



The Birth of Tragedy

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



The Birth of Tragedy



FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Plain English Translation

Translated by Michael Berardi

MOUSEIA

THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted Plain English edition, made independently and directly from the same German text, without reference to the Musean edition or to any English translation.

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.

Mouseia · mouseia.org

Edition dated 26 October 2026

Contents



An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 1	1	Section 6	41
An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 2	3	Section 7	45
An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 3	5	Section 8	50
An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 4	7	Section 9	56
An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 5	9	Section 10	62
An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 6	12	Section 11	66
An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 7	14	Section 12	72
Preface to Richard Wagner	17	Section 13	78
Section 1	19	Section 14	82
Section 2	24	Section 15	87
Section 3	28	Section 16	92
Section 4	32	Section 17	98
Section 5	36	Section 18	104
		Section 19	108
		Section 20	116
		Section 21	119
		Section 22	126
		Section 23	131
		Section 24	136
		Section 25	140

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 1



Whatever lies behind this questionable book, it must have been a question of the first importance and fascination. It must also have been a deeply personal question. The time when the book came into being is evidence of that: the turbulent time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, *despite* which it came into being. As the thunder of the battle of Wörth rolled across Europe, the brooding lover of riddles who fathered this book sat somewhere in a corner of the Alps. Deep in his brooding and riddles, he was therefore both deeply troubled and untroubled. He wrote down his thoughts about the *Greeks*. These formed the core of the strange, hard-to-enter book to which this late preface, or afterword, is to be devoted. A few weeks later he himself was outside the walls of Metz. He still had not escaped the question marks he had placed against the supposed “cheerfulness” of the Greeks and Greek art. At last, in that month of extreme tension when peace was being discussed at Versailles, he also made peace with himself. Slowly recovering from an illness he had brought home from the battlefield, he settled “The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music” for himself, once and for all.—Out of music? Music and tragedy? Greeks and the music of tragedy? Greeks and the artwork of pessimism? The Greeks, the best-

turned-out, most beautiful, most envied kind of people so far, the people who most tempt us to live—what? They, of all people, *needed* tragedy? More than that—art? What was Greek art for?...

You can guess where the great question mark over the value of existence had now been placed. Is pessimism *necessarily* a sign of decline, of decay, of having turned out badly, of tired and weakened instincts? It was that among the Indians, and apparently it is that among us “modern” people and Europeans. Is there a pessimism of *strength*? An intellectual preference for what is hard, horrifying, evil, and problematic in existence, arising from well-being, overflowing health, a *fullness* of existence? Could there even be suffering from overfullness itself? A tempting courage of the sharpest eye that *wants* what is terrible, as it wants an enemy, a worthy enemy against whom to test its strength? From whom it wants to learn what “being afraid” means? What does *tragic* myth mean among the Greeks, precisely in their best, strongest, bravest age? And the tremendous phenomenon of the Dionysian? What of tragedy, born from it?—Then again: what killed tragedy was the Socratic approach to morality, the dialectic, contentment, and cheerfulness of the theoretical person. What? Could this very Socratic approach be a sign of decline, exhaustion, sickness, of instincts falling apart in anarchy? And could the “Greek cheerfulness” of the later Greeks be only a sunset glow? Could the Epicurean will *against* pessimism be merely a sufferer’s precaution? And science itself, our science—yes, what does all science mean at all, seen as a symptom of life? What is all science for? Worse still, *where does it come from*? What? Is a scientific outlook perhaps only fear of pessimism and an escape from it? A subtle act of self-defense against—the *truth*? And, in moral terms, something like cowardice and dishonesty? In nonmoral terms, a piece of cunning? Oh Socrates, Socrates, was that perhaps *your* secret? Oh mysterious ironist, was this perhaps your—irony? —

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 2



What I got hold of then was something terrible and dangerous: a problem with horns, not necessarily a bull, but certainly a *new* problem. Today I would say it was the *problem of science* itself. For the first time, science was understood as problematic, as something open to question. But the book in which my youthful courage and suspicion expressed themselves—what an *impossible* book had to grow out of a task so unsuited to youth! It was built entirely from premature, unripe personal experiences. All of them stood right at the edge of what could be communicated. It took its stand on the ground of *art*, since the problem of science cannot be recognized on the ground of science. Perhaps it was a book for artists with a secondary gift for analysis and looking back—that is, for an exceptional sort of artist whom one has to search for and would not even want to search for... It was full of psychological innovations and artists' secrets, with an artist's metaphysics in the background. A work of youth, full of youthful courage and youthful sadness, it was independent, defiantly self-reliant even where it seemed to bow to an authority and to its own admiration. In short, it was a first work in every bad sense of the word as well. Despite its aged problem, it had every fault of youth, above all youth's "far too long" and its "storm and stress." On the other hand, in view of its success—especially with the great artist it addressed as if in a conversation between two people, Richard Wagner

