
Art and Climate

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

Contents

About this Title	4
Translator's Note	4
Art and Climate	7
Notes	15

About this Title

Source

Art and Climate

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

The Art-Work of the Future

Richard Wagner's Prose Works

Volume 1

Pages 251-265

Published in 1895

Original Title Information

Kunst und Klima

Published in 1841

Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen : Volume III

Pages 207-221

Reading Information

This title contains 5549 words.

Estimated reading time between 16 and 28 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[250]

Translator's Note

In a letter to Uhlig, dated February 8th, 1850, Wagner writes: "To the March number of the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* (Stuttgart) I have promised to contribute an article, 'Art and Climate.' The good friend in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* has determined me to expose the lazy, cowardly, preposterous objection of 'climate,' in all its emptiness." A nervous illness intervened between this letter and the following, undated but apparently written towards the end of the month, where he says: "Since yesterday I have been writing away at the article for the March number of the *Monatsschrift*." In the succeeding letter (March 13th, 1850), in which he also refers to "Wieland" as previously cited, Wagner says: "*Kunst und Klima* appears in the Stuttgart *Deutsche Monatsschrift*, in the March, or, at latest, in the April number. The article is important."—In the April number of that review (edited by Adolph Kolatschek) the article accordingly appeared.—

Upon referring to the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, we find in the issue for Jan. 15, 1850 a criticism of *Art and Revolution* containing the remarks here referred to by our author. They run as follows: "Whence, beneath *our Northern skies*, shall we derive that rapt intoxication of

the sense of beauty, which even upon the Ionic horizon did not loom so pure as we are wont to conceive when we sum up the æsthetic life of olden times in the principle of Hellenism? . . . These wailings are fantastic, unfruitful, and can be answered by no kind of Revolution, excepting by that of the whole *Earth-rind*, and a new cycle of the world."—

[251]

Art and Climate

THE author's publicly expressed views on the future of Art, in step with the advance of the human race to perfect Freedom, have been met with this objection, among others: that he has failed to take account of the *influence of Climate upon man's capacity for Art*, and has, for instance, presupposed of the modern Northern-European nations a future imaginative and constructive art-faculty to which the natural characteristics of their native skies are entirely opposed.

It may therefore be deemed of some importance to lay bare the lack of understanding which lies at the bottom of this objection, by a general survey of the actual relations between Art and Climate; leaving, for the present, the kindly reader to complete the individual details by their further consequences.



Just as we know that there are heavenly bodies which have not as yet, or never will have, attained the birth of those conditions fundamentally necessary to the existence of human beings: so do we know that at one time our own Earth, also, had not as yet evolved such attributes. The present physiognomy of our planet shows us that, even now, the life of Man is by no means permitted on every portion of its surface: where its climatic mood proclaims itself in unbroken exclusiveness, as on the fiery plains of the Sahara, or mid the Northern ice-steppes, there Man is an impossibility. Only where this 'Climate' resolves the fixed and all-dominating uniformity of its influence into a [252] pliant chain of broken contrasts, do we see arise that infinitely manifold series of organic creations whose highest grade is conscience-gifted Man.

Yet where Climatic Nature draws Man beneath the all-sheltering influence of her rankest prodigality, and rocks him in her bosom as a mother rocks her child,—where we must therefore place the cradle of newborn mankind—there has Man remained a child forever—as in the Tropics,—with all an infant's good and evil qualities. First where she drew this all-conditioning, over-tender influence back, when she handed Man, like a prudent mother her adult son, to himself and his own free self-devisings,—where Man, then, mid the waning warmth of the directly fostering care of Climate, was forced to cater for himself,—do we see him ripening to the full unfoldment of his being. Only through the force of such a Need as surrounding Nature did not, like an over-careful mother, both listen for and still at once ere it had scarcely risen, but for whose appeasement he must himself provide, did he gain consciousness not only of that need but also of his *power*. This consciousness he reached through learning *the distinction between himself and Nature*; and thus it was that she, who no more *offered* him the stilling of his need, but from whom he now must *wrest* it, became the object of his observation, inquiry, and dominion.

