

# Friedrich Nietzsche

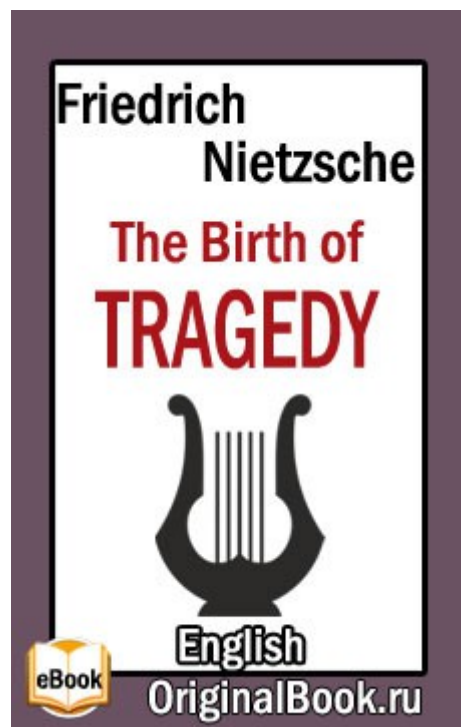
## THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

### Out of the Spirit of Music

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Original:

[Die Geburt der Tragödie](#)



1872

Translated by Ian Johnston

The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (German: Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik) is an 1872 work of dramatic theory by the German philosopher [Friedrich Nietzsche](#).

It was reissued in 1886 as The Birth of Tragedy, Or: Hellenism and Pessimism (Die Geburt der Tragödie, Oder: Griechentum und Pessimismus). The later edition contained a prefatory essay, An Attempt at Self-Criticism, wherein Nietzsche commented on this earliest book.

Ebook: <http://originalbook.ru>



### **Translator's Note**

In the following translation, most of Nietzsche's long paragraphs have been broken up into shorter units. Where Nietzsche uses a foreign phrase this text retains that phrase and includes an English translation in square brackets and italics immediately afterwards (for example, [translation] ). Explanatory footnotes, usually to identify a person named in the text, have been added by the translator.

Readers are permitted to download this translation for their own use, and teachers may distributed the text to their students in printed or electronic form without permission and without charge. There are, however, copyright restrictions on publishing the translation as a printed book. This translation was last revised in June 2008.

### **Historical Note**

The Birth of Tragedy , Nietzsche's first book, was published in 1872, when he was 28 years old and a professor of classical philology at Basel. The book had its defenders but, in general, provoked a hostile reception in the academic community and affected Nietzsche's academic career for the worse. As the opening section (added in 1886) makes clear, Nietzsche himself later had some important reservations about the book. However, since that time the work has exerted an important influence on the history of Western thought, particularly on the interpretations of Greek culture. In later editions part of the title of the work was changed from "Out of the Spirit of Music" to "Hellenism and Pessimism," but the former phrase has remained more common.

Friedrich Nietzsche



## **The Birth of Tragedy. Friedrich Nietzsche**

### **An Attempt at Self-Criticism<sup>1</sup>**

#### **1**

Whatever might have been the basis for this dubious book, it must have been a question of the utmost importance and charm, as well as a deeply personal one at the time — testimony to that effect is the time in which it arose, in spite of which it arose, that disturbing era of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. While the thunderclap of the Battle of Wörth was reverberating across Europe, the meditative lover of enigmas whose lot it was to father this book sat somewhere in a corner of the Alps, extremely reflective and perplexed, thus simultaneously very distressed and carefree, and wrote down his thoughts about the Greeks — the kernel of that odd and difficult book to which this later preface (or postscript) should be dedicated.<sup>2</sup> A few weeks after that, he found himself under the walls of Metz, still not yet free of the question mark which he had set down beside the alleged “serenity” of the Greeks and of Greek culture, until, in that month of the deepest tension, as peace was being negotiated in Versailles, he finally came to peace with himself and, while slowly recovering from an illness he'd brought back home with him from the field, finished composing the Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music<sup>3</sup>.

— From music? Music and tragedy? The Greeks and the Music of Tragedy? The Greeks and the art work of pessimism? The most successful, most beautiful, most envied people, those with the most encouraging style of life so far — the Greeks? How can this be? Did they of all people need tragedy? Even more — art? What for — Greek art?

One can guess from all this just where the great question mark about the worth of existence was placed. Is pessimism necessarily the sign of collapse, destruction, of disaster, of the exhausted and enfeebled instincts — as it was with the Indians, as it is now, to all appearances, among us, the “modern” peoples and Europeans? Is there a

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this first section of the Birth of Tragedy was added to the book many years after it first appeared, as the text makes clear. Nietzsche wrote this “Attempt at Self-Criticism” in 1886. The original text, written in 1870-71, begins with the Preface to Richard Wagner, the second major section in this text.

<sup>2</sup> The Battle of Wörth occurred in August 1870. The German army defeated the French army.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche contracted a serious and lingering illness while serving as a medical orderly with the Prussian forces in the Franco-Prussian War. The illness forced him eventually to give up his academic position.



pessimism of strength ? An intellectual inclination for what in existence is hard, dreadful, evil, problematic, emerging from what is healthy, from overflowing well being, from living existence to the full ? Is there perhaps a way of suffering from the very fullness of life? A tempting courage of the keenest sight which demands what is terrible as the enemy, the worthy enemy, against which it can test its power, from which it wants to learn what “to fear” means? What does the tragic myth mean precisely for the Greeks of the best, strongest, and bravest age? What about that tremendous phenomenon of the Dionysian?<sup>4</sup> And what about what was born out of the Dionysian — the tragedy? — And by contrast, what are we to make of what killed tragedy — Socratic morality, dialectic, the satisfaction and serenity of the theoretical man? <sup>5</sup> How about that? Could not this very Socratism [Sokratismus] be a sign of collapse, exhaustion, sickness, the anarchic dissolution of the instincts? And could the “Greek serenity” of later Greek periods be only a red sunset? Could the Epicurean will hostile to pessimism be merely the prudence of a suffering man? <sup>6</sup> And even science itself, our science — indeed, what does all science in general mean considered as a symptom of life? What is the point of all that science and, even more serious, where did it come from ? What about that? Is scientific scholarship perhaps only a fear and an excuse in the face of pessimism? A delicate self-defence against — the Truth ? And speaking morally, something like cowardice and falsehood? Speaking unmorally, a clever trick? <sup>7</sup> O Socrates, Socrates, was that perhaps your secret? O you secretive ironist, was that perhaps your — irony? —

## 2

What I managed to seize upon at that time, something fearful and dangerous, was a problem with horns, not necessarily a bull exactly, but in any event a new problem; today I would state that it was the problem of science itself — science for the first time grasped as problematic, as dubious. But that book, in which my youthful courage and

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<sup>4</sup> In Greek mythology, Dionysus, son of Zeus and the mortal Semele, was the god of wine, associated with ecstatic and intoxicated group rituals.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Socrates : (470-399 BC), Athenian philosopher famous for his devotion to challenging the beliefs of his contemporaries with intense questioning. Also as the main character in Plato's early dialogues, Socrates becomes the chief spokesman for a more rational understanding of life.

<sup>6</sup> Epicurus : (341-270 BC), Greek philosopher who stressed that the purpose of thinking was the attainment of a tranquil, pain-free existence.

<sup>7</sup> The German word Wissenschaft , a very important part of Nietzsche's argument, has a range of meanings: scholarship, science, scholarly research. In this translation I have normally used science or scientific knowledge or scholarship . The meaning of the term is by no means confined to the physical sciences.



suspicion then spoke, what an impossible book had to grow out of a task so contrary to the spirit of youth!

Created out of merely premature, really immature personal experiences, which all lay close to the threshold of something communicable, built on the basis of art — for the problem of science cannot be understood on the basis of science — a book perhaps for artists with analytical tendencies and a capacity for retrospection (that means for exceptions, a type of artist whom it is necessary to seek out and whom one never wants to look for . . .), full of psychological innovations and artists' secrets, with an artist's metaphysics in the background, a youthful work, full of the spirit of youth and the melancholy of youth, independent, defiantly self-sufficient, even where it seemed to bow down with special reverence to an authority, in short, a first work also in every bad sense of the word, afflicted, in spite of the problem better suited for old men, with every fault of youth, above all with its “excessive verbiage” and its “storm and stress.” On the other hand, looking back on the success the book had (especially with the great artist to whom it addressed itself, as if in a conversation, that is, with Richard Wagner), the book proved itself — I mean it was the sort of book which at any rate was effective enough among “the best people of its time.”<sup>8</sup> For that reason the book should at this point be handled with some consideration and discretion.

However, I do not want totally to hide how unpleasant the book seems to me now, how strangely after sixteen years it stands there in front of me — in front of an older man, a hundred times more discriminating, but with eyes which have not grown colder in the slightest and which have themselves not become estranged from the work which that bold book dared to approach for the first time: to look at science from the perspective of the artist, but to look at art from the perspective of life .

### 3

Let me say again: today for me it is an impossible book — I call it something poorly written, ponderous, embarrassing, with fantastic and confused imagery, sentimental, here and there so saccharine it is effeminate, uneven in tempo, without any impulse for logical clarity, extremely self-confident and thus dispensing with evidence, even distrustful of the relevance of evidence, like a book for the initiated, like “Music” for those baptized with music, those who are bound together from the start in secret and esoteric aesthetic experiences as a secret sign recognized among blood relations in

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<sup>8</sup> 4 Richard Wagner : (1813-1883), German composer and essayist, most famous for his operas. Early in Nietzsche's career he and Wagner (who met in 1868) were close friends.



artibus [in the arts] — an arrogant and rhapsodic book, which right from the start hermetically sealed itself off from the *profanum vulgus* [profane rabble] of the “educated,” even more than from the “people,” but a book which, as its effect proved and continues to prove, must also understand this issue well enough to search out its fellow rhapsodists and to tempt them to new secret pathways and dancing grounds.

At any rate, here a strange voice spoke — people admitted that with as much curiosity as aversion — the disciple of an as yet “unknown God,” who momentarily hid himself under the hood of a learned man, under the gravity and dialectical solemnity of the German man, even under the bad manners of a follower of Wagner. Here was a spirit with alien, even nameless, needs, a memory crammed with questions, experiences, secret places, beside which the name Dionysus was written like one more question mark. Here spoke — so people told themselves suspiciously — something like a mystic and an almost maenad-like soul, which stammered with difficulty and arbitrarily, in a foreign language, as it were, almost uncertain whether it wanted to communicate something or hide itself.<sup>9</sup>

This “new soul” should have sung, not spoken! What a shame that I did not dare to utter as a poet what I had to say at that time; perhaps I might have been able to do that! Or at least as a philologist — even today in this area almost everything is still there for philologists to discover and dig up! Above all, the issue that there is a problem right here — and that the Greeks will continue remain, as before, entirely unknown and unknowable as long as we have no answer to the question, “What is Dionysian?” . . .

#### 4

Indeed, what is Dionysian? — This book offers an answer to that question — a “knowledgeable person” speaks there, the initiate and disciple of his god. Perhaps I would now speak with more care and less eloquently about such a difficult psychological question as the origin of tragedy among the Greeks. A basic issue is the relationship of the Greeks to pain, the degree of their sensitivity — did this relationship remain constant? Or did it turn itself around? — That question whether their constantly stronger desire for beauty, for festivals, entertainments, and new cults really arose out of some lack, out of deprivation, out of melancholy, out of pain. For if we assume that this particular claim is true — and Pericles, or, rather, Thucydides, in the great Funeral Oration gives us to understand that it is — where then must that contradictory desire stem from, which appears earlier than the desire for beauty,

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<sup>9</sup> . . . maenad-like : a maenad is an ecstatic follower of the god Dionysus.



namely, the desire for the ugly, the good strong willing of the ancient Hellenes for pessimism, for tragic myth, for pictures of everything fearful, evil, enigmatic, destructive, and fateful as the basis of existence? <sup>10</sup> Where then must tragedy have come from? Perhaps out of joy, out of power, out of overflowing health, out of overwhelming fullness?

And psychologically speaking, what then is the meaning of that madness out of which tragic as well as comic art grew, the Dionysian madness? What? Is madness perhaps not necessarily the symptom of degradation, of collapse, of cultural decadence? Are there perhaps — a question for doctors who treat madness — neuroses associated with health? With the youth of a people and with youthfulness? What is revealed in that synthesis of god and goat in the satyr? Out of what personal experience, what impulse, did the Greek have to imagine the Dionysian enthusiast and original man as a satyr? And so far as the origin of the tragic chorus is concerned, in those centuries when the Greek body flourished and the Greek soul bubbled over with life, were there perhaps endemic raptures? Visions and hallucinations which entire communities, entire cultural bodies, shared? How's that? What if it were the case that the Greeks, right in the richness of their youth, had the will for the tragic and were pessimists? What if it was clearly lunacy, to use a saying from Plato, which brought the greatest blessings throughout Greece?

And, on the other hand, what if, to turn the issue around, it was precisely during the period of their dissolution and weakness that the Greeks became constantly more optimistic, more superficial, more hypocritical, and with a greater lust for logic and rational understanding of the world, as well as “more cheerful” and “more scientific”? What's this? In spite of all “modern ideas” and the prejudices of democratic taste, could the victory of optimism, the developing hegemony of reasonableness, of practical and theoretical utilitarianism, as well as democracy itself, which occurs in the same period, perhaps be a symptom of failing power, of approaching old age, of physiological exhaustion, rather than pessimism? Was Epicurus an optimist — precisely because he was suffering? — We see that this book was burdened with an entire bundle of difficult questions — let us add its most difficult question: What, from the point of view of living, does morality mean? . . .

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<sup>10</sup> Pericles : (495-429 BC) political leader of Athens at the height of its power; his Funeral Oration commemorating those Athenians killed in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, as it is described by the great contemporary historian Thucydides (460-395 BC), celebrates the glories of Athens and its citizens.



The preface to Richard Wagner already proposed that art — and not morality — was the essential metaphysical human activity; in the book itself there appears many times over the suggestive statement that the existence of the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In fact, the entire book recognizes only an artist's sense and — a deeper meaning under everything that happens — a “God,” if you will, but certainly only a totally unthinking and amoral artist-God, who in creation as in destruction, in good things as in bad, desires to become aware of his own pleasures and autocratic power equally, a God who, as he creates worlds, rids himself of the distress of fullness and superfluity, from the suffering of pressing internal contradictions. The world is at every moment the attained redemption of God, as the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the one who suffers most, who is the most rent with contradictions, the most inconsistent, who knows how to save himself only in appearances.

People may call this entire artistic metaphysics arbitrary, pointless, and fantastic — the essential point about it is that it already betrays a spirit which will at some point risk everything to stand against the moralistic interpretation and meaningfulness of existence. Here is announced, perhaps for the first time, a pessimism “beyond good and evil”; here is expressed in word and formula that “perversity in belief” against which Schopenhauer never grew tired of hurling his angriest curses and thunderbolts in advance — a philosophy which dares to place morality itself in the world of phenomena, to subsume it, not merely under the “visions” (in the sense of some idealistic terminus technicus [technical end point] ) but under “illusions,” as an appearance, delusion, fallacy, interpretation, something made up, a work of art.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps we can best gauge the depth of this tendency hostile to morality from the careful and antagonistic silence with which Christianity is treated in the entire book — Christianity as the most excessively thorough elaboration of a moralistic theme which humanity up to this point has had available to listen to. To tell the truth, there is nothing which stands in greater opposition to the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world, as it is taught in this book, than Christian doctrine, which is and wishes to be merely moralistic and which, with its absolute standards, beginning, for example, with its truthfulness of God, relegates art, every art, to the realm of lies — in other words, which denies art, condemns it, and passes sentence on it.

Behind such a way of thinking and evaluating, which must be hostile to art, so long as it is in any way genuine, I always perceived also something hostile to life, the wrathful, vengeful aversion to life itself; for all life rests on appearance, art, illusion,

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<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer : Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), German philosopher whose work had a strong influence on Nietzsche.



optics, the need for perspective and for error. Christianity was from the start essentially and thoroughly life's disgust and weariness with life, which only dressed itself up with, only hid itself in, only decorated itself with the belief in an "other" or "better" life. The hatred of the "world," the curse against the emotions, the fear of beauty and sensuality, a world beyond created so that the world on this side might be more easily slandered, at bottom a longing for nothingness, for extinction, for rest, until the "Sabbath of all Sabbaths" — all that, as well as the absolute desire of Christianity to allow only moral values to count, has always seemed to me the most dangerous and most eerie form of all possible manifestations of a "Will to Destruction," at least a sign of the deepest illness, weariness, bad temper, exhaustion, and impoverishment in living — for in the eyes of morality (and particularly Christian morality, that is, absolute morality) life must be seen as constantly and inevitably wrong, because life is something essentially amoral — hence, pressed down under the weight of contempt and eternal No's, life must finally be experienced as something not worth desiring, as something inherently worthless. And what about morality itself? Might not morality be a "desire for the denial of life," a secret instinct for destruction, a principle of decay, diminution, slander, a beginning of the end? And thus, the danger of dangers? . . .

And so, my instinct at that time turned itself against morality in this questionable book, as an instinct affirming life, and invented for itself a fundamentally different doctrine and a totally opposite way of evaluating life, something purely artistic and anti-Christian . What should it be called? As a philologist and man of words, I baptized it, taking some liberties — for who knew the correct name of the Antichrist? — after the name of a Greek god: I called it the Dionysian .

## 6

Do people understand the nature of the task I dared to touch on back then with this book? . . . How much I now regret the fact that at the time I did not yet have the courage (or the presumptuousness?) to allow myself in every respect a personal language for such an individual point of view and such daring exploits — that I sought labouriously to express strange and new evaluations with formulas from Schopenhauer and Kant, something which basically went quite against the spirit of Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as against their tastes! <sup>12</sup>

What then did Schopenhauer think about tragedy? He says, "What gives everything tragic its characteristic drive for elevation is the working out of the recognition that the

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<sup>12</sup> Kant : Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German philosopher, one of the most important figures in the Enlightenment.



world, that life, can provide no proper satisfaction, and thus our devotion to it is not worthwhile ; the tragic spirit consists of that insight — it leads therefore to resignation ” ( *The World as Will and Idea* , II,3,37). O how differently Dionysus spoke to me! O how far from me then was precisely this whole doctrine of resignation [Resignationismus] ! —

But there is something much worse about my book, something which I now regret even more than to have obscured and spoiled Dionysian premonitions with formulas from Schopenhauer: namely, that I generally ruined for myself the magnificent problem of the Greeks , as it arose in me, by mixing it up with the most modern issues! I regret that I tied myself to hopes where there was nothing to hope for, where everything indicated all too clearly an end point! That, on the basis of the most recent German music, I began to tell stories of the “German character,” as if that character might be just about to discover itself, to find itself again — and that at a time when the German spirit, which not so long before still had the desire to rule Europe and the power to assume leadership of Europe, was, as its final testament, simply abdicating forever and, beneath the ostentatious pretext of founding an empire, making the transition to a conciliatory moderation, to democracy and “modern ideas”! As a matter of fact, in the intervening years I have learned to think of that “German character” with a sufficient lack of hope and of mercy — similarly with contemporary German music , which is Romantic through and through and the most un-Greek of all possible art forms, and besides that, a first-rate corrupter of the nerves, doubly dangerous among a people who love drink and esteem lack of clarity as a virtue, because that has the dual character of a drug which simultaneously intoxicates and befuddles the mind. — Of course, set apart from all the rash hopes and defective practical applications to present times with which I then spoiled my first book for myself, the great Dionysian question mark still remains as it is set out there, also in relation to music: How would one have to create a music which is no longer Romantic in origin, like the German — but Dionysian ?

## 7

But, my dear sir, what in all the world is Romantic if your book is not? Can the deep hatred against “modernism,” “reality,” and “modern ideas” go any further than it does in your artists' metaphysics — which would sooner still believe in nothingness or the devil than in the “here and now”? Does not a fundamental bass note of anger and



desire for destruction rumble underneath all your contrapuntal vocal art and seductive sounds, a raging determination in opposition to everything “contemporary,” a desire which is not too distant from practical nihilism and which seems to say “Better that nothing were true than that you were right, than that your truth were correct!” Listen to yourself, my pessimistic gentleman and worshipper of art, listen with open ears to a single selected passage from your book, to that not ineloquent passage about the dragon killer, which may sound like an incriminating pied piper to those with young ears and hearts. What? Is that not a true and proper Romantic declaration of 1830, under the mask of the pessimism of 1850, behind which is already playing the prelude to the usual Romantic finale — break, collapse, return, and prostration before an ancient belief, before the old God. . . . What? Isn't your book for pessimists itself an anti-Greek and Romantic piece, even something “as intoxicating as it is befuddling,” in any event, a narcotic, even a piece of music, German music ? Listen to the following:

“Let's picture for ourselves a generation growing up with this fearlessness in its gaze, with this heroic push into what is tremendous; let's picture for ourselves the bold stride of these dragon slayers, the proud audacity with which they turn their backs on all the doctrines of weakness associated with optimism, in order to live with resolution, fully and completely. Would it not be necessary that the tragic man of this culture, having trained himself for what is serious and frightening, desire a new art, the art of metaphysical consolation , the tragedy, as his own personal Helen of Troy, and to have to cry out with Faust:

With my desire's power, should I not call

Into this life the fairest form of all? <sup>13</sup>

“Would it not be necessary ?” . . . No, three times no! You young Romantics: it should not be necessary! But it is very likely that things will end up like that — that you will end up like that — namely, “being consoled,” as it stands written, in spite of all the self-training for what is serious and frightening, “metaphysically consoled,” in short, the way Romantics finish up, as Christians . . . . No! You should first learn the art of consolation in this life — you should learn to laugh , my young friends, even if you wish to remain thoroughly pessimistic. From that, as laughing people, some day or other perhaps you will for once ship all metaphysical consolation to the devil — and

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<sup>13</sup> A quotation from Goethe's *Faust II* , 7438-9. The prose quotation before these lines is from Section 18 of *The Birth of Tragedy* .



then away with metaphysics! Or, to speak the language of that Dionysian fiend called Zarathustra<sup>14</sup> :

“Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher! And for my sake don't forget your legs as well! Raise up your legs, you fine dancers, and better yet, stand on your heads!” “This crown of the man who laughs, this crown wreathed with roses — I have placed this crown upon myself. I myself declare my laughter holy. Today I found no one else strong enough for that.” “Zarathustra the dancer, Zarathustra the light hearted, who beckons with his wings, a man ready to fly, hailing all birds, prepared and ready, a careless and blessed man.” — “Zarathustra the truth-teller, Zarathustra the true laughter, not an impatient man, not a man of absolutes, someone who loves jumps and leaps to the side — I myself crown myself!” “This crown of the laughing man, this crown of rose wreaths: you my brothers, I throw this crown to you! Laughter I declare sacred: you higher men, for my sake learn — to laugh!”

August 1886

### **Preface to Richard Wagner<sup>15</sup>**

In order to keep far away from me all possible disturbances, agitation, and misunderstandings which the assembly of ideas in this piece of writing will bring about on account of the peculiar character of our aesthetic public, and also to be capable of writing a word of introduction to the book with the same contemplative joy which marks every page, the crystallization of good inspirational hours, I am imagining to myself the look with which you, my esteemed friend, will receive this work — how you, perhaps after an evening stroll in the winter snow, look at the unbound Prometheus on the title page, read my name, and are immediately convinced that, no matter what this text consists of, the writer has something serious and urgent to say, and that, in addition, in everything which he composed, he was conversing with you as with someone present and could write down only what was appropriate to such a presence.

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<sup>14</sup> Zarathustra : the name Nietzsche uses throughout his works for his re-interpretation of Zoroaster, the ancient Persian prophet, in order to make him a spokesman for his own ideas, notably in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-1885), from which these concluding paragraphs are quoted. Zarathustra : the name Nietzsche uses throughout his works for his reinterpretation of Zoroaster, the ancient Persian prophet, in order to make him a spokesman for his own ideas, notably in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-1885), from which these concluding paragraphs are quoted.

<sup>15</sup> The original version of *Birth of Tragedy* (1871) starts with this section.



In this connection, you will remember that I gathered these ideas together at the same time that your marvellous commemorative volume on Beethoven appeared, that is, during the terror and grandeur of the war which had just broken out. Nevertheless, people would be wrong if this collection made them think of the contrast between patriotic excitement and aesthetic rapture, between a brave seriousness and a cheerful game. By actually reading this text, they should instead be astonished to recognize clearly the serious German problem which we have to deal with, the problem which we really placed right in the middle of German hopes, as its vortex and turning point. However, it will perhaps be generally offensive for these same people to see an aesthetic problem taken so seriously, if, that is, they are incapable of seeing art as anything more than a merry diversion, an easily dispensable bell-ringing in comparison with the "Seriousness of Existence," as if no one understood what was involved in this contrast with such "Seriousness of Existence." For these earnest readers, let this serve as a caution: I am convinced that art is the highest task and the essential metaphysical capability of this life, in the sense of that man to whom I here, as to my sublime pioneer on this path, wish this writing to be dedicated.

Basel, End of the Year 1871

## **The Birth of Tragedy**

### **1**

We will have achieved much for scientific study of aesthetics when we come, not merely to a logical understanding, but also to the certain and immediate apprehension of the fact that the further development of art is bound up with the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, just as reproduction similarly depends upon the duality of the sexes, their continuing strife and only periodically occurring reconciliation. We take these names from the Greeks, who gave a clear voice to the profound secret teachings of their contemplative art, not in ideas, but in the powerfully clear forms of their divine world.

With those two gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus, we establish our recognition that in the Greek world there exists a huge contrast, in origin and purposes, between the visual arts, the Apollonian, and the non-visual art of music, the Dionysian.<sup>16</sup> These two very different drives go hand in hand, for the most part in open conflict with each

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<sup>16</sup> Apollo : in Greek mythology the son of Zeus and Leto (hence a half-brother of Dionysus), associated with the sun and prophecy.



other and simultaneously provoking each other all the time to new and more powerful offspring, in order to perpetuate in them the contest of that opposition, which the common word “Art” only seems to bridge, until at last, through a marvellous metaphysical act of the Greek “will,” they appear paired up with each other and, as this pair, finally produce Attic tragedy, as much a Dionysian as an Apollonian work of art.

In order to bring those two drives closer to us, let us think of them first as the separate artistic worlds of dream and of intoxication, physiological phenomena between which we can observe an opposition corresponding to the one between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. According to the idea of Lucretius, the marvellous divine shapes first stepped out before the mind of man in a dream<sup>17</sup>. It was in a dream that the great artist saw the delightful anatomy of superhuman existence, and the Greek poet, questioned about the secrets of poetic creativity, would have also recalled his dreams and given an explanation similar to the one Hans Sachs provides in *Die Meistersinger*.<sup>18</sup>

My friend, that is precisely the poet's work —  
To figure out his dreams, mark them down.  
Believe me, the truest illusion of mankind  
Is revealed to him in dreams:  
All poetic art and poeticizing  
Is nothing but interpreting true dreams.

The beautiful appearance of the world of dreams, in whose creation each man is a complete artist, is the precondition of all plastic art, and also, in fact, as we shall see, an important part of poetry. We enjoy the form with an immediate understanding; every shape speaks to us; nothing is indifferent and unnecessary. For all the most intense life of this dream reality, we nevertheless have the thoroughly unpleasant sense of their illusory quality : that, at least, is my experience. For the frequency, indeed normality, of this response, I could point to many witnesses and the utterances of poets. Even the philosophical man has the presentiment that under this reality in which we live and have our being lies hidden a second, totally different reality and that thus the former is an illusion. And Schopenhauer specifically designates as the trademark of philosophical talent the ability to recognize at certain times that human beings and all things are mere phantoms or dream pictures. Now, just as the philosopher behaves in relation to the reality of existence, so the artistically excitable

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<sup>17</sup> Lucretius : Titus Lucretius Carus (99 BC to 55 BC), Roman philosopher and poet, author of *De Rerum Natura* ( On the Nature of Things ).

<sup>18</sup> Hans Sachs : a historical person and a character portrayed in Richard Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*



man behaves in relation to the reality of dreams: he looks at them precisely and with pleasure, for from these pictures he fashions his interpretation of life; from these events he rehearses his life for himself. This is not merely a case of the agreeable and friendly images which he experiences in himself with a complete understanding; they also include what is serious, cloudy, sad, dark, sudden scruples, teasing accidents, nervous expectations, in short, the entire “divine comedy” of life, including the Inferno — all this moves past him, not just like a shadow play — for he lives and suffers in the midst of these scenes — and yet also not without that fleeting sense of illusion. And perhaps several people remember, like me, amid the dangers and terrors of a dream, successfully cheering themselves up by shouting: “It is a dream! I want to dream it some more!” I have also heard accounts of some people who had the ability to set out the causality of one and the same dream over three or more consecutive nights. These facts are clear evidence showing that our innermost beings, the secret underground in all of us, experiences its dreams with deep enjoyment and a sense of delightful necessity. In the same manner the Greeks expressed this joyful necessity of the dream experience in their Apollo; Apollo, as the god of all the plastic arts, is at the same time the god of prophecy. In accordance with the root meaning of his association with “brightness,” he is the god of light; he also rules over the beautiful appearance of the inner fantasy world. The higher truth, the perfection of this condition in contrast to the sketchy understanding of our daily reality, as well as the deep consciousness of a healing and helping nature in sleep and dreaming, is at the same time the symbolic analogy to the capacity to prophesy the truth, as well as to art in general, through which life is made possible and worth living. But also that delicate line which the dream image may not cross so that it does not work its effect pathologically — otherwise the illusion would deceive us as crude reality — that line must not be absent from the image of Apollo, that boundary of moderation, that freedom from more ecstatic excitement, that fully wise calm of the god of images. His eye must be “sun-like,” in keeping with his origin; even when he is angry and gazes with displeasure, the consecration of the beautiful illusion rests on him.

