

**THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA: AN  
ATTEMPT TO INSPIRE A BETTER  
APPRECIATION OF WAGNER  
AS A DRAMATIC POET**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649730698

The Wagnerian Drama: An Attempt to Inspire a Better Appreciation of Wagner as a Dramatic Poet by Houston Stewart Chamberlain

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN**

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AS A DRAMATIC POET**



**THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA**

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

THE FOUNDATIONS OF  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

IMMANUEL KANT  
A STUDY AND A COMPARISON WITH  
GOETHE, LEONARDO DA VINCI,  
BRUNO, PLATO AND DESCARTES

# THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA

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WAGNER AS A  
DRAMATIC POET. BY  
HOUSTON STEWART  
CHAMBERLAIN ⌘



Stanford University

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD W.  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY MCMXV

MF '78

ML 410

W13.C442

AMSC

239579

Y9A80J 080754:13

WILLIAM BRINDON AND SON, LTD., PRINTERS, PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND



## INTRODUCTION

THE object of this little work is at the same time definite and circumscribed.

Wagner was throughout, from his childhood days in fact, a dramatic poet: to awaken in the reader's mind a real and intelligent recognition of this fact is the object of the following, for this recognition is the first and essentially important step towards the understanding of Wagner as an artist and the true comprehension of his artistic achievements.

To depreciate Wagner the Musician in favour of Wagner the Word-Poet would, to be sure, be more than attempting a paradox; but what must be understood is that the musical invention is in his case controlled by the poetical creation. As Wagner has himself explained, Music is the "feminine element," and as such, though not of lesser significance, it is none the less subservient to the masculine

element. How this is to be understood, it is the intention of the author to demonstrate.

Nowhere is the strict unity of purpose, which so singularly serves to render lucid and complete the general aspect of Wagner's life, more compellingly evident than in his art-works. If we leave out of our consideration a few superficial accidents, they will indeed appear to us as a single sequence. To prove this fact is the first step to be taken, after which we shall proceed to a consideration of the individual works in the light of this realisation. This consideration will, however, be confined to the dramatic kernel as well to the clear recognition of the fact, that in the new drama the conception of the dramatic factor is also a new one.

We shall see that Wagner took as his starting-point the drama, and that he never had any other object but the drama in view, that he only made use of Opera because he needed a musical and scenic apparatus for the realisation of his dramatic intentions and thought, for a time at least, that Opera would afford him this, and finally, that the development of his own intuitive creation at last

brought him the realisation that the point at issue was an entirely new art and with it the revelation of its fundamental principles. A consideration of these fundamental principles will conclusively prove that this achievement signifies not a reform, but a new-birth, that is to say, that the works of the first not fully conscious period can only be properly appreciated from the vantage-point of the period when consciousness was attained, as they form but rungs in the ladder reaching to consciousness of that which was already, though unconsciously, existing.

After this I shall shortly consider the works of the first period and show that they are dramas, but that their appreciation as such is impeded, partly through their operatic form, partly through certain deviations in the application of the various means of expression. For the works of the period of fully conscious creation in a new form of art a more detailed consideration will be necessary ; but here also I shall concentrate my attention only on the dramatic poet, and shall attempt to prove that Wagner with his new art-works was able and forced to wander in new paths, and that he