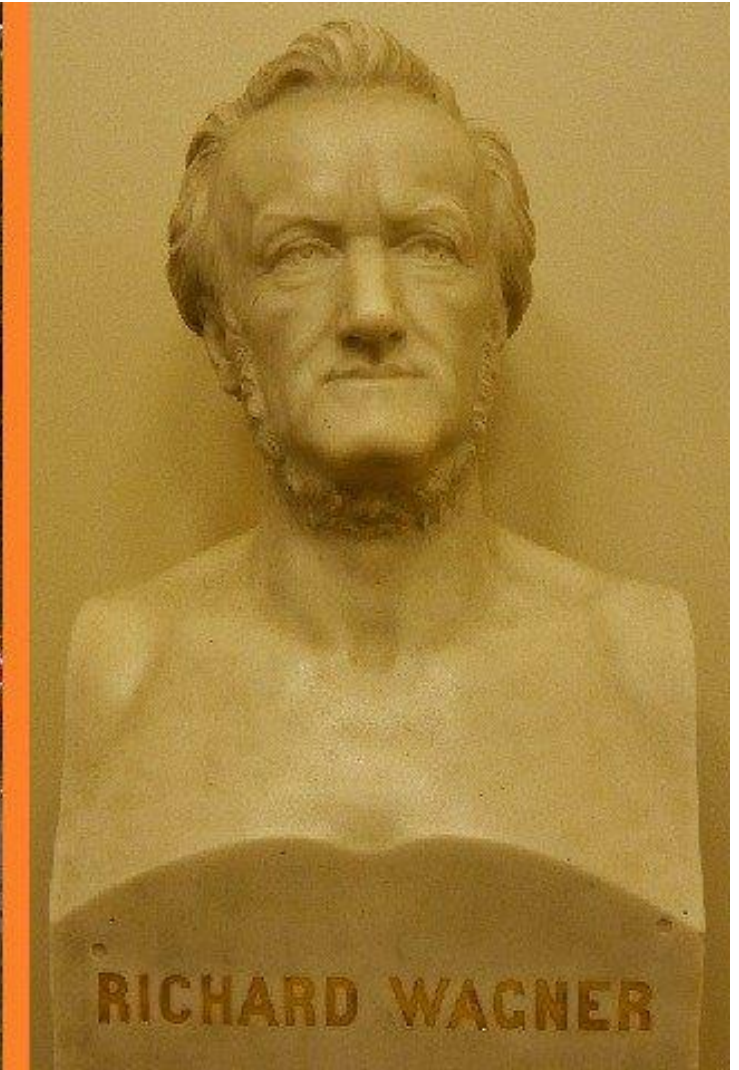




November 2015 No 911

'Richard Wagner Square' To Be Renamed 'Refugees Welcome Square' In Snub To German Patriots

By [Oliver Lane](#) 5 Nov 2015



A square in the Leipzig old town named for 19th-century German romantic composer Richard Wagner may be renamed to help promote a "cosmopolitan and tolerant" city.

Initially suggested by a group of hard-left anti-borders activists masquerading as a "citizens' initiative", the name change of Richard Wagner Platzes to 'Refugees Welcome Platz' has now been taken up by the city council with support from the Green party bloc.

City spokesman, pro-migrant campaigner, and Green politician Christin Melcher said of the change she is supporting: "We stand for a cosmopolitan and tolerant Leipzig. The renaming of a central square as Refugees Welcome Place is also a symbol of a new culture of welcome in Leipzig", [reports the Saschen Depesche](#).

City council Green colleague Norman Volger, in a spectacular moment of honesty admits the move is intended as a deliberate snub towards Germany's insurgent right wing movements.

The Leipzig branch of the [Patriotic Europeans Against The Islamisation Of The West](#) (PEGIDA) protest group meet regularly at Richard Wagner Platzes, and the erasure of the memory of an important figure from German history could be a bitter blow to the group, which campaigns for traditional European culture. Mr. Volger wants the new 'Refugees Welcome Platz' to stand as a sign against PEGIDA, who he calls 'inhuman racists', and that "Leipzig is no place for racism".

Richard Wagner, born in Leipzig in 1813, is a towering figure in the German psyche for his role in influencing the unification of Germany into a single state in the years leading up to 1871. His operas drew heavily from romantic and dramatic Germanic folklore and his essays called for a single German identity,

rather than disparate kingdoms as it was during much of the 19th century. The Richard Wagner Platzes was named in 1913 in honour of the composer, celebrating the centenary of his birth. A number of groups have moved to oppose the proposition, including the Junge Union. The German equivalent of the Young Conservatives, the group has warned against allowing faddish political beliefs to influence place names, remarking that while majorities shift within democratic systems, it is not healthy to constantly change place names, [reports the Leipziger Internet Zeitung](#).

The International Association of Wagner Societies has reacted with fury at the suggestion the square in the composer's home town might be sacrificed at the altar of political correctness. They said in a statement "Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig and is one of the greatest artists of the 19th century.

