

A Consideration of the Educational and Illuminative Function of the Actor in Richard Wagner's Essay *On the Actor and Singer*

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Abstract

This paper addresses the essay *On the Actor and Singer* (*Über Schauspieler und Sänger*) (1872) by Richard Wagner, the nineteenth-century German composer, and investigates his views on the national educational and illuminative function of the actor. Conventional research has not regarded how Wagner valued, from a viewpoint of cultural nationalism, the actor's important abilities and function. Wagner realized the actor's cooperativity and artistry in German theater, and recognized him not only as a mere medium between artwork and audience, but also as a teacher who has a didactic effect on the audience. In his relationships with actors, Wagner paid attention especially to their acting capabilities and recitation techniques. From the viewpoint of theater history and artistic discussions of the nineteenth century, this paper discusses how Wagner also emphasized the actor's function and educational effect as a teacher as entailing an advanced acting technique and performance. Furthermore, in the context of Hegel's aesthetics and Schopenhauer's philosophy, Wagner considered how actors' "self-abandonment" realized a high order of art and didactic effect. We can see here a new image of the actor, built by Wagner in his conception of total art, as a public person who connected to the actor's mechanical function in the dramatic staging of the age of the "director's theater" (Regietheater) of the avant-garde.

Keywords: Wagner, modern German theater, actor, education, national theater

Introduction

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the eighteenth-century German dramatist, in his *Letters Concerning the Latest Literature Letters* (*Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend*, 1759–1765), described the situation of German theater in those days as follows:

We don't have a theater. We don't have any actors. We don't have any audience.

(Wir haben kein Thater. Wir haben keine Schauspieler. Wir haben keine Zuhörer.)¹⁾

In German theater from the first half of the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century, touring companies (Wandertruppe) travelled for periodic or Christmas markets in different cities and performed in temporary poor stalls (Bude)²⁾. Since there was no permanent theater in Germany,

actors were constantly on the move and had unsettled lives, and so they made their livings by touring between cities. The social standing of the acting groups, which consisted of lower classes of people, such as unskilled laborers or nomads, was very low. Indeed, actors and actresses had been under pressure from and suppressed by the church from the Middle Ages onward³⁾. This was especially clear in an eighteenth-century episode in which Caroline Friederike Neuber (1697–1760), the principle of a troupe well-known for excelling in its art, died. The church did not accept the civil rights of the actors, who were longtime adversaries of theirs, and refused to allow the burial of this famous actress' ashes during the daytime. The acting troupes were recognized as non-citizen outsiders.



Caroline Friederike Neuber
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In comparison to German theater culture, the situation in France had been much more advanced since the beginning of the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth century, in which the theater was incorporated into French cultural policies. Cardinal Richelieu, King Louis XIII's chief clergyman and a theater lover, institutionalized the regulation of theater and actively developed theater controls⁴⁾. In particular, classical tragedy was emphasized as an important genre that served a king's glory, and was performed on a grand scale for the purpose of deifying sovereignty. After Louis XIII's Imperial edict forbade all unscrupulous behavior by actors and actresses⁵⁾, their professionalization progressed, and they came to form stable theatrical companies around leading star actors⁶⁾. While a famous aristocratic actor, Floridor, appeared in French theater history and led a company at the Hôtel de Bourgogne⁷⁾, the actress was established as the first female profession in France⁸⁾. The theaters in Paris, which were often visited by the royalty and aristocracy, changed into places for an upper-class public society with delicate and refined tastes. Under the government's protection of theater, the Comédie-Française was founded in 1680, and early modern French theater was organized.

In order to keep up with the advancement of theater in modern France, a theater reform movement formed in Germany. Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766), a professor at Leipzig University and author, inter alios, greatly contributed to the development of German theater and to improvement in the status of actors. To improve the people's taste, he began a theater reform in collaboration with Mrs. Neuber modeled on French neoclassicism. In 1736, after they banished the clown "Hanswurst," a popular idol, from German theater, they used their influence to purify theatrical language and refine dramatic works. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the national

actor August Wilhelm Iffland (1759–1814), the first German actor from a sophisticated and educated class of citizens, appeared in German theater and contributed to the actor's and actress' advancement in social status⁹⁾. As the actor's professional specialization developed, it became required for leading actors to possess artistic skill, and many advocated for an actor training school based on the model of the French academy. In the context of promoting nationalism, the national and cultural contribution of theater to the people was regarded as important. Starting with the large city of Hamburg, the foundation and management of national theater began in various cities, so the role of the theater was expanded into a nationally illuminative and morally edifying organization.

Under such circumstances for theater culture, some actors appeared who contracted with city theaters, changing from a traveling lifestyle to a settled one, and succeeded in being assimilated into civil society. For example, Karl von Holtei (1798–1880), an esteemed actor of the nineteenth century, did not belong to a troupe of traveling entertainers, and in his diary spelled out his yearning for the life of touring actors¹⁰⁾. Moreover, Goethe, who was manager and director of the Weimar Royal Court Theater, wrote a guidebook called *Rules for Actors* (*Regeln für Schauspieler*, 1803) for the actors contracted with his theater, which taught them social behavior and performance manners. In this book, Goethe urged actors to behave morally in their private lives and to observe their discipline at all times. For instance:



August Wilhelm Iffland
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The actor should also consider in everyday life, that he will be seen as a public art show.

