón y para demostrar la presencia de una concepción muy análoga en *WB*. Luego se muestra cómo los efectos de esta imaginada educación musical son parte integral de una humanidad verdaderamente liberada, tal y como es descrita por Nietzsche en el capítulo final de *WB*. Se concluye destacando varios momentos de la educación musical desarrollada más tarde por Nietzsche bajo los auspicios de su inmoralismo, y sugiriendo posibles vías para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras clave: Nietzsche, Platón, sentir y pensar, educación musical, *Richard Wagner en Bayreuth*.

Abstract

In this article a new interpretation of *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* is proposed: far from being an artifact of Nietzsche's youthful devotion to Wagner, it stands beyond any idolization of Wagner and uses his art as a vehicle for a renewal of musical education of the kind proposed by Plato in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*. After documenting Nietzsche's intellectual independence from Wagner already in the period of *WB*, the notions of 'correct feeling' and 'incorrect feeling' are discussed, ostensibly taken from Wagner but used by Nietzsche in a very different manner. The notion of correct feeling then serves as a bridge to an account of Plato's musical education, and to demonstrating the presence of a highly analogous conception in *WB*. It is then showed how the effects of this envisioned musical education are integral to a truly liberated humanity, as Nietzsche describes it in the final chapter of *WB*. The text concludes by highlighting several moments of this musical education that were later developed by Nietzsche at greater length under the auspices of his immoralism, and by suggesting possible avenues for further research.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Plato, feeling and thinking, musical education, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*.

Resumo

Neste artigo proponho uma nova interpretação de *Richard Wagner em Bayreuth (WB)*: longe de ser apenas artefato de uma devoção juvenil de Nietzsche a Wagner, o texto paira acima de qualquer idealização de Wagner e encara sua arte como veículo de renovação da educação musical proposta por Platão na *República* e nas *Lei*s. Após documentar a independência intelectual de Nietzsche ainda no período da *WB*, discuto conceitos de "correção" e "incorreção de sentimento", aparentemente emprestados de Wagner, mas utilizados por Nietzsche de modo inovador. A noção de correção de sentimento, então, serve de ponte para uma descrição da educação musical platônica e para a existência de um conceito análogo em *WB*. Mostro, então, que, ao final de *WB*, os efeitos dessa educação musical são, para Nietzsche, integrais a uma humanidade verdadeiramente livre. O texto conclui ao enfatizar vários episódios dessa educação musical que foram, tempos depois, desenvolvidos por Nietzsche sob os auspícios do imoralismo, e sugere possíveis extensões para a análise aqui delineada.

Palavras chave: Nietzsche, Platão, sentimento e pensamento, educação musical, *Richard Wagner em Bayreuth*.
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*Contacto:jmajernik@uchicago.edu Ph.D. from the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. His dissertation is an interpretation of Nietzsche's *Untimely Considerations* as a single, coherent whole, with particular focus on the understanding of the human soul articulated therein. Some of the dissertation's findings have been published as "The Psychological Theory of *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*" in the 2020 edition of *Nietzsche-Studien.* Besides Nietzsche, he is interested in Plato, phenomenology (especially Jan Patočka and Leo Strauss), and modern returns to ancient thought.This work was produced at the Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

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Richard Wagner in Bayreuth (WB), the fourth and last of the *Untimely Considerations (UC)*, published on the occasion of the inaugural Bayreuth festival in August 1876, is one of Nietzsche's most neglected and worst-understood texts. Many readers consider it to be a very "timely" piece: a rather uninteresting, fawning hagiography of Wagner, a testament of Nietzsche's youthful devotion to the maestro. Consequently, it is "often merely read as a curiosity" (Gray 408) – even by those few scholars who have devoted some attention to this essay. Gray believes that WB expresses an "uninhibited idolatry" of Wagner (405), Large complains that "the text strikes us now as positively cringeworthy on account of the depth of its hero-worship" (2012 100), and Brooks characterizes its tone as "cringingly reverential" (188).

This article aims to challenge this view, focusing on the notion of "correct feeling" in WB 5 (KSA 1, 456/ 282).[1] It shall argue that although this term is taken from Wagner, Nietzsche uses it in a thoroughly un-Wagnerian way: namely as a reference to the Platonic conception of musical education, as it is presented in the *Laws* (Books II and VII) and in the *Republic* (376e–403e). There is direct evidence in favor of this reading in the *Nachlass*: Nietzsche has noted down some of the relevant passages from the *Laws* in the period of working on the UC (KSA 7, 95–6). The Platonic context transforms how the relation between "correct feeling" and "correct thinking" in *WB* is to be understood: following the Platonic model, they do not stand in an exclusive opposition, but the former is rather to serve as a preparation for the latter, as a way to habituate the young to a life of thinking before their cognitive capacities are fully developed. Wagner's musical dramas are envisioned as works of art that would be suitable as means for such a musical education ("musical" in the wider, Greek sense that encompasses everything "of the Muses": i.e., cultural education in contemporary parlance). Ultimately, this shows not only that *WB* isn't just a timely piece of Wagner worship, but that it is so untimely as to go back to the very origins of Western political philosophy – to Plato.