"Since the 100th anniversary naming in 1913, the city has been honouring one of its greatest sons. This must remain so! Anyone against the cultural and political nonsense, which is directed against the interests of our city and its citizens, and wants to raise his voice, can sign a petition during business hours at our office".

[A new petition](#) has been launched online, and the discussions in the comment section on the page provide an illuminating insight into the perspectives of those tussling over Richard Wagner

Platzen. One writes that he refuses to sign the petition, because "according to Wikipedia, Wagner was a convinced anti-Semite. My attitude is refugees welcome". Another contributor asks in response to the comment that if Wagner is to be removed because of his anti-Semitism, why is it right to welcome Muslim refugees who have increased anti-Semitic attitudes in the community of late.

Renaming squares and streets is an emerging cultural battleground in Europe, as leftist groups on city government boards seek to erase cultural histories and inconvenient reminders as soon as they seize power. *Breitbart London* reported on two such examples in July where Spanish authorities insulted the memories of right-wing figures by renaming their squares after LGBT-lobby campaigners.

[Plaza Margaret Thatcher](#) was one such square, with her memorial to be torn down and the place renamed for Pedro Zerolo, a left-wing gay anarchist who died this year. Following that, it was reported the square dedicated to noted Catholic scholar Juan Vázquez de Mella would also be renamed after a [gay rights campaigner](#).

<http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/11/05/richard-wagner-square-renamed-refugees-welcome-square-snob-german-patriots/>

While the above article was being written there occurred in the blogosphere this exchange - producing electronic graffiti ...

Leipzig plan to rename Richard Wagner Platz 'Refugees Welcome Place'

November 4, 2015 by norman lebrecht - [comments](#)

Wagner loyalists in Leipzig are putting up a petition to stop the city from accepting a Green Party proposal to rename the square that honours the city's most famous son.

While we recognise the need to acknowledge Wagner's birthplace, there would be a certain poetic justice in deposing the old racial supremacist in favour of a multicultural kindlier, Deutschland.

[Here's](#) the pro-Wagner petition.

Anyone care to put up an opposing one?



<http://slippedisc.com/2015/11/leipzig-plan-to-renamerichardwagnerplatzrefugeeswelcomeplace/#comments>

Comments

RW2013 says:

[November 4, 2015 at 5:47 pm](#)

Absurd!!!

Neven P. says:

[November 4, 2015 at 5:57 pm](#)

Just read a few excerpts from Houellebeck's most recent novel this weekend. I always thought he was a wacko (albeit a highly talented one), but now realize that he might actually be a visionary.

Theodore McGuiver says:

[November 4, 2015 at 6:02 pm](#)

La Plateforme came true almost immediately.

[Reply](#)

Neven P. says:

[November 4, 2015 at 6:29 pm](#)

I read it in 2008, but didn't like it. His penchant for provocation was all too apparent. But the new one nails it perfectly...

John Borstlap says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:15 pm](#)

Don't worry. Houellebeck is a crazy, nihilistic neurotic and product of French postwar hangover.

Neven P. says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:36 pm](#)

I wonder if you would dare to assign the same attributes if a Muslim author were in question.

John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 1:03 pm](#)

Well, yes. But any muslim author with comparable ideas would be a bit inhibited to publish them. But if he were a fully-integrated European muslim, he would share Houellebeck's worries.

Neven P. says:

[November 5, 2015 at 2:19 pm](#)

John, you know very well that there is a number of Muslim religious figures in Europe who spread ideas (both by preaching and in written form) that are much more radical than Houellebeck's.

What bothers me is that the leftist intelligentsia is very quick to denounce an eccentric and provocateur like him, however, their political correctness prevents them from speaking against the real perpetrators of hate.

And this is where his most recent novel makes an excellent point – the softness and embrace of the absurd (of which the topic described in this post is the best example) will eventually lead to a decay of liberal democracy. And to be honest, this is what I am afraid the most.

John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 2:37 pm](#)

Replying to Neven's comment underneath: I fully agree.

But criticizing Houellebeck should not be construed as an attempt of NOT criticizing muslim hate mongers, who don't publish novels. The oldfashioned leftist thinkers of today, the 'left-overs' so to speak, are not strong enough in defending Western values because they have read too much Derrida, Foucault, etc. etc. and not enough Finkelkraut. Maybe the number of muslim hate mongers is comparable to the number of 'white trash' cultivating racism and xenophobia. How to statistically find-out? Generalization of immigrants is stupid, and does injustice to the many (really many) muslim immigrants who have become, or are becoming, European. Faith and confidence in Western values, most of which are universal anyway and much desirable – given the refugee influx – should be sufficient to absorb so many people from non-European lands and make them European.

Neven P. says:

[November 5, 2015 at 2:54 pm](#)

I admire your idealism and optimism. My experience, unfortunately, teaches me the opposite.