(Der Schauspieler soll auch im gemeinen Leben bedenken, daß er öffentlich zur Kunstschau stehen werde.)¹¹⁾

The severe management of such discipline and rules for actors strengthened actors' new figure as public characters. The result of the enlargement and deepening of the national and cultural relationship between theater and civil society throughout the nineteenth century was the improvement of the actors' social standing and expansion of their sociocultural influence.

On the basis of such circumstances and the change in the actor's image in the modern German-speaking theatrical world, this paper addresses the essay *On the Actor and Singer* (*Über Schauspieler und Sänger*, 1872)¹²⁾ by Richard Wagner (1813–1883), the nineteenth-century German composer, and investigates his views on the national educational and illuminative function of the actor. Regarding

this theme, there are studies of Hans Hey (1911)¹³⁾, concerning Wagner's literary reading technique, and of the musicologist Martin Knust (2007)¹⁴⁾, considering the relation of Wagner to actors and their performance techniques of declamation and recitation. However, these conventional studies have not regarded how Wagner valued, from a viewpoint of cultural nationalism, the actor's important abilities and function. Wagner realized the actor's cooperativity and artistry in German theater, and recognized him not only as a mere medium between artwork and audience, but also as a teacher who has a didactic effect on the audience.

Considering the relation between Wagner and the actor, this paper investigates how he paid attention especially to their acting capabilities and recitation techniques. Then, from the viewpoint of theater history and artistic discussions of the nineteenth century, it discusses how Wagner also emphasized the actor's function and educational effect as a teacher as entailing an advanced acting technique and performance. Furthermore, in the context of Hegel's aesthetics and Schopenhauer's philosophy, Wagner considered how actors' "self-abandonment" realized a high order of art and didactic effect. Also, a new image of the actor built by Wagner in his conception of total art, as a public person, will be analyzed, in order to examine its meaning for dramatic staging in the age of the "director's theater" (Regietheater) at the end of the nineteenth century.

1. Wagner and Actors

Wagner discussed the actor's function in his essay *On the Actor and Singer* written in 1872 as following:

Strictly speaking, we have seen from this that the real share of the **art** of theatricals performances must be awarded only to actors, [...]

(Genau betrachtet müssen wir hieraus erkennen, dass der eigentliche **Kunstanteil** bei Thateraufführungen lediglich den Darstellern zugesprochen werden muß, [...], GSD IX 193)

However, based on the function of the author as a creator of an artwork in its performance, Wagner recognized the actor as a substantial person who embodies the author's artistic will, and as a sensuous transmitter of artistic ideals. For this reason, Wagner's high evaluation of the actor's artistic contribution as an expressive performer, it is necessary to consider his deep understanding of the actor's vocation.

First of all, Wagner, a representative composer of the nineteenth century, was born and grew up in a family with a profound knowledge of art. He was always in close contact with actors. Ludwig Geyer

(1779–1821), an actor and dramatist, was the adoptive father of Wagner, who had lost his father in childhood. Geyer played an active part in Leipzig theater and in the Royal Court Theater of Dresden, and was known as a character actor¹⁵⁾. Moreover, Wagner's oldest brother, Albert Wagner (1799–1874), chose not to study medicine, but theater in Breslau, and not only worked as a singer and actor at the Municipal Theater of Würzburg, but also showed talent as a theater director. Wagner also appreciated Albert's talent as a dramatic singer¹⁶⁾. Moreover, Wagner's oldest sister, Rosalie Wagner (1803–1837), was a famous actress and singer at the Royal Court Theater of Dresden as well. She demonstrated her outstanding talent in dramatic recitation, and was admired by Heinrich Laube (1806–1884), who was known for having a severely critical eye for it¹⁷⁾. Wagner's second elder sister, Luise Wagner (1805–1872), also chose an actress' career. Additionally, it is well known that Wagner's first wife, Minna Wagner (1809–1866), was a star actress at the Municipal Theater of Magdeburg.



Rosalie Wagner
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Wagner was not only always in contact with the actors in his family, playing active parts in the different theaters throughout the big city. But during his childhood and youth in Dresden, Wagner developed his fine appreciation for polished acting and declamation technique while attending performances by prominent actors. Take, for instance, Wagner's admiration late in life for the declamation technique of Sophie Schröder (1781–1868)¹⁸⁾. She was well known as a national actress of Germany and Austria, and played an active part in the theater of Hamburg and the Burgtheater of Vienna. In *On the Actor and Singer*, Wagner regards Schröder as a highly talented actress who contributed to the foundation of German theater, alongside the famous German actor Ludwig Devrient (1784–1832) (GSD IX 196). Moreover, Wagner recalled in his essay *A Message to My Friends (Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde, 1851)* a singer and actress named Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient (1804–1860), who was the wife of Wagner's friend Eduard (Phillip) Devrient (1801–1877), also an actor and manager of the Royal Court Theater of Karlsruhe. Wagner called this actress "the entire dramatist" (durchaus Dramatikerin, GSD IV



Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient
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341) and “this gifted genius” (diese geniale Natur, GSD IV 340). She played the major role of Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*, 1840), a contribution that Wagner gave a rave review: “She completed this role with gifted creativity, and her performance saved this work from complete incomprehension by the audience” ([Sie] gab diese Rolle mit so genial schöpferischer Vollendung, daß ihre Leistung allein diese Oper vor völligem Unverständnis von Seiten des Publikums rettete. GSD IV 341). It must be noticed that when Wagner appreciated an actor or actress, he not only how evaluated them practically, based on their theatrical skills or recitation and singing ability, but also how he respected the actor’s abilities to represent a work’s artistic will and their competence in using the medium to emotionally engage viewers. He also showed his appreciation for the actor’s achievements in expressing the high spirit and universality of a work. On this point, Wagner placed value on an actor’s talent and technical capabilities not only from a theater director’s viewpoint, like Laube, but also from a philosophical and aesthetic viewpoint, since he recognized the actor’s high artistic nature.

2. The Relation between Actor’s Technique and their Role as Teacher

While Wagner valued some actors’ excellent skill and artistry, he also considered the general public’s low evaluation of the actor’s social standing. This is also described in *On the Actor and Singer*:

In spite of the ever increasing expansion of the theater system in Germany, the observation of the actor’s social position from the viewpoint of the bourgeois world is always associated with rejection and philistine disbelief, while their tendency to mingle and earn an actor’s friendship would have placed oneself only in the doubtful group of a certain kind of un-bourgeois society.

(Trotz der immer wachsenden Verbreitung des Theaterwesens über Deutschland, bleibt die Beobachtung des Schauspielerstandes von Seiten der bürgerlichen Welt immer nur mit Kopfschütteln und philisterhafter Verwunderung begleitet, während die Neigung, in seinen Umgang sich zu mischen, nur gewissen frivolen Kreisen der unbürgerlichen Gesellschaft zu eigen ist. GSD IX 206)

The nineteenth-century philosopher G.W.F. Hegel analyzed the social standing of the actor in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 1835), in which he considers the high order spiritualism of actors who express a community pathos in the performance of tragedy, and recognizes them as artists. Hegel says, “Today, people call actors artists and pay them all the honor of an

artistic profession; to be an actor today is in our feeling neither a moral nor social defect." (Man heißt jetzt die Schauspieler Künstler und zollt ihnen die ganze Ehre eines künstlerischen Berufs; ein Schauspieler zu sein ist unserer heutigen Gesinnung nach weder ein moralischer noch ein gesellschaftlicher Makel. VA III 515)¹⁹⁾ Hegel found in the actor the industriousness, discipline, intellect, and patience characteristic of modernistic labor principles, and admired their professional nobility.

However, in contrast with such an affirmative evaluation of the actor in Hegel, a low evaluation of their professional status was also seen in Wagner's era. For example, the book *Theater System* (*Schauspielwesen*) was published anonymously by Wilhelm Hebenstreit in Vienna in 1843. The drama scholar Oskar Walzel emphasizes that this book is filled with prejudice and contempt for the social and professional status of the actor, and that it includes many misunderstandings of them²⁰⁾. Heinrich Theodor Röttscher (1803–1871), a drama critic in Berlin and Bomberg, wrote *The Art of Dramatic Performance* (*Die Kunst der dramatischen Darstellung*, 1841–46) out of antipathy toward the work of Hebenstreit²¹⁾. In this work, the Hegelian Röttscher affirmatively analyzes the actor's art from the viewpoint of the philosophy and aesthetics of Greece up to the modern age. In the same period, the successful experiences of actors were evident in Iffland becoming the first German actor awarded for his cultural contributions, and also in the fact that there were many actors from the educated class who played an active part in German theater. Indeed, it has been pointed out that certain famous actors belonged to the privileged class, were engaged with the noble Burgtheater, and received high pay²²⁾. Moreover, according to the theater historian Meike Wagner, in the theater reform movement after the March Revolution of 1848, theater gained the function of a modernistic public institution and took up the duties of civil society. The organization and governing and administrative structure of the theater management was reformed in order to realize political and economic transparency²³⁾. In this development of theater reform, not only did the salary and pension system for actors gradually change, for the better, into occupational social security, it also improved the actor's social standing. We can see here that, driven by the rapidly expanded theater culture, a significant deviation occurred between the conventionally and traditionally negative image of actors and actresses and the new aesthetic value given to them as people who embody the beauty of art.