1. The structure of WB

First of all, it has to be pointed out that, at the time of writing *WB*, Nietzsche was no devout Wagnerian. As Prange (21–51) documents, Nietzsche's private misgivings about Wagner and his project started as early as February 1870 – less than a year after the two men had first met each other. Furthermore, Nietzsche developed his honest assessment of Wagner at some length in his notebooks in early 1874 (KSA 7, 756–75; he also reports about it in the letter to Erwin Rohde from 15 February 1874 – cf. KGB II.3, 202). The critiques in these notes have three focal points: the shortcomings of Wagner as an artist; his political naivety, i.e. his failure to find suitable allies and supporters for his art (the Bayreuth project was funded to a large extent by Ludwig II of Bavaria, and it couldn't have been completed without him);[2] and the shortcomings of Wagner's project of cultural reform that his art, and the institution of Bayreuth, was supposed to spearhead. The most significant, and the most damning, of these critiques is in the note 32 [44] (KSA 7, 767–8): here, Nietzsche finds in Wagner's art "something like an escape from this world, it negates the world, it doesn't transfigure this world" – a tendency which is the very opposite of what tragedy should do according to Nietzsche. Lampert (106) judges this note to be "an early installment in Nietzsche's condemnation of romantic pessimism" (cf. *The Gay Science* § 370, KSA 3, 619 ff.). He goes on to say that "Wagnerism, to the degree that it had a core, harbored an antilife, romantic tendency, part of the reason it so naturally tended toward Christianity" (*Ibid.*, 107) – and Nietzsche was aware of this fundamental problem of Wagnerism to a large degree already in 1874.

WB thus doesn't speak about Wagner as he actually was in Nietzsche's view, but about what he *could* and *should* have been, and what he *could* and *should* have accomplished for the cause of

[1]References to the *UC* are first to the German original in the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA) Bd. 1, and then to the English translation by Richard T. Gray (Nietzsche 1995).

[2]Large (1978 164) reports that "Wagner's scandalous affair with Cosima von Bülow, his luxurious living at public expense, and his repeated interference in local politics soon alienated the people of Munich" and adds that Wagner's stay at Tribschen was also financed "at Ludwig's personal expense" (*Ibid.*). As a consequence, Wagner came to be seen as the cause of Ludwig's excesses.

genuine culture: the Wagner of *WB* is a "monumental ideal" (Lampert 124). This was determined by the occasional character of *WB*: given that it was rushed into print so that it could be sold at the inaugural Bayreuth festival (Schaberg 48–9), it had no room for overt criticisms of the triumphant Wagner. Insofar as Nietzsche still had any hopes for the fruitfulness of Wagner's project at this point, this article agrees with Montinari (46) that *WB* should be read as "a challenge to Wagner, whom Nietzsche proposes a certain interpretation of his life and work. [. . .] will Wagner remain faithful to himself?"[3] It was one last attempt to guide Wagner toward the genuine heights that his project could potentially attain, were it oriented in the right direction. WB is Nietzsche's appeal to Wagner's professed artistic and cultural ideals, and a plea for Wagner to uphold them in the hour of his great triumph. For this reason, whenever this article speaks of "Wagner" below, it does not mean the actual Wagner, but rather Nietzsche's idealized version of him.

Having cleared up the most common prejudice about *WB*, let us take a fresh look at the structure of this work. In this regard, close attention shoud be paid to the final paragraph of *WB* 1. Here, Nietzsche tells us about a peculiar look Wagner had after the laying of the cornerstone at Bayreuth: "he was silent and for a long time turned his gaze inward with a look that would be impossible to describe in words" (KSA 1, 434/ 262). Not one word, not even a few words suffice to explain this moment or look (*Augenblick*, as it is called a few lines later): in fact, the remainder of *WB* is an interpretation of this singular moment. This structure of *WB* can be clearly seen also in the note 11 [47] (KSA 8, 239–40). In this *Augenblick*, the whole of his life in its unity – his past, present, and future, or "how he had become what he is, and what he will be" (*Ibid.*) – became manifest to Wagner.[4] That this *Augenblick* of Wagner is not just a throwaway rhetorical device for Nietzsche, but a crucial phenomenon, is made clear by Nietzsche's later comment on this passage in *Ecce Homo*, Birth of Tragedy 4: "the *look* spoken of on the seventh page [of *WB*; i.e. at KSA 1, 434/ 262] is Zarathustra's distinctive look; Wagner, Bayreuth, the whole wretched German pettiness are a cloud in which an infinite *fata morgana* of the future is reflected". And insofar *WB* is an interpretation of a single, particular *Augenblick,* Nietzsche goes beyond Heidegger's account of this phenomenon by not just indicating its formal structure, but by showing us also the content which fleshed it out in this unique instance. To summarize, this *Augenblick*, this insight into the unity and direction of one's life, is something that can be experienced only by a genuinely great human being, by one who has become what he is. And it is not just Wagner's life that becomes comprehensible from this *Augenblick*, but "only from this Wagnerian look will we ourselves be able to understand the greatness of his deed" (KSA 1, 434/ 262). Nietzsche tells us that Wagner's art must be understood from the artist himself (cf. Heidegger 1996 66–74).