Theodore McGuiver says:

[November 4, 2015 at 6:06 pm](#)

The Greens are in search of a cause and an identity, their extremist posturing having been comprehensively debunked in recent times. They're just trying to find a way to stay present in the media.

Max Grimm says:

[November 4, 2015 at 6:20 pm](#)

+1

Here's an article that sheds a little more light on the background of the initiative. Three words out of it, hit the nail on the head "kulturpolitischer Unsinn" and "Symbolpolitik".

(<https://mopo24.de/nachrichten/leipzig-richardwagnerplatz-refugeeswelcomeplatz-irrer-23824>)

william osborne says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:24 pm](#)

I seriously doubt that the initiators of this effort think they will be successful. Their goal was to create a media event to raise both discussion and consciousness about German xenophobia and its deep roots in German culture. They have succeeded. Those who wish to see this kept swept under the carpet will of course howl "kulturpolitischer Unsinn" and "Symbolpolitik". Symbolpolitik it certainly is.

Max Grimm says:

[November 4, 2015 at 9:23 pm](#)

Say what you will, William. Their goal you describe is meritorious but the way they are going about achieving it is silly and just that...Unsinn.

william osborne says:

[November 4, 2015 at 9:58 pm](#)

I think there's some pointed irony and humor in the effort. Not sure I would say it's silly. Unfortunately, most of the commentary here isn't about methods, but sympathetic references to xenophobia.

Max Grimm says:

[November 4, 2015 at 9:25 pm](#)

And disagreeing with the fashion in which someone is trying to call attention to an issue, does not mean that one is trying to sweep anything under the carpet or that one denies the existence of said issue.

Max Grimm says:

[November 4, 2015 at 11:35 pm](#)

"I think there's some pointed irony and humor in the effort. Not sure I would say it's silly. Unfortunately, most of the commentary here isn't about methods, but sympathetic references to xenophobia."

Noted. I just find that these humorous approaches with topics such as this end up being used as ammunition against those trying to raise discussion and awareness. As the saying goes, "die Politik setzt jedem Spaß ein schnelles Ende".

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 7:40 am](#)

Someone needs to let Colbert and Jon Stewart know about that. OTH, humor famously does not have the same position in German society. With a little self-irony, the Third Reich would have never happened...

Max Grimm says:

[November 5, 2015 at 2:05 pm](#)

Colbert and Jon Stewart, indeed. Tell me, how seriously are they taken by those in Washington when it comes to policies and decision making? They are TV personalities and that's where these humorous actions and petitions belong; not on the Tagesordnung of parliaments.

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 2:38 pm](#)

They are taken fairly seriously because they have a significant effect on public opinion and thus voting patterns. Rush Limbaugh, who is essentially a comedian, probably has an even stronger effect on shaping right wing policy. This article in the Harvard Political Review discusses their influence and its limitations.

<http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/the-stewart-colbert-factor/>

A hallmark of totalitarian societies is the lack of political humor. "It is a curious fact that people are never so trivial as when they take themselves seriously." – Oscar Wilde

Max Grimm says:

[November 5, 2015 at 5:49 pm](#)

Your points are well noted, William. Let me put it this way then, maybe Colbert or Stewart would have come up with something better than "Refugees-Welcome-Platz".

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 9:15 pm](#)

I see your point. In terms of irony, or words that disguise a larger reality that is exactly the opposite, Refugees-Welcome-Platz is in a similar vein with Arbeit macht frei, even if not as horrific — that point where political reality brings a crashing end to humor. Americans have these things too: Smoking gun mushroom cloud. Join the Navy and see the world. And on and on with slogans and titles to hide our human failings.

Max Grimm says:

[November 5, 2015 at 9:27 pm](#)

Well said.

Doug says:

[November 4, 2015 at 7:07 pm](#)

Anyone here familiar with Raspail's Le Camp Des Saints? Anybody? Up until now would I ever believe that self-congratulation was a basis from which to form public policy.

"Human beings have been making mistakes and committing sins as long as there have been human beings. The great catastrophes of history have usually involved much more than that. Typically, there has been an additional and crucial ingredient—some method by which feedback from reality has been prevented, so that a dangerous course of action could be blindly continued to a fatal conclusion." -Thomas Sowell

Kunz Vogelgesang says:

[November 4, 2015 at 7:58 pm](#)

Such ignorance is astounding. Firstly, Wagner was himself a refugee for decades in the name of political and social liberty. Secondly, his Overture Polonia of 1836 was written out of sympathy for the Poles in the wake of their uprising against Russian oppression which led to the flight of thousands into German cities.

Wagner, above other sons of Leipzig, had the greatest sympathy for the plight of refugees, and Richard Wagner Platz is a fitting reminder of this fact.

John Borstlap says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:13 pm](#)

A hot potato, this one.