However, according to Wagner, despite society's lingering negative views of the actor, a change took place in their social standing that truly revived theater. In his essay, Wagner examines the contrastive attempts of the famous actors Holtei and Devrient. On the one hand, Holtei searched for "natural talent" (Genie, GSD IX 208); however, as Wager emphasizes, this tendency, by which Holtei directed his comedy company, disappeared as theater was placed on the road to well-conducted civility (GSD IX 207f.). On the other hand, Wagner also analyzed Devrient's attempt to elevate theater

to a more civil level, since it had come under the noble influence of schools and education, and took this “grace” (Würde, GSD IX 207) into itself. In this attempt, Devrient developed his reform of modern German theater, along with a cultural principle based on civil society, and also aimed to assimilate actors into the public. However, Wagner did not completely express his sympathy for either attempt, nor those of the Burgtheater of Vienna, which was said to have united these two. In further argument, Wagner observed the actors in each situation; however, they were already regarded as “teacher[s]” (Lehrer, GSD IX 210), just as the writer was.



Karl von Holtei
(© Source: de.wikipedia.org)

If it may be only the writer or the actor itself, to whom the management of the theater was given over, the people always came from the opinion that here is something to teach and probably to learn too. Therefore, it becomes only a question of who should be a teacher, the actor or the writer?

(Mochte es nun der Literat, oder der Schauspieler selbst sein, welchem die Leitung des Theaters übergeben wurde, immer ging man von der Meinung aus, daß hier etwas zu lehren und wohl auch zu erlernen sei, demnach es sich einzig darum handelte, wer der Lehrer sein sollte, der Schauspieler oder der Literat? GSD IX 210)

Such a view of the actor as an educational figure could already be seen in the theatrical discourse of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. For example, Johann Friedrich Löwen (1727–1771), known for promoting the establishment of a national theater in Hamburg, and also a poet and theater theorist, advocated, in his *History of German Theater* (*Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 1766) for the promotion of German theater. According to him, a theater that has a purifying effect on the moral sense of the audience would be improved by comedians, and he insisted on the necessity of improvement in their social standing²⁴⁾. Löwen also found the public’s misunderstanding of and prejudice toward the actor as the cause of German theater’s



Eduard Devrient
(© Source: Stadtchronik Karlsruhe)

backwardness. He emphasized the illuminative function of the actor for the public, and with a quote from the French philosopher Denis Diderot, insisted that each nation's people should have their own theater.

Consider the idea of the moral theater of the Enlightenment. Wagner recognizes not only the writer as a creator of text, but also the actor as expressive of this text, with the ability to initiate the transmission of the educational effect of the theater. According to theater scholar Jens Roselt, since staging work did not have aesthetic importance in the first half of the nineteenth century, the praise and evaluation for a performed work before then was dependent on the text and actor²⁵⁾. It was after the end of the nineteenth century that staging work focused on and gave greater importance to the fantasy effect, as part of the trend of "the director's theater" (Regietheater), as represented by the directors Max Reinhardt (1873–1943), Adolphe Appia (1863–1926), or Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966), and so on. The film director Richard Blank analyses the avant-garde theater of such new producers' "collapsed modernization²⁶⁾." Wagner was concerned here not with the actor's private character or their sense of ethics, but with their traditional and modernistic mimetic technique that created a dramatic and educational effect. Wagner's serious consideration of the actor's techniques, can be connected to his quotation from an episode of Goethe's *Faust*, part I, in which a comedian skilled in rhetoric and declamation is referred to with following words: "a comedian may be able to teach a pastor" (ein Komödiant könnte einen Pfarrer lehren). As a reason for why both social positions could be reversed, Wagner emphasized the following:

If we understand the 'pastor' mentioned here as an entirely higher professional practitioner, who believes he must maintain the special authority of affectation emerging from this practice in speech and behavior, and, in contrast to it, if we understand the 'comedian' as one whose profession is to imitate the real natural man in his various characters and professional characteristics by disguising his voice and gestures, so it is very apparent that only the comedian can be the teacher here, and that the pastor probably has a lot to learn, so long as he is the same as his teacher. However, the contemptuous expression 'comedian' can but, strictly speaking, only speak to those who want themselves to appear interesting or particularly worthy by a misaligned behavior, and will then be holding as truth the person whom he pretends to be.

(Verstehen wir unter dem hier genannten, Pfarrer' alle einen höheren Beruf Ausübende, welche zur Behauptung der mit dieser Ausübung angetretenen besonderen Würde der Affektation im Reden und Benehmen sich hingegen zu müssen glauben, und unter ‚Komödiant‘ dagegen Denjenigen, welcher seinen Beruf darein setzt, durch verstellte Stimme und Gebärde den wirklichen natürlichen Menschen in seinen verschiedenen Charakter- und Berufseigenschaften

nachzuahmen, so wird es sehr ersichtlich, daß hier nur der Komödiant der Lehrer sein kann, und der Pfarrer vermutlich sehr viel zu lernen hat, ehe er seinem Lehrer gleich kommt. Der verächtliche Ausdruck ‚Komödiant‘ kann aber, genau genommen, nur Denjenigen bezeichnen, der durch ein verstelltes Benehmen sich selbst interessant oder besonders würdig erscheinen lassen will, indem er in Wahrheit für Den gehalten sein will, für den sich ausgiebt. GSD IX 217)