Wagner's *Augenblick* at the founding of the Bayreuth festival is then the central structuring moment of *WB* (as Church 200 has also noticed). Wagner's 'past' – the story of his becoming-himself – is discussed by Nietzsche in chapters 2–3 of *WB*. His 'present' is his current stature as a mature artist, who has finally managed to found the Bayreuth festival – the institution which is to assure a continuing legacy for his art – and the effect his art has on the present-day Germans (*WB* chapters 4 and 7–10). However, the 'future' of Wagner and his art is a subject that defies easy summarization.

2. Correct and Incorrect Feeling

Looking forward into Wagner's future, Nietzsche sees another way in which his music would be particularly beneficial for modern humans (besides its utility to the present-day Germans, to whom Wagner's art presents ennobling mythic fictions): it could serve as a basis of a *musical education.* That is to say, it could serve as a means by which one could "found the state on music",

[3]A similar evaluation can be found also in Janz (1.706). Wagner himself wrote to Nietzsche on 21 September 1873: "I swear to you by God that I hold you to be the only one who knows what I want!" (KGB II.4, 295)

[4]This kind of *Augenblick* is very similar to that described by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (§ 68a; § 68c). This parallel leads one to suspect that Heidegger was inspired by the *UC* in more than just the three useful kinds of history from *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*, which he discusses in § 76 – on which occasion he remarks that Nietzsche "understood more than he has made known to us".

and thereby follow the example of the ancient Greeks (KSA 1, 458/ 284), who demanded this of themselves according to Nietzsche. To see what precisely is entailed by this proposal, we need to carefully follow the argument of *WB* 5–6.

Wagner understands the crisis of modernity through one of its most visible symptoms – the alienation of language. In the modern world, "language always had to climb up to the very last rungs it could reach" (KSA 1, 455/ 281), so as to provide an adequate conceptual apparatus for the rapidly expanding edifice of science. It thus becomes ever more adapted to the needs of modern science, and its registers become oriented ever more on thought rather than on feeling (*Ibid.*). But there is a major unforeseen consequence to this 'theoreticization' of language: through this process it also becomes ever less capable of fulfilling its primary task, namely "to enable suffering human beings to communicate with one another about their most basic necessities of life" (*Ibid.*) – these needs being *felt* and thus requiring language likewise oriented on feeling. Thus, thanks to this alienation of language from its proper purpose, modern men have become alienated from their true needs. They are unable to communicate them, and even to express them for themselves. Simply said, they no longer have words for them – this is what Nietzsche means when he says that we moderns have to suffer also "under *convention*" (*Ibid.*) in addition to our other, more universal sufferings. And, Nietzsche tells us, this is a major problem, as feeling is more primary for humans than thinking and concepts, and man can hardly be "a being who thinks and reasons correctly" if he isn't first "someone who feels correctly" (KSA 1, 456/ 282).

Nietzsche's expression in *WB* for this human self-alienation is "incorrect feeling" – a term loosely based on an argument from Wagner's *Opera and Drama* (cf. Wagner 7.225). He then proceeds to analyze the influence of the "incorrect feeling" on modern life in terms that are consistent with the critique of the philistine pseudo-culture he made in *David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer* (chapters 1–3). The two principal instances of "incorrect feeling" in the modern world, discussed at KSA 1, 462/ 287, are the valuation of moneymaking over the higher human pursuits, and the valuation of the timely affairs over "concern for the matters of eternity". In short, "incorrect feeling" means the instinctive attitudes of the sick modern soul that doesn't know its genuine good and seeks its good instead in pursuing the satisfaction of various insatiable – in fact, unsatisfiable – desires that are mere extensions of our animality (cf. KSA 1, 378/ 209–10). Nietzsche emphasizes the latter feature of "incorrect feeling" with phrases like "here there is no hunger and no satiety" (KSA 1, 460/ 286) or "the omnipresence of a filthy, insatiable greed" (KSA 1, 462/ 287). In short, the incorrectly feeling moderns "call their unhappiness 'happiness' and willfully collaborate in their own misfortune" (KSA 1, 461/ 287).