—it was a *proven* book. I mean a book that at least satisfied “the best people of its time.” On that basis alone it should be treated with some consideration and restraint. Still, I do not want to suppress entirely how unpleasant it seems to me now, how foreign it stands before me after sixteen years. My eye is older and a hundred times harder to please, but it has by no means grown colder. Nor has it grown more distant from the task that daring book first ventured to approach: *to see science from the artist’s point of view, but art from the point of view of life...*

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 3



To say it again, today I find it an impossible book. I call it badly written, clumsy, embarrassing, wild about images and confused by them, emotional, here and there sugary to the point of femininity, uneven in pace, with no desire for clean logic. It is very sure of itself and therefore considers proof beneath it; it even distrusts the *propriety* of proving things. It is a book for the initiated, “music” for people baptized into music, people joined together from the beginning of things by shared and rare experiences of art. It is a badge of recognition for blood relatives in the arts. It is an arrogant, overenthusiastic book. From the start it shuts itself off from the uninitiated mass of the “educated” even more than from “the people.” Yet, as its effect proved and still proves, it must also know well enough how to seek out fellow enthusiasts and lure them onto new hidden paths and dancing grounds. In any case, a *foreign* voice was speaking here. People admitted that to themselves with both curiosity and dislike. It was the voice of a disciple of a still “unknown god,” who had temporarily hidden under a scholar’s hood, under German heaviness and humorless dialectic, even under a Wagnerian’s bad manners. Here was a mind with foreign needs that still had no name, a memory bursting with questions, experiences, and hidden things, beside which the name Dionysus had been written like one more question mark. Here, people suspiciously told themselves, something like a mystical,

almost maenad-like soul was speaking. Painfully and arbitrarily, almost unable to decide whether it wanted to reveal or hide itself, it stammered as if in a foreign language. This “new soul” should have *sung*, not spoken! What a pity 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 scholar of ancient language and literature. Even today, almost everything in this field remains for such a scholar to discover and dig up! Above all, the problem *that* there is a problem here. And that, as long as we have no answer to the question “what is Dionysian?”, the Greeks remain completely unknown and impossible to imagine...

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 4



Yes, what is Dionysian?—This book contains an answer. Someone “who knows” speaks in it, an initiate and disciple of his god. Perhaps today I would speak more cautiously and less eloquently about so difficult a psychological question as the origin of tragedy among the Greeks. One basic question is the Greek’s relationship to pain, his degree of sensitivity. Did that relationship stay the same, or did it reverse itself? Did his constantly growing *desire for beauty*, for festivals, entertainments, and new forms of worship really grow out of lack, deprivation, melancholy, and pain? Suppose this were true—and Pericles, or Thucydides, gives us to understand that it was, in the great funeral speech. Where, then, must the opposite desire, which appeared earlier, have come from? The *desire for the ugly*: the earlier Greek’s good, strict will toward pessimism, tragic myth, and the image of everything terrible, evil, mysterious, destructive, and fatal at the bottom of existence. Where, then, must tragedy have come from? Perhaps from *pleasure*, from strength, from overflowing health, from an excessive fullness? And what, in physiological terms, is the meaning of the madness from which both tragic and comic art grew, Dionysian madness? What? Perhaps madness is not necessarily a symptom of degeneration, decline, or an overripe culture? Could there be—here is a question for psychiatrists—neuroses of *health*? Of a people’s youth and youthfulness? What

does the combination of god and goat in the satyr point to? What personal experience and what urge made the Greek imagine the Dionysian enthusiast and primal human being as a satyr? And as for the origin of the tragic chorus: in those centuries when the Greek body flourished and the Greek soul overflowed with life, could there have been widespread outbreaks of ecstasy? Visions and hallucinations that spread through whole communities, whole gatherings of worshipers? What if the Greeks, precisely in the richness of their youth, wanted the tragic and were pessimists? What if it was precisely madness, to use Plato's words, that brought the *greatest* blessings to Greece? And what if, on the contrary, the Greeks became increasingly optimistic, superficial, and theatrical precisely in the times of their disintegration and weakness? What if they also grew more eager for logic and for making the world logical, and thus became both "more cheerful" and "more scientific"? What? Despite all "modern ideas" and the prejudices of democratic taste, could the victory of *optimism*, the dominance of *rationality*, and practical and theoretical *utilitarianism* be symptoms of declining strength, approaching age, and physiological exhaustion, just like democracy itself, which appears at the same time? And could pessimism be precisely what is *not* such a symptom? Was Epicurus an optimist precisely as a *sufferer*? — You can see that this book has burdened itself with a whole bundle of difficult questions. Let us add its most difficult question! Seen from the point of view of *life*, what does morality mean?...

