



The Birth of Tragedy

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted Musean translation of the 1886 issue, with the Attempt at Self-Criticism and the Preface to Richard Wagner, made directly from the German of the Fritzsche Neue Ausgabe and read against its page images; reviewed against the German before publication.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

Written 1872 · Philosophy

SOURCE

Original text from archive.org.

GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The Internet Archive item is cataloged as 1872, but this copy is the undated Fritzsche Neue Ausgabe mit dem Versuch einer Selbstkritik (1886); the printed title page, not the catalog, governs the text. This witness ends the self-criticism with the Zarathustra citation and does not print the Sils-Maria dateline that later printings add, so no later date is supplied.

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An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 1



Whatever may underlie this questionable book, it must have been a question of the first importance and fascination, and a deeply personal question at that—the time in which it arose, *despite* which it arose, bears witness to this: the turbulent time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71. While the thunder of the battle of Wörth rolled across Europe, the brooder and lover of riddles to whom this book owes its paternity sat somewhere in a corner of the Alps, deep in brooding and riddles, and consequently deeply troubled and untroubled at once, setting down his thoughts about the *Greeks*—the core of the strange, hard-to-get-at book to which this late foreword (or afterword) is meant to be devoted. A few weeks later, he himself was beneath the walls of Metz, still unable to shake off the question marks he had placed beside the supposed “cheerfulness” of the Greeks and Greek art; until at last, in that month of utmost tension when peace was being negotiated at Versailles, he too made peace with himself and, slowly recovering from an illness brought home from the battlefield, definitively settled within himself “The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music.”—Out of music? Music and tragedy? Greeks and the music of tragedy? Greeks and the artwork of pessimism? The best-turned-out,

most beautiful, most envied kind of human being so far, the kind that most seduces one into living, the Greeks—what? Did they, of all people, *need* tragedy? More than that—art? What for—Greek art?...

One can guess where the great question mark over the value of existence had thus been placed. Is pessimism *necessarily* a sign of decline, of decay, of having turned out badly, of weary and weakened instincts?—as it was among the Indians, as it is, to all appearances, among us “modern” human beings and Europeans? Is there a pessimism of *strength*? An intellectual inclination toward the harsh, horrifying, evil, problematic aspects of existence, born of well-being, of overflowing health, of the *fullness* of existence? Is there perhaps a suffering from overfullness itself? A courage of the keenest vision that tempts and tests, that *craves* the terrible as its enemy, the worthy enemy against which it can prove its strength? From which it wants to learn what “being afraid” means? What does the *tragic* myth mean, precisely among the Greeks in their best, strongest, bravest age? And the tremendous phenomenon of the Dionysian? What of tragedy, born from it?—And again: what killed tragedy—the Socratism of morality, the dialectic, contentedness, and cheerfulness of the theoretical human being—what? Might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of weariness, sickness, of instincts dissolving into anarchy? And the “Greek cheerfulness” of the later Greek world merely an evening glow? The Epicurean will *against* pessimism merely a sufferer’s precaution? And science itself, our science—indeed, what does all science mean when viewed as a symptom of life? To what end, worse still, *from where*—all science? What? Is the scientific spirit perhaps only a fear of pessimism and a flight from it? A subtle act of self-defense against—the *truth*? And, morally speaking, something like cowardice and dishonesty? Immorally speaking, a piece of cunning? Oh Socrates, Socrates, was this perhaps *your* secret? Oh mysterious ironist, was this perhaps your—irony?— —

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 2



What I got hold of then, something terrible and dangerous, a problem with horns, not necessarily a bull, but in any case a *new* problem: today I would say that it was the *problem of science* itself—science grasped for the first time as problematic, as questionable. But the book in which my youthful courage and suspicion then found an outlet—what an *impossible* book had to grow out of a task so hostile to youth! Built entirely from premature, far-too-green personal experiences, all of them on the very threshold of what could be communicated; placed on the ground of *art*—for the problem of science cannot be recognized on the ground of science—a book perhaps for artists with an additional bent for analysis and retrospection (that is, for an exceptional kind of artist, whom one must seek out and would not even care to seek out...); full of psychological innovations and artists’ secrets, with an artists’ metaphysics in the background; a youthful work full of youthful courage and youthful melancholy, independent, defiantly self-reliant even where it seems to bow before an authority and its own reverence; in short, a first work in every bad sense of the word as well, despite its old man’s problem, burdened with every fault of youth, above all its “far too long,” its “Storm and Stress”: on the other hand, in view of its success (especially with the great artist to whom it addressed itself as if in a dialogue, Richard Wagner), a *proven* book—by which I mean one that at least satisfied

“the best of its time.” On that account alone it should be treated with a measure of consideration and reserve; nevertheless, I do not want to suppress entirely how disagreeable it now seems to me, how alien it stands before me now, after sixteen years—before an eye that is older, a hundred times more exacting, but by no means colder, an eye that has grown no more estranged from the task itself that this audacious book ventured to approach for the first time—to see science through the artist’s eyes, but art through those of life....

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 3



To say it once more: today it is an impossible book to me—I call it badly written, ponderous, embarrassing, image-mad and image-muddled, sentimental, here and there sweetened to the point of femininity, uneven in tempo, without any will to logical precision, thoroughly convinced and therefore above offering proof, distrustful even of the *propriety* of offering proof: a book for the initiated, “music” for those baptized in music, those bound together from the beginning of things by shared and rare experiences of art, a sign of recognition for blood relations in the arts—a haughty and rapturous book that shuts itself off from the outset even more against the profane rabble of the “educated” than against “the people,” yet must also, as its effect proved and proves, know well enough how to find fellow enthusiasts and lure them onto new secret paths and dancing grounds. Here, in any case—people admitted this to themselves with as much curiosity as aversion—a *strange* voice was speaking, the disciple of a still “unknown god,” who had temporarily hidden himself beneath the scholar’s hood, beneath the heaviness and dialectical dreariness of the German, even beneath the bad manners of the Wagnerian; here was a spirit with strange, still nameless needs, a memory brimming with questions, experiences, hidden things, with the name Dionysus inscribed beside them like one more question mark; here there spoke—so people told themselves suspiciously—something

like a mystical and almost maenadic soul, stammering, as if in a foreign tongue, laboriously and capriciously, almost undecided whether to communicate or conceal itself. This “new soul” should have *sung*—not spoken! What a pity that I did not dare to say as a poet what I had to say then: perhaps I could have done it! Or at least as a philologist—for even today, in this field, almost everything remains for the philologist to discover and unearth! Above all, the problem *that* there is a problem here—and that until we have an answer to the question “what is Dionysian?” the Greeks remain, as before, utterly unknown and beyond imagining...

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 4



Yes, what is Dionysian?—This book contains an answer—a “knower” speaks here, the initiate and disciple of his god. Perhaps I would now speak more cautiously and less eloquently about so difficult a psychological question as the origin of tragedy among the Greeks. One fundamental question is the Greek’s relationship to pain, his degree of sensitivity—did this relationship remain the same? Or did it reverse itself?—the question whether his ever stronger *desire for beauty*, for festivals, amusements, new cults, really grew out of lack, out of deprivation, out of melancholy, out of pain? For suppose this very thing were true—and Pericles (or Thucydides) gives us to understand as much in the great funeral oration—where, then, must the opposite desire, which appeared earlier in time, have come from: the *desire for the ugly*, the older Hellene’s good, stern will to pessimism, to tragic myth, to the image of everything terrible, evil, enigmatic, destructive, fateful at the foundation of existence—where, then, must tragedy have come from? Perhaps from *pleasure*, from strength, from overflowing health, from an excess of fullness? And then, to ask physiologically, what is the meaning of that madness out of which tragic as well as comic art grew—Dionysian madness? What? Is madness perhaps not necessarily a symptom of degeneration, decline, a culture grown overripe? Are there perhaps—a question for psychiatrists—neuroses of *health*? Of a people’s youth and youthfulness?

What does that synthesis of god and goat in the satyr point to? From what experience of himself, in response to what urge, did the Greek have to imagine the Dionysian enthusiast and primordial human as a satyr? And as for the origin of the tragic chorus: in those centuries when the Greek body flourished and the Greek soul brimmed over with life, were there perhaps endemic raptures? Visions and hallucinations that spread through entire communities, entire assemblies of worshipers? What? What if the Greeks, precisely in the abundance of their youth, had a will to the tragic and were pessimists? What if it was precisely madness, to borrow a phrase from Plato, that brought the *greatest* blessings upon Hellas? And what if, on the other hand and conversely, it was precisely in the times of their disintegration and weakness that the Greeks grew ever more optimistic, superficial, theatrical, and also more lustful for logic and for the logicizing of the world—thus at once more “cheerful” and more “scientific”? What? Might the victory of *optimism*, the ascendancy of *rationality*, practical and theoretical *utilitarianism*, like democracy itself, with which it is contemporary—despite all “modern ideas” and the prejudices of democratic taste—be a symptom of declining strength, approaching age, physiological exhaustion? And precisely *not*—pessimism? Was Epicurus an optimist—precisely as a *sufferer*?— —One sees that it is a whole bundle of heavy questions with which this book has burdened itself—let us add its heaviest question as well! What, seen through the eyes of *life*, is the meaning of—morality?...

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 5



Already in the preface to Richard Wagner, art—and *not* morality—is presented as the truly *metaphysical* activity of humanity; in the book itself, the provocative proposition recurs several times that the existence of the world is *justified* only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In fact, the whole book recognizes only an artist's meaning and hidden meaning behind all that happens—a “god,” if you will, but certainly only an entirely unscrupulous and immoral artist-god who wants to become conscious of his equal pleasure and sovereignty in building as in destroying, in good as in bad, who, by creating worlds, releases himself from the *distress* of fullness and *overfullness*, from the *suffering* of the opposites crowded within him. The world, at every moment the *achieved* redemption of God, as the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the one who suffers most, who is most full of opposites, most rich in contradiction, and who knows how to redeem himself only in *semblance*: one may call this entire artists' metaphysics arbitrary, idle, fantastic—the essential thing is that it already betrays a spirit that will one day, at any risk, defend itself against the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence. Here, perhaps for the first time, a pessimism “beyond good and evil” announces itself; here that “perversity of disposition” finds words and a formula against which Schopenhauer never tired of hurling his fiercest curses and thunderbolts in advance—a philosophy that

dares to place morality itself in the world of appearance, to demote it, and not merely to the rank of “appearances” (in the sense of the idealist technical term), but to that of “deceptions,” as semblance, delusion, error, interpretation, contrivance, art. Perhaps the depth of this *antimoral* tendency can best be measured by the cautious and hostile silence with which Christianity is treated throughout the book—Christianity as the most extravagant figuration of the moral theme that humanity has yet been made to hear. In truth, there is no greater opposite to the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world taught in this book than Christian doctrine, which is and wants to be *only* moral, and which, with its absolute standards—for example, with the truthfulness of its God alone—relegates art, *all* art, to the realm of lies—that is, denies, damns, condemns it. Behind such a way of thinking and valuing, which must be hostile to art so long as it is at all genuine, I have always also sensed its *hostility to life*, its furious, vengeful aversion to life itself: for all life rests on semblance, art, deception, a way of seeing, the necessity of perspective and error. From the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, Christianity was life’s disgust and weariness with life, which merely disguised itself, merely hid itself, merely decked itself out under the belief in an “other” or “better” life. Hatred of the “world,” the curse upon the passions, fear of beauty and sensuality, a beyond invented to slander this world all the better, at bottom a craving for nothingness, for the end, for rest, for the “Sabbath of Sabbaths”—all this, like Christianity’s unconditional will to recognize *only* moral values, always struck me as the most dangerous and sinister of all possible forms of a “will to downfall,” at the very least a sign of the deepest sickness, weariness, discontent, exhaustion, impoverishment of life—for before morality (especially Christian, that is, unconditional morality), life *must* continually and inevitably be found in the wrong, because life *is* something essentially immoral—life, crushed beneath the weight of contempt and the eternal No, *must* finally come to be felt as undeserving of desire, as worthless in itself. Morality itself—what? Might morality not be a “will to the denial of life,” a secret instinct of annihilation, a principle of decay, diminishment, slander, a beginning of the end? And consequently the danger of dangers?... It was *against* morality, then, that my instinct

turned at the time, with this questionable book, as an instinct speaking on behalf of life, and invented for itself a fundamental counter-doctrine and counter-valuation of life, a purely artistic, an *anti-Christian* one. What should it be called? As a philologist and a man of words, I baptized it, not without some freedom—for who could know the right name of the Antichrist?—with the name of a Greek god: I called it the *Dionysian*.—

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 6



Is it understood what task I was already daring to touch on with this book?... How deeply I regret now that I did not yet have the courage (or the immodesty?) to allow myself, in every respect, a *language of my own* for visions and ventures so much my own—that I laboriously sought to express in Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations that ran fundamentally counter to the spirit of Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as to their taste! What did Schopenhauer think of tragedy? “What gives everything tragic its distinctive upward sweep toward exaltation,” he says, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* II, 495, “is the dawning recognition that the world, life, cannot offer true satisfaction and is therefore *not worth* our attachment: in this consists the tragic spirit—it thus leads to *resignation*.” Oh, how differently Dionysus spoke to me! Oh, how remote from me then was precisely this whole doctrine of resignation!—But there is something much worse about the book, something I now regret still more than having obscured and spoiled Dionysian intimations with Schopenhauerian formulas: namely, that I *spoiled* the magnificent *Greek problem* as it had dawned on me by mixing in the very latest concerns! That I attached hopes where there was nothing to hope for, where everything pointed all too clearly toward an end! That, on the basis of the latest German music, I began spinning fables about the “German essence,” as though

it were on the point of discovering itself and finding itself again—and this at a time when the German spirit, which not long before had possessed the will to rule Europe, the strength to lead Europe, was just then *abdicating*, by last will and testament and for good, and, under the pompous pretext of founding an empire, making its transition to mediocrity, to democracy and “modern ideas”! In fact, in the meantime I have learned to think hopelessly and unsparingly enough about this “German essence,” and likewise about present-day *German music*, which is romanticism through and through and the most un-Greek of all possible art forms; moreover, a corrupter of the nerves of the first order, doubly dangerous among a people that loves drink and honors obscurity as a virtue—namely, in its double capacity as an intoxicating and at the same time *befogging* narcotic.—Apart, however, from all the rash hopes and mistaken applications to the most immediate present with which I spoiled my first book for myself at the time, the great Dionysian question mark as it is placed there remains standing, on and on, with regard to music as well: what would a music have to be like that was no longer romantic in origin—as German music is—but *Dionysian*?...

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 7



—But, my dear sir, what in the world is romanticism if *your* book is not romanticism? Can the deep hatred of the “present day,” of “reality” and “modern ideas,” be carried any further than it has been in your artists’ metaphysics—which would sooner believe in nothingness, sooner even in the devil, than in the “now”? Does a ground bass of wrath and lust for destruction not rumble on beneath all your contrapuntal artistry of voices and seduction of the ear, a raging determination against everything that is “now,” a will not very far from practical nihilism, which seems to say, “Better that nothing should be true than that *you* should be right, than that *your* truth should prevail!” Listen for yourself, Mr. Pessimist and Deifier of Art, with a more open ear to a single chosen passage from your book, that not ineloquent dragon-slayer passage, which may sound dangerously like a pied piper to young ears and hearts: what? Is this not the genuine, authentic romantic’s confession of 1830 beneath the mask of the pessimism of 1850? And behind it the usual romantic finale is already sounding its prelude—break, breakdown, return, and prostration before an old faith, before the old God... What? Is your pessimist’s book not itself a piece of anti-Hellenism and romanticism, itself something “as intoxicating as it is befogging,” a narcotic at any rate, even a piece of music, of *German* music? But listen:

“Let us imagine a rising generation with this fearlessness of vision, this heroic urge toward the tremendous; let us imagine the bold stride of these dragon-slayers, the proud daring with which they turn their backs on all the feeble doctrines of optimism in order to ‘live resolutely,’ wholly and fully: *should it not be necessary* that the tragic human being of this culture, in educating himself for seriousness and terror, should desire a new art, the *art of metaphysical consolation*, tragedy as the Helen who belongs to him, and cry out with Faust:

“And should I not, with longing’s utmost force,
Draw into life that one and only form?”

“Should it not be *necessary*?”... No, three times no! You young romantics: it should *not* be necessary! But it is very likely to *end* that way, that *you* will end that way, namely “consoled,” as it is written, despite all your self-education for seriousness and terror, “metaphysically consoled,” in short, as romantics end, *Christian*... No! First you should learn the art of *this-worldly* consolation—you should learn to *laugh*, my young friends, if you are determined to remain pessimists; perhaps then, as laughing people, you will one day send all metaphysical consolation-mongering to the devil—and metaphysics first of all! Or, to say it in the language of that Dionysian monster called *Zarathustra*:

“Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher! And do not forget your legs either! Lift up your legs too, you good dancers, and better yet: stand on your heads as well!

“This crown of the laughing one, this crown of rose garlands: I myself placed this crown upon my head, I myself pronounced my laughter holy. I found no one else strong enough for it today.

“Zarathustra the dancer, Zarathustra the light-footed, who beckons with his wings, poised for flight, beckoning to all birds, ready and prepared, a blissful lighthearted one:—

“Zarathustra the truth-sayer, Zarathustra the truth-laughter, no impatient man, no man of absolutes, one who loves leaps and sidesteps: I myself placed this crown upon my head!

“This crown of the laughing one, this crown of rose garlands: to you, my brothers, I throw this crown! I pronounced laughter holy: you higher human beings, *learn*—to laugh!”

Also sprach Zarathustra, vierter Theil S. 87.

Preface to Richard Wagner



To keep at a distance all the possible misgivings, agitation, and misunderstandings that the thoughts gathered in this work will provoke, given the peculiar character of our aesthetic public, and to be able to write these introductory words with the same contemplative delight whose imprint the work itself bears on every page, as the fossil of happy and uplifting hours, I picture the moment when you, my deeply revered friend, will receive this work: how, perhaps after an evening walk through the winter snow, you look at the unbound Prometheus on the title page, read my name, and are immediately convinced that, whatever this work may contain, its author has something serious and urgent to say, and likewise that, in everything he conceived, he conversed with you as though you were present and could write down only what befitted that presence. You will recall that I gathered myself into these thoughts at the same time as your splendid commemorative essay on Beethoven was taking shape—that is, amid the terrors and sublimities of the war that had just broken out. Yet anyone who, in connection with this gathering of thoughts, should think of the contrast between patriotic excitement and aesthetic indulgence, between courageous seriousness and cheerful play, would be mistaken: rather, on truly reading this work, such readers might discover to their astonishment what a seriously German problem we are dealing with, one that we place at the very center of German hopes, as their vortex and turning point. But perhaps these same readers will find it altogether offensive to see an aesthetic problem taken so seri-

ously, if they can recognize in art no more than an amusing sideline, a jingling of bells that could easily be dispensed with beside the “seriousness of existence”: as though no one knew what such a “seriousness of existence” amounts to in this contrast. Let these serious people be informed that I am convinced that art is the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life, in the sense of the man to whom I wish to dedicate this work here, as my sublime pioneer on this path.

Basel, at the end of the year 1871.

Section 1



We will have gained much for the science of aesthetics when we have reached not merely a logical understanding but the immediate certainty of intuition that the continuing development of art is bound to the duality of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*, much as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, with their continuous struggle and only periodic reconciliation. We borrow these names from the Greeks, who make the profound secret teachings of their view of art intelligible to the discerning not in concepts, but in the vividly clear figures of their world of gods. With their two deities of art, Apollo and Dionysus, we associate our recognition that in the Greek world an immense opposition of origins and aims exists between the image-maker's art, the Apollonian, and the imageless art of music, the art of Dionysus: these two very different drives run side by side, usually in open conflict, continually provoking one another to new and more powerful births, in which to perpetuate the struggle of that opposition which the shared word "art" only seemingly bridges; until at last, through a miraculous metaphysical act of the Hellenic "will," they appear paired, and in this pairing finally produce the equally Dionysian and Apollonian artwork of Attic tragedy.

To bring these two drives closer to us, let us first imagine them as the separate art-worlds of *dream* and *intoxication*, two physiological phenomena between which an opposition corresponding to that between the Apollonian and the Dionysian can be observed. It was in dreams, according to Lucretius's

conception, that the glorious figures of the gods first appeared before human souls; in dreams the great sculptor saw the enchanting bodily forms of superhuman beings; and the Hellenic poet, if asked about the secrets of poetic procreation, would likewise have pointed to dreams and offered instruction like that given by Hans Sachs in *The Mastersingers*:

My friend, this is the poet's task:

To mark his dreams and read their meaning.

Believe me, our truest illusion

Is opened up to us in dreams:

All verse and poetry

Is nothing but the reading of true dreams.

The beautiful semblance of dream-worlds, in whose creation every human being is a complete artist, is the precondition of all visual art, and indeed, as we shall see, of an important half of poetry as well. We delight in an immediate understanding of form; all shapes speak to us; nothing is indifferent or unnecessary. Yet even amid the most intense life of this dream-reality we retain a glimmering sense of its *semblance*: at least this is my experience, and I could offer much testimony and many sayings of poets to show how common, indeed how normal, it is. The philosophical person even has a presentiment that beneath this reality in which we live and exist there lies hidden a second, quite different reality, so that this one too is a semblance; and Schopenhauer expressly describes the gift of sometimes seeing human beings and all things as mere phantoms or dream-images as the mark of a capacity for philosophy. As the philosopher relates to the reality of existence, so the artistically sensitive person relates to the reality of dreams; he looks closely and gladly, for from these images he interprets life, through these events he prepares himself for life. It is by no means only pleasant and friendly images that he experiences within himself with this all-embracing understanding: the serious, the gloomy, the sorrowful, the dark, sudden obstacles, the teasing tricks of chance, anxious expectations—in short, the whole “divine comedy” of life, including the *Inferno*—passes before him, not merely like a play of shadows—for he lives and suffers along with these scenes—and yet not without that fleeting sense of semblance.

And perhaps some, like me, will remember sometimes calling out to themselves amid the dangers and terrors of a dream, encouragingly and with success: "It is a dream! I want to keep dreaming it!" I have also been told of people able to continue the causal sequence of one and the same dream over three or more successive nights: facts that clearly testify that our innermost being, the common foundation of us all, experiences the dream within itself with deep pleasure and joyful necessity.

This joyful necessity of the dream experience was likewise expressed by the Greeks in their Apollo: Apollo, as the god of all image-making powers, is also the god of prophecy. He who is, in the root meaning of his name, the "shining one," the deity of light, also rules over the beautiful semblance of the inner world of fantasy. The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the only fragmentarily intelligible reality of waking life, and then the deep awareness of nature's healing and helping power in sleep and dreams, are at the same time the symbolic analogue of the prophetic faculty and of the arts in general, through which life is made possible and worth living. But that delicate line which the dream-image must not cross if it is not to have a pathological effect—otherwise semblance would deceive us as crude reality—must also be present in the image of Apollo: that measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder impulses, that wise repose of the image-making god. His eye must be "sunlike," in keeping with his origin; even when it looks angry and displeased, the consecration of beautiful semblance rests upon it. And so, in an eccentric sense, what Schopenhauer says of the human being caught in the veil of Maya might apply to Apollo. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I S. 416: "Just as on the raging sea, which, boundless on every side, howling lifts and lowers mountains of waves, a boatman sits in a small boat, trusting the frail vessel; so, amid a world of torments, the individual human being sits calmly, supported by and trusting in the principle of individuation." Indeed, one might say of Apollo that in him the unshaken trust in that principle and the calm repose of the person caught within it have found their most sublime expression; one might even describe

Apollo as the glorious divine image of the principle of individuation, from whose gestures and glances the whole pleasure and wisdom of “semblance,” together with its beauty, would speak to us.

In the same passage Schopenhauer described for us the tremendous *horror* that seizes a person when he suddenly loses confidence in the cognitive forms of appearance, because the principle of sufficient reason, in one of its forms, seems to admit an exception. If to this horror we add the blissful rapture that rises from the innermost ground of the human being, indeed of nature, at this same shattering of the principle of individuation, we gain a glimpse into the essence of the *Dionysian*, brought closest to us by the analogy of *intoxication*. Either under the influence of the narcotic drink of which all primitive human beings and peoples speak in hymns, or at the mighty approach of spring, which pervades all nature with pleasure, those Dionysian stirrings awaken, and as they intensify, the subjective fades away into complete self-forgetfulness. In the German Middle Ages too, ever-growing throngs rolled from place to place under this same Dionysian power, singing and dancing: in these dancers of St. John and St. Vitus we recognize the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their prehistory in Asia Minor, reaching back to Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea. There are people who, from lack of experience or dullness of mind, turn away from such phenomena as from “epidemic diseases,” mockingly or pityingly, conscious of their own health: the poor creatures have no inkling how corpse-pale and ghostly this very “health” of theirs looks when the glowing life of Dionysian enthusiasts rushes past them.