And so concerning Apollo one could endorse, in an eccentric way, what Schopenhauer says of the man trapped in the veil of Maja: “As on the stormy sea which extends without limit on all sides, howling mountainous waves rise up and sink and a sailor sits in a row boat, trusting the weak craft, so, in the midst of a world of torments, the solitary man sits peacefully, supported by and trusting in the principium individuationis [principle of individuation] ” ( World as Will and Idea , I.1.3). <sup>19</sup> In

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<sup>19</sup> . . . the veil of Maja : a phrase used by Schopenhauer to describe a screen which exists between “the world inside my head and the world outside my head,” that is, the world of human representation which has no true objectivity.



fact, we could say of Apollo that the imperturbable trust in that principle and the calm sitting still of the man caught up in it attained its loftiest expression in him, and we may even designate Apollo himself as the marvellous divine image of the principium individuationis, from whose gestures and gaze all the joy and wisdom of “illusion,” together with its beauty, speak to us. In the same place Schopenhauer also described for us the tremendous awe which seizes a man when he suddenly doubts his ways of comprehending illusion, when the principle of reason, in any one of its forms, appears to suffer from an exception. If we add to this awe the ecstatic rapture, which rises up out of the same collapse of the principium individuationis from the innermost depths of a human being, indeed, from the innermost depths of nature, then we have a glimpse into the essence of the Dionysian, which is presented to us most closely through the analogy to intoxication. Either through the influence of narcotic drink, of which all primitive men and peoples speak in their hymns, or through the powerful coming on of spring, which drives joyfully through all of nature, that Dionysian excitement arises; as it intensifies, the subjective fades into complete forgetfulness of self. Even in the German Middle Ages, under the same power of Dionysus, constantly growing hordes thronged from place to place, singing and dancing; in these St. John's and St. Vitus's dances we recognize the Bacchic chorus of the Greeks once again, with its precursors in Asia Minor, right back to Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea [riotous Babylonian festival]. There are people who, from a lack of experience or out of apathy, turn mockingly or pityingly away from such phenomena as from a “sickness of the people,” with a sense of their own health. These poor people naturally do not have any sense of how deathly and ghost-like this very “health” of theirs sounds, when the glowing life of the Dionysian throng roars past them. Under the magic of the Dionysian, not only does the bond between man and man lock itself in place once more, but also nature itself, no matter how alienated, hostile, or subjugated, rejoices again in her festival of reconciliation with her prodigal son, man. The earth freely offers up her gifts, and the beasts of prey from the rocks and the desert approach in peace. The wagon of Dionysus is covered with flowers and wreaths; under his yolk stride panthers and tigers.

If someone were to transform Beethoven's Ode to Joy into a painting and not restrain his imagination when millions of people sink dramatically into the dust, then we could come close to the Dionysian. Now the slave a free man; now all the stiff, hostile barriers break apart, those things which necessity and arbitrary power or “saucy fashion” have established between men. Now, with the gospel of world harmony, every man feels himself not only united with his neighbour, reconciled and fused together, but also as one with him, as if the veil of Maja had been ripped apart, with



only scraps fluttering around in the face of the mysterious primordial unity. Singing and dancing, man expresses himself as a member of a higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and talk and is on the verge of flying up into the air as he dances. The enchantment speaks out in his gestures. Just as the animals now speak and the earth gives milk and honey, so something supernatural also echoes out of him: he feels himself a god; he himself now moves in as lofty and ecstatic a way as he saw the gods move in his dream. The man is no longer an artist; he has become a work of art: the artistic power of all of nature, to the highest rhapsodic satisfaction of the primordial unity, reveals itself here in the transports of intoxication. The finest clay, the most expensive marble — man — is here worked and chiselled, and the cry of the Eleusinian mysteries rings out to the chisel blows of the Dionysian world artist: “Do you fall down, you millions? World, do you have a sense of your creator?”<sup>20</sup>

## 2

Up to this point, we have considered the Apollonian and its opposite, the Dionysian, as artistic forces which break forth out of nature itself, without the mediation of the human artist, and in which the human artistic drives are for the time being satisfied directly — on the one hand, as a world of dream images, whose perfection has no connection with an individual’s high level of intellect or artistic education, on the other hand, as the intoxicating reality, which once again does not respect the individual, but even seeks to abolish the individual and to redeem him through a mystical feeling of collective unity. In comparison to these unmediated artistic states of nature, every artist is an “imitator,” and, in fact, is an artist either of Apollonian dream or Dionysian intoxication or, finally — as in Greek tragedy, for example — simultaneously an artist of intoxication and of dreams. As the last, it is possible for us to imagine how he sinks down in Dionysian drunkenness and mystical obliteration of the self, alone and apart from the rapturous choruses, and how, through the Apollonian effects of dream, his own state now reveals itself to him, that is, his unity with the innermost basis of the world, in a metaphorical dream picture.

Having set out these general assumptions and comparisons, let us now approach the Greeks, in order to recognize to what degree and to what heights those artistic drives of nature were developed in them: in that way we will be in a position to understand more deeply and to assess the relationship of the Greek artist to his primordial images

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<sup>20</sup> . . . creator ”: this quotation comes from Schiller’s poem which provides the words for Beethoven’s Ode to Joy .  
Eleusinian mysteries: secret ecstatic religious ceremonies.



or, to use Aristotle's expression, his "imitation of nature." In spite of all their literature on dreams and numerous dream anecdotes, we can speak of the dreams of the Greeks only hypothetically, although with fair certainty. Given the incredibly clear and accurate plastic capability of their eyes, along with their intelligent and open love of colour, one cannot go wrong in assuming that, to the shame all those born later, their dreams also had a logical causality of lines and circumferences, colours, and groupings, a sequence of scenes rather like their best bas reliefs, whose perfection would certainly entitle us, if such a comparison were possible, to describe the dreaming Greek man as Homer and Homer as a dreaming Greek man, in a deeper sense than when modern man, with respect to his dreams, has the temerity to compare himself with Shakespeare. On the other hand, we do not need to speak merely hypothetically when we are to expose the immense gap which separates the Dionysian Greeks from the Dionysian barbarians. In all quarters of the old world — setting aside here the newer worlds — from Rome to Babylon, we can confirm the existence of Dionysian celebrations, of a type, at best, related to the Greek type in much the same way as the bearded satyr, whose name and attributes are taken from the goat, is related to Dionysus himself. Almost everywhere, the central point of these celebrations consisted of an exuberant sexual promiscuity, whose waves flooded over all established family practices and its traditional laws. The very wildest bestiality of nature was here unleashed, creating that abominable mixture of lust and cruelty, which has always seemed to me the real "witches' cauldron."

From the feverish excitement of those festivals, knowledge of which reached the Greeks from all directions by land and sea, they were, it seems, for a long time completely secure and protected through the figure of Apollo, drawn up here in all his pride. Apollo could counter by holding up the head of Medusa, for no power was more dangerous than this massive and grotesque Dionysian force.<sup>21</sup> Doric art has immortalized that majestic bearing of Apollo as he stands in opposition.<sup>22</sup> This resistance became more dubious and even impossible as similar impulses finally broke out from the deepest roots of Hellenic culture itself: now the effect of the Delphic god, in a timely final process of reconciliation, limited itself to taking the destructive weapon out of the hand of the powerful opponent. This reconciliation is the most important moment in the history of Greek culture. Wherever we look, the revolutionary effects of this event manifest themselves. It was the reconciliation of two opponents, who from now on observed their differences with a sharp demarcation

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<sup>21</sup> . . head of Medusa : In Greek mythology, Medusa was one of the three monstrous sisters called the Gorgons; her face could turn those who looked at it into stone.

<sup>22</sup> Doric art : An older form of Greek art and architecture which arose in the seventh century BC.



of the border line to be kept between them and with occasional gifts sent to honour each other, but basically the gap was not bridged over. However, if we see how, under the pressure of that peace agreement, the Dionysian power revealed itself, then we now understand the meaning of the festivals of world redemption and days of transfiguration in the Dionysian orgies of the Greeks, in comparison with that Babylonian Sacaea, which turned human beings back into tigers and apes.

In these Greek festivals, for the first time nature achieves its artistic jubilee. In them, for the first time, the tearing apart of the principii individuationis [the principle of individuation] becomes an artistic phenomenon. Here that dreadful witches' cauldron of lust and cruelty was without power. The strange mixture and ambiguity in the emotions of the Dionysian celebrant only remind him — as healing potions remind one of deadly poison — of that phenomenon that pain awakens joy, that the jubilation in his chest rips out cries of agony. From the most sublime joy echoes the cry of horror or the longingly plaintive lament over an irreparable loss. In those Greek festivals it was as if a sentimental feature of nature is breaking out, as if nature has to sigh over her dismemberment into separate individuals. The song and the language of gestures of such a doubly defined celebrant was for the Homeric Greek world something new and unheard of, and in it Dionysian music, in particular, awoke fear and terror. If music was apparently already known as an Apollonian art, this music, strictly speaking, was a rhythmic pattern like the sound of waves, whose artistic power had been developed for presenting Apollonian states. The music of Apollo was Doric architecture expressed in sound, but only in intimate tones characteristic of the cithara [a traditional stringed instrument]. It kept at a careful distance, as something un-Apollonian, the particular element which constitutes the character of Dionysian music and, along with that, of music generally, the emotionally disturbing tonal power, the unified stream of melody, and the totally incomparable world of harmony.

In the Dionysian dithyramb man is aroused to the highest intensity of all his symbolic capabilities; something never felt forces itself into expression, the destruction of the veil of Maja, the sense of oneness as the presiding genius of form, in fact, of nature itself. Now the essence of nature is to express itself symbolically; a new world of symbols is necessary, the entire symbolism of the body, not just the symbolism of the mouth, of the face, and of the words, but the full gestures of the dance, all the limbs moving to the rhythm. And then the other symbolic powers grow, those of the music, in rhythm, dynamics, and harmony — with sudden violence.

To grasp this total unleashing of all symbolic powers, man must already have attained that high level of freedom from the self which desires to express itself symbolically in



those forces. Because of this, the dithyrambic servant of Dionysus will be understood only by someone like himself! With what astonishment must the Apollonian Greek have gazed at him! With an amazement which was all the greater as he sensed with horror that all this might not be really so foreign to him, that, in fact, his Apollonian consciousness was, like a veil, merely covering the Dionysian world in front of him.

### 3

In order to grasp this point, we must dismantle that artistic structure of Apollonian culture, as it were, stone by stone, until we see the foundations on which it is built. Here we now become aware for the first time of the marvellous Olympian divine forms, which stand on the pediments of this building and whose actions decorate its friezes all around in illuminating bas relief. If Apollo also stands among them as a single god next to others and without any claim to a pre-eminent position, we should not on that account let ourselves be deceived. The same drive which made itself sensuously perceptible in Apollo gave birth to that entire Olympian world in general, and, in this sense, we are entitled to value Apollo as the father of that world. What was the immense need out of which such an illuminating society of Olympian beings arose?

Anyone who steps up to these Olympians with another religion in his heart and now seeks from them ethical loftiness, even sanctity, non-physical spirituality, loving gazes filled with pity, will soon have to turn his back despondently in disappointment with them. Here there is no reminder of asceticism, spirituality, and duty: here speaks to us only a full, indeed a triumphant, existence, in which everything present is worshipped, no matter whether it is good or evil. And thus the onlooker may well stand in real consternation in front of this fantastic excess of life, to ask himself with what magical drink in their bodies these high-spirited men could have enjoyed life, so that wherever they look, Helen laughs back at them, that ideal image of their own existence, "hovering in sweet sensuousness." However, we must call out to this onlooker who has already turned his back: "Don't leave them. First listen to what Greek folk wisdom expresses about this very life which spreads itself out here before you with such inexplicable serenity.

There is an old legend that king Midas for a long time hunted the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, in the forests, without catching him. When Silenus finally fell into the king's hands, the king asked what was the best thing of all for men, the very finest. The daemon remained silent, motionless and inflexible, until, compelled by the



king, he finally broke out into shrill laughter and said these words, “Suffering creature, born for a day, child of accident and toil, why are you forcing me to say what would give you the greatest pleasure not to hear? The very best thing for you is totally unreachable: not to have been born, not to exist, to be nothing. The second best thing for you, however, is this — to die soon.”

What is the relationship between the Olympian world of the gods and this popular wisdom? It is like the relationship of the entrancing vision of the tortured martyr to his torments. Now, as it were, the Olympic magic mountain reveals itself and shows us its roots. The Greek knew and felt the terror and horrors of existence: in order to be able to live at all, he must have placed in front of him the gleaming dream birth of the Olympians. That immense distrust of the titanic forces of nature, that Moira [Fate] enthroned mercilessly above everything which could be known, that vulture of the great friend of man, Prometheus, that fatal lot of wise Oedipus, that family curse on the House of Atreus, which compelled Orestes to kill his mother, in short, that entire philosophy of the woodland god, together with its mythical illustrations, from which the melancholy Etruscans died off — that was overcome time after time by the Greeks, or at least hidden and removed from view, through the artistic middle world [Mittelwelt] of the Olympians.<sup>23</sup>

In order to be able to live, the Greeks must have created these gods out of the deepest necessity. We can readily imagine the sequential development of these gods: through that Apollonian drive for beauty there developed, by a slow transition out of the primordial titanic divine order of terror, the Olympian divine order of joy, just as roses break forth out of thorny bushes. How else could a people so emotionally sensitive, so spontaneously desiring, so singularly capable of suffering, have been able to endure their existence, unless the same qualities, with a loftier glory flowing round them, manifested themselves in their gods. The same impulse which summons art into life as the seductive replenishment for further living and the completion of existence also gave rise to the Olympian world, in which the Hellenic “Will” held before itself a transfiguring mirror.

In this way, the gods justify the lives of men, because they themselves live it — that is the only satisfactory theodicy! Existence under the bright sunshine of such gods is experienced as worth striving for in itself, and the essential pain of the Homeric men refers to separation from that sunlight, above all in the fact that such separation is coming soon, so that people could now say of them, with a reversal of the wisdom of

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<sup>23</sup> Prometheus, a Titan, brought fire down from heaven to human beings. Zeus punished him by chaining him on a mountain and sending a vulture to feed on his liver during the day.



Silenus, “The very worst thing for them was to die soon; the second worst was to die at all.” When the laments resound now, they tell once more of short-lived Achilles, of the changes in the race of men, transformed like leaves, of the destruction of the heroic age. It is not unworthy of the greatest hero to long to live on, even as a day labourer.<sup>24</sup> Thus, in the Apollonian stage, the “Will” spontaneously demands to keep on living, the Homeric man feels himself so at one with living, that even his lament becomes a song of praise.

Here we must now point out that this harmony, looked on with such longing by more recent men, in fact, that unity of man with nature, for which Schiller coined the artistic slogan “naive,” is in no way such a simple, inevitable, and, as it were, unavoidable condition, like a human paradise, which we necessarily run into at the door of every culture: such a belief is possible only in an age which seeks to believe that Rousseau’s *Emile* is also an artist and which imagines it has found in Homer an artist like Oedipus’ fatal destiny had him unknowingly kill his father and marry his mother. When he learned the truth, he tore out his own eyes. The House of Atreus suffered from a savage curse which pitted Atreus, father of Agamemnon, against his brother Thyestes. Thyestes’ son, Aegisthus, seduced Agamemnon’s wife, Clytaemnestra, and together they murdered Agamemnon. Orestes, Agamemnon’s only son, avenged his father by killing Aegisthus and his own mother, Clytaemnestra. The Etruscans were the dominant group in central Italy before the rise of the Roman Republic .

*Emile* raised in the bosom of nature.<sup>25</sup> Wherever we encounter the “naive” in art, we have to recognize the highest effect of Apollonian culture, which always first has to overthrow the kingdom of the Titans and to kill monsters, and through powerfully deluding images and joyful illusions, has to emerge victorious over the horrific depth of what we observe in the world and the most sensitive capacity for suffering. But how seldom does the naive, that sense of being completely swallowed up in the beauty of appearance, succeed! For that reason, how inexpressibly noble is Homer , who, as a single individual, was related to that Apollonian popular culture as the individual dream artist is to the people’s capacity to dream and to nature in general.

Homeric “naivete” is only to be understood as the complete victory of the Apollonian illusion. It is the sort of illusion which nature uses so frequently in order to attain her objectives. The true goal is concealed by a deluding image: we stretch our hands out

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<sup>24</sup> 2 The shade of the dead Achilles makes this claim to Odysseus in Book XI of the *Odyssey*

<sup>25</sup> Schiller : Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German poet, dramatist, and philosopher. Rousseau : Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), French philosopher, novelist, and political theorist. His book *Emile* , published in 1762, presents his extremely influential philosophy and program of education.



toward this image, and nature reaches its goal through our deception. With the Greeks the “Will” wished to gaze upon itself through the transforming power of genius and the world of art; in order to glorify itself, its creatures had to sense that they themselves were worthy of being glorified; they had to see themselves again in a higher sphere, without this complete world of contemplation affecting them as an imperative or as a reproach. This is the sphere of beauty, in which they saw their mirror images, the Olympians. With this mirror of beauty, the Hellenic “Will” fought against the talent for suffering, which is bound up with artistic talent, and the wisdom of suffering, and, as a memorial of its victory, Homer stands before us, the naive artist.

#### 4

Using the analogy of a dream, we can learn something about this naive artist. If we recall how the dreamer, in the middle of his illusory dream world, calls out to himself, without destroying that world, “It is a dream. I want to continue dreaming it,” and if we can infer from that, on the one hand, that he has a deep inner delight at the contemplation of the dream, and, on the other, that he must have completely forgotten the day and its terrible demands, in order to be capable of dreaming at all with this inner joy at contemplation, then we may interpret all these phenomena, with the guidance of Apollo, the interpreter of dreams, in something like the manner which follows. To be sure, with respect to both halves of life, the waking and the dreaming parts, the first one strikes us as disproportionately more privileged, more important, more valuable, more worth living, in fact, the only part which is lived; nevertheless, I would like to assert, something of a paradox to all appearances, for the sake of that secret foundation of our essence, whose manifestation we are, precisely the opposite evaluation of dreams. For the more I become aware of those all-powerful natural artistic impulses and the fervent yearning for illusion contained in them, the desire to be redeemed through appearances, the more I feel myself pushed to the metaphysical assumption that the true being and the primordial oneness, ever-suffering and entirely contradictory, constantly uses the delightful vision, the joyful illusion, to redeem itself; we are compelled to experience this illusion, totally caught up in it and constituted by it, as the truly non-existent, that is, as a continuous development in time, space, and causality, in other words, as empirical reality. But if we momentarily look away from our own “reality,” if we grasp our empirical existence and the world in general as an idea of the primordial oneness created in every moment, then we must now consider our dream as the illusion of an illusion, as well as an even higher fulfilment of the original hunger for illusion. For this same reason, the innermost core of nature takes



that indescribable joy in the naive artist and naive work of art, which is, in the same way, only “an illusion of an illusion.”

Raphael, himself one of those immortal “naive” men, has presented in an allegorical painting that reduction of an illusion into an illusion, the fundamental process of the naive artist and Apollonian culture as well.<sup>26</sup> In his *Transfiguration* the bottom half shows us, with the possessed boy, the despairing porters, the helplessly frightened disciples, the mirror image of the eternal primordial pain, the sole basis of the world. The “illusion” here is the reflection of the eternal contradiction, of the father of things. Now, out of this illusion there rises up, like an ambrosial fragrance, a new world of illusion, like a vision, invisible to those trapped in the first scene — something illuminating and hovering in the purest painless ecstasy, a shining vision to contemplate with eyes wide open. Here we have before our eyes, in the highest symbolism of art, that Apollonian world of beauty and its foundation, the frightening wisdom of Silenus, and we understand, through intuition, their reciprocal necessity. But Apollo confronts us once again as the divine manifestation of the *principii individuationis* [the principle of individuation], the only thing through which the eternally attained goal of the primordial oneness, its redemption through illusion, takes place: he shows us, with awe-inspiring gestures, how the entire world of torment is necessary, so that through it the individual is pushed to the creation of the redemptive vision and then, absorbed in contemplation of that vision, sits quietly in his rowboat, tossing around in the middle of the ocean.

This deification of individuation, if it is thought of in general as commanding and proscriptive, understands only one law, the individual, that is, observing the limits of individualization, moderation in the Greek sense. Apollo, as an ethical divinity, demands moderation from his followers and, so that they can observe self-control, a knowledge of the self. And so alongside the aesthetic necessity of beauty run the demands “Know thyself” and “Nothing too much!”; whereas, arrogance and excess are considered the essentially hostile daemons belonging to the non-Apollonian sphere, therefore characteristics of the pre-Apollonian period, the age of the Titans, and of the world beyond the Apollonian, that is, the barbarian world.<sup>27</sup> Because of his Titanic love for mankind, Prometheus had to be ripped apart by the vulture. For the sake of his excessive wisdom, which solved the riddle of the sphinx, Oedipus had to

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<sup>26</sup> Raphael : Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520) a major artist of the Renaissance.

<sup>27</sup> Titans : In Greek mythology these were the divine figures before the Olympians. Zeus overthrew and imprisoned them. The barbarian world, for the Greeks, included those people who did not speak Greek, whose language sounded like gibberish to them (“bar . . . bar . . . bar”).



be overthrown in a bewildering whirlpool of evil. That is how the Delphic god interpreted the Greek past.<sup>28</sup>

To the Apollonian Greek the effect aroused by the Dionysian also seemed “Titanic” and “barbaric.” But he could not, with that response, conceal that he himself was, nonetheless, at the same time also internally related to those deposed Titans and heroes. Indeed, he must have felt even more: his entire existence, with all its beauty and moderation, rested on a hidden underground of suffering and knowledge, which was exposed for him again through that very Dionysian. And look! Apollo could not live without Dionysus! The “Titanic” and the “barbaric” were, in the end, every bit as necessary as the Apollonian!

And now let us imagine how in this world, constructed on illusion and moderation and restrained by art, the ecstatic sound of the Dionysian celebration rang out all around with a constantly more enticing magic, how in these celebrations the entire excess of nature made itself known in joy, suffering, and knowledge, even in the most piercing scream. Let us imagine what the psalm-chanting Apollonian artist, with his ghostly harp music could have meant in comparison to this daemonic popular singing! The muses of the art of “illusion” withered away in the face of an art which spoke truth in its intoxicated state: the wisdom of Silenus cried out “Woe! Woe!” against the serene Olympians. The individual, with all his limits and moderation, was destroyed in the self-oblivion of the Dionysian condition and forgot the Apollonian principles.

Excess revealed itself as the truth. The contradiction, the ecstasy born from pain, spoke of itself right out of the heart of nature. And so the Apollonian was cancelled and destroyed everywhere the Dionysian penetrated. But it is just as certain that in those places where the first onslaught was halted, the high reputation and the majesty of the Delphic god manifested itself more firmly and threateningly than ever. For I can explain the Doric state and Doric art only as a constant Apollonian war camp: only through an uninterrupted opposition to the Titanic-barbaric essence of the Dionysian could such a defiantly aloof art, protected on all sides with fortifications, such a harsh upbringing as a preparation for war, and such a cruel and ruthless basis for government endure for a long time.<sup>29</sup> Up to this point I have set out at some length

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<sup>28</sup> The sphinx was a monster who terrorized the city of Thebes. Oedipus solved the riddle posed by the Sphinx and was made king of Thebes. The Delphic god is Apollo, who had his major shrine at Delphi.

<sup>29</sup> Dorian art was associated with Sparta, a city state preoccupied with military training, warfare, and an inflexible political system.



what I observed at the opening of this essay: how the Dionysian and the Apollonian ruled the Hellenic world in a constantly new sequence of births, one after the other, mutually intensifying each other; how, out of the “first” age, with its battles against the Titans and its austere popular philosophy, the Homeric world developed under the rule of the Apollonian drive for beauty; how this “naive” magnificence was swallowed up once more by the breaking out of the Dionysian torrent; and how, in opposition to this new power, the Apollonian erected the rigid majesty of Doric art and the Doric world view. If in this way the earlier history of the Greeks, in the struggle of those two hostile principles, falls into four major artistic periods, we are now impelled to ask more about the final stage of this development and striving, in case we should consider, for example, the last attained period, the one of Doric art, the summit and intention of those artistic impulses. Here, the lofty and highly praised artistic achievement of Attic tragedy and of the dramatic dithyramb presents itself before our eyes, as the common goal of both impulses, whose secret marriage partnership, after a long antecedent struggle, glorified itself with such a child — simultaneously Antigone and Cassandra<sup>30</sup>.

## 5

We are now approaching the essential goal of our undertaking, which aims at a knowledge of the Dionysian-Apollonian genius and its work of art, at least at an intuitive understanding of that mysterious unity. Here now, to begin with, we raise the question of where that new seed first manifests itself in the Hellenic world, the seed which later develops into tragedy and the dramatic dithyramb. On this question, classical antiquity itself gives us illustrative evidence when it places Homer and Archilochus next to each other in paintings, cameos, and so on, as the originators and torch-bearers of Greek poetry, in full confidence that only these two should be equally considered completely original natures from whom a fire-storm flowed out over the entire later world of the Greeks.<sup>31</sup> Homer, the ancient, self-absorbed dreamer, the archetype of the naive Apollonian artist, now stares astonished at the passionate head of wild Archilochus, the fighting servant of the Muses, battered by existence. In its

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<sup>30</sup> Antigone, a daughter of Oedipus, who killed herself rather than obey the state, is the famous tragic heroine of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*. Cassandra, daughter of Priam, king of Troy, was a prophetess. She was given to Agamemnon as a war prize and murdered along with him by Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra when the Greek armies returned home after the Trojan War.

<sup>31</sup> Homer: the name given by the Greeks to the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (composed in the eighth century BC); Archilochus: (680 BC to c. 645 BC), Greek poet from the island of Paros.



interpretative efforts, our more recent aesthetics has known only how to indicate that here the first “subjective” artist stands in contrast to the “objective” artist. This interpretation is of little use to us, since we recognize the subjective artist only as a bad artist and demand in every style of art and every high artistic achievement, first and foremost, a victory over the subjective, redemption from the “I,” and the silence of every individual will and desire; indeed, we are incapable of believing the slightest artistic creation true, unless it has objectivity and a purely disinterested contemplation. Hence, our aesthetic must first solve that problem of how it is possible for the “lyric poet” to be an artist, for he, according to the experience of all ages, always says “I” and sings out in front of us the entire chromatic sequence of the sounds of his passions and desires. This very Archilochus startles us, alongside Homer, through the cry of his hate and scorn, through the drunken eruptions of his desire. By doing this, is not Archilochus, the first artist called subjective, essentially a non-artist? But then where does that veneration come from, which the Delphic oracle itself, the centre of “objective” art, showed to him, the poet, in very remarkable utterances.

Schiller has illuminated his own writing process for us with a psychological observation which was inexplicable to him but which nevertheless did not appear questionable, for he confesses that when he was in a state of preparation, before he actually started writing, he did not have something like a series of pictures, with a structured causality of ideas, in front of him and inside him, but rather a musical mood (“With me, feeling at first lacks a defined and clear object; the latter develops for the first time later on. A certain musical emotional state comes first, and from this, with me, the poetic idea then follows.”

If we now add the most important phenomenon of the entire ancient lyric, the union, universally acknowledged as natural, between the lyricist and the musician, in fact, their common identity — in comparison with which our recent lyrics look like the image of a god without a head — then we can, on the basis of the aesthetic metaphysics we established earlier, now account for the lyric poet in the following manner. He has, first of all, as a Dionysian artist, become entirely unified with the primordial oneness, with its pain and contradiction, and produces the reflection of this primordial oneness as music, if music can with justice be called a re-working of the world and its second casting. But now this music becomes perceptible to him once again, as in a metaphorical dream image, under the influence of Apollonian dreaming. That reflection, which lacks imagery and ideas, of the original pain in the music, together with its redemption in illusion, gives rise now to a second reflection as a particular metaphor or illustration. The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity



in the Dionysian process; the image which now reveals to him his unity with the heart of the world is a dream scene, which symbolizes that original contradiction and pain, together with the primordial joy in illusion. The “I” of the lyric poet thus echoes out of the abyss of being. What recent aestheticians mean by his “subjectivity” is mere fantasy.

When Archilochus, the first Greek lyric poet, announces his raging love and, simultaneously, his contempt for the daughters of Lycambes, it is not his own passion which dances in front of us in an orgiastic frenzy: we see Dionysus and the maenads; we see the intoxicated reveller Archilochus sunk down in sleep — as Euripides describes it for us in the *Bacchae*, asleep in a high Alpine meadow in the midday sun — and now Apollo steps up to him and touches him with his laurel. The Dionysian musical enchantment of the sleeper now, as it were, flashes around him fiery images, lyrical poems, which are called, in their highest form, tragedies and dramatic dithyrambs.<sup>32</sup> The plastic artist, as well as his relation, the epic poet, is absorbed in the pure contemplation of images. The Dionysian musician totally lacks every image and is in himself only and entirely the original pain and original reverberation of that image. The lyrical genius feels a world of images and metaphors grow up out of the mysterious state of unity and of renunciation of the self. These have a colour, causality, and speed entirely different from that world of the plastic artist and of the writer of epic. While the last of these (the epic poet) lives in these pictures and only in them with joyful contentment and does not get tired of contemplating them with love, right down to the smallest details, and while even the image of the angry Achilles is for him only a picture whose expression of anger he enjoys with that dream joy in illusions — so that he, by this mirror of appearances, is protected against the development of that sense of unity and of being fused together with the forms he has created — the images of the lyric poet are, by contrast nothing but he himself and, as it were, only different objectifications of himself. He can say “I” because he is the moving central point of that world; only this “I” is not the same as the “I” of the awake, empirically real man, but the single “I” of true and eternal being in general, the “I” resting on the foundation of things, through the portrayal of which the lyrical genius looks right into that very basis of things.