This alienation can go so far as to make them into "will-less slaves of incorrect feeling" (*Ibid.*), into automata whose lives are completely governed by external structures such as work, journalism, and public opinion, and whose decisions and plans are mere choices from pre-given options provided by these conventional structures; as Hutter (2006 31) puts it, "in such conditions, human beings do not live, they are being lived". In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche spoke of "the tortured slaves of the three M's, Moment, Majority Opinion, and Modishness" (KSA 1, 392/ 222–3). The only power within them that objects to the barbaric life they lead is their conscience, and therefore they strive hard to silence it. Their learning has a "*preparatory apologetic* character" (KSA 1, 463/ 288) against the accusations of their conscience, against the voice that tells them – if only ever so quietly – "be yourself! You are none of those things that you now do, think, and desire" (KSA 1, 338/ 172). And their consumption of art is to provide them with "either a nothing or an evil something" (KSA 1, 461/ 286), its task is "to stupefy or intoxicate" them (KSA 1, 463/ 288): it is *divertissement*, to use Pascal's word, a way of temporarily silencing the incorruptible critic within their souls.[5] This is why under these circumstances "we must even consider the *avowed enemy of art* to be a true and useful ally" (KSA 1, 460/ 285): his hostility against the arts is hostility against their contemporary debased form, against art as *divertissement.* In short, the alienated modern men have no way of facing their conscience squarely and of carrying out what

[5]Cf. Pascal, *Pensées* §§ 165–71 (Pascal 1995 44–9). Nietzsche directly referenced Pascal's idea of *divertissement* – entertaining activities whose purpose is to prevent us from confronting the question of the meaning of our existence, or (more precisely) of lack thereof – already in *David Strauss* (KSA 1, 203/ 47).

it asks of them (cf. KSA 1, 338/ 172) – that much is said by the word “incorrect feeling” – and thus they “they prefer to be hunted, wounded, and torn to pieces rather than to have to live with themselves in solitude” (KSA 1, 461/ 286).

Such is Wagner’s diagnosis of the alienation of modern humanity. Moreover, he sees music as a necessary corrective against this alienation. He sees evidence of the *necessity* of this relationship in the fact that it is precisely now, in the modern times, that music achieved an unheard-of prominence above the other forms of art, and in the emergence of a “a series of great artists” (KSA 1, 454/ 280), from Bach through Beethoven to Wagner himself, in the recent past. But how can music help us, insofar as we are an “existence that fights for *conscious freedom* and *independence of thought*” (*Ibid.*), to overcome the affliction of “incorrect feeling”? How is music, in Wagner’s – or rather Nietzsche’s – view, capable of teaching us “*correct feeling*” (KSA 1, 456/ 282)? What is the relation between music and life – genuinely *human life* – that they saw?

3. Platonic Musical Education

The answer to this question has to do with the ethical ‘content’ of Wagner’s music, with what it represents to its audience. As Nietzsche summarizes the plots of Wagner’s musical dramas (KSA 1, 507–9/ 328–30), the single overarching theme in them is the self-sacrifice of the tragic hero. The cause for the sake of which the hero sacrifices him- or herself varies; the one constant is the hero’s recognition that there are things worth dying for. This recognition is the core of the teaching of tragedy as such, of “tragic sensibility”, as Nietzsche calls it earlier in *WB* (KSA 1, 453/ 279). But at the same time, this principle is also essential to the philosophic life: Plato’s Socrates had famously said that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (*Apology* 38a) and that “the most important thing is not life, but the good life” (*Crito* 48b).

Thus, what we find in Wagner’s dramas is a very intense and clear articulation of the noble (as well as philosophic) attitude to live well rather than merely to live. Moreover, this articulation doesn’t use just speech as its medium, but also music (and, being or at least aspiring to be a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the plastic arts as well). And it is the medium of music and its capacities that is especially interesting to Nietzsche. One need not believe with Schopenhauer that music is “an immediate copy of the Will itself” (Schopenhauer I.366) to know from personal experience that it has an extraordinary power of appealing to our passions, whether by rousing or soothing them, whether by putting them into a tension or by harmonizing them. In a word, music has a unique way of speaking to our feelings. If we keep this in mind, it is no longer that surprising to claim that music may be able to play an important role in the cultivation of our passions or feelings, in the sentimental education of modern man. And it becomes even less surprising when we remember that there is another thinker, central not just to Nietzsche’s thought, but to all of Western philosophy, who stressed the power of music to affect the irrational parts of our soul – our ‘feelings’ in contemporary parlance – and the educative uses of this power of music: namely the divine Plato, who gave a prominent place to musical education both in the *Republic* (376e–403e) and in the *Laws* (Books II and VII).

For Plato, the purpose of education in general is properly to order the irrational passions of the human soul even before reason becomes capable of doing such ordering, so that reason faces less resistance from the irrational parts of the soul when the time comes for it to assert itself as the soul’s proper ruling faculty. As the Athenian Stranger explains in the *Laws* (653b), “pleasure and liking, pain and hatred, become correctly arranged in the souls of those who are not yet able to reason, and then, when the souls do become capable of reasoning, these passions can in consonance [*symphonia*] with reason affirm that they have been correctly habituated in the appropriate habits.” Education, then, aims at children and young people, at those whose reason is not yet fully developed. Their passions nevertheless need to be ordered in a way that is in accord with the future order in which reason is the rightful ruler of one’s soul. However, since reason cannot do this work yet, we need non-rational means for this ordering. And these means are the

various musical arts, as the Stranger goes on to explain: he says that (*Laws* 653d) "the gods have ordained the change of holidays as times of rest from labor. They have given as fellow celebrants the Muses, with their leader Apollo, and Dionysus – in order that these divinities may set humans right again." He then adds that the gods have also given us "the pleasant perception of rhythm and harmony" (*Laws* 654a), perceptions which allow us to enjoy songs and dances, and finally suggests that choruses – a chorus being "the combination of dance and song taken together as a whole" (*Laws* 654b) – divided by age and sex groups, with a content suited for each particular group, would be the best way of habituating the souls of the citizens of Magnesia to virtue.[6]