Under the spell of the Dionysian, not only is the bond between human being and human being renewed: alienated, hostile, or subjugated nature too once more celebrates her festival of reconciliation with her lost son, humanity. The earth offers her gifts freely, and the beasts of prey from the rocks and the desert approach in peace. The chariot of Dionysus is heaped with flowers and garlands; beneath his yoke stride panthers and tigers. Transform Beethoven’s jubilant hymn to “Joy” into a painting, and do not let your imagination fall short when the millions sink shuddering into the dust: then you can approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid, hostile boundaries

that need, arbitrary power, or “insolent fashion” have established between human beings break apart. Now, at the gospel of universal harmony, everyone feels himself not merely united, reconciled, fused with his neighbor, but one with him, as though the veil of Maya had been torn and fluttered only in tatters before the mysterious primordial One. In song and dance the human being expresses himself as a member of a higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is about to fly up, dancing, into the air. Enchantment speaks from his gestures. Just as the animals now speak and the earth yields milk and honey, so something supernatural also sounds forth from him: he feels himself a god, he himself now moves in the same rapture and exaltation in which he saw the gods move in his dreams. The human being is no longer an artist; he has become a work of art: the artistic power of all nature reveals itself here, amid the shudders of intoxication, for the supreme, blissful satisfaction of the primordial One. The noblest clay, the most precious marble, is kneaded and hewn here—the human being—and to the chisel strokes of the Dionysian world-artist sounds the cry of the Eleusinian mysteries: “Do you fall down, you millions? Do you sense the Creator, world?”—

Section 2



So far we have considered the Apollonian and its opposite, the Dionysian, as artistic powers that burst forth from nature itself, *without the mediation of the human artist*, and in which nature's artistic drives find their first and direct satisfaction: on the one hand as the image-world of dreams, whose perfection has no connection whatever with the individual's intellectual level or artistic education; on the other as an intoxicated reality that likewise pays no heed to the individual, but even seeks to annihilate him and redeem him through a mystical feeling of unity. In relation to these immediate artistic states of nature, every artist is an "imitator": either an Apollonian dream-artist or a Dionysian artist of intoxication, or finally—as, for example, in Greek tragedy—an artist of both intoxication and dream. Such an artist we might imagine sinking down in Dionysian drunkenness and mystical self-abandonment, alone and apart from the rapturous choruses, whereupon, through the influence of Apollonian dreaming, his own state—that is, his unity with the innermost ground of the world—is revealed to him *in a symbolic dream-image*.

After these general premises and contrasts, let us now approach the *Greeks* to discover to what degree and to what height those *artistic drives of nature* were developed in them. This will enable us to understand and appreciate more deeply the Greek artist's relation to his archetypes, or, in Aristotle's phrase, "the imitation of nature." Despite all their literature on dreams and their numerous dream anecdotes, we can speak of the Greeks' *dreams* only conjecturally,

though with considerable confidence: given their eye's incredibly precise and sure grasp of sculptural form, together with their bright and candid delight in color, we cannot help assuming, to the shame of all later generations, that their dreams too possessed a logical causality of lines and contours, colors and groups, a succession of scenes resembling their finest reliefs, whose perfection, if a comparison were possible, would surely entitle us to call the dreaming Greeks Homers and Homer a dreaming Greek—in a deeper sense than when a modern person ventures to compare himself, as regards his dreaming, with Shakespeare.

By contrast, we need not speak merely in conjectures when uncovering the enormous gulf that separates the *Dionysian Greeks* from the Dionysian barbarians. From every corner of the ancient world—leaving the modern world aside here—from Rome to Babylon, we can demonstrate the existence of Dionysian festivals whose type stands, at best, in the same relation to that of the Greek festivals as the bearded satyr, to whom the goat gave its name and attributes, stands to Dionysus himself. Almost everywhere the center of these festivals lay in an extravagant sexual license whose waves swept over every form of family life and its venerable laws; it was precisely nature's wildest beasts that were unleashed here, reaching that abominable mixture of sensuality and cruelty that has always seemed to me the true "witches' brew." Against the feverish stirrings of these festivals, knowledge of which reached the Greeks by every land and sea route, they seem for a time to have been completely secured and protected by the figure of Apollo, rising here in all his pride, who could hold up the head of Medusa against no more dangerous power than this grotesquely uncouth Dionysian one. It is in Doric art that this majestically rejecting stance of Apollo has been immortalized. This resistance became more precarious and even impossible when similar drives at last broke through from the deepest root of the Hellenic itself: now the activity of the Delphic god was confined to taking the destructive weapons from his mighty opponent's hands through a timely reconciliation. This reconciliation is the most important moment in the history of Greek worship: wherever one looks, the upheavals caused by this event are visible. It was the reconciliation of two opponents, with a strict defini-

tion of the boundaries they were henceforth to observe and with the periodic sending of gifts of honor; at bottom, the gulf had not been bridged. But if we look at how Dionysian power revealed itself under the pressure of that peace agreement, we now recognize in the Dionysian orgies of the Greeks, in comparison with those Babylonian Sacaea and their reversion of the human being to tiger and ape, the significance of festivals of world-redemption and days of transfiguration. Only with them does nature attain her artistic jubilation; only with them does the rending of the principle of individuation become an artistic phenomenon. That hideous witches' brew of sensuality and cruelty was powerless here: only the wondrous mixture and duality in the emotions of the Dionysian enthusiasts recalls it—as medicines recall deadly poisons—that phenomenon in which pain awakens pleasure and jubilation wrests agonized sounds from the breast. Out of the highest joy sounds a cry of horror or a yearning lament for an irreplaceable loss. In those Greek festivals a sentimental strain in nature breaks forth, as it were, as though she had to sigh over her dismemberment into individuals. The song and gesture-language of such doubly attuned enthusiasts was something new and unheard-of to the Homeric Greek world; and Dionysian *music* in particular aroused terror and horror in it. If music was apparently already known as an Apollonian art, it was so, strictly speaking, only as the wave-beat of rhythm, whose shaping power was developed to represent Apollonian states. Apollo's music was Doric architecture in sound, but in merely suggested sounds, such as belong to the kithara. Precisely the element that constitutes the character of Dionysian music, and thus of music altogether, is carefully kept away as un-Apollonian: the shattering power of sound, the unified stream of melody, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony. In the Dionysian dithyramb the human being is stimulated to the highest intensification of all his symbolic capacities; something never before felt presses for expression—the destruction of the veil of Maya, oneness as the genius of the species, indeed of nature. Now the essence of nature is to express itself symbolically; a new world of symbols is needed: first the whole symbolism of the body, not merely the symbolism of the mouth, the face, the word, but the full gesture of dance, moving every limb in rhythm. Then the other symbolic pow-

ers, those of music, suddenly grow impetuously in rhythm, dynamics, and harmony. To comprehend this total unleashing of all symbolic powers, a human being must already have reached that height of self-abandonment which seeks to express itself symbolically in these powers: thus the dithyrambic servant of Dionysus is understood only by his own kind! With what astonishment the Apollonian Greek must have looked at him! An astonishment all the greater because it was mingled with the horror that all this was not really so alien to him after all, indeed that his Apollonian consciousness concealed this Dionysian world from him only like a veil.

Section 3



To understand this, we must dismantle that artful edifice of *Apollonian culture*, stone by stone, as it were, until we see the foundations on which it rests. Here we first perceive the glorious figures of the *Olympian* gods standing on the pediments of this building, their deeds adorning its friezes in reliefs that shine far and wide. If Apollo too stands among them, as one deity beside others and without claiming first place, we must not let this mislead us. The same drive that took visible form in Apollo gave birth to that entire Olympian world, and in this sense we may regard Apollo as its father. What was the tremendous need from which so radiant a company of Olympian beings arose?

Anyone who approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart and now searches among them for moral elevation, indeed holiness, for disembodied spiritualization, for loving looks full of compassion, will soon have to turn his back on them, displeased and disappointed. Nothing here recalls asceticism, spirituality, and duty: here only a luxuriant, indeed triumphant existence speaks to us, in which everything that exists is deified, whether good or evil. And so the onlooker may stand quite bewildered before this fantastic exuberance of life and ask himself with what magic potion in their veins these high-spirited people can have enjoyed life, that, wherever they look, Helen, the ideal image of their own existence, “hovering in sweet sensuality,” meets them with laughter. But to this onlooker, already turning away, we must call out: “Do not leave, but first hear what Greek folk wisdom says of this same life that spreads

before you here with such inexplicable cheerfulness. The old legend tells how King Midas hunted the wise *Silenus*, companion of Dionysus, in the forest for a long time without catching him. When he finally fell into his hands, the king asked what was the very best and most excellent thing for human beings. Stiff and motionless, the spirit remained silent, until, compelled by the king, he at last broke out with shrill laughter into these words: 'Miserable race of a day, children of chance and toil, why do you force me to tell you what it would be most beneficial for you not to hear? The very best is utterly beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is—to die soon.'"

How does the Olympian world of gods relate to this folk wisdom? As the tortured martyr's rapturous vision relates to his torments.

Now the Olympian magic mountain opens before us, as it were, and shows us its roots. The Greek knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence: to be able to live at all, he had to set before them the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians. That immense distrust of the Titanic powers of nature, that Moira enthroned mercilessly above all knowledge, that vulture of the great friend of humanity, Prometheus, that fearful fate of wise Oedipus, that ancestral curse of the house of Atreus which forces Orestes to murder his mother—in short, that whole philosophy of the forest god, together with its mythical examples, which brought the melancholy Etruscans to ruin—was continually overcome anew by the Greeks through that artistic *intermediate world* of the Olympians, or at least veiled and hidden from view. To be able to live, the Greeks had to create these gods out of the deepest necessity: a process we may probably imagine as the gradual development, through that Apollonian drive for beauty, of the Olympian divine order of joy from the original Titanic divine order of terror, as roses burst forth from thorny bushes. How else could this people, so acutely sensitive, so impetuous in desire, so uniquely capable of *suffering*, have endured existence if it had not been shown to them in their gods, suffused with a higher glory? The same drive that calls art into life, as the complement and completion of existence that seduces us into living on, also brought the Olympian world into being, in which the Hellenic "will" held up a transfiguring mirror to itself.

Thus the gods justify human life by living it themselves—the only sufficient theodicy! Existence beneath the bright sunshine of such gods is felt to be desirable in itself, and the true *pain* of Homeric humanity concerns departure from it, above all an early departure, so that one might now say of them, reversing the wisdom of Silenus, “The very worst thing for them is to die soon, the second worst to die at all.” When lament does sound, it tells once more of short-lived Achilles, of the human race changing and passing like leaves, of the downfall of the heroic age. It is not unworthy of the greatest hero to long to go on living, even as a day laborer. So impetuously does the “will,” at the Apollonian stage, crave this existence, so completely at one with it does the Homeric human being feel, that even lament becomes its hymn of praise.

Here it must now be said that this harmony, indeed unity, of humanity with nature, gazed upon so longingly by modern people, for which Schiller established the technical term “naive,” is by no means so simple, self-evident, almost inevitable a condition that we *must* encounter it at the gateway of every culture as a paradise of humanity: only an age that tried to imagine Rousseau’s Emile as an artist too, and fancied it had found in Homer just such an artist-Emile, brought up at nature’s heart, could believe this. Wherever we encounter the “naive” in art, we must recognize the highest effect of Apollonian culture, which must always first overthrow a realm of Titans and slay monsters, and must have triumphed, through powerful delusive visions and pleasurable illusions, over a terrifying depth of insight into the world and the most acute capacity for suffering. But how rarely is the naive, that complete absorption in the beauty of semblance, attained! How inexpressibly sublime, then, is *Homer*, who, as an individual, stands in the same relation to that Apollonian popular culture as the individual dream-artist to the capacity for dreaming of the people and of nature in general. Homeric “naivety” can be understood only as the complete victory of Apollonian illusion: an illusion of the kind nature so often uses to attain her purposes. The true goal is concealed by a delusive image: we reach out our hands for the latter, and nature attains the former through our deception. In the Greeks the “will” wanted to behold itself in the transfiguration of genius and the world of art; to glorify itself, its creatures had to feel

themselves worthy of glorification; they had to see themselves again in a higher sphere, without this perfected world of vision acting as an imperative or a reproach. This is the sphere of beauty in which they saw their mirror images, the Olympians. With this mirroring of beauty, the Hellenic “will” fought against the talent for suffering and for the wisdom of suffering that corresponded to the artistic talent: and as a monument to its victory, Homer stands before us, the naive artist.

Section 4



The analogy of dreams teaches us something about this naive artist. If we picture the dreamer calling out to himself, in the midst of the illusion of the dream-world and without disturbing it, “It is a dream; I want to keep dreaming it”; if from this we must infer a deep inner pleasure in beholding dreams; if, on the other hand, to be able to dream at all with this inner pleasure in seeing, we must have completely forgotten the day and its dreadful intrusiveness—then, under the guidance of Apollo the interpreter of dreams, we may interpret all these phenomena somewhat as follows. Certain as it is that, of the two halves of life, the waking and the dreaming half, the former seems to us incomparably preferable, more important, more worthy, more worth living, indeed the only half actually lived, I would nevertheless, despite every appearance of paradox, maintain precisely the opposite valuation of dreams for that mysterious ground of our being whose appearance we are. For the more I perceive in nature those all-powerful artistic drives, and in them an ardent longing for semblance, for redemption through semblance, the more I feel compelled toward the metaphysical assumption that the truly existent and primordial One, as the eternally suffering and contradictory, also needs the enchanting vision, the pleasurable semblance, for its continual redemption: a semblance that we, wholly caught within it and consisting of it, are compelled to experience as the truly nonexistent—that is, as a continual becoming in time, space, and causality, in other words, as empirical reality. If, then, we set aside our own “reality” for a moment

and understand our empirical existence, like that of the world in general, as a representation of the primordial One generated at every moment, then the dream must now count for us as the *semblance of semblance*, and thus as a still higher satisfaction of the primordial desire for semblance. For this same reason, the innermost core of nature takes that indescribable pleasure in the naive artist and the naive artwork, which is likewise only “semblance of semblance.” *Raphael*, himself one of those immortal “naive” artists, has portrayed for us in a symbolic painting that reduction of semblance to semblance, the primordial process of the naive artist and of Apollonian culture alike. In his *Transfiguration*, the lower half, with the possessed boy, his despairing bearers, the helplessly frightened disciples, shows us the reflection of eternal primordial pain, the sole ground of the world: “semblance” here is the reflected glow of eternal contradiction, the father of things. From this semblance there now rises, like an ambrosial fragrance, a visionary new world of semblance, invisible to those caught in the first semblance—a radiant hovering in purest bliss and painless contemplation shining from wide-open eyes. Here, in the highest symbolism of art, we have before our eyes that Apollonian world of beauty and its foundation, the terrible wisdom of Silenus, and through intuition we grasp their mutual necessity. Apollo, however, confronts us once again as the deification of the principle of individuation, in which alone the eternally attained goal of the primordial One, its redemption through semblance, is accomplished: with sublime gestures he shows us how the whole world of torment is necessary so that through it the individual may be driven to produce the redeeming vision and then, absorbed in contemplating it, sit calmly in his rocking boat in the middle of the sea.

This deification of individuation, if it is conceived at all as imperative and prescriptive, knows only one law: the individual—that is, observance of the individual’s boundaries, *measure* in the Hellenic sense. Apollo, as an ethical deity, demands measure from his followers and, so that they may observe it, self-knowledge. Thus alongside the aesthetic necessity of beauty run the demands “Know yourself” and “Not too much!” while self-exaltation and excess were regarded as the truly hostile demons of the non-Apollonian sphere,

and hence as qualities of the pre-Apollonian time, the age of Titans, and of the world outside the Apollonian, that is, the barbarian world. Because of his Titanic love for humanity, Prometheus had to be torn apart by vultures; because of his excessive wisdom, which solved the riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus had to plunge into a bewildering whirlpool of atrocities: thus the Delphic god interpreted the Greek past.

The effect aroused by the *Dionysian* also seemed “Titanic” and “barbaric” to the Apollonian Greek, though he could not conceal from himself that he was at the same time inwardly akin to those overthrown Titans and heroes. Indeed, he had to feel still more: his entire existence, with all its beauty and moderation, rested on a veiled foundation of suffering and knowledge, which that Dionysian power laid bare to him again. And look! Apollo could not live without Dionysus! The “Titanic” and the “barbaric” were ultimately just as necessary as the Apollonian! And now let us imagine how the ecstatic sound of the Dionysian festival rang into this world built on semblance and moderation and artificially dammed up, in ever more enticing, magical strains; how in these strains the whole *excess* of nature in pleasure, suffering, and knowledge grew audible, rising to a piercing scream: let us imagine what the psalm-chanting artist of Apollo, with the ghostly sound of his harp, could amount to beside this demonic popular song! The Muses of the arts of “semblance” grew pale before an art that spoke the truth in its intoxication; the wisdom of Silenus cried “Woe! Woe!” against the cheerful Olympians. The individual, with all his boundaries and measures, perished here in the self-forgetfulness of Dionysian states and forgot the Apollonian laws. *Excess* revealed itself as truth; contradiction, bliss born from pain, spoke of itself from the heart of nature. And so, wherever the Dionysian broke through, the Apollonian was suspended and annihilated. Yet it is just as certain that wherever the first assault was withstood, the prestige and majesty of the Delphic god expressed themselves more rigidly and menacingly than ever. For I can explain the *Doric* state and Doric art to myself only as a permanent military encampment of the Apollonian: only in

unremitting resistance to the Titanic-barbaric essence of the Dionysian could so defiantly austere an art, enclosed by ramparts, so martial and harsh an education, so cruel and ruthless a state endure for long.

Up to this point we have developed further what I observed at the opening of this essay: how the Dionysian and the Apollonian ruled the Hellenic character in ever-new, successive births, each intensifying the other; how out of the “bronze” age, with its battles of Titans and its harsh folk philosophy, the Homeric world developed under the sway of the Apollonian drive for beauty; how this “naive” splendor was swallowed up again by the invading flood of the Dionysian; and how, confronting this new power, the Apollonian rose to the rigid majesty of Doric art and its view of the world. If in this way the earlier history of the Hellenes, in the struggle of those two hostile principles, falls into four great stages of art, we are now compelled to ask further about the ultimate design of this becoming and striving, unless we are to regard the last period attained, that of Doric art, as the summit and purpose of those artistic drives. And here the sublime and highly praised artwork of *Attic tragedy* and the dramatic dithyramb presents itself to our eyes as the shared goal of both drives, whose mysterious marriage, after a long preceding struggle, has glorified itself in such a child—who is at once Antigone and Cassandra.

Section 5



We now approach the true aim of our inquiry, which seeks knowledge of the Dionysian-Apollonian genius and his artwork, or at least an intuitive understanding of that mystery of union. Here we first ask where that new germ, which later developed into tragedy and the dramatic dithyramb, first became perceptible in the Hellenic world. Antiquity itself gives us a pictorial answer when, on sculptures, engraved gems, and the like, it places *Homer and Archilochus* side by side as the forefathers and torchbearers of Greek poetry, in the sure feeling that these two alone were to be regarded as equally and wholly original natures, from whom a stream of fire continued to flow through all subsequent Greek generations. Homer, the aged dreamer absorbed in himself, the type of the Apollonian, naive artist, now looks in astonishment at the passionate head of Archilochus, the warlike servant of the Muses driven wildly through existence; and modern aesthetics could add by way of interpretation only that here the “objective” artist was set against the first “subjective” one. This interpretation does little for us, because we know the subjective artist only as a bad artist, and in every kind and degree of art demand first and foremost the conquest of the subjective, redemption from the “I,” and the silencing of every individual will and desire; indeed, without objectivity, without pure, disinterested contemplation, we can never believe in even the slightest truly artistic creation. Therefore our aesthetics must first solve the problem of how the “lyric poet” is possible as an artist: he who, according to the experience of every age,

always says “I” and sings before us the whole chromatic scale of his passions and desires. Beside Homer, this very Archilochus terrifies us with the cry of his hatred and scorn, with the drunken outbursts of his desire; does this not make him, the first artist called subjective, the true nonartist? But why, then, the reverence shown to him as a poet, precisely by the Delphic oracle too, the hearth of “objective” art, in some very remarkable pronouncements?

Schiller has shed light on the process of his poetic creation through a psychological observation that he himself could not explain, yet that does not seem dubious. He confesses that, in the preparatory state before the act of composing poetry, he did not have before him and within him a series of images with an ordered causality of thoughts, but rather a *musical mood* (“At first, feeling in me has no definite and clear object; this takes shape only later. A certain musical state of mind comes first, and only after this does the poetic idea follow in me”). If we now add the most important phenomenon of all ancient lyric poetry, the union, indeed identity, of the *lyric poet with the musician*, everywhere regarded as natural—beside which our modern lyric poetry looks like a divine statue without a head—we can now, on the basis of our previously expounded aesthetic metaphysics, explain the lyric poet to ourselves as follows. First, as a Dionysian artist, he has become entirely one with the primordial One, its pain and contradiction, and produces the image of this primordial One as music, if music has indeed rightly been called a repetition of the world and a second cast of it; but now this music becomes visible to him again, as in a *symbolic dream-image*, under the influence of Apollonian dreaming. That imageless and conceptless reflection of primordial pain in music, with its redemption in semblance, now produces a second mirroring, as an individual symbol or example. The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process: the image that now shows him his unity with the heart of the world is a dream-scene that gives visible form to that primordial contradiction and primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure of semblance. The lyric poet’s “I” thus sounds from the abyss of being; his “subjectivity,” in the sense of modern aestheticians, is a fiction. When Archilochus, the first lyric poet of the Greeks, declares his raging love and at the same time his contempt to the daughters of

Lycambes, it is not his passion that dances before us in an orgiastic frenzy: we see Dionysus and the maenads, we see the intoxicated enthusiast Archilochus sunk in sleep—as Euripides describes it to us in *The Bacchae*, sleep on a high mountain pasture in the midday sun—and now Apollo approaches him and touches him with the laurel. The sleeper’s Dionysian-musical enchantment now sprays, as it were, sparks of images around him: lyric poems, which in their highest development are called tragedies and dramatic dithyrambs.

The sculptor, and likewise the epic poet akin to him, is absorbed in the pure contemplation of images. Without any image at all, the Dionysian musician is himself entirely primordial pain and its primordial echo. Out of the mystical state of self-abandonment and unity, the lyrical genius feels a world of images and symbols growing forth, with an entirely different coloring, causality, and speed from the world of the sculptor and epic poet. While the latter lives in these images, and only in them, with joyful contentment, and never tires of lovingly contemplating them down to their smallest details; while even the image of the wrathful Achilles is for him only an image, whose wrathful expression he enjoys with that dreamlike pleasure in semblance—so that, through this mirror of semblance, he is protected against becoming one and fusing with his figures—the lyric poet’s images, by contrast, are nothing but *himself*, and, as it were, only different objectifications of him, which is why he, as the animating center of that world, may say “I.” Only this selfhood is not the same as that of the waking, empirically real human being, but the only truly existent and eternal selfhood, resting at the foundation of things, through whose images the lyrical genius sees right through to that foundation. Now let us imagine how, among these images, he also sees *himself* as a nongenius—that is, his “subject,” the whole tumult of subjective passions and impulses of will directed toward a particular thing that seems real to him. If it now appears as though the lyrical genius and the nongenius bound to him were one, and as though the former spoke that little word “I” of himself, this semblance will no longer be able to mislead us, as it certainly has misled those who called the lyric poet the subjective poet. In truth, Archilochus, the passionately inflamed human being who loves and hates, is only a vision of the genius who is already no longer

Archilochus but the genius of the world, and who symbolically expresses his primordial pain in that image of the human being Archilochus; whereas that subjectively willing and desiring human being Archilochus can never, ever be a poet. But it is by no means necessary for the lyric poet to see before him only the phenomenon of the human being Archilochus as a reflection of eternal being; and tragedy shows how far the lyric poet's visionary world can move away from that phenomenon, which admittedly lies nearest to hand.

Schopenhauer, who did not conceal from himself the difficulty the lyric poet presents for a philosophical consideration of art, believes he has found a way out that I cannot follow, although in his profound metaphysics of music he alone had been given the means by which that difficulty could be decisively removed—as I believe I have done here, in his spirit and in his honor. He, by contrast, describes the distinctive essence of song as follows (*Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, S. 295): “It is the subject of the will, that is, one's own willing, that fills the singer's consciousness, often as a released, satisfied willing (joy), but probably still more often as a thwarted willing (sorrow), always as emotion, passion, an agitated state of mind. Beside this, however, and at the same time, the sight of surrounding nature makes the singer conscious of himself as the subject of pure, will-less knowing, whose unshakable, blissful calm now stands in contrast to the urge of willing, always restricted, always still in want: the feeling of this contrast, of this interplay, is really what expresses itself in the song as a whole and what constitutes the lyrical state at all. In this state, pure knowing approaches us, as it were, to redeem us from willing and its urge: we follow, but only for moments; again and again willing, the memory of our personal aims, tears us away from calm contemplation; but again and again, too, the nearest beautiful surroundings, in which pure, will-less knowledge presents itself to us, lure us away from willing. Thus in song and in the lyrical mood, willing (the personal interest in an aim) and pure contemplation of the surroundings that present themselves are wondrously intermingled: relations between the two are sought and imagined; the subjective mood, the affection of the will, imparts its

color by reflection to the contemplated surroundings, and these in turn to that mood: the authentic song is the imprint of this entire, so mingled and divided state of mind.”