Anonymous declaration in the 'open petition' against the renaming plan:

"J'ai signé cette pétition car les valeurs culturelles (dont Wagner fait largement partie) et qui constituent l'essence même d'un pays doivent perdurer au delà de toutes polémiques." In other words: don't touch a country's cultural identity. But Wagner's personality had a couple of traits which are, let us say, less than appropriate for the identity of the new, decent Germany. So, this well-intentioned support can be read as a grave offence.

A young Leipziger politician:

"Gerade Zuwanderer sollen doch unsere deutsche Kultur in ihrer Vielfalt und internationalen Relevanz kennenlernen." In other words: the refugees should get to know Wagner and his importance in a German and international context. But if the first thing immigrants learn about Germany were Wagner, either the man and the contribution to a murky nationalism he made, or the Ring des Nibelungen, they may feel this as an implied advice to return to the war zone.

The renaming initiative was born from resistance against Pegidaits, call it the healthy workings of the local people's immune system. But to turn it into a real fact, seems going much too far. What would refugees think of this affair? If I would be welcomed at a home

in a way that immediately causes uproar, I would knock on another, quieter door.

william osborne says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:17 pm](#)

Das Judentum in der Musik was published in the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik under a pseudonym in 1850, and in an expanded version under Wagner's name in 1869. Wagner said he wrote the work to:

"...explain to ourselves the involuntary repulsion possessed for us by the nature and personality of the Jews, so as to vindicate that instinctive dislike which we plainly recognize as stronger and more overpowering than our conscious zeal to rid ourselves thereof."

The last part of the phrase has deeply discomfoting associations with exterminationist Antisemitism. The essay became such an embarrassment for Wagnerites that it was seldom reprinted. It is thus possible that Hitler never read it, though he was a Wagner fanatic and frequented libraries in Vienna where it was available. The essay was left out of the edition of Wagner's complete writings published in 1983 — in effect a form of revisionist history.

In the comments here, it's not just that we see similar forms of denial, but that references are made to more recent writings representing or portraying xenophobic racism. Why do these attitudes plague classical music, and especially in Europe?

In any case, we can see why the Greens might have concerns about Richard-Wagner-Platz. Perhaps the Greens remember a famous comment plausibly attributed to Hitler: "There is only one legitimate predecessor to National Socialism: Wagner."

I don't support the name change of the plaza, but the hostile comments appearing once again here on Slippedisc hint at the latent bigotry that still haunts classical music.

Neven P. says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:22 pm](#)

William, my friend, it's always nice to take a break from Fox News to read your comment.

Doug says:

[November 4, 2015 at 9:31 pm](#)

Ah, the days of Holodomor and central planning. How we miss Great Leader and Teacher.

French musician says:

[November 4, 2015 at 10:30 pm](#)

Ha!

Holger H. says:

[November 5, 2015 at 6:43 am](#)

That predecessor "quote" by the guy with the funny moustache: where and when exactly is it made evident? Or did you get carried away again with the intellectual booze you are addicted to?

M_von_Kolinahr says:

[November 5, 2015 at 7:20 am](#)

... Just re the end of the quote from "Das Judentum in der Musik" and possible associations with "exterminationist anti-Semitism", I think a (somewhat) less convoluted translation of the original German might read:

"Here, then, we come to a point to clarify the purpose of our undertaking: to elucidate the involuntary repulsion that we have in regards to the personality and the nature of the Jews, in order to justify this instinctive aversion, which, however, we clearly recognise as being stronger and more predominant

than is our conscious zeal to rid ourselves of this aversion."

Here, it is clear from the German that it is the aversion (Abneigung) that Wagner refers to in relation to "a conscious zeal to rid ourselves of" ("... diese instinctmässige Abneigung zu rechtfertigen, von welcher wir doch deutlich erkennen, dass sie stärker und überwiegender ist, als unser bewusster Eifer, dieser Abneigung uns zu entledigen"). However, William Ashton Ellis' translation may lead readers to think that something (... or someone) else entirely is intended to be got "rid of" here. Wagner's prose writings are wordy, confusing and chock full of encapsulated meanings in a way that German grammar only makes even more indecipherable (and/or possible in the first place). In my experience as a fluent German speaker (having lived there for over 15 years), Ellis' versions tend to be rather clumsy, often unreliable and in any case overly literal (I can so often see the individual German words literally "hiding" behind his English ones, whereas in fact translation is all about communicating the overall underlying meaning, not replicating the individual words where they fall!), and so he often serves only to confuse things further. Accordingly, I've decided in future to read Wagner's writings only in the original German, which admittedly is not exactly an easy option (and no, it doesn't really make "Das Judenthum" more palatable either). However, given Ellis' translation, I'd still much prefer to hear it all straight from the horse's mouth, as it were.

