Part One: How to Get Started in Wagner Without Dying in the Attempt

Often, although not too much, young people more or less introduced into the world of music speak to me, but without any knowledge of Richard Wagner, who after hearing about Wagnerianism, or about Wagner, are suddenly seized with the healthy intention “to hear” something from Wagner, sometimes more out of curiosity than anything else.

This curiosity increases when certain topics are included, even though their real foundation is distant from Wagner and in some cases poorly understood, such as for example the “Germanic” visions in some scenes of The Ring of the Nibelungen, or the comments, so frequent in the press (and so absurd or ill-intentioned), about the political or personal context of Wagner, when not other topics such as the promotion of famous lyric voices or the collecting of various record labels.

The goal among such students of entering into Wagnerianism is good, but the motivation is wrong and the way forward is terrible.

If we truly want to enter into the world of Wagner, then the motivation and the means of entering into his works must change.

The Motivation to be Wagnerian:

‘Laciate omnia politica’ we could say, paraphrasing the expression “Leave behind all hope ye who enter here,” the sign that Dante puts over the entrance to Hell.

If one wants to be Wagnerian for mythological motives, for the love of singing or politics, then he is prostituting the works of Wagner, will never understand them and, what is worse, will get entangled in a world of false symbolisms and neurotic interpretations that will only make him outlandish, but not Wagnerian.
We must want to enter into Wagnerianism through our own personal, artistic and humanistic motivation, and not for the sake of a low level imitative politicking that lacks consistency.

Therefore, the first thing to do is to consider whether we really want to take an ‘artistic’ approach, with emotion, a path of personal and social elevation through art. If that is not the feeling and the desire, then it is better to dedicate oneself to something else and leave Wagner in peace.

The essential reason to be a Wagnerian is the desire to find a path of personal and communal redemption by means of art and sensibility, by means of the elevation of the Self and through Compassion for the Sorrow of the world. That is, to find a way for a Dramatic Conception of the World that resolves the essential questions of man: What to do in this world of material pain and deception? How to raise our Self above mere pleasure or living beneath the mere appearances of happiness? How to bring the elements of elevation and sensibility to people?

To develop this theme I published a book, “Wagnerianism As the Conception of the World”, and I think it superfluous to insist on everything that I have already fully stated there. (Translator’s note: The translator has also translated this book, together with several other highly relevant Wagnerian texts. Dear reader: Read them!)

**Wagnerianism and the Scale of the Arts:**

If we want to simplify the path of art in six words, and with that I note that every simplification is tremendously unjust, I would say: Beauty, Spirituality, Character, Feeling, Wagnerianism and finally, Neurosis.

Art begins in earnest with the sense of Beauty as the essence of art, then goes through a path of mysticism and spirituality, resumes with the Renaissance the sense of beauty, but then already not only physical but the beauty of the character of the person, beauty both physical and psychic; then everything rises in Romanticism towards pure feeling, the sensibility of the human being; reaching its maximum peak in the Total Art of Wagnerianism; … and ends falling from the heights into the deep hell of madness and sickly neurosis in the so-called contemporary art.
Therefore anyone who confronts the knowledge of Wagnerianism must first understand something of Greek art, the mystical meaning of Christian art, Renaissance classicism and above all Romanticism.

Each step provides an essential rung on the climb up to Wagnerianism. Greece gave the essence of Tragedy, its definition and exact precision, in an incredible advance for every subsequent step upwards, but with means absolutely insufficient for the achievement of its perfect expression. Then Christianity gave the compassionate and spiritual essence that is necessary if we are to address the sorrow of the world with hope. The Renaissance brings great music together with Calderón or Shakespeare, forming one of the bases of Wagnerianism. Romanticism brings feeling to music, surpasses mere beauty and brings sentimental expression. But only Wagner manages to unite the parts and give them their final unitary form.

And Wagner climbed so high that the successor dwarves did not dare to climb any further, so they decided to go down to hell rather than compete on the heights.

It will not be superfluous for those who want to enter into Wagnerianism to have a prior idea, even though superficial, of the History of Art, for which they must avoid, first of all, reading any of those nefarious books of historical Marxism that pretend to explain every art based on the economic or social relations of the moment, something that is like explaining the emotions of a person solely based on knowing the current balance in their checking account.

So choose a book of Art History, preferably from before 1936, and be aware of the steps on your journey.