The progress of the human race in the development of its innate capabilities of winning from Nature the contentment of those needs that waxed with its ever-waxing powers, is the *history of Culture*. In it Man evolves his own qualities in *counterpoise* to Nature, and thus acquires *independence* of her. Only man become independent of Nature by his personal energy, is the *historical* Man and only the historical Man has summoned *Art* to life, but not the primitive Man in Nature's leading-strings.

Art is the highest common life-expression of the man who, after self-fought-out contentment of his natural needs, displays himself to Nature in all the flush of triumph. His art-works as though fill up the gaps which she had [253] left for Man's free personal activity;

they form the closing harmony of her majestic whole, in which self-conscious, independent Man is thus included as her highest factor. Wherefore, where *Nature* in her overfill was All, we neither light upon free Man nor genuine *Art*; but where—as we have phrased it—she left those empty gaps, where she thus made room for the free self-evolution of Man and of his need-grown energy, was *Art* first born.

Granted, that *Nature* has also had her share in the birth of *Art*, just as the highest expression of the latter is the brilliant 'close,' the conscious reunion of *Nature* with Man, effected by his understanding of her. Her share, however, was this: that she abandoned Man, the creator of *Art*, to the conditions which must necessarily spur him on to self-gained consciousness,—inasmuch as she retreated before him and merely exerted a conditional influence over him, in place of holding him a prisoner in the bosom of her full and unconditional sway. From the over-tender mother, she became to him a bashful bride, whom he now must win by vigour and love-worthiness for his—endlessly enhanced—fruition; a bride who, vanquished thus by mind and valour, made offering of herself to Love's embraces. Not, therefore, in the teeming Tropics, not in the sensuous flower-land of India, was born *true Art*; but on the naked, sea-plashed rocks of Hellas, upon the stony soil and beneath the scanty shadows of the olive-trees of Attica, was set her cradle:—*for here, amid privations, strove Hercules and suffered*—here was the first *true Man* begotten.— —

When we survey the history of Hellenic culture, we are above all struck by *those* circumstances which favoured the development of Man to his highest energy, and thereby to independence of *Nature* and finally of those cramping human relationships which sprang directly from his natural surroundings. We certainly shall find these circumstances markedly involved in the characteristics of the 'scene of action' of Hellenic history; but the decisive feature of these characteristics lies herein, that *Nature* did [254] not *pamper* (*v e r wöhnte*) the Hellenes by her influence, but *weaned* (*e n t wöhnte*) them from her care; that she *be-schooled* (*e r zog*), and not *be-lapped* (*v e r zog*) them like the softer Asiatics. Every other determining factor in the Hellenic evolution may be referred to the individual manysidedness of the numerous racial stems which crowded close together in rich variety. The natural characteristics of their respective dwelling-places had, sure enough, an essential effect upon their individuality, and therefore upon that of the whole nation, but only in the sense of spurring them to free activity; so that the work of forming and developing these diverse individualities must be ascribed far more to History than to *Nature*.

The motive force of Hellenic history is thus the *vigorous* (*thätige*) *Man*; and its fairest fruit, the crown of Hellenic self-consciousness, is the *purely human Art*, i.e. that art which found its stuff and object in actual Man, man self-acknowledged as *Nature's* highest product. The later *Plastic art* was the luxury and superfluity of Hellenic *Art*: in it the flower of Greece shed down on its surroundings the overfill of its rich sap, secreted by the fibres of the humanistic art-work, and erstwhile kept close-locked within its maiden chalice: it is the squandered seed of bursting, over-ripe Hellenic *Art*. This seed glanced off from Man, fell back upon surrounding *Nature*, and on her soil twixt trees and bushes, from mountain, brook and meadow, brought forth those teeming pictures of man's art which signal for us, to this very day, the tidings of the overfill of human faculty.