(... And that famous comment attributed to Hitler – "There is only one legitimate predecessor to National Socialism: Wagner.": it is my understanding (and do please correct me if I'm wrong!) that this and a number of other Wagner-related comments attributed to Hitler come from the book "Hitler Speaks" (1939) by Hermann Rauschning, who had claimed to have had many private discussions with Hitler during the 1930s. However, it seems serious doubts have since cast on the scholarship of that book – in the preface to his comprehensive "Hitler" biography, for example, the historian Ian Kershaw writes: "I have on no single occasion cited Hermann Rauschning's 'Hitler Speaks', a work now regarded to have so little authenticity that it is best to disregard it altogether." So I'm not at all sure if that particular quote is all that reliable.)

I've otherwise every sympathy when it comes to the current very difficult refugee crisis in Germany, and urgently finding some kind of workable humanitarian solution, but as for the idea of renaming the plaza in Leipzig: it's surely a veritable "Schnapsidee", i.e. a foolish idea as if spontaneously inspired by the excessive consumption of one of those nice German dry



fruit brandies. You'll find a Richard-Wagner-Strasse or Platz or something in cities all over Germany – out of all of them, then, it seems totally daft to want to rename the one in the city of his birth, which is otherwise only too happy to proudly proclaim: "Richard ist Leipziger!"

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 8:10 am](#)

Most any attempt to make sense of Wagner's writing is doomed, regardless of the translation. We might

as well be frank. In the realm of words, he was an idiot. In "Heroism and Christianity" he suggests, for example, that the "fall of man" might be due to eating meat. He then goes on to the idea of miscegenation:

"Quite apart from such an explanation, one of the cleverest men of our day has also *proved* this fall to have been caused by a corruption of blood, though, leaving that change of diet wholly out of sight, he has derived it solely from the crossing of races, whereby the noblest lost more than the less noble of them gained. The uncommonly circumstantial picture of this process supplied us by Count Gobineau in his "Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines" appeals to us with most terrible force of conviction. We cannot withhold our acknowledgment that the human family consists of irremediably disparate races, whereof the noblest well might rule the more ignoble, yet never raise them to their level by commixture, but simply sink to theirs."

With groups like Pegida, this sort of racist xenophobia continues in Germany. We also see it in the VPO's exclusion of Asians. One of the strangest experiences for me in Germany (I've lived here for the last 35 years) was being mildly perceived by many people as a form of genetic and cultural pollution – especially in Bavaria. As a white American, however, it wasn't nearly as strong as if I had been black, where the racism was and still is completely open.

A younger generation of Germans is trying to reject these views, hence the rather humorous effort to change the name of the Wagner Platz in Leipzig.

Holger H. says:

[November 5, 2015 at 3:33 pm](#)

Well, I don't support these groups, but Pegida says NOTHING that a middle-class middle of the road US citizen wouldn't agree with. You make it sound as if Germany was prone to extremists, when in fact countries like the US or France have much more radical right wing fractions of society.

John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 8:48 pm](#)

Since this discussion isn't by far crazy enough, I would like to draw some attention to Wagner's assertion that the 'fall of man' has something to do with the consumption of meat. Behind that assertion lies the idea, that seeing warm-blooded animals merely as dinner stuff and not as beings with a soul, however different from us, but related, as some kind of preliminary version of the human being, betrays a lack of sensitivity and of ignorance about the holistic character of Nature. Killing animals for eating is not the same as killing fellow-men for some reason of dispute or difference of opinion or suspicion that his religion undermines one's own, etc. etc., but can be considered on a gliding scale. Wagner assumed that respect for animals as living beings, in the same boat as we, thrown onto the same foreign coast of life as humans (Schlegel), and thus avoiding eating them, would contribute to civilization, a point he got from Schopenhauer and a perfectly legitimate idea. Formulating such concepts is not easy and Wagner was always in a hurry when writing, his thoughts running away with him, as in music.

Then, thinking of Mr Osborne's relatively negative experiences in Bavaria, and thinking of his opinions

about life, Germany, and his highly politicized views on culture, one could easily imagine that Bavarian Bildungsbürger would be a bit concerned when meeting him.

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 9:45 pm](#)

1) The concerns of certain Bavarian Bildungsbürger began the minute my wife won her position in the Munich Phil as a woman trombonist. 2) In his postwar polemics against technology, Heidegger suggested that industrialized animal husbandry was a forerunner of the Holocaust, as if such phenomena were merely part of a "sliding scale." He thus revealed more about his thought than he realized.

John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 9:59 pm](#)

Maybe Mr Osborne's suspicions of 'sliding scales' have something to do with the slide on his wife's instrument?

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 8:39 am](#)

One can rationalize Wagner's statement that it is merely an attempt to "rid ourselves of our aversion to Jews" and not recognize the implication that the surest way to rid society of such an aversion is to rid it of Jews. This sort of innuendo is still a common aspect of how racism is discretely expressed in Germany. After the criticism Wagner faced for "Judentum in der Musik," he learned the value of exactly this form of indirect speech. I think it might also be why he was careful not to elucidate the racist metaphors in the Ring. For the sake of good manners, racism was discretely expressed through a coded language. Hitler built his career on the idea that this coded language was no longer necessary. After the war, discretion was once again required. This cultural history illustrates why the events in Leipzig are a positive and healthy development.