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 human beings. In the book itself, the provocative statement returns several times: 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 everything that happens. A “god,” if you like, but certainly only a completely unscrupulous and nonmoral artist-god. In building as in destroying, in good things as in bad, he wants to experience the same pleasure and sovereign power of his own. By creating worlds, he frees himself from the *distress* of fullness and *overfullness*, from the *suffering* caused by the opposites crowded together inside him. At every moment the world is God's *achieved* deliverance: the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the one who suffers most, who is most full of opposites and contradictions, and who can redeem himself only in *semblance*. You may call this whole artist's metaphysics arbitrary, pointless, or fantastic. Its essential feature is that it already reveals a spirit that will one day resist the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence, whatever the danger. Here, perhaps for the first time, a pessimism “beyond good and evil” announces itself. Here that “perversity of outlook” finds a voice and a formula—the perversity against which Schopenhauer never tired of hurling his angriest curses and thunder-

bolts in advance. It is a philosophy that dares to put morality itself into the world of appearance, to lower it into that world. It puts morality not only among “appearances,” in the technical sense used by idealist philosophy, but among “deceptions,” as semblance, delusion, error, interpretation, something contrived, art. Perhaps the depth of this *antimoral* tendency is best measured by the cautious, hostile silence with which Christianity is treated throughout the book. Christianity is the most extravagant working-out of the moral theme that humanity has yet had to listen to. In truth, nothing stands more completely opposed to the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world taught in this book than Christian teaching. It is and wants to be *only* moral. With its absolute standards—the truthfulness of its God, for example—it sends art, *all* art, into the realm of lies. That is, it denies, damns, and condemns it. Behind this way of thinking and valuing, which must be hostile to art as long as it is at all genuine, I have always also sensed *hostility to life*: a furious, vengeful disgust with life itself. For all life rests on semblance, art, deception, ways of seeing, the necessity of perspective and error. From the beginning, Christianity was essentially and thoroughly life’s disgust and weariness with life. It merely disguised, hid, and dressed up this disgust in the belief in an “other” or “better” life. Hatred of the “world,” curses on the passions, fear of beauty and sensuality, a world beyond invented to slander this world more effectively—at bottom, a longing 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 seemed to me the most dangerous and sinister of all possible forms of a “will to destruction.” At the very least, it is a sign of the deepest sickness, fatigue, ill temper, exhaustion, and impoverishment of life. For, judged by morality—especially Christian, that is, unconditional morality—life *must* constantly and inevitably be found in the wrong, because life *is* something essentially nonmoral. Finally, crushed under the weight of contempt and the eternal No, life *must* be felt as unworthy of desire, worthless in itself. Morality itself—what? Could morality be a “will to deny life,” a hidden instinct of destruction, a principle of decay, belittlement, and slander, the beginning of the end? And therefore the danger of dangers?... So, with this questionable book,

my instinct turned *against* morality. As an instinct speaking up for life, it invented a fundamentally opposed teaching and valuation of life: a purely artistic one, an *anti-Christian* one. What should I call it? As a scholar of ancient language and a man of words, I took some liberty in naming it—for who knows the true name of the Antichrist? I gave it the name of a Greek god: I called it *Dionysian*.—

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 6



Do you understand what task I was already daring to touch on with this book?... How much I now regret that I did not yet have the courage—or the immodesty?—to allow myself, in every respect, a *language of my own* for such personal views and ventures. Instead I struggled to express unfamiliar, new valuations in formulas taken from Schopenhauer and Kant, valuations fundamentally opposed to both their spirit and their taste! What did Schopenhauer think about tragedy? “What gives everything tragic its distinctive upward sweep,” he says in *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* II, 495, “is the dawning recognition that the world, life, can give no true satisfaction, and is therefore *not worth* our attachment. That is the tragic spirit: it therefore leads toward *resignation*.” Oh, how differently Dionysus spoke to me! How far from me, precisely then, was this whole doctrine of resignation!—But there is something much worse about the book, something I now regret even more than having darkened and spoiled Dionysian intuitions with Schopenhauer’s formulas. I *spoiled* the whole magnificent *Greek problem*, as it had dawned on me, by mixing in the most modern concerns! I attached hopes where there was nothing to hope for, where everything pointed all too clearly to an end! On the basis of the latest German music, I began to spin tales about the “German character,” as if it were just about to discover and rediscover itself. And this at a time when the German spirit, which