Wagner attributed the reversal between the pastor and comedian to the excellent rhetorical technique of the comedian. Here, treating them as professional equals, he suggests that an actor has an educational effect through his talent for imitational performance methods. Regarding Goethe's episode quoted here, it should be taken into consideration, from the viewpoint of theater history, that Goethe created the original recitation method called the Weimar system and taught it at his theater. For example, the philosopher Fichte was planning to train in the reading technique at the Weimar theater in order to improve his own skill at political speech²⁷⁾. This consideration of such recitation techniques can also be extended to the Burgtheater of Vienna, whose organization was based on the idea of the "national education" (Nationalbildung) of the Habsburg Empire, and half of whose audience, therefore, was aristocratic. Laube, the art director of this theater invited Hortei as an actor's "reading teacher" (Vortragslehrer), because he was known for his clear pronunciation²⁸⁾. Laube considered the theater to be a place of text, and among scenography and art, he gave priority to the effect of the auditory sense²⁹⁾. Moreover, in the middle of the eighteenth century, some educated actors already worked as aristocrats' private teachers, and so they had deepened relations with the aristocracy³⁰⁾. In addition, in the nineteenth century, the actor who had refined stage language and reading techniques was invited to be an instructor in the reading circles that were in fashion among aristocrats and citizens³¹⁾.

Considering the above-mentioned phenomena in theater culture, the role of the actor as a "teacher" could actually be understood, since they were visible in the big cities, where theater culture prospered. Parallel to the rise of the sociocultural demand for such actor's professional acting and reading techniques, it should be remembered that the institutionalization of theater progressed and that many advocated for the founding of an acting school in the nineteenth century. Along with Moritz Gottlieb Saphir (1840), Devrient (1840), Röscher (1845), Carl Gutzkow (1846), and so on³²⁾, Wagner, in his essay, *Letter on the Theater System to an Actor (Brief über das Schauspielwesen an einen Schauspieler, 1872)* also advocated for the founding of an acting school in which the actor himself should be the teacher (GSD IX 311). In this acting school, based on the Conservatoire of France, it would be ideal for the actor to teach systematic techniques for performing or for beautiful reading or recitation. This gravitation toward sophisticated acting methods reflected the new concept of the

acting school and influenced the establishment of the acting profession as a performing art. By sharing refined techniques with the common and cultural life or occupations of civil society, the emotional distance between citizens and actors gradually decreased.

3. Actor's Educational Function in their Transmission of Art

However, here it should be considered that Wagner's civil model called the actor a "teacher" not just because of his evaluation of the actor's superior technical skills, which Hegel praised as well, but because he respected the idea of beauty realized by an actor's mimetic aesthetic technique. This is also evident in *On the Actor and Singer*. Wagner says that a "didactic-poetic pathos" (didaktisch-poetische Pathos, GSD IX 228) formed in the text of great poets like Schiller, and can only be presented by an outstanding actor:

Here the ethical-didactic substance of the sentence was stripped of pathos, and brought to the recitation in a thoughtful way, after the included coloring of feeling. Only once Schiller's Ideal seems to have been entirely achieved, as the brilliant Sophie Schröder, in that substance, also found the transfiguring **musical** tone of the speech, by virtue of which the didactic core is dissolved again into the sphere of pure feeling, and therefore it itself became the passionate accent of the dramatist.

(Hier ward der ethisch-didaktische Gehalt der Sentenz vom Pathos abgestreift, und in verständiger Weise nach der ihm beizulegenden Färbung des Gefühles zum Vortrag gebracht. Nur einmal scheint das Schiller'sche Ideal durchaus erreicht worden zu sein, als die geniale Sophie Schröder für jenen Gehalt auch den verklärenden **musikalischen** Ton der Rede fand, vermöge dessen der didaktische Kern sich wiederum in die Sphäre des reinen Gefühles auflöste, und somit selbst zum leidenschaftlichen Accente des Dramatikers wurde. GSD IX 228)

Wagner explains here that after a poet's didactic proposition passes through the process of objectification, first as the removal of pathos by an actor, the actor's subjective sentiment again gives an ethical-didactic meaning to the essential substances. Here, the actor sensuously interconverts the text's essence and transmits it, in order to produce the spiritual and artistic onstage meaning.

Concerning this, we can refer to Hegel's aesthetics, which influenced Wagner philosophically. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel discussed acting techniques as one of the modern art genres, which developed in the relation between the two sides of the poet and actor. Hegel says, "The actor should bring, through declamation, facial expressions, and gestures, the poetic work into sensual appear-

ance” ([Der Schuspieler soll] durch Deklamation, Mienenspiel und Gebärden das poetische Werk zur sinnlichen Erscheinung bringen. VA III 512). According to his aesthetics, an aesthetic object is recognized by subjective affect as an object, and thereby the universal substances are transmitted. In the beauty that is captured by sensuous intuition and observation, essence and real existence are unified within each other. This spontaneous and free objective world is an aesthetic idea, and the actor has to realize this universality as truth using his own sensitivity. Hegel called this realization of ideal beauty “the idea of the sensuous appearance” (das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee, VA I 151). Hegel’s consideration of acting technique as enabling expression of free and infinite beauty is shares common ground with Wagner.