M_von_Kolinahr says:

[November 5, 2015 at 1:08 pm](#)

Thanks for your comments – point taken regarding the rationalisation of Wagner's statement that it is merely an attempt to "rid ourselves of our aversion to Jews" – whereby for my part I was really just trying to clarify what he'd written in the German at that one point, I hadn't been thinking of the text in any of way. However one views that particular passage, needless to say he still incriminates himself elsewhere in the essay in any case. It is indeed very difficult to work out what he's on about at all half the time, and even if I'm not a great fan of William Ashton Ellis' style, I'll give him his dues that he stuck out translating thousands of Wagner's words, which surely will have been enough to drive anyone over the brink. I'll refrain from commenting further on the extract from "Heroism and Christianity" – I don't have the German original for that one, and I got a big enough headache from trying to re-translate the last bit from "Das Judentum".

Meanwhile, I was rather intrigued by your impressions of having lived in Germany for 35 years, and how you were perceived in Bavaria in particular. I too lived in Bavaria, and being of British extraction was relatively well tolerated I suppose (especially after I married a German lass, my partner in crime) but just how you describe the subtle (or not so subtle) put downs for

being "cultural pollution" is very much the way I remember things being. And yes, as soon as someone's skin is a different colour as well, then I think things get worse a lot more quickly. Just how far Germany still has to come in that regard is shown by the followed (Wagner-related) photo from 2006 – www.volkmarweiss.com/2011/wagner-nagano/ – especially if we think of how much opposition there is now to Mickey Rooney's acting as "Mr Yunioshi" in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" – and this poster was awarded a Gold medal! I wish Germany well with its current refugee situation, but if it works out at all, I think integrating the new migrants will still be a huge learning curve for everyone involved.

John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 1:42 pm](#)

Consideration of 'German xenophobia' should include the immense damage the brown period plus the ensuing national destruction has done to the collective subconsciousness of that nation. Germany has become fully European but any awareness of 'home' is surrounded by taboos, most of them felt as imposed from outside. Where foreigners carry a priori images of racist xenophobia in their heart, they may easily provoke these negative reactions, like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 1:54 pm](#)

The url you list for the Kent Nagano/Wagner poster doesn't work, but it can be found on the Deutsche Welle website along with a very useful article that represents a much more enlightened side of German society:

<http://www.dw.com/en/anti-racism-groups-slam-german-ads/a-1649145-0>

I didn't know about this poster. Thanks for mentioning it. Very interesting given the extensive recent discussion about the use of yellow and black face in theater productions in the USA.

M_von_Kolinahr says:

[November 5, 2015 at 4:17 pm](#)

... Oops!! – yes, I meant:

<http://www.volkmarweiss.com/2011/wagner-nagano/>

That's the most high-resolution one I could find.



John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 10:14 pm](#)

It's a bit childish, but in no way racially offensive, I think. It is not offensive to have eastern eyes, and to have – of all people – Wagner posing as an Asian, serves him right.

One of the great advances of Western society is that one can be part of European / German culture, even profoundly so, and ethnically non-Aryan, like the young conductor David Afkham, stemming from an immigrant background. Also it is very reassuring to see a very black young cook presenting a very German cooking TV programme, speaking the most perfect Hochdeutsch fluently.

One can choose a culture and grow into it, and that is what the first generations of Jews, when they received civil rights at the beginning of the 19th

century, were doing. Bryan Magee has written eloquently about this in his 'Aspects of Wagner' (Oxford University Press 1999, the thinnest book ever written on the subject). If Wagner's theories as expounded in his anti-Jew-pamphlet are followed-through, one would arrive at the conclusion that after some time, Jews would be entirely Germanized, as they were and forming a very important cultural elite in Germany and Austria. Nothing remained of their Jewishness apart from their nose, like Wagner's (he suffered all his life from the suspicion that his father was a Jew). In music, Mahler and Schoenberg were the last representatives of the German classical tradition and that they had a Jewish ethnic background, says it all.

william osborne says:

[November 4, 2015 at 8:17 pm](#)

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Fredrick Toben says:

[November 5, 2015 at 8:40 am](#)

I wonder who is the bigot in this discussion, and it seems to me that some further commentary is needed in order to get away from the expressed platitudes and delve deeper into the subject matter, rather than celebrate one's own prejudicial viewpoint.

1. At the 2013 Wagner Symposium following the Melbourne Ring Cycle, John Deathridge closed a discussion with this very same emphasis on Wagner's perceived racism, etc. I managed to remind him that when making such a comment it is imperative, for the sake of balance in the argument, to point out the existence of Jewish racism as expressed in Talmud – Jerusalem and Babylonian. Deafening silence was the response, and only afterwards did individuals come to me and congratulate me on having made that statement.