In the plastic arts, Man undoubtedly brought himself once more into direct relationship with surrounding climatic *Nature*; but only herein, that he weighed his needs and forces against hers, and set his purely human will and pleasure in unison with the Necessity of her demeanour. *Only the free and full-fledged man*, however, such as he had evolved himself by combat with the parsimony of *Nature*, could throughly understand her, and wist at last to spend the overfill of his own being on that harmonic complement [255] of *Nature* which should answer to his power of enjoyment. The creative faculty lay therefore ever grounded on Man's *independence of Nature*—yea, on the overfill of that quality—and not in any directly

productive *operation of natural Climate*.

But the voiding of that overflow was also the death-knell of this art-creative man: the more he strewed his seed beyond the confines of his Hellenic motherland, the farther he shed this overflow toward Asia, and led back thence its lavish stream into the pragmatic-prosaic and grossly sensual world of Rome: so much the more visibly did his creative force die out; to make place, at his eventual death, for the worship of an *abstract God* who, in melancholy joy of immortality, wandered aimlessly between the splendid works of statuary and architecture which decked the burying-place of this departed Man. Thenceforth God *ruled* the world,—God, who had *made* all Nature for the glory of his name. From that time forward, man's affairs are governed by the '*incomprehensible will*' of God; no longer by the instinct and necessity of Nature,—and it is therefore a highly unchristian action, on the part of our modern Christian art-producers, to appeal to "Climate" and "Natural soil" as hindering or favouring conditions for the birth of Art.—Let us consider what has become of art-fit Man, under the dispensation of Jehova!

The first thing that strikes us, in glancing at the evolution of our modern nations, is this: that it has only most conditionally been governed by the influence of *Nature*, but quite unconditionally by the confounding and distorting operation of an alien Civilisation; that, as a matter of fact, our Culture and Civilisation have not sprung upwards from the nether soil of Nature, but have been poured down upon us from above, from the Heaven of the priests and the *Corpus Juris* of Justinian.

With its entrance upon history, the natural stock of each new European nation was grafted with a cutting from the tree of Roman-dom and Christendom, and the fruit of the thus-engendered artificial shoot, which bushed out on [256] every hand in cripple-like monstrosity, we are now tasting in our barbaric civilisation. Hindered from the first in their self-unfolding, we can form no estimate of the shape which the original characteristics and climatic idiosyncracies of those nations might perchance have evolved. Even though we should set down the degree of artistic culture, which they might be trusted to have attained on the path of self-unfolding, at ever so little (an assumption, however, which would be thoroughly onesided and unjust!), yet we have here no need to vex ourselves with that question; but simply to confess that such an undisturbed self-development has actually had no chance of taking place. Whosoever may choose to reply, that at all events our native idiosyncrasy has had a well-marked influence on the shaping of imported elements of culture, is completely in the right when, for example, he asserts that the Christianity of Nicæa was a different matter from that of Berlin; but he would only make himself ridiculous, if he should attempt—as has already occurred to certain pious persons—to prove an innate predisposition of the Germanic races toward Christianity from the contents of the Eddas.

True, that into the evolutionary channel of the modern nations their 'climatic' origin poured its waters too, (1) and that from the perennial torrent of the Folk, with its own peculiar strain of poetry and intuition; only—it was but in an incomplete and spasmodic, a fragmentary and unsubstantial manner, that the true Folk-spirit could ever manifest itself, beneath the 'influences' that pressed upon it from outside and above. Our spiritual development has [257] therefore been a mass of tangled contradictions: *not* the product of Nature and Climate, nor of a cycle of culture that had shaped itself in strict conformity therewith; but the result of a violent counter-thrust against this Nature, of a wilful disregard of both Nature and Climate, of the frenzied strife twixt soul and body, "will" and "can." The desolate battlefield, across which this crazy fight swept howling, is the plain of the Middle Ages. Undecided, as of its very nature it could not but remain, the battle wavered to and fro; until the Turks came to our help, and hunted over to us, in the Occident, the last professors of Hellenic art.