Musical education for Plato entails not just dancing, but also gymnastics in a wider sense: gymnastics arises from and cultivates the natural human tendency to move and jump around that we exhibit as soon as we can (*Laws* 673a). Music, its counterpart, cultivates our natural tendency to make noises of all sorts: "these motions and cries were the source of music and gymnastic" (*Laws* 672c). Nietzsche was familiar with this Platonic conception, as can be seen from the note 5 [14] (KSA 7, 95–6), in which he made notes on some of the same passages that are discussed in this and the preceding paragraph. We may, then, safely assume that he was aware also of the basic principle underlying the Platonic musical education: as the Athenian Stranger puts it (*Laws* 659d), "education is the drawing and pulling of children toward the argument that is said to be correct by the law and is also believed, on account of experience, to be really correct by those who are most decent and oldest" (cf. also the forceful formulation of the same principle in *Republic* 401d–2a). It thus follows that "the things we call songs" are in fact "incantations for souls" that lead them toward feeling correctly about each and every matter relevant to virtue, but "since the souls of the young cannot sustain seriousness, these incantations are called 'games' and 'songs', and are treated as such" (*Laws* 659e). In short, the purpose of Platonic musical education, both in the *Laws* and in the *Republic*, is to "make the irrational realm [of the soul] that which it is capable of being without knowing it, namely *a realm of unconscious rationality*", in Jan Patočka's (70–1) words.[7]

Such a conception of musical education is, roughly, what Nietzsche had in mind when he says that the Greeks demanded of themselves to "found the state on music" (KSA 1, 458/ 284). This is also why he considers music to be a great "educational force" (*Ibid.*) that has (re)appeared in modern times. The idea of music and tragedy as means of education appears very early on in Nietzsche's thinking: see notes such as 5 [9] (KSA 7, 94), 7 [139] (KSA 7, 195), or 19 [274] (KSA 7, 505). If we look at Wagner's music from this perspective, we'll see that it produces in its audience a sensitivity to their genuine needs (cf. KSA 1, 333/ 166) – to what is necessary for their spiritual growth and/ or for the cultivation of their tragic sensibility. In other words, it *attunes* them to these needs, and conversely, it tunes them out of caring for the pseudo-needs that are propagated by the empty modern conventions and by the alienated modern language.

Furthermore, by instilling this "correct feeling" in the souls of its future listeners, Wagner's music also "expresses the longing for its natural sister, *gymnastics*" (KSA 1, 458/ 283): it demands that appropriate outward motions accompany the inner motions – the feelings – it has awakened within the soul.[8] That is to say, it fosters within us "the true concept of form as a necessary

[6]Valiquette Moreau offers a valuable account of why the *musical* part of "musical education" is essential to its efficacy, which served as an inspiration for the argument of this section. She shows that in the *Republic*, Socrates argues that "the soul has a musical structure" and that it "requires tuning in order to achieve harmony" (Valiquette Moreau 203) – i.e. tuning by the means of suitable music. That is why in the *Republic*, "music is the means by which [the guardians] are to preserve the system of education upon which the harmony of the city depends" (*Ibid.*, 201).

[7]Gabriel Richardson Lear (197) argues along similar lines that "Plato believes that, with sufficient repetition, the practice of mimesis will train us to take some sort of non-rational pleasure in the outward manifestation – in the appearance – of the character-type imitated". If she is correct in her contention that, for Plato, the real danger of dramatic poetry is about "the *multifariousness* of mimesis" – i.e. about the variety of characters being imitated (and especially bad characters) rather than about *mimesis* as such (*Ibid.*, 198), this would make Nietzsche's Wagnerian-Platonic musical education especially conducive not just to the cultivation of one's soul, but to an external culture defined as unity of artistic style (KSA 1, 163/ 9) as well.

[8]Wagner offers a somewhat similar conception of the relation of music and gymnastics in his essay *On Musical Criticism* (Wagner 6.385, 6.389), a conception that also harks back to the ancient Greeks (in particular to the Athenians). Nietzsche takes up Wagner's words and uses them in his much more ambitious conception. Nietzsche thus makes his conception of musical education appear much closer to Wagner's conception than it actually is: he uses the same words as Wagner, and

formation" (KSA 1, 457/ 283), as opposed to the modern conception of form as an arbitrary convention that bears no relation to the 'content' it presents (cf. KSA 1, 275/ 112). Thus it promotes not just the unity of style that is a sign of genuine culture, but also the unity of one's thinking and actions, and works contrary to the modern tendency toward the 'weak' or 'split' personality that consists precisely in the lack of connection between thinking and action (Nietzsche discusses it in *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*, chapters 4–5). It also works against the related phenomena of philistine pseudo-culture, which is the "the chaotic hodgepodge of all styles" as opposed to the unity of style (KSA 1, 163/ 9), and of the use of culture as a "'*beautiful form*'", a mere decoration, by those who "are conscious of an *ugly or boring content*" (KSA 1, 389/ 220).