Who could fail to recognize in this account that lyric poetry is characterized here as an art imperfectly attained, one that reaches its goal only by leaps, as it were, and seldom—indeed, as a half-art whose *essence* is supposed to consist in the wondrous intermingling of willing and pure contemplation, that is, of the unaesthetic and the aesthetic state? We maintain, rather, that the whole opposition by which even Schopenhauer still classifies the arts as if by a standard of value, the opposition of subjective and objective, has no place at all in aesthetics, since the subject, the individual who wills and advances his egoistic aims, can be conceived only as the opponent, not the origin, of art. But insofar as the subject is an artist, he is already redeemed from his individual will and has become, as it were, a medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates its redemption in semblance. For this above all must be clear to us, to our humiliation *and* exaltation: that the whole comedy of art is by no means performed for us, for our improvement and education, say, and that we are just as little the true creators of that world of art; but we may indeed assume of ourselves that, for its true creator, we are already images and artistic projections, and have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art—for only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* are existence and the world eternally *justified*—while, to be sure, our consciousness of this significance of ours is scarcely different from the consciousness that warriors painted on a canvas have of the battle depicted on it. Thus all our knowledge of art is at bottom entirely illusory, because as knowers we are not one and identical with that being who, as the sole creator and spectator of that comedy of art, provides eternal enjoyment for himself. Only insofar as the genius, in the act of artistic procreation, fuses with that primordial artist of the world does he know anything of the eternal essence of art; for in that state he is, wondrously, like the uncanny fairy-tale image that can turn its eyes and look at itself; now he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator.

Section 6



Regarding Archilochus, scholarly research has discovered that he introduced the *folk song* into literature, and that on account of this deed he holds that unique place beside Homer in the general esteem of the Greeks. But what is the folk song, as opposed to the wholly Apollonian epic? What else but the perpetual trace of a union of the Apollonian and the Dionysian? Its immense diffusion, spread over all peoples and swelling in ever new births, is for us a testimony to how strong that twofold artistic drive of nature is—a drive that leaves its traces in the folk song in the same way that the orgiastic movements of a people immortalize themselves in its music. Indeed, it would also have to be demonstrable historically that every period rich in productive folk songs was at the same time stirred most powerfully by Dionysian currents, which we must always regard as the ground and presupposition of the folk song.

The folk song, however, counts for us first and foremost as a musical mirror of the world, as primal melody, which now seeks out a parallel dream appearance for itself and speaks it forth in poetry. *Melody is therefore the first and universal thing*, which for that very reason can undergo several objectifications, in several texts. In the naive estimation of the people it is also by far the more important and the more necessary element. Melody gives birth to poetry out of itself, and does so again and again, ever anew; nothing else is what *the strophic form of the folk song* wants to tell us—a phenomenon I always regarded with astonishment until I finally found this explanation. Anyone who looks through

a collection of folk songs, Des Knaben Wunderhorn for instance, with this theory in mind will find countless examples of how the ceaselessly birthing melody sprays sparks of images around itself, which in their motley colors, their abrupt changes, even their mad tumbling over one another reveal a force utterly alien to epic semblance and its calm onward flow. From the standpoint of the epic, this uneven and irregular world of images in lyric is simply to be condemned; and this is surely what the solemn epic rhapsodes at the Apollonian festivals in the age of Terpander did.

In the poetry of the folk song, then, we see language strained to the utmost to *imitate music*; and so with Archilochus a new world of poetry begins, one that contradicts the Homeric at its deepest root. With this we have named the only possible relation between poetry and music, word and tone: the word, the image, the concept seeks an expression analogous to music and now suffers the power of music upon itself. In this sense we may distinguish two main currents in the linguistic history of the Greek people, according to whether language imitated the world of appearances and images or the world of music. One need only reflect more deeply on the linguistic differences of color, of syntactic structure, of vocabulary between Homer and Pindar to grasp the significance of this opposition; indeed, it becomes palpably clear that between Homer and Pindar the *orgiastic flute melodies of Olympus* must have sounded—melodies that even in the age of Aristotle, amid a vastly more developed music, still swept people away into drunken rapture and surely, in their original effect, provoked every poetic means of expression of the people of that time to imitation. I recall here a familiar phenomenon of our own day, one that our aesthetics finds merely offensive. Again and again we experience how a Beethoven symphony compels individual listeners to speak in images, even if an assemblage of the various worlds of images produced by a single piece of music looks quite fantastically motley, even contradictory. To exercise one's poor wit on such assemblages while overlooking a phenomenon that is surely worth explaining is exactly in the manner of that aesthetics. Indeed, even when the tone-poet himself has spoken about a composition in images—when, say, he calls a symphony pastoral, and one movement “Scene by the Brook,” another “Merry Gathering of

Country Folk”—these too are merely figurative representations born out of the music, and not at all the imitated objects of music—representations that can teach us nothing whatever about the *Dionysian* content of music, and that have no exclusive worth beside other images. We must now transfer this process of music discharging itself in images to a youthfully fresh, linguistically creative multitude, in order to get an inkling of how the strophic folk song arises, and how the whole faculty of language is stirred up by the new principle of imitating music.

If we may therefore regard lyric poetry as the imitative effulgaration of music in images and concepts, we can now ask: “As what does music *appear* in the mirror of imagery and concepts?” *It appears as will*, the word taken in Schopenhauer’s sense, that is, as the opposite of the aesthetic, purely contemplative, will-less state of mind. Here one must now distinguish as sharply as possible the concept of essence from that of appearance: for music, in its essence, cannot possibly be will, because as such it would have to be banished entirely from the realm of art—for the will is that which is in itself unaesthetic —; but it appears as will. For in order to express its appearance in images, the lyric poet needs every stirring of passion, from the whisper of fondness to the rumble of madness; driven by the urge to speak of music in Apollonian similes, he understands all of nature, and himself within it, only as the eternally willing, desiring, yearning. But insofar as he interprets music in images, he himself rests in the still sea-calm of Apollonian contemplation, however much everything he beholds through the medium of music may be in urgent, driving motion around him. Indeed, when he catches sight of himself through that same medium, his own image shows itself to him in a state of unsatisfied feeling: his own willing, yearning, groaning, exulting is a simile by which he interprets music to himself. This is the phenomenon of the lyric poet: as an Apollonian genius he interprets music through the image of the will, while he himself, wholly released from the greed of the will, is a pure, untroubled sun-eye.

This whole discussion holds fast to the claim that lyric is just as dependent on the spirit of music as music itself, in its complete unrestrictedness, does not *need* image and concept but merely *tolerates* them beside itself. The poetry of

the lyric poet can say nothing that did not already lie, in the most immense generality and universal validity, in the music that compelled him to speak in images. The world-symbolism of music can by no means be exhaustively grasped through language, precisely because it refers symbolically to the primal contradiction and primal pain in the heart of the primordial One, and thus symbolizes a sphere that lies above all appearance and before all appearance. Measured against it, every appearance is rather only a simile: and so *language*, as the organ and symbol of appearances, can never and nowhere turn the innermost depth of music outward, but remains, as soon as it engages in imitating music, only in an external contact with it, while music's deepest meaning cannot be brought one step nearer to us by all lyrical eloquence.

Section 7



We must now call to our aid all the artistic principles discussed so far, in order to find our way in the labyrinth that we have to call *the origin of Greek tragedy*. I do not think I assert anything absurd when I say that the problem of this origin has not even been seriously posed so far, let alone solved, however often the fluttering shreds of ancient tradition have already been sewn together by conjecture and torn apart again. This tradition tells us with complete decisiveness *that tragedy arose out of the tragic chorus*, and that originally it was only chorus and nothing but chorus; which obliges us to look into the heart of this tragic chorus as the true primal drama, without letting ourselves be satisfied in any way by the current art-phrases—that the chorus is the ideal spectator, or that it is meant to represent the people over against the princely region of the stage. That last-mentioned explanatory idea, which sounds sublime to many a politician—as if the immutable moral law had been represented by the democratic Athenians in the people’s chorus, which beyond the passionate excesses and extravagances of kings always remains in the right—may be suggested ever so strongly by a remark of Aristotle’s: it has no influence on the original formation of tragedy, since from those purely religious origins the whole opposition of people and prince, indeed every political and social sphere, is excluded. But even with regard to the classical form of the chorus in Aeschylus and Sophocles that we know, we would consider it blasphemy to speak here of an intimation of a “constitutional popular representation”—a blasphemy from which others

have not shrunk. The ancient constitutions of state knew no constitutional popular representation in practice, and in their tragedy, one hopes, they never even “intimated” it.

Far more famous than this political explanation of the chorus is the idea of A. W. Schlegel, who recommends that we regard the chorus in a certain sense as the epitome and extract of the mass of spectators, as the “ideal spectator.” This view, set beside the historical tradition that tragedy was originally only chorus, proves to be what it is: a crude, unscientific, yet brilliant assertion, which has gained its brilliance only from its concentrated form of expression, from the genuinely Germanic bias in favor of everything called “ideal,” and from our momentary astonishment. For we are astonished as soon as we compare the theater public so well known to us with that chorus and ask ourselves whether it could ever be possible to idealize out of this public something analogous to the tragic chorus. We deny it silently, and now marvel as much at the boldness of Schlegel’s assertion as at the wholly different nature of the Greek public. For we had always supposed that the true spectator, whoever that may be, must always remain aware that a work of art is before them and not an empirical reality, whereas the tragic chorus of the Greeks is compelled to recognize embodied existences in the figures on the stage. The chorus of Oceanids truly believes it sees the Titan Prometheus before it, and takes itself to be just as real as the god of the scene. And that is supposed to be the highest and purest kind of spectator, to hold Prometheus, like the Oceanids, to be bodily present and real? And it would be the mark of the ideal spectator to run onto the stage and free the god from his torments? We had believed in an aesthetic public, and had held the individual spectator all the more capable the more that spectator was able to take the work of art as art, that is, aesthetically; and now Schlegel’s expression suggested to us that the perfect ideal spectator lets the world of the stage have its effect not aesthetically at all, but bodily and empirically. Oh, those Greeks! we sigh; they overturn our aesthetics! But grown accustomed to this, we repeated Schlegel’s dictum whenever the chorus came up.

But that tradition, so explicit, speaks against Schlegel here: the chorus in itself, without a stage—that is, the primitive form of tragedy—and that chorus of ideal spectators cannot be reconciled with each other. What kind of art would it be that was drawn out of the concept of the spectator, whose proper form would have to be the “spectator in itself”? The spectator without a spectacle is an absurd concept. We fear that the birth of tragedy can be explained neither from high regard for the moral intelligence of the masses nor from the concept of the spectator without a play, and we consider this problem too deep to be even touched by such shallow ways of looking at it.

An infinitely more valuable insight into the significance of the chorus had already been revealed by Schiller in the famous preface to *Die Braut von Messina*, where he regarded the chorus as a living wall that tragedy draws around itself in order to shut itself off completely from the real world and to preserve its ideal ground and its poetic freedom.

With this, his chief weapon, Schiller fights against the common concept of the natural, against the illusion commonly demanded in dramatic poetry. Although the day itself on the stage is only an artificial one, the architecture only symbolic, and the metrical language bears an ideal character, Schiller argues, error still reigns in the whole: it is not enough that one tolerates merely as a poetic license what is nonetheless the essence of all poetry. The introduction of the chorus is the decisive step by which war is openly and honestly declared on every naturalism in art.—It is a way of thinking such as this, it seems to me, for which our age, imagining itself superior, uses the dismissive catchword “pseudo-idealism.” I fear that we, with our present veneration of the natural and the real, have by contrast arrived at the opposite pole of all idealism, namely in the region of the wax museums. There, too, there is an art, as in certain popular novels of the present day; only let no one torment us with the claim that this art has overcome the Schiller-Goethean “pseudo-idealism.”

To be sure, it is an “ideal” ground on which, according to Schiller’s correct insight, the Greek satyr chorus, the chorus of original tragedy, is accustomed to walk, a ground raised high above the real path of mortals. For this chorus the Greek built the suspended scaffolding of a fictitious *state of nature*, and set ficti-

tious *natural beings* upon it. Tragedy grew up on this foundation and, for that reason alone, of course, has been relieved from the very beginning of any painstaking portrayal of reality. Yet it is no world fantasized arbitrarily into the space between heaven and earth; rather it is a world of the same reality and credibility that Olympus, together with its inhabitants, possessed for the believing Hellene. The satyr, as the Dionysian chorist, lives in a reality religiously acknowledged, under the sanction of myth and cult. That tragedy begins with him, that the Dionysian wisdom of tragedy speaks out of him, is a phenomenon just as strange to us here as the origin of tragedy from the chorus altogether. Perhaps we gain a starting point for our reflection if I put forward the claim that the satyr, the fictitious natural being, stands to the human being of culture in the same relation as Dionysian music to civilization. Of the latter Richard Wagner says that it is superseded by music as lamplight is by daylight. In the same way, I believe, the Greek human being of culture felt superseded in the face of the satyr chorus: and this is the most immediate effect of Dionysian tragedy, that state and society, indeed the chasms between one human being and another, give way to an overpowering feeling of unity that leads back to the heart of nature. The metaphysical consolation—with which, as I already hint here, every true tragedy sends us away—that life at the ground of things is, despite all change of appearances, indestructibly powerful and full of joy: this consolation appears in bodily distinctness as the satyr chorus, as a chorus of natural beings who live on indestructibly, as it were, behind all civilization, and who, despite all change of generations and of the history of peoples, remain eternally the same.

With this chorus the profound Hellene, uniquely capable of the most delicate and the heaviest suffering, finds consolation: the Hellene who has looked with a keen, cutting gaze into the midst of the terrible destructive turmoil of so-called world history, and likewise into the cruelty of nature, and who is in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art—life saves him for itself.

The rapture of the Dionysian state, with its annihilation of the ordinary barriers and limits of existence, contains, for as long as it lasts, a *lethargic* element, into which everything personally experienced in the past is submerged. Thus, through this chasm of oblivion, the world of everyday reality and the world of Dionysian reality are sundered from each other. But as soon as that everyday reality enters consciousness again, it is felt as such with disgust; an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of those states. In this sense the Dionysian human being resembles Hamlet: both have once taken a true look into the essence of things, they have *come to know*, and it disgusts them to act; for their action can change nothing in the eternal essence of things, and they feel it to be ridiculous or shameful that they should be expected to set right again the world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires being veiled in illusion—that is the lesson of Hamlet, not that cheap wisdom of Hans the Dreamer, who from too much reflection, as it were from a surplus of possibilities, never gets around to acting; not reflection, no!—true knowledge, insight into the horrifying truth, outweighs every motive that drives toward action, in Hamlet as in the Dionysian human being. Now no consolation avails any longer; longing reaches out beyond a world after death, beyond the gods themselves; existence, together with its gleaming reflection in the gods or in an immortal beyond, is negated. In the awareness of the truth once beheld, the human being now sees everywhere only the dreadful or absurd in being, now understands what is symbolic in Ophelia's fate, now recognizes the wisdom of the forest god Silenus: it sickens them.

Here, in this supreme danger to the will, *art* approaches as a saving, healing sorceress; she alone is able to bend those thoughts of disgust at the dreadful or absurd nature of existence into representations with which one can live: these are the *sublime*, as the artistic taming of the dreadful, and the *comic*, as the artistic discharge of the disgust at the absurd. The satyr chorus of the dithyramb is the saving deed of Greek art; on the intermediate world of these Dionysian attendants those fits just described spent themselves.

Section 8



The satyr and the idyllic shepherd of our more recent age are both offspring of a longing directed toward the primal and the natural; but with what a firm, undaunted grasp the Greek reached for his forest man, and how bashfully and limply the modern human being dallied with the flattering image of a tender, fluting, soft-natured herdsman! Nature on which no knowledge has yet labored, in which the bolts of culture are still unbroken—that is what the Greek saw in his satyr, which for that reason was not yet equated with the ape. On the contrary: it was the archetype of the human being, the expression of the human being's highest and strongest stirrings—as an inspired reveler whom the nearness of the god enraptures, as a compassionate companion in whom the god's suffering is repeated, as a proclaimer of wisdom out of the deepest breast of nature, as an emblem of the sexual omnipotence of nature, which the Greek is accustomed to contemplate with reverent wonder. The satyr was something sublime and divine: so he had to appear, above all to the painfully shattered gaze of the Dionysian human being. The spruced-up, fabricated shepherd would have been an insult to that human being, whose eye rested in sublime satisfaction on the unveiled and undiminished grandeur of nature's handwriting; here the illusion of culture was wiped away from the archetype of the human being, here the true human being was revealed, the bearded satyr who cries out in jubilation to his god. Before this figure the human being of culture shrank into a lying caricature. Schiller is right about these beginnings of tragic

art too: the chorus is a living wall against the onrushing reality, because it—the satyr chorus—depicts existence more truthfully, more really, more completely than the human being of culture, who commonly esteems himself the only reality. The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world, as a fantastic impossibility of a poet's brain: it wants to be precisely the opposite, the unvarnished expression of truth, and for that very reason it must cast off the lying finery of that supposed reality of the human being of culture. The contrast between this genuine truth of nature and the lie of culture, which poses as the sole reality, is similar to that between the eternal core of things, the thing in itself, and the whole world of appearances: and as tragedy, with its metaphysical consolation, points to the eternal life of that core of existence amid the ceaseless perishing of appearances, so the symbolism of the satyr chorus already expresses in a simile that primal relation between the thing in itself and appearance. That idyllic shepherd of the modern human being is only a likeness of the sum of illusions of cultivation that passes for nature in his eyes; the Dionysian Greek wants truth and nature at their highest power—he sees himself enchanted into a satyr.

Under such moods and insights the reveling throng of the servants of Dionysus exults: their power transforms them before their own eyes, so that they fancy they behold themselves as restored spirits of nature, as satyrs. The later constitution of the tragic chorus is the artistic imitation of that natural phenomenon; in which, to be sure, a separation of Dionysian spectators from the Dionysian enchanted then became necessary. Only one must always keep in mind that the audience of Attic tragedy found itself again in the chorus of the orchestra, that at bottom there was no opposition between audience and chorus: for everything is only one great, sublime chorus of dancing and singing satyrs, or of those who let themselves be represented by these satyrs. Schlegel's phrase must disclose itself to us here in a deeper sense. The chorus is the "ideal spectator" insofar as it is the only *beholder*, the beholder of the visionary world of the stage. An audience of spectators, as we know it, was unknown to the Greeks: in their theaters, thanks to the terraced structure of the auditorium rising in concentric arcs, it was possible for everyone quite literally to *look out over* the entire cultural world all around and, in sated gazing, to fancy themselves a

chorist. By this insight we may call the chorus, at its primitive stage in primal tragedy, a self-mirroring of the Dionysian human being: a phenomenon that can be made clearest by the process of the actor, who, when truly gifted, sees the image of the role to be portrayed hovering before their eyes, so palpable it can almost be grasped. The satyr chorus is first of all a vision of the Dionysian mass, just as, in turn, the world of the stage is a vision of this satyr chorus: the power of this vision is strong enough to make the gaze dull and insensible to the impression of "reality," to the people of cultivation arrayed on the tiers of seats all around. The form of the Greek theater recalls a lonely mountain valley: the architecture of the stage appears like a luminous cloud-image, which the Bacchantes roving through the mountains behold from the heights, as the glorious frame in whose midst the image of Dionysus is revealed to them.

That artistic primal phenomenon, which we bring up here in explanation of the tragic chorus, is, given our bookish view of the elementary artistic processes, almost offensive; whereas nothing can be more certain than that poets are poets only because they see themselves surrounded by figures who live and act before them and into whose innermost essence they look. Through a peculiar weakness of modern talent we are inclined to imagine the aesthetic primal phenomenon as too complicated and abstract. For the genuine poet the metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a substitute image that truly hovers before him in place of a concept. A character is for the poet not a whole composed of collected individual traits, but an insistently living person before the poet's eyes, who differs from the corresponding vision of the painter only by continuing to live and continuing to act. By what means does Homer depict so much more vividly than all other poets? Because he beholds so much more. We talk about poetry so abstractly because we all tend to be bad poets. At bottom the aesthetic phenomenon is simple; if one only has the capacity to see a living play continually and to live always surrounded by hosts of spirits, then one is a poet; if one only feels the drive to transform oneself and to speak out of other bodies and souls, then one is a dramatist.

Dionysian excitement is capable of communicating to an entire mass this artistic gift of seeing itself surrounded by such a host of spirits, with whom it knows itself inwardly to be one. This process of the tragic chorus is the *dramatic* primal phenomenon: to see oneself transformed before oneself and now to act as if one had really entered into another body, another character. This process stands at the beginning of the development of drama. Here is something other than the rhapsode, who does not fuse with his images but, like the painter, sees them outside himself with a contemplative eye; here there is already a giving up of the individual through entry into an alien nature. And indeed this phenomenon appears epidemically: a whole throng feels itself enchanted in this way. The dithyramb is therefore essentially different from every other choral song. The maidens who, with laurel branches in hand, process solemnly to the temple of Apollo and sing a processional song as they go remain who they are and keep their civic names: the dithyrambic chorus is a chorus of the transformed, in whom their civic past, their social standing, is utterly forgotten: they have become the timeless servants of their god, living outside all spheres of society. All other choral lyric of the Hellenes is merely an immense heightening of the Apollonian solo singer; whereas in the dithyramb there stands before us a community of unconscious actors who see themselves, among one another, as transformed.

Enchantment is the presupposition of all dramatic art. In this enchantment the Dionysian reveler sees himself as a satyr, *and as a satyr in turn beholds the god*, that is, in the transformation he sees a new vision outside himself, as the Apollonian consummation of his state. With this new vision the drama is complete.

According to this insight, we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus, which again and again discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images. Those choral parts with which tragedy is interwoven are therefore, in a certain sense, the womb of the whole so-called dialogue, that is, of the entire world of the stage, of the drama proper. In several successive discharges this primal ground of tragedy radiates forth that vision of the drama: which is thoroughly a dream appearance and in that respect epic in nature, but which,

on the other hand, as the objectification of a Dionysian state, represents not the Apollonian redemption in semblance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and its becoming one with primordial being. Thus the drama is the Apollonian embodiment of Dionysian insights and effects, and is thereby separated from the epic as by an immense chasm.

The *chorus* of Greek tragedy, the symbol of the entire mass in Dionysian excitement, finds its full explanation in this view of ours. While we, accustomed to the position of a chorus on the modern stage, above all an opera chorus, could not grasp at all how that tragic chorus of the Greeks should be older, more original, indeed more important than the “action” proper—as tradition had so clearly handed down—while we, again, could not reconcile with that handed-down high importance and originality the claim that the chorus was nevertheless composed only of lowly, serving beings, indeed at first only of goatish satyrs, while the orchestra in front of the stage always remained a riddle to us, we have now come to the insight that the stage together with the action was at bottom and originally conceived only as a *vision*, that the sole “reality” is precisely the chorus, which generates the vision out of itself and speaks of it with the whole symbolism of dance, tone, and word. In its vision this chorus beholds its lord and master Dionysus and is therefore eternally the *serving* chorus: it sees how he, the god, suffers and glorifies himself, and therefore does not itself *act*. In this position of utter service toward the god, it is nonetheless the highest, that is, the Dionysian, expression of *nature*, and therefore speaks, like nature, oracles and sayings of wisdom in its inspiration: as the *compassionate* one it is at the same time the *wise* one, proclaiming truth out of the heart of the world. Thus arises that fantastic and seemingly so offensive figure of the wise and inspired satyr, who is at the same time “the simple human being” in contrast to the god: image of nature and of its strongest drives, indeed symbol of them and at the same time herald of its wisdom and art: musician, poet, dancer, spirit-seer in one person.

Dionysus, the true hero of the stage and center of the vision, is, according to this insight and according to tradition, at first, in the very oldest period of tragedy, not truly present, but is only imagined as present: that is, originally

tragedy is only “chorus” and not “drama.” Later the attempt is made to show the god as a real one and to present the visionary figure, together with its transfiguring frame, as visible to every eye; with this the “drama” in the narrower sense begins. Now the dithyrambic chorus is given the task of stirring the mood of the listeners to such a Dionysian pitch that, when the tragic hero appears on the stage, they do not see the clumsily masked human being but rather a visionary figure born, as it were, of their own rapture. Let us imagine Admetus, in deep brooding, remembering his recently departed wife Alcestis and wholly consuming himself in the mental contemplation of her—how now suddenly a veiled female figure, similar in form, similar in gait, is led toward him: let us imagine his sudden trembling unrest, his stormy comparing, his instinctive conviction—then we have an analogue of the feeling with which the spectator in Dionysian excitement saw the god step forward on the stage, the god with whose suffering that spectator had already become one. Involuntarily the spectator transferred the whole image of the god, magically trembling before the soul, onto that masked figure and dissolved its reality, as it were, into 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 that one and yet more shadowlike, is born anew before our eyes in constant change. Accordingly we recognize in tragedy a thoroughgoing opposition of style: language, color, mobility, dynamics of speech diverge, in the Dionysian lyric of the chorus on the one hand and in the Apollonian dream world of the stage on the other, into wholly separate spheres of expression. The Apollonian appearances in which Dionysus objectifies himself are no longer “an eternal sea, a changing weaving, a glowing life,” as the music of the chorus is, no longer those merely felt forces, not condensed into an image, in which the inspired servant of Dionysus senses the nearness of the god: now the clarity and firmness of epic form speaks to the servant from the stage, now Dionysus speaks no longer through forces but as an epic hero, almost in the language of Homer.

Section 9



Everything that comes to the surface in the Apollonian part of Greek tragedy, in the dialogue, looks simple, transparent, beautiful. In this sense the dialogue is a likeness of the Hellene, whose nature reveals itself in dance, because in dance the greatest strength is only potential, yet betrays itself in the suppleness and lushness of movement. So the language of the Sophoclean heroes surprises us with its Apollonian definiteness and brightness, so that we think we are at once looking into the innermost ground of their being, with some astonishment that the way to this ground is so short. But suppose we look away for a moment from the hero's character, which comes to the surface and becomes visible—and which at bottom is nothing more than a luminous image cast on a dark wall, that is, appearance through and through—and press on instead into the myth that projects itself in these bright reflections: then we suddenly experience a phenomenon that stands in the reverse relation to a familiar optical one. When, after a forceful attempt to look straight into the sun, we turn away blinded, we have dark colored spots before our eyes, as a kind of remedy: conversely, those luminous image-appearances of the Sophoclean hero, in short the Apollonian element of the mask, are necessary products of a glance into the inner and terrible side of nature, shining spots, as it were, to heal a gaze wounded by ghastly night. Only in this sense may we believe that we grasp

rightly the serious and significant concept of “Greek cheerfulness”; whereas we do, of course, meet the misunderstood concept of this cheerfulness, as a condition of unthreatened comfort, on every road and footpath of the present day.