Art's *renaissance*—mark well! not any *birth*—now set in with full force: the last remains of Greek art-beauty were *taught* to us. The tombstones from the burial-place of long-deceased

Greek art, those weather-beaten forms of bronze and marble, denuded of their living garb of colour,—were unriddled for us by these learned men, so well as their own scant stock of understanding still permitted. And just as those monuments were, as we said, the merest gravestones of the once living Hellenic artist-man,—the last ghostlike, pallid death-abstraction from his onetime warmly-feeling, nobly-doing life,—so have we learnt from them to regard *Art* itself as an *abstract notion*, which we fancy we must pour down from above—as we had erstwhile done with the immaterial god of Heaven—into the mould of actual Life. From this abstract notion has our Modern Art been *constructed*: meaning thereby our *plastic* art, i.e. that art which, of our need of Luxury, we have *imitated* from the plastic art of Greece, itself the mere luxurious appanage of Grecian Art; and, in troth, have not imitated in the fulness wherewith it once took rise from Life and stood erect in living bloom,—but according to the sorrowful disfigurement in which alone it offered itself to us, beaten by the storms of time, torn from its natural bearings, and scattered in capricious fragments here a little and there a little. And thus we take these monuments—robbed of their warming and protecting deckery of tint— [258] drag them naked and frostbitten through the Christian-German sand of "Mark" Brandenburg, set them up amidst the windy firs of "Sans-Souci," and chatter from between our teeth a learned sigh anent the *unfavourableness of our climate*. But that, midst this "unfavourableness," our Berlin art-pedants have not yet gone completely crazy, we ascribe with justice to the undeserved grace of God!

By all means these learned men are right, when, beholding the work of their own luxurious caprice, they find that in that work we are merely bunglers, prompted by neither necessity nor self-dependence; that in our "climate" the imitated plastic art of Greece can only be a hothouse growth, and not a natural plant. This verdict, however, can but open the eyes of any man of common sense, to the fact that our whole art is good for nothing *because* it has had no origin in our actual being, nor in any harmonic supplementing of the "climatic" Nature which surrounds us. But this in nowise proves that, in our climate, an art could not unfold itself in answer to our veritable human needs; for we have never yet reached the point of developing our artistic powers, without let or hindrance, according to *our own* associate need.

A survey of our modern art thus teaches us that we absolutely do *not* stand under the influence of climatic *Nature*, but of a *History* at entire variance with that Nature. We must, therefore, first realise that our history of to-day is made by the selfsame *men* who once brought forth the Grecian art-work, and, that done, ask ourselves: *what* is it, that has changed these men so utterly, that Those created works of Art whilst We but turn-out costly wares of Industry? Then shall we also recognise that, as our essence is at bottom one and the same, so, however wide apart our starting-points, our termini must one day light upon each other, though approached on different paths. The Greek, proceeding from the bosom of Nature, attained to Art when he had made himself independent of the immediate influence of Nature: *we*, violently debarred from Nature, and proceeding from the drillground of a [259] heaven-rid and juristic Civilisation, shall first reach Art when we completely turn our backs on such a civilisation and once more cast ourselves, with conscious bent, into the arms of Nature.