2. Then recently in Israel there occurred an extraordinary event – the reconstituting of the 'Nascent Sanhedrin' Court presided over by Rabbi Yisrael Ariel. Here is a brief extract of what he had to say on 9 September 2015: >> "Therefore Maimonides says that if you see a person in the street who does not follow the Seven Laws – this is what he says – if we have the might, you have to kill him. If you catch Obama on the street, and you know that he does not follow the Seven Laws, etc."

A man in the audience interjected: "You are commanded to kill him."

Ariel responds: "Sorry?"

The man repeats: "You are commanded to kill him, and the sooner the better."

Ariel responds in the affirmative: "This is why we have Maimonides. If someone threatens you, to ruin you, to kill you, you kill him first."

Ariel's comments on Obama followed the reading of a long list of charges against Obama, the Pope and other world leaders, including "theft and conspiracy to conduct theft of the Land of Israel from the People of Israel" and "bloodshed, murder and standing idly by the blood of others" which "threatens the very existence of Israel, if not the total genocide of the People of Israel."

The Sanhedrin claims the "Land of Israel" as "from the Euphrates to the Nile." This would mean Israeli occupation of parts of Syria, Iraq, Egypt and the whole of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and Jordan, and probably parts of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Kuwait. Temple movement rabbi proselytizes for genocide <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9edV7ta-r-Y>

... there's more... In June, the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in the Galilee was torched and defaced with Hebrew-language graffiti denouncing idol worship. Soon after, Bentzi Gopstein, another Jewish extremist leader, publicly called for the burning of churches, designating Christians as idol worshippers and citing Maimonides. At a forum for Jewish seminary students in August, in answer to the question, "Are you in favor of burning churches in the Land of Israel, yes or no?" Gopstein responded: "You have to burn, are you for Maimonides or against Maimonides? ... Yes, of course ... Didn't Maimonides rule that we must burn? Idol worship must be burned ... Yes, of course. Of course, that's Maimonides. Simply yes, why are you even asking? ... You have any doubt?" Israeli police have not charged Gopstein over the incident. Although Israeli law prohibits incitement to racism, legal loopholes permit the offensive statements if they are couched in religious terminology. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/video-temple-movement-rabbi-proselytizesgenocide/14870> <<

3. And now, bearing the above good Rabbi Yisrael Ariel's words in mind, there is now to consider the wisdom coming from German philosopher Martin Heidegger – and it doesn't help to use all those shut-up words – Hater, Holocaust denier, antisemite, racist, Nazi, xenophobe – to save one's own prejudiced mind from perhaps maturing a little and not to deflect from the truth-content of what he stated: The Jews, with their marked gift for calculating, live, already for the longest time, according to the principle of race, which is why they are resisting its consistent application with utmost violence – Martin Heidegger

4. And for those who wish to discover for themselves what Wagner's two essays was all about, please be advised that in a slim volume of 125 pages they are reproduced under the title, with my introduction, and available from <http://barnesreview.org/product/judaism-in-music-wagner-for-the-21st-century/>

5. Finally, I agree with Christian Thielemann who splendidly states that there is no such thing as anti-Semitic music – music is music! Those fatuous attempts to destroy Wagner's universal gift to humanity cannot and will not be undone by those who have never achieved his level of musical output, which to date remains unsurpassed.

Fredrick Töben, Adelaide, 5 November 2015

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 9:52 am](#)

In 1988, Gerald Fredrick Töben spent 9 months in prison in Germany for Holocaust denial. In 1994 he founded the Adelaide

Institute which has also been associated with Holocaust denial. His comments could not illustrate more clearly the problematic nature of Wagner reception.

Fredrick Toben says:

[November 5, 2015 at 11:50 am](#)

Mr Osborne, please get your facts straight. You remind me of someone who would support oppressive mental enslavement through legal sanction, of which Wagner also knew something at first hand. The tone in which you embrace the concept "Holocaust denial" is indicative of a problem not of Wagner's making but is a characteristic of those whose fundamental battle-of-the-wills impulse sets out not to discover and fulfill ideals such as beauty, truth, justice, honour, etc. The aim seems to be, with rational hubris as a guiding light, to fall into a reductionist deficiency mode of thinking where playing the victim destroys any creative impulse. Wagner's creativity liberates individuals from certain conceptual prisons – and that is a good thing, especially in the 21st century where under the guise of so-called political correctness and outright legal sanction a whole new generation is doomed to flourish by following a materialistic, hedonistic, nihilistic and self-destructive course – driven by envy and hatred. Unfortunately that's the way of life for most – but Wagner teaches us to resist such mindsets and embrace a universality, even if it is for only the proverbial three-score-and-ten years.

william osborne says:

[November 5, 2015 at 1:14 pm](#)

I should add that Töbin also spent three months in prison in Australia for inciting racial hatred. (And a correction, it was in 1998 that he spent 9 months in prison in Germany for Holocaust denial, not 1988.)