The most sorrowful figure of the Greek stage, the ill-fated *Oedipus*, was understood by Sophocles as the noble human being who, despite his wisdom, is destined for error and misery, but who in the end, through his monstrous suffering, exerts a magical, beneficent power around him that remains effective even beyond his death. The noble human being does not sin, the profound poet wants to tell us: through his action every law, every natural order, even the moral world may perish, yet precisely through this action a higher, magical circle of effects is drawn, effects that found a new world on the ruins of the old one overthrown. That is what the poet wants to tell us, insofar as he is also a religious thinker: as a poet he shows us first a legal case wondrously tied into a knot, which the judge slowly unravels, link by link, to his own ruin; the truly Hellenic delight in this dialectical solution is so great that it casts an air of superior cheerfulness over the whole work, one that everywhere blunts the point of the dreadful premises of that trial. In “Oedipus at Colonus” we meet this same cheerfulness, but lifted up into an infinite transfiguration: set against the old man, struck by an excess of misery and surrendered to everything that befalls him purely as a *sufferer*, there stands the unearthly cheerfulness that descends from the divine sphere and hints to us that the hero, in his purely passive conduct, attains his highest activity, which reaches far beyond his life, whereas his conscious thinking and striving in his earlier life led him only to passivity. Thus the knot of the Oedipus fable, which to mortal eyes is inextricably tangled, is slowly unraveled—and the deepest human joy comes over us at this divine counterpart of dialectic. If with this explanation we have done the poet justice, it can still be asked whether the content of the myth is thereby exhausted: and here it turns out that the poet’s whole conception is nothing but precisely that luminous image which healing nature holds up to us after a look into the abyss. Oedipus, the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, Oedipus, the solver of the Sphinx’s riddle! What does the mysterious triad of these deeds of fate tell us? There is a very ancient popular belief, especially Persian, that a wise

magus can be born only of incest: which, with regard to Oedipus, the riddle-solver who wed his mother, we must at once interpret to mean that where the spell of present and future, the rigid law of individuation, and in general the true enchantment of nature has been broken by prophetic and magical powers, a monstrous unnaturalness—as incest is in that case—must have preceded as the cause; for how could one force nature to give up her secrets, if not by victoriously resisting her, that is, by the unnatural? This insight I see stamped in that dreadful triad of Oedipus's fates: the same man who solves the riddle of nature—that double-natured Sphinx—must also, as murderer of his father and husband of his mother, shatter the holiest orders of nature. Indeed, the myth seems to want to whisper to us that wisdom, and precisely Dionysian wisdom, is an unnatural abomination, that whoever by his knowledge plunges nature into the abyss of annihilation must also undergo the dissolution of nature in himself. “The point of wisdom turns against the wise man: wisdom is a crime against nature”: such terrible sentences the myth calls out to us; but the Hellenic poet touches, like a ray of sunlight, the sublime and fearsome Memnon column of the myth, so that it suddenly begins to sound—in Sophoclean melodies!

Against the glory of passivity I now set the glory of activity, which radiates around the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus. What the thinker Aeschylus had to tell us here, but what as a poet he lets us only sense through his parable-like image, the young Goethe knew how to unveil for us in the daring words of his Prometheus:

“Here I sit, forming human beings
In my own image,
A race to be like me,
To suffer, to weep,
To enjoy and to rejoice,
And to pay you no heed,
Like me!”

Man, rising into the Titanic, wins his culture for himself by struggle and forces the gods to ally themselves with him, because in his own wisdom he holds their existence and their limits in his hand. The most wonderful thing about that Prometheus poem, however, which in its basic idea is the true hymn of impiety, is the deep Aeschylean drive toward *justice*: the immeasurable suffering of the bold “individual” on the one side, and on the other the divine distress, indeed the foreboding of a twilight of the gods, the compelling power of those two worlds of suffering, which drives toward reconciliation, toward metaphysical oneness—all this recalls with the greatest force the center and main tenet of the Aeschylean view of the world, which sees Moira enthroned as eternal justice above gods and men. Given the astonishing boldness with which Aeschylus places the Olympian world on his scales of justice, we must bear in mind that the profound Greek had an immovably firm foundation of metaphysical thought in his mysteries, and that all his skeptical fits could discharge themselves on the Olympians. The Greek artist in particular felt, in regard to these deities, a dim sense of mutual dependence: and precisely in the Prometheus of Aeschylus this feeling is symbolized. The Titanic artist found in himself the defiant belief that he could create human beings and at least destroy Olympian gods: and this by his higher wisdom, which he was admittedly forced to atone for with eternal suffering. The splendid “ability” of the great genius, which even eternal suffering pays for too cheaply, the austere pride of the *artist*—that is the content and soul of Aeschylean poetry, while Sophocles in his Oedipus strikes up, as a prelude, the victory song of the *saint*. But even with the interpretation that Aeschylus gave the myth, its astonishing depth of terror has not been fully measured: rather, the artist’s delight in becoming, the cheerfulness of artistic creation that defies every misfortune, is only a bright picture of cloud and sky mirrored on a black lake of sadness. The Prometheus legend is an original possession of the entire Aryan community of peoples and a document of their gift for the profoundly tragic; indeed, it might not be without probability that this myth holds for the Aryan character exactly the same characteristic significance that the myth of the Fall has for the Semitic, and that between the two myths there exists a degree of kinship like that between brother and sister.

The presupposition of that Prometheus myth is the extravagant value that a naive humanity attaches to *fire* as the true palladium of every ascending culture: but that man should rule freely over fire, and not merely receive it as a gift from heaven, as igniting lightning bolt or warming blaze of the sun, seemed to those contemplative primeval humans a sacrilege, a robbery from divine nature. And so the very first philosophical problem poses a painful, insoluble contradiction between man and god and shoves it, like a boulder, up to the gateway of every culture. The best and highest that humanity can come to share in, it wins through a sacrilege, and must now in turn accept its consequences, namely the whole flood of sufferings and sorrows with which the offended heavenly beings must afflict the nobly aspiring human race—must: a harsh thought, which by the *dignity* it bestows on sacrilege stands in strange contrast to the Semitic myth of the Fall, in which curiosity, lying deception, susceptibility to seduction, lustfulness, in short a series of chiefly feminine passions, was regarded as the origin of evil. What distinguishes the Aryan conception is the sublime view of *active sin* as the properly Promethean virtue: with which the ethical foundation of pessimistic tragedy has been found at the same time, as the *justification* of human evil, and indeed of both human guilt and the suffering incurred by it. The calamity in the essence of things—which the contemplative Aryan is not inclined to explain away—the contradiction at the heart of the world, reveals itself to him as a jumble of different worlds, for example a divine and a human one, each of which is in the right as an individual, but which, as a single world beside another, has to suffer for its individuation. In the individual's heroic urge toward the universal, in the attempt to step beyond the spell of individuation and to want to be the *one* world-being itself, he suffers in himself the primal contradiction hidden in things, that is, he commits sacrilege and suffers. Thus the Aryans understand sacrilege as a man, the Semites sin as a woman, just as the primal sacrilege is committed by the man, the primal sin by the woman. Incidentally, the chorus of witches says:

“We don’t take this so exactly:

A woman gets it done in a thousand steps;

But however she may hurry,

A man does it in a single leap.”

Whoever understands that innermost core of the Prometheus legend—namely the necessity of sacrilege imposed on the titanically striving individual—must at the same time feel the un-Apollonian quality of this pessimistic conception; for Apollo wants to bring individual beings to rest precisely by drawing boundary lines between them and by reminding them again and again, with his demands for self-knowledge and measure, of these lines as the holiest laws of the world. But lest in this Apollonian tendency form harden into Egyptian stiffness and coldness, lest the movement of the whole lake die away in the effort to prescribe to the single wave its path and its domain, the high flood of the Dionysian from time to time again destroyed all those small circles into which the one-sidedly Apollonian “will” sought to confine Hellenism. That suddenly swelling flood of the Dionysian then takes upon its back the single small wave-mountains of the individuals, as the brother of Prometheus, the Titan Atlas, carries the earth. This Titanic urge to become, as it were, the Atlas of all individuals and to carry them on a broad back higher and higher, farther and farther, is what the Promethean and the Dionysian have in common. In this respect the Aeschylean Prometheus is a Dionysian mask, while in that deep drive toward justice mentioned earlier Aeschylus betrays to the discerning his paternal descent from Apollo, the god of individuation and the boundaries of justice. And so the double nature of the Aeschylean Prometheus, his at once Dionysian and Apollonian nature, might be expressed in a conceptual formula thus: “All that exists is just and unjust and equally justified in both.”

That is your world! That’s what you call a world!—

Section 10



It is an unassailable tradition that Greek tragedy in its oldest form had only the sufferings of Dionysus for its subject, and that for a long time the only stage hero in existence was precisely Dionysus. But with the same certainty it may be asserted that right up to Euripides Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero, and that all the famous figures of the Greek stage—Prometheus, Oedipus, and so forth—are only masks of that original hero Dionysus. That a deity lurks behind all these masks is the one essential reason for the typical “ideality” of those famous figures, so often marveled at. Someone—I don’t know who—has claimed that all individuals as individuals are comic and therefore untragic: from which one would have to conclude that the Greeks were altogether *unable* to bear individuals on the tragic stage. In fact they seem to have felt that way: just as, in general, that Platonic distinction and valuation of the “idea” as opposed to the “idol,” the image, lies deeply grounded in the Hellenic nature. But to make use of Plato’s terminology, we might speak of the tragic figures of the Hellenic stage roughly like this: the one truly real Dionysus appears in a multiplicity of figures, in the mask of a struggling hero and, as it were, entangled in the net of the individual will. As the appearing god now speaks and acts, he resembles an erring, striving, suffering individual: and that he *appears* at all with this epic definiteness and clarity is the effect of Apollo, the interpreter of dreams, who interprets to the chorus its Dionysian state through that parable-like appearance. In truth, however, that hero is the suffering Dionysus of the

mysteries, that god who experiences in himself the sufferings of individuation, of whom wondrous myths tell how as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and is now worshiped in this state as Zagreus: whereby it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, and that we should therefore regard the state of individuation as the source and primal ground of all suffering, as something reprehensible in itself. From the smile of this Dionysus the Olympian gods arose, from his tears human beings. In that existence as a dismembered god, Dionysus has the double nature of a cruel, savage demon and a mild, gentle ruler. The hope of the epopts, however, was directed toward a rebirth of Dionysus, which we must now grasp, with a premonition, as the end of individuation: to this coming third Dionysus the roaring jubilant song of the epopts resounded. And only in this hope is there a ray of joy on the face of the world, torn apart, shattered into individuals: as the myth depicts it through Demeter, sunk in eternal mourning, who for the first time *rejoices* again when she is told that she can give birth to Dionysus *once more*. In the views just cited we already have together all the components of a profound and pessimistic view of the world and, with it, *the mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental insight into the unity of everything that exists, the view of individuation as the primal ground of evil, art as the joyful hope that the spell of individuation can be broken, as the premonition of a restored unity.—

It was indicated earlier that the Homeric epic is the poetry of Olympian culture, with which that culture sang its own victory song over the terrors of the Titan struggle. Now, under the overpowering influence of tragic poetry, the Homeric myths are reborn once more and show in this metempsychosis that in the meantime the Olympian culture too has been conquered by a still deeper view of the world. The defiant Titan Prometheus announced to his Olympian tormentor that his rule would one day be threatened by the gravest danger unless he joined forces with Prometheus in time. In Aeschylus we recognize the alliance of the terrified Zeus, anxious about his end, with the Titan. Thus the earlier age of the Titans is afterward brought back from Tartarus into the light. The philosophy of wild and naked nature regards the myths of the Homeric

world, dancing past, with the unveiled countenance of truth: they turn pale, they tremble before the lightning eye of this goddess—until the mighty fist of the Dionysian artist forces them into the service of the new deity. Dionysian truth takes over the entire domain of myth as the symbolism of *its own* insights and expresses these partly in the public cult of tragedy, partly in the secret celebrations of dramatic mystery festivals, but always under the old mythic cloak. What force was this that freed Prometheus from his vultures and transformed myth into a vehicle of Dionysian wisdom? It is the Heracles-like force of music: which, having reached its highest appearance in tragedy, knows how to interpret myth with a new and most profound significance; as we had already had to characterize this earlier as the mightiest capacity of music. For it is the lot of every myth gradually to creep into the narrowness of a supposedly historical reality and to be treated by some later age as a unique fact with historical claims: and the Greeks were already well on the way to restamping their entire mythic dream of youth, with ingenuity and caprice, as a historical-pragmatic *history of their youth*. For this is the way religions tend to die: namely, when the mythic presuppositions of a religion are systematized, under the stern, rationalistic eyes of an orthodox dogmatism, into a finished sum of historical events, and one begins anxiously to defend the credibility of the myths, while balking at any natural continued life and proliferation of them; when, that is, the feeling for myth dies and the claim of religion to historical foundations takes its place. This dying myth was now seized by the newborn genius of Dionysian music: and in the genius's hand it bloomed once more, with colors such as it had never shown, with a fragrance that stirred a yearning intimation of a metaphysical world. After this last flaring up it collapses, its leaves wither, and soon the mocking Lucians of antiquity grab at the flowers, bleached and ravaged, carried off on every wind. Through tragedy myth arrives at its deepest content, its most expressive form; once more it rises, like a wounded hero, and the whole surplus of strength, together with the wisdom-filled calm of the dying, burns in its eye with a last, mighty gleam.

What did you want, sacrilegious Euripides, when you tried to force this dying creature into your servitude once more? It died under your violent hands: and now you needed a counterfeit, masked myth, which, like Heracles' ape, knew only how to deck itself out in the old finery. And as the myth died for you, so too the genius of music died for you: even though you plundered all the gardens of music with greedy seizing, you still arrived only at a counterfeit, masked music. And because you abandoned Dionysus, Apollo abandoned you as well; rouse all the passions from their lair and conjure them into your circle, sharpen and file a sophistic dialectic into shape for the speeches of your heroes—even your heroes have only imitated, masked passions and speak only imitated, masked speeches.

Section 11



Greek tragedy perished differently from all the older sister art forms: it died by suicide, as the result of an insoluble conflict, that is, tragically, whereas all those others passed away at an advanced age in the most beautiful and peaceful death. For if it accords with a happy natural condition to depart from life with fair offspring and without convulsion, then the end of those older art forms shows us such a happy natural condition: they sink slowly, and before their dying eyes stands already their more beautiful progeny, impatiently raising its head with a bold gesture. With the death of Greek tragedy, by contrast, there arose an immense void, felt deeply everywhere; just as Greek sailors once, in the time of Tiberius, heard on a lonely island the shattering cry “the great Pan is dead,” so now a painful note of lamentation sounded through the Hellenic world: “Tragedy is dead! Poetry itself has been lost with it! Away, away with you, stunted, emaciated epigones! Away to Hades, so that you can for once eat your fill there on the crumbs of the former masters!”

But when yet another new art form did blossom, one that revered tragedy as its predecessor and mentor, it was perceived with horror that it did indeed bear its mother’s features, but the very ones she had shown in her long death agony. This death agony of tragedy was fought by *Euripides*; that later art form is known as *newer Attic comedy*. In it the degenerate form of tragedy lived on, as a monument to its exceedingly laborious and violent passing.

Given this connection, the passionate affection that the poets of the newer comedy felt for Euripides is understandable; so that the wish of Philemon, who was willing to be hanged on the spot just to be able to seek out Euripides in the underworld, no longer seems strange—if only he could be convinced that the deceased was still in his right mind even now. If one wants to designate, as briefly as possible and without claiming to say anything exhaustive, what Euripides has in common with Menander and Philemon and what acted as such an exciting model for them, it is enough to say that *the spectator* was brought onto the stage by Euripides. Whoever has recognized from what material the Promethean tragedians before Euripides shaped their heroes, and how far from them lay the intention of bringing the faithful mask of reality onto the stage, will also be clear about the entirely divergent tendency of Euripides. Through him the man of everyday life pushed from the auditorium onto the stage; the mirror in which formerly only the great and bold features found expression now showed that painful fidelity that conscientiously reproduces even nature's botched lines. Odysseus, the typical Hellene of the older art, now sank under the hands of the newer poets to the figure of the Graeculus, who from now on stands at the center of dramatic interest as the good-natured, sly household slave. What Euripides credits himself with in the Aristophanic "Frogs"—that by his home remedies he freed tragic art of its pompous corpulence—is above all to be felt in his tragic heroes. In essence the spectator now saw and heard his double on the Euripidean stage and was delighted that the double knew how to talk so well. But it did not stop at this delight: people themselves learned to speak from Euripides, and he himself boasts of this in his contest with Aeschylus: that through him the people had now learned to observe, to negotiate, and to draw conclusions artfully and with the shrewdest sophistications. Through this revolution in public speech he made the newer comedy possible at all. For from now on it was no secret any more how, and with what maxims, everyday life could represent itself on the stage. Bourgeois mediocrity, on which Euripides built all his political hopes, now came to speak, whereas until then the demigod in tragedy and the drunken satyr or half-man in comedy had set the character of the language. And so the Aristophanic

Euripides stresses, in his own praise, how he portrayed the common, universally known, everyday life and bustle, about which anyone is capable of judging. If now the whole mass philosophized, managed land and property with unheard-of shrewdness, and conducted its lawsuits, that, he claims, was his merit and the result of the wisdom he had inoculated into the people.

To a mass prepared and enlightened in this way the newer comedy could now turn, for which Euripides had in a sense become the chorus master; only this time the chorus of spectators had to be trained. As soon as this chorus was practiced in singing in the Euripidean key, there arose that chess-game-like genre of drama, the newer comedy with its perpetual triumph of cleverness and cunning. But Euripides—the chorus master—was praised without end: indeed people would have killed themselves in order to learn still more from him, had they not known that the tragic poets were just as dead as tragedy. With tragedy, however, the Hellene had given up the belief in his own immortality, not only the belief in an ideal past but also the belief in an ideal future. The phrase from the well-known epitaph, “as an old man frivolous and whimsical,” applies also to aged Hellenism. The moment, wit, levity, whim are its highest deities; the fifth estate, that of the slave, now comes to power, at least in attitude: and if one may still speak at all of “Greek cheerfulness,” it is the cheerfulness of the slave, who has nothing heavy to answer for, nothing great to strive for, and knows how to value nothing of the past or the future more highly than the present. It was this semblance of “Greek cheerfulness” that so outraged the profound and formidable natures of the first four centuries of Christianity: to them this effeminate flight from seriousness and terror, this cowardly contentment with comfortable enjoyment, appeared not merely contemptible but as the truly anti-Christian disposition. And it is to their influence that we must ascribe the fact that the view of Greek antiquity, living on through centuries, held fast with almost insuperable tenacity to that pale pink hue of cheerfulness—as if there had never been a sixth century with its birth of tragedy, its mysteries, its Pythagoras and Heraclitus, indeed as if the works of art of the great age

did not exist at all, which yet—each taken by itself—cannot be explained at all from the soil of such senile, slavish delight in existence and cheerfulness and point to an entirely different view of the world as their ground of existence.

If it was claimed just now that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage in order thereby to enable the spectator truly, for the first time, to judge drama, then there arises the semblance that the older tragic art never got out of a mismatch between itself and the spectator: and one might be tempted to praise the radical tendency of Euripides to achieve a corresponding relation between work of art and public as progress beyond Sophocles. But now “public” is only a word and by no means a homogeneous quantity that stays constant within itself. Where is the artist supposed to get an obligation to accommodate himself to a force whose strength lies only in numbers? And if, by his gift and his aims, he feels himself superior to each single one of these spectators, how could he feel more respect for the collective expression of all these capacities subordinate to him than for the single spectator who is relatively the most gifted? In truth no Greek artist treated his public through a long life with greater audacity and self-sufficiency than Euripides did: he who, even when the mass threw itself at his feet, in sublime defiance publicly struck his own tendency in the face, that same tendency with which he had triumphed over the mass. If this genius had felt the slightest reverence for the pandemonium of the public, he would have collapsed under the club blows of his failures long before the middle of his career. We see from this consideration that our statement, that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage in order to make the spectator truly capable of judgment, was only a provisional one, and that we have to seek a deeper understanding of his tendency. Conversely, it is of course universally known that Aeschylus and Sophocles throughout their lives, indeed far beyond them, stood in full possession of popular favor, so that in the case of these predecessors of Euripides there can by no means be talk of a mismatch between work of art and public. What drove the richly gifted artist, urged ceaselessly to create, so violently from the road over which the sun of the greatest poetic

names and the cloudless sky of popular favor shone? What strange regard for the spectator set him against the spectator? How could he—out of too high a respect for his public—despise his public?

Euripides felt himself—this is the solution to the riddle just presented—as a poet superior to the mass, to be sure, but not to two of his spectators: the mass he brought onto the stage, those two spectators he revered as the only competent judges and masters of all his art: following their directions and admonitions he transferred the whole world of feelings, passions, and experiences, which until now had joined every festival performance on the spectators' benches as an invisible chorus, into the souls of his stage heroes; he yielded to their demands when he sought for these new characters also the new word and the new tone; in their voices alone he heard the valid verdicts on his creative work, just as he heard the victory-promising encouragement whenever he saw himself condemned once more by the justice of the public.

Of these two spectators, one is Euripides himself, Euripides *as thinker*, not as poet. Of him one could say that the extraordinary abundance of his critical talent, similar to Lessing's, if it did not generate, at least continually fertilized a productive artistic secondary drive. With this gift, with all the brightness and nimbleness of his critical thinking, Euripides had sat in the theater and strained to make out again, in the masterpieces of his great predecessors, as in paintings gone dark, feature by feature, line by line. And here now he encountered what must not be unexpected to anyone initiated into the deeper mysteries of Aeschylean tragedy: he perceived something incommensurable in every feature and every line, a certain deceptive definiteness and at the same time an enigmatic depth, indeed infinity, of background. The clearest figure still had a comet's tail about it that seemed to point into the uncertain, the unilluminable. The same twilight lay over the structure of the drama, especially over the meaning of the chorus. And how doubtful the solution of the ethical problems remained to him! How questionable the treatment of the myths! How uneven the distribution of fortune and misfortune! Even in the language of the older tragedy much offended him, or at least puzzled him; in particular he found too much pomp for simple circumstances, too many tropes and monstrosities for

the plainness of the characters. So he sat in the theater, restlessly brooding, and he, the spectator, admitted to himself that he did not understand his great predecessors. But if the intellect counted for him as the real root of all enjoying and creating, then he had to ask and look around whether no one at all thought as he did and likewise admitted that incommensurability. But the many, and with them the best individuals, had only a distrustful smile for him; yet no one could explain to him why, in the face of his misgivings and objections, the great masters were nonetheless in the right. And in this tormented condition he found *the other spectator*, who did not comprehend tragedy and therefore did not respect it. Allied with this one, he could dare, out of his isolation, to begin the immense struggle against the works of art of Aeschylus and Sophocles—not with polemics, but as a dramatic poet who sets *his* conception of tragedy against the traditional one.—

Section 12



Before we name this other spectator, let us pause here a moment to call back to mind the impression, described earlier, of the divided and incommensurable in the very nature of Aeschylean tragedy. Let us think of our own bewilderment before the *chorus* and the *tragic hero* of that tragedy, neither of which we knew how to reconcile with our habits any more than with tradition—until we rediscovered that very duality as the origin and essence of Greek tragedy, as the expression of two artistic drives woven into one another, *the Apollonian and the Dionysian*.

To eliminate that original and all-powerful Dionysian element from tragedy and to rebuild it, pure and new, on un-Dionysian art, custom, and view of the world—this is the tendency of Euripides, now revealing itself to us in bright illumination.

Euripides himself, in the evening of his life, put the question of the value and significance of this tendency to his contemporaries, in the most emphatic way, in a myth. Is the Dionysian to be allowed to exist at all? Is it not to be uprooted by force from Hellenic soil? Certainly, the poet tells us, if only it were possible: but the god Dionysus is too powerful; the most rational opponent—like Pentheus in the “Bacchae”—is unexpectedly bewitched by him and afterward runs with this enchantment into his doom. The judgment of the two old men Cadmus and Tiresias seems to be also the judgment of the aged poet: that the reflection of the cleverest individuals does not overthrow those old popular

traditions, that veneration of Dionysus which propagates itself eternally, and that it is fitting, in the face of such wondrous powers, to show at least a diplomatically cautious participation: though it remains possible that the god may take offense at so lukewarm a participation and in the end turn the diplomat—as here Cadmus—into a dragon. This is what a poet tells us who with heroic strength resisted Dionysus throughout a long life—only to close his career at its end with a glorification of his adversary and a suicide, like someone seized by vertigo who, merely to escape the dreadful, no longer bearable whirl, hurls himself down from the tower. That tragedy is a protest against the feasibility of his tendency; alas, and it had already been carried out! The marvelous had happened: when the poet recanted, his tendency had already triumphed. Dionysus had already been driven from the tragic stage, and indeed by a demonic power speaking out of Euripides. Euripides too was in a certain sense only a mask: the deity that spoke out of him was not Dionysus, nor Apollo either, but an entirely newborn demon, called *Socrates*. This is the new opposition: the Dionysian and the Socratic, and the work of art of Greek tragedy perished of it. Even if Euripides now seeks to console us by his recantation, he does not succeed: the most magnificent temple lies in ruins; what use to us is the lament of the destroyer and his confession that it was the most beautiful of all temples? And even that Euripides has been turned into a dragon, as punishment, by the art critics of all ages—whom would this wretched compensation satisfy?