Furthermore, according to Hegel, “poetry is the human beings’ universal and extensive teacher, and is still so.” (So ist sie [d.h. Poesie] die allgemeinste und ausgebreiteteste Lehrerin des Menschengeschlechtes gewesen und ist es noch. VA III 240f.) Hegel recognizes a poetic work as the writer’s interior soul and as what builds the one objective world, and so the actor sensuously works toward the realization of the idea of the didactic work using his body. At the same time, while the formed sensuous phenomenon affects the audience’s inner intuition, they objectify it with their own understanding and receive the spirit and vitality of the essential substances. The illuminative or educational effect that such poetry includes is transmitted to the people through an actor’s aesthetic sensitivity. This sense of Hegel’s aesthetic considerations of modern acting methods has an affinity for Wagner’s view already quoted. Also, in Wagner, the universal and didactic substance that a poet’s creativity forms is embodied as one worldview by an actor’s sensuous artistic expression. Referring to Wagner’s total art theory, poetry, actor, and audience are unified in one organic connection, and form the whole of an artwork as one totality. In this total art, produced from the beauty on the stage, both the refinement of people’s taste and transmission of the cultural aesthetic education are realized.

Concerning this tendency of Wagner’s at the time, a parallel relationship should be considered in Friedrich Nietzsche, his friend, who then had a similarly positive view of actors. In his essay *The Dionysiac World View* (1870), Nietzsche considered the actor to have an important function, since he is a symbol of reality, not just a semblance, while audiences could immerse themselves in the feeling symbolized by the actor³³). Like Wagner, Nietzsche advocated the revival of German theater, which was modeled on classical Greek tragedy, and attempted to create a new image of the actor that embodied an idea of beauty. It can be supposed that their close relationship influenced each other’s positive view of the actor.

However, according to Wagner, for the realization of such beauty and education, “natural” technique is consistently required. This German “naturalness” is counterposed with the expressive form

of French “unnatural” (unnatürlich, GSD IX 215) or “naturalness” (Unnatur, GSD IX 222). We can see which words Wagner admired in, for example, “with natural tone” (mit natürlicher Ton, GSD IX 218) in describing an actor’s reading technique, or in other art genres, in “imitative-dramatical naturalness” (mimisch-dramatische Natürlichkeit, GSD IX 230), for describing poetic creation, or in “orchestra with such realistic nature” (Orchestra mit solch riaristischer Natürlichkeit, GSD IX 237), for describing an instrumental performance. Concerning “naturalness” in acting technique, we can consider an acting method that was dominant in the German-speaking sphere since the second half of the eighteenth century, and was taken up by different studies in psychology, anthropology, and physiognomy³⁴). Natural mimetic technique, developed in the eighteenth century, laid weight on a character’s realistic state of mind and body motion, and was widely accepted throughout the nineteenth century. The representative actor Iffland and Johann Jakob Engel (1741–1802), a famous theorist who created an original acting method, belonged to this theatrical trend. Wagner appreciated the harmonious beauty of this modernistic acting technique, which was distinct from the exaggerated one of the Baroque Period, and was modified for the lifestyles of civil society.

However, while Wagner affirmed this naturalistic means of performance, he viewed “virtuosity” negatively, as the opposite mode of representation that was characteristic of modern art. The virtuoso as an actor was known for pushing forward one’s own subjectivity and having an excellent use of acting technique that was varied in personality³⁵). Wagner was influenced by the view of the actor of Eduard Devrient, the theater reformer, who wrote in his essays *On Acting School* (*Ueber Theaterschule*, 1840) and *The National Theater of the New Germany* (*Das Nationaltheater des neuen Deutschland*, 1848) that he rejects the actor’s egoism, with which he asks for virtuosity³⁶), since the actor is not only the creator of art, but is himself an artwork³⁷). Also, it must be taken into consideration that this virtuosity had been critically discussed in Wagner’s era by the theater reformer Röscher, in the context of commercialism and modern technocentrism³⁸). Wagner, who similarly promoted theater reform, placed his confidence in the natural performance method that developed through German “natural talent” (Talent, GSD IX 203), rather than in “exaggerated” and “unnatural” acting methods. Indeed, Wagner recognized that the self-effacing and understated stage expression of the actor who stood face to face with civil social groups had the effect of moral edification of his culture.

Furthermore, while Wagner emphasized anthropological and psychological performance techniques after the second half of the eighteenth century, he assumed that “self-abandonment” (Selbstentäußerung, GSD IX 259) is concerned with the shift to an ideal worldview from the common life experience of an actor, following their entry into a new social standing. Regarding this term, Wagner discussed a similar term in his essay “Self-denial” (Selbstverleugnung, GSD IX 259),

in the context of Devrient's *History of German Acting* (*Geschichte der deutschen Schauspielkunst*, 1848–1874):

Ed. Devrient refers to this in his earlier book, already mentioned quite decorously, when he demands the genuine republican virtue of self-denial from the actor. / Basically, under a notable expansion of this talent is understood, here, to constitute the mimicry instinct itself, since it can be understood to me first, almost demonically, as a propensity for self-abandonment.