We have not, therefore, to turn to the consideration of Climatic Nature, but of *Man*, the only creator of Art, in order to discover what has made this modern European man art-impotent. Then shall we perceive with full distinctness, that this evil influence is none other than our present *Civilisation*, with its complete indifference to Climate. It is not our atmosphere, that has reduced the proud warriors of the North, who shattered once the Roman world, to servile, crass, weak-nerved, dim-eyed, deformed and slovenly cripples;—not it, that has turned the blithesome, action-lusting, dauntless sons of heroes, whom we cannot now conceive aright, into our hypochondriacal, cowardly and cringing citizens;—not it, that has brought forth from the hale and hearty Teutons our scrofulous linen-weavers, weaved

themselves from skin and bones; from the Siegfried of olden days a "Gottlieb"; from spear-throwers our logic-choppers, our counsellors and sermon-spinners. No, the glory of this splendid work belongs to our clergy-ridden *Pandect-civilisation*, with all its fine results; among which, beside our Industry, our worthless, heart-and-soul-confounding *art* fills out its seat of honour. For the whole posse must be set down to this Civilisation, in its entire variance with our nature, and not to any Nature-born *necessity*.

Wherefore, not from that Civilisation, but from the future true and genuine *Culture*, which shall bear a right relation to our climatic Nature, will one day also bloom that Artwork which is now denied both breath and air to breathe in, and as to whose peculiar properties we shall never be able to form a notion until *we Men*, the creators of that artwork, can conceive ourselves as developed to a rational concord *with this Nature*.

From the kernel of our history therefore, have *we*, for now, to draw conclusions on our Future; from the character [260] of Man, such as our history shows us working-out himself to free self-destination, under the merest conditional influence of Nature, have we to enquire how the free and veritable Men of the Future will take their stand twixt Art and Nature.

What then is the kernel of this history?

We shall surely not go far astray, if we describe it briefly thus:—

In Greekdom, we find Man evolving to full and conscious self-discrimination from Nature: the artistic monument in which this conscious man objectified himself, is the tintless marble statue,—the idea, expressed in stone, of the pure human form; which idea Philosophy, again, dissolved from out the stone and resolved into a pure 'abstraction' of the human essence. Into this solitary man, existing at last in naught but the idea,—this man in whom, amid the physical lack of all community of the species, the essence of the sheer personality was represented as the essence of the species,—the People's Christianity instilled the lifebreath of passionate heart's-desire. The error of the philosopher became the madness of the masses. This frenzy's scene of action is the Middle Ages: on it we see the Nature-sundered man—taking his personal, egoistic, and therefore impotent being for the essence of the human species—with greed and haste, by physical and moral mutilation, (2) hunt after his redemption into *God*; under whose image, by an instinctive error, he expressed the idea of the in truth con summate essence of the human race and Nature. (3)

[261]

As the only possible, true, therefore unconsciously and at last consciously striven-for, redemption from this state of misery, we then see loom before us the ascension of the *egoistic* essence of the individual into the *communistic* essence of the human race; the concretion of the abstract idea of Man into the actual, true and blissful common-being of *Mankind*. If, therefore the kernel of the world's history, from the Asiatic down to the close of the Grecian period, was the emanation of the *unit Man* from Nature: so is the kernel of the newer European history the resolution of this idea into the actuality of *Men*.

But to men who know themselves united in one all-capable species, the natural character of this or that particular Climate can no longer set up cramping bounds: to them, as a species at one with itself, the total like-united Nature of this Earth alone can form a confine. To this whole Earth-Nature, in measure as she is known to them in all her wide connexion with the World-All, will the Men and Brothers of the Future turn; yet no longer turn as to a barrier—such as the Egoist deemed the circle of his natural surroundings—but as the prime condition of their existence, their life and handiwork.

In this vast and blest conjunction, shall we first attain the artist's true creative-force; when first *the Artists* are to hand, then will *Art* herself be present. But these Artists are *human beings*; not trees, nor waves, nor skies. This brotherhood of artist-men will mould its works of art in unison with, in complement and rounding-off of Mother Nature; accenting every quality and individual trait evoked by special need, in answer to the special call of Nature's individual

features, but marching forward from the base of [262] this particularity towards a common pact with common Nature—as toward the utmost fulness of man's being.