Now, let’s imagine next how he also looks upon himself among these likenesses, as a non-genius, that is, as his own “Subject,” the entire unruly crowd of subjective passions and striving of his will aiming at something particular, which seems real to him. If it now appears as if the lyrical genius and the non-genius bound up with him

<sup>32</sup> . . . maenads : These are the ecstatic female worshippers of Dionysus. Euripides : (480-406 BC), famous Greek tragedian. His last play, the *Bacchae*, was first produced after his death.



were one and the same and as if the first of these spoke that little word "I" about himself, then this illusion could now no longer deceive us, not at least in the way it deceived those who have defined the lyricist as a subjective poet.

To tell the truth, Archilochus, the man of passionately burning love and hate, is only a vision of the genius who is by this time no longer Archilochus but a world genius and who expresses his primordial pain symbolically in Archilochus as a metaphor for man; whereas, that subjectively willing and desiring man Archilochus can generally never ever be a poet. It is not at all essential that the lyric poet see directly in front of him only the phenomenon of the man Archilochus as a reflection of eternal being, and tragedy shows how far the visionary world of the lyric poet can distance itself from that phenomenon clearly standing near at hand.

Schopenhauer, who did not hide from the difficulty which the lyric poet creates for the philosophical observation of art, believed that he had discovered a solution, something which I cannot go along with, when in his profound metaphysics of music he alone found a way of setting that difficulty decisively to one side, as I believe I have done here, in his spirit and with due honour to him. For the sake of comparison, here is how he describes the essential nature of song:

The consciousness of the singer is filled with the subject of willing, that is, his own willing, often as an unleashed satisfied willing (joy), but also, and more often, as a restricted willing (sorrow), always as emotion, passion, a turbulent state of feeling. However, alongside this condition and simultaneous with it, the singer, through a glimpse at the surrounding nature, becomes aware of himself as a subject of pure, will-less knowledge, whose imperturbable, blessed tranquilly now enters in contrast to the pressure of his always hindered, always still limited willing: the sensation of this contrast, this game back and forth, is basically what expresses itself in the totality of the song and what, in general, creates the lyrical state. In this condition, pure understanding, as it were, comes to us, to save us from willing and the pressure of willing; we follow along, but only moment by moment: the will, the memory of our personal goals, constantly removes this calm contemplation from us, but over and over again the next beautiful setting, in which pure will-less knowledge presents itself to us once again, entices us away from willing. Hence, in the song and the lyrical mood, willing (the personal interest in purposes) and pure contemplation of the setting which reveals itself are miraculously mixed up together: we seek and imagine relationships between them both; the subjective mood, the emotional state of the will, communicates with the surroundings we contemplate, and the latter, in turn, give their



colour to our mood, in a reflex action. The true song is the expression of this entire emotional condition, mixed and divided in this way” ( *World as Will and Idea* , I.3.51)

Who can fail to recognize in this description that here the lyric has been characterized as an incompletely realized art, a leap, as it were, which seldom attains its goal, indeed, as a semi-art, whose essence is to consist of the fact that the will and pure contemplation, that is, the unaesthetic and the aesthetic conditions, must be miraculously mixed up together? In contrast to this, we maintain that the entire opposition of the subjective and the objective, which even Schopenhauer still uses as a measurement of value to classify art, has generally no place in aesthetics, since the subject, the willing individual demanding his own egotistical purposes, can only be thought of as an enemy of art, not as its origin. But insofar as the subject is an artist, he is already released from his individual willing and has become, so to speak, a medium, through which a subject of true being celebrates its redemption in illusion. For we need to be clear on this point, above everything else, to our humiliation and ennoblement: the entire comedy of art does not present itself for us in order to make us, for example, better or to educate us, even less because we are the actual creators of that art world. We are, however, entitled to assume this about ourselves: for the true creator of that world we are already pictures and artistic projections and in the meaning of works of art we have our highest dignity — for only as an aesthetic phenomena are existence and the world eternally justified — while, of course, our consciousness of this significance of ours is scarcely any different from the consciousness which soldiers painted on canvas have of the battle portrayed there. Hence our entire knowledge of art is basically completely illusory, because, as knowing people, we are not one with and identical to that being who, as the single creator and spectator of that comedy of art, prepares for itself an eternal enjoyment. Only to the extent that the genius in the act of artistic creation is fused with that primordial artist of the world does he know anything about the eternal nature of art, for in that state he is, in a miraculous way, like the weird picture of fairy tales, which can turn its eyes and contemplate itself. Now he is simultaneously subject and object, simultaneously poet, actor, and spectator.

## 6

With respect to Archilochus, learned scholarship has revealed that he introduced the folk song into literature and that, because of this achievement, he earned that individual place next to Homer in the universal estimation of the Greeks. But what is



the folk song in comparison to the completely Apollonian epic poem? What else but the *perpetuum vestigium* [the eternal mark] of a union between the Apollonian and the Dionysian; its tremendous expansion, extending to all peoples and constantly increasing with new births, testifies to us how strong that artistic double drive of nature is, which leaves its trace behind in the folk song, just as, in an analogous manner, the orgiastic movements of a people leave their mark in its music. In fact, there must also have been historical evidence to show how every period richly productive of folk songs at the same time has been stirred in the most powerful manner by Dionysian currents, something which we have to recognize always as the foundation and precondition of folk song.

But to begin with, we must view the folk song as the musical mirror of the world, as the primordial melody, which now seeks for a parallel dream image of itself and expresses this in poetry. The melody is thus the primary and universal fact, for which reason it can in itself undergo many objectifications, in several texts. It is also far more important and more essential in the naive evaluations of the people. Melody gives birth to poetry from itself, over and over again. That is what the strophic form of the folk song indicates to us. I always observed this phenomenon with astonishment, until I finally came up with this explanation. Whoever looks at a collection of folk songs, for example, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* [The Boy's Magic Horn]]]] with this theory in mind will find countless examples of how the continually fecund melody emits fiery showers of images around itself. These images, with their bright colours, their sudden alteration, indeed, their wild momentum, reveal a power completely foreign to the epic illusion and its calm forward progress. From the standpoint of epic this uneven and irregular world of images in the lyric is easy to condemn — something no doubt the solemn epic rhapsodists of the Apollonian celebrations did in the age of Terpander<sup>33</sup>.

Thus, in the poetry of the folk song we see language most strongly pressured to imitate music. Hence, with Archilochus a new world of poetry begins, something which conflicts in the most profound and fundamental way with the Homeric world. Here we have demonstrated the one possible relationship between poetry and music, word, and tone: the word, the image, the idea look for an analogous expression in music and now experience the inherent power of music. In this sense we can distinguish two main streams in the history of the language of the Greek people, corresponding to language which imitates appearance and images or language which imitates the world of music. Now, let's think for a moment more deeply about the linguistic difference in colour, syntactic structure, and vocabulary between Homer and Pindar in order to grasp the

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<sup>33</sup> Terpander : Greek poet in the first half of seventh century BC.



significance of this contrast.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, in this way it will become crystal clear to us that between Homer and Pindar the orgiastic flute melodies of Olympus must have rung out, which even in the time of Aristotle, in the midst of an infinitely more sophisticated music, drove people into raptures of drunken enthusiasm and with their primordial effect certainly stimulated all the poetical forms of expression of contemporaries to imitate them.<sup>35</sup>

I recall here a well-known phenomenon of our own times, something which strikes our aestheticians as merely objectionable. Again and again we experience how a Beethoven symphony makes it necessary for the individual listener to talk in images, even if it's also true that the collection of different worlds of imagery created by a musical piece really looks fantastically confused, indeed, contradictory. In the art of those aestheticians the proper thing to do is to exercise their poor wits on such collections and yet to overlook the phenomenon which is really worth explaining. In fact, even when the tone poet has spoken in images about a composition, for example, when he describes a symphony as a pastoral and one movement as "A Scene by the Brook," another as "A Frolicking Gathering of Peasants," these expressions are similarly only metaphors, images born out of the music — and not some objective condition imitated by the music — ideas which cannot teach us anything at all about the Dionysian content of the music and which, in fact, have no exclusive value alongside other pictures. Now, we have only to transfer this process of unloading music into pictures to a youthful, linguistically creative crowd of people in order to sense how the strophic folk song arises and how the entire linguistic capability is stimulated by the new principle of imitating music.

If we are thus entitled to consider the lyrical poem as the mimetic efflorescence of music in pictures and ideas, then we can now ask the following question: "What does music look like in the mirror of imagery and ideas?" It appears as the will, taking that word in Schopenhauer's sense, that is, as the opposite to the aesthetic, purely contemplative, will-less state. Here we must now differentiate as sharply as possible the idea of being from the idea of appearance: it is impossible for music, given its nature, to be the will, because if that were the case we would have to ban music entirely from the realm of art — for the will consists of what is inherently unaesthetic — but music appears as the will. For in order to express that appearance in images, the lyric poet needs all the excitements of passion, from the whispers of affection right up to the ravings of lunacy. Under the impulse to speak of music in Apollonian

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<sup>34</sup> Pindar: (c. 522 BC to 443 BC), Greek lyric poet.

<sup>35</sup> 2 Aristotle : (384 BC to 322 BC), major Greek philosopher.



metaphors, he understands all nature and himself in nature only as eternal willing, desiring, yearning. However, insofar as he interprets music in images, he himself is resting in the still tranquillity of the sea of Apollonian observation, no matter how much everything which he contemplates through that medium of music is moving around him, pushing and driving. Indeed, if he looks at himself through that same medium, his own image reveals itself to him in a state of emotional dissatisfaction: his own willing, yearning, groaning, cheering are for him a metaphor with which he interprets the music for himself. This is the phenomenon of the lyric poet: as an Apollonian genius, he interprets the music through the image of the will, while he himself, fully released from the greed of the will, is a pure, untroubled eye of the sun.

This entire discussion firmly maintains that the lyric is just as dependent on the spirit of music as is music itself. In its fully absolute power, music does not need image and idea, but only tolerates them as something additional to itself. The poetry of the lyricist can express nothing which was not already latent in the most immense universality and validity of the music, which forces him to speak in images. The world symbolism of music for this very reason cannot in any way be exhausted by or reduced to language, because music addresses itself symbolically to the primordial contradiction and pain in the heart of the original oneness, and thus presents in symbolic form a sphere which is above all appearances and prior to them. In comparison with music, each appearance is far more a mere metaphor: hence, language, as voice and symbol of appearances, can never ever convert the deepest core of music to something external, but always remains, as long as it involves itself with the imitation of music, only in superficial contact with the music. The full eloquence of lyric poetry cannot bring us one step closer to the deepest meaning of music.

## 7

We must now seek assistance from all the artistic principles laid out above, in order to find our way correctly through the labyrinth, a descriptive term we have to use to designate the origin of Greek tragedy. I do not think I'm saying anything illogical when I claim that the problem of this origin still has not once been seriously formulated up to now, let alone solved, no matter how frequently the scattered scraps of ancient tradition have already been combined with one another and then torn apart once more. This tradition tells us very emphatically that tragedy developed out of the



tragic chorus and originally consisted only of a chorus and nothing else.<sup>36</sup> This fact requires us to look into the heart of this tragic chorus as the essential original drama, without allowing ourselves to be satisfied at all with the common ways of talking about art — that the chorus is the ideal spectator or had the job of standing in for the people over against the royal area of the scene.

That last mentioned point, a conceptual explanation which sounds so lofty for many politicians — as though the invariable moral law was presented by the democratic Athenians in the people's chorus, which was always proved right in matters dealing with the kings' passionate acts of violence and excess — may well have been suggested by a word from Aristotle. But such an idea has no influence on the original formation of tragedy, since all the opposition between people and ruler and every political-social issue in general is excluded from those purely religious origins. But looking back on the classical form of the chorus known to us in Aeschylus and Sophocles we might also consider it blasphemous to talk here of a premonition of a "constitutional popular representation." Others have not been deterred from this blasphemous assertion. The ancient political organizations of the state had no knowledge in praxi [in practice] of a constitutional popular representation, and, in addition, they never once had a hopeful "premonition" of such things in their tragedies.

Much more famous than this political explanation of the chorus is A. W. Schlegel's idea.<sup>37</sup> He recommended that we consider the chorus to some extent as the quintessence and embodiment of the crowd of onlookers, as the "ideal spectator." This view, combined with the historical tradition that originally the tragedy consisted entirely of the chorus, reveals itself for what it is, a crude and unscholarly, although dazzling, claim. But its glitter survives only in the compact form of the expression, from the truly German prejudice for everything which is called "ideal," and from our momentary astonishment.

For we are astonished, as soon as we compare the theatre public we know well with that chorus and ask ourselves whether it would be at all possible on the basis of this public ever to derive some idealization analogous to the tragic chorus. We tacitly deny this and are now surprised by the audacity of Schlegel's claim, as well as by the totally different nature of the Greek general public. For we had always thought that the proper spectator, whoever he might be, must always remain conscious that he has a work of

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<sup>36</sup> The authority for this claim is Aristotle's *Poetics*.

<sup>37</sup> A. W. Schlegel : August Wilhelm von Schlegel: German poet and critic, a major figure in German Romanticism. His *On Dramatic Art and Literature* was published in 1808.



art in front of him, not an empirical reality; whereas, the tragic chorus of the Greeks is required to recognize the shapes on the stage as living, existing people. The chorus of Oceanids really believes that they see the Titan Prometheus in front of them and consider themselves every bit as real as the god of the scene. And was that supposed to be the highest and purest type of spectator, a person who, like the Oceanids, considers Prometheus vitally alive and real? Would it be a mark of the ideal spectator to run up onto the stage and free the god from his torment? We had believed in an aesthetic public and considered the individual spectator all the more capable, the more he was in a position to take the work of art as art, that is, aesthetically, and now this saying of Schlegel's indicates to us that the completely ideal spectator lets the scenic world work on him, not aesthetically at all, but vitally and empirically. "O these Greeks!" we sigh, "they are knocking over our aesthetics!" But once we get used to that idea, we repeat Schlegel's saying every time we talk about the chorus. But that emphatic tradition speaks here against Schlegel: the chorus in itself, without the stage, that is, the primitive form of tragedy, and that chorus of ideal spectators are not compatible. What sort of artistic style would there be which one might derive from the idea of the spectator, for which one might consider the "spectator in himself" the essential form? The spectator without a play is a contradictory idea. We suspect that the birth of tragedy cannot be explained either from the high estimation of the moral intelligence of the masses or from the idea of the spectator without a play, and we consider this problem too profound even to be touched upon by such superficial styles of commentary.

Schiller has already provided an infinitely more valuable insight into the meaning of the chorus in the famous preface to the *Bride from Messina*, which sees the chorus as a living wall which tragedy draws around itself in order to separate itself cleanly from the real world and to protect its ideal space and its poetical freedom for itself.<sup>38</sup>

With this as his main weapon Schiller fought against the common idea of naturalism, against the common demand for illusion in dramatic poetry. While in the theatre the day itself might be only artistic and stage architecture only symbolic, and the metrical language might have an ideal quality, on the whole, a misconception still ruled: it was not enough, Schiller claimed, that people merely tolerated as poetic freedom what, by contrast, was the essence of all poetry. The introduction of the chorus was the decisive step with which war was declared openly and honourably against every naturalism in art. Such a way of looking at things is the one, it strikes me, for which our age, which considers itself so superior, uses the dismissive catch phrase "pseudo-idealism." But I

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<sup>38</sup> Schiller's preface, *Concerning the Use of the Choir in Tragedy*, was published in 1803.



rather suspect that with our present worship of naturalism and realism we are situated at the opposite pole from all idealism, namely, in the region of a wax works collection. In that, too, there is an art, as in certain popular romance novels of the present time. Only let no one pester us with the claim that with this art the “pseudo-idealism” of Schiller and Goethe has been overcome.

Of course, it is an “ideal” stage on which, according to Schiller’s correct insight, the Greek satyr chorus, the chorus of the primitive tragedy, customarily strolled, a stage lifted high over the real strolling stage of mortal men. For this chorus the Greeks constructed a suspended scaffolding of an imaginary state of nature and on it placed imaginary natural beings. Tragedy grew up out of this foundation and, for that very reason, has, from its inception, been spared the embarrassing business of counterfeiting reality. That is not to say, however, that it is a world arbitrarily fantasized somewhere between heaven and earth. It is much rather a world possessing the same reality and credibility as the world of Olympus, together with its inhabitants, had for the devout Greek. The satyr, as the Dionysian chorus member, lives in a reality granted by religion and sanctioned by myth and ritual. The fact that tragedy begins with him, that out of him the Dionysian wisdom of tragedy speaks, is a phenomenon as foreign to us here as the development of tragedy out of the chorus generally. Perhaps we can reach a starting point for this discussion when I offer the claim that the satyr himself, the imaginary natural being, is related to the cultural person in the same way that Dionysian music is related to civilization. On this last point Richard Wagner states that civilization is neutralized by music in the same way lamplight is by daylight. In just such a manner, I believe, the cultured Greek felt himself neutralized by the sight of the chorus of satyrs, and the next effect of Dionysian tragedy is that the state and society, in general the gap between man and man, give way to an invincible feeling of unity, which leads back to the heart of nature. The metaphysical consolation — with which, as I am immediately indicating here, every true tragedy leaves us, that, in spite of all the transformations in phenomena, at the bottom of everything life is indestructibly powerful and delightful — this consolation appears in lively clarity as the chorus of satyrs, as the chorus of natural beings, who live, so to speak, indestructibly behind all civilization, and who, in spite of all the changes in generations and a people’s history, always remain the same.

With this chorus, the profound Greek, uniquely capable of the most delicate and the most severe suffering, consoled himself, the man who looked around with a daring gaze in the middle of the terrifying destructive instincts of so-called world history and equally into the cruelty of nature and who is in danger of longing for a Buddhist denial



of the will. Art saves him, and through art life saves him. The ecstasy of the Dionysian state, with its destruction of the customary manacles and boundaries of existence, contains, of course, for as long as it lasts a lethargic element, in which everything personally experienced in the past is immersed. Because of this gulf of oblivion, the world of everyday reality and the world of Dionysian reality separate from each other. But as soon as that daily reality comes back again into consciousness, one feels it as something disgusting. The fruit of that state is an ascetic condition, in which one denies the power of the will. In this sense the Dionysian man has similarities to Hamlet: both have had a real glimpse into the essence of things. They have understood, and it disgusts them to act, for their action can change nothing in the eternal nature of things. They perceive as ridiculous or humiliating the fact that they are expected to set right again a world which is out of joint. The knowledge kills action, for action requires a state of being in which we are covered with the veil of illusion — that is what Hamlet has to teach us, not that really venal wisdom about John-a-Dreams, who cannot move himself to act because of too much reflection, because of an excess of possibilities, so to speak. It's not a case of reflection. No! — the true knowledge, the glimpse into the cruel truth overcomes every driving motive to act, both in Hamlet as well as in the Dionysian man. Now no consolation has any effect any more. His longing goes out over a world, even beyond the gods themselves, toward death. Existence is denied, together with its blazing reflection in the gods or in an immortal afterlife. In the consciousness of once having glimpsed the truth, the man now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of being; now he understands the symbolism in the fate of Ophelia; now he recognizes the wisdom of the forest god Silenus. It disgusts him. Here, at a point when the will is in the highest danger, art approaches, as a saving, healing magician.... Art alone can turn those thoughts of disgust at the horror or absurdity of existence into imaginary constructs which permit living to continue. These constructs are the Sublime as the artistic mastering of the horrible and the Comic as the artistic release from disgust at the absurd. The chorus of satyrs of the dithyramb is the saving fact of Greek art. Those emotional moods I have just described play themselves out in the middle world [Mittelwelt] of these Dionysian attendants.

## 8

The satyr as well as the idyllic shepherd of our more recent times are both the epitomes of a longing directed toward the primordial and natural, but with what a firm, fearless grip the Greek held onto his man from the woods, and how timidly and weakly modern man toys with the flattering image of a delicate and gentle flute-



playing shepherd! Nature on which no knowledge had yet worked, in which the walls of culture had still not been thrown up — that's what the Greek saw in his satyr, and so he did not yet mistake him for an ape. Quite the contrary: the satyr was the primordial image of man, the expression of his highest and strongest emotions, as an inspired reveller, enraptured by the approach of the god, as a sympathetic companion, in whom the suffering of the god was repeated, as a messenger bringing wisdom from the deepest heart of nature, as a perceptible image of the sexual omnipotence of nature, which the Greek was accustomed to observing with reverent astonishment. The satyr was something sublime and divine: that's how he must have seemed especially to the painfully broken gaze of the Dionysian man, who would have been insulted by our well-groomed fictitious shepherd. His eye lingered with sublime satisfaction on the exposed, vigorous, and magnificent script of nature; here the illusion of culture was wiped away by the primordial image of man; here the real man revealed himself, the bearded satyr, who cried out with joy to his god. In comparison with him, the man of culture was reduced to a misleading caricature. Schiller was also right about the start of tragic art: the chorus is a living wall against the pounding reality, because it — the satyr chorus — presents existence more genuinely, more truly, and more completely than does the civilized person, who generally considers himself the only reality. The sphere of poetry does not lie beyond this world as a fantastic impossibility of a poet's brain; it wants to be exactly the opposite, the unadorned expression of the truth, and it must therefore simply cast off the false costume of that alleged truth of the man of culture. The contrast between this real truth of nature and the cultural lie which behaves as if it is the only reality is similar to the contrast between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the total world of appearances. And just as tragedy, with its metaphysical consolation, draws attention to the eternal life of that existential core in the continuing destruction of appearances, so the symbolism of the satyr chorus already expresses metaphorically that primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance. That idyllic shepherd of modern man is only a counterfeit, the totality of cultural illusions which he counts as nature. The Dionysian Greek wants truth and nature in their highest power — he sees himself magically changed into the satyr.

The enraptured horde of those who served Dionysus rejoiced under such moods and insights, whose power transformed them even before their very eyes, so that they imagined they saw themselves as restored natural geniuses, as satyrs. The later constitution of the tragic chorus is the artistic imitation of that natural phenomenon, in which now a division was surely necessary between the Dionysian spectators and those under the Dionysian enchantment. But we must always remind ourselves that the



public for Attic tragedy rediscovered itself in the chorus of the orchestra, that basically there was no opposition between the public and the chorus: for everything is only a huge sublime chorus of dancing and singing satyrs or of those people who permit themselves to be represented by these satyrs.<sup>39</sup> That saying of Schlegel's here must become accessible to us in a deeper sense. The chorus is the "ideal spectator," insofar as it is the single onlooker, the person who sees the visionary world of the scene. A public of spectators, as we are familiar with it, was unknown to the Greeks. In their theatre, given the way the spectators' space was built up in terraces of concentric rings, it was possible for everyone quite literally to look out over the collective cultural world around him and in that complete perspective to imagine himself a member of the chorus. Given this insight, we can call the chorus, in its primitive stages of the prototypical tragedy, the self-reflection of the Dionysian man, a phenomenon which we can make out most clearly in the experience of the actor, who, if he is really gifted, sees perceptibly in front of him the image of the role he has to play, hovering before his eyes, there for him to grasp. The satyr chorus is, first and foremost, a vision of the Dionysian mass, just as, in turn, the world of the stage area is a vision of this satyr chorus: the power of this vision is strong enough to dull and desensitize the impression of "reality," the sight of the cultured people ranged in their rows of seats all around. The form of the Greek theatre is a reminder of a solitary mountain valley: the architecture of the scene appears as an illuminated picture of a cloud, which the Bacchae swarming around in the mountains gaze upon from on high, as the majestic setting in the middle of which the image of Dionysus is revealed to them....<sup>40</sup>

This primitive artistic illusion, which we are putting into words here to explain the tragic chorus, is, from the perspective of our scholarly views about the basic artistic process, almost offensive, although nothing can be more obvious than that the poet is only a poet because of the fact that he sees himself surrounded by shapes which live and act in front of him and into whose innermost being he gazes. Through some peculiar weakness in our modern talent, we are inclined to imagine primitive aesthetic phenomenon in too complicated and abstract a manner. For the true poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical trope, but a representative image which really hovers in front of him in the place of an idea. For him the character is not some totality put together from individual traits collected bit by bit, but a living person, insistently there before his eyes, which differs from the similar vision of the painter only through its continued

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<sup>39</sup> 1 In the Greek theatre the stage area (sometimes called here the acting area) was an elevated platform stage where the principal actors played their roles. The orchestra, the flat semi-circular area extending in front of the stage area, was the territory of the Chorus.

<sup>40</sup> . . . the Bacchae : the enraptured followers of the god Dionysus.



further living and acting. Why does Homer give us descriptions so much more vivid than all the poets? Because he sees so much more around him. We speak about poetry so abstractly because we all tend to be poor poets. The aesthetic phenomenon is fundamentally simple: if someone simply possesses the capacity to see a living game going on continually and to live all the time surrounded by hordes of ghosts, then the man is a poet; if someone simply feels the urge to change himself and to speak out from other bodies and souls, then that person is a dramatist. Dionysian excitement is capable of communicating this artistic talent to an entire multitude, so that they see themselves surrounded by such a horde of ghosts with which they know they are inwardly one. This dynamic of the tragic chorus is the original dramatic phenomenon: to see oneself transformed before one's eyes and now to act as if one really had entered another body, another character. This process stands at the beginning of the development of drama. Here is something different from the rhapsodist, who does not fuse with his images, but, like the painter, sees them with an observing eye outside himself; in the dramatic process there is already a surrender of individuality by the entry into a strange nature. And, in fact, this phenomenon breaks out like an epidemic; an entire horde feels itself enchanted in this way.

For this reason the dithyramb is essentially different from every other choral song. The virgins who move solemnly to Apollo's temple with laurel branches in their hands, singing a processional song as they go, remain who they are and retain their names as citizens. The dithyrambic chorus is a chorus of transformed people, for whom their civic past, their social position, is completely forgotten.<sup>41</sup> They have become their god's timeless servants, living beyond all regions of society. Every other choral lyric of the Greeks is only an immense intensification of the Apollonian solo singer; whereas, in the dithyramb a congregation of unconscious actors stands before us, who look upon each other as transformed.

Enchantment is the precondition for all dramatic art. In this enchantment the Dionysian reveller sees himself as a satyr, and then, in turn, as a satyr he looks at his god, that is, in his transformed state he sees a new vision outside himself as an Apollonian fulfilment of his condition. With this new vision drama is complete.

Keeping this knowledge in mind, we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus which over and over again discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images. Those choral passages interspersed through tragedy are thus, as it were, the maternal womb of the entire dialogue so-called, that is, of the totality of the stage word, the

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<sup>41</sup> . . . dithyrambic chorus : The dithyramb was an choral hymn of praise to Dionysus, characterized by a much more ecstatic style than other hymns to the gods, especially to Apollo.



actual drama. This primordial basis of tragedy radiates that vision of drama out in several discharges following one after the other, a vision which is entirely a dream image and, in this respect, epic in nature, but, on the other hand, as an objectification of a Dionysian state, it presents not the Apollonian consolation in illusion, but, by contrast, the smashing of individuality and becoming one with primordial being. Thus, drama is the Apollonian embodiment of Dionysian knowledge and effects, and, hence, is separated as if by an immense gulf from epic. This conception of ours provides a full explanation for the chorus of Greek tragedy, the symbol for the collectively aroused Dionysian multitude. While we, given what we are used to with the role of the chorus on the modern stage, especially the chorus in opera, have been totally unable to grasp how that tragic chorus of the Greeks could be older, more original, in fact, more important than the actual “action” — as tradition tells us so clearly — while we, in turn, could not figure out why, given that traditionally high importance and original preeminence, the chorus would nonetheless be put together only out of lowly serving creatures, in fact, at first only out of goat-like satyrs, and while for us the orchestra in front of the acting area remained a constant enigma, now we have come to the insight that the acting area, together with the action, was basically and originally thought of only as a vision, that the single “reality” is simply the chorus, which creates the vision out of itself and speaks of that with the entire symbolism of dance, tone, and word.

This chorus in its vision gazes at its lord and master Dionysus and is thus always the chorus of servants; the chorus sees how Dionysus, the god, suffers and glorifies himself, and thus it does not itself act. But in this role, as complete servants in relation to the god, the chorus is nevertheless the highest, that is, the Dionysian expression of nature and, like nature, in its frenzy speaks the language of oracular wisdom. As the sympathetic as well as wise person, it announces the truth out of the heart of the world. So arises that fantastic and apparently so offensive figure of the wise and frenzied satyr, who is, at the same time, “the simple man” in contrast to the god: an image of nature and its strongest drives, indeed, a symbol of that and at the same time the announcer of its wisdom and art: musician, poet, dancer, visionary in a single person.