(Diesen bezeichnet Ed. Devrient in seinem früher bereits erwähnten Buche recht schicklich, wenn er von dem Schauspieler die ächt republikanische Tugend der Selbstverleugnung fordert. / Im Grunde ist hierunter eine bedeutende Erweiterung derjenigen Anlagen verstanden, welche den mimischen Trieb selbst ausmachen, da dieser zunächst mir als, fast dämonischer, Hang zur Selbstentäußerung zu verstehen ist. GSD IX 259)

The word “self-abandonment,” which appears repeatedly in Wagner's *On the Actor and Singer*, is reminiscent of the concept of “the abandonment of will” in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, which had deeply affected Wagner since the second half of the nineteenth century. In this pessimistic philosophy, by giving up the desire for life and egoism in the phenomenal world, people can achieve the truth of things or the recognition of worthy substances. For self-abandonment to construct a relationship with the phenomenal world, it must intend to move from a particular thing to the universe, that is to say, from the eliminated individual to the whole. Wagner adopted this ethical philosophy of Schopenhauer's, which rejects a selfish impulse in considering the relationship between the actor and artistic expression. By abandoning one's own “consciousness” (Bewußtsein, GSD IX 259, 260) through acting talent, the actor is assimilated into the essential character of a *dramatis personae*, in order to phenomenalize it onstage. Since the actor suppresses his individuality and volition in his “self-abandonment,” not only is he able to transmit the ethical-didactic essence of an artwork without any distortion, but also can he have a morally edifying effect on the modern theater audience, which also offers them civil and social dignity.

However, we should pay attention here to the fact that an actor who achieved “self-abandonment” was being incorporated, as a tool for living, into the educational institution called theater, and his individual, original work of interpretation may have been given up. The idea of an actor's rejection of his own individuality for the creation of art was ahead of the time, and anticipates the concept of avant-garde theater of Gordon Craig, who is known for his conceptualization of the actor's essential transformation into a marionette, which he describes in his essay *The Actor and the Über-Marionette* (1911). Craig states:

Do away with the actor, and you do away with the means by which a debased stage-realism is produced and flourishes. No longer would there be a living figure to confuse us into connecting actuality and art; no longer a living figure in which the weakness and tremors of the flesh were perceptible.³⁹⁾

Craig considered perfect control and management of actors' expressions, gestures, emotions, and detailed physical movements as necessary for the disappearance of their uncultivated taste and vulgar individuality in his theater productions, in order to reform and revive conventional theater. As the theater scholar Manfred Brauneck claims, it must be understood that this marionettization of the actor as a material for theater was Craig's fundamental criticism of all forms of suitable understanding pertaining to the traditional aesthetics of mimesis⁴⁰⁾. In the commercialistic tendency of the European theatrical world, which expanded from the end of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century, the stage production placed specific weight on the visual fantasy effect. It is reasonable to say that such an impulse towards the actor's unified and mechanical choreography involved the risk of exhibiting the actor's empty but aesthetic body, which was filled with the text. If the actor's mental and physical "self-abandonment" strengthened gradually, and at the same time separated from the original purpose of generalizing the essence of things, and was then altered into a function of the director's total theater, it should be taken into consideration that the actor's educational function of phenomenizing the didactic essence he had once borne, was also actually and gradually lost.

Conclusion

From the 1850s onward, Wagner conceived his theory of total art, in which he aimed to create art as a national and cultural festival. This was a new art form, in which all art—such as dancing, music, theater, and images—was organically synthesized, but also had the function of unifying people, religion, and state in order to form a national consciousness. Wagner also recognized the contribution of the actors and singers who expressed this artistic ideal, and regarded them as an important element in the formation of the center of total art. From the viewpoint of national illumination, Wagner connected his new concept of theater to the people's aesthetic and spiritual character building. Wagner embedded a deeper idea into his concept of total art, in which this aesthetic education of the people, which led to this art being realized by the actor who actually confronted the audience directly and transmitted the idea of a work through original sensitivity. Wagner's new image of the actor who achieves "self-abandonment" was not only useful for his character strengthening as a "teacher" who

performs national and cultural education at the sacrifice of his individuality. In the transition period during which the leadership of the stage shifted from the actor to the theater director, the actor also changed his substance from the free expressive artist who performed an individual interpretation of the artwork subjectively and sensuously, into the body donor who was interpreted by the director as a mechanical artist for the production of illusion. Similarly, this theatrical phenomenon, in which passive actors were commanded by the director for the sake of illusion, promoted the tendency of totalizing theater to effectively induce and control the audience's thoughts and feelings. Wagner's image of the actor as an artist and public person was a new concept that formed a continuity with other such aesthetic and theatrical phenomena throughout the nineteenth century.