Such a 'spiritual' understanding of gymnastics again has its precedent in Plato, who has Socrates argue in the *Republic* that although gymnastics is apparently done for the sake of the body, its chief importance is for maintaining proper harmony within the soul: souls that lack gymnastic training become cowardly and easily excitable, while souls that lack musical education become savage and misologistic (*Republic* 410c–11e). Nietzsche's reasoning here is analogical: while the term 'gymnastics' refers primarily to exercise of the body, its true importance lies in its promoting of the "plastic power" of one's soul, i.e. of the robustness of the order within one's soul.

The practical form gymnastics thus understood would assume would likely be various kinds of "dancing" – rhythmic motions with emphasis on breathing and on becoming aware of the organic rhythms of one's *Leib* [living body]; yoga and martial arts (Hutter 2006 195), or the dancing of Xenophon's Socrates (Hutter 2006 71; cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* II.15–19), can be considered as kindred practices. This "gymnastics in the Greek and Wagnerian sense" (KSA 1, 459/ 284) is, then, in an important sense a spiritual exercise, a "gymnastics of willing" (cf. Hutter 2013 on this term and its potential practical applications) that teaches us to take control of our outward lives and to shape them according to our innermost needs. This is another way in which Wagner's music is capable of re-naturalizing its audiences and their spiritual development.[9]

The structure and purpose of this Wagnerian musical education are, then, fully analogous to its Platonic forerunner. Music in concert with gymnastics is to train or harmonize the various feelings or passions which coexist within our soul in the correct way before we are able to do this consciously. It is a pre-rational or pre-conscious preparation of the internal order the soul requires for its proper functioning, which functioning can only begin at a later stage of spiritual maturity (and which would be significantly more difficult if the lower elements of the soul were striving in a direction that is contrary to this functioning). The main difference between the Platonic and the Wagnerian musical education lies in the particular order that it is supposed to prepare in the soul: for Plato this means a soul that is harmonized under the rule of the *logistikon*, the 'rational part' of the soul, while for Nietzsche the goal is a soul which knows itself in the sense of knowing the "the fundamental law of [its] authentic self" (KSA 1, 340/ 174), and which is willing and able to follow this innermost tendency wherever it leads. For Nietzsche, the "correct feeling" that Wagner's music should instill in the young is feeling in a way that is consistent with the imperative *be yourself*, it is this imperative itself in the form of affective preference rather than of conscious understanding. It is a sub-conscious preparation for the later conscious choice of the life of culture.

thereby masks the difference of *concepts* underlying those words. More generally, WB contains a wealth of borrowings from and allusions to various writings of Wagner, which are documented by Mazzino Montinari in KGW IV.4, 119–60.

[9]Alternatively, Hutter (2006 187) suggests that Plato's (and hence also Nietzsche's) conception of musical education "would seem to follow a social practice known from many traditional cultures in which communal orgiastic abandonment to chaotic forces of the soul periodically interrupt the normal performances of social labor." On this account, this "gymnastics" would also be a way of discharging various normally repressed passions in a controlled manner, thus preventing their festering in the sub-conscious part of the soul and occasional uncontrolled, chaotic outbreaks of such passions. This would be yet another way in which gymnastics contributes to a healthy balance of forces within the soul.

4. The Free Men [Menschen] of the Future

If the argument outlined above is to be persuasive, it cannot be left at the claim that in WB, Nietzsche imagines a 'Wagnerian' musical education (or rather Platonic musical education, for which Wagner's art is just the material). It must also be shown that Nietzsche has a conception of how this musical education is to transform those who undergo its regimen. And this is precisely what Nietzsche does in the final chapter of *WB*. So how are we to imagine the effects of this proposed musical education?

Nietzsche describes the character of these men of the future in the first two paragraphs of *WB* 11. He first insists that Wagner – and by extension also Nietzsche himself – is no utopian: his goal isn't remaking human beings according to some fanciful notion that has no foundation in experience, such as that all men and women should be brothers and sisters and live in perfect harmony. Nietzsche and Wagner rather strive to change the changeable in man in accord with the unchangeable necessity (cf. KSA 1, 445/ 272), with human nature and its true height as they came to know it from their own experience, from their own struggle to become what they are. Their legislation of human greatness is original justice based on their knowledge of that which is. Their teaching is meant to help others cultivate themselves in a similar manner, to help them become as free and healthy as Nietzsche and Wagner are.