According to this insight and to the tradition, Dionysus, the actual stage hero and central point of the vision, was at first, in the very oldest periods of tragedy, not really present but was only imagined as present. That is, originally tragedy is only “chorus” and not “drama.” Later the attempt was made to show the god as real and then to present in a way visible to every eye the form of the vision together with the transfiguring setting. At that point “drama” in the strict sense begins. Now the



dithyrambic chorus takes on the task of stimulating the mood of the listeners right up to the Dionysian level, so that when the tragic hero appears on the stage, they do not see something like an awkward masked person but a visionary shape born, as it were, out of their own enchantment. If we imagine Admetus thinking deeply about his recently departed wife Alcestis, completely pining away in his spiritual contemplation of her — how suddenly is led up to him an image of a woman of similar form and similar gait, but in disguise; if we imagine his sudden trembling agitation, his emotional comparisons, his instinctive conviction — then we have an analogy to the sensation with which the aroused Dionysian spectator saw striding onto the stage the god with whose suffering he has already become one.<sup>42</sup> Spontaneously he transferred the whole picture of the god, magically trembling in front of his soul,,, onto that masked form and dissolved the reality of that figure, so to speak, in a ghostly unreality. This is the Apollonian dream state, in which the world of day veils itself and a new world, clearer, more comprehensible, more moving than the first, and yet more shadow-like, generates itself anew in a continuing series of changes before our eyes.

With this in mind, we can recognize in tragedy a drastic contrast of styles: speech, colour, movement, dynamics of speech appear in the Dionysian lyric of the chorus and, on the other hand, in the Apollonian dream world of the scene as expressive spheres completely separate from each other. The Apollonian illusions, in which Dionysus objectifies himself, are no longer “an eternal sea, a changing weaving motion, a glowing life,” as is the case with the music of the chorus, no longer those powers which are only felt and cannot be turned into poetic images, moments when the frenzied servant of Dionysus feels the approach of the god.<sup>43</sup> Now, from the acting area the clarity and solemnity of the epic form speak to him; now Dionysus no longer speaks through forces but as an epic hero, almost with the language of Homer.

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Everything which comes to the surface in the Apollonian part of Greek tragedy, in the dialogue, looks simple, translucent, beautiful. In this sense the dialogue is an image of the Greek man, whose nature reveals itself in dancing, because in dancing the greatest power is only latent, but it betrays its presence in the lithe and rich movement. Thus, the language of the Sophoclean heroes surprises us by its Apollonian clarity and brightness, so that we immediately imagine that we are glimpsing the innermost basis

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<sup>42</sup> . . . Admetus . . . Alcestis : In Greek mythology, when Admetus, king of Thessaly, was dying from illness, Apollo spared him if he could find someone to die in his place. His wife Alcestis volunteered, and Admetus was spared. Hercules later saved Alcestis from death, and she was reunited with her husband.

<sup>43</sup> The quotation comes from Goethe's *Faust* , Part 1.



of their being, with some astonishment that the path to this foundation is so short. However, once we look away from the character of the hero as it surfaces and becomes perceptible — a character who is basically nothing more than a light picture cast onto a dark wall, that is, an illusion through and through — we penetrate instead into the myth which projects itself in this bright reflection. At that point we suddenly experience a phenomenon which is the reverse of a well-known optical one. When we make a determined attempt to look directly at the sun and turn away blinded, we have dark coloured specks in front of our eyes, like a remedy, as it were. Those illuminated illusory pictures of the Sophoclean hero, briefly put, the Apollonian mask, are the reverse of that, necessary creations of a glimpse into the inner terror of nature, bright spots, so to speak, to heal us from the horrifying night of the crippled gaze. Only in this sense can we think of correctly grasping the serious and significant idea of “Greek serenity”; whereas, nowadays we certainly come across the undoubtedly misconceived idea that this serenity is a condition of secure contentment on all the pathways and bridges of the present.

The most painful figure of the Greek stage, the ill-fated Oedipus, is understood by Sophocles as the noble man who is destined for error and misery in spite of his wisdom, but, who through his immense suffering, at the end exerts a magically beneficial effect around him, which still has an effect beyond his death.<sup>44</sup> The noble man does not sin — that’s what the profound poet wishes to tell us: through Oedipus’ actions every law, every natural principle of order, indeed, the moral world may collapse, but because of these very actions a higher magical circle of consequences is created, which founds a new world on the ruins of the old world, which has been overthrown. Insofar as the poet is also a religious thinker, that is what he wishes to say to us; as a poet, he shows us first a wonderfully complicated legal knot, which the judge slowly undoes, link by link, in the process destroying himself. The real joy for the Greek in this dialectical solution is so great that because of it a sense of powerful serenity invests the entire work, which always breaks the sting of the dreadful assumptions of that plot. In Oedipus in Colonus we run into this same serenity, but elevated in an immeasurable transfiguration. In contrast to the old man afflicted with excessive suffering, a man who is exposed purely as a man suffering from everything which happens to him — there stands the supernatural serenity which descends from the sphere of the gods and indicates to us that the hero in his purely passive conduct achieves his highest activity, which reaches out far over his own life; whereas, his

<sup>44</sup> Sophocles wrote two surviving plays about the tragedy of Oedipus, king of Thebes: Oedipus the King and Oedipus at Colonus. The first tells the story of how Oedipus, the wisest man in Thebes, suffers horribly from his own investigations into the murder of his predecessor. The second depicts the reception, years later, of the very old and suffering Oedipus, now near death, by the Athenians.



conscious striving in his earlier life led him only to passivity. Thus, for the mortal eye the inextricably tangled legal knot of the Oedipus story is slowly untangled — and the most profound human joy suffuses us with this divine dialectical companion piece.

If we have done justice to the poet with this explanation, one can still nonetheless ask whether the content of the myth has been exhausted in that explanation. And here we see that the entire conception of the poet is simply nothing other than that illuminated image which healing nature holds up before us after a glimpse into the abyss. Oedipus the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, Oedipus the solver of the riddle of the sphinx! What does the secret trinity of these fatal events tell us? There was a very ancient folk belief, especially in Persia, that a wise magus could be born only out of incest. Looking at Oedipus as the solver of riddles and emancipator of his mother, what we have to interpret immediately is the fact that right there where, through prophecy and magical powers, the spell of present and future is broken, that rigid law of individuation and the essential magic of nature in general, an immense natural horror — in this case incest — must have come first as the original cause. For how could we have compelled nature to yield up her secrets, if not for the fact that we fight back against her and win, that is, if not for the fact that we commit unnatural actions? I see this insight stamped out in that dreadful trinity of Oedipus's fate: the same man who solves the riddle of nature — of that ambiguous sphinx — must also break the most sacred natural laws when he murders his father and marries his mother. Indeed, the myth seems to want to whisper to us that wisdom, and especially Dionysian wisdom, is an unnatural atrocity, that a man who through his knowledge pushes nature into the abyss of destruction also has to experience in himself the disintegration of nature. "The spear point of knowledge turns itself against the wise man. Wisdom is a crime against nature."<sup>45</sup> The myth calls out such terrible statements to us, but, like a ray of sunlight, the Greek poet touches the awe-inspiring and fearful Memnon's Column of myth, so that it suddenly begins to play music — Sophoclean melodies<sup>46</sup>.

Now I'm going to compare the glory of passivity with the glory of activity which illuminates Aeschylus's Prometheus. What Aeschylus the thinker had to say to us here, but what Aeschylus as a poet could only hint to us through a metaphorical picture — that's something young Goethe knew how to reveal to us in the bold words of his Prometheus:

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<sup>45</sup> The quotation comes from Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, 316

<sup>46</sup> Memnon's Column : an immense structure in Thebes (in Egypt) beside the temple of Amenhotep III (1400 BC) which gave out sounds when warmed by the sun.



“Here I sit — I make men  
in my own image,  
a race like me,  
to suffer, to weep,  
to enjoy life and rejoice,  
and to ignore you,  
as I do.”<sup>47</sup>

Man, rising up into something Titanic, is victorious over his own culture and compels the gods to unite with him, because in his autonomous wisdom he holds their existence and the limits to their authority in his hand. The most marvellous thing in that poem of Prometheus, which is, according to its basic ideas, essentially a hymn celebrating impiety, is, however, the deep Aeschylean impulse for justice : the immeasurable suffering of the brave “individual,” on the one hand, and, on the other, the peril faced by the gods, in fact, a presentiment of a twilight of the gods, the compelling power for a metaphysical oneness, for a reconciliation of both these worlds of suffering — all this is a most powerful reminder of the central point and major claim of the Aeschylean world view, which sees Fate [Moira] enthroned over gods and men as eternal justice.

In considering the astonishing daring with which Aeschylus places the Olympian world on his scales of justice, we must remind ourselves that the deep-thinking Greek had an unshakably firm basis for metaphysical thinking in his mystery cults and that he could unload all his sceptical moods onto the Olympians. The Greek artist, in particular, with respect to these divinities, felt a dark sense of reciprocal dependency, and this sense is symbolized directly in Aeschylus’s Prometheus . The Titanic artist discovered in himself the defiant belief that he could make men and, at the very least, destroy Olympian gods — and he could do this through his higher wisdom, which he, of course, was compelled to atone for with eternal suffering. The magnificent “capability” of the great genius, for whom eternal suffering itself is too cheap a price, the stern pride of the artist — that is the content and soul of Aeschylean poetry; whereas, Sophocles in his Oedipus sounds out the prelude to the victory song of the holy man .

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<sup>47</sup> In Goethe’s poem, Prometheus addresses these words to Zeus, the chief Olympian god. Prometheus, a Titan, was punished savagely by Zeus for stealing fire from heaven and giving it to human beings. Prometheus also knew a secret prophecy that the minor goddess Thetis, whom Zeus wanted to have sex with, would have a son more powerful than his father. Aeschylus (525-456 BC), an Athenian tragedian, presents a version of the story in his play Prometheus Bound, part of a trilogy in which two plays have not survived. Goethe: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), German’s greatest writer, author of a poem called Prometheus, in which the mythic Prometheus hurls his defiance at Zeus.



But also that meaning which Aeschylus gave the myth does not fully measure the astonishing depth of its terror. On the contrary, the artist's joy in being, the serenity of artistic creativity in spite of every impiety, is only a light picture of cloud and sky mirrored in a dark lake of sorrow. The Prometheus saga is a primordial possession of the Aryan population collectively and documentary evidence of their talent for the profoundly tragic. In fact, it could well be the case that for the Aryan being this myth has the same characteristic significance as the myth of the Fall does for the Semitic peoples and that both myths are related, like brother and sister.

The pre-condition of that Prometheus myth is the extraordinary value which a naive humanity associates with fire as the true Palladium of every rising culture.<sup>48</sup> But the fact that man freely controls fire and does not receive it merely as a gift from heaven, as a blazing lightning flash or warming rays of the sun, appeared to those contemplative primitive men as an outrage, a crime against divine nature. And so right away the first philosophical problem posed an awkward insoluble contradiction between man and god and pushed it, like a boulder, right up to the door of every culture. The best and loftiest thing which mankind can be blessed with men acquire through a crime, and now they must accept the further consequences, namely, the entire flood of suffering and troubles with which the offended divine presences must afflict the nobly ambitious human race: an austere notion which, through the value which it gives to the crime, stands in a curious contrast to the Semitic myth of the Fall, in which curiosity, lying falsehoods, temptation, lust, in short, a series of predominantly female emotions was looked upon as the origin of evil.

What distinguishes the Aryan conception is the lofty view of the active transgression as the essentially Promethean virtue. With this, at the same time the ethical basis of pessimistic tragedy is established, together with the justification of human evils, that is, both of human guilt and of the forfeit of suffering caused by that guilt. The impiety in the essence of things — that's what the thinking Aryan is not inclined to quibble away — the contradiction in the heart of the world reveals itself to him as the interpenetration of different worlds, for example, a divine and a human world, each of which is right individually but which must, as one individual alongside another one, suffer for its individuality. With this heroic push of the individual into the universal, with this attempt to stride out over the limits of individuation and to wish to be oneself a world being, man suffers in himself the original contradiction hidden in things, that is, he violates the laws, and he suffers. Just as among the Aryans crime is seen as male and among the Semites sin is seen as female, so the original crime was also committed

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<sup>48</sup> Palladium : The Palladium is the divine image or statue which acted as the protector of the state. In a famous incident in the Trojan War, Odysseus and Diomedes stole the Palladium from Troy.



by a man, the original sin by a woman. In this connection, the chorus of witches [in Goethe's *Faust*] says:

We're not so particular in what we say:  
Woman takes a thousand steps to get her way.  
But no matter how quickly she can hurry on,  
With just one leap the man will get it done.

Anyone who understands that innermost core of the Prometheus saga — namely, the imperative requirement that the individual striving like a Titan has to fall into crime — must also sense at the same time the un-Apollonian quality of this pessimistic idea, for Apollo wants to make individual beings tranquil precisely because he establishes border lines between them and, with his demands for self-knowledge and moderation, always reminds them once again of the most sacred laws of the world. However, to prevent this Apollonian tendency from freezing form into Egyptian stiffness and frigidity and to make sure the movement of the entire lake does not die away through the attempt of the Apollonian to prescribe to the individual waves their path and their extent, from time to time the high flood of the Dionysian once again destroys all those small circles in which the one-sided Apollonian “will” seeks to confine the Greek spirit. Now that suddenly rising flood of the Dionysian takes the single small wave crest of the individual on its back, just as the brother of Prometheus, the Titan Atlas, shouldered the Earth. This Titanic impulse to become, as it were, the Atlas of all individuals and to bear them on one's wide back, higher and higher, further and further, is the common link between the Promethean and the Dionysian.<sup>49</sup>

In this view, the Aeschylean Prometheus is a Dionysian mask, while, in that previously mentioned deep desire for justice Aeschylus betrays, to the one who understands, his paternal descent from Apollo, the god of individuation and just boundaries. And so the double nature of the Aeschylean Prometheus, his simultaneously Dionysian and Apollonian nature, can be expressed in an understandable formula with the following words: “Everything present is just and unjust and equally justified in both.” That is your world! That's what one calls a world!<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Atlas: in Greek mythology one of the primordial Titans, brother of Prometheus, condemned by Zeus to hold up the sky so that it would remain separated from earth.

<sup>50</sup> A quotation from Goethe's *Faust* .



It is an incontestable tradition that Greek tragedy in its oldest form had as its subject only the suffering of Dionysus and that for a long time later the individually present stage heroes were simply Dionysus. But with the same certainty we can assert that right up to the time of Euripides Dionysus never ceased being the tragic hero, that all the famous figures of the Greek theatre, like Prometheus, Oedipus, and so on, are only masks of that primordial hero, Dionysus.<sup>51</sup> The fact that behind all these masks stands a divinity, that is the single fundamental reason for the frequently admired characteristic “ideality” of those well-known figures.

Someone, I don't know who, made the claim that all individuals, as individuals, are comic and thus untragic, and from that we might gather that the Greeks in general could not tolerate individuals on the tragic stage.<sup>52</sup> In fact, they seem to have felt this way: that Platonic distinction between and evaluation of the “idea” in contrast to the “idol,” to copies, in general lies deeply grounded in the nature of the Greeks.<sup>53</sup> But for us to make use of Plato's terminology, we would have to talk of the tragic figures of the Greek stage in something like the following terms: the one truly real Dionysus appears in a multiplicity of shapes, in the mask of a struggling hero and, as it were, bound up in the net of the individual will. So now the god made manifest talks and acts in such a way that he looks like an erring, striving, suffering individual: the fact that he generally appears with this epic definition and clarity is the effect of Apollo, the interpreter of dreams, who indicates to the chorus its Dionysian state by that metaphorical appearance.

In reality, however, that hero is the suffering Dionysus of the mysteries, that god who experiences the suffering of the individual in himself, the god about whom the amazing myths tell how he, as a child, was dismembered by the Titans and now in this condition is venerated as Zagreus.<sup>54</sup> Through this is revealed the idea that this dismemberment, the essentially Dionysian suffering, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we also have to look upon the condition of individuation as the source and basis for all suffering, as something in itself reprehensible. From the

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<sup>51</sup> Euripides : (480-406 BC), a major Athenian tragic dramatist, the last of the celebrated trio of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Dionysus is a principal character in Euripides' last play, *The Bacchae*

<sup>52</sup> The claim Nietzsche refers to is made by Aristotle in his *Poetics* .

<sup>53</sup> Plato : (428-348 BC), the most important philosopher in classical Greece, who distinguished between a real world of ideal forms and the phenomenal world of sense experience, with the latter being an inferior imitation of the former.

<sup>54</sup> According to some Greek myths Zeus and the goddess Demeter were the parents of Zagreus, a child who was torn to pieces by the Titans but who was later born again, either reassembled by Demeter or born to the mortal Semele. Zagreus was identified with the god Dionysus, child of Zeus and Semele.



smile of this Dionysus arose the Olympian gods, from his tears arose mankind. In that existence as dismembered god Dionysus has the dual nature of a cruelly savage daemon and a lenient, gentle master. The initiates in the Eleusinian mysteries hoped for a rebirth of Dionysus, which we now can understand as a premonition of the end of individuation: the initiates' thundering song of jubilation cried out to this approaching third Dionysus. And only with this hope was there a ray of joy on the face of the fragmented world, torn apart into individuals, as myth reveals in the picture of Demeter sunk in eternal sorrow, who rejoices again for the first time when someone says to her that she might be able once again to give birth to Dionysus. In these established views we already have assembled all the components of a profound and pessimistic world view, together with the mysterious doctrine of tragedy : the basic acknowledgement of the unity of all existing things, the observation that individuation is the ultimate foundation of all evil, art the joyful hope, that the spell of individuation is there for us to break, as a premonition of a re-established unity. — It has been pointed out earlier that the Homeric epic is the poetry of Olympian culture, with which it sang its own song of victory over the terrors of the fight against the Titans. Now, under the overwhelming influence of tragic poetry, the Homeric myths were newly reborn and show in this metamorphosis that since then the Olympian culture has also been overcome by an even deeper world view. The defiant Titan Prometheus reported to his Olympian torturer that for the first time his rule was threatened by the highest danger, unless he quickly joined forces with him. In Aeschylus we acknowledge the union of the frightened Zeus, worried about his end, with the Titan. Thus the earlier age of the Titans is belatedly brought back from Tartarus into the light once more.<sup>55</sup> The philosophy of wild and naked nature looks with the open countenance of truth at the myths of the Homeric world dancing past it: before the flashing eyes of this goddess, those myths grow pale and tremble — until the mighty fist of the Dionysian artist forces them into the service of the new divinity. The Dionysian truth takes over the entire realm of myth as the symbol of its knowledge and speaks of this knowledge, partly in the public culture of tragedy and partly in the secret celebrations of dramatic mystery celebrations, but always in the disguise of the old myths. What power was it which liberated Prometheus from his vultures and transformed the myth into a vehicle of Dionysian wisdom? It was the Herculean power of music, which attained its highest manifestation in tragedy and knew how to interpret myth with a new significance in the most profound manner, something we have already described before as the most powerful capacity of music.

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<sup>55</sup> When Zeus overcame the Titans, who were immortal, he imprisoned them in Tartarus, a region deep within the earth.



For it is the lot of every myth gradually to creep into the crevice of an assumed historical reality and to become analyzed as a unique fact in answer to the historical demands of some later time or other. The Greek were already fully on their way to re-labelling cleverly and arbitrarily the completely mythical dreams of their youth as a historical, pragmatic, and youthful history . For this is the way religions tend to die out, namely, when the mythical pre-conditions of a religion, under the strict, rational eyes of an orthodox dogmatism become systematized as a closed totality of historical events and people begin anxiously defending the credibility of their myths but resisting every naturally continuing life and further growth of those same myths and when the feeling for the myth dies out and in its place the claim to put religion on a historical footing steps forward. The newly born genius of Dionysian music now seized these dying myths, and in its hands myth blossomed again, with colours which it had never shown before, with a scent which stirred up a longing premonition of a metaphysical world. After this last flourishing, myth collapsed, its leaves grew pale, and soon the mocking Lucians of antiquity grabbed up the flowers, scattered around by all winds, colourless and withered. <sup>56</sup> Through tragedy myth attains its most profound content, its most expressive form. It lifts itself up again, like a wounded hero, and all the remaining strength and the wise tranquilly of a dying man burn in its eyes with its final powerful light.

What did you want, you rascal Euripides, when you sought to force this dying man once more into your cheerful service? He died under your powerful hands. And now you used a counterfeit, masked myth, which knew only how to dress itself up with the old splendour, like Hercules' monkey. And as myth died with you, so with you died the genius of music as well. Although you liked to plunder with greedy hands all the gardens of music, even so you achieved only a counterfeit, masked music. And because you abandoned Dionysus, you were then abandoned also by Apollo. Even though you hunted out all the passions from their beds and charmed them into your circle, even though you sharpened and filed a really sophisticated dialectic for the speeches of your heroes — nevertheless your heroes have only counterfeit, masked passions and speak only a counterfeit, masked dialogue.

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<sup>56</sup> Lucians : Lucian of Samosata (125 AD-180 AD), a popular satirist in Roman Syria who wrote in Greek and, among other things, made fun of traditional stories.



Greek tragedy died in a manner different from all its ancient sister artistic styles: it died by suicide, as a result of an insoluble, hence tragic, conflict; whereas, all those others passed away in advanced old age with the most beautiful and most tranquil deaths. For if it is an appropriately happy natural condition to depart from life with beautiful descendants and without any painful strain, then the end of those older artistic genres manifests such a fortunate natural state of things. They disappeared slowly, and their more beautiful offspring were already standing there before their dying gazes, impatiently craning their heads with courageous gestures. By contrast, with the death of Greek tragedy there was created an immense emptiness, profoundly felt everywhere. Just as the Greek sailors at the time of Tiberius once heard from some isolated island the shattering cry "Great Pan is dead," so now, like a painful lament, rang throughout the Greek world, "Tragedy is dead! Poetry itself is lost with it! Away, away with you, you stunted, emaciated epigones! Off with you to Hades, so that there you can for once eat your fill of the crumbs from your former masters!"<sup>57</sup>

If now a new form of art still blossomed which paid tribute to tragedy as its predecessor and mistress, it was looked upon with fright, because while it certainly carried the characteristics of its mother, they were the ones she had shown in her long death struggle. This death struggle of tragedy was fought by Euripides, and that later art form is known as New Attic Comedy. In it the atrophied form of tragedy lived on, as a monument to tragedy's extremely labourious and violent death. Looking at things this way, we can understand the passionate fondness the poets of the newer comedies felt for Euripides. Thus, Philemon's desire to be hanged immediately merely so that he could seek out Euripides in the underworld, provided only he could be convinced that the dead man was still in possession of his wits, is no longer something strange. However, if we want to state, briefly and without claiming to say anything in detail, what Euripides has in common with Menander and with Philemon and what worked for them so excitingly and in such an exemplary manner in Euripides, it is enough to say that in Euripides the spectator is brought up onto the stage.<sup>58</sup> Anyone who has recognized the material out of which the Promethean tragedians before Euripides created their heroes and how remote from them lay any intention of bringing the true mask of reality onto the stage will also see clearly the totally deviant tendencies of Euripides.

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<sup>57</sup> Tiberius : Tiberius Caesar August (42 BC to 37 AD), second Roman emperor, after Augustus. Pan : in Greek mythology, a god of the wilderness, hunting, and shepherds. The quotation comes from Plutarch, a Greek historian (46 AD to 120 AD).

<sup>58</sup> Philemon : (c. 362 BC to c. 262 BC), very successful Athenian playwright; Menander: (c. 342 to 291 BC), Greek dramatist, famous for his works of New Comedy.



As a result of Euripides, the man of ordinary life pushed his way out of the spectators' space and up onto the acting area. The mirror in which earlier only the great and bold features had been shown now displayed that awkward fidelity which also conscientiously reflected the unsuccessful features of nature. Odysseus, the typical Greek of the older art, now sank in the hands of the newer poets into the figure of Graeculus, who from now on stands right at the centre of dramatic interest as the good-hearted, clever house slave. What Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* gives himself credit for as a service, namely, that through his household medicines he freed tragic art of its pompous corpulence, that point we can trace above all in his tragic heroes.<sup>59</sup>

Essentially the spectator now saw and heard his double on the Euripidean stage and was happy that the character understood how to talk so well. But this was not the only delight. People themselves learned from Euripides how to speak. He praises himself on this very point in the contest with Aeschylus [in Aristophanes' *Frogs*] — how through him the people now learned to observe in an artistic way, with the keenest sophistication, to negotiate, and to draw conclusions. Because of this transformation in public language, he also made the new comedy generally possible. For from that time on there was nothing mysterious any more about how ordinary life could appear on stage and what stock phrases [Sentenzen] it would use.

Middle-class mediocrity, on which Euripides built all his political hopes, now had its say. Up to that point, in tragedy the demi-god and in comedy the intoxicated satyr or semi-human had determined the nature of the language. And so the Aristophanic Euripides [in *Frogs*] gave himself high praise for how he presented common, well-known, ordinary living and striving, which any person was capable of judging. If now the entire crowd philosophized, administered their lands and goods with tremendous astuteness, and carried on their own legal matters, well then, he claimed, that was to his credit and the achievement of the wisdom which he had drummed into the people. The new comedy could now direct its attention to such a prepared and enlightened crowd, for whom Euripides became, to a certain extent, the choir master. Only this time the chorus of spectators had to have practice. As soon as this chorus was well trained to sing in the Euripidean musical key, that style of drama like a chess game arose, the New Comedy, with its continuing triumph of shrewdness and cunning. But Euripides, the leader of the chorus, was incessantly praised. Indeed, people would have let themselves be killed in order to learn even more from him, if they had not been aware that tragic poets were just as dead as tragedy itself.

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<sup>59</sup> Graeculus : "little Greek," a pejorative name for a Greek; Aristophanes (456 BC to 386 BC), the greatest dramatist of Old Comedy; his play *Frogs* features a long satiric verbal duel between Euripides and Aeschylus in Hades, an argument about which of them is the better poet and what the features of the best dramatic poetry must be.



With tragedy, however, the Greeks had surrendered their faith in immortality, not merely the faith in an ideal past, but also the faith in an ideal future. The saying from the well-known written epitaph, “as an old man negligent and trivial” is applicable also to the old age of Hellenism. The instantaneous, the witty, the foolish, the capricious — these are its loftiest divinities; the fifth state, that of the slave, or at least the feelings of a slave, now come to rule, and if in general one is entitled still to talk of a “Greek serenity,” it is the serenity of the slave, who has no idea how to take responsibility for anything difficult, how to strive for anything great, how to value anything in the past or future higher than the present.

It was this appearance of “Greek serenity” which so outraged the profound and fearful natures of the first four centuries of Christianity; to them this feminine flight from seriousness and terror, this cowardly self-satisfaction with comfortable consumption, seemed not only despicable but also the essentially anti-Christian frame of mind. And to their influence we can ascribe the fact that the view of Greek antiquity as that age of pale rose-coloured serenity lasted for centuries and endured with almost invincible tenacity — as if Greek antiquity had never produced a sixth century, with its birth of tragedy, its mystery cults, its Pythagoras and Heraclitus, indeed, as if the artistic works of the great age simply did not exist — although these works, each and every one of them, cannot be explained at all on the grounds of such a senile joy in existence and serenity, a mood appropriate to a slave, these works which testify to a completely different world view as the basis of their existence.<sup>60</sup> Finally, when it is asserted that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage in order to make the spectator truly capable for the first time of judging drama, it may appear as if the older tragic art had not resolved its false relationship to the spectator, and people might be tempted to value the radical tendency of Euripides to attain an appropriate relationship between the art work and the public as a progressive step beyond Sophocles. However, the “public” is only a word and not at all a constant, inherently firm value. Why should an artist be duty-bound to accommodate himself to a power whose strength is only in numbers?

And if, with respect to his talent and intentions, the artist senses that he is superior to every single one of these spectators, how could he feel more respect for the common expression of all these capacities inferior to his own than for the one who was, by comparison, the most highly talented individual spectator? To tell the truth, no Greek artist handled his public over a long lifetime with greater daring and self-satisfaction than Euripides. As the masses hurled themselves at his feet, he himself sublimely

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<sup>60</sup> Pythagoras : a Greek philosopher in the sixth century BC; Heraclitus : ( 535 BC to 475 BC), Ionian philosopher.



defied even his own characteristic tendencies and openly slapped them in the face, those same tendencies with which he had conquered the masses. If this genius had had the slightest reverence for the pandemonium of the public, he would have broken apart under the cudgel blows of his failures long before the middle of his life.

Taking this into account, we see that our expression — Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage, in order to make the spectator truly capable of making judgments — was only provisional and that we have to seek out a deeper understanding of his dramatic tendencies. By contrast, it is, in fact, well known everywhere how Aeschylus and Sophocles during their lifetimes and, indeed, well beyond that, stood in full possession of popular favour, and thus, given these predecessors of Euripides, there is no point in talking about a misunderstanding between the art work and the public. What drove the richly talented artist constantly under pressure to create so powerfully away from the path above which shone the sun of the greatest poetic names and the cloudless sky of popular approval? What curious consideration for the spectator led him to go against the spectator? How could he be contemptuous of his public out of a high respect for his public?