Before, however, men shall once more shape their artworks by their Need, and not as now by Luxury and Caprice, they will neither have the wit to bring their works to needful unison with Nature. But if they shape from Need—and the true need of Art can only be one felt in common—then no Climate upon earth, that allows at all of man's existence, can hinder them from Art-work; the rather will the niggardness of outward Nature but whet the more their purely human artist-zeal.

As for the objection that, even for the generation of the *art-need*, peculiar favouring conditions of Climate—such as Ionic skies—are indispensable: it is, in the sense in which it is nowadays brought forward, either bigoted or hypocritical, and in its very gist unmanly. Wherever Climate does not forbid men living *free* and *healthy* lives, neither will it hinder them from bodily beauty and the feeling of the need of art. Climate can only pronounce its fatal veto where, through the invincibility of its influence, it stays true Men from being bred, and merely lets the human *animal* vegetate. Yet even these men-beasts will one day vanish before the march of truer culture; just as so many of their like have already vanished, or through exchange of climate and intermingling of varieties, have thriven into normal men. But, as we have said above, where men attain to mastery of their dependence on climatic Nature, they will necessarily—in their ever broader *historical* contact with all those men who have reached like independence—stride onward also to the mastery of each dependence on those oppressive tenets which have clung to them as the result of erroneous conceptions harboured in the time of that war-of-emancipation with Nature, and have ruled both the religious and political conscience of mankind with equal cramping dictates of authority. The common creed of those Men of the Future must therefore necessarily take this form:—

[263]

There exists no higher *Power* than *Man's Community*; there is naught so *worthy Love* as the *Brotherhood of Man*.

But only through the *highest power of Love* can we attain to *perfect Freedom*; for there exists no genuine Freedom but that in which *each Man hath share*.

The mediator between Power and Freedom, the redeemer without whom Power remains but violence, and Freedom but caprice, is therefore—Love; yet not that revelation from above, imposed on us by precept and command,—and therefore never realised,—like the Christian's: but *that Love* which issues from the Power of true and undistorted human nature; which in its origin is nothing other than the liveliest utterance of this nature, that proclaims itself in pure delight at physical existence and, starting from marital love, strides forward through the love for children, friends and brothers, right on to *love for Universal Man*.

This Love is thus the wellspring of all true Art, for through it alone can the natural flower of *Beauty* bloom from Life. Yet Beauty, too, is now only one of our abstract notions, and verily no notion deduced from actual Life, but from the *lesson-ed* Grecian art. That which can only be perceived and felt in the full warm joy of all the senses, has become the object of æsthetic speculation; and, confronted with the axioms of the Metaphysician, our modern art-professor sighs again for Ionic skies, beneath which alone (in his opinion) can Beauty ever thrive. But here, again, he keeps his eyes involuntarily fixed on the only remaining, dull and faded link that connects the art of Greece with our own time, the *plastic* art and notably the natural Material from which it fashioned forms. He thus forgets entirely that the fashioner of those statues was first and foremost an artist Man, and that he only *copied* in those works the actual artwork he had *carried out* upon and with his own warm, living body. The Beauty to which the artist at last erected marble statues, he had *felt* before, and *tasted*, with the highest joy of sense; to him this tasting had been a true instinctive *need*, and this need was none other

than—Love. How high this love-need could mount [264] within the exclusive circle of the Grecian nation, we learn from the course of their historical evolution. Because it was no more than the need of a peculiar people, it remained hedged about with Egoism; and could therefore only squander, so to speak, its force on wantonness at last, and, after all this prodigality, die out in philosophical abstractions, renewed by not one spark of counter-love. If, on the other hand, we weigh the instinctive impulse of the men of present history,—if we recognise that they can only reach redemption by the realisation of God in the physical verity of the Human Race,—that their most burning need can only still itself in Universal Human Love, and that, by an infallible necessity, it must one day attain this stilling,—then we can but look with full assurance to a future element of life in which this Love, extending its own need into the widest circles of broad humanity, must needs give birth to works undreamt as yet; works which, moulded by unheard-of manysidedness of *felt and living* sense of Beauty, shall turn those mouldering remains of Grecian art to unregarded playthings for peevish children.