These "men of the future" may not look very appealing to us on the first sight: Nietzsche says they might "seem on the whole even more evil" than the men of today, and it is possible that the sight of them "would shake up and terrify our soul" (KSA 1, 506/ 327). This is because these men will be characterized above all by openness, for good as well as for evil. However, this doesn't mean they will not have any standards; they won't be spiritual anarchists for whom 'anything goes'. It is rather that the current (post-)Christian moral conventions of good and evil (*Böse*) will hold little importance to them. *Their* standard will be human nature and the process of growth inherent in it; and in terms of this standard, they will be good rather than bad (*schlecht*) human beings.[10] Nietzsche sums up the attitudes of these free men as follows (KSA 1, 506–7/ 327–8):

> Or how do these statements sound to our ears: that passion is better than stoicism and hypocrisy; that being honest, even where evil is concerned, is better than losing oneself in traditional morality; that the free human being can be both good and evil, but that the unfree human being is a disgrace to nature and shares neither in any heavenly nor in any earthly consolation; finally, that any person who wants to become free must accomplish this through himself, and that freedom does not fall like a surprise gift into anyone's lap.

This is what Wagner's music can teach its present-day listeners to think – but, as a basis of a musical education, it could make future generations *feel* this, ingrain these attitudes so deeply in them that they will become effectively instinctual to them – a 'second nature', if not nature simply; or a "new and improved *physis*" in the language of *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (KSA 1, 334/ 167). And these attitudes of spiritual nobility and cultivating one's passions – are "*precisely* what I earlier called correct feeling" (KSA 1, 507/ 328; emphasis added), as Nietzsche expressly says here.

The key distinction in the ethical thinking of these future generations will be between the *Natur* of themselves and their striving to further growth, and the *Unnatur* of the spiritually crippled modern society. Their naturalness will be the source of their freedom: the freedom from the degrading influence of modern society, the freedom to pursue their own genuine self that is immeasurably high above them (cf. KSA 1, 340/ 174), and to genuinely act as a consequence of this pursuit. They will know that the modern unfree man doesn't live, but is "being lived" (Hutter 2006 31); that he's not capable of any greatness whatsoever (cf. *Republic* 495b); that he is "a

[10]Nietzsche's argument here recalls the ancient conception of ('virtue') as the excellence that is proper to a particular kind of being, and prefigures the *Gut – Schlecht vs. Gut – Böse* distinction of *On the Genealogy of Morality I.*

disgrace to nature and shares neither in any heavenly nor in any earthly consolation" (KSA 1, 506–7/ 328). Nietzsche quotes and affirms these sentences at the end of *The Gay Science* § 99. Ultimately, they will see *the* fundamental choice we have to make as between genuinely *leading* one's life, i.e. a life that seeks to grow and that finds meaning in the further unfolding of itself, and 'leading' a comfortable life that can find no such meaning, that amounts to senseless suffering – and knows this if it doesn't anaesthetize itself with *divertissements*. Nietzsche concludes with the sharpest possible formulation of this distinction which marks the free men of the future as life-affirming, and their unfree counterparts as life-denying because lacking any genuine way of coming to terms with the suffering life inevitably entails: "the [unnatural] does not want to be; the [natural] wants to be *different*"[11](KSA 1, 507/ 328). He speaks similarly in the Epilogue to *The Case of Wagner*: "the Christian wants to *escape* from himself. [. . .] – On the other hand, noble morality, master morality, is rooted in a triumphant *self*-directed Yes, – it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life".

These free men will use Wagner's art as it is meant to be used – as art *as such* ought to be used: it will provide them with salutary mythic images of their own life and striving, and it will strengthen them for the trials and sufferings they have to undergo. They will furthermore strive to make a "people" of their kind, a free people, a genuine community based on a shared highest need and a shared satisfaction thereof, i.e. on a shared highest goal (KSA 1, 506/ 327; cf. KSA 1, 278/ 115, and Lampert 121). Their shared highest need or ruling passion is visible in the satisfaction they derive from Wagner's art, in the myths it provides them with: it is the need to become their true selves, wherever it may lead them and whatever it may cost them. Wagner will thus be for them "the interpreter and transfigurer of the past" (KSA 1, 510/ 331), but this will be a mythical-symbolic account of their own past strivings, not an interpretation of the historical past (cf. KSA 1, 262/ 100; contra Brooks 204).

However, it should be emphasized that the musical education (and its potential results) described above is just Nietzsche's vision or speculation. If it is at all possible that Wagner's music could accomplish these effects, it would be a matter of quite distant future. This education would first have to be elaborated in detail, institutionalized, and given its solid place in the structure of German culture. And even then, its efficacy in shaping the souls of the young would depend on how early in their life it begins and with what precision and regularity it is practiced. As Plato's Socrates says (*Republic* 377a–b), "don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it." The earlier the age at which the education starts, the better the eventual results (cf. *Republic* 429d–30b). And, being based on the same principles, the same holds for the possible Wagnerian musical education of the future. Its effects on the present-day people should be sought rather in the effect of alienation from the alleged certainties and necessities of one's unreflective existence so far, which Nietzsche describes at KSA 1, 464/ 289 and in the rhapsodic single-paragraph *WB* 7 as a whole.