The solution to the riddle posed immediately above is this: Euripides felt himself as a poet quite superior to the masses, but not superior to two of his spectators. He brought the masses up onto the stage. Those two spectators he honoured as the only judges capable of rendering a verdict and as masters of all his art; following their instructions and reminders, he transposed the entire world of feelings, passions, and experiences, which up to that point had appeared in the rows of spectators as an invisible chorus for every celebratory presentation, into the souls of his stage heroes. Following the demands of these two judges, he also sought out for these new characters a new language and a new tone. In the vote of these two spectators alone he heard a valid judgment of his creation, just as he heard their encouragement promising victory, when he saw himself once again condemned by the justice of the general public. The first of these two spectators is Euripides himself, Euripides the thinker, not the poet. Of him we could say that the extraordinary richness of his critical talent, like that of Lessing, constantly fostered, even if it did not create, an additional productive artistic drive.<sup>61</sup> Given this talent, with all the clarity and agility of his critical thinking, Euripides sat in the theatre and struggled to recognize the masterpieces of his great predecessors, as with a painting darkened by age, feature by feature, line by line. And here he now encountered something not unfamiliar to those who know the profound secrets of Aeschylean tragedy: he became aware of something incommensurable in

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<sup>61</sup> Lessing : Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729 to 1781), German dramatist, writer, and art critic.



every feature and in every line, a certain deceptive clarity and, at the same time, an enigmatic depth, the infinity of the background. The clearest figure still had a comet's tail attached to it, which seemed to hint at the unknown, the inexplicable. The same duality lay over the construction of the drama, as well as over the meaning of the chorus. And how ambiguously the solution of the ethical problems remained for him! How questionable the handling of the myths! How unequal the division of luck and disaster! Even in the language of the older tragedies there was a great deal he found offensive or, at least, enigmatic. He especially found too much pomp and circumstance for simple relationships, too many figures of speech and monstrosities for the straightforwardness of the characters. And thus he sat there in the theatre, full of uneasy thoughts, and, as a spectator, he came to realize that he did not understand his great predecessors. But since his reason counted for him as the real root of all enjoyment and creativity, he had to ask himself and look around to see if there was anyone who thought the way he did and could in the same way attest to that incommensurability of the old drama. But the public, including the best individuals among them, met him only with a suspicious smile. No one could explain to him why his reflections about and objections to the great masters might be correct. And in this agonizing condition he found the other spectator, who did not understand tragedy and therefore did not value it. United with him, Euripides could dare to begin emerging from his isolation to launch the immense battle against the art works of Aeschylus and Sophocles — not with critical writings, but as a dramatic poet, who sets up his idea of tragedy in opposition to the tradition.

## 12

Before we designate this other spectator by name, let's linger here a moment to call to mind for ourselves that impression of the duality and incommensurability at the heart of Aeschylean tragedy, something we described earlier. Let us think about our own surprise at and unease with the chorus and the tragic hero of those tragedies, both of which we did not know how to reconcile with what we are used to any more than with the tradition — until we again recognized that duality itself as the origin and essence of Greek tragedy, as the expression of two artistic drives woven together, the Apollonian and the Dionysian.



To cut that primordial and all-powerful Dionysian element out of tragedy and to rebuild tragedy as a pure, new, and un-Dionysian art, morality, and world view — that has now revealed itself to us very clearly as the tendency of Euripides.

Near the end of his life, Euripides himself proposed as emphatically as possible for his contemporaries the question about the value and meaning of this tendency in a myth. Should the Dionysian exist at all? Should we not eradicate it forcefully from Greek soil? Of course we should, the poet says to us, if only it were possible, but the god Dionysus is too powerful. The most sensible opponent — like Pentheus in the *Bacchae* — is unexpectedly charmed by Dionysus and later runs in this enchanted state to his own destruction. The judgment of the two old men, Cadmus and Tiresias, seems also to be the judgment of the aged poet: the thinking of the cleverest individual does not throw away that old folk tradition, that eternally propagating reverence for Dionysus; indeed, where such amazing powers are concerned, it is appropriate at least to demonstrate a diplomatically prudent show of joining in. But even with that, it is still possible that the god might take offense at such lukewarm participation and transform the diplomat finally into a dragon — as happens here with Cadmus.<sup>62</sup> The poet tells us this, a poet who fought throughout his long life against Dionysus with heroic force — only to conclude his life with a glorification of his opponent and a suicide, like a man suffering from vertigo who, in order to escape the dreadful dizziness, which he can no longer endure, throws himself off a tower. That tragedy [*The Bacchae*] is a protest against the practicality of his artistic program [*Tendenz*], alas, and it had already succeeded!<sup>63</sup> A miracle had taken place: just when the poet recanted, his program had already triumphed. Dionysus had already been chased off the tragic stage, and by a daemonic power speaking out from Euripides. But Euripides was, in a certain sense, only a mask: the divinity which spoke out of him was not Dionysus, and not Apollo, but an entirely new-born daemon called Socrates.

This is the new opposition: the Dionysian and the Socratic, and from this contrast, Greek tragedy perished as a work of art. No matter how much Euripides might now seek to console us with his retraction, he was unsuccessful: the most magnificent temple lay in ruins. What use to us are the laments of the destroyer and his awareness that it had been the most beautiful of all temples? And even if Euripides himself, as a

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<sup>62</sup> Cadmus and Tiresias : Cadmus, founder of Thebes, and Tiresias, the blind prophet, are two old men in Euripides' *Bacchae*. They are mocked in the play for their desire to observe the Dionysian rites. At the end of the play, Cadmus is transformed into a dragon.

<sup>63</sup> Euripides wrote the *Bacchae* at the very end of his life when he had left Athens for Macedonia. The work was discovered and performed after his death.



punishment, has been turned into a dragon by the artistic critics of all ages — who can be satisfied with this paltry compensation?

Let us get closer now to this Socratic trend, with which Euripides fought against and conquered Aeschylean tragedy.

What purpose — that's the question we need to ask ourselves at this point — could Euripides' intention to ground drama solely on the un-Dionysian have generally had, if we assume its implementation had the very highest ideals? What form of drama still remained, if it was not to be born from the womb of music, in that mysterious half-light of the Dionysian? All it could be was dramatic epic, an Apollonian art form, in which the tragic effect is naturally unattainable.

This is not a matter of the content of the represented events. Indeed, I could assert that in Goethe's proposed *Nausikaa* it would have been impossible to make the suicide of that idyllic being — which was to be carried out in the fifth act — grippingly tragic, for the power of the Apollonian epic is so extraordinary that right before our very eyes it magically transforms the most horrific things through that joy in and redemption through appearances. The poet of the dramatic epic cannot completely fuse with his pictures, any more than the epic rhapsodist can: it is still a matter of calm, tranquil contemplation, looking with open eyes, a state which sees the images in front of it. The actor in this dramatized epic still remains, in the most profound sense, a rhapsodist; the consecration of the inner dream lies upon all his actions, so that he is never completely an actor. Now, how is Euripides' work related to this ideal of Apollonian drama? It is just like the relationship of the solemn rhapsodist of the olden times to that younger attitude, whose nature is described in

Plato's *Ion* as follows: "When I say something sad, my eyes fill with tears. But if what I say is horrifying and terrible, then the hairs on my head stand on end from fright, and my heart beats loudly." Here we no longer see the epic dissolution of being in appearances, the disinterested coolness of the real actor, who remains, particularly in his most intense activity, totally appearance and delight in appearances. Euripides is the actor with the beating heart, with his hair standing on end. He designs his work as a Socratic thinker, and he carries it out as a passionate actor.

Euripides is a pure artist neither in planning his work nor in carrying it out. Thus, the Euripidean drama is simultaneously a cool and fiery thing, equally capable of freezing or burning. It is impossible for it to attain the Apollonian effect of the epic, while, on the other hand, it has divorced itself as much as possible from the Dionysian elements, and now, in order to work at all, it needs new ways to arouse people, methods which



can no longer lie within either of the two individual artistic drives of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. These methods of arousing people are detached paradoxical ideas — substituted for Apollonian objects of contemplation — and fiery emotions — substituted for Dionysian enchantment. The fiery effects are, to be sure, imitated with the highest degree of realism, but the ideas and emotional effects are not in the slightest imbued with the spirit of art. Hence, if we have recognized this much, that Euripides did not, in general, succeed in basing his drama solely on Apollonian principles, that, by contrast, his un-Dionysian tendencies led him astray into an inartistic naturalism, we will now be able to move closer to the essential quality of Socratic aesthetics, whose most important law runs something like this: “Everything must be understandable in order to be beautiful,” a corollary to the Socratic saying, “Only the knowledgeable person is virtuous.” With this canon in hand, Euripides measured all the individual features and justified them according to this principle: the language, the characters, the dramatic construction, the choral music. What we habitually assess so frequently in Euripides as a poetical deficiency and a backward step, in comparison with Sophoclean tragedy, is for the most part the product of that emphatic critical process, that daring intelligence. Let the Euripidean prologue serve for us as an example of what that rationalistic method produces. Nothing can be more offensive to our stage techniques than the prologue in a Euripidean play. That a single person should step forward at the beginning of a work and explain who he is, what has gone on before the action starts, what has happened up to this point, and, indeed, what will occur in the unfolding of the work, that would strike a modern poetical dramatist as a wanton, inexcusable abandonment of the effect of suspense. If we, in fact, know everything which is going to happen, who will want to sit around waiting to see that it really does happen? — For here there is nothing like the stimulating relationship between a prophetic dream and a real event which occurs later.

Euripides thought quite differently about the matter. The effect of tragedy, he believed, never depended on epic suspense, on the tempting uncertainty about what would happen now and later. It depended far more on those great rhetorical-lyrical scenes in which the passion and dialectic of the main hero swelled up into a wide and powerful torrent. Everything was preparing for pathos, not for action, and what did not prepare the way for pathos was considered disposable. But the most serious barrier to the delighted devotion to such scenes is any part the spectator found missing, a gap in the network of the previous events. As long as the listener still has to figure out what this or that person means, what gives rise to this or that conflict in motives or purposes, then his full immersion in the suffering and action of the main characters, his breathless sympathy with and fear for them are not yet possible. The Aeschylean-



Sophoclean tragedies made use of the most elegant artistic methods to provide the spectators in the opening scenes, as if by chance, all those necessary clues to understanding everything, a technique in which their noble artistry proves its worth by allowing the necessary features to appear, so to speak, as something masked and accidental.

But for all that, Euripides believed he noticed that during those first scenes the spectator was oddly disturbed having to figure out the simple arithmetic of the previous events, so that the poetical beauties and the pathos of the exposition were lost on him. Therefore Euripides set up the prologue even before the exposition and put it in the mouth of a person whom people could trust — often a divinity had to more or less guarantee the outcome of the tragedy for the public and take away all doubts about the reality of the myth, in a manner similar to the way in which Descartes was able to establish the reality of the empirical world only through an appeal to the truthfulness of God and his inability to lie. At the end of his drama, Euripides once again made use of this same divine truthfulness in order to confirm his hero's future for the public. This is the function of the notorious *deus ex machina*.<sup>64</sup> Between the epic preview and final preview lay the lyrical, dramatic present, the essential “drama.” So Euripides as a poet is, above all, the echo of his conscious knowledge, and it is precisely this which confers upon him such a memorable place in the history of Greek art. In view of his critically productive creativity it must have often struck him that he had to bring alive in drama the opening of Anaxagoras' text, the first lines of which go as follows: “In the beginning everything was confused, but then came reason and created order.” And if, among philosophers, Anaxagoras, with his concept of *nous* [mind], seems like the first sober man among nothing but drunkards, so Euripides might have conceptualized his relationship to the other tragic poets with a similar image.<sup>65</sup> So long as the single creator of order and ruler of all, *nous* [mind], was still excluded from artistic creativity, everything was still mixed up in a chaotic primordial stew. That's how Euripides must have judged the matter; that's how he, as the first “sober” poet, must have passed sentence on the “drunken” poets.

What Sophocles said about Aeschylus — that he does what's right, without being aware of it — was certainly not said in any Euripidean sense. Euripides would have conceded only that Aeschylus created improperly because he created without any

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<sup>64</sup> *deus ex machina* (lit. “god out of a machine”), a term describing the resolution of a complex action by an extremely implausible event (e.g., by having a god come down from on high to sort out all the problems on the spot and to indicate what will happen in future to the main characters).

<sup>65</sup> Anaxagoras : (c. 500 BC to 428 BC), an Ionian materialistic philosopher.



conscious awareness. Even the god-like Plato speaks of how the creative capability of poets is not a conscious insight, but for the most part only ironically, and he draws a comparison with the talent of prophets and dream interpreters, since the poet is not able to write until he has lost his conscious mind and reason no longer resides in him. Euripides undertook the task, as did Plato as well, to show the world the opposite of the “irrational” poet. His basic aesthetic principle, “Everything must be conscious in order to be beautiful,” is, as I have said, the corollary of the Socratic saying, “Everything must be conscious in order to be good.”

With this in mind, we are entitled to assess Euripides as the poet of aesthetic Socratism. Socrates, however, was that second spectator, who did not understand the older tragedy and therefore did not value it. With Socrates as his ally, Euripides dared to be the herald of a new artistic creativity. If the older tragedy perished from this development, then aesthetic Socratism is the murdering principle. But insofar as the fight was directed against the Dionysian of the older art, we recognize in Socrates the enemy of Dionysus, the new Orpheus, who roused himself against Dionysus, and who, although destined to be torn apart by the maenads of the Athenian Court of Justice, nevertheless compelled the overpowering god himself to run away.<sup>66</sup> Dionysus, as before, when he fled from Lycurgus, king of the Edoni, saved himself in the depths of the sea, that is, in the mysterious floods of a secret cult which would gradually overrun the entire world.

### 13

That Socrates had a close relationship to Euripides’ attitude did not escape their contemporaries in ancient times, and the clearest expression for this happy intuition is that rumour running around Athens that Socrates was in the habit of helping Euripides with his poetry. Both names were linked by the supporters of the “good old days” when it was time to list the present popular leaders whose influence had brought about a situation in which the old sturdy fitness in mind and body manifested at the Battle of Marathon was being increasingly sacrificed for a dubious way of explaining things, in a continuing erosion of the physical and mental powers.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Orpheus in Greek mythology was the preeminent poet and musician, who perfected the lyre. He was said to have the power to charm nature with his music. Socrates was charged by the Athenians with impiety, put on trial, and sentenced to death. He died by drinking hemlock, the official method of execution.

<sup>67</sup> Battle of Marathon : (490 BC) one of the highest points of Greek (and especially Athenian) history, when a small force of Greeks, led by the Athenians, defeated the Persian expeditionary force at Marathon, near Athens. According to tradition, Aeschylus fought at Marathon and Sophocles, as a young lad, danced in the victory celebrations.



This was the tone, half indignation, half contempt, in which Aristophanic comedy habitually talked of those men, to the horror of the newer generations, who, although happy enough to betray Euripides, could not contain their surprise that Socrates appeared in Aristophanes as the first and most important sophist, as the mirror and essence of all sophistic ambitions. Their only consolation for this was to pillory Aristophanes himself as an impudent lying Alcibiades of poetry.<sup>68</sup> Without here defending the profound instincts of Aristophanes against such attacks, I will proceed to demonstrate the close interrelationship between Socrates and Euripides as the ancients saw it. It's important to remember, in this connection, that Socrates, as an opponent of tragic art, did not attend the performances of tragedy and only joined the spectators when a new piece by Euripides was being produced. The best known link,,,, however, is the close juxtaposition of both names in the pronouncements of the Delphic Oracle, which indicated that Socrates was the wisest of men and at the same time delivered the judgment that Euripides captured second prize in the contest for wisdom. Sophocles was the third person named in this hierarchy, the man who could praise himself in comparison with Aeschylus by saying that he (Sophocles) did what was right because he knew what was right. Obviously the particular degree of clarity in these men's knowledge was the factor that designated them collectively as the three "wise men" of their time. But the most pointed statement about that new and unheard of high opinion of knowledge and understanding was uttered by Socrates, when he claimed that he was the only person to assert that he knew nothing; whereas, in his critical wandering about in Athens conversing with the greatest statesmen, orators, poets, and artists, everywhere he ran into people who imagined they knew things. Astonished, he recognized that all these famous people themselves had no correct and clear insight into their careers and carried out their work only instinctually. "Only from instinct" — with this expression we touch upon the heart and centre of the Socratic attitude.

Given this, Socratism condemns prevailing art as well as prevailing ethics. Wherever he directs his searching gaze, he sees a lack of insight and the power of delusion, and from this lack he infers the inner falsity and worthlessness of present conditions. On the basis of this one point, Socrates believed he had to correct existence. He, a solitary individual, stepped forward with an expression of contempt and superiority, as the pioneer of an entirely different style of culture, art, and morality, into a world, a scrap

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<sup>68</sup> The Sophists were professional teachers of rhetoric, who had the reputation of using clever arguments to criticize traditional truths and to help their clients and pupils succeed in legal disputes with sophisticated new reasoning, which many people regarded as specious. Aristophanes portrays Socrates as the leader of a school of sophistic reasoning in his play *Clouds*. Alcibiades: (c. 450 BC to 404 BC) was an erratic and charismatic Athenian politician and military officer, who repeatedly changed his allegiance during the Peloponnesian War (defecting to Sparta and Persia and then returning).



of which we would count an honour and the greatest good fortune to catch. That is the immensely disturbing thing which always grips us about Socrates and which over and over again stimulates us to find out the meaning and intention of this man, the most problematic figure of ancient times. Who is the man who can dare, as an individual, to deny the essence of Greece, which as Homer, Pindar, and Aeschylus, as Phidias, as Pericles, as Pythia, and Dionysus, as the most profound abyss and loftiest height, can count on our astonished veneration? What daemonic force is it that could dare to sprinkle this magic drink in the dust? What demi-god is it to whom the ghostly chorus of the noblest specimens of humanity had to cry out: “Alas, alas! You have destroyed the beautiful world with your mighty fist. It is collapsing, falling to pieces!”<sup>69</sup>

A key to the essence of Socrates is offered to us by that amazing phenomenon indicated by the term “Socrates’ daimonon .” Under special circumstances, in which his immense reasoning power was gripped by doubt, he got a firm clue from a divine voice which expressed itself at such times. When this voice came, it always sounded a cautionary note . In this totally anomalous character, instinctive wisdom reveals itself only in order to stand up now and then against conscious knowledge as a hindrance . Whereas in all productive men instinct is the truly creative and affirming power, and consciousness acts as a critical and cautioning reaction, in Socrates instinct becomes the critic, consciousness becomes the creator — truly a monstrosity per defectum [from some defect] ! Indeed, we do perceive here a grotesque defectus [defect] of every mystical talent, so that Socrates can be considered a specific case of the non-mystical man , in whom the logical character has become simply too massive through excessive use, just like instinctive wisdom in the mystic. On the other hand, however, it was utterly impossible for that logical drive, as it appeared in Socrates, to turn against itself. In its unfettered outpouring it demonstrates a natural force of the sort we meet, to our shuddering surprise, only in the very greatest of all instinctive powers. Anyone who has sensed in the Platonic texts the merest scent of that god-like naivete and confidence in the direction of Socrates’ life has also felt how that immense drive wheel of logical Socratism is in motion, as it were, behind Socrates and how we are compelled to see this through Socrates, as if we were looking through a shadow. That he himself had a premonition of this relationship comes out in the dignified seriousness with which he assessed his divine calling everywhere, even before his judges. To censure him for this was basically as impossible as to approve of his influence on the dissolution of instinct. When Socrates was hauled before the assembly of the Greek state, there was only one single form of sentence for this irreconcilable conflict, namely, banishment: people should have expelled him beyond

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<sup>69</sup> The quotation comes from Goethe’s Faust .



the borders as something completely enigmatic, unclassifiable, inexplicable, so that some posterity could not justly indict the Athenians for acting shamefully.

But the fact that death and not mere exile was pronounced over him Socrates himself appears to have brought about, fully clear about what he was doing and without the natural horror of death: he went to his death with that tranquillity Plato describes him showing as he leaves the Symposium, the last drinker in the early light of dawn, to start a new day, while behind him, on the benches and on the ground, his sleeping dinner companions stay behind, to dream of Socrates, the truly erotic man. The dying Socrates became the new ideal of the noble Greek youth, one never seen before. Above all, the typical Greek youth, Plato, prostrated himself before Socrates' image with all the fervent adoration of his passionately enthusiastic soul.

## 14

Let's now imagine that one great Cyclops eye of Socrates focussed on tragedy, that eye in which the beautiful madness of artistic enthusiasm never glowed — let's imagine how it was impossible for that eye to peer into the Dionysian abyss with a feeling of pleasure.<sup>70</sup> What must that eye have actually seen in the “lofty and highly praised” tragic art, as Plato calls it? Something really unreasonable — causes without effects and effects which appeared to have no causes, and the whole so confused and with so many different elements that any reasonable disposition had to reject it, but dangerous tinder for sensitive and susceptible souls. We know which single form of poetry Socrates understood: Aesop's fables, and he certainly did so with that smiling complacency with which the noble and good Gellert in his fable of the bee and the hen sings the praises of poetry:

You see in me the use of poetry—  
To tell the man without much sense  
A picture image of the truth of things.<sup>71</sup>

But for Socrates tragic art did not seem “to speak the truth” at all, quite apart from the fact that it addressed itself to the man who “does not possess much sense,” and thus not to philosophers, a double excuse to keep one's distance from it. Like Plato, he assigned it to the arts of cosmetics, which present only what is pleasant, not what is useful, and he therefore made the demand that his disciples abstain and strictly stay

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<sup>70</sup> Cyclops : In Greek mythology a cyclops was a huge, one-eyed, cannibal monster living in the wilderness.

<sup>71</sup> Gellert : Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769), German poet and professor of philosophy, famous for his moralistic fables. Aesop : a sixth century BC Greek writer, by tradition a slave, who is known only for the moralistic tales which bear his name.



away from such unphilosophical temptations, with so much success that the youthful poet of tragedy, Plato, immediately burned his poetical writing, so that he could become Socrates' student. But where invincible talents fought against the Socratic instructions, his power, together with the force of that immense personality, was still great enough to force poetry itself into new attitudes, unknown up until then.

An example of this is Plato himself. To be sure, in his condemnation of tragedy and art in general he did not remain back behind the naive cynicism of his master. But completely from artistic necessity he had to create an art form inwardly related to the existing art forms which he had rejected. The major criticism which Plato had made about the older art — that it was the imitation of an illusion and thus belonged to an even lower level than the empirical world — must above all not be directed against the new work of art. And so we see Plato exerting himself to go beyond reality and to present the Idea which forms the basis of that pseudo-reality.<sup>72</sup>

With that, however, Plato the thinker reached by a detour the very place where, as a poet, he had always been at home and from where Sophocles and all the older art was solemnly protesting against Plato's criticism. If tragedy had assimilated into itself all earlier forms of art, so the same again holds true, in an odd way, for the Platonic dialogue, which was created from a mixture of all available styles and forms and hovers between explanation, lyric, drama, between prose and poetry, right in the middle, and in so doing broke through the strict old law about the unity of stylistic form. The Cynic writers went even further along the same path. In the excessive garishness of their style, in their weaving back and forth between prose and metrical forms, they produced the literary image of "raving Socrates," which they were in the habit of depicting in their own lives.<sup>73</sup> The Platonic dialogue was, so to speak, the boat on which the shipwreck of the older poetry, along with all its children, was saved. Pushed together into a single narrow space and with Socrates at the helm they anxiously and humbly set off now into a new world, which never could get its fill of looking at fantastic images of this procession. Plato truly gave all future generations the image of a new form of art, the image of the novel, which can be characterized as an infinitely intensified Aesopian fable, in which poetry lived on with a relative priority to dialectical philosophy similar to the relative priority of that very philosophy to theology for many centuries, that is, as ancilla [subservient maid]. This was

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<sup>72</sup> In Plato's theory of knowledge, reality is ideal and can be apprehended only through the intellect, not through the senses. The sensible world around us contains copies of that ideal reality (empirical objects copy or participate in the Idea of the object).

<sup>73</sup> The Cynic writers : The Cynics, an important school of philosophy in the fifth century BC, encouraged a moral life free of material wealth.



poetry's new position, the place into which Plato forced it under the pressure of the daemonic Socrates. Now philosophical ideas grew up around art and forced it to cling closely to the trunk of dialectic. The Apollonian attitude metamorphosed into logical systematizing, just as we noticed something similar with Euripides and, in addition, the Dionysian was transformed into naturalistic emotions. Socrates, the dialectical hero in Platonic drama, reminds us of the changed nature of the Euripidean hero, who has to defend his actions with reasons and counter-reasons and thus frequently runs the risk of losing our tragic sympathy. For who can fail to recognize the optimistic element in the heart of dialectic, which celebrates a jubilee with every conclusion and can breathe only in cool brightness and consciousness, that optimistic element which, once it has penetrated tragedy, must gradually overrun its Dionysian regions and necessarily drive them to self-destruction — right to their death leap into middle-class drama.

Let people merely recall the consequences of the Socratic sayings “Virtue is knowledge; sin arises only from ignorance; the virtuous person is the happy person”: in these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of tragedy. For now the virtuous hero must be a dialectician; now there must be a necessarily perceptible link between virtue and knowledge, belief and morality; now the transcendental resolution of justice in Aeschylus is lowered to the flat and impertinent principle of “poetic justice” with its customary *deus ex machina*.

What does this new Socratic optimistic stage world look like now with respect to the chorus and the whole musical-Dionysian basis for tragedy in general? As something accidental, as a reminder of the origin of tragedy, which we can well do without. We, by contrast, have come to realize that the chorus can only be understood as the origin of tragedy and of the tragic in general. Already with Sophocles the issue of the chorus reveals something of an embarrassment — an important indication that even with him the Dionysian stage of tragedy is beginning to fall apart. He no longer dares to trust the chorus to carry the major share of the action, but limits its role to such an extent that it now appears almost coordinated with the actors, just as if it had been lifted up out of the orchestra into the scene. This feature naturally destroys its nature completely, no matter how much Aristotle may have approved of this particular arrangement of the chorus.

That displacement of the chorus, which Sophocles certainly recommended through his dramatic practice and, according to tradition, even in a written text, is the first step toward the destruction of the chorus, whose phases in Euripides, Agathon, and the New Comedy followed with breakneck speed, one after the other. Optimistic dialectic,



with its syllogistic whip, drove music out of tragedy, that is, it destroyed the essence of tragedy, which can be interpreted only as a manifestation and representation of Dionysian states, as a perceptible symbolizing of music, as the dream world of a Dionysian intoxication.

If we have thus noticed an anti-Dionysian tendency already effective even before Socrates, which only in him achieves incredible, brilliant expression, then we must not shrink from the question of where such a phenomenon as Socrates points to. For we are not in a position, given the Platonic dialogues, to see that phenomenon merely as a negative force of dissolution. And so, while it's true that the most immediate effect of the Socratic drive was to bring about the subversion of Dionysian tragedy, a profound living experience of Socrates himself forces us to the question whether there must necessarily be only an antithetical relationship between Socratism and art and whether the birth of an "artistic Socrates" is in general an inherent contradiction.

For where art is concerned, that despotic logician now and then had the feeling of a gap, of an emptiness, of a partial reproach, of a duty he had perhaps neglected. As he explains to his friends in prison, often one and the same dream apparition came to him, always with the same words, "Socrates, practise music!"<sup>74</sup> He calmed himself, right up to his last days, with the interpretation that his practice of philosophy was the highest musical art and believed that it was incorrect that a divinity would remind him of "common, popular music." Finally in prison, in order to relieve his conscience completely, he agreed to practice that music, something he had considered insignificant. And in this mood, he composed a poem to Apollo and rendered a few of Aesop's fables in verse. What drove him to this practice was something like the voice of his warning daemon: it was his Apollonian insight that, like a barbarian king, he did not understand a noble divine image and was in danger of sinning against a divinity — through his failure to understand. That statement of Socrates's dream vision is the single indication of his thinking about something perhaps beyond the borders of his logical nature. So he had to ask himself: Is something which I do not understand not also something incomprehensible? Perhaps there is a kingdom of wisdom which is forbidden to the logician? Perhaps art is even a necessary correlative and supplement to scientific understanding?

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<sup>74</sup> This story is mentioned in Plato's *Phaedo*.



In the sense of this last mysterious question we must now state how the influence of Socrates has spread out over later worlds, right up to this moment and, indeed, into all future ages, like a shadow in the evening sun constantly growing larger, how that influence always makes necessary the re-creation of art — I mean art in its most profound and widest metaphysical sense — and through its own immortality guarantees the immortality of art.

Before we could recognize this fact, before we convincingly established the innermost dependence of every art on the Greeks, from Homer right up to Socrates, we had to treat these Greeks as the Athenians treated Socrates. Almost every era and cultural stage has at some point sought in an profoundly ill-tempered frame of mind to free itself of the Greeks, because in comparison with the Greeks, all their own achievements, apparently fully original and admired in all sincerity, suddenly appeared to lose their colour and life and shrivelled to unsuccessful copies, in fact, to caricatures. And so a heartfelt inner anger always keeps breaking out again against that arrogant little nation which dared to designate for all time everything that was not produced in its own country as “barbaric.” Who were those Greeks, people asked themselves, who, although they had achieved only an ephemeral historical glitter, only ridiculously restricted institutions, only an ambiguous competence in morality, who could even be identified with hateful vices, yet who had nevertheless laid a claim to a dignity and a pre-eminent place among peoples, appropriate to a genius among the masses? Unfortunately people were not lucky enough to find the cup of hemlock which could easily do away with such a being, for all the poisons which envy, slander, and inner rage created were insufficient to destroy that self-satisfied magnificence.