Let us therefore conclude thus:—

That which a man loves, that *deems* he beautiful; that which strong, free Men—who in community are all that of their essence they can be—that which *they* love in common, that *is* in very surety beautiful. No other natural standard exists for true, not inculcated, Beauty. In their joy at this beauty, will the Freemen of the Future fashion works of Art such as they needs *must* fashion to content their measurelessly heightened need. Everywhere, in every Climate, will these works be suchwise fashioned as to answer to the purely human need inspired by native skies: they will be beautiful alike and perfect, for reason that in them the highest need of Man is *satisfied*. But in the boundless intercourse of Future Men, the thousand individual qualities that shall have sprung from human Need, in answer to the divers idiosyncracies of Climate,—so *soon as ever they have raised themselves to the height of the universal Human, and therefore universally Intelligible*,—will mutually react on one [265] another in fertilising interchange, and blossom forth to joint 'all-human' artworks, of whose amplitude and splendour our art-sense of to-day, with its eternal clinging to the fetters of the old and dead, can conceive no jot or tittle.

To clear the ground for such a Work of the Future, must the Earth, then, take the human race once more into her womb, and bear herself and it anew?

In troth, she'd play us thus a sorry trick!—for then would Mother Earth destroy at one fell swoop all those conditions whose actual presence, just as they are, now shows us—rightly understood—the Necessity of such a framing of the human Future as we have here but barely hinted. For we can gain no hope, no courage, no confident assurance of the Future, till we convince ourselves that the fulfilment of our soul's best wish hangs not upon the old erroneous supposition that men must needs be what our wilful notions, abstracted from the Past, dictate that they *should* be; but on the certain knowledge, that they require alone to be what by their very nature they *can* be, and *therefore shall and will be*. Not *Angels*; but precisely *Men*!

The *Climate* about which alone we can talk, in any reasonable fashion, as fundamentally conditioning Art, is therefore:

The actual—and not the fancied—essence of the Human Race.

Notes

Note 1 on page 9

The original text runs: "Wohl ist im Entwicklungsgange der modernen Nationen ihre klimatische Originalität ebenfalls mit eingeflossen, und zwar aus dem unversiegbaren Strome des Volkes,..." The author has here indulged in a rhetorical play of words, quite impossible to reproduce in another tongue; taking the word "influence" from the mouths of his opponents, he has, in this sentence, restored it to its primitive meaning, viz., "to flow into" (cf. *influx*), a sense still preserved in the German verb "einfließen." To complete his metaphor, he has further employed the "gang" of "Entwicklungsgang" (course of evolution) in its sense of "conduit," a meaning retained in the English "water-course."—TR.

Note 2 on page 11

Compare *Parsifal*, Act i. "an sich legt er die Frevelhand," where Gurnemanz refers to Klingsor's egoistic endeavours to force his way to the *Gral*.—TR.

Note 3 on page 11

"Unter welchem er das in Wahrheit vollkommene Wesen der menschlichen Gattung und der Natur nach unwillkürlichem Irrthume begriff."—The meaning of this passage, and of that which follows, will become clearer by reference to Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (for Wagner's partial thought-indebtedness whereto, see the Preface to the present volume and also p. 25), in the first chapter of which we find: "Religion is nothing else than the consciousness which man has of his own, not finite and limited, but infinite nature"; again: "The antithesis of divine and human is nothing else than the antithesis between human nature in general and the individual"; and later: "God is the concept of the species as an individual: the idea, or rather the essence of the species, that, while a universal being, the epitome of all perfections, of all attributes set free from the limits existing in the mind and feeling of the individual, is withal an individual *personal* being.....Man supplies the absence of the idea of the species by the idea of God,—as of a Being who is free from the limits and wants which oppress the individual, and, in his judgment (since he identifies the species with the individual), the species itself."—TR.