**The three bases of the Wagnerian Path:**

To enter the Wagnerian world it is necessary to delve a little more deeply into three concrete parts of the previous art that form the cornerstones of its essence, and for which something more than a superficial or general knowledge must be claimed.

Wagnerianism tries to achieve a work of Art capable of expressing itself as a path of personal and communal Redemption, for which the work of art must express not only the generic feeling in every work of art, but answer much deeper questions: The why and for what of those feelings, the reasons and motivations that lead to the emotions and the outcome of those sentimental clashes.
Music is a perfect element for the expression of emotion, since it reaches directly into human sensibility without the need to reason, to be interpreted by reason, which is always an attempt against the feeling itself.

But music is unable to express reasons, motives and the outcomes necessary to make those pure feelings become a way forward, and not a mere personal show of emotions.

The development of the human theme is a drama, everything in the world that is serious and essential is reflected in the human drama. Tragedy is not only disasters or sorrow, but is the human development of emotions in a situation of conflict, and life is always a conflict, at least with death, love and pain.

Thus theatric Drama is another of the bases of complete art, the part that manages to express the why of the feelings, their logic, their outcome, their tragic or compassionate journey.

The text in verse of the classic Dramas unifies the reasons, the beauties of the sonority, and for this a dramatic reading in verse is always preferable, even though not always possible.

Finally, theatrical drama explains the why of the emotions but normally, except in very isolated cases, does not show us the For What of the Drama, the philosophy that orients the drama and human life. Tragedy shows us a concrete example of human life, and that is exactly why Tragedy removes the generic, but like every work of art, the tragic theatre is not a philosophy class, not an Essay. Therefore something of the philosophy of the for what of man and his tragedy, his feelings, his life and his death must enter in as well.

**The dramatic theatre: The Why?**

In Wagner drama brings to light the deepest human emotions, from love to renunciation, from compassion to despair, ambition or hatred, heroism and redemption, strength and meanness. But each feeling is only fully comprehensible when we see it in its setting, when we know what produces it, what awakens it, where is its strength and logic, what feeds and what weakens it. And only the text gives us these data, only the dramatic poem. These behaviours are based on personalities elevated or tragic, evil or heroic, but never vulgar. Neither Wagner nor Calderón nor Shakespeare are going to show us the soul of the vulgar television watcher, the protagonist in TV serials with their
baseness or thoughts on an almost simian level. This is a theatre of passions, elevated or mean, but always profound. Hence we must read this theatre before approaching Wagner, we are not going to believe that in Wagner we are going to get pink novels, Freudian dramas and neurotic or hysterical themes à la Almodovar.

Within the dramatic theatre, the person who wants to enter into Wagnerianism must at least, as something special, cover three great foundations: The Classical Spanish Theatre (getting specific, we begin with Calderón and continue with some Lope de Vega and Tirso de Molina), the dramatic theatre of Shakespeare and the German romantic theatre of Schiller.

As we suppose the reader doesn’t have time to spend a year on all this, let’s reduce the preparation on this theme to the book ‘Wagner and the Classic Spanish Theatre’ by J. Mota and M. Infiesta, to continue with at least the main works of Calderón (above all, La Vida es Sueño) and the same with Shakespeare (both his dramatic works, virtually every work, as well as the so-called historical ones, especially Richard III, Henry IV and Henry V, and those of the ‘Roman’ cycle such as Julius Caesar, Coriolanus or Titus Andronicus). Something from the dramatic production of Schiller is essential, perhaps Wallenstein and several others…

And after those one must get hold of the text of the works of Wagner that are meant to be seen, read calmly, like the works of profound theatre that they are, without hurry. One must not begin the vision of the work without having read the text at least twice on the day before and also know the development not only of the ‘action’ but of the dialogue and its meaning as well. For this it is very good to find some explanatory text of the work, which is nothing easy to do because the current ones are a garbage dump of commentaries. But if we can get hold of the texts of Chamberlain, Liszt, Lichtenberger or Angel Mayo, that is already much better. Fortunately the most important work, The Wagnerian Drama by H. S. Chamberlain, can be obtained in PC Word format, if the book cannot be found.

As for the texts of the works, there are many editions, and on the internet one can find them all on the Spanish ‘Kareol’. We also have the entirety of the texts on a disc in Word format. We recommend a text such as Wagner Poet? by Jordi Mota, Nº 29 (April-June 1998), in the magazine of the Wagnerian Association of Barcelona.