Hence, confronted by the Greeks, people have been ashamed and afraid, unless an individual values the truth above everything else and dares to propose this truth: the notion that the Greeks, as the charioteers of our culture and every other one, hold the reins, but that almost always the wagon and horses are inferior material and do not match the glory of their drivers, who then consider it amusing to whip such a team into the abyss, over which they themselves jump with the leap of Achilles.<sup>75</sup> To demonstrate that Socrates also merits such a place among the drivers of the chariot, it is sufficient to recognize him as typifying a form of existence inconceivable before him, the type known as the Theoretical Man. Our next task is to reach some insight about the meaning and purpose of such a man. The theoretical man, like the artist, also takes an infinite satisfaction in the present and is, like the artist, protected by that satisfaction from the practical ethic of pessimism and from its lynx eyes which glow

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<sup>75</sup> Achilles : the principal character of Homer's Iliad , is the pre-eminent warrior hero of Greek culture.



only in the darkness. For while the artist, with each revelation of the truth, always keeps his enchanted gaze hanging on what still remains hidden after his revelation, theoretical man enjoys and remains satisfied with the covers which have been cast aside and takes as the greatest object of delight the process of continually happy unveiling which his own power has brought about. There would be no science if it concerned itself only with that one naked goddess and with nothing else. For then its disciples would have to feel like people who wanted to dig a hole straight through the earth, and each of them sees that, even with the greatest lifelong effort, he is in a position to dig through only a really small piece of the immense depths, and that piece will be covered over in front of his eyes by the work of the person who comes after him, so that a third person would apparently do well to select on his own initiative a new place for his tunnelling efforts. Well, if someone now convincingly demonstrates that it is impossible to reach the antipodes by this direct route, who will still want to continue working on in the old depths, unless in the meantime he lets himself be satisfied with the possibility of finding some valuable rock or discovering some natural law? For that reason, Lessing, the most honest theoretical man, ventured to state that for him the search for the truth counted for more than truth itself. With that statement the fundamental secret of science, is unmasked, to the astonishment, indeed, the anger, of scientists. Now, of course, alongside occasional recognitions like Lessing's, prompted by excessive honesty if not high spirits, stands a profound delusion, which first came into the world in the person of Socrates, the unshakeable faith that thinking, guided by the main idea of causality, might reach into the deepest abyss of being and that thinking is capable, not just of understanding being, but even of correcting it. This sublime metaphysical delusion is instinctually part of science and leads it over and over again to its limits, at which point it must turn into art, something which is really predictable with this mechanical process.

With the torch of this idea, let's now look at Socrates: to us he appears as the first person who was capable not only of living by that instinct for science, but also — something much more — of dying by it, and thus the picture of the dying Socrates as a man raised above fear of death by knowledge and reason is the shield hanging over the entranceway to science, reminding every individual of his purpose, namely, to make existence intelligible and thus apparently justified. Of course, when reasoning cannot succeed in this endeavour, myth must also finally serve, something which I have just noted as the necessary consequence, indeed, even the purpose, of science. Once anyone clearly sees how, after Socrates, that mystagogue of science, one philosophical school after another, like wave after wave, succeed each other, how a never-imagined universal greed for knowledge through the widest extent of the educated world



steered science around on the high seas as the essential task for every person of greater capabilities, a greed which it has been impossible since then completely to expel from science, how through this universality a common net of thinking was cast over the entire earth for the first time, with prospects, in fact, of the rule-bound workings of an entire solar system — whoever reminds himself of all this, together with that astonishingly high pyramid of contemporary knowledge, cannot deny the fact that in Socrates we see a turning point and vortex of so-called world history.

Then imagine for a moment if the entire incalculable sum of the energy which has been used in pursuit of that world project were spent, not in the service of knowledge, but on the practical, that is, the egotistical, aims of individuals and peoples, then in all probability the instinctive delight in living would be so weakened by universal wars of destruction and continuing migrations of people that, with suicide being a common occurrence, perhaps the individual would have had to feel the final remnant of a sense of duty, when he, like the inhabitants of the Fiji Islands, as a son would strangle his parents, and as a friend would strangle his friend — a practical pessimism, which could even give rise to a dreadful ethic of mass murder out of sympathy — an ethic which, by the way, is present and has been present all over the world, wherever art has not appeared in some form or other, especially in religion and science, as a remedy and a defence against that miasma.

With respect to this practical pessimism, Socrates is the original picture of the theoretical optimist, who, as I have described, in the belief that we could come to understand the nature of things, thinks that the power of a universal medicine is contained in knowledge and discovery and that evil inherently consists of error. To push forward with that reasoning and to separate true knowledge from appearance and from error seemed to the Socratic man the noblest, even the single truly human, vocation, and so from Socrates on, that mechanism of ideas, judgments, and conclusions has been valued as the highest activity and the most admirable gift of nature, above all other capabilities. Even the noblest moral deeds, the emotions of pity, of self-sacrifice, of heroism and that calmness in the soul, so difficult to attain, which the Apollonian Greeks called *sophrosyne* — all these were derived by Socrates and his like-minded descendants right up to the present time from the dialectic of knowledge and therefore described as teachable.

Whoever has experienced for himself the delight of a Socratic discovery and feels how this, in ever-widening circles, seeks to enclose the entire world of phenomena, will from then on find no spur capable of pushing him into existence more intense than the desire to complete that conquest and to weave a solid impenetrable net. To a man so



minded, the Platonic Socrates then appears as the teacher of an entirely new form of “Greek serenity” and of a blissful existence, which seeks to discharge itself in actions and which will find this discharge, for the most part, in those influences which come from acting as a midwife to and educating noble disciples, in order to produce an endless supply of genius. But now science, incited by its powerful delusion, speeds on inexorably right to its limits, at which point the optimism hidden in the essence of logic breaks down. For the circumference of the circle of science has an infinity of points, and while it is still impossible to see how that circumference could ever be completely measured, nevertheless the noble, talented man, before the middle of his life, inevitably comes up against such a border point on that circumference, where he stares out into something which cannot be illuminated. When, at this point, he sees to his horror how at these limits logic turns around on itself and finally bites its own tail — then a new form of knowledge breaks through, tragic insight, which, in order merely to be endured, requires art as a protector and healer. If we look at the loftiest realms of that world streaming around us, our eyes strengthened and refreshed by the Greeks, we become aware of that greed of insatiably optimistic knowledge, exemplary in Socrates, turning into tragic resignation and a need for art, even if it’s true that this same greed, at its lower levels, must express itself as hostile to art and must inwardly loathe Dionysian tragic art in particular, as I have already explained in the example of the conflict between Aeschylean tragedy and Socratism.

Here we are now knocking, with turbulent feelings, on the doors of the present and future: Will that “““““turning around” lead to continuously new configurations of genius and straight to the music-playing Socrates? Will that net of art spread out over existence, whether in the name of religion or of science, be woven always more tightly and delicately, or is it determined that it will be ripped to shreds by the restless barbaric impulses and hurly-burly which we now call “the present”? — We are standing here on the sidelines for a little while as lookers on, worried but not without hope, for we are being permitted to witness that immense struggle and transition. Alas! The magic of these battles is that whoever looks at them must also fight them!

## 16

By setting out this historical example, we have attempted to clarify how tragedy just as surely dies away with the disappearance of the spirit of music, as it can be born only out of this spirit. To mitigate the strangeness of this claim and, on the other hand, to indicate the origin of this insight of ours, we must now openly face up to analogous



phenomena of the present time. We must stride right into the midst of those battles which, as I have just said, are being waged in the loftiest spheres of our present world between the insatiably optimistic desire to know and the tragic need for art. In this discussion, I shall omit all the other opposing drives which have in every age worked against art, especially against tragedy, and which at present have also taken hold with such confidence of victory that, for example, in the art of the theatre, only farces and ballets produce fragrant blossoms with a reasonably luxurious bloom, which is perhaps not for everyone. I shall speak only of the most illustrious opposition to the tragic world view: by that I mean scientific knowledge, optimistic to the deepest core of its being, with its father Socrates at the very pinnacle. Shortly I shall also indicate by name the forces which seem to me to guarantee a rebirth of tragedy — and who knows what other blessed hopes for the German character!

Before we leap into the middle of that battle, let us wrap ourselves in the armour of the insights we seized upon earlier. In opposition to all those eager to derive art from a single principle as the necessary living origin of every work of art, I keep my eyes fixed on both those artistic divinities of the Greeks, Apollo and Dionysus, and recognize in them the living and clear representatives of two art worlds, different in their deepest being and their highest goals. Apollo stands before me as the transfigured genius of the principium individuationis [principle of individuation] „„, through which release is only to be truly attained through illusion; whereas, under the mystical joyous cries of Dionysus, the spell of individuation is shattered, and the way lies open to the maternal source of being, to the innermost core of things.

This tremendous difference, which opens up a yawning gap between plastic art as the Apollonian and music as the Dionysian art, became obvious to only one of the great thinkers, to the extent that he, even without that prompting from the symbolism of the Greek gods, recognized for music a character and origin different from all the other arts, because music is not, like all those others, the image of appearance, but an immediate portrayal of the will itself and also because it presents the metaphysical as compared to all physical things in the world, the thing-in-itself as compared to all appearances (Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Idea*, I.1.3.52).

On this most significant insight into all aesthetics, which, taken seriously, marks the first beginning of aesthetics, Richard Wagner, as confirmation of its lasting truth, set his stamp, when he established in Beethoven that music must be assessed on aesthetic principles entirely different from those for all fine arts and not at all according to the category of beauty, although an erroneous aesthetics in the service of a misleading and degenerate art, had, because of that idea of beauty asserting itself in the world of



images, become accustomed to demand from music an effect similar to what it demanded from works of the plastic arts, namely, the arousal of satisfaction in beautiful forms. After the discovery of that tremendous opposition, I sensed a strong urge to bring myself closer to the essence of Greek tragedy and, in so doing, to the most profound revelation of the Hellenic genius. Only now did I believe I was capable of the magical task of posing the basic problem of tragedy vividly in my own mind, over and above the jargon of our customary aesthetics. Through that, I was granted such a strange, idiosyncratic glimpse into the Hellenic that it had to appear to me as if our classical-Hellenic scholarship, which behaves so proudly, had up to this point known, for the most part, only how to gloat over games with shadows and trivialities.

Perhaps we can touch on that original problem with the following question: What aesthetic effect arises when those inherently separate powers of art, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, come to operate alongside each other? Or, put more briefly, what is the relationship of music to images and ideas? Schopenhauer, whom Richard Wagner applauded on this very point for the unsurpassable clarity and perceptiveness of his explanation, spoke his views on this matter in the greatest detail in the following place, which I will quote again here in full, from *World as Will and Idea*, I, p. 309:

“As a result of all this, we can look upon the world of appearance, or nature, and music as two different expressions of the same thing, which itself is thus the only mediating factor in the analogy between the two of them; thus, an insight into this mediating factor is required in order to understand that analogy. According to this, music, when considered as an expression of the world, is to the highest degree a universal language, something which even has a relationship with the universality of ideas, rather like the way these are related to particular things. Its universality, however, is in no way that empty universality of abstractions, but something of an entirely different kind, bound up with a thoroughly clear certainty. In this, music is like geometric figures and numbers, which are the universal forms of all possible objects of experience and applicable to them all a priori [before experience], not, however, in an abstract manner but vividly and thoroughly fixed. All possible efforts, excitements, and expressions of the will, all those processes inside human beings, which reason subsumes under the broad negative concept of feelings, can be expressed through the infinite number of possible melodies, but always in the universality of mere form, without matter, always only according to the thing-in-itself, not according to its appearance; they are, so to speak, its innermost soul, without the body. From this intimate relationship which music has with the true essence of all things, we can also account for the fact that when an appropriate music is heard in any scene, business,



action, or environment, this music appears to open up to us the most secret sense of these things and comes forward as the most correct and clearest commentary on them, in the same way that for the man who surrenders himself entirely to the experience of a symphony it is as if he saw all possible events of life and of the world drawn over into himself, and yet he cannot, if he thinks about it, perceive any similarity between that play of sounds and the things which are in his mind. For music is, as mentioned, different from all other arts in this sense: it is not a portrayal of appearances, or more correctly, the adequate objectification of the will, but the immediate portrayal of the will itself, as well as the metaphysical complement of all physical things in the world and the thing-in-itself of all appearances. We could, therefore, call the world the embodiment of music just as much as the embodiment of the will. And that is why it is understandable that music is capable of bringing out every painting, indeed, every scene of real life and the world, with an immediate and higher significance and, of course, to do that all the more, the closer the analogy of its melody is to the inner spirit of the given phenomenon. On this point we base the fact that we can set a poem to music as a song, or a vivid presentation as a pantomime, or both as an opera. Such individual pictures of human life, given a foundation in the universal language of music, are never bound to music and do not correspond with music by some constant necessity, but stand in relation to music as a random example to a universal idea. They present in the clarity of the real the very thing which music expresses in the universality of mere form. For melodies are, to a certain extent, like general ideas, an abstractum [abstraction] from the reality. For reality, that is, the world of individual things, supplies clear phenomena, remarkable and individual things, the single case, to both the universality of ideas and to the universality of melodies. Both of these universals, however, are, from a certain point of view, contrary to each other, since ideas consist only of forms abstracted first of all from perception, the stripped-away outer skin of things, so to speak, and are thus really and entirely abstracta [abstractions] ; music, by contrast, gives the heart of the thing, the innermost core, which comes before all particular forms. This relationship can be really well expressed in the language of the scholastics, when we say: ideas are the *universalia post rem* [universals after the fact] ; music, however, gives the *universalia ante rem* [universals before the fact] , and reality the *universalia in re* [universals in the fact] . That in general there can be a connection between a musical composition and a perceptible presentation, however, rests on the point that, as stated, both are only very different expressions of same inner essence of the world. Now, when in a particular case such a connection is truly present, that is, the composer has known how to express in the universal language of music the dynamic of the will, which constitutes the core of an



event, then the melody of the song, the music of the opera, is full of expression. But the analogy discovered by the composer between those two must issue from his immediate insight into the world's essence, unknown to his reason, and must not be an imitation, conveyed in ideas with conscious intentionality. Otherwise the music does not express the inner essence, the will itself, but only gives an inadequate imitation of its appearance, the way all essentially imitative music does."

Following what Schopenhauer has taught, we also understand music as the language of the unmediated will and feel our imaginations stirred to shape that spirit world which speaks to us invisibly and nonetheless with such vital movement and to embody it for ourselves in an analogous illustration. By contrast, image and idea, under the influence of a truly appropriate music, reach an elevated significance. Thus, Dionysian art customarily works in two ways on Apollonian artistic potential: music stimulates us to the metaphorical viewing of the Dionysian universality, and music then permits that metaphorical image to come forward with the highest significance. From this inherently intelligible observation and without any deeper considerations of unapproachable things, I conclude that music is capable of generating myth, that is, the most meaningful example, and of giving birth in particular to the tragic myth, the myth which speaks in metaphors of the Dionysian insight. I have explained in the phenomenon of the lyric poet, how the music in the lyric poet strives to make its essence known through him in Apollonian pictures. If we now imagine that music at its highest intensity must also seek to reach its highest representation, then we must consider it possible that music also knows how to find the symbolic expression for its essentially Dionysian wisdom. And where else will we have to look for this expression, if not in tragedy and in the idea of the tragic generally?

From the essence of art as it is commonly understood according to the single categories of illusion and beauty, it is genuinely impossible to derive the tragic. Only with reference to the spirit of music do we understand a joy in the destruction of the individual. For in particular examples of such a destruction is made clear to us the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art, which brings into expression the will in its omnipotence out from behind, so to speak, the *principio individuationis* [principle of individuation], the eternal life beyond all appearances and in spite of all destruction. The metaphysical joy in the tragic is a translation of the instinctive unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of the image: the hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is destroyed, and we are happy at that, because, after all, he is only an illusion, and the eternal life of the will is not disturbed by his destruction. "We believe in eternal life," so tragedy calls out, while the music is the direct idea of this life. The



work of the plastic artist has an entirely different purpose: here Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual through the bright exaltation in the eternity of the illusion . Here beauty is victorious over the suffering inherent in life. The pain is, in a certain sense, brushed away from the face of nature. In Dionysian art and in its tragic symbolism this same nature speaks to us with its true, undisguised voice: "Be as I am! Under the incessant changes in phenomena, the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally forcing things into existence, eternally satisfied with the changing nature of appearances!"

## 17

Dionysian art thus wishes to convince us of the eternal delight in existence: only we are to seek this delight, not in appearances, but behind them; we are to recognize how everything which comes into being must be ready for painful destruction; we are forced to gaze directly into the terror of individual existence — and nonetheless are not to become paralyzed: a metaphysical consolation tears us momentarily out of the hustle and bustle of changing forms. For a short time we really are the primordial essence itself and feel its unbridled lust for and joy in existence; the struggle, the torment, the destruction of appearances now seem to us necessary, on account of the excess of innumerable forms of existence pressing and punching themselves into life and of the exuberant fecundity of the world will; we are transfixed by the raging barbs of this torment in the very moment when we become, as it were, one with the immeasurable primordial delight in existence and when, in Dionysian rapture, we sense the indestructible and eternal nature of this joy. In spite of fear and pity, we are fortunate vital beings, not as individuals, but as the one living being, with whose procreative joy we have been fused. The story of how Greek tragedy arose tells us now with clear certainty how the Greeks' tragic work of art really was born out of the spirit of music. With this idea we think we have, for the first time, done justice to the original and astonishing meaning of the chorus. At the same time, however, we must concede that the significance of the tragic myth established previously was never conceptually and transparently clear to the Greek poets, to say nothing of the Greek philosophers. Their heroes speak to a certain extent more superficially than they act; the myth really does not find its adequate objectification in the spoken word.

The structure of the scenes and the vivid images reveal a deeper wisdom than the poet himself can grasp in words and ideas. We can make the same observation about Shakespeare, whose Hamlet, for example, in a similar sense speaks more superficially



than he acts, so that we derive the doctrine of Hamlet we discussed earlier, not from the words, but from the deeper view and review of the totality of the work. With respect to Greek tragedy, which, of course, comes to us only as a drama of words, I have even suggested that the incongruity between myth and word can easily seduce us into considering it shallower and more empty of meaning than it is and thus also to assume a more superficial effect than it must have had according to the testimony of the ancients, for we easily forget that what the poet as a wordsmith could not achieve, the attainment of the highest intellectualization and idealization of myth, he could have achieved successfully at any moment as a creative musician! Admittedly we are almost forced to recreate through scholarship the extraordinary power of the musical effects in order to experience something of that incomparable consolation necessarily characteristic of true tragedy. But we would experience this superior musical power for what it is only if we ourselves were Greeks; whereas, considering the entire development of Greek music in comparison to the music we know and are familiar with — so infinitely richer by comparison — we believe that we are hearing youthful songs of musical genius, sung with only a timid sense of their power. The Greeks are, as the Egyptian priests say, eternal children and, even in tragic art, only children who do not know what a sublime toy has arisen under their hands and which — will be destroyed. That struggle of the spirit of music for pictorial and mythic revelation, which becomes increasingly intense from the beginning of the lyric right up to Attic tragedy, suddenly breaks apart, right after it first attained full luxuriant bloom and, so to speak, disappears from the surface of Hellenic art, although the Dionysian world view born out of this struggle lives on in the mysteries and, in the most amazing transformations and degenerations, never stops attracting more serious natures to it. Is it not possible that one day it will rise from its mystic depths as art once more? At this point we are concerned with the question whether the power whose opposition broke tragedy has sufficient force for all time to hinder the artistic reawakening of tragedy and the tragic world view. If the old tragedy was derailed by the dialectical drive for knowledge and for the optimism of science, we might have to infer from this fact an eternal struggle between the theoretical and the tragic world view, and only after the spirit of science is taken right to its limits and its claim to universal validity destroyed by the proof of those limits would it be possible to hope for a re-birth of tragedy. For a symbol of such a cultural form, we would have to set up Socrates the player of music, in the sense talked about earlier. By this confrontation I understand with respect to the spirit of science that belief, which first came to light in the person of Socrates, that nature can be rationally understood and that knowledge has a universal healing power.



Anyone who remembers the most immediate consequences of this restless, forward-driving spirit of science will immediately recall how it destroyed myth and how, through this destruction, poetry was driven out of its naturally ideal soil as something which from now on was without a home. If we have correctly ascribed to music the power to be able to bring about out of itself a rebirth of myth, then we will also have to seek out the spirit of science on the path where it has its hostile encounter with the myth-creating power of music. This occurred in the development of the new Attic dithyramb, whose music no longer expressed the inner essence, the will itself, but only gave back an inadequate appearance in an imitation delivered through ideas. From such inwardly degenerate music those with a true musical nature turned away with the same aversion which they had shown when confronted by the art-killing attitude of Socrates.

The instinct of Aristophanes, which had such a sure grasp, was certainly right when he linked together Socrates himself, the tragedies of Euripides, and the music of the new writers of dithyrambs, hating each of them equally and smelling in all three phenomena the characteristics of a degenerate culture. Through that newer dithyramb, music was, in an outrageous manner, turned into a mimetic demonstration of appearances, for example, a battle, a storm at sea, and in the process was certainly robbed of all its power to create myths. For when music seeks to arouse our indulgence only by compelling us to look for external analogies between an event in life and nature and certain rhythmic figures and characteristic musical sounds, when our understanding is supposed to be satisfied with the recognition of these analogies, then we are dragged down into a mood in which a conception of the mythic is impossible, for myth desires to be vividly felt as a single instance of universality and truth staring into the infinite.

Truly Dionysian music confronts us as such a universal mirror of the world will: that vivid event reflected in this mirror widens out at once for our feelings into the image of an eternal truth. By contrast, in the sound painting of the newer dithyramb such a vivid event is immediately stripped of every mythic character; now the music has become a feeble copy of the phenomenon and, in the process, infinitely poorer than the phenomenon itself. Through this impoverishment the phenomenon itself is even lowered in our feelings, so that now, for example, a battle imitated in this kind of music exhausts itself in marches, trumpet calls, and so forth, and our imagination is held back by these very superficialities.

Painting with music is thus in every respect the opposite to the myth-creating power of true music: through the former a phenomenon becomes even more impoverished than



it is; whereas, through Dionysian music the individual phenomenon becomes richer and widens into a world picture. It was a powerful victory of the non-Dionysian spirit when, in the development of the newer dithyramb, it alienated music from itself and forced it down to be the slave of appearances. Euripides, who, in a higher sense, must be considered a thoroughly unmusical nature, is for this very reason an ardent supporter of the newer dithyrambic music and uses all its stock effects and styles with the open-handedness of a thief.

From another perspective we see the force of this un-Dionysian spirit in action directing its effects against myth, when we turn our gaze toward the way in which the presentation of character and the psychological complexities increase alarmingly in the tragedies of Sophocles. The character can no longer be allowed to broaden out into an eternal type, but, by contrast, must come across as an individual because of the artistic qualifications and shading and the most delicate clarity of every line, so that the spectator generally no longer experiences the myth but the commanding naturalism of the artist, his power of imitation.

Here, as a result, we also become aware of the victory of appearances over the universal and of the delight in the particular, like an anatomical specimen, as it were. Already we breathe the air of a theoretical world, which values the scientific insight higher than the artistic reflection of a universal principle. The movement along the line of increasingly typical characteristics quickly goes further. While Sophocles still paints whole characters and yokes their sophisticated development to myth, Euripides already paints only large individual character traits, which are capable of expressing themselves in violent passions. In the newer Attic comedy there are only masks with one expression, silly old men, deceived pimps, and mischievous slaves in an inexhaustible repetition. Where now has the myth-building spirit of music gone? What is still left for music now is music either of excitement or of memory, that is, either a means of stimulating jaded and worn out nerves or sound painting. As far as the first is concerned, the text is largely irrelevant. Already in Euripides, when his heroes or chorus first start to sing, things get really out of hand. What must it have been like with his impertinent successors?

However, the new un-Dionysian spirit manifests itself with the utmost clarity in the conclusions of the newer plays. In the old tragedy, the metaphysical consolation was there to feel at the conclusion. Without that, the delight in tragedy generally cannot be explained. The sound of reconciliation from another world echoes most purely perhaps in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Now, once the genius of music flew away from tragedy, tragedy is, in the strict sense of the term, dead: for out of what are people now



supposed to be able to create that metaphysical consolation? Consequently, people looked for an earthly solution to tragic dissonance. After the hero was sufficiently tortured by fate, he received a well-earned reward in an impressive marriage, in divine tributes. The hero became a gladiator, to whom people occasionally gave his freedom, after he had been well beaten and was covered with wounds. The *deus ex machina* moved in to take the place of metaphysical consolation. I don't wish to say that the tragic world view was completely destroyed everywhere by the surging spirit of the un-Dionysian: we know only that it must have fled out of art into the underworld, so to speak, degenerating into a secret cult. But over the widest surface area of Hellenic existence raged the consuming wind of that spirit which announces itself in that form of "Greek serenity" to which I have already referred earlier, as an impotent, unproductive delight in existence. This cheerfulness is the opposite of the marvellous "naivete" of the older Greeks, which we must see, in accordance with its given characteristics, as the flowering of Apollonian culture, blossoming out of a dark abyss, as the victory over suffering and the wisdom of suffering, which the Hellenic will gains through its ability to mirror beauty.

The noblest form of that other form of "Greek serenity," the Alexandrian, is the cheerfulness of the theoretical man. It manifests the same characteristic features I have just derived out of the spirit of the un-Dionysian — it fights against Dionysian wisdom and art; it strives to dissolve myth; in place of a metaphysical consolation, it sets an earthly consonance, indeed, a *deus ex machina* of its own, namely, the god of machines and crucibles, that is, the forces of nature spirits, recognized and used in the service of a higher egoism; it believes in correcting the world through knowledge, in a life guided by science, and thus is really in a position to confine the individual man in the narrowest circle of soluble problems, inside which he can cheerfully say to life: "I want you. You are worth knowing."

## 18

It's an eternal phenomenon: the voracious will always finds a way to keep its creatures alive and to force them on to further living by an illusion spread over things. One man is fascinated by the Socratic desire for knowledge and the delusion that with it he will be able to heal the eternal wound of existence. Another is caught up by the seductive veil of artistic beauty fluttering before his eyes, still another by the metaphysical consolation that underneath the hurly-burly of appearances eternal life flows on indestructibly, to say nothing of the more common and almost even more powerful



illusions which the will holds ready at all times. In general, these three stages of illusion are only for nobly endowed natures, those who especially feel with a more profound reluctance the weight and difficulty of existence and who have to be deceived out of this reluctance by these exquisite stimulants. Everything we call culture consists of these stimulants: depending on the proportions of the mixture we have a predominantly Socratic or artistic or tragic culture — or if you'll permit historical examples — there is either an Alexandrian or a Hellenic or a Buddhist culture. Our entire modern world is trapped in the net of Alexandrian culture and recognizes as its ideal the theoretical man, equipped with the highest intellectual powers and working in the service of science, a man for whom Socrates is the prototype and progenitor. All our methods of education originally have this ideal in view; every other existence has struggled on with difficulty alongside this ideal as a way of life we permit, not as one we desire. For a long time now, in an almost frightening sense, an educated person here has been found only in the form of the scholar. Even our poetic arts have had to develop out of scholarly imitations, and in the important effect of rhyme we recognize still the development of our poetical form out of artificial experiments with what is essentially a really scholarly language, not one native to us.

To a true Greek how incomprehensible Faust would have to have appeared, the man of modern culture, inherently intelligible to us, who storms dissatisfied through all faculties, that Faust whose drive for knowledge makes him devoted to magic and the devil. We have only to stand him beside Socrates for comparison in order to recognize that modern man is beginning to have a premonition of the limits of that Socratic desire for knowledge and is yearning for a coastline in the wide, desolate sea of knowledge. When Goethe once remarked to Eckermann, with reference to Napoleon, "Yes, my good man, there is also a productivity in actions," in a delightfully naive way he was reminding us that the non-theoretical man is something implausible and astonishing to modern human beings, so that, once again, it required the wisdom of a Goethe to find out that such a strange form of existence is comprehensible, indeed, forgivable.

And now we should not conceal from ourselves what lies hidden in the womb of this Socratic culture! An optimism that thinks itself all powerful! Well, people should not be surprised when the fruits of this optimism ripen, when a society that has been thoroughly leavened with this kind of culture, right down to the lowest levels, gradually trembles with an extravagant turmoil of desires, when the belief in earthly happiness for everyone, when faith in the possibility of such a universal knowledge



culture gradually changes into the threatening demand for such an Alexandrian earthly happiness, into the plea for a Euripidean *deus ex machina* !

People should take note: Alexandrian culture requires a slave class in order to be able to exist over time, but with its optimistic view of existence, it denies the necessity for such a class and thus, when the effect of its beautiful words of seduction and reassurance about the “dignity of human beings” and the “dignity of work” has worn off, it gradually moves towards a horrific destruction. There is nothing more frightening than a barbarian slave class which has learned to think of its existence as an injustice and is preparing to take revenge, not only for itself, but for all generations. In the face of such threatening storms, who dares appeal with sure confidence to our pale and exhausted religions, which themselves in their foundations have degenerated into scholarly religions, so that myth, the essential precondition for every religion, is already paralyzed everywhere, and even in this area that optimistic spirit which we have just described as the germ of destruction of our society has gained control.

While the disaster slumbering in the bosom of theoretical culture gradually begins to worry modern man, while he, in his uneasiness, reaches into the treasure of his experience for ways to avert the danger, without himself having any real faith in these means, and while he also begins to have a premonition of the particular consequences for him, some great wide-ranging natures have, with an incredible circumspection, known how to use the equipment of science itself to set out the boundaries and restricted nature of knowledge generally and, in the process, decisively to deny the claim of science to universal validity and universal goals. With proofs like this, the delusion which claims that with the help of causality it can fathom the innermost essence of things has for the first time become recognized for what it is.