Let us now approach that *Socratic* tendency with which Euripides fought and conquered Aeschylean tragedy.

What goal—so we must now ask—could the Euripidean intention to found drama solely on the un-Dionysian have at all, in the highest ideality of its execution? What form of drama remained, if it was not to be born from the womb of music, in that mysterious twilight of the Dionysian? Only *the dramatized epic*: in which Apollonian domain of art, of course, the *tragic* effect is unattainable. What matters here is not the content of the events portrayed; indeed I would claim that it would have been impossible for Goethe, in his projected “*Nausicaa*,” to make the suicide of that idyllic being—which was to fill the fifth act—tragically gripping; so uncommonly great is the power of the epic-Apollonian

that it enchants the most horror-filled things before our eyes with that delight in semblance and redemption through semblance. The poet of the dramatized epic can no more fuse completely with his images than the epic rhapsode can: he remains still a calm, unmoved contemplative vision, gazing out of wide eyes, that sees the images *before* itself. The actor in this dramatized epic remains at bottom still a rhapsode; the consecration of inner dreaming lies upon all his actions, so that he is never wholly an actor.

How, then, does the Euripidean play stand in relation to this ideal of Apollonian drama? How does that younger rhapsode stand in relation to the solemn rhapsode of the old days, the one who describes his nature in Plato's "Ion" thus: "When I say something sad, my eyes fill with tears; but if what I say is terrible and dreadful, then the hair of my head stands on end with shuddering, and my heart pounds." Here we notice nothing any more of that epic state of being lost in semblance, of the passionless coolness of the true actor, who precisely in his highest activity is entirely semblance and delight in semblance. Euripides is the actor with the pounding heart, with hair standing on end; as a Socratic thinker he draws up the plan, as a passionate actor he carries it out. A pure artist he is neither in the drafting nor in the execution. Thus the Euripidean drama is a thing at once cool and fiery, equally capable of freezing and of burning; it is impossible for it to attain the Apollonian effect of epic, while on the other hand it has detached itself as far as possible from the Dionysian elements, and now, in order to have any effect at all, needs new means of excitation, which can no longer lie within the only two artistic drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. These means of excitation are cool, paradoxical *thoughts*—in place of the Apollonian visions—and fiery *emotions*—in place of the Dionysian raptures—and indeed thoughts and emotions most realistically counterfeited, by no means dipped into the ether of art.

If we have recognized thus much, that Euripides never succeeded at all in founding drama solely on the Apollonian, that rather his un-Dionysian tendency strayed into a naturalistic and unartistic one, we may now approach more closely the nature of *aesthetic Socratism*; whose supreme law runs roughly thus: "everything must be rational in order to be beautiful"; as a parallel to the

Socratic “only the one who knows is virtuous.” With this canon in hand Euripides measured every particular and rectified it according to this principle: the language, the characters, the dramaturgical structure, the choral music. What we are so often accustomed to charge to Euripides, in comparison with Sophoclean tragedy, as poetic deficiency and regression is mostly the product of that penetrating critical process, that daring rationality. Let the Euripidean *prologue* serve us as an example of the productivity of that rationalistic method. Nothing can be more repugnant to our stage technique than the prologue in the drama of Euripides. That a single character stepping forward at the entrance of the play tells who that person is, what precedes the action, what has happened so far, indeed what will happen in the course of the play—a modern playwright would call that a willful and unpardonable renunciation of the effect of suspense. One knows everything that will happen, after all; who will want to wait for it to really happen?—since here there is by no means the exciting relation of a prophetic dream to a reality that arrives later. Euripides reflected quite differently. The effect of tragedy never rested on epic suspense, on the tantalizing uncertainty of what would happen now and later: rather on those great rhetorical-lyrical scenes in which the passion and dialectic of the chief hero swelled into a broad and mighty stream. Everything prepared for pathos, not for action: and whatever did not prepare for pathos was deemed objectionable. But what most impedes the enjoyable surrender to such scenes is a missing link for the listener, a gap in the fabric of the backstory; as long as the listener still has to work out what this or that person means, what presuppositions this or that conflict of inclinations and intentions has, his full immersion in the suffering and action of the principal characters, his breathless suffering and fearing along with them, is not yet possible. Aeschylean-Sophoclean tragedy used the most ingenious artistic means to put into the spectator’s hand, in the first scenes and as if by chance, all those threads necessary for understanding: a trait in which that noble artistry proves itself that, as it were, masks the *necessary* formal element and lets it appear as something accidental. All the same, Euripides believed he noticed that during those first scenes the spectator is in a peculiar unrest, working out the arithmetic problem of the backstory, so

that the poetic beauties and the pathos of the exposition would be lost to him. Therefore he placed the prologue even before the exposition and put it into the mouth of a person who could be trusted: a deity often had to guarantee the course of the tragedy to the public, in a manner of speaking, and remove every doubt about the reality of the myth: in much the same way that Descartes could prove the reality of the empirical world only by appealing to the truthfulness of God and his incapacity for lying. Euripides needs the same divine truthfulness once more at the end of his drama, to make the future of his heroes secure for the public; this is the task of the notorious *deus ex machina*. Between the epic looking forward and the epic looking beyond lies the dramatic-lyrical present, the actual "drama."

So Euripides, above all as a poet, is the echo of his conscious insights; and precisely this gives him such a remarkable position in the history of Greek art. In regard to his critical-productive creating he must often have felt as if he were to bring to life for drama the beginning of the writing of Anaxagoras, whose first words read: "In the beginning all was together: then came intellect and created order." And if Anaxagoras with his "Nous" appeared among the philosophers like the first sober man among nothing but drunks, Euripides too may have grasped his relation to the other tragic poets under a similar image. As long as the sole orderer and ruler of the universe, the Nous, was still excluded from artistic creation, everything was still together in a chaotic primal porridge; so Euripides had to judge, so he had to condemn the "drunken" poets as the first "sober one." What Sophocles said of Aeschylus, that he does what is right, though unconsciously, was certainly not said in Euripides' sense: he would have granted only so much, that Aeschylus, *because* he creates unconsciously, creates what is wrong. Even the divine Plato speaks of the poet's creative faculty, insofar as it is not conscious insight, for the most part only ironically and puts it on a par with the gift of the soothsayer and dream-interpreter; the poet, he says, is after all not capable of composing until he has become unconscious and no intellect dwells in him any longer. Euripides undertook, as Plato also undertook, to show the world the counterpart of the "irrational" poet; his aesthetic principle "everything must be conscious in order to be beautiful" is, as I said,

the parallel of the Socratic “everything must be conscious in order to be good.” Accordingly Euripides may count for us as the poet of aesthetic Socratism. Socrates, however, was that *second spectator* who did not comprehend the older tragedy and therefore did not respect it; allied with him, Euripides dared to be the herald of a new artistic creation. If the older tragedy perished of this, then aesthetic Socratism is the murderous principle: but insofar as the struggle was directed against the Dionysian element of the older art, we recognize in Socrates the adversary of Dionysus, the new Orpheus, who rises up against Dionysus and, though destined to be torn apart by the maenads of the Athenian court of justice, nonetheless forces the overpowering god himself to flee: who, as once when he fled from the Edonian king Lycurgus, saved himself in the depths of the sea, namely in the mystic waters of a secret cult gradually spreading over the whole world.

Section 13



Socrates' close affinity of purpose with Euripides did not escape their contemporaries in antiquity; the most eloquent expression of this fortunate instinct is the story circulating in Athens that Socrates regularly helped Euripides write his plays. The adherents of the "good old days" named both men in the same breath whenever they listed the corrupters of the people in their own time: it was their influence, they said, that was increasingly sacrificing the old, foursquare excellence of body and soul—the excellence of Marathon—to a dubious enlightenment, as physical and spiritual powers steadily withered. This is the tone, half indignation and half contempt, in which Aristophanic comedy habitually speaks of these men, to the horror of modern readers, who are quite willing to abandon Euripides but cannot cease wondering that Aristophanes should present Socrates as the first and foremost *Sophist*, the mirror and epitome of every sophistic endeavor. Their only consolation is to pillory Aristophanes himself as a dissolute, lying Alcibiades of poetry. Without defending Aristophanes' profound instincts against such attacks here, I will continue to demonstrate the close kinship of Socrates and Euripides as antiquity felt it. In this connection we should recall in particular that Socrates, as an opponent of tragic art, refrained from attending tragedies and appeared among the spectators only when a new play by Euripides was being performed. Most famous

of all, however, is the close conjunction of their names in the pronouncement of the Delphic oracle, which declared Socrates the wisest of human beings but also judged that Euripides deserved second prize in the contest of wisdom.

Sophocles was named third in this ranking: he could boast, in contrast to Aeschylus, that he did what was right, and did it because he *knew* what was right. Clearly it is precisely the degree of clarity in this *knowledge* that singles out the three men together as the three “knowing ones” of their time.

But Socrates gave the sharpest expression to this new, unprecedented esteem for knowledge and insight when he found himself the only person who admitted to *knowing nothing*, whereas on his critical wanderings through Athens, calling on the greatest statesmen, orators, poets, and artists, he everywhere encountered the conceit of knowledge. To his astonishment, he recognized that all these celebrated men lacked sound and certain insight even into their own professions and practiced them only by instinct. “Only by instinct”: with this expression we touch the heart and center of the Socratic tendency. With it, Socratism condemns existing art and existing ethics alike: wherever it turns its scrutinizing gaze, it sees a lack of insight and the power of delusion, and from this lack concludes that what exists is inwardly perverse and reprehensible. From this one point Socrates believed he must correct existence: he, a solitary individual, enters with an air of disdain and superiority, as the forerunner of an entirely different kind of culture, art, and morality, into a world whose merest fringe we would count it our greatest good fortune to grasp in reverence.

This is the immense misgiving that seizes us whenever we confront Socrates, urging us again and again to discover the meaning and intention of this most questionable figure of antiquity. Who is this who dares, as a single individual, to negate the Greek spirit, which in Homer, Pindar, and Aeschylus, in Phidias, in Pericles, in the Pythia and Dionysus, is assured of our astonished adoration as both the deepest abyss and the loftiest height? What demonic power dares to pour this magic potion into the dust? What demigod is this to whom the spirit chorus of humanity’s noblest must cry: “Woe! Woe! You have destroyed it, the beautiful world, with a mighty fist; it falls, it crumbles!”

A key to the nature of Socrates is offered by that marvelous phenomenon called the “daimonion of Socrates.” In particular situations, when his immense intellect began to waver, he found firm support in a divine voice that made itself heard at such moments. Whenever this voice comes, it always *warns* him *away*. In this wholly abnormal nature, instinctive wisdom appears only to *obstruct* conscious knowledge here and there. In all productive people, instinct is precisely the creative, affirmative force, while consciousness behaves critically and dissuasively; in Socrates, by contrast, instinct becomes the critic, consciousness the creator—a true monstrosity born of deficiency! What we perceive here is a monstrous absence of any mystical disposition, so that Socrates might be described as the specific *non-mystic*, in whom the logical nature has developed through a second conception as excessively as instinctive wisdom has in the mystic. On the other hand, the logical drive manifesting itself in Socrates was utterly incapable of turning against itself; in its unrestrained onward flow it displays an elemental force such as we encounter, to our shuddering astonishment, only in the very greatest instinctive powers. Anyone who has felt even a breath of the divine naivety and certainty of Socrates’ way of life in Plato’s writings also senses how the immense driving wheel of logical Socratism is moving, as it were, *behind* Socrates, and how we must look through Socrates as through a shadow to see it. That he himself had some inkling of this relation is expressed in the dignified gravity with which he asserted his divine calling everywhere, even before his judges. To refute him on this point was fundamentally as impossible as to approve his influence, which dissolved the instincts. Given this insoluble conflict, once he had been brought before the tribunal of the Greek state, only one form of condemnation was appropriate: exile. As something utterly enigmatic, unclassifiable, inexplicable, he might have been sent across the border without any posterity having the right to accuse the Athenians of a disgraceful deed. But that death rather than mere exile was pronounced upon him seems to have been brought about by Socrates himself, with complete lucidity and without the natural horror of death. He went to his death with the same calm with which, in Plato’s account, he leaves the symposium at the first light of dawn, the last of the drinkers, to begin a new day, while behind him his

drowsy companions remain on the benches and the ground, dreaming of Socrates, the true lover. *The dying Socrates* became the new ideal, never before beheld, of noble Greek youth: above all, the quintessential Hellenic youth, Plato, cast himself before this image with all the fervent devotion of his rapturous soul.

Section 14



Let us now imagine Socrates' single great Cyclops eye turned upon tragedy, that eye in which the gracious madness of artistic inspiration never glowed—let us imagine how incapable that eye was of gazing with pleasure into the Dionysian abysses—what, after all, must it have seen in the “sublime and highly praised” art of tragedy, as Plato calls it? Something quite irrational, with causes that seemed to have no effects and effects that seemed to have no causes, the whole so colorful and manifold that it must repel a sober temperament, while providing dangerous tinder for excitable, sensitive souls. We know the only genre of poetry he understood: the *Aesopian fable*. And surely he understood it with that smiling condescension with which honest, good Gellert sings the praises of poetry in his fable of the bee and the hen:

“You see in me what use it serves:

To tell someone of little sense

The truth by means of an image.”

But to Socrates tragic art did not seem even to “tell the truth,” quite apart from its addressing someone “of little sense,” and thus not the philosopher: a twofold reason to keep away from it. Like Plato, he counted it among the flattering arts, which present only what is pleasant, not what is useful, and therefore demanded of his disciples abstinence and strict separation from such unphilosophical enticements—with such success that the young tragic poet Plato first of all burned his poems so that he could become Socrates' pupil. But

where unconquerable gifts fought against the Socratic maxims, the force of those maxims, combined with the weight of that tremendous character, was still great enough to drive poetry itself into new and hitherto unknown positions.

One example is Plato himself, just mentioned. In condemning tragedy and art in general, he certainly did not lag behind his master's naive cynicism; yet sheer artistic necessity compelled him to create an art form inwardly akin to the very existing forms he had rejected. Above all, the chief reproach Plato had to make against the older art—that it was the imitation of an illusory image and therefore belonged to a sphere still lower than the empirical world—must not be leveled at the new artwork. And so we see Plato striving to go beyond reality and represent the Idea underlying that pseudo-reality. Yet by this detour Plato the thinker had arrived at the very place where he had always been at home as a poet, and from which Sophocles and all the older art solemnly protested against that reproach. If tragedy had absorbed all earlier genres of art, the same may in turn be said, in an eccentric sense, of the Platonic dialogue: produced by mixing every existing style and form, it hovers midway between narrative, lyric, and drama, between prose and poetry, and thereby breaks through the older strict law of a unified linguistic form. The *Cynic* writers went still further along this path: with the utmost motley of styles, swaying back and forth between prose and metrical forms, they also achieved the literary image of the “raving Socrates” whom they habitually embodied in life. The Platonic dialogue was, as it were, the boat in which the shipwrecked older poetry saved itself along with all its children. Crowded into a narrow space and fearfully subject to the one helmsman, Socrates, they now sailed into a new world that could never tire of looking at the fantastic spectacle of this procession. Plato truly provided all posterity with the model of a new art form, the model of the *novel*: it may be described as the Aesopian fable raised to an infinite power, in which poetry stands in much the same subordinate relation to dialectical philosophy as that same philosophy stood to theology for many centuries—as its handmaid. This was the new position into which Plato forced poetry under the pressure of the demonic Socrates.

Here *philosophical thought* overgrows art and forces it to cling tightly to the trunk of dialectic. The *Apollonian* tendency has enclosed itself in the chrysalis of logical schematism, just as we found something corresponding to this in Euripides, and in addition a translation of the *Dionysian* into naturalistic emotion. Socrates, the dialectical hero of the Platonic drama, recalls the kindred nature of the Euripidean hero, who must defend his actions with argument and counterargument, and thereby so often risks forfeiting our tragic pity. For who could fail to recognize the *optimistic* element in the nature of dialectic, which celebrates its triumph in every inference and can breathe only in cool clarity and consciousness? Once this optimistic element has penetrated tragedy, it must gradually overgrow its Dionysian regions and necessarily drive it to self-destruction—ending in the death leap into bourgeois drama. We need only consider the consequences of the Socratic propositions: “Virtue is knowledge; one sins only out of ignorance; the virtuous person is the happy person.” These three basic forms of optimism contain the death of tragedy. For now the virtuous hero must be a dialectician; now there must be a necessary, visible bond between virtue and knowledge, faith and morality; now Aeschylus’ transcendental resolution of justice has been debased into the shallow, impudent principle of “poetic justice,” with its customary god from the machine.

Against this new Socratic-optimistic stage world, how does the *chorus* now appear, and with it the entire musical-Dionysian foundation of tragedy? As something incidental, a reminder of tragedy’s origin that might well be dispensed with, whereas we have understood that the chorus can be grasped only as the *cause* of tragedy and of the tragic in general. Even in Sophocles this embarrassment over the chorus becomes apparent—an important sign that the Dionysian ground of tragedy is already beginning to crumble in his work. He no longer dares entrust the principal share of the effect to the chorus, but so restricts its sphere that it now appears almost on the same level as the actors, as though it had been lifted out of the orchestra and onto the stage. This, of course, utterly destroys its nature, even if Aristotle endorses precisely this conception of the chorus. This displacement of the chorus, which Sophocles recommended at any rate through his practice and, according to tradition, even in

a written treatise, is the first step toward its *annihilation*, whose successive phases follow one another with terrifying speed in Euripides, Agathon, and the newer comedy. With the scourge of its syllogisms, optimistic dialectic drives *music* out of tragedy: that is, it destroys the essence of tragedy, which can be interpreted only as a manifestation and embodiment in images of Dionysian states, as a visible symbolization of music, as the dream world of a Dionysian intoxication.

If we must therefore assume an anti-Dionysian tendency at work even before Socrates, one that merely gains an expression of unprecedented grandeur in him, we must not shrink from asking what a phenomenon such as Socrates points toward. For in the face of the Platonic dialogues we are unable to understand him as a merely dissolving, negative power. And however certain it is that the most immediate effect of the Socratic drive tended toward the disintegration of Dionysian tragedy, a profound experience in Socrates' own life compels us to ask whether Socratism and art *necessarily* stand only at opposite poles, and whether the birth of an "artistic Socrates" is really something inherently contradictory.

For this despotic logician did occasionally feel, in relation to art, a gap, an emptiness, a half-reproach, a duty perhaps left unfulfilled. As he tells his friends in prison, the same dream apparition often came to him, always saying the same thing: "Socrates, practice music!" Until his last days he reassures himself with the belief that his philosophizing is the highest art of the Muses, and cannot quite believe that a divinity would be reminding him of that "common, popular music." At last, in prison, to relieve his conscience entirely, he agrees to practice even the music he holds in such low esteem. In this spirit he composes a prelude to Apollo and puts some Aesopian fables into verse. What drove him to these exercises resembled the daimonion's warning voice: it was his Apollonian insight that, like a barbarian king, he did not understand a noble image of a god and was in danger of offending a divinity—through his failure to understand. Those words of the Socratic dream apparition are the sole sign of a misgiving about the limits of the logical nature. Perhaps—so he must have

asked himself—what is unintelligible to me is not, for that reason, unintelligent? Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is banished? Perhaps art is even a necessary correlative and supplement to science?

Section 15



In the spirit of these last questions, so full of presentiment, we must now say how the influence of Socrates has spread over posterity down to this very moment, indeed into all the future, like a shadow that grows ever longer in the evening sun; how it compels the creation of *art* anew, again and again—art, that is, in the already metaphysical, broadest and deepest sense—and, through its own infinity, guarantees the infinity of art as well.

Before this could be recognized, before the innermost dependence of all art on the Greeks—the Greeks from Homer to Socrates—had been convincingly demonstrated, we were bound to fare with these Greeks as the Athenians did with Socrates. Almost every age and stage of culture has at some point sought, in profound discontent, to free itself from the Greeks, because in their presence everything it had achieved for itself, everything seemingly wholly original and quite sincerely admired, suddenly seemed to lose color and life and shrink into a failed copy, even a caricature. And so heartfelt fury keeps breaking out afresh against that presumptuous little people who dared to brand everything not native to themselves as “barbaric” for all time. Who are they, we ask ourselves, who, although they have only an ephemeral historical splendor to show, only institutions of ludicrously narrow scope, only a dubious moral excellence, and are even marked by ugly vices, nonetheless claim the dignity and special standing among peoples that belong to genius amid the masses? Unfortunately, we have not been lucky enough to find the cup of hemlock that could simply dis-

pose of such a being: all the poison generated by envy, slander, and fury was insufficient to annihilate that self-sufficient magnificence. And so we feel shame and fear before the Greeks—unless someone prizes truth above all else and therefore dares admit this truth as well: that the Greeks, as charioteers, hold our culture and every culture in their hands, but that almost always the chariots and horses are made of too inferior a substance, unworthy of the glory of their drivers, who then think it a joke to send such a team plunging into the abyss, while they themselves clear it with the leap of Achilles.

To establish the dignity of such leadership for Socrates too, it is enough to recognize in him the type of a form of existence unheard of before him: the type of the *theoretical human being*, whose meaning and aim it is our next task to understand. Like the artist, the theoretical person finds infinite satisfaction in what exists and, like the artist, is protected by that satisfaction against the practical ethics of pessimism and its Lynceus eyes, which shine only in the dark. For while the artist, whenever truth is unveiled, clings with rapturous gaze only to what remains a veil even now, after the unveiling, the theoretical person takes pleasure and satisfaction in the discarded veil, finding the highest object of delight in a process of unveiling that always succeeds happily through one's own power. There would be no science if it cared for that *one* naked goddess and nothing else. For then its disciples would have to feel like people who wanted to dig a hole straight through the earth: each of them realizes that even with the greatest lifelong exertion he can dig through only a tiny stretch of that immense depth, which before his eyes is filled in again by his neighbor's work, so that a third seems well advised to choose a new spot on his own for his attempts at boring. If someone now proves convincingly that this direct route cannot reach the goal at the antipodes, who would still want to keep working in the old depths, unless in the meantime he found satisfaction in discovering precious stones or laws of nature? That is why Lessing, the most honest theoretical person, dared to declare that he cared more for the search for truth than for truth itself: with this, the fundamental secret of science was laid bare, to the astonishment, indeed the annoyance, of its practitioners. Yet alongside this isolated insight, as an excess of honesty if not of high spirits, stands a profound

delusional idea, which first came into the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought, following the guiding thread of causality, reaches into the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it. This sublime metaphysical delusion is given to science as an instinct and leads it again and again to its limits, where it must turn into *art: the real object toward which this mechanism is directed*.

If we now look at Socrates by the torchlight of this thought, he appears to us as the first who, guided by that instinct of science, could not only live but—what is far more—also die. Thus the image of the *dying Socrates*, the human being freed from fear of death by knowledge and reasons, is the heraldic shield above the entrance gate of science, reminding everyone of its vocation: to make existence appear intelligible and thereby justified. For this purpose, of course, when reasons fail, *myth* too must ultimately serve—the very thing I have just described as a necessary consequence, indeed as the aim, of science.

Anyone who vividly imagines how, after Socrates, the initiator into the mysteries of science, one philosophical school succeeds another like wave upon wave; how an undreamed-of universality of the thirst for knowledge, across the broadest reaches of the cultivated world and as the true task of everyone with superior gifts, carried science onto the high seas, from which it has never since been wholly driven back; how only through this universality was a common web of thought stretched over the entire globe, indeed with vistas onto the lawful order of a whole solar system—anyone who brings all this before his mind, together with the astonishingly lofty pyramid of knowledge in the present, cannot help seeing in Socrates the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history. For if we imagined this entire incalculable sum of energy expended on that world tendency being used *not* in the service of knowledge but for the practical—that is, egoistic—aims of individuals and peoples, then general wars of annihilation and continual migrations of peoples would probably have so weakened the instinctive joy in living that, with suicide a habit, an individual might feel a final remnant of duty when, like an inhabitant of the Fiji Islands, he strangled his parents as their son, or his friend as a friend. This would be a practical pessimism that could even produce a horrifying ethics of genocide out

of pity—a pessimism that, incidentally, exists and has existed everywhere in the world where art in some form, especially as religion and science, has not appeared as a remedy and defense against that pestilential breath.

In the face of this practical pessimism, Socrates is the archetype of the theoretical optimist, who, through the faith already described in the fathomability of the nature of things, credits knowledge and insight with the power of a universal medicine and sees error as evil in itself. To penetrate those depths and distinguish true knowledge from semblance and error seemed to the Socratic person the noblest, indeed the only truly human vocation, just as, from Socrates onward, that mechanism of concepts, judgments, and inferences was valued above all other faculties as nature's highest activity and most admirable gift. Even the most sublime moral deeds, the impulses of pity, self-sacrifice, and heroism, and that hard-won sea-calm of the soul which the Apollonian Greek called *sophrosyne*, were derived by Socrates and his like-minded successors down to the present from the dialectic of knowledge, and accordingly declared teachable. Anyone who has experienced the pleasure of a Socratic insight and feels how, in ever-widening circles, it seeks to embrace the entire world of appearances will from then on feel no more powerful spur toward existence than the desire to complete that conquest and weave the net so tightly that nothing can pass through it. To someone disposed in this way, the Platonic Socrates then appears as the teacher of an entirely new form of "Greek cheerfulness" and bliss in existence, which seeks to discharge itself in action and will chiefly find that discharge in maieutic and educative influence on noble youths, with the aim of finally begetting genius.