**Music: What is its essence?**

Compassion, if merely explained, is completely useless; compassion must be felt. Love is not achieved by reading its definition, but by practicing its very essence. Music transmits this essence of emotion that words only confirm or complicate.
It is therefore indispensable to distinguish between ‘pure music’, in which one seeks beauty and sonorous balance, and the music of feelings, when what is intended instead is to express ‘states of the soul’.

In Wagner we cannot do as with so many operas, hear the moments of arias or the musically most ‘melodious’ and then sleep through the rest. In Wagner we must follow the drama and remember that the music is at every moment one more language of that drama.

In music one must begin with Handel, with *The Messiah* and its heroic Arias. Then Bach, at least the *Magnificat* and *Brandenburg Concertos*. Finally the *Requiem* of Mozart. This is pure and elevated music. After this it is indispensable to begin with the Romantic music of feeling, no doubt Beethoven, the symphonies 3, 5, 7 and 9 at least. And the *Egmont Overture*. Finally, some Symphonic Poem such as ‘*Mazepa*’ by Liszt or ‘*Don Juan*’ by Strauss. Everything we can hear of classical music is good, but given that this is not a matter of making our arrival at Wagner too slow, we must at least include several ‘operas’ that prepare for Wagnerian Drama:

From Mozart ‘*The Magic Flute*’ and then from Carl Maria von Weber ‘*The Marksman*’ or ‘*The Freeshooter*’ would be the most adequate.

**Thought: the For What?**

We have already spoken about the motivations for being Wagnerian, but leaving those generalisations aside, there is a motivation in every work, an orientation for each concrete work. Therefore it is highly recommended that we ‘know the work’ before taking on its performance. But we must be clear: Wagner said in a letter to Liszt that to be present at his works he did not ask for public ‘understanding’, but only for ‘undeformed feelings and a human heart’, which is much to ask, as Wagner himself indicates, and more so in that time when the minds of the people were deformed by money and the propaganda for money and had egotism and the mere pursuit of pleasure and diversion instilled in their feelings.

Therefore it is necessary to distinguish between knowledge of the work and immersion in the general philosophy that surrounds the work of Wagner, the latter being merely recommended but in no way necessary. So on a scale of what is required for this subject of ‘intellectual’ preparation for the reception of Wagner’s works, we can suggest three stages:

1- For each to make a previous effort to free oneself, before the performance, from every material preoccupation, from hatred, from economic problems or problems at work, to cleanse the heart from the society that surrounds us and make ready to sensitise oneself to Art.
2- Try to understand the subliminal message, not philosophical but general, of the dramatic work at which one is going to attend. When attending the Mastersingers, the Gold or Parsifal one should in some way have a previous idea about each opera, about what message, what emotions, what orientation the opera has. One must not go to Parsifal with the same feeling as for the Rhinegold. Perhaps in that sense a small pamphlet that introduces each opera would suffice for that purpose, although the previously mentioned text of Chamberlain is no doubt more than fully adequate, as would be the book of Angel Mayo, ‘Wagner’ by Ediciones Península (Scherzo Collection).

3- When one feels prepared, and has time, introduce oneself to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, if not in depth then at least in general. But if one has read some of the works of Schopenhauer, then I think one is doing something sad as a Wagnerian… One is most likely making two mistakes:

- Taking some of the most popular works of the great thinker, those least interesting for a Wagnerian. The ‘Parerga and Paralipomena’ or his aphorisms on Love, Women and Death, is the most profound and cynical, but is worthless for Wagnerianism.

- On the other hand, the capital work ‘The World As Will and Representation’ is really fundamental to Wagnerianism, yet is a long, complex and hard to read work without a certain preparation.

So once again I would recommend a summary of the many writings as edited in Wagnerian reviews, and specifically the commentary in the book ‘Richard Wagner and the Thought of Schopenhauer’ by Edouard Sans, edited in the magazine Wagneriana, Special Edition, or also the book ‘The Wagnerian Conception of the World’, edited by Associació Wagneriana. Also texts published by magazines of the Associació Wagneriana of Barcelona such as ‘The Culture of Entertainment’, by Jordi Mota, Number 35 (October-December1999) and ‘The Great Lost Style: On the fashion of rejecting the legitimate rights of Great Art’, by Joachim Kaiser, Number 45 (April-June 2002), both in the Wagnerian magazine. (Translator’s note: Click and view http://www.associaciowagneriana.com/es/. Website is in Spanish and Catalan.)