The immense courage and wisdom of Kant and Schopenhauer achieved the most difficult victory, the victory over the optimism lying concealed in the essential nature of logic, which is, in turn, the foundation of our culture. While this logic, based on *aeternae veritates* [eternal truths] which it did not consider open to objection, believed that all the riddles of the world could be recognized and resolved and had treated space, time, and causality as totally unconditional laws with the most universal validity, Kant showed how these really served only to raise mere appearance, the work of *Maja*, to the single, highest reality and to set it in place of the innermost and true essence of things and thus to make true knowledge of this essence impossible, that is, in the words of Schopenhauer, to get the dreamer to sleep even more soundly ( *World as Will and Idea* , I, 498).



With this recognition there is introduced a culture which I venture to describe as a tragic culture. Its most important distinguishing feature is that wisdom replaces science as the highest goal, a wisdom which, undeceived by the seductive diversions of science, turns its unswerving gaze onto the all-encompassing picture of the world and, with a sympathetic feeling of love, seeks in that world to grasp eternal suffering as its own suffering. Let us picture for ourselves a generation growing up with this fearlessness in its gaze, with this heroic push into what is tremendous; let us picture for ourselves the bold stride of these dragon slayers, the proud audacity with which they turn their backs on all the doctrines of weakness associated with that optimism, in order “to live with resolution,” fully and completely. Would it not be necessary that the tragic man of this culture, having trained himself for what is serious and frightening, desire a new art, the art of metaphysical consolation, the tragedy, as his own personal Helen of Troy, and to have to cry out with Faust:

With my desire's power, should I not call

Into this life the fairest form of all?

However, now that Socratic culture has been shaken on two sides and can hang onto the sceptre of its infallibility only with trembling hands — first of all by the fear of its own consequences, which it is definitely beginning to sense and, in addition, because it is itself no longer convinced with that earlier naive trust of the eternal validity of its foundations, it's a sorry spectacle how the dance of its thinking constantly dashes longingly after new forms in order to embrace them and then how, like Mephistopheles with the seductive Lamias, it suddenly, with a shudder, lets them go again.<sup>76</sup> That is, in fact, the characteristic mark of that “fracture” which everyone is in the habit of talking about as the root malady of modern culture, that theoretical man is afraid of his own consequences and, in his dissatisfaction, no longer dares to commit himself to the fearful ice currents of existence. He runs anxiously up and down along the shore. He no longer wants to have anything completely, any totality with all the natural cruelty of things. That's how much the optimistic way of seeing things has mollycoddled him. At the same time he feels how a culture which has been built on the principle of science must collapse when it begins to become illogical, that is, when it begins to run back once it is faced with its own consequences.

Our art reveals this general distress: in vain people use imitation to lean on all the great productive periods and natures; in vain they gather all “world literature” around

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<sup>76</sup> Mephistopheles . . . Lamia : In Goethe's Faust, Mephistopheles is a representation of the Devil. Lamia is an alternative name for Lilith, Adam's first wife. In Faust she is portrayed as a beautiful seductive woman.



modern man to bring him consolation and place him in the middle of artistic styles and artists of all ages, so that he may, like Adam with the animals, give them a name. But he remains an eternally hungry man, the “critic” without joy and power, the Alexandrian man, who is basically a librarian and copy editor and goes miserably blind from the dust of books and printing errors.

## 19

We can designate the innermost meaning of this Socratic culture no more precisely than when we call it the culture of opera, for in this area this Socratic culture, with characteristic naivete, has expressed its wishes and perceptions, something astonishing to us, if we bring the genesis of opera and the facts of the development of opera together with the eternal truths of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. First, I bring to mind the emergence of the *stilo rappresentativo* [the representational style] and of recitative. Is it credible that this entirely externalized opera music, something incapable of worship, could be accepted and preserved with wildly enthusiastic favour, as if it were the rebirth of all true music, during an age in which Palestrina’s inexpressibly awe-inspiring and sacred music had just arisen? <sup>77</sup> On the other hand, who would make the diversion-loving voluptuousness of those Florentine circles or the vanity of its dramatic singers responsible for such an impetuously spreading love of opera? The fact that in the same age — indeed, in the same peoples — alongside the vaulted structure of Palestrina’s harmonies, which the entire Christian Middle Ages had developed, there awoke that passion for a half-musical way of speaking — that I can explain only by some tendency beyond art at work in the very nature of recitative.

To the listener who wishes to hear clearly the word under the singing, there corresponds the singer who speaks more than he sings and who intensifies the expressions of pathos in this half-singing. Through this intensification of pathos he makes the words easier to understand and overpowers that part of the music which remains. The real danger now threatening him is that at an inopportune moment he may give the music the major emphasis, so that the pathos in the speech and the clarity of the words necessarily disappear at once. On the other hand, he always feels the urge for musical release and a virtuoso presentation of his voice. Here the “poet” comes to

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<sup>77</sup> Palestrina : Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525 to 1594), Italian musician, famous for his polyphonic vocal harmonies.



his assistance, the man who knows how to provide him sufficient opportunities for lyrical interjections, repetitions of words and sentences, and so on, places where the singer can now rest in the purely musical element, without considering the words. This alternation of urgently emotional speech which is only half sung and interjections which are all singing, which lies at the heart of the *stilo rappresentativo*, this rapidly changing effort at one moment to affect the understanding and imagination of the listener and, at another, to work on his musical sensibility, is something so completely unnatural and similarly so inwardly contradictory to the Dionysian and Apollonian artistic drives that we must infer an origin of recitative which lies outside all artistic instincts.

According to this account, we can define recitative as the mixing of epic and lyric performing, and, to be precise, not at all in an inwardly consistent blending, which could not have been attained with such entirely disparate things, but in the most external conglutination, in the style of a mosaic, something the like of which has no model whatsoever in the realm of nature and experience. But this was not the opinion of those inventors of recitative. By contrast, they themselves, along with their age, believed that through that *stilo rappresentativo* the secret of ancient music had been resolved, that only through it could one explain the tremendous effect of an Orpheus, Amphion, indeed, even of Greek tragedy.<sup>78</sup> The new style was valued as the reawakening of the most effective music, the music of the ancient Greeks; in fact, under the universal and totally popular conception of the Homeric world as the primitive world, people could abandon themselves to the dream that they had now climbed down once more into the paradisaic beginnings of humankind, in which music must necessarily have had that superb purity, power, and innocence which the poets knew how to talk about so movingly in their pastoral plays.

Here we see into the innermost development of this truly genuine modern style of art, the opera: a powerful need forcibly creates an art, but it is a need of an unaesthetic sort, the yearning for the idyllic, the belief in a primordial existence of the artistic and good man. Recitative served as the rediscovered language of that primordial man, and opera as the rediscovered land of that idyllic or heroically good being, who at the same time follows a natural artistic drive in all his actions, who sings at least something in everything he has to say, so that, given the slightest emotional arousal, he immediately sings out in full voice.

For us now it is unimportant that contemporary humanists used this newly created picture of the paradisaic artist to fight against the old church idea of human beings as

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<sup>78</sup> In Greek mythology Orpheus and Amphion were extraordinarily gifted musicians.



inherently corrupt and lost, so that opera is to be understood as the opposing dogma of good people, something with which they simultaneously discovered a way of consoling themselves against that pessimism to which the serious-minded people of that time, given the horrifying uncertainties of all social conditions, were attracted most strongly. It's enough for us to recognize how the real magic and thus the origin of this new artistic form lies in the satisfaction of an entirely unaesthetic need, in the optimistic glorification of man as such, in its view of primitive man as a naturally good and artistic man. This operatic principle has gradually transformed itself into a threatening and terrible demand, which we, faced with the socialist movement of the present day, can no longer fail to hear. The "good primitive man" wants his rights: what paradisaal prospects!

Alongside this point I set still another equally clear confirmation of my view that opera is constructed on the same principles as our Alexandrian culture. Opera is the offspring of the theoretical man, of the critical layman, not of the artist — one of the strangest facts in the history of all the arts. It was the demand of essentially unmusical listeners that people had to understand the words above all, so that a rebirth of music was only to be expected when some way of singing was discovered according to which the words of the text rule over the counterpoint the way a lord rules over his servants. For the words, they claimed, are much nobler than the accompanying harmonic system, just as the soul is much nobler than the body. In the beginning of opera, the union of music, image, and word was treated according to the amateurish, unmusical crudity of these views. The first experiments with the meaning of this aesthetic were launched even in distinguished amateur circles in Florence by the poets and singers patronized there.

The man who is artistically impotent produces for himself a form of art precisely because he is the inherently inartistic man. Because he has no sense of the Dionysian depths of music, for his own sake he transforms musical taste into easy-to-understand verbal and musical rhetoric of the passions in the *stilo rappresentativo* and into the voluptuousness of the art of singing; because he is incapable of seeing a vision, he presses mechanics and decorative artists into his service; because he has no idea how to grasp the true essence of the artist, he conjures up in front of him the "artistic primitive man" to suit his own taste, that is, the man who, when passionate, sings and speaks verse. He dreams himself back in an age in which passion was sufficient to produce songs and poems, as if every feeling is capable of creating something artistic. The precondition of opera is a false belief about the artistic process; more precisely, it is that idyllic faith that in reality every sensitive man is an artist. In keeping with the



sense of this belief, opera is the expression of lay amateurs in art, something which dictates its laws with the cheerful optimism of the theoretical man.

If we wanted to bring together into a single conception both of these ideas I have just described, which were at work in the origin of opera, all we would have left to do is to speak of an idyllic tendency in opera, and for that the only thing we would need to use is Schiller's way of expressing himself and his explanation. He claimed that nature and the ideal are either an object of sorrow, when the former is represented as lost and the latter as unattained, or both are an object of joy, when they are represented as real. The first produces the elegy in a narrower sense, and the other produces the idyll in its broadest sense. Now we can immediately draw attention here to the common characteristic of both of those ideas in the genesis of opera, that in them the ideal does not register as unattained, and nature does not register as lost.

According to this feeling, there was a primordial time for man when he lay on the heart of nature and, in this state of nature, at the same time attained the ideal of humanity in paradisaal goodness and artistry. We all are said to have descended from these perfect primitive men; indeed, we still were their faithful image; we only had to cast some things away from us in order to recognize ourselves once again as these primitive people, thanks to a voluntary renunciation of superfluous scholarship, of lavish culture. Through his operatic imitation of Greek tragedy, the educated man of the Renaissance let himself be led back to such a harmony of nature and the ideal, to an idyllic reality. He used this tragedy, as Dante used Virgil, in order to be led right up to the gates of paradise, while from this point on he strode even further on his own and passed over from an imitation of the highest Greek art form to a "restoration of all things," to a replica of man's original artistic world.<sup>79</sup>

What a confident good nature there is in these audacious attempts, right in the bosom of theoretical culture! Something to be explained only by the comforting faith that "the essential man" is the eternally virtuous hero of opera, the eternally piping or singing shepherd, who must always in the end rediscover himself as such, should he find out at some time or other that he has really lost himself for a while: the only fruit of that optimism which here arises out of the depths of the Socratic world view, like a sweetly seductive fragrant column of air.

Hence, among the characteristics of opera there is no sense at all of that elegiac pain of an eternal loss; instead there is the cheerfulness of eternal rediscovery, the comfortable

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<sup>79</sup> In the first part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the Roman poet Virgil is the narrator's guide through the circles of Hell but has to leave him as the narrator moves up into Purgatory and Paradise.



joy in an idyllic reality, the truth of which man can at least imagine for himself in every moment. In doing this, man may perhaps at some point suspect that this imagined reality is nothing other than a fantastically silly indulgence, at which anyone able to measure it against the fearful seriousness of true nature and to compare it with the actual primitive scenes of the beginnings of humanity would have to cry out in disgust: Get rid of that phantom!

Nevertheless, we would be deceiving ourselves if we believed that such a flirtatious being as opera could be frightened off simply by a powerful shout, like a ghost. Whoever wants to destroy opera must undertake the struggle against that Alexandrine cheerfulness, which expresses its favourite idea so naively in opera; in fact, opera is its real artistic form. But what can we expect for art itself from the effect of a form of art whose origins do not lie in the aesthetic realm at all but which have, by contrast, stolen from a half moralistic sphere over into the sphere of art and which can deceive people about this hybrid origin only now and then?

On what juices does this parasitic operatic being feed itself, if not from the sap of true art? Are we not to assume that, among opera's idyllic seductions, among its Alexandrine arts of flattering, the highest task of art, the one we should truly call serious — saving the eye from a glimpse into the horror of the night and through the healing balm of illusion rescuing the subject from the spasms brought about by the stirrings of the will — would degenerate into a tendency to empty and scattered diversion? What becomes of the eternal truths of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in such a mixture of styles of the sort I have set down as the essence of the *stilo rappresentativo*, where the music is considered the servant and the libretto the master, where the music is compared to the body and the libretto to the soul, where the highest goal at best will aim at a descriptive tone painting, as it was earlier with the new Attic dithyramb, where the music is completely alienated from its true dignity, which is to be a Dionysian world-mirror, so that the only thing left for it is to imitate the essential forms of appearances, like a slave of phenomena, and to arouse a superficial entertainment in the play of lines and proportions? A rigorous examination shows how this fatal influence of opera on music coincides precisely with the entire modern development of music; the optimism lurking in the genesis of opera and in the essence of the culture represented through opera has succeeded with alarming speed in stripping music of its Dionysian world meaning and stamping on it a formally playful, amusing character. This transformation can be compared only to something like the metamorphosis of Aeschylean man into the Alexandrian cheerful man.



However, if in the explanation given above we have been right to link the disappearance of the Dionysian spirit with an extremely striking but so far unexplained transformation and degeneration of Greek man, what hopes must revive in us when the surest favourable signs bring us the guarantee of the reverse process, of the gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit in our contemporary world! It is not possible that the divine power of Hercules should remain always impotent in voluptuous bondage to Omphale.<sup>80</sup> Out of the Dionysian foundation of the German spirit a power has arisen which has nothing in common with the most fundamental assumptions of Socratic culture, something which those assumptions can neither explain nor excuse, but which instead is experienced by this culture as something frightening, inexplicable, as overpowering and hostile — that is, German music, above all as we must understand it in its mighty solar orbit from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner. Even in the best of circumstances what can the Socratism of our day, greedy for knowledge, begin to make of this daemon rising out of the inexhaustible depths? Neither from the lacework or arabesques of operatic melodies nor with the help of the arithmetical abacus of fugue and contrapuntal dialectic will a formula reveal itself in whose triple-powered light people can render that daemon obsequious and compel it to speak. What a spectacle when our aestheticians nowadays, with the hunting net of “beauty” all of their own, strike at and try to catch that musical genius romping around in front of them with incredible life, with movements which will not be judged according to standards of eternal beauty any more than of the sublime. We should inspect these patrons of music for a moment, in person and at close quarters, when they cry out so tirelessly “Beauty! Beauty!” to see whether, in the process, they look like discriminating darling children of nature educated in the lap of beauty or whether they are not, by contrast, seeking a deceptively euphemistic form for their own crudity, an aesthetic pretext for their characteristically unfeeling sobriety. Here, for example, I’m thinking of Otto Jahn.<sup>81</sup> But the liar and hypocrite should beware of German music, for in the midst of all our culture it is precisely the one unalloyed, pure, and purifying fire spirit out from which and towards which all things move in a double orbit, as in the doctrine of the great Heraclitus of Ephesus: everything which we now call culture, education, civilization must at some point appear before the unerring judge Dionysus<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Hercules . . . Omphale : In Greek mythology, the great hero Hercules had to serve for three years as a slave to Omphale, queen of Lydia, in retribution for murder.

<sup>81</sup> Otto Jahn : (1813 to 1869), German scholar of archaeology and philology and writer on music.

<sup>82</sup> Heraclitus: ( c. 535 to 475 BC), pre-Socratic Greek philosopher from Asia Minor



Furthermore, let's remember how the spirit of German philosophy in Kant and Schopenhauer, streaming from the same springs, was able to annihilate the contented joy in existence of scientific Socratism by demonstrating its boundaries, how with this demonstration an infinitely deeper and more serious consideration of ethical questions and of art was introduced, which we can truly describe as Dionysian wisdom conceptually understood. Where does the mystery of this unity between German music and German philosophy point if not to a new form of existence, about whose meaning we can inform ourselves only by speculating on the basis of analogies with the Greeks? For the Greek model has this immeasurable value for us who stand on the border line between two different forms of existence — in it are also stamped all those transitions and struggles in a classically instructive form, except that, to use an analogy, we are, as it were, living through the great high ages of Greek being in the reverse order: for example, we seem to be moving now out of an Alexandrian period backwards into a period of tragedy.

At the same time, we feel as if the birth of a tragic time period for the German spirit only means a return to itself, a blessed rediscovery of self, after hugely invasive forces from outside had for a long time forced it into servitude under their form, that spirit which, so far as form is concerned, had lived in helpless barbarism. And now finally, after its return home to the original spring of its being, it can dare to stride in here before all peoples, bold and free, without the guiding reins of a Romanesque civilization. If only it can now understand how to keep learning continuously from a single people, the Greeks; being at all capable of learning from them is already a high honour and a remarkable distinction. And when have we needed these most eminent of mentors more than now, when we are experiencing the rebirth of tragedy and are in danger of not knowing where it is coming from and of being incapable of interpreting where it wants to go?

## 20

At some point under the eyes of an incorruptible judge we may determine in what age and in which men up to now the German spirit has struggled most powerfully to learn from the Greeks, and if we can assume with confidence that this extraordinary praise must be awarded to the noblest cultural struggles of Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann, then we would certainly have to add that, since that time and the most



recent developments of that battle, the attempt to attain a culture and to reach the Greeks by the same route has become incomprehensibly weaker and weaker.<sup>83</sup>

In order to avoid being forced into total despair about the German spirit, should we not conclude from all this that in some important point or other even those fighters could not succeed in penetrating into the core of the Hellenic spirit and creating a lasting bond of love between German and Greek culture? Perhaps an unconscious recognition of this failure even gives rise in more serious natures to the enervating doubt whether, after such predecessors, they could go even further than those men had along this cultural path and reach their goal at all. For that reason since that time we've seen the judgment about the cultural value of the Greeks degenerate in the most disturbing way. We can hear expressions of sympathetic condescension in the most varied encampments of the mind and of pernicious ideology [des Geistes und des Ungeistes] . In other places a completely ineffectual sweet talk flirts with "Greek harmony," "Greek beauty," and "Greek cheerfulness."

And precisely in the circles which could dignify themselves by drawing tirelessly from the Greek river bed in order to benefit German culture — in the circles of teachers in the institutes of higher education — people have learned best to come to terms with the Greeks early and in a comfortable manner, not rarely to the point of sceptically abandoning the Hellenic ideal and totally reversing the real purpose of classical studies. In general, anyone in those circles who has not completely exhausted himself in the effort to be a dependable corrector of old texts or a microscopic studier of language, like some natural historian, may perhaps even seek to acquire Greek antiquity "historically," alongside other antiquities, but in any case following the methods of our present academic historical writing, along with its supercilious expressions.

If, as a result, the real cultural power of the institutions of higher learning has certainly never before been lower and weaker than at present, if the "journalist," the paper slave of the day, has won his victory over the professors in every respect, so far as culture is concerned, and the only thing still left for the latter is the by-now frequently experienced metamorphosis which has them also moving around these days, to speak in the style of a journalist, with the "light elegance" of this sphere, like cheerful, well-educated butterflies — then how awkward and confusing it must be for those educated in this manner and living in such a present to stare at something which may only be

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<sup>83</sup> Winckelmann : Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717 to 1768), German art historian and archaeologist, an important figure in the study of the classical Greeks.



understood by an analogy to the most profound principles of the as yet unintelligible Hellenic genius, the revival of the Dionysian spirit and the rebirth of tragedy.

There is no other artistic period in which so-called culture and true art have stood more alienated from and averse to each other than what we witness with our own eyes nowadays. We understand why such a weak culture despises true art, for it fears such art will destroy it. But surely after being able to taper off into such a delicate and slight point as our contemporary culture, a complete cultural style, that is, the Socratic-Alexandrian, must have run its full life.

When heroes like Schiller and Goethe could not succeed in breaking down that enchanted door which leads to the Hellenic magic mountain, when for all their most courageous struggles they reached no further than that yearning gaze which Goethe's Iphigeneia sent from barbaric Tauris over the sea towards her home, what is left for the imitators of such heroes to hope for, unless from some totally different side, untouched by all the efforts of previous culture, the door might suddenly open for them on its own — to the accompaniment of the mysterious sound of the reawakened music of tragedy. Let no one try to detract from our belief in a still imminent rebirth of Hellenic antiquity, for that is the only place where we find our hope for a renewal and reformation of the German spirit through the fiery magic of music. What would we otherwise know to name which amid the desolation and weariness of contemporary culture could awaken some comforting expectation for the future? We peer in vain for a single, powerful, branching root, for a spot of fertile and healthy soil: everywhere dust, sand, ossification, decay. Here a desperate, isolated man could not choose a better symbol than the knight with Death and the Devil, as Dürer has drawn him for us, the knight in armour with the hard iron gaze, who knows how to make his way along his terrible path, without being dismayed at his horrific companions, and yet without any hope, alone with his horse and hound. Such a Dürer knight was our Schopenhauer: he lacked all hope, but he wanted the truth. There is no one like him.<sup>84</sup> But how suddenly that wilderness of our exhausted culture I have just so gloomily sketched out changes when the Dionysian magic touches it! A tempest seizes everything worn out, rotten, broken apart, and stunted, wraps it in a red whirling cloud of dust, and, like a vulture, lifts it up into the air. In our bewilderment, our eyes seek out what has disappeared, for what they see has risen up, as if from oblivion, into golden light, so full and green, so richly alive, so immeasurable and full of longing. Tragedy sits in the midst of this superfluity of life, suffering, and joy; with awe-

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<sup>84</sup> Dürer : Albrecht Dürer (1471 to 1528), German painter, particularly famous for his prints.



inspiring delight it listens to a distant melancholy song, which tells of the mothers of being whose names sound out: Delusion, Will, Woe.

Yes, my friends, believe with me in the Dionysian life and in the re-birth of tragedy. The age of the Socratic man is over: crown yourselves with ivy, take the thyrsus stalk in your hand, and don't be amazed when tigers and panthers lie down fawning at your feet. Only now you must dare to be tragic men, for you are to be redeemed. You are to lead the Dionysian celebratory procession from India to Greece! Arm yourselves for a hard battle, but have faith in the miracles of your god!

## 21

Moving back from this tone of exhortation into a mood suitable for contemplation, I repeat that only from the Greeks can we learn what such a miraculously sudden awakening of tragedy can mean for the innermost, fundamental life of a populace. It is the people of the tragic mysteries who fight the Persian wars, and then, in turn, the people who carried on these wars use tragedy as an essential potion in their recovery.<sup>85</sup> Who would have suspected that these particular people, after being stirred right to their innermost being for several generations by the strongest paroxysms of the Dionysian daemon, still had such a regular and powerful outpouring of the simplest political feeling, the most natural instinctive emotion for their homeland, the original manly desire to fight? Nonetheless, if we always sense in every remarkable Dionysian arousal which takes hold of its surroundings how Dionysian release from the shackles of individuality registers at first as a heightened restriction of the political instinct, all the way to indifference and even hostility, it is also true that, on the other hand, Apollo, the nation builder, is also the genius of the principium individuationis [principle of individuation] and that a sense of state and homeland cannot survive without an affirmation of the individual personality.

From orgiastic experience there is only one way out for a people, the route to Indian Buddhism, which, with its longing for nothingness, in order to be endurable, generally requires those rare ecstatic states with their ascent above space, time, and individuality: just as these states, in their turn, demand a philosophy which teaches people to use some idea to overcome the unimaginable dreariness of intermediate

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<sup>85</sup> Persian Wars : Persian forces invaded Greece twice, in 490 and in 480 BC. The first expedition ended with the Battle of Marathon and the second with the naval battle of Salamis and the land battle of Plataea. These victories were high points of classical Hellenic experience, particularly for the spirit of courage and cooperation they displayed in the face of what looked like insuperable odds.



states. In cases where the political drives are considered absolutely valid, it's equally necessary for a people to turn to a path of the most extreme secularization. The most magnificent but also the most terrifying example of this is the Roman empire. Standing between India and Rome and forced to make a tempting choice, the Greeks succeeded in inventing a third form in classical purity. Of course, they did not make use of it for long themselves, but for that very reason they made it immortal. The fact that the darlings of the gods die early holds in all things, but it's equally certain that then they live among the gods for ever. So people should not demand from the noblest thing of all that it should possess the hard-wearing durability of leather; that crude toughness characteristic of the Roman national impulses, for example, probably does not belong to the necessary predicates of perfection.

But if we ask what remedies made it possible for the Greek in their great period, with the extraordinary strength of their Dionysian and political drives, not to exhaust themselves either with an ecstatic brooding or in a consuming pursuit of world power and worldly honour, but to reach that marvellous mixture — just as a noble wine makes one feel fiery and meditative at the same time — then we must keep in mind the immense power of tragedy, which stimulated the entire life of the people, purifying it and giving it release. We will first sense its highest value when, as with the Greeks, it confronts us as the essence of all prophylactic healing potions, as the mediator adjudicating between the strongest and inherently most disastrous characteristics of a people.

Tragedy draws the highest musical ecstasy into itself, so that, with the Greeks, as with us, it immediately brings music to its culmination. But then it places the tragic myth and the tragic hero next to the music, and he then, like a powerful Titan, takes the whole Dionysian world on his back and thus relieves us of it. On the other hand, with the same tragic myth, in the person of the tragic hero, tragedy knows how to redeem us from the greedy pressure for this existence and with a warning hand reminds us of another state of being and a higher pleasure for which the struggling hero, filled with foreboding, is preparing himself, not through his victory, but through his destruction. Tragedy places between the universal validity of its music and the listener sensitive to the Dionysian an awe-inspiring parable — the myth — and with that awakens an illusion, as if the music is only the production's highest device for bringing life to the plastic world of the myth. Trusting in this noble deception, tragedy can now move its limbs in the dithyrambic dance and abandon itself unconsciously to an ecstatic feeling of freedom; without that deception it would not dare to revel in the very essence of music.



The myth protects us from the music, while it, by contrast, immediately gives the music its highest freedom. In return, the music gives back to the tragic myth, as a return gift, an urgent and convincing metaphysical significance, of a kind which word and image could never attain without that unique assistance, and through the music, in particular, there comes over the spectator of tragedy that certain presentiment of the highest joy, the road to which leads through destruction and negation, so that he thinks what he hears is like the innermost abyss of things speaking to him out loud. If in these last sentences I have perhaps been able to provide only a provisional expression of this difficult idea, something immediately understandable to few people, at this particular point I cannot refrain from urging my friends to a further attempt and from asking them with a single example of our common experience to prepare themselves to recognize a general principle. With this example, I am not referring to those who use the images of the action in the scene, the words and emotions of those doing the acting, so that with this help they can come closer to the feeling of the music, for none of these people speaks music as a mother tongue, and, for all that help, they proceed no further than the lobbies of musical perception, without ever being entitled to touch its innermost shrine. Some of these who take this road, like Gervinus, do not even succeed in reaching the lobby.<sup>86</sup> No, I must turn only to those who have an immediate relationship with music, who find in it, as it were, their mother's womb and stand bound up with things almost exclusively through an unconscious musical relationship. To these true musicians I direct the question: Can they imagine a person capable of perceiving the third act of *Tristan and Isolde* purely as an immense symphonic movement, getting no help from words and images, without suffocating from a convulsive spreading of all the wings of the soul?<sup>87</sup> A man who, as in this case, has set his ear, so to speak, on the heart chambers of the world's will, who feels in himself the raging desire for existence pouring forth into all the veins of the world as a thundering rainstorm or as the most delicately spraying brook — would such a man not fall apart on the spot? Could he endure hearing in the suffering glass case of his human individuality the echo of countless cries of desire and woe from the "wide space of the world's night," without, in the midst of this shepherd's medley of metaphysics, inexorably flying off for refuge to his primordial home? But what if nonetheless such a work can be perceived as a totality, without the denial of individual existence, what if such a creation could be produced without shattering its creator — where do we get the solution to such a contradiction?

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<sup>86</sup> Gervinus : Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805 to 1871), German literary and political historian.

<sup>87</sup> *Tristan and Isolde* : an opera by Richard Wagner, first performed in 1865.



Here, between our highest musical excitement and that music, the tragic myth and the tragic hero interpose themselves, basically only as a metaphor of the most universal facts of all, about which only music can speak directly. However, if we felt as purely Dionysian beings, then myth would be entirely ineffectual as a metaphor and would remain beside us unnoticed. It would not make us turn our ears away for an instant from listening to the echo of the *universalia ante rem* [the universal before the fact] . But here the Apollonian power breaks through, preparing for the reintegration of the almost shattered individuality with the healing balm of a blissful illusion. Suddenly we think we still see only Tristan, motionless and dazed, as he asks himself, “The old melody, what does it awaken for me?” And what earlier struck us as an empty sigh from the centre of being now only wishes to say to us something like “the barren, empty sea.” And where we breathlessly imagined we were dying in a convulsive inner paroxysm of all our feelings with only a little linking us to this existence, now we hear and see only the hero mortally wounded and yet not dying, with his cry full of despair, “Longing! Longing! In death still yearning, and not to die for very longing!” And when earlier, after such an excess and such a huge number of consuming torments, the jubilation of the horns, almost like the highest agony, cuts through our hearts, there stands between us and this “jubilation in itself” the celebrating Kurwenal, turned towards the ship which carries Isolde. No matter how powerful the pity gripping us inside, this pity nonetheless saves us, in a certain sense, from the primordial suffering of the world, just as the symbolic picture of the myth saves us from the immediate look at the highest world idea, just as the idea and the word save us from the unrestrained outpouring of the unconscious will. Because of that marvellous Apollonian deception it seems to us as if the empire of music itself confronted us as a plastic world, as if in it only Tristan’s and Isolde’s destiny had been formed and stamped out in pictures, as in the most delicate and expressive of all material.