But now science, spurred by its powerful delusion, hastens irresistibly toward its limits, where the optimism hidden in the essence of logic founders. For the circumference of the circle of science has infinitely many points, and while it is still impossible to see how that circle could ever be completely measured out, the noble and gifted person inevitably encounters, even before the midpoint of life, such boundary points on the circumference, where he stares into what cannot be illuminated. When, to his horror, he sees here how logic

coils around itself at these limits and finally bites its own tail, a new form of knowledge breaks through, *tragic knowledge*, which needs art as protection and remedy merely to be endured.

If, with eyes strengthened and refreshed by the Greeks, we look upon the highest spheres of the world that washes around us, we perceive the insatiable thirst for optimistic knowledge, exemplified in Socrates, transformed into tragic resignation and a need for art. On its lower levels, however, that same thirst must express itself in hostility to art, and inwardly abhor Dionysian-tragic art above all, as was shown, for example, in the account of Socratism's battle against Aeschylean tragedy.

Here, then, with stirred hearts, we knock at the gates of the present and future: will that "transformation" lead to ever-new configurations of genius, and precisely of the *music-practicing Socrates*? Will the net of art spread over existence, even under the name of religion or science, be woven ever more firmly and delicately, or is it destined to be torn to shreds by the restlessly barbaric activity and turmoil that now calls itself "the present"?—Anxious but not without consolation, we stand aside for a little while as contemplative observers permitted to witness those tremendous struggles and transitions. Ah! The spell of these struggles is that whoever beholds them must also fight them!

Section 16



Through this historical example, developed in detail, we have tried to make clear that tragedy perishes with the fading of the spirit of music just as surely as it can be born from that spirit alone. To temper the strangeness of this claim and, on the other hand, to reveal the origin of this insight of ours, we must now confront the analogous phenomena of the present with an unclouded gaze. We must enter the midst of those struggles which, as I have just said, are being fought in the highest spheres of our present world between the insatiable desire for optimistic knowledge and the tragic need for art. Here I will disregard all the other hostile drives that work against art, and against tragedy in particular, in every age, and that are spreading through the present with such confidence of victory that, among the theatrical arts, for example, farce and ballet alone put forth their blossoms in a somewhat luxuriant growth—blossoms whose scent may not please everyone. I will speak only of the *most illustrious opposition* to the tragic view of the world, by which I mean science, optimistic in its deepest essence, with its ancestor Socrates at its head. Soon, too, the powers will be named that seem to me to guarantee *a rebirth of tragedy*—and what other blessed hopes for the German spirit!

Before we plunge into the midst of those struggles, let us clothe ourselves in the armor of the insights we have won so far. In contrast to all those intent on deriving the arts from a single principle as the necessary source of life for every artwork, I keep my gaze fixed on those two artistic divinities of the Greeks,

Apollo and Dionysus, and recognize in them the living, visible representatives of *two* worlds of art, different in their deepest essence and their highest aims. Apollo stands before me as the transfiguring genius of the principle of individuation, through whom alone redemption in semblance can truly be attained, while at the mystical, jubilant cry of Dionysus the spell of individuation is shattered and the way lies open to the Mothers of being, to the innermost core of things. This tremendous opposition, which gapes open between the plastic arts as the Apollonian art and music as the Dionysian art, became apparent to only one of the great thinkers with such clarity that, even without the guidance of this Hellenic symbolism of the gods, he recognized in music a character and origin different from those of all the other arts: it is not, like all of them, an image of appearance, but an immediate image of the will itself, and thus represents *the metaphysical in relation to everything physical in the world*, the thing in itself in relation to all appearance. (Schopenhauer, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, p. 310). Richard Wagner has set his seal on this most important insight in all aesthetics—with which aesthetics, taken in a more serious sense, first begins—confirming its eternal truth when he establishes in “Beethoven” that music must be judged by aesthetic principles entirely different from those of all the visual arts, and not by the category of beauty at all, even though a mistaken aesthetics, guided by a misguided and degenerate art, had grown accustomed, starting from the concept of beauty valid in the world of visual form, to demand an effect from music similar to that of works of visual art: namely, the arousal of *pleasure in beautiful forms*. After recognizing that tremendous opposition, I felt a powerful necessity to approach the essence of Greek tragedy, and with it the deepest revelation of Hellenic genius. For only now did I believe I possessed the magic to go beyond the phraseology of our customary aesthetics and bring the primal problem of tragedy bodily before my soul. This granted me so strangely distinctive a glimpse into the Hellenic world that it could only seem to me as though our classical-Hellenic scholarship, for all its proud bearing, had so far in the main known only how to feast on shadow plays and externals.

Perhaps we may touch on that primal problem with this question: what aesthetic effect arises when those inherently separate artistic powers, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, become active side by side? Or, more briefly: how does music relate to image and concept?—Schopenhauer, whom Richard Wagner praises for an unsurpassable clarity and transparency of exposition on precisely this point, discusses the matter most fully in the following passage, which I will reproduce here in its entirety. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, p. 309: “In accordance with all this, we can regard the world of appearances, or nature, and music as two different expressions of the same thing, which is therefore itself the sole mediator of the analogy between them and must be known if that analogy is to be understood. Accordingly, when regarded as an expression of the world, music is a language universal to the highest degree, whose relation even to the universality of concepts is roughly that of concepts to individual things. Its universality, however, is by no means the empty universality of abstraction, but of an entirely different kind, joined to clear definiteness throughout. In this it resembles geometrical figures and numbers, which, as the universal forms of all possible objects of experience and applicable to all of them prior to experience, are nevertheless not abstract but directly apprehensible and thoroughly determinate. All possible strivings, excitations, and expressions of the will, all those processes within the human being that reason casts into the broad negative concept of feeling, can be expressed through the infinitely many possible melodies, but always in the universality of mere form, without the material, always only in terms of their in-itself, not their appearance—as it were their innermost soul, without a body. This intimate relation of music to the true essence of all things also explains why, when suitable music sounds during any scene, action, event, or setting, it seems to disclose its most secret meaning to us and to serve as its truest and clearest commentary; likewise, why someone who gives himself wholly to the impression of a symphony feels as though he were seeing all possible events of life and the world pass before him. Yet on reflection he can point to no resemblance between that play of sounds and the things that hovered before his mind. For music, as I have said, differs from all other arts in that it is not an image of appearance, or more

precisely of the adequate objecthood of the will, but an immediate image of the will itself, and thus represents the metaphysical in relation to everything physical in the world, the thing in itself in relation to all appearance. Accordingly, the world could just as well be called embodied music as embodied will. This, then, explains why music immediately makes every painting, indeed every scene of actual life and the world, stand out with heightened significance—all the more so, of course, the closer the analogy between its melody and the inner spirit of the given appearance. On this rests the possibility of setting a poem to music as a song, or a visual representation as a pantomime, or both as an opera. Such individual images of human life, set to the universal language of music, are never connected or in correspondence with it through any thoroughgoing necessity; rather, they stand to it only as an arbitrarily chosen example stands to a universal concept. They present in the definiteness of reality what music expresses in the universality of mere form. For melodies, like universal concepts, are in a certain sense an abstraction from reality. Reality, that is, the world of individual things, supplies what is perceptible, particular, and individual—the individual case—both for the universality of concepts and for that of melodies. Yet these two universalities are in a certain respect opposed: concepts contain only the forms first abstracted from perception, as it were the outer husk stripped from things, and are thus abstractions in the strictest sense; music, by contrast, gives the innermost core that precedes all formation, or the heart of things. This relation could be expressed quite well in the language of the Scholastics by saying: concepts are universals after the thing, music gives universals before the thing, and reality gives universals in the thing. But the very possibility of a relation between a composition and a visual representation rests, as I have said, on their being merely quite different expressions of the same inner essence of the world. When such a relation is actually present in a particular case, when the composer has known how to express in the universal language of music the stirrings of the will that constitute the core of an event, then the melody of the song, the music of the opera, is expressive. But the analogy the composer discovers between the two must have arisen from an immediate knowledge of the essence of the world, without his reason being conscious of it;

it must not be an imitation mediated by concepts and made with conscious intention. Otherwise the music does not express the inner essence, the will itself, but merely imitates its appearance inadequately, as all music that is properly imitative does.”—

Thus, following Schopenhauer’s teaching, we understand music as the immediate language of the will and feel our imagination stirred to give form to that invisible yet so vividly moving spirit world that speaks to us, and to embody it for ourselves in an analogous example. On the other hand, image and concept acquire a heightened significance under the influence of music that truly corresponds to them. Dionysian art therefore ordinarily exerts two effects on the Apollonian artistic faculty: music prompts a *vision in likenesses* of Dionysian universality; music then makes the likeness-image stand out *with the highest significance*. From these facts, intelligible in themselves and accessible to any deeper observation, I infer music’s capacity to give birth to *myth*, that is, the most significant example, and specifically to *tragic* myth: the myth that speaks in likenesses of Dionysian knowledge. In the phenomenon of the lyric poet I have shown how music struggles within him to make its essence known in Apollonian images. If we now imagine that music at its highest intensification must also seek the highest embodiment in images, we must consider it possible that it can find the symbolic expression of its own Dionysian wisdom. And where else should we seek this expression, if not in tragedy and in the very concept of *the tragic*?

The tragic cannot honestly be derived at all from the essence of art as commonly understood through the sole category of semblance and beauty; only through the spirit of music do we understand a joy in the annihilation of the individual. For individual examples of such annihilation merely make clear to us the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art, which expresses the will in its omnipotence, as it were behind the principle of individuation, eternal life beyond all appearance and despite all annihilation. Metaphysical joy in the tragic is a translation of instinctively unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of images: the hero, the highest appearance of the will, is negated to our delight because he is, after all, only appearance, and his annihilation does

not touch the eternal life of the will. "We believe in eternal life," cries tragedy, while music is the immediate idea of this life. The sculptor's art has an entirely different aim: here Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual through the radiant glorification of the *eternity of appearance*; here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life, and in a certain sense pain is lied away from the features of nature. In Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism, that same nature addresses us in its true, undisguised voice: "Be as I am! Beneath the ceaseless change of appearances, the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally compelling into existence, eternally finding satisfaction in this change of appearances!"

Section 17



Dionysian art, too, seeks to convince us of the eternal joy of existence; only we are to seek this joy not in appearances but behind them. We are to recognize that everything that comes into being must be prepared for a painful downfall; we are compelled to look into the terrors of individual existence—and yet are not to freeze in horror: a metaphysical consolation tears us momentarily out of the machinery of changing forms. For brief moments we really are the primordial being itself and feel its unbridled thirst for existence and joy in existence. The struggle, the torment, the annihilation of appearances now seem necessary, as it were, given the excess of countless forms of existence pressing and jostling their way into life, given the exuberant fertility of the world-will. We are pierced by the raging sting of these torments at the very moment when we have, as it were, become one with the immeasurable primordial joy in existence, and when in Dionysian rapture we divine the indestructibility and eternity of this joy. Despite fear and pity, we are the happily living—not as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose joy in procreation we have merged.

The history of the origin of Greek tragedy now tells us with luminous certainty how the Greeks' tragic artwork was truly born from the spirit of music. Through this thought we believe we have, for the first time, done justice to the original and so astonishing meaning of the chorus. At the same time, however, we must admit that the significance of tragic myth proposed above never became transparent in conceptual clarity to the Greek poets, let alone the Greek

philosophers. Their heroes speak, in a sense, more superficially than they act; myth by no means finds its adequate objectification in the spoken word. The structure of the scenes and the visible images reveal a deeper wisdom than the poet himself can grasp in words and concepts. The same can also be observed in Shakespeare, whose Hamlet, for example, in a similar sense speaks more superficially than he acts, so that the lesson of Hamlet mentioned earlier must be drawn not from the words but from a deepened contemplation and survey of the whole. As for Greek tragedy, which admittedly comes before us only as spoken drama, I have even suggested that this incongruity between myth and word could easily tempt us to consider it shallower and less significant than it is, and accordingly to assume that its effect was more superficial than, according to ancient testimony, it must have been. For how easily we forget that what the poet of words had failed to do—attain the highest spiritualization and ideality of myth—he could accomplish at any moment as a creative musician! We, of course, must reconstruct the overwhelming power of the musical effect almost by scholarly means in order to receive something of that incomparable consolation which must belong to true tragedy. Yet even this musical predominance could have been felt by us as such only if we were Greeks, whereas in the whole development of Greek music—set against the infinitely richer music we know and are familiar with—we believe we hear only the youthful song of musical genius, struck up in a shy sense of its own strength. The Greeks are, as the Egyptian priests say, the eternal children, and in tragic art too they are only children who do not know what sublime toy has come into being under their hands and—is being shattered.

That struggle of the spirit of music toward revelation in image and myth, intensifying from the beginnings of lyric poetry to Attic tragedy, suddenly breaks off just after achieving its luxuriant flowering, and vanishes, as it were, from the surface of Hellenic art. Meanwhile the Dionysian view of the world born of that struggle lives on in the mysteries and, through the most wondrous metamorphoses and degenerations, never ceases to attract more serious natures. Might it not one day rise again from its mystical depths as art?

Here we are concerned with the question whether the power against whose resistance tragedy shattered is strong enough for all time to prevent the artistic reawakening of tragedy and the tragic view of the world. If ancient tragedy was driven from its course by the dialectical drive toward knowledge and the optimism of science, we would have to infer from this fact an eternal struggle between *the theoretical* and *the tragic view of the world*. Only after the spirit of science has been led to its limits, and its claim to universal validity destroyed by the demonstration of those limits, might we hope for a rebirth of tragedy. For this form of culture we would have to establish the symbol of *the music-practicing Socrates*, in the sense discussed earlier. In this contrast, by the spirit of science I mean that faith, first brought to light in the person of Socrates, in the fathomability of nature and the universal healing power of knowledge.

Anyone who recalls the immediate consequences of this restlessly advancing spirit of science will at once bring to mind how it annihilated *myth*, and how this annihilation drove poetry from its natural, ideal soil, leaving it homeless. If we have rightly credited music with the power to give birth to myth anew from within itself, then we must also seek the spirit of science along the path where it confronts this myth-creating power of music as an enemy. This happens in the development of the *newer Attic dithyramb*, whose music no longer expressed the inner essence, the will itself, but merely reproduced appearance inadequately, in an imitation mediated by concepts. Truly musical natures turned away from this inwardly degenerate music with the same revulsion they felt toward Socrates' art-murdering tendency. Aristophanes' sure-seizing instinct certainly grasped the truth when it embraced Socrates himself, Euripides' tragedy, and the music of the newer dithyrambic poets in the same feeling of hatred, scenting the marks of a degenerate culture in all three phenomena. Through that newer dithyramb, music was sacrilegiously made into an imitative portrait of appearance—of a battle, for example, or a storm at sea—and thereby wholly robbed of its myth-creating power. For if it seeks to arouse our delight only by compelling us to look for external analogies between an event in life or nature and certain rhythmic figures and characteristic sounds in music, if our understanding is to find satisfaction in recognizing these analogies, then we are

dragged down into a mood in which receiving the mythical is impossible. For myth seeks to be felt in a vivid vision as a single example of a universality and truth gazing into infinity. Truly Dionysian music confronts us as just such a universal mirror of the world-will: the visible event refracted in this mirror immediately expands for our feeling into the image of an eternal truth. Conversely, the tone painting of the newer dithyramb immediately strips such a visible event of every mythical quality. Music has now become a meager image of appearance, and is therefore infinitely poorer than appearance itself; through this poverty it even diminishes appearance itself in our feeling, so that, for example, a battle musically imitated in this way is exhausted in the din of marching, signal calls, and the like, and our imagination is held fast precisely at these superficialities. Tone painting is thus in every respect the opposite of the myth-creating power of true music: through it appearance becomes poorer than it is, whereas through Dionysian music the individual appearance is enriched and expanded into an image of the world. It was a mighty victory for the non-Dionysian spirit when, in the development of the newer dithyramb, it estranged music from itself and degraded it into the slave of appearance. Euripides, who in a higher sense must be called an utterly unmusical nature, is for precisely this reason a passionate adherent of the newer dithyrambic music, and employs all its showpieces and mannerisms with a robber's generosity.

We see the power of this non-Dionysian spirit, directed against myth, at work from another side when we turn our gaze to the growing predominance of *character portrayal* and psychological refinement in tragedy from Sophocles onward. Character is no longer to be allowed to expand into an eternal type; on the contrary, through artful secondary traits and shadings, through the most delicate definition of every line, it is to seem so individual that the spectator no longer feels myth at all, but rather the powerful fidelity to nature and the artist's imitative power. Here too we perceive the victory of appearance over the universal and the pleasure in the individual specimen, as though it were an anatomical preparation; we are already breathing the air of a theoretical world that prizes scientific knowledge above the artistic reflection of a universal law. The movement along the line of characterization advances swiftly: while

Sophocles still paints whole characters and harnesses myth to their refined development, Euripides already paints only great individual character traits that know how to express themselves in violent passions. In the newer Attic comedy there are only masks with *one* expression: frivolous old men, cheated pimps, cunning slaves, in tireless repetition. Where is the myth-forming spirit of music now? What remains of music is either music of excitation or music of recollection—that is, either a stimulant for dulled, worn-out nerves or tone painting. For the former, the accompanying text scarcely matters anymore: even in Euripides things become quite slovenly once his heroes or choruses begin to sing. What can they have come to in his brazen successors?

But the new non-Dionysian spirit reveals itself most clearly of all in the *endings* of the newer dramas. In ancient tragedy, the metaphysical consolation without which pleasure in tragedy cannot be explained at all could be felt at the end; perhaps the reconciling sound from another world rings out most purely in Oedipus at Colonus. Now that the genius of music has fled from tragedy, tragedy is, strictly speaking, dead: for where could that metaphysical consolation now be drawn from? So an earthly resolution of tragic dissonance was sought. After being sufficiently tortured by fate, the hero reaped his well-earned reward in a splendid marriage, in divine tributes of honor. The hero had become a gladiator who, after being thoroughly flayed and covered in wounds, was occasionally granted his freedom. The god from the machine has taken the place of metaphysical consolation. I do not mean to say that the tragic view of the world was everywhere and entirely destroyed by the advancing spirit of the non-Dionysian: we know only that it had to flee from art, as it were into the underworld, degenerating into a secret cult. But across the broadest expanse of the surface of the Hellenic spirit raged the consuming breath of that spirit which manifests itself in the form of “Greek cheerfulness” already discussed as a senile, unproductive joy in existence. This cheerfulness is the opposite of the magnificent “naivety” of the older Greeks, which, according to the characterization given, must be understood as the blossom of Apollonian culture growing from a dark abyss, as the victory the Hellenic will wins over suffering and the wisdom of suffering through its mirroring of beauty. The noblest expression of

that other form of “Greek cheerfulness,” the Alexandrian form, is the cheerfulness of *the theoretical human being*. It displays the same characteristic features I have just derived from the spirit of the non-Dionysian: it fights Dionysian wisdom and art; it strives to dissolve myth; it replaces metaphysical consolation with an earthly consonance, indeed with a god from the machine of its own, namely the god of machines and crucibles—that is, the forces of the spirits of nature known and employed in the service of a higher egoism. It believes in a correction of the world through knowledge, in a life guided by science, and is actually capable of confining the individual within the very narrowest circle of solvable tasks, within which he cheerfully says to life: “I want you: you are worth knowing.”

Section 18



It is an eternal phenomenon: the greedy will always find a means, through an illusion spread over things, to hold its creatures fast in life and compel them to go on living. One person is bound by the Socratic pleasure in knowledge and the delusion that through it the eternal wound of existence can be healed; another is ensnared by art's seductive veil of beauty, fluttering before his eyes; another, in turn, by the metaphysical consolation that beneath the whirl of appearances eternal life flows on indestructibly—not to speak of the more commonplace and almost still more powerful illusions the will keeps ready at every moment. Those three stages of illusion are, in general, only for more nobly gifted natures, who feel the burden and weight of existence with a deeper displeasure and must be deceived out of that displeasure by choice stimulants. Everything we call culture consists of these stimulants: according to the proportions of their mixture, we have a predominantly *Socratic*, *artistic*, or *tragic* culture. Or, if historical examples may be permitted: there is either an Alexandrian, a Hellenic, or a Buddhist culture.

Our entire modern world is caught in the net of Alexandrian culture and recognizes as its ideal the *theoretical human being*, equipped with the highest powers of knowledge and working in the service of science, whose archetype and forefather is Socrates. All our educational methods originally have this ideal in view: every other existence must struggle laboriously upward alongside it, as a permitted rather than an intended existence. In an almost frightening sense,

for a long time the cultivated person was found here only in the form of the scholar; even our poetic arts had to develop from learned imitations, and in the principal effect of rhyme we still recognize the origin of our poetic form in artificial experiments with a language not native to us, a learned language in the strictest sense. How incomprehensible a genuine Greek would have to find *Faust*, the modern man of culture, in himself comprehensible—Faust, storming unsatisfied through all the faculties of learning, devoted to magic and the devil out of his drive for knowledge. We need only set him beside Socrates for comparison to recognize that modern humanity is beginning to divine the limits of that Socratic pleasure in knowledge and longs, from the vast, desolate sea of knowledge, for a shore. When Goethe once remarks to Eckermann, with reference to Napoleon, “Yes, my dear fellow, there is also a productivity of deeds,” he reminds us, with charming naivety, that the non-theoretical person is something incredible and astonishing to the modern person, so that it takes the wisdom of a Goethe once again to find even so strange a form of existence comprehensible, indeed pardonable.

And now we must not conceal from ourselves what lies hidden in the womb of this Socratic culture! Optimism that imagines itself without limits! Now we must not be horrified when the fruits of this optimism ripen, when society, leavened by such a culture down to its lowest strata, gradually begins to tremble with exuberant stirrings and desires; when faith in earthly happiness for everyone, faith in the possibility of such a universal culture of knowledge, gradually turns into the threatening demand for such an Alexandrian happiness on earth, into the invocation of a Euripidean god from the machine! We must take note: Alexandrian culture needs a slave class if it is to endure, but in its optimistic view of existence it denies the necessity of such a class, and therefore, once the effect of its fair words of seduction and reassurance about the “dignity of humanity” and the “dignity of labor” is spent, it gradually moves toward a horrifying annihilation. There is nothing more terrible than a barbaric slave class that has learned to regard its existence as an injustice and prepares to take revenge not only for itself but for all generations. In the face of such threatening storms, who dares appeal with confident courage to our pale and

weary religions, which have degenerated even in their foundations into scholars' religions, so that myth, the necessary precondition of every religion, is already paralyzed everywhere, and even in this sphere that optimistic spirit has come to power which we have just identified as the seed of our society's annihilation?

While the disaster slumbering in the womb of theoretical culture gradually begins to frighten the modern person, and he reaches anxiously into the treasury of his experiences for means to avert the danger without quite believing in those means himself; while he thus begins to divine his own consequences, great natures of universal breadth have known how, with incredible deliberation, to use the instruments of science itself to demonstrate the limits and conditioned character of knowledge in general, and thereby decisively to deny science's claim to universal validity and universal aims. In this demonstration, the delusional idea that presumes, guided by causality, to fathom the innermost essence of things was recognized as such for the first time. The tremendous courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer* won the hardest victory, the victory over the optimism hidden in the essence of logic, which in turn forms the foundation of our culture. Supported by eternal truths that it took without question, this optimism had believed that all the riddles of the world could be known and fathomed, and had treated space, time, and causality as wholly unconditioned laws of the most universal validity. Kant revealed how these actually served only to elevate mere appearance, the work of *Maya*, into the sole and highest reality, putting it in the place of the innermost and true essence of things and thereby making genuine knowledge of that essence impossible—that is, in Schopenhauer's phrase, lulling the dreamer into a still deeper sleep (W. a. W. u. V. I, p. 498). This insight has inaugurated a culture I dare to call tragic. Its most important feature is that wisdom replaces science as the highest goal: undeceived by the seductive distractions of the sciences, it turns an unwavering gaze upon the total image of the world and seeks, with loving sympathy, to embrace the eternal suffering within it as its own. Let us imagine a rising generation with this fearlessness of vision, this heroic impulse toward the tremendous; let us imagine the bold stride of these dragon slayers, the proud daring

with which they turn their backs on all the doctrines of weakness belonging to that optimism, in order to “live resolutely,” wholly and fully. Must not the tragic person of this culture, in educating himself to seriousness and terror, necessarily desire a new art, the art of metaphysical consolation, tragedy as the Helen who belongs to him, and cry out with Faust:

And should I not, with longing’s utmost force,
Draw into life that one and only form?