The Trap of the Voice: The Amateur Opera Singer

If the true advocate of Wagnerianism is already a good opera devotee, before anything else one should read Wagner’s ‘Opera and Drama’ beforehand, which is published in Spanish and Catalan. And in any case, it should be clear that in almost every version of Wagner’s works on the market, on CD, Video or DVD, in almost every one (not to say in every one) the orchestral version and voice is more
than adequate, is correct, some more and some less, but always correct for the comprehension and approach to the dramatic feeling of the work. No bad orchestra or nefarious singer will spoil the version that can be bought, but rather disgusting scenes that in a large number of cases (most, with few exceptions) are given in the videos and DVDs available. It is not that debate over the differences in voice among Wagnerian singers is bad; moreover that debate is much recommended for the better understanding of the theme, but the important thing is not to fall into the operatic defect of ‘voice mania’. What is absolutely different in Wagner from every other opera is the importance of the voice in the overall work. The Voice must be adequate, but is not the principal protagonist of the play, as often happens in operas. The Voice must comply with the expression of the drama and comply with the score, but in Wagner there are no ‘divas’, there must be none of them; instead there are actors who sing, not singers who shine with their voice. Of course a strong beautiful voice must project the acting and the play, and is necessary, but must never take precedence over the other components of the drama.

“Before everything else the singers must habituate themselves to the awareness that they have a Dramatic problem to solve first, and then they themselves will easily be able to resolve the lyrical problem.” Letter of Wagner to Liszt, May 22 1851.

All or Nothing: Complete Versions

Most Wagner albums that are not complete versions represent three types of contents:

- Overtures of his dramatic works
- Bits of his dramatic works (that at times have the effrontery to call themselves ‘arias’)
- Non-dramatic pieces of Wagner

No doubt the third type are highly recommended, while the first two types are best not bought, since their audition gives us a ‘musical’ or ‘operatic’ version of Wagner that will in no way later help us to approach the dramatic works as such. We must break with the idea, of operatic origin, that the plays of Wagner are a fabulous overture, sublime bits of arias, duos, choirs, etcetera and long intermediate recitatives. Whoever sees Wagner’s plays like this would do better to dedicate themselves to Rossini and leave Wagner alone and in peace. One must go to the complete versions, if possible on DVD and not on Video, leaving the mere ‘audition’ only for cases in which the previous two possibilities have already taken place or are absolutely impossible.
It is precisely because of the need to ‘assist’ at a dramatic performance that can last for several hours that we are analysing how to ‘approach’ this performance without falling into mistakes that make the dramas ‘boring’ or ‘incomprehensible’.

If we go to a dramatic theatrical performance where the text is in German, we would surely have serious problems for the spectacle to interest us. The Wagnerian dramas are theatrical works in two idioms: the musical, which can be understood by everyone, and the poetic idiom in German, which we must therefore understand before entering into the performance.

Both languages complement each other and are interwoven into each other, so that they cannot be treated separately or understood one without the other. The mere partial audition of a Wagnerian play is ‘just music’, which does not mean it is not marvellous and recommended for hearing, but that with that audition we do not enter into the Wagnerian opera but into its music only. As the mere reading of the text is the reading of an incomplete theatrical play, and thereby lacks the sensible message of the music.

When we recommend reading the text before the performance, and not, instead, listening to the music beforehand, it is because the music is a universal language that we will understand directly in the performance, while the text and the explanations of the text and its scenes cannot be understood within the performance. Even understanding German very well, it is often difficult to understand the entire sung text, and in any case the reading of the scene and commentaries about the work would be, in any case, always necessary.

Another question is that in starting with Wagner it is best to begin with dramatic productions from his middle period, not from his initial or final periods. It would be convenient to begin with Tannhäuser or Lohengrin, to continue with the Mastersingers, and only after this preparation to approach works such as The Ring of the Nibelungen, Parsifal and Tristan and Isolde.

**DVD: Both Sides of a Fabulous Breakthrough**

The appearance of the DVD has allowed two gigantic advances in the possibilities for attending a Wagnerian work at home: A high-quality audition and the possibility of sub-titles in Spanish during the performance. These two possibilities make the use of the DVD for the initiation into Wagner more than advisable.