5. Conclusion

The argument developed above shows that WB isn't a timely hagiography of Wagner, but rather an 'untimeliness' so profound as to go back to the very origins of Western political philosophy (cf. Plutarch, *Nicias* 23). Nietzsche's project of cultural renewal through the restoration of Platonic musical education goes far beyond anything that can be found in Wagner, and so shows Nietzsche's political-philosophical affinity with Plato – pointed out, among others, by Strauss (174–91), Lampert (85), and Drochon (38) – in a new and clearer light. Wagner is not an object of Nietzsche's worship in *WB*, but just a means to Nietzsche's own project of musical education toward the philosophic life. It could furthermore be shown that the project of *WB* as outlined here is a part of the overall project of the *UC*, but that argument is beyond the scope of this paper.

[11]"Different" in the sense of being ever higher and higher than it currently is.

The musical education envisioned by Nietzsche in *WB* is based on the Platonic pattern and uses Wagner's art as a new means to the same (or a very similar) end: habituating young people to 'correct feeling', i.e. to instinctively value the good life more than mere life. This is to be accomplished through the capacity of the arts, above all of music, to 'speak' to our passions and feelings – and, especially in the case of young people, also to form them in a suitable way. Nietzsche's 'Wagnerian' musical education could thus be a way of preventing the physiological corruption of our sensibility, preventing the plague of 'incorrect feeling', in the future generations that receive this education, and replacing it with the 'correct feeling' that is characteristic of both spiritual nobility and the philosophic life. In this manner, even the *prima facie* quite ridiculous Wagnerian claim that a reformation of the theatre would lead to the change and reformation of modern humanity as such (KSA 1, 448/ 275) becomes worthy of more serious thought.

However, appreciating the potential for a renewed musical education that Nietzsche sees in Wagner's art should not make it possible to overlook the great practical difficulties any attempt to realize such an education would have to face. The two most important ones will now be briefly discussed, both of which have to do with the vast difference of scale between an Ancient Greek *polis* and the modern state. First of these is the idea that Wagner's reform of theater will recreate "the onetime reality of the Greek theater" (KSA 1, 449/ 276), that theater can have the same effect today as it did for the Greeks. Church (212) points out this hope, but he doesn't see anything problematic about it. It is true that theater can be deeply meaningful for individuals, and in this sense it may well be the opposite of the modern art-as-*divertissement*. But it can hardly have the same effect on the community of citizens. Modern theatrical performances are always played for a relatively small audience, as opposed to the performances of tragedies at the Athenian Dionysia, which were observed by a large part of the citizen body. In the modern world, theater is a medium for small, elite groups, and not the communal (in the sense of relating to the entire community) affair it was in the ancient city.[12]

The second is the fact that even if a 'Wagnerian' musical education were established and institutionalized, it would hardly be more than a niche alternative to the traditional educational system. It would presuppose a total reform of German educational system for it to become more than that, and Nietzsche does not propose any plan along these lines. It is true that Nietzsche hoped a small group – some hundred people (KSA 1, 260, 295, 325/ 98, 131, 159) – would be sufficient to *initiate* a large-scale cultural reform; but even so, until that great reform takes place, this new musical education would be a niche affair, unlike its Ancient Greek counterpart, in which the works of Homer and Hesiod were the unquestioned foundations of all education and higher culture. Plato's proposal for a musical education amounted to a reform of an existing educational system, while Nietzsche's proposal would effectively be the founding of a completely new one.

That being said, this study concludes by highlighting the importance of *WB* for Nietzsche's later thought. The 'correct feeling' to which the envisioned musical education should educate shows significant prefigurations of some of the mature Nietzsche's ideas. These prefigurations are, first, the early form of the good – bad vs. good – evil distinction (cf. KSA 1, 506–7/ 327–8); second, the connection between the noble person and the philosopher in valuing the good life over mere life, as well as the unspoken disconnection in their respective understandings of what the good life consists in (cf. KSA 1, 451–3/ 278–80); and third, the Platonic rather than Wagnerian orientation of Nietzsche's thinking about the political role of art in *WB*, and of the project of the *Untimely Considerations* as a whole. This final point was announced in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (KSA 1, 413/ 242), where Nietzsche says that understanding philosophy Platonically means to work toward the production of new Platos, of genuine philosophers; and it would be developed more clearly in later passages such as *Beyond Good and Evil* § 211 or *The Antichrist* § 56.[13] This study thus considers it an especially promising avenue for further research.

[12]It is an interesting but tangential question whether modern mass media – especially television and cinema, these heirs of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* in their artistic means – could produce a similar effect in modern societies. They have long overcome the technical limitations of Wagner's time. And the problem of scale no longer exists in them: thousands and even millions of human beings can be the audience of a single event or artwork simultaneously.

[13]On this point cf. Meier (277–90).

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