John Borstlap says:

[November 5, 2015 at 10:24 pm](#)

Every orthodoxy holds some crazy concepts, and the Jewish one is no exception. Since most religions develop over time, certain aspects are left behind, others highlighted. If it is true that one cannot BECOME a Jew, there is some racism there, and if there are people from Jewish descent thinking that for this reason they are 'superior' to people lacking this accolade, they are as racist as antisemites. Quarrels about ethnicity are nonsensical since nobody has chosen to be born like this or that. Therefore, the concept of culture should be seen as ethnically neutral and Wagner's mistakes not seen for more than they are.

Fredrick Toben says:

[November 6, 2015 at 10:53 am](#)

It's becoming tedious to read this reply from Mr Osborne: >>william osborne says: November 5, 2015 at 1:14 pm. I should add that Töbin also spent three months in prison in Australia for inciting racial hatred. (And a correction, it was in 1998 that he spent 9 months in prison in Germany for Holocaust denial, not 1988.)<<

Mr Osborne, why cannot you get the facts straight – the dates are incorrect, the reasons are incorrect – "contempt of court" is not a criminal matter – especially when the material facts are not established rationally but only by applying some "hurt feeling" measure! Surely you are aware of how shonky such legal thought-structure is, one that is certainly not imbued with our much celebrated democratic spirit.

Never mind – Wagner still was one of the greatest freedom fighters of the 19th century – the liberation from a mindset that to him was oppressive, devious and false. So it's nothing new for those who today bump against a similar mindset. It certainly doesn't help to indulge in any form of scapegoating. Why not? Didn't Kant say that we have to liberate ourselves from our own 'selbstverschuldete Unmündigkeit'?

Re the reference in one comment here about the German "brown period" perhaps that is why the endeavour is now to put into effect for the whole of Europe the Coudenhove Kalergi Plan

– to brown the Europeans through immigration. Have a view of this clip as well:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm6MSShcRE>

I wonder what lessons Shakespeare had for us in Othello and in The Merchant of Venice? For me personally one of the basic lessons from these 17th century literary works is that the problems facing Europeans today are nothing new but are indeed timeless existential and cultural problems. Perhaps during that century and following it, there was some clarity of thought, which today through the Internet has caused an avalanche of problems to emerge whose solution is not to be had by pulling the race card at every opportunity. Perhaps Jaques Barzun and Oswald Spengler were right – for the Europeans, for the Occident in general, the inevitable decline is here.

What bothers me personally is that during my global travels I worried whenever I saw the stark difference in personal and civil cleanliness – both physical and mental! Recently someone reminded me that King Solomon, whose temple both Jews and Freemasons wish to erect for the third time in the Holy Land, actually had a thousand wives – or was it two thousand? – and 500 concubines. Such fatuous nonsense does seem to excite some individuals while I consider it to be the height of infantile degeneracy.

Remember Wagner's lesson as presented to us in The Ring, and specifically through Brunhilde's actions, is more insightful than anything Freud could have offered us. Had she been a real woman and not a mere liberated Valkyrie reduced to womanhood, then Siegfried's deception would not have had her reveal to Hagen Siegfried's vulnerable point where he could be killed. True love does not seek revenge!

The ideals of beauty, love, truth, honour, justice, valiance, etc. have been developed and are a part of our Occidental culture that today in our hedonistic materialistic world, etc. are dismissed as trivial and meaningless. No wonder the western materialistic consumer world is like a rudderless ship that celebrates internationalism and shies away from nationalism. Liberty, equality and fraternity are its empty slogans. We need ask the question: freedom from what and freedom for what? No individuals are equal – and as an identical twin I should know! – and so this concept should be replaced with justice. Likewise, the brother/sisterhood of man/woman is a perverse concept. In his 9th Symphony Beethoven may have celebrated Schiller's Ode to Joy where brotherly love is celebrated – but just remember how he augments that thought with the concept of a loving relationship between man and woman:

*Whoever has had the great fortune,
To be a friend's friend,
Whoever has won the love of a devoted wife,
Add his to our jubilation!
Indeed, whoever can call even one soul
His own on this earth!
And whoever was never able to must creep
Tearfully away from this circle.*

The Semitic mindset that pervades those who celebrate King Solomon and his many wives and concubines is generally foreign to the European mindset and we should resist endeavours that attempt to influence us in accepting the moral values expressed therein. A beautiful and tidy garden requires constant attention. I suppose you have now read from Breitbart's website the latest on this Wagner Square issue – 'Richard Wagner Square' To Be Renamed 'Refugees Welcome Square' In Snub To German Patriots –

<http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/11/05/richard-wagner-square-renamed-refugees-welcome-square-snob-german-patriots/>

- See more at: <http://slippedisc.com/2015/11/leipzig-plan-to-rename-richard-wagner-platz-refugees-welcome-place/#comment-87375>