Unfortunately there is a very grave problem: If encouraged by these words we go to a store specialising in classical music and we look in the section for music DVDs, we will find quite a variety of versions of Wagnerian music dramas. If by chance we choose the one we want to see, it is probable that we will be disgusted
to find an infamous version of the work, that will have NOTHING to do with Wagnerian drama.

The great evil of our day is that Wagnerian performances consist of three aspects: Music, poem-voice and theatric performance. If almost every version is adequate in the aspects of orchestra and voice, on the other hand the most complete chaos reigns in the theatrical performance, with magnificent versions next to versions we can only catalogue as criminal. Not bad, not abysmal, but much worse, they are neurotic, authentic madness, damage so absolute to the works that these versions cannot be considered as Wagner’s operas, but as authentic anti-Wagnerian plays that attempt to destroy everything that Wagner wanted to do.

Hence it is indispensable to buy only the versions whose performances are correct, or at least acceptably correct. And this is a great difficulty for some works. It is of interest to know which versions of each dramatic work can really be bought. We can currently recommend:

1975: ‘Der Fliegende Hollander’.
• Director: Wolfgang Sawallisch. Stage design: Gerd Krauss and Herbert Strabel. Singers: Donald McIntire, Catarina Ligendza, Bengt Rundgren, Hermann Winkler, Ruth Hesse, Herald Egk. Duration: 157 minutes. A correct version made cinematographically, not for commercial sale and has been performed for TV several times.


1990 ‘Lohengrin’.


1984: “Die meistersinger von Nürnberg”.


1993: “Parsifal”.

The Wagnerian theatrical performance
Attending Bayreuth is currently one of the best ways of having to endure, almost certainly, the worst performances of Wagner in the world. So after eliminating the possibility of Bayreuth as the most appropriate, Bayreuth, the Temple of Wagner, is now converted into a Machiavellian laboratory of Mephistopheles, an alchemy that claims to convert the Wagnerian gold into genetically modified fodder, and the only way to assist at Wagnerian performances in theatres is to make oneself very aware of where and when the few correct versions are given in the world. Abandoning any hope for the Lyceum of Barcelona, now in the hands of Alberic, one must travel and have truthful information about the performances that are worth the trouble. Vienna, Budapest, New York, Wels, Seattle, Liège, Bilbao… are cities where there have been good performances, without any guarantee that every performance offered in them is good. Hence it is very advisable to subscribe to magazines of a Wagnerian Association that supports good performances and combats current barbarities. In this sense Wagnerian Associations have a vital importance nowadays, and must be the ones to inform the public without being in the pay of anyone, and least of all the official mafias, handpicked mafias that dominate the orientation of the theatres funded by the State. The Associations must provide good performances, the meaning of those performances, the relevant data and profound knowledge of Wagnerian texts, the entire milieu of the work of art of the future, not only Wagner but the entire work of so many composers and artists who labour to elevate the human person through Art. Within this work it is absolutely important to read the 20th issue of ‘Wagneriana” magazine in Catalan, from the Associació Wagneriana of Barcelona: “Against the current artistic dictatorship… We call it dictatorship!” and “Stage Directors: Artists or provocateurs?” (also edited in Catalan), where we can read dozens of authorised commentaries about the need for correct performance and for criticisms against the absurdities, in some cases almost criminal, in the present performances in many places. (Translator’s note: Click and view http://www.associaciowagneriana.com/es/. Website is in Spanish and Catalan.)

Wagnerianism

Finally, if after attending the music dramas of Wagner, live or by DVD, if after reading the texts we have indicated, if after all this there is in us the idea that the Path of Wagner is something more than ‘music’, or more than a distraction or an artistic taste, something more than a given point in the history of music, much more than a few hours dedicated to art, but which is instead a personal Path of
Redemption to improve oneself and to reach that Great Style, then and only then, is it good to decide to be Wagnerian. It is advisable to read, for example:


Wagnerianism is not an ‘affiliation’, a mania or a personal hobby, does not mainly consist in knowing the life of Wagner in depth or the details about his works, although that is necessary, but is about deepening oneself in the ultimate attempts of Man to raise himself up, to achieve a consciousness superior to pleasure, superior to a useful life, to mere existence in order to be ‘happy’, to the egotism of ‘my family and my money’, but is instead the ultimate effort of the Absolute Individual to reach their greatest possible sensuous, artistic, human and spiritual development.