But now that Socratic culture has been shaken from two sides and can hold the scepter of its infallibility only in trembling hands—first from fear of its own consequences, which it is at last beginning to divine, and then because it is no longer convinced of the eternal validity of its foundation with its former naive confidence—it is a sad spectacle to see how the dance of its thought keeps flinging itself longingly upon new forms to embrace them, only suddenly to release them again with a shudder, as Mephistopheles releases the seductive Lamias. This is precisely the sign of that “rupture” everyone speaks of as the primal affliction of modern culture: the theoretical person recoils before his consequences and, unsatisfied, no longer dares entrust himself to the terrible, icy torrent of existence. Anxiously he runs up and down the bank. He no longer wants anything whole, whole also with all the natural cruelty of things. So far has the optimistic way of looking at things pampered him. Moreover, he feels how a culture built upon the principle of science must perish when it begins to become *illogical*, that is, to flee from its consequences. Our art reveals this universal distress: in vain do we lean in imitation on all the great productive periods and natures; in vain do we gather the whole of “world literature” around the modern person for his consolation and place him amid the artistic styles and artists of every age, so that, like Adam with the animals, he may give them names. He remains nonetheless the eternally hungry one, the “critic” without pleasure or power, the Alexandrian person, who is at bottom a librarian and proofreader and goes miserably blind from book dust and printing errors.

Section 19



The innermost substance of this Socratic culture cannot be characterized more sharply than by calling it *the culture of opera*. For in this sphere that culture has spoken with a naivety all its own about what it wills and knows—to our astonishment, when we set the genesis of opera and the facts of its development beside the eternal truths of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Let me recall first the emergence of the representational style and recitative. Is it credible that this wholly externalized operatic music, incapable of devotion, could have been received and cherished with rapturous favor, almost as the rebirth of all true music, by an age from which Palestrina's inexpressibly sublime and sacred music had only just arisen? And who, on the other hand, would hold only the distraction-seeking luxury of those Florentine circles and the vanity of their dramatic singers responsible for the delight in opera that spread so impetuously? That in the same age, indeed among the same people, beside the vaulted edifice of Palestrina's harmonies, on which the entire Christian Middle Ages had labored, this passion for a half-musical manner of speaking should awaken—I can explain this to myself only through an *extra-artistic tendency* at work in the very nature of recitative.

The singer accommodates the listener who wants to hear the words distinctly beneath the singing by speaking more than singing, and by intensifying the impassioned expression of the words in this half-song. Through this intensification of pathos, he makes the words easier to understand and overcomes

the remaining half of music. The real danger now threatening him is that he may at some point give music the upper hand at the wrong moment, which would immediately destroy the pathos of the speech and the clarity of the words. On the other hand, he always feels the drive toward musical release and a virtuoso display of his voice. Here the “poet” comes to his aid, knowing how to offer him enough opportunities for lyrical interjections, repetitions of words and maxims, and the like: at these points the singer can now rest in the purely musical element, without regard for the words. This alternation between emotionally insistent yet only half-sung speech and wholly sung interjection, inherent in the representational style—this rapidly shifting effort to affect now the listener’s concepts and ideas, now his musical depths—is something so completely unnatural, so inwardly at odds with the artistic drives of the Dionysian and the Apollonian alike, that we must infer an origin for recitative outside all artistic instincts. On this account, recitative must be defined as a mixture of epic and lyrical delivery: by no means an inwardly stable mixture, which could not be achieved with things so wholly disparate, but the most external, mosaic-like gluing together, something utterly without a model in nature or experience. *But this was not the opinion of those inventors of recitative:* rather, they themselves, and their age with them, believed that this representational style had solved the mystery of ancient music, which alone could explain the tremendous effect of an Orpheus, an Amphion, indeed of Greek tragedy itself. The new style was regarded as the reawakening of the most powerful music, that of ancient Greece. Indeed, given the general and thoroughly popular conception of the Homeric world *as the primordial world*, people could surrender to the dream that they had now descended once again into humanity’s paradisiacal beginnings, when music, too, must necessarily have possessed that unsurpassed purity, power, and innocence of which the poets could tell such moving tales in their pastoral plays. Here we look into the innermost becoming of this quintessentially modern art form, opera: a powerful need compels an art into existence, but a need of an unaesthetic kind—the longing for the idyll, the belief in an existence of the artistic and good human being in the primordial past. Recitative was regarded as the rediscovered language of that primordial human

being; opera as the recovered land of that idyllically or heroically good creature who at the same time follows a natural artistic drive in all his actions, who sings at least a little in everything he has to say, only to begin singing at full voice at the slightest stirring of feeling. For our present purposes it is immaterial that, with this newly created image of the paradisiacal artist, the humanists of the time were fighting the old ecclesiastical conception of the human being as inherently corrupt and lost. Opera must thus be understood as the opposing dogma of the good human being, which at the same time supplied a consolation against the pessimism to which precisely the serious-minded people of that age were most strongly impelled by the horrifying uncertainty of all circumstances. It is enough if we have recognized that the real enchantment, and thus the genesis, of this new art form lies in satisfying a wholly unaesthetic need: in the optimistic glorification of humanity as such, in conceiving the primordial human being as naturally good and artistic. This principle of opera has gradually turned into a threatening and terrifying *demand*, which, in the face of the socialist movements of the present, we can no longer fail to hear. The “good primordial human being” wants his rights: what paradisiacal prospects!

Alongside this I place another equally clear confirmation of my view that opera is built on the same principles as our Alexandrian culture. Opera is the offspring of the theoretical person, the critical layman, not the artist: one of the strangest facts in the history of all the arts. It was the demand of listeners unmusical in the strictest sense that the words must be understood above all else, so that a rebirth of the art of music could be expected only if some manner of singing were discovered in which the words of the text ruled over counterpoint as the master over the servant. For words, they said, were as much nobler than the accompanying harmonic system as the soul was nobler than the body. With the unmusical crudity of a layman inherent in these views, the union of music, image, and word was handled in the beginnings of opera. In the spirit of this aesthetics, the first experiments also took place in the aristocratic lay circles of Florence, through poets and singers patronized there. The person powerless to create art produces a kind of art for himself precisely because he is the unartistic person as such. Because he has no inkling of music’s Dionysian

depths, he transforms the enjoyment of music into an intellectual rhetoric of passion in words and tones in the representational style, and into sensuous delight in the arts of singing. Because he cannot behold a vision, he forces the stage machinist and the scenery painter into his service; because he does not know how to grasp the artist's true nature, he conjures before him the "artistic primordial human being" to his own taste—that is, the person who sings and speaks in verse when impassioned. He dreams himself into an age when passion is enough to produce songs and poetry, as though every emotion had been capable of creating something artistic. Opera presupposes a false belief about the artistic process, namely that idyllic belief that everyone who feels is really an artist. In the sense of this belief, opera is the expression of the lay mentality in art, dictating its laws with the cheerful optimism of the theoretical person.

If we wished to unite under one concept the two ideas just described as active in the birth of opera, we would have no choice but to speak of an *idyllic tendency in opera*, using only Schiller's terminology and explanation. Either, he says, nature and the ideal are an object of sorrow, when nature is presented as lost and the ideal as unattained; or both are an object of joy, when they are represented as real. The first gives elegy in the narrower sense, the second idyll in the broadest. Here we must immediately draw attention to the common feature of those two ideas in the genesis of opera: in them the ideal is not felt to be unattained, nor nature to be lost. According to this feeling, there was a primordial age of humanity when the human being lay against nature's heart and, in this naturalness, had at the same time attained the ideal of humanity in a paradisiacal goodness and artistry. We were all supposed to descend from this perfect primordial human being, indeed still to be his faithful likeness: we needed only to cast off a few things in order to recognize ourselves once again as this primordial human being, by voluntarily divesting ourselves of superfluous learning and overabundant culture. Through his operatic imitation of Greek tragedy, the cultivated person of the Renaissance allowed himself to be led back to such a harmony of nature and ideal, to an idyllic reality. He used this tragedy as Dante used Virgil, to be led to the gates of paradise; from there, however, he advanced further on his own, passing from an imitation of the highest Greek

art form to a “restoration of all things,” to a re-creation of humanity’s original world of art. What confident good nature in these audacious endeavors, in the very womb of theoretical culture!—It can be explained only by the consoling belief that the “human being as such” is the eternally virtuous operatic hero, the eternally piping or singing shepherd, who must always finally rediscover himself as such if at some time he has really lost himself for a while. It is solely the fruit of that optimism which rises here from the depths of the Socratic view of the world like a cloyingly seductive column of fragrance.

Thus the features of opera bear by no means that elegiac pain of an eternal loss, but rather the cheerfulness of eternal rediscovery, the easy pleasure in an idyllic reality that we can at least imagine as real at any moment. In doing so we may occasionally suspect that this supposed reality is nothing but a fantastically silly dalliance, at which anyone able to measure it against the terrible seriousness of true nature and compare it with the actual primal scenes of humanity’s beginnings would have to cry out in disgust: “Away with the phantom!” Yet we would be deceiving ourselves if we believed that such a trifling creature as opera could simply be banished like a ghost by a forceful shout. Whoever wants to annihilate opera must take up the struggle against that Alexandrian cheerfulness which speaks so naively in it about its favorite idea, and of which it is indeed the proper art form. But what is art itself to expect from the workings of an art form whose origins do not lie in the aesthetic sphere at all, which has instead stolen over into the artistic domain from a half-moral sphere and has managed only here and there to disguise this hybrid origin? On what juices does this parasitic operatic creature feed, if not those of true art? Must we not suppose that, under its idyllic seductions, under its Alexandrian flatteries, art’s highest and truly serious task—to redeem the eye from gazing into the horrors of night, and through the healing balm of semblance to rescue the subject from the convulsions of the will’s stirrings—will degenerate into an empty pursuit of distracting amusement? What becomes of the eternal truths of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in such a mixture of styles as I have demonstrated in the nature of the representational style? Where music is regarded as servant, the words of the text as master, music compared with the body, the words with the

soul? Where the highest goal will at best be directed toward a paraphrasing tone painting, as formerly in the new Attic dithyramb? Where music has been wholly estranged from its true dignity as a Dionysian mirror of the world, so that nothing remains for it but, as the slave of appearance, to imitate the formal character of appearance and arouse an external delight in the play of lines and proportions? To a rigorous examination, this fatal influence of opera on music simply coincides with the entire development of modern music. The optimism lurking in the genesis of opera and in the nature of the culture it represents has succeeded with alarming speed in stripping music of its Dionysian vocation in the world and stamping it with a playful, entertaining character absorbed in forms. This change can perhaps be compared only with the metamorphosis of the Aeschylean human being into the cheerful Alexandrian human being.

But if, in the example just indicated, we have rightly connected the fading of the Dionysian spirit with a most striking yet hitherto unexplained transformation and degeneration of the Greek human being—what hopes must awaken within us when the surest of auspices guarantee *the reverse process, the gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit* in our present world! It is not possible for the divine strength of Heracles to languish forever in voluptuous servitude to Omphale. From the Dionysian ground of the German spirit a power has arisen that has nothing in common with the primordial conditions of Socratic culture and can neither be explained nor excused in terms of them; rather, that culture feels it as something terrifyingly inexplicable, overwhelmingly hostile: *German music*, as we must understand it above all in its mighty solar course from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner. What, in the most favorable case, can the knowledge-hungry Socratism of our day do with this demon rising from inexhaustible depths? Neither the jagged patterns and arabesques of operatic melody nor the help of the fugue's arithmetical counting board and contrapuntal dialectic will yield the formula in whose thrice-mighty light that demon could be subdued and forced to speak. What a spectacle, when our aestheticians now swipe and snatch at the genius of music with the catching net of a "beauty" all their own, as it romps before them with incomprehensible life, in movements that will no more submit to judgment by eternal beauty than by

the sublime. We need only take a close, bodily look at these patrons of music as they cry so tirelessly, "Beauty! Beauty!" Do they look like nature's favorite children, nurtured and pampered in the lap of beauty, or are they not rather seeking a mendaciously concealing form for their own crudity, an aesthetic pretext for their own sober poverty of feeling? Here I am thinking, for example, of Otto Jahn. But let liars and hypocrites beware of German music: for amid our entire culture it alone is the pure, clear, and purifying spirit of fire, from which and toward which all things move in a double circular course, as in the teaching of the great Heraclitus of Ephesus. Everything we now call culture, cultivation, civilization must one day appear before the unerring judgment of Dionysus.

Let us recall, furthermore, how the spirit of *German philosophy*, flowing from the same sources, was enabled through Kant and Schopenhauer to annihilate the contented joy in existence of scientific Socratism by demonstrating its limits; how this demonstration inaugurated an infinitely deeper and more serious consideration of ethical questions and art, which we may simply call *Dionysian wisdom* grasped in concepts. Where does the mystery of this unity between German music and German philosophy point us, if not toward a new form of existence, whose substance we can learn to divine only through Hellenic analogies? For us, standing at the boundary between two different forms of existence, the Hellenic model retains this immeasurable value: in it, all those transitions and struggles are also stamped into a classically instructive form. Only, we experience by analogy the great principal epochs of the Hellenic spirit in, as it were, *reverse* order, and now seem, for example, to be stepping backward from the Alexandrian age into the period of tragedy. In this we feel as though the birth of a tragic age could mean for the German spirit only a return to itself, a blissful rediscovery of itself, after tremendous powers pressing in from outside had for a long time forced it, living on in a helpless barbarism of form, into bondage to their form. Now at last, after returning home to the primal source of its being, it may dare stride boldly and freely before all peoples, without the leading strings of a Romance civilization—if only it knows how to learn unswervingly from one people from whom even to be able to learn at all is already a high honor and a distinguishing rarity: the Greeks. And when have we

needed these supreme teachers more than now, as we experience *the rebirth of tragedy* and are in danger of neither knowing where it comes from nor being able to interpret for ourselves where it seeks to go?

Section 20



Let it be weighed for once, before the eyes of an incorruptible judge, in what age and in which men the German spirit has so far struggled most vigorously to learn from the Greeks; and if we confidently assume that this singular praise must be awarded to the noblest struggle for culture undertaken by Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann, we must certainly add that, since that age and the immediate effects of that struggle, the effort to reach culture and the Greeks along the same path has, incomprehensibly, grown weaker and weaker. To keep from despairing altogether of the German spirit, may we not conclude from this that, on some essential point, even those champions may have failed to penetrate the heart of the Hellenic nature and establish an enduring bond of love between German and Greek culture? Perhaps, then, an unconscious recognition of that failure aroused, even in more serious natures, the dispiriting doubt whether, coming after such predecessors, they could advance along this path of cultivation any farther than those men had, or indeed reach the goal at all. Thus, ever since that age, we have seen judgments of the Greeks' value for culture degenerate in the most disturbing way; expressions of pitying superiority can be heard in the most diverse camps of spirit and of spiritlessness; elsewhere, utterly ineffectual fine talk toys with "Greek harmony," "Greek beauty," and "Greek serenity." And precisely in those circles whose honorable task might be to draw tirelessly from the Greek riverbed for the good of German culture, among the teachers at our higher educational institutions, people have

learned better than anywhere else to settle their accounts with the Greeks early and comfortably—not infrequently to the point of skeptically abandoning the Hellenic ideal and completely reversing the true purpose of all classical studies. Anyone in those circles who has not entirely exhausted himself in the effort to be a reliable corrector of ancient texts or a natural historian peering at language through a microscope may also seek to make Greek antiquity his own “historically,” alongside other antiquities—but in any case by the method and with the superior airs of our present-day cultivated historiography. If, then, the actual power of our higher educational institutions to cultivate people has probably never been lower or feebler than it is today; if the “journalist,” the paper slave of the day, has triumphed over the teacher of higher learning in every aspect of culture, leaving the latter only the metamorphosis we have so often witnessed already, of now flitting about in his turn in the journalist’s idiom, with the “light elegance” of that sphere, as a cheerful, cultivated butterfly—in what painful bewilderment must those educated in this fashion by such an age stare at a phenomenon that could perhaps be grasped by analogy only from the deepest ground of the still-uncomprehended Hellenic genius: the reawakening of the Dionysian spirit and the rebirth of tragedy? There is no other period in art when so-called culture and art itself have faced one another with such estrangement and aversion as we see before our eyes today. We understand why so feeble a culture hates true art: it fears that art will destroy it. But might not an entire kind of civilization, the Socratic-Alexandrian, have run its course, once it could taper to so dainty and slender a point as our present culture? If even heroes such as Schiller and Goethe were not permitted to break open the enchanted gate leading into the Hellenic magic mountain; if, in their boldest struggles, they advanced no farther than that longing gaze which Goethe’s Iphigenia sends across the sea toward her homeland from barbarian Tauris—what hope would remain for the later followers of such heroes, unless the gate suddenly opened to them of its own accord, on an entirely different side, untouched by all the efforts of culture up to now—to the mystical sound of the reawakened music of tragedy?

Let no one try to diminish our faith in a rebirth of Hellenic antiquity still to come; for in that faith alone we find our hope for a renewal and purification of the German spirit through the fiery magic of music. What else could we name that, amid the desolation and exhaustion of present-day culture, might awaken any comforting expectation for the future? In vain we search for a single root branching vigorously, for a patch of fertile, healthy soil: everywhere dust, sand, rigidity, languishing. Someone left desolately alone could scarcely choose a better symbol than the knight with Death and the Devil as Dürer has drawn him for us: the armored knight with his hard, bronze-like gaze, who knows how to travel his terrifying road, undeterred by his dreadful companions and yet without hope, alone with his horse and dog. Our Schopenhauer was such a Dürer knight: he lacked all hope, but he wanted truth. There is no one like him.—

But how suddenly that wilderness of our exhausted culture, just painted in such gloomy colors, is transformed when Dionysian magic touches it! A storm wind seizes everything outworn, rotten, broken, stunted, wraps it in a whirling cloud of red dust, and carries it into the air like a vulture. Bewildered, our eyes search for what has vanished: for what they now see seems to have risen from a hidden depth into golden light, so full and green, so luxuriantly alive, so boundless in its longing. Tragedy sits amid this abundance of life, suffering, and delight, in sublime rapture, listening to a distant, sorrowful song—it tells of the Mothers of Being, whose names are Delusion, Will, Woe.—Yes, my friends, believe with me in Dionysian life and the rebirth of tragedy. The age of the Socratic human being is over: crown yourselves with ivy, take the thyrsus in your hands, and do not be surprised when tigers and panthers lie down caressingly at your knees. Only dare, now, to be tragic human beings: for you are to be redeemed. You are to escort the Dionysian procession from India to Greece! Arm yourselves for a hard struggle, but believe in the miracles of your god!

Section 21



Slipping back from these exhortations into the mood appropriate to contemplation, I repeat that only from the Greeks can we learn what such a miraculous, sudden awakening of tragedy means for the innermost ground of a people's life. It is the people of the tragic mysteries that fights the battles against the Persians; and in turn, the people that has waged those wars needs tragedy as a necessary healing draught. Who would still expect, precisely in this people, after it had been stirred to its depths for several generations by the most violent convulsions of the Dionysian demon, so steadily vigorous an outpouring of the simplest political feeling, the most natural instincts of attachment to home, the primal masculine delight in battle? Whenever Dionysian excitements spread significantly, one can always sense how the Dionysian release from the fetters of the individual makes itself felt first of all in a weakening of political instincts that intensifies to indifference, even hostility; just as surely, on the other hand, the state-founding Apollo is also the genius of the principle of individuation, and neither the state nor attachment to home can live without an affirmation of individual personality.

From orgiastic ecstasy only one path leads onward for a people: the path to Indian Buddhism, which, with its longing for nothingness, needs those rare ecstatic states that lift one above space, time, and the individual if it is to be bearable at all; just as those states in turn demand a philosophy that teaches one to overcome, through an idea, the indescribable distress of the intervening

states. With equal necessity, a people that starts from the unconditional authority of political drives is driven onto a course of utter worldliness, whose grandest but also most terrifying expression is the Roman empire.

Placed between India and Rome and pressed toward a seductive choice, the Greeks succeeded in inventing a third form in classical purity—not, admittedly, for their own prolonged use, but for immortality for that very reason. For the saying that the gods' favorites die young holds true in all things; but it is equally certain that they then live eternally with the gods. Let us not demand that what is noblest of all should have the lasting toughness of leather; the coarse durability characteristic, for example, of the Roman national drive is probably not among the necessary attributes of perfection. But if we ask what remedy enabled the Greeks in their great age, despite the extraordinary strength of their Dionysian and political drives, to avoid exhausting themselves either in ecstatic brooding or in a consuming pursuit of world power and world renown, and instead to achieve that magnificent blend found in a noble wine, at once kindling the spirit and disposing it to contemplation, we must remember the enormous power of *tragedy*, which stirs, purifies, and discharges the entire life of a people. We will only begin to divine its highest value when it confronts us, as it did the Greeks, as the sum of all preventive healing powers, as the mediator that holds sway between a people's strongest and inherently most fatal qualities.

Tragedy absorbs the highest orgiastic ecstasy of music, so that, among the Greeks as among ourselves, it positively brings music to fulfillment; but it then places beside it the tragic myth and the tragic hero, who, like a mighty Titan, takes the whole Dionysian world upon his back and lifts its burden from us. At the same time, through that same tragic myth, in the person of the tragic hero, tragedy knows how to deliver us from the greedy urge for this existence, and with an admonishing hand reminds us of another being and a higher delight, for which the struggling hero, with a sense of foreboding, prepares himself through his downfall, not his victories. Between the universal validity of its music and the listener receptive to Dionysian experience, tragedy places a sublime likeness, the myth, and awakens in that listener the semblance that music is merely the supreme means of representation for bringing the sculptural world

of myth to life. Trusting in this noble illusion, music may now move its limbs in dithyrambic dance and surrender without misgiving to an orgiastic feeling of freedom in which, as music in itself, without that illusion, it would not dare to revel. Myth shields us from music, while on the other hand it alone grants music its highest freedom. In return, as a countergift, music lends tragic myth a metaphysical significance so penetrating and convincing that word and image could never attain it without this unique assistance. Through music, in particular, the tragic spectator is seized by precisely that sure presentiment of a supreme delight to which the path leads through downfall and negation, so that he seems to hear the innermost abyss of things speaking audibly to him.

If in these last sentences I have perhaps managed to give this difficult conception only a provisional expression, immediately intelligible to few, then precisely here I must not cease urging my friends to make another attempt, and asking them to prepare themselves to grasp the general proposition through a single example from our shared experience. In this example I cannot appeal to those who use the images of events onstage, the words and emotions of the characters, to help them approach the experience of music; for none of them speaks music as a native language, and even with this help they get no farther than the antechambers of musical perception, never being allowed to touch its innermost sanctuaries; some of them, like Gervinus, do not even reach the antechambers by this route. Rather, I must address only those who are directly akin to music, who have in it, as it were, their mother's womb, and are connected with things almost exclusively through unconscious musical relations. I ask these genuine musicians whether they can imagine a human being capable of perceiving the third act of "Tristan and Isolde," without any assistance from word or image, purely as an immense symphonic movement, without breathing his last in a convulsive stretching of all the soul's wings. A human being who, as here, has laid his ear, as it were, against the heart chamber of the world-will, who feels the raging desire for existence pour from here into all the world's veins, as a thundering torrent or the most delicate brook dissolved into spray—would he not shatter suddenly? Could he bear, within the wretched glass shell of the human individual, to hear the echo of countless cries of delight and pain

from the “vast expanse of the world’s night,” without fleeing irresistibly, at this shepherd’s song of metaphysics, to his primordial home? Yet if such a work can be perceived as a whole without negating individual existence, if such a creation could be created without crushing its creator—where do we find the solution to this contradiction?

Here the tragic myth and the tragic hero thrust themselves between our highest musical excitement and that music—fundamentally only as a likeness of the most universal facts, of which music alone can speak directly. Yet as a likeness, if we felt as purely Dionysian beings, the myth would remain beside us utterly ineffectual and unnoticed, and would not for a moment turn us away from offering our ears to the echo of universals prior to things. Here, however, the *Apollonian* power breaks forth, intent on restoring the almost shattered individual, with the healing balm of a blissful illusion: suddenly we believe we see only Tristan, motionless and dazed, asking himself, “The old tune; why does it wake me?” And what earlier seemed to us like a hollow sigh from the center of being now wishes to tell us only how “desolate and empty the sea” is. And where we imagined we were being extinguished, breathless, in the convulsive stretching of all our feelings, and only a little still bound us to this existence, we now hear and see only the hero wounded to death and yet not dying, with his despairing cry: “Longing! Longing! In dying still to long, not to die of longing!” And where earlier, after such an excess and such a multitude of consuming torments, the horn’s jubilation cut through our hearts almost like the greatest torment of all, now the rejoicing Kurwenal stands between us and this “jubilation in itself,” turned toward the ship carrying Isolde. However powerfully compassion reaches into us, in a certain sense it nevertheless saves us from the primordial suffering of the world, just as the figurative image of myth saves us from the immediate vision of the supreme world-Idea, and thought and word save us from the undammed outpouring of the unconscious will. Through that magnificent Apollonian illusion, it seems to us that even the realm of sound confronts us as a sculptural world, as though in it, too, only the fate of Tristan and Isolde had been shaped and given visible form, as in the most delicate and expressive of materials.

Thus the Apollonian tears us away from Dionysian universality and enchants us with individuals; it binds our compassion to them, and through them satisfies the sense of beauty thirsting for great and sublime forms; it leads images of life past us and urges us to grasp in thought the living core they contain. With the enormous force of the image, the concept, the ethical teaching, the stirring of sympathy, the Apollonian snatches the human being up out of his orgiastic self-annihilation, and, by deceiving him about the universality of the Dionysian process, brings him to the delusion that he is seeing a single image of the world—Tristan and Isolde, for example—and is meant only to *see* it still better and more inwardly *through music*. What can the healing magic of Apollo not accomplish, if it can even arouse in us the illusion that the Dionysian really could serve the Apollonian by intensifying its effects—indeed, that music is even essentially an art of representation for an Apollonian content?