Thus the Apollonian rescues us from Dionysian universality and delights us with individuals. It attaches our aroused feelings of sympathy to them, and with them it satisfies our sense of beauty, which longs for great and awe-inspiring forms; it parades images of life before us and provokes us to a thoughtful grasp of the kernel of life contained in them. With the immense power of image, idea, ethical instruction, and sympathetic arousal, the Apollonian lifts man up out of his ecstatic self-destruction and blinds him to the universality of the Dionysian process, leading him to the delusion that he is watching just one image of the world — for example, Tristan and Isolde — and that through the music he is only supposed to see it even better and more inwardly. What can the healing magic of Apollo not achieve, if it can even arouse in us this delusion, so that it seems as if the Dionysian is really working to serve the



Apollonian and is capable of intensifying its effects — in fact, as if the music were even essentially an artistic presentation of an Apollonian content?

With that pre-established harmony which reigns between the perfect drama and its music, drama attains a supreme degree of vividness, something which verbal drama otherwise could not approach. As in the independently moving melodic lines all the living forms in the scene simplify themselves in front of us into the clarity of curved lines, the juxtaposition of these lines sounds out to us in the harmonic changes which sympathize in the most delicate way with the action as it moves forward. While this happens, the relation of things becomes immediately perceptible to us in a more sensuously perceptible way, which has nothing abstract about it at all, as we also recognize through it that only in these relations does the essence of a character and of a melodic line clearly reveal itself. And while the music compels us in this way to see more and more profoundly than ever and the scenic action spreads itself in front of us like a delicate spider's web, for our spiritual inward-gazing eye the world of the stage is just as infinitely widened as it is illuminated from within. What could a word poet offer analogous to this — someone who struggles with a very imperfect mechanism in indirect ways to attain with word and idea that inner expansion of the vivid world of the stage and its inner illumination? Musical tragedy, of course, also uses the word, but at the same time it can set beside it the fundamental basis and birth place of the word and reveal to us from inside what that word has become. But nonetheless we could just as surely claim about this depiction of the action that it is only a marvellous appearance, i.e., that previously mentioned Apollonian illusion, through whose effect we are to be relieved of the Dionysian surge and excess. In fact, the relationship between music and drama is fundamentally the very reverse — the music is the essential idea of the world, the drama only a reflection of this idea, an isolated silhouette.

That identity between the melodic line and the living form, between the harmony and the relations of the characters in that form, is true in a sense opposite to what it might seem to be for us as we look at musical tragedy. We may well stir up the form in the most visible way, enliven and illuminate it from within, but it always remains only an appearance, from which there is no bridge leading to true reality, into the heart of the world. But music speaks out from this heart, and although countless appearances of that sort could clothe themselves in the same music, they would never exhaust its essence, but would always be only its external reflection.

Of course, for the complex relationship between music and drama nothing is explained and everything is confused by the popular and entirely false contrast between the soul



and the body. But particularly among our aestheticians it's the unphilosophical crudity of that contrast which seems to have become, who knows the reasons why, quite a well-known article of faith, while they have learned nothing about the difference between the appearance and the thing-in-itself or, for similarly unknown reasons, don't want to learn anything.

If one result of our analysis might be that the Apollonian in tragedy, thanks to its deception, emerges completely victorious over the Dionysian primordial element of music and makes use of this for its own purposes, that is, for the highest dramatic clarity, a very important reservation would naturally follow: at the most essential point that Apollonian deception is broken up and destroyed. The drama, which, with the help of music, spreads out in front of us with such inwardly illuminated clarity in all its movements and forms, as if we were seeing the fabric on the loom while the shuttle moves back and forth, achieves its effect as a totality which lies beyond all the artistic workings of the Apollonian. In the total effect of tragedy the Dionysian regains its superiority once more. Tragedy ends with a tone which never could resound from the realm of Apollonian art. And as that happens, the Apollonian illusion reveals itself for what it is, as the veil which, so long as the tragedy is going on, has covered the essentially Dionysian effect. But this Dionysian effect is nonetheless so powerful that at the end it drives the Apollonian drama itself into a sphere where it begins to speak with Dionysian wisdom and where it denies itself and its Apollonian visibility. So we could truly symbolize the complex relationship between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy with the fraternal bond between both divinities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, but Apollo finally speaks the language of Dionysus, and with that the highest goal of tragedy and art in general is attained.

## 22

An attentive friend should remind himself in a pure and unconfused manner, from his own experience, of a truly musical tragedy. I think I have described what this effect is like, attending to both aspects of it in such a way that he will now know how to interpret his own experience for himself. For he will recall how, confronted with the myth unfolding in front of him, he felt himself raised up to some sort of omniscience, as if now the visual power of his eyes was not merely a force dealing with surfaces but was capable of penetrating within, and as if, with the help of the music, he could now see in front of him the turbulent feelings of the will, the war of motives, the growing storm of passions as something which is, as it were, sensuously present, like an



abundance of living lines and figures in motion, and thus as if he could plunge into the most delicate secrets of unknown emotions. As he becomes conscious of the highest intensification of his instincts which aim for clarity and transfiguration, nonetheless he feels with equal certainty that this long series of Apollonian artistic effects does not produce that delightful resignation of will-less contemplation which the sculptor and the epic poet, in other words, the genuine Apollonian artists, bring out in him with their works of art, that is, the justification of the world of the individuation [individual] attained in that contemplation, which is the peak and essence of Apollonian art. He looks at the transfigured world of the stage and yet denies it. He sees the tragic hero in front of him in epic clarity and beauty and, nonetheless, takes pleasure in his destruction. He understands the events on stage to their innermost core and joyfully flies off into the incomprehensible. He feels the actions of the hero as justified and is, nonetheless, still more uplifted when these actions destroy the one who initiated them. He shudders in the face of the suffering which the hero is about to encounter and, nonetheless, because of it has a premonition of a higher, much more overpowering joy. He perceives more things and more profoundly than ever before and yet wishes he were blind.

Where would we be able to derive this miraculous division of the self, this collapse of the Apollonian climax, if not from Dionysian magic, which, while it apparently excites the Apollonian feelings to their highest point, nevertheless can still force this exuberance of Apollonian art into its service? The tragic myth can only be understood as a symbolic picture of Dionysian wisdom by means of Apollonian art. It leads the world of appearances to its limits, where it denies itself and once again seeks to fly back into the womb of the true and single reality, at which point it seems, with Isolde, to sing its metaphysical swan song.

In the surging torrents  
of seas of my desires,  
in resounding tones  
of fragrant waves,  
in the blowing All  
of the world's breath—  
to drown, to sink down,  
to lose consciousness—  
the highest joy.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> These lines come from Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*, Act III.



In this way we recall, from the experiences of the truly aesthetic listener, the tragic artist himself, as he, like a voluptuous divinity of individuation [individuation], creates his forms, in which sense his work can scarcely be understood as an “imitation of nature”— but then as his immense Dionysian drive devours this entire world of appearances in order to allow us, through its destruction, to have a premonition behind it of the primal and highest artistic joy in the womb of the primordial One. Of course, our aestheticians don’t know what to write about this return journey to our original home, about the fraternal bond of the two brother gods of art in tragedy, any more than they do about the Apollonian or the Dionysian excitement of the listener, while they never weary of characterizing as the essential feature of the tragic the struggle of the hero with fate, the victory of a moral world order, or the purging of the emotions achieved by tragedy. Such tireless efforts lead me to the thought that in general they may be men incapable of aesthetic excitement, so that when they hear a tragedy perhaps they think of themselves only as moral beings.

Since Aristotle, there has not yet been an explanation of the tragic effect which could justify it on the basis of artistic conditions, of the aesthetic capability of the listener. Sometimes pity and fear are supposed to be pushed by the serious action to a discharge which brings relief. At other times, we are supposed to feel enthusiastic and elevated because of the victory of good and noble principles, by the sacrifice of the hero, taking that as a moral observation about the world. And just as I have no doubt that for countless men that and only that is precisely the effect of tragedy, so it’s equally clear this reveals that all these people, together with their interpreting aestheticians, have experienced nothing of tragedy as a supreme art. That pathological purgation, the catharsis of Aristotle, which the philologists are uncertain whether to count a medical or a moral phenomenon, brings to mind a remarkable feeling of Goethe’s. “Without a lively pathological interest,” he says, “I have also never succeeded in working on any kind of tragic situation, and therefore I have preferred to avoid it rather than seek it out. Could it perhaps be the case that among the merits of the ancients the highest degree of the pathetic was also only aesthetic play for them, while with us the truth of nature must be there as well, in order for such a work to be produced?”

After our marvellous experiences we can now answer yes to this profound question, once we have experienced with wonder precisely this musical tragedy, how truly the highest degree of the pathetic can be, for all that, only an aesthetic game. For that reason, we are entitled to think that only now can the primordial phenomenon of the tragic be described with some success. Anyone who nowadays still provides explanations only in terms of those surrogate effects from spheres beyond aesthetics



and does not sense that he has risen above the pathological and moralistic processes may well despair altogether of his aesthetic nature. For that condition we recommend as an innocent substitute the interpretation of Shakespeare the way Gervinus does it and the diligent search for “poetic justice.” So with the rebirth of tragedy the aesthetic listener is also born again, in whose place up to this point a strange quid pro quo habitually sat in the theatre space, with half moral and half scholarly demands — the “critic.” In his sphere so far everything has been synthetic and merely whitewashed with the appearance of life. The performing artist, in fact, did not know any more what he could begin to do with such a listener who behaved critically, and therefore he, together with the dramatist or opera composer who inspired him, peered anxiously for the last remnants of life in this demanding, barren creature incapable of enjoying itself.

But up to this point the general public has consisted of this sort of “critic.” Through education and the press, the student, the school child, indeed even the most harmless female creature has already been prepared, without being aware of it, to perceive a work of art in a similar manner. The more noble natures among the artists, faced with such a public, counted on exciting moral and religious forces, and the call for “a moral world view” stepped in vicariously, where, in fact, a powerful artistic magic should have entranced the real listener. Alternatively, dramatists brought out a splendid and at least exciting trend in contemporary political and social issues so vividly that the listener could forget his critical exhaustion and let himself go with feelings similar to those in patriotic or militaristic moments or in front of the speaker’s desk in parliament or in judicial sentences for crimes and vices. And that alienation from true artistic purposes necessarily led here and there directly to a culture of bias. But here there stepped in, what in all artificial arts up to now has intervened, a rapaciously quick loss of that very tendency, so that, for example, the view that the theatre should be used as an institution for the moral education of a people, something taken seriously in Schiller’s day, is already counted among the incredible antiquities of an education which has been superceded. As the critic came to rule in the theatre and concert, the journalist in the schools, and the press in society, art degenerated into an object of entertainment of the basest sort, and the aesthetic critic was used as a way of binding together a vain, scattered, selfish, and, beyond that, pitifully unoriginal social group, the meaning of which we can understand from that parable of the porcupines in Schopenhauer, so there has never been a time when people have chattered so much about art and thought so little of it. But cannot we still associate with someone able to entertain himself with Beethoven and Shakespeare? Let everyone answer this question according to his own feelings: with his answer he will at any rate demonstrate what he



imagines by the word “culture,” provided he seeks to answer the question at all and has not already been struck dumb with astonishment.

By contrast, many with a nobler and more naturally refined ability, even if they also have gradually turned into critical barbarians in the manner described above, could say something about an effect, as unexpected as it is entirely incomprehensible, of the sort which a work like a happily successful production of *Lohengrin* has had on them, except perhaps they lacked any hand which could assist them with advice and interpretation; thus, that incredibly different and totally incomparable sensation which so shook them at the time remained a single example and, after a short period of illumination, died out, like a mysterious star.<sup>89</sup> That was the moment they had a presentiment of what an aesthetic listener is.

## 23

Anyone who wants an accurate test for himself to see how closely related he is to the truly aesthetic listener or how much he belongs with the Socratic-critical community could sincerely ask himself about the feeling with which he receives some miracle presented on stage. In that situation, for example, does he feel offended in his historical sense, which organizes itself on strict psychological causality, or does he, in a spirit of generosity, as it were, make a concession to the miracle as something comprehensible in childhood but foreign to him, or does he suffer anything else at all in that process? For in doing this he will be able to measure how far, in general, he is capable of understanding the myth, the concentrated world picture, which, as an abbreviation of appearance, cannot work without the miracle. However, it's likely that almost everyone in a strict test would feel himself so thoroughly corrupted by the critical-historical spirit of our culture that he could make the previous existence of the myth credible only with something scholarly, with some mediating abstractions. However, without myth every culture forfeits its healthy creative natural power: only a horizon surrounded with myth completes the unity of an entire cultural movement. Only through myth are all the powers of the imagination and of Apollonian dream rescued from their random wandering around. The images of myth must be the unseen, omnipresent, daemonic sentries under whose care the young soul matures and by whose signs a man interprets for himself his life and his struggles. Even the state knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythical foundation which guarantees its own connection to religion, its growth out of mythic ideas.

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<sup>89</sup> *Lohengrin* : an opera by Richard Wagner first produced in 1848.



Alongside that let's now place abstract people, those who are led around without myths, and abstract education, abstract customs, abstract law, the abstract state. Let's remember the disorderly roaming of the artistic imagination which is not restrained by any secret myth. Let's imagine a culture which has no fixed and sacred primordial seat but which is condemned to exhaust all possibilities and to subsist on a meagre diet from all cultures — and there we have the present, the result of that Socratism whose aim is to destroy myth.

And now the man without myth stands there, eternally hungry, in the midst of all past ages, rummaging around and digging as he looks for roots, even if he has to shovel for them in the most remote ancient times. What is revealed in the immense historical need of this dissatisfied modern culture, the gathering up of countless other cultures, the consuming desire to know, if not the loss of myth, the loss of the mythic homeland, of the mythic maternal womb?

Let's ask ourselves whether the feverish and strange agitation of this culture is something other than a starving man's greedy snatch-and-grab for food — and who would still want to give such a culture anything, when nothing which it gobbles down satisfies it and when, at its touch, the most powerful and healthiest nourishment habitually changes into "history and criticism"? We would even have to experience painful despair over our German being, if it were already inextricably intermixed in a similar way with its culture, or, indeed, if they had become a single unit, as we can observe, to our horror, with civilized France. What for a long time constituted the great merit of France and the cause of its huge superiority — that very unity of being in people and culture — should make us, when we look at it, praise our good luck that such a questionable culture as ours has had nothing in common up to this point with the noble core of our people's character. Instead of that, all our hopes are reaching out yearningly towards the awareness that under this restless cultural life and cultural convulsions twitching here and there lies hidden a glorious, innerly healthy, and age-old power, which naturally only begins to stir into powerful motion at tremendous moments and then goes on dreaming once again about a future awakening. Out of this abyss the German Reformation arose: in its choral music there rang out for the first time the future style of German music. This choral music of Luther's sounded as profound, courageous, and spiritual, as exuberantly good and tender, as the first Dionysian call rising up out of the thickly growing bushes at the approach of spring. In answer to it came the competing echo of that solemn exuberant procession of Dionysian throngs, whom we have to thank for German music — and whom we will thank for the rebirth of the German myth !



I know that now I have to take the sympathetic friend who is following me up to a lofty place for lonely contemplation, where he will have only a few travelling companions. By way of encouragement I call out to him that we have to keep hold of those leaders who illuminate the way for us, the Greeks. Up to now, in order to purify our aesthetic awareness, we have borrowed from them both of those images of the gods, each of whom rules over his own specific artistic realm, and by considering Greek tragedy, we came to an awareness of their mutual contact and intensification. To us the downfall of Greek tragedy must appear to have occurred through a remarkable tearing apart of both of these primordial artistic drives, an event which was accompanied by a degeneration and transformation of the character of the Greek people — something which demands from us some serious reflection about how necessarily and closely art and people, myth and custom, tragedy and the state are fundamentally intertwined.

That downfall of tragedy was at the same time the downfall of myth. Up to that point the Greeks were instinctively compelled to tie everything they lived through immediately to their myths — in fact, to understand that experience only through this link. In that process, even the most recent present had to appear to them at once *sub specie aeterni* [under the eye of eternity] and thus, in a certain sense, to be timeless. In this stream of the timeless, however, the state and art both plunged equally, in order to find in it rest from the weight and greed of the moment. And a people — as well as a person, by the way — is only valuable to the extent that it can stamp upon its experiences the mark of the eternal, for in that way it is, as it were, relieved of the burden of the world and demonstrates its unconscious inner conviction of the relativity of time and of the true, that is, of the metaphysical meaning of life. Something quite different from this happens when a people begins to understand itself historically and to smash up the mythic bastions standing around it. Tied in with this development is usually a decisive secularization, a breach with the unconscious metaphysics of its earlier existence, along with all ethical consequences. Greek art and especially Greek tragedy above all checked the destruction of myth; people had to destroy them in order to be able to live detached from their home soil, unrestrained in a wilderness of thought, custom, and action.

But now that metaphysical drive still tries to create, even if in a toned down form, a transfiguration for itself, in the Socratism of science which pushes forward into life. But on the lower steps this very drive led only to a feverish search, which gradually lost itself in a pandemonium of myths and superstitions from all over the place, all piled up together, in the middle of which, nonetheless, the Hellene sat with an



unquenched heart, until he understood to mask that fever with Greek cheerfulness and Greek negligence, in the form of Graeculus, or to plunge completely into some stupefying oriental superstition or other.

In the most obvious way, since the reawakening of Alexandrian- Roman antiquity in the fifteenth century, after a long and difficult to describe interval, we have come closer to this condition. Up on the heights this same abundant desire for knowledge, the same insatiable happiness in discovery, the same immense secularization, alongside a homeless wandering around, a greedy thronging at foreign tables, a reckless idolizing of the present, or an apathetic, numbed turning away, with everything sub specie saeculi [under the eye of the secular] , of the “present age”; these same symptoms lead us to suspect the same lack at the heart of this culture, the destruction of myth. It seems hardly possible that grafting on a foreign myth would have any lasting success, without in the process irreparably damaging the tree. Perhaps it is at some point strong and healthy enough to slice out that foreign element again with a dreadful struggle, but usually it must waste away infirm and faded or live on in a morbid state. We have such a high regard for the pure and powerful core of the German being that we dare to expect from it, in particular, that elimination of powerfully grafted foreign elements and consider it possible that the German spirit will come back into an awareness of itself on its own. Perhaps some people will think that spirit would have to start its struggle with the elimination of the Romantic, and for that he could recognize an external preparation and encouragement in the victorious courage and bloody glory of the recent war. But the internal necessity must be sought in the competitive striving always to be worthy of the noble pioneers on this road, including Luther just as much as our great artists and poets. But let him never believe that he can fight similar battles without his house gods, without his mythic homeland, without a “bringing back” of all things German! And if the German in his hesitation should look around him for a leader who will take him back again to his long-lost home land, whose roads and pathways he hardly knows any more — then let him only listen to the sweet, enticing call of the Dionysian bird hovering above him seeking to show him the way.

## 24

Among the characteristic artistic effects of musical tragedy we had to stress an Apollonian illusion through which we are to be rescued from immediate unity of being with the Dionysian music, while our musical excitement can discharge itself in an



Apollonian sphere and in a visible middle world which interposed itself. By doing this we thought we had noticed how, simply through this discharge, that middle world of the scenic action, the drama in general, to a certain degree became visible and comprehensible from within, in a way which is unattainable in all other Apollonian art, so that here, where the Apollonian is energized and raised aloft, as it were, through the spirit of the music, we had to acknowledge the highest intensification of its power and, therefore, in that fraternal bond of Apollo and Dionysus the peak of both the Apollonian and the Dionysian artistic aims. Of course, the projected Apollonian image with this particular inner illumination through the music does not achieve the effect characteristic of the weaker degrees of Apollonian art, what epic or animated stone is capable of, compelling the contemplating eye to that calm delight in the world of the individual — in spite of a higher animation and clarity, that effect will not permit itself to be attained here.

We looked at drama and with a penetrating gaze forced our way into the inner moving world of its motives — and nonetheless for us it was as if only an allegorical picture passed before us, whose most profound meaning we thought we could almost guess and which we wanted to pull aside, like a curtain, in order to look at the primordial image behind it. The brightest clarity of the image did not satisfy us, for this seemed to hide just as much as it revealed. And while, with its allegorical-like revelation, it seemed to promise to rip aside the veil, to disclose the mysterious background, once again it was precisely that penetrating light illuminating everything which held the eye in its spell and prevented it from probing more deeply.

Anyone who has not had this experience of having to watch and, at the same time, of yearning to go above and beyond watching will have difficulty imagining how definitely and clearly these two processes exist together and are felt alongside each other, as one observes the tragic myth. However, the truly aesthetic spectators will confirm for me that among the peculiar effects of tragedy that co-existence may be the most remarkable.

If we now translate this phenomenon taking place in the aesthetic spectator into an analogous process in the tragic artist, we will have understood the genesis of the tragic myth. He shares with the Apollonian sphere of art the full joy in appearances and in watching — at the same time he denies this joy and has an even higher satisfaction in the destruction of the visible world of appearances. The content of the tragic myth is at first an epic event with the glorification of the struggling hero. But what is the origin of that inherently mysterious feature, the fact that the suffering in the fate of the hero, the most painful victories, the most agonizing opposition of motives, in short, the



exemplification of that wisdom of Silenus, or, expressing it aesthetically, of the ugly and dissonant, in so many countless forms, is presented with such fondness, always renewed, and precisely in the richest and most youthful age of a people, unless we recognize in all this a higher pleasure? For the fact that in life things are really so tragic would not in the least account for the development of an art form, if art is not only an imitation of natural reality but a metaphysical supplement to that reality, set beside it in order to overcome it. The tragic myth, insofar as it belongs to art at all, also participates fully in this general purpose of art to provide metaphysical transfiguration. But what does it transfigure, when it leads out the world of appearance in the image of the suffering hero? Least of all the “Reality” of this world of appearances, for it says directly to us: “Look here! Look right here! This is your life! This is the hour hand on the clock of your existence!” And did the myth show us this life in order to transfigure it in front of us? If not, in what does the aesthetic joy consist with which we allow those images to pass in front of us? I ask about aesthetic delight and know full well that many of these images can in addition now and then still produce a moral pleasure, for example, in the form of pity or a moral triumph. But whoever wants to derive the effect of the tragic merely from these moral origins, as, of course, has been customary in aesthetics for far too long, should not think that, in so doing, he has then done anything for art, which above all must demand purity in its realm. For an explanation of the tragic myth the very first demand is that he seek that joy characteristic of it in the purely aesthetic sphere, without reaching over into the territory of pity, fear, and the morally sublime. How can the ugly and dissonant, the content of the tragic myth, excite an aesthetic delight?

Here it is necessary for us to vault with a bold leap into a metaphysics of art, when I repeat an earlier sentence — that existence and the world appear justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. It’s in this sense that the tragic myth has to convince us that even the ugly and dissonant are an artistic game, which the will, in the eternal abundance of its joy, plays with itself. But there’s a direct way to make this primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art, which is so difficult to comprehend, completely understandable and to enable one to grasp it immediately, through the miraculous meaning of musical dissonance, the way the music in general, set next to the world, is the only thing that can give an idea of what it means to understand a justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The joy which the tragic myth produces has the same homeland as the delightful sensation of dissonance in music. The Dionysian, together with its primordial joy felt even in pain, is the common birth womb of music and the tragic myth.



Thus, is it not possible that we have made that difficult problem of the tragic effect really much easier now that we have called on the relation of musical dissonance to help us? For now we understand what it means in tragedy to want to keep looking and at the same time to yearn for something beyond what we see. We would have to characterize this condition in relation to the artistic use of dissonance simply as the fact that we want to keep listening and at the same time yearn to get beyond what we hear. That striving for the infinite, the wing beat of longing, associated with the highest delight in clearly perceived reality, reminds us that in both states we must recognize a Dionysian phenomenon, which always reveals to us all over again the playful cracking apart and destruction of the world of the individual as the discharge of primordial delight, in a manner similar to the one in which gloomy Heraclitus compares the force constructing the world to a child who playfully sets stones here and there, builds sand piles, and then knocks them down again.

And thus in order to assess the Dionysian capability of a people correctly, we have to think not just about their music; we must also think about their tragic myth as the second feature of that capacity. Given this closest of relationships between music and myth, now we can in a similar way assume that a degeneration and deprivation of one of them will be linked to a decline in the other, if in a weakening of myth generally a waning of the Dionysian capability really does manifest itself. But concerning both of these, a look at the development of the German being should leave us in no doubt: in the opera, as well as in the abstract character of our myth-deprived existence, in an art which has sunk down to entertainment, as well as in a life guided by concepts, that inartistic and equally life-draining nature of Socratic optimism stands revealed.

For our consolation, however, there were indications that, in spite of everything, the German spirit rests and dreams in magnificent health, profundity, and Dionysian power, undamaged, like a knight sunk down in slumber in an inaccessible abyss. And from this abyss, the Dionysian song rises up to us in order to make us understand that this German knight is also still dreaming his age-old Dionysian myth in solemn, blissful visions. Let no one believe that the German spirit has lost for ever its mythic homeland, when it still understands so clearly the voices of the birds which tell of that homeland. One day it will find itself awake in all the morning freshness of an immense sleep. Then it will kill dragons, destroy the crafty dwarf, and awake Brunnhilde — and even Wotan's spear itself will not be able to block its way!<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Wotan and his daughter, Brunnhilde are characters in Richard Wagner's opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelungen*. The crafty dwarf, also a character in the work, is Alberich who guards the Rhinegold treasure.



My friends, you who have faith in Dionysian music, you also know what tragedy means to us. In it we have the tragic myth, reborn from music — and in it you can hope for everything and forget what is most distressing! The most painful thing, however, for all of us is this — the long degradation under which the German genius, alienated from house and home, has lived in service to that crafty dwarf. You understand my words — as you will also understand my hopes as I conclude.

## 25

Music and tragic myth are equally an expression of the Dionysian capacity of a people and are inseparable from each other. Both derive from an artistic realm that lies beyond the Apollonian. Both transfigure a region in whose joyful chords dissonance as well as the terrible image of world fade delightfully away. Both play with the sting of joylessness, trusting in the extreme power of their magical arts. Through this play both justify the existence of even the “worst of worlds.” Here the Dionysian shows itself, measured against the Apollonian, as the eternal and primordial artistic force, which, in general, summons the entire world of appearances into existence. In its midst a new transfiguring illusion becomes necessary in order to keep alive the living world of the individual. Could we imagine dissonance becoming human — and what is a man other than that? — then this dissonance, in order to be able to live on, would need a marvellous illusion, which covered it with a veil of beauty over its essential being. This is the true artistic purpose of Apollo, in whose name we put together all those countless illusions of beautiful appearances which render existence at every moment generally worth living and push us to experience the next moment. But in this process, from that basis for all existence, from the Dionysian bed rock of the world, only as much can come into the consciousness of the human individual as can be overcome once more by that Apollonian power of transfiguration, so that both of these artistic drives are compelled to display their powers in a strictly mutual proportion, in accordance with the law of eternal justice. Wherever Dionysian power rises up too impetuously, as we are experiencing it, there Apollo must already have come down to us, hidden in a cloud. The next generation may well see the richest of his beautiful effects.

However, the fact that this effect is necessary each man will experience most surely through his intuition, if he once, even if only in a dream, feels himself set back into the life of the ancient Greeks. As he wanders under high Ionic colonnades, glancing upwards to a horizon marked off with pure and noble lines, with reflections of his



transfigured form beside him in shining marble, around him people solemnly striding or moving delicately, with harmoniously resounding sounds and a speech of rhythmic gestures — faced with this constant stream of beauty, would he not have to extend his hand to Apollo and cry out: “Blessed Hellenic people! How great Dionysus must be among you, if the Delphic god thinks such magic necessary to heal your dithyrambic madness!” — To a person in such a mood as this, however, an old Athenian, looking at him with the noble eye of Aeschylus, might reply: “But, you strange foreigner, say this as well: How much these people must have suffered in order to be able to become so beautiful! But now follow me to the tragedy and sacrifice with me in the temple of both divinities.”

[Friedrich Nietzsche](#), 1872

### Recommendations:

[Emma](#), [Northanger Abbey](#), [Pride and Prejudice](#), [Mansfield Park](#) by Jane Austen

[Gobseck](#), [Father Goriot](#), [The Magic Skin](#) by Honoré de Balzac

[Uncle Tom’s Cabin](#) by Harriet Beecher Stowe

[The Decameron](#) by Giovanni Boccaccio

[Wuthering Heights](#) by Emily Brontë

[Life Is A Dream](#) by Pedro Calderon De La Barca

[Don Quixote of La Mancha](#) by Miguel de Cervantes

[The Divine Comedy](#) by Dante Alighieri

[Oliver Twist](#), [David Copperfield](#), [A Tale of Two Cities](#) by Charles Dickens

[The Idiot](#), [The Brothers Karamazov](#), [Crime And Punishment](#), [The Insulted And The Injured](#) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

[Faust Parts I & II](#) , [The Sorrows of Young Werther](#) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

[The Overcoat](#), [The Nose](#) by Nikolai Gogol

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[The Hunchback of Notre-Dame](#) , [Les Misérables](#) , [The Man Who Laughs](#) by Victor Hugo

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