Part Two: 1848: Ghibelline thought in the work of Wagner

In 1848 Wagner writes the first draft of the Ring, in his first title ‘The Death of Siegfried’, written shortly before he finished with Lohengrin (1845 - 1848) where he already took up the theme of the Grail and situated the action in Brabant, and in this same year he completed a sketch of a work he did not finish: ‘Frederick I Barbarossa’. A few years later the sketch of Parsifal began, although then he left it for many years uncompleted…. but thus said, everything seems simply a series of disconnected facts, or with no more connection than being works of Wagner. And yet there is a close relationship between these facts, a relationship that is very little known and truly surprising, concerning which we would have no proofs or be able to convince the reader, too often accustomed to extravagant connections and conclusions having no more basis than the desire of the scholar for originality, if it were not that Wagner himself has left us the key to his inner continuity in a letter of that same date, entitled ‘The Wibelungen’, in the summer of 1848.

In that year and the previous ones, Wagner was devoted to the study of themes related to German mythology: “I sought to be a master of this topic”, not a scientific expert but to be sufficiently imbued with the spirit of the ancient Germans. The conclusions of his studies are described in this text, which is not a text of history but of emotion, a personal interpretation of the knowledge of the Germanic peoples. The conclusions Wagner takes away from this are surprising and explain many things about the genesis of these four works at their inception. Of course we must not forget that in 1854 Wagner discovers Schopenhauer and that at that same date he will write “Opera and Drama”, in which his thought comes into focus and he definitively analyses the why of drama and the use of plot; he
encounters the motive and final direction for his Dramas, and everything will shift away from the use of historical drama and mythology as he saw it in 1848. Now nothing will be the same and the Ring or Parsifal will no longer be a theme oriented by the same thought as he had in 1848. But we return to 1848 and the conclusions of Wagner in that moment, concerning his readings and his work to conceive the global drama that we will call ‘Ghibelline’ and that led him to conceive in their mythological essence four ideas as diverse as: Lohengrin, The Ring of the Nibelungen, Frederick I Barbarossa and Parsifal. What is important is not the reality of the legends and their meaning, but that for Wagner this was revealed as a mystic poetic reality, as an essential and ideal reality that inspired a part of his work.

The Primitive Kingship

The central idea in Wagner’s text is the study of the roots of a ‘first-born royalty’, finding the traces of that idea of ‘king’ as the leader, both political and religious, of a Clan, a lineage, the Priest-King, with the feeling of shared identity linked to a lineage and to Nature herself. This emotion that is found in the Indo-European peoples of the Asian Caucasus, from whence the German-Aryan clans emigrate to Europe. And among those clans are the Franks, located in what is now Belgium, “where under the name of Wibelinen, a primitive kingdom raised its claims to aspire to the Empire of the world.” The leaders of that town always came from the same family or lineage. The history-legend reminds us how this lineage descends to the mythic-historic leader Chlodio, who defeats the Romans and generates the great idea of the Empire of ‘Nibergau’ (the Land of Mists, literally), there in the Frankish lands, north of present-day France.

The Nibelungen

For Wagner the legend is the reflection of a previous reality sublimated in popular poetry. Within the great clusters of primitive legends there is always an earlier Idea and then its incarnation in a reality, that when sublimated produces the legend. The earlier idea in this case, the primitive one, is the solar struggle, the Sun, the combat of the solar against the Dragon, against the Cave, the Night. The eternal and cyclic struggle of life and death. Similar to the idea in Greek mythology of the fight between Apollo (God of the Sun) and the Python snake. And this incarnates in the hero, in a Siegfried, a Chlodio, in ‘‘a lineage of heroes, the Welsa… or the Wibeline… Nibelungen, the dwellers of the Mists… When the Wibeline defeat the Romans, the Dragon, they take their treasure and aspire to dominate the world that belongs to them in the same way that it belonged to Siegfried. The Franks,
Nibelungen people, are for Wagner already the Nibelungen, in that they have become conscious of their Ideal Treasure and their Destiny, and are leading the German ‘Alemanni’, Bavarians, Thuringians, Saxons… because the Franks eliminate their royal families and make them into dependencies. This is the lineage that descends to Charlemagne. In Nordic myth Wagner also finds Nifelheim, the Land of Mists, and reference to the Niflungar, the Nibelungen, but there converted into children of the mists, miners and sons of the Soil.