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Notes

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- 3) Kenji Hara: *Jyuhattuseiki Wien no Minshugeki*. (in English, *The Popular Play in Vienna of the Eighteenth Century*) (Housei University Press) 1988, pp. 313–315; Shinichi Minamiouji: *Hamburg no 'Theaterkrieg' ni tsuite*. (in English, *On the 'Theater-Battle' (1769) in Hamburg*). In: *18seiki Doitsu Bungaku Ronbun-shu*. (in English, *A Collection of Literary Academic Papers on the Literature of the Eighteenth Century*.) (Sanshusha) 2001, pp. 235–300, here 235–246.
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- 6) Alain Viala: *Histoire du théâtre*. Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 2005. (trns. in Japanese by Nobuyoshi Takahashi, Hakusui-sha, 2008), p. 63.
- 7) Tobari 1998, p. 24.
- 8) Ibid., pp. 28–29.
- 9) Gerda Baumbach: *Schauspieler. Historische Anthropologie des Akteurs*. Vol. 1. Köthen (Leipziger Universität Verlag) 2012, pp. 31–37.

- 10) Schmitt 1996, p. 19.
- 11) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Regeln für Schauspieler. In: id.: *Aesthetische Schriften. 1771–1805. Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Friedmar Apel. Frankfurt am Main (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag) 1998, pp. 857–883, here 879.
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- 16) Ibid., p. 265.
- 17) Knust 2007, p. 200.
- 18) Ibid., p. 198f.
- 19) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*. Vol. 3. Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1986, p. 515. [abbr. VA, All Hegel translations in this paper are mine]
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- 23) Meike Wagner: *Theater und Öffentlichkeit im Vormärz: Berlin, München und Wien als Schauplätze bürgerlicher Medienpraxis*. Berlin (Akademie Verlag) 2013, pp. 126–129.
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- 30) Hara 1988, pp. 287–288.
- 31) Weithase 1961, pp. 539–565.
- 32) Stauss 2011, p. 89f.; Wagner 2013, p. 129.
- 33) Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, edited by Raymond Geuss et.al. Cambridge et.al.: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 117–138, here 135.
- 34) Alexander Košenina: *Anthropologie und Schauspielkunst. Studien zur ‚eloquentia corporis‘ im 18. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen (Niemeyer) 1995, pp. 1–28.
- 35) Regarding Virtuouse as an actor, I refer to the following study by Günter Oesterle. Cf. Günter Oesterle: Imitation und Überbietung. Drei Versuche zum Verhältnis von Virtuosität und Kunst. In: Hans-Georg von Arburg (Ed.): *Virtuosität. Kult und Krise der Artistik in Literatur und Kunst der Moderne*. Göttingen (Wallstein) 2006, p. 47–59.
- 36) Eduard Devrient: *Das Nationaltheater des neuen Deutschland. Eine Reformschrift*. Leipzig: Weber, 1849, pp. 91f.

- 37) Eduard Devrient: *Ueber Theaterschule. Eine Mittheilung an das Theaterpublikum*. Berlin: Jonas, 1840, p. 15.
- 38) Heinrich Theodor Röttscher: Das Virtuositentum in der Schauspielkunst. In: id.: *Kritiken und dramaturgische Abhandlungen*. Leipzig (Wilhelm Engelmann) 1859, pp. 241–249.
- 39) Edward Gordon Craig: The Actor and the Über-Marionette. In: *Mask* (April 1908), vol. 1. 2, pp. 3–16, here 11. (Digital text issued by Princeton University, Blue Mountain Project, Historic Avant-garde Periodicals for Digital Research, 11. Aug. 2005)
- 40) Manfred Brauneck: *Theater im 20. Jahrhundert. Programmschriften, Stilperioden, Kommentare*. Vollständig überarbeitete und erw. Neuausgabe. Hamburg (Rowohlt) c1982, 2009, p. 217f.

リヒャルト・ヴァーグナーにおける俳優の 教育啓蒙的な機能についての考察 ——論考『俳優と歌手について』を手がかりに

山 崎 明 日 香

要 旨

本稿は、19世紀ドイツの作曲家リヒャルト・ヴァーグナーの著書『俳優と歌手について (*Über Schauspieler und Sänger*)』(1872)を対象に、そこで考察された俳優の国民教育的また啓蒙的な機能について検証するものである。従来の研究では、ヴァーグナーが国民文化的な視点から、ドイツ演劇に内包する共同体性と芸術性を実現する俳優の機能を重視したことや、俳優を芸術作品と観客との間の単なる媒体ではなく、観客への教育効果をもたらす「教師」的な存在であることを認識していたことが、注目されてこなかった。ヴァーグナーは、自身の俳優との関係において、作家の芸術的意志を媒介する俳優の演技術や朗読術に着目していただけではなかった。ヴァーグナーは、俳優の高度な演技術に伴う倫理的また教育的な機能を高く評価していたことが、19世紀の演劇史と芸術論の観点から認識できる。さらにヴァーグナーの考察する「自己断念」を通じた俳優の高次の芸術理念の実現と、それに伴う教育効果が、同時代のヘーゲル美学やショーペンハウアー哲学との関連から読み取れる。ヴァーグナーの総合芸術の構想内で示されたこの新たな俳優像は、俳優の公的人物としての性質を強めただけでなく、前衛芸術時代の「監督劇場」で構築された新たな俳優像にも結びついている。

キーワード：ヴァーグナー、ドイツ近代演劇、俳優、教育、国民劇場