Through the preestablished harmony that reigns between the perfected drama and its music, drama attains a supreme degree of vivid visibility otherwise inaccessible to spoken drama. As all the living figures onstage simplify themselves before us in the independently moving melodic lines to the clarity of a sweeping line, we hear these lines side by side in the shifting harmonies that respond with the most delicate sympathy to the unfolding action. Through those harmonies, the relations between things become immediately perceptible to us in a sensuous, by no means abstract way; through them we likewise recognize that only in these relations does the essence of a character and of a melodic line reveal itself purely. And while music thus compels us to see more, and more inwardly, than usual, and to spread the action onstage before us like a delicate web, the world of the stage is both infinitely expanded and illuminated from within for our spiritualized eye, which looks into the interior. What could the poet of words offer that compares with this, as he struggles, with a far less perfect mechanism and by an indirect route, starting from word and concept, to achieve that inward expansion of the visible stage-world and its inner illumi-

nation? Although musical tragedy, too, brings in the word, it can at the same time place beside it the ground and birthplace of the word, and make clear to us, from within, how the word comes into being.

But we would have to say just as firmly of the process described here that it is only a magnificent semblance: that Apollonian *illusion* mentioned earlier, whose effect is meant to relieve us of the Dionysian onrush and excess. Fundamentally, the relation of music to drama is precisely the reverse: music is the actual Idea of the world, drama only a reflection of this Idea, an isolated shadow-image of it. That identity between the melodic line and the living figure, between the harmony and the relations of that figure's character, is true in the opposite sense to what we might suppose while watching musical tragedy. We may make the figure move before us as vividly as possible, bring it to life, and illuminate it from within: it always remains only appearance, from which no bridge leads into true reality, into the heart of the world. Yet music speaks out of that heart; and countless appearances of that kind might pass before the same music without ever exhausting its essence, remaining always only its externalized images. The popular and utterly false opposition between soul and body can, of course, explain nothing about the difficult relation between music and drama, and can confuse everything; but the unphilosophical crudity of that opposition seems to have become a readily professed article of faith precisely among our aestheticians, for who knows what reasons, while they have learned nothing about an opposition between appearance and the thing in itself, or, for equally unknown reasons, have wished to learn nothing.

If our analysis should have shown that the Apollonian in tragedy, through its illusion, has triumphed completely over music's primordial Dionysian element and harnessed music to its own purposes, namely the highest possible clarification of drama, then a very important qualification would certainly have to be added: at the most essential point of all, that Apollonian illusion is broken through and destroyed. The drama that unfolds before us with the help of music, in such inwardly illuminated clarity of every movement and figure, as though we were watching the fabric come into being on the loom with its darting up and down—achieves, as a whole, an effect that lies *beyond all Apollonian*

artistic effects. In the total effect of tragedy, the Dionysian regains the upper hand; tragedy closes with a sound that could never come from the realm of Apollonian art. And so the Apollonian illusion proves to be what it is: a veiling of the actual Dionysian effect that lasts throughout the tragedy. Yet that effect is powerful enough, at the end, to drive the Apollonian drama itself into a sphere where it begins to speak with Dionysian wisdom, and where it negates itself and its Apollonian visibility. Thus the difficult relation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy could truly be symbolized by a fraternal alliance between the two divinities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, but Apollo finally speaks the language of Dionysus. With this, the highest aim of tragedy, and of art in general, is attained.

Section 22



Let the attentive friend call to mind, from his own experience, the effect of a true musical tragedy, pure and unmixed. I believe I have described both sides of this effect in such a way that he will now know how to interpret his own experiences. For he will remember how, as he watched the myth unfolding before him, he felt himself raised to a kind of omniscience, as though the power of his eyes were now not merely confined to surfaces but could penetrate within, and as though, with the help of music, he now saw the surges of the will, the struggle of motives, the swelling current of the passions before him, almost visibly embodied for the senses, as a wealth of lines and figures in living motion, and could thereby plunge down into the most delicate secrets of unconscious impulses. While he thus becomes conscious of the highest intensification of his drives toward visibility and transfiguration, he feels just as certainly that this long series of Apollonian artistic effects does *not*, after all, produce that blissful lingering in will-less contemplation which the sculptor and the epic poet, the properly Apollonian artists, bring about in him through their works: that is, the justification of the world of individuation attained in that contemplation, which is the summit and sum of Apollonian art. He beholds the transfigured world of the stage, and yet negates it. He sees the tragic hero before him in epic clarity and beauty, and yet delights in his annihilation. He understands the action onstage to its innermost depths, and gladly takes refuge in the incomprehensible. He feels the hero's actions to be justified, and yet is still more uplifted

when those actions destroy their author. He shudders at the sufferings that will befall the hero, and yet senses in them a higher, far more overpowering delight. He sees more, and more deeply, than ever, and yet wishes himself blind. From what are we to derive this marvelous self-division, this breaking off of the Apollonian summit, if not from *Dionysian* magic, which, while seeming to excite Apollonian impulses to the highest pitch, can nevertheless force even this overflowing of Apollonian power into its service? *Tragic myth* can be understood only as an embodiment of Dionysian wisdom in images through Apollonian artistic means; it leads the world of appearance to the limits where it negates itself and seeks to flee back into the womb of the true and only reality; where it then seems, with Isolde, to intone its metaphysical swan song in these words:

In the sea of rapture's
surging swell,
in the fragrant waves'
resonant sound,
in the world-breath's
billowing universe—
to drown—to sink—
unconscious—highest delight!

Thus, through the experiences of the truly aesthetic listener, we picture the tragic artist himself: how, like a luxuriant deity of individuation, he creates his figures—in which sense his work could scarcely be understood as an “imitation of nature”—but how his enormous Dionysian drive then devours this entire world of appearances, so that behind it, and through its annihilation, we may sense a supreme primordial joy of art in the womb of the primordial One. Our aestheticians, of course, have nothing to tell us about this return to the primordial home, about the fraternal alliance of the two artistic divinities in tragedy, or about the listener's simultaneously Apollonian and Dionysian excitement. Instead, they never tire of characterizing the hero's struggle with fate, the victory of the moral world order, or a discharge of emotions brought about by tragedy as the truly tragic element. This tirelessness makes me suspect that they

may not be people capable of aesthetic excitement at all, and that in listening to tragedy they may count only as moral beings. Never, since Aristotle, has an explanation of the tragic effect been given from which one could infer artistic states, an aesthetic activity on the listeners' part. Sometimes the grave events are supposed to drive pity and fear toward a relieving discharge; sometimes we are supposed to feel uplifted and inspired by the victory of good and noble principles, by the hero's sacrifice in the spirit of a moral view of the world. And as surely as I believe that for many people precisely this, and only this, is the effect of tragedy, it follows just as clearly that all of them, together with their interpreting aestheticians, have experienced nothing of tragedy as a supreme *art*. That pathological discharge, Aristotle's catharsis, which philologists do not quite know whether to class among medical or moral phenomena, recalls a remarkable intuition of Goethe's. "Without a lively interest in the passions," he says, "I too have never succeeded in treating any tragic situation, and have therefore preferred to avoid rather than seek them out. Might it also have been one of the ancients' advantages that even the highest pathos was only aesthetic play for them, whereas with us fidelity to nature must contribute to the production of such a work?" After our magnificent experiences, we may now answer this deeply searching final question in the affirmative, since precisely in musical tragedy we have experienced with amazement how even the highest pathos can really be only aesthetic play. We may therefore believe that only now can the primordial phenomenon of the tragic be described with some success. Anyone who still has nothing to report but those surrogate effects from nonaesthetic spheres, and does not feel himself raised above the pathological-moral process, may simply despair of his aesthetic nature; to him we recommend, as an innocent substitute, interpreting Shakespeare in the manner of Gervinus and diligently hunting down "poetic justice."

Thus, with the rebirth of tragedy, the *aesthetic listener* too is reborn. Until now his seat in the theater had generally been occupied by a strange substitute, with half-moral, half-scholarly pretensions: the "critic." Within the critic's former sphere everything was artificial, merely whitewashed with a semblance of life. The performing artist truly no longer knew what to do with a listener who

struck such critical poses, and therefore, together with the dramatist or opera composer who inspired him, searched anxiously for the last remnants of life in this pretentiously barren creature, incapable of enjoyment. Yet until now the audience consisted of such “critics”; the university student, the schoolboy, even the most harmless female creature had, without knowing it, already been prepared by education and newspapers to perceive a work of art in the same way. The nobler natures among artists counted on arousing moral and religious forces in such an audience, and the invocation of the “moral world order” served as a substitute where a mighty artistic enchantment should properly have enraptured the genuine listener. Or the dramatist presented some grander, or at least exciting, tendency of contemporary politics and society so clearly that the listener could forget his critical exhaustion and surrender to emotions like those felt in patriotic or warlike moments, or before the parliamentary speaker’s platform, or in the condemnation of crime and vice. This estrangement from the true purposes of art was bound, here and there, to lead outright to a cult of tendentiousness. Yet here there occurred what has always occurred with all contrived arts: those tendencies deteriorated with headlong speed, so that, for example, the aim of using the theater as an institution for the people’s moral education, taken seriously in Schiller’s time, is already counted among the discredited antiquities of an outgrown culture. While the critic had come to rule the theater and concert hall, the journalist the school, and the press society, art degenerated into an object of entertainment of the lowest kind, and aesthetic criticism was used as the binding agent of a vain, distracted, selfish, and moreover wretchedly unoriginal social life, whose meaning Schopenhauer’s parable of the porcupines helps us understand. Thus no age has chattered so much about art and thought so little of it. But can one still associate with a person capable of making conversation about Beethoven and Shakespeare? Let each answer this question as he feels: his answer will in any case reveal what he understands by “culture,” provided he attempts to answer the question at all and has not already fallen silent in astonishment.

On the other hand, many a person endowed by nature with nobler and more delicate gifts, even though he had gradually become a critical barbarian in the manner described, may have an effect to recount, as unexpected as it was utterly incomprehensible, which a felicitously successful performance of Lohengrin, for example, exerted upon him. Only perhaps there was no hand to take hold of him, admonishing and interpreting, so that even that sensation, incomprehensibly different and altogether beyond comparison, which shook him then, remained isolated, and went out like a mysterious star after a brief gleam. At that moment he had sensed what the aesthetic listener is.

Section 23



Anyone wishing to examine himself very closely as to how far he is akin to the true aesthetic listener, or belongs to the community of Socratic-critical people, need only ask himself honestly what he feels when he encounters the *miracle* represented onstage: whether he perhaps feels that his historical sense, directed toward strict psychological causality, has been offended; whether, with a benevolent concession, he admits the miracle, as it were, as a phenomenon intelligible to childhood but alien to himself; or whether he undergoes something else entirely. For by this he will be able to measure how far he is capable of understanding *myth* at all—that concentrated image of the world which, as an abridgment of appearance, cannot dispense with the miracle. What is likely, however, is that on strict examination almost everyone will feel himself so disintegrated by the critical-historical spirit of our culture that only by scholarly means, through mediating abstractions, can he make the former existence of myth seem credible to himself. Yet without myth every culture forfeits its healthy, creative natural power: only a horizon ringed with myths rounds off an entire cultural movement into unity. Only through myth are all the powers of imagination and Apollonian dream rescued from their indiscriminate wandering. The images of myth must be the unnoticed, omnipresent demonic guardians under whose protection the young soul grows, whose signs the

grown man uses to interpret his life and struggles; and even the state knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythical foundation that guarantees its connection with religion, its growth out of mythical ideas.

Now set beside this the abstract human being, guided by no myths, abstract education, abstract custom, abstract law, the abstract state: picture the unregulated roaming of the artistic imagination, unbridled by any native myth; imagine a culture that has no fixed and sacred original dwelling, but is condemned to exhaust every possibility and eke out its nourishment from every culture—that is the present, as the result of that Socratism directed toward the annihilation of myth. And now the mythless human being stands eternally hungry amid all the pasts, digging and rummaging for roots, even if he must dig for them in the remotest antiquities. What does the enormous historical need of unsatisfied modern culture point to—its gathering of countless other cultures around itself, its consuming desire to know—if not the loss of myth, the loss of the mythical home, the mythical mother's womb? Let us ask whether the feverish and so uncanny agitation of this culture is anything but the hungry person's greedy grasping and snatching after food—and who would still wish to give anything to a culture that cannot be sated by everything it devours, and at whose touch the strongest, most wholesome nourishment habitually turns into "history and criticism"?

We would have to despair painfully of our German nature, too, if it had already become in the same way inextricably entangled with its culture, indeed one with it, as we can observe to our horror in civilized France. And what was for so long France's great advantage and the cause of its immense predominance, precisely that oneness of people and culture, might at this sight compel us to count it good fortune that this highly questionable culture of ours has so far had nothing in common with the noble core of our national character. Rather, all our hopes reach out longingly toward the perception that beneath this cultural life restlessly twitching up and down, beneath these spasms of cultivation, there lies hidden a magnificent, inwardly healthy, age-old power, which admittedly stirs with violence only at tremendous moments, and then dreams again toward a future awakening. From this abyss the German

Reformation grew: in its chorale the future melody of German music sounded for the first time. So deep, bold, and soulful, so overflowing good and tender, was the sound of Luther's chorale, as the first Dionysian call of enticement issuing from dense undergrowth as spring approaches. It was answered, in an echo of rivalry, by that consecrated and exuberant procession of Dionysian enthusiasts to whom we owe German music—and to whom we shall owe *the rebirth of German myth!*

I know that I must now lead the friend who follows with sympathy to a high place of solitary contemplation, where he will have few companions, and I call to him in encouragement that we must hold fast to our radiant guides, the Greeks. Thus far, to purify our aesthetic knowledge, we have borrowed from them those two divine figures, each ruling a separate realm of art, and through Greek tragedy we gained an intimation of their mutual contact and intensification. The downfall of Greek tragedy had to appear to us as brought about by a remarkable tearing apart of the two primordial artistic drives; a degeneration and transformation of the Greek national character was in harmony with that event, urging us to reflect seriously on how necessarily and intimately art and people, myth and custom, tragedy and state, are intertwined at their foundations. That downfall of tragedy was at the same time the downfall of myth. Until then the Greeks had been involuntarily compelled to connect everything they experienced immediately with their myths, indeed to understand it only through this connection; thus even the most immediate present had to appear to them at once under the aspect of eternity, and in a certain sense as timeless. Into this current of the timeless the state as well as art immersed itself, to find in it rest from the burden and greed of the moment. And a people—like a human being, for that matter—is worth precisely as much as it is able to stamp its experiences with the seal of the eternal: for in doing so it is, as it were, lifted out of worldliness, and shows its unconscious inner conviction of the relativity of time and of life's true, that is, metaphysical significance. The opposite occurs when a people begins to understand itself historically and to shatter the mythical bulwarks around it. This is usually accompanied by a decisive turn toward worldliness, a break, in all its ethical consequences, with the unconscious meta-

physics of its earlier existence. Greek art, and Greek tragedy above all, held back the annihilation of myth more than anything else: it had to be annihilated too, so that people, severed from their native soil, could live unbridled in the wilderness of thought, custom, and deed. Even now that metaphysical drive attempts to create for itself a form of transfiguration, though a weakened one, in the Socratism of science pressing toward life; but at the lower levels the same drive led only to a feverish search that gradually lost itself in a pandemonium of myths and superstitions heaped together from everywhere. In its midst the Hellene nevertheless sat with his heart unsatisfied, until he learned to mask that fever with Greek serenity and Greek frivolity, as a petty Greek, or to numb himself completely in some dull Oriental superstition.

Since the revival of Alexandrian-Roman antiquity in the fifteenth century, after a long interlude difficult to describe, we have approached this condition in the most striking way. On the heights, the same overflowing delight in knowledge, the same insatiable happiness in discovery, the same enormous turn toward worldliness; beside them, a homeless wandering, a greedy crowding around foreign tables, a frivolous deification of the present or a dully numbed turning away—all under the aspect of the age, the “present day.” These identical symptoms suggest an identical lack at the heart of this culture: the annihilation of myth. It seems scarcely possible to transplant a foreign myth with lasting success without doing irreparable damage to the tree through this transplanting. The tree may occasionally be strong and healthy enough to expel that foreign element again in a terrible struggle, but usually it must waste away, sickly and stunted or in pathological overgrowth. We think so highly of the pure and vigorous core of the German nature that we dare to expect precisely from it that expulsion of forcibly implanted foreign elements, and consider it possible that the German spirit will return to an awareness of itself. Perhaps many will think that this spirit must begin its struggle by expelling the Romance element: for this it may recognize an outward preparation and encouragement in the victorious valor and bloody glory of the last war, but it must seek the inward necessity in the emulation that strives always to be worthy of the sublime pioneers on this path, Luther as well as our great artists and poets. But let it

never believe that it can fight such battles without its household gods, without its mythical home, without a “restoration” of all things German! And if the German should look about timidly for a guide to lead him back into the homeland long since lost, whose roads and paths he scarcely knows anymore—let him only listen to the blissfully enticing call of the Dionysian bird that sways above him and wishes to show him the way there.

Section 24



Among the distinctive artistic effects of musical tragedy, we had to single out an Apollonian *illusion* intended to save us from immediate oneness with Dionysian music, while allowing our musical excitement to discharge itself in an Apollonian realm, upon an intervening, visible intermediate world. In this we believed we had observed how, precisely through this discharge, that intermediate world of events onstage—the drama as a whole—became visible and intelligible from within to a degree unattainable in all other Apollonian art. Thus here, where this art was, as it were, given wings and borne aloft by the spirit of music, we had to recognize the highest intensification of its powers, and therefore, in that fraternal alliance of Apollo and Dionysus, the summit of both Apollonian and Dionysian artistic aims.

Yet precisely in being illuminated from within by music, the luminous Apollonian image did not attain the distinctive effect of the lesser degrees of Apollonian art. What the epic or the animated stone can accomplish—compelling the contemplating eye to that calm rapture in the world of individuation—could not be achieved here, despite a greater animation and clarity. We watched the drama and penetrated with a probing gaze into its inner, moving world of motives—and yet we felt as though only a figurative image were passing before us, whose deepest meaning we believed we could almost divine, and which we wished to draw aside like a curtain, to see the original image behind it. The brightest clarity of the image did not satisfy us, for it seemed to reveal

something and conceal it in equal measure. And while its figurative revelation seemed to invite us to tear the veil apart and uncover the mysterious background, that very illuminated visibility of everything held the eye spellbound in turn and prevented it from penetrating deeper.

Anyone who has not experienced this simultaneous necessity to behold and longing to go beyond beholding will scarcely imagine how distinctly and clearly these two processes coexist and are felt side by side in contemplating tragic myth; whereas truly aesthetic spectators will confirm for me that, among the distinctive effects of tragedy, this coexistence is the most remarkable. Now transpose this phenomenon of the aesthetic spectator into an analogous process in the tragic artist, and the genesis of *tragic myth* will be understood. It shares with the Apollonian artistic sphere the full delight in semblance and beholding, and at the same time negates this delight and finds a still higher satisfaction in annihilating the visible world of semblance. The content of tragic myth is, first of all, an epic event glorifying the hero in his struggle. But what is the source of that intrinsically puzzling trait: that the suffering in the hero's fate, the most painful acts of overcoming, the most tormenting conflicts of motives—in short, the exemplification of that wisdom of Silenus, or, in aesthetic terms, the ugly and disharmonious—are represented in such countless forms, with such fondness, again and again, and precisely in a people's most luxuriant and youthful age, unless a higher delight is perceived in all these very things?

For the fact that life really does proceed so tragically would be the least adequate explanation for the genesis of an art form—if art is not merely an imitation of natural reality, but precisely a metaphysical supplement to natural reality, set beside it for its overcoming. Insofar as tragic myth belongs to art at all, it also shares fully in this metaphysical aim of transfiguration that belongs to art as a whole. But what does it transfigure when it presents the world of appearance in the image of the suffering hero? Least of all the “reality” of this world of appearance, for it tells us precisely: “Look! Look closely! This is your life! This is the hour hand on the clock of your existence!”

And did myth show us this life in order thereby to transfigure it before us? But if not, where does the aesthetic delight lie with which we let these images, too, pass before us? I am asking about aesthetic delight, and I know very well that many of these images can sometimes also produce a moral gratification, perhaps in the form of pity or a moral triumph. But anyone who would derive the effect of the tragic solely from these moral sources, as has indeed been customary in aesthetics for all too long, should not imagine that he has thereby done anything for art, which must demand purity in its domain above all. In explaining tragic myth, the very first requirement is to seek its distinctive delight in the purely aesthetic sphere, without encroaching on the territory of pity, fear, or the morally sublime. How can the ugly and the disharmonious, the content of tragic myth, arouse an aesthetic delight?

Here it becomes necessary to take a bold running leap into a metaphysics of art, as I repeat the earlier proposition that only as an aesthetic phenomenon do existence and the world appear justified. In this sense, tragic myth in particular must convince us that even the ugly and disharmonious are an artistic game the will plays with itself in the eternal fullness of its delight. Yet this elusive primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art becomes intelligible by a direct route, and is immediately grasped, only in the wondrous significance of *musical dissonance*: just as music in general, set beside the world, alone can give a conception of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The delight produced by tragic myth has the same home as the pleasurable sensation of dissonance in music. The Dionysian, with its primordial delight perceived even in pain, is the common womb from which music and tragic myth are born.

Might we not meanwhile have substantially eased that difficult problem of the tragic effect by enlisting the help of dissonance as a musical relation? For we now understand what it means, in tragedy, to wish at once to behold and to long to go beyond beholding. With regard to dissonance used artistically, we would have to characterize this same state by saying that we wish to hear and at the same time long to go beyond hearing. That striving into the infinite, the wingbeat of longing, amid the highest delight in clearly perceived reality,

reminds us that in both states we must recognize a Dionysian phenomenon, which reveals to us again and again the playful building and shattering of the individual world as the outflow of a primordial delight—much as when Heraclitus the Obscure compares the world-forming power to a child who, at play, sets stones here and there and builds up heaps of sand only to knock them down again.

To assess a people's Dionysian capacity correctly, then, we would have to consider not only its music but, just as necessarily, its tragic myth as the second witness to that capacity. Given this closest kinship between music and myth, we may likewise suppose that a degeneration and debasement of the one will be accompanied by a withering of the other—if indeed a weakening of myth expresses a weakening of Dionysian power at all. Yet a glance at the development of the German nature should leave us in no doubt about either: in opera as in the abstract character of our mythless existence, in an art sunk to mere amusement as in a life guided by concepts, that nature of Socratic optimism, as inartistic as it is corrosive of life, had revealed itself to us. To console us, however, there were signs that despite all this the German spirit rests and dreams in an inaccessible abyss, undestroyed in its magnificent health, depth, and Dionysian strength, like a knight who has sunk into slumber. From this abyss the Dionysian song rises to us, to let us understand that even now this German knight still dreams his age-old Dionysian myth in blissfully solemn visions. Let no one believe that the German spirit has lost its mythical home forever, when it still understands so clearly the birds' voices that tell of that home. One day it will find itself awake, in all the morning freshness of an immense sleep: then it will kill dragons, annihilate the treacherous dwarfs, and awaken Brünnhilde—and even Wotan's spear will be powerless to bar its way!

My friends, you who believe in Dionysian music, you also know what tragedy means for us. In it we have tragic myth, reborn from music—and in that myth you may hope for everything and forget what is most painful! But what is most painful for all of us is—the long degradation under which the

German genius lived, estranged from house and home, in the service of treacherous dwarfs. You understand these words—as, in the end, you will also understand my hopes.

Section 25



Music and tragic myth are equally expressions of a people's Dionysian capacity, and are inseparable from each other. Both spring from a realm of art that lies beyond the Apollonian; both transfigure a region in whose chords of delight dissonance, like the terrifying image of the world, dies away enchantingly; both play with the sting of distress, trusting in their overwhelmingly powerful magic arts; both, through this play, justify the existence of even the "worst world." Here the Dionysian, measured against the Apollonian, reveals itself as the eternal and original artistic power that calls the entire world of appearance into existence. In its midst a new transfiguring semblance becomes necessary to hold the animated world of individuation fast in life. If we could imagine dissonance becoming human—and what else is the human being?—then, in order to live, this dissonance would need a magnificent illusion to spread a veil of beauty over its own nature. This is the true artistic aim of Apollo, under whose name we gather all those countless illusions of beautiful semblance that at every moment make existence itself worth living and urge us to experience the next moment.

At the same time, of that foundation of all existence, that Dionysian ground of the world, precisely only so much may enter the human individual's consciousness as can in turn be overcome by that Apollonian power of transfiguration. Thus these two artistic drives are compelled to unfold their powers in strict mutual proportion, according to the law of eternal justice. Where the

Dionysian powers rise as impetuously as we are experiencing them, Apollo too must already have descended to us, veiled in a cloud; his most luxuriant effects of beauty will probably be seen by a coming generation.

But anyone would most surely feel, through intuition, that this effect is necessary if he once felt himself transported back, even if only in a dream, into an ancient Hellenic existence: walking beneath tall Ionic colonnades, looking up toward a horizon bounded by pure and noble lines, beside him reflections of his transfigured form in gleaming marble, all around him people striding solemnly or moving delicately, with harmoniously sounding voices and a rhythmic language of gesture—amid this ceaseless influx of beauty, would he not have to raise his hand to Apollo and cry: “Blessed people of the Hellenes! How great Dionysus must be among you, if the Delian god considers such enchantments necessary to heal your dithyrambic madness!”—But an aged Athenian, looking up at him with the sublime eye of Aeschylus, might reply to someone in this mood: “But say this too, you curious stranger: how much this people must have suffered to be able to become so beautiful! Now, though, follow me to the tragedy, and sacrifice with me in the temple of both divinities!”