The treasure of the Nibelungen and the Frankish royal lineage

On defeating the Dragon, the Romans, the empire ‘of another lineage’, of the darkness, Chlodio takes the Treasure, perhaps the Roman Imperial Standards, not so much in their physical as in their spiritual value. Legend has it that when Chlodio died his children, except one even younger, were left in the care of his cousin Merwig, of the Merwegau clan, linked logically by blood with Chlodio and the royal Wibelinen lineage. This cousin kills Chlodio’s children and succeeds him, appropriating the Treasure, and this is the origin of the name of the Merovingians. But a son of Chlodio survives, and upheld by the people this son will return in his lineage as the ‘Pepins’ (popular name of endearment given to them by the people, since their triumph was due to popular support), thus becoming the first-born root that will descend to Charlemagne. Wagner reminds us that in one of the legends of the Nibelungen, Siegfried de Morungen (of Merwegau, the Merovingian lineage), when he conquers the Treasure of the Nibelungen, refuses to share it with the children of the Nibelungen as he had promised and keeps it instead. Be that as it may, we come to a primitive root stock, the Wibelins, the Nibelungen, keepers of the Ideal Treasure, confident in their rights over the world, heroes and imperial princes, who establish that feeling as that of Charlemagne’s empire, together with the Avar Treasure of Charlemagne, famous in his time. Wagner devotes a chapter to explain how in Frankish legends a Trojan origin is claimed for the Frankish clan, considered to be continuators of Priam, in an attempt to record the distant, oriental origin of the first-stage Sacred City of the Clan. At every moment the Carolingian lineage feel themselves to be the blood ‘descendants’ of that ideal primitive Soil.

The Welfs or Guelphs and the Nibelungen or Ghibellines

Wagner finds a Germanic legend about the ‘Welfe’ lineage, name that means ‘fed by the mother’, by the mother wolves, and that in itself means ‘son of a true mother’. This Swabian clan refuses to accept the royal investiture at the hands of the Frankish lineage of Charlemagne, thus refusing to accept their dependence.
This is the rebellion against the Nibelungen, against the Imperium. When later, already in historic times, the Empire arrived on the Italian lands, as we shall see, with the Italians pronouncing the German names in the form in which they have come down into our current language: Welfe replaced with Guelphs, Wibellnen with Ghibellines. Words with meanings similar to those of the legend, but with connotations that we shall see later when we understand how the initial Frankish legend and the ideal Carolingian Empire evolved historically, whose Nibelungen origin Wagner has come to base on his studies in the Frankish and Germanic legends.

The Ghibelline Empire and Frederick I Barbarossa

The appearance of German lineages that led a moral and physical resurgence against the Carolingians begins with Conrad of Franconia, and is carried through with blood marriages into the Carolingian lineage, until Otto I achieved the ‘unitary’ conquest of the German clans. Emperor Conrad II the Salian, of Carolingian lineage, and Lothar of Saxony cause the Carolingian, Ghibelline, Nibelungen dramatic role to pass into the Saxon and other German lineages, creating the desire to continue the Carolingian Imperium. From the beginning the Nibelungen descendants, now the Germans, have a ‘Roman’ aspiration, at every moment attempting to serve that (Holy) German Roman Empire…. Spiritual-Imperial, Church-State at the same time. Frederick I is directly descended from the Nibelungen Saga, from those first-born royal lineages with imperial aspirations in the Ghibelline-Nibelungen sense. They carry the idea of the primitive royalty in their blood: the Priest-King. The Pope must be the first official of the Empire, a delegate of the Priest-King in matters of Cult, that Supreme Priest who already existed in the Ancient Roman Empire, but always in the service of the God-Emperor.

The life of Frederick I was always a struggle for this ideal: First he had to conquer or make a pact with the German Guelphs, advocates of independence, isolationists, and thereby unite Germany. Then dominate the neighbouring peoples that threatened the Empire, the Hungarians, Poles and Danes. Achieving all this, he was strong enough to address his two main problems: First integrate the Church of Rome into the Empire, and second gain the Treasure, the Myth, achieve what could be expected in order to defeat the Dragon again and regain the Myth of the Nibelungen, so that his Empire was once again the ideal first-born of the Wibelinen…. the Quest of the Priest-King, this time converted into the Grail Kingdom. Against Frederick I there were three enemies:
• The German Guelphs, those who saw in the Empire the succession of Franco-Carolingian rule, and therefore an attack on their extreme individualism. Whether defeated or integrated, there were always small Guelph revolts in Germany.

• The Church of Rome, which tried to achieve the same goal as Frederick I but the other way around, without Political or ethnic-national sense: to achieve the power of the Supreme Priest over the imperial power. And their principal weapon: excommunication and fomenting rebellion against the excommunicated Emperor. Frederick achieved mighty victories and influence in Rome over the Papal power, but was never able to convince the Papacy of its imperial destiny.

• The Italian Lombard Guelphs, with Milan at their head, opposed the Empire with their tradition of ‘cities’ apart from natural Clan and Caste. Independent cities, without tradition of Empire, unity and common destiny. Extreme Individualism is always the enemy of the Imperium, the power that wants to be too personal, detached from the Ethical Community, from the Natural sense that belongs to the Carolingian-Nibelungen lineage given as something settled in legend and the past, by divine right. Wagner sees in Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa the great continuator of the first-born lineages united to legend, with consciousness of Legend, and a sacred destiny that is not merely temporal, material. The military defeat of Frederick by the Lombard League meant a setback in the Italian adventure of the Emperor, but not his final defeat or the loss of any great part of his power.

The ideal meaning of the absorption of the Nibelungen Treasure into the Grail

For Wagner once the Carolingian Treasure disappeared in its ‘physical’ historical aspect, the Empire comes to seek that Ideal Treasure that must be Nibelungen, must be the Hero. The Treasure incarnates in the idea of the Grail, the idea of a first-born Kingdom located there in the Orient (in reality when Wagner later located it in Moslem Spain, he still followed that idea of ‘Orient’ but made it close and accessible to the Franco-German knights of the Grail), where a Priest-King, Amfortas, reigns in peace and perfection, and is the perfect Empire, with the Grail, the Ideal Treasure. A Treasure that has now been lost and was in the hands of the Dragon of Islam, that slept on the Treasure in the Holy Land. Among those legends Wagner finds the one of the Knight of the Grail that, after causing great prodigies, disappears when they ask for its origin and lineage. And that must happen, is the logical thing, in the land of the Nibelungen, in Brabant where the cradle of the Carolingian lineage was… this is the connection with Lohengrin. Actually Henry I the Fowler is one of the ancestors of that Nibelungen-Wilbeinen lineage that culminates in Frederick I. Frederick I reunited the entire Empire in
Mainz, made a pact of peace with the Lombards and forgives them for their rebellion, reconciles with the Guelphs and attempts to convert Rome to his ideal plan: the Crusade of the Grail, the conquest of the Nibelungen Treasure. With this he intends to fulfil his Nibelungen destiny, to be the Priest-King, to kill the Dragon and to have the Treasure, the Grail that will give him power in Rome as well. He gathers a tremendous army, defeats the Islamics in Asia and when he is at the point of achieving his goal... he drowns in a river ... his body is never found and the legend of the Grail expands throughout Europe with the telling of a series of Grail legends.

The End of the Nibelungen lineage

The lineage continues with the great Emperor Frederick II, but then suddenly dies, or rather is exterminated, ends as a lineage, on the execution in Naples of Conrad, the ultimate descendant of this lineage, at sixteen years of age, at the hands of Charles of Anjou, a Capet who, as Wagner very well indicates, is the prototype of the new monarchies already completely removed from the first-born root, the non-Carolingian monarchies, the monarchies of temporal power without desire, root or will superior to the material. The Capetians, come from nothing, without ancestors, without lineage, without the thread of Tradition, without the Ideal Treasure, seek only Property, power, money. The Ideal Treasure becomes Personal Property. In this way, Wagner connects us with his Ideal of the Nibelungen lineage, far beyond the Ring, as a network of relationships that begins with the Nibelungen, continues with the Ghibelline Frederick I and ends in the Grail of Lohengrin and Parsifal, the Priest-King in the Ideal Kingdom. A text of Wagner really little known and that gives us as his own conclusion that the Ideal Treasure is henceforth and forever only in the hands of poets and troubadours, of sensitive art... in the song of Richard Wagner.