not long before had still possessed the will to rule Europe and the strength to lead it, was making its last and final *abdication*. Under the pompous pretext of founding an empire, it was moving toward mediocrity, democracy, and “modern ideas”! In fact, since then I have learned to think hopelessly and unsparingly enough about this “German character,” and likewise about present-day *German music*. This music is romantic through and through, the most un-Greek of all possible art forms. It is also a destroyer of nerves of the first rank. It is doubly dangerous among a people who love drinking and honor lack of clarity as a virtue, because it is a drug that both intoxicates and *befogs*.—Of course, apart from all the hasty hopes and mistaken applications to the most recent events with which I spoiled my first book, the great Dionysian question mark placed in it remains. This also applies to music: what would music have to be like if, instead of having a romantic origin like German music, it had a *Dionysian* origin?...

An Attempt at Self-Criticism, Section 7



—But sir, what in the world is romanticism if *your* book is not romantic? Could a deep hatred of the “present age,” “reality,” and “modern ideas” be taken any further than in your artist’s metaphysics? It would sooner believe in nothingness, sooner believe in the devil, than in the “now”! Beneath all your contrapuntal art of voices and seduction of the ears, isn’t there a rumbling bass of anger and a desire to destroy? A furious determination against everything that exists “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 win out!” Listen for yourself, Mr. Pessimist and Worshiper of Art, with a more open ear, to just one selected passage from your book. That eloquent passage about dragon-slayers may sound dangerously like the Pied Piper to young ears and hearts. What? Isn’t it the genuine romantic creed of 1830 under the mask of the pessimism of 1850? And behind it the usual romantic finale is already being sounded: a break, a collapse, a return, and a headlong fall before an old faith, before the old God... What? Isn’t your pessimistic book itself a piece of hostility to the Greeks and a piece of romanticism? Isn’t it itself something “as intoxicating as it is befogging,” a drug in any case, even a piece of music, of *German* music? But listen:

“Let us imagine a growing generation with this fearlessness of vision, this heroic drive 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. *Wouldn’t it be necessary* for the tragic person of this culture, as he trains himself for seriousness and terror, to desire a new art, the *art of metaphysical comfort*, tragedy as the Helen who belongs to him, and to cry out with Faust:

“And shouldn’t I, with all the force of longing,
Draw that one and only figure into life?”

“Wouldn’t it be *necessary*?”... No, three times no, you young romantics: it should *not* be necessary! But it is very likely that this is how it *ends*, how *you* end: “comforted,” as it is written, despite all your training for seriousness and terror, “metaphysically comforted.” In short, as romantics end, as *Christians*... No! First you should learn the art of comfort *in this world*. You should learn to *laugh*, my young friends, if you absolutely insist on remaining pessimists. Perhaps then, as people who laugh, you will one day send all metaphysical comforting to the devil—and metaphysics first of all! Or, to put it in the language of that Dionysian monster called *Zarathustra*:

“Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher! And don’t forget your legs either! Lift up your legs too, you good dancers, and better still: stand on your heads as well!

“This crown of the laughing man, this crown of roses: I put this crown on myself, I myself pronounced my laughter holy. I found no one else strong enough for that today.

“Zarathustra the dancer, Zarathustra the light one, who waves his wings, ready to fly, waving to all the birds, ready and prepared, blissfully lighthearted:

“Zarathustra the soothsayer, Zarathustra the truth-laughter, not impatient, not someone who insists on absolutes, someone who loves leaps and leaps to the side: I put this crown on myself!

“This crown of the laughing man, this crown of roses: to you, my brothers,
I throw this crown! I pronounced laughter holy: you higher people, *learn*—to
laugh!”

Also sprach Zarathustra, vierter Theil S. 87.

Preface to Richard Wagner



The thoughts brought together in this book will give rise to every sort of concern, agitation, and misunderstanding, given the peculiar character of our public discussion of art. To keep all that at a distance, and to write these opening words with the same joy of contemplation whose mark they themselves bear on every page, as the petrified trace of good and uplifting hours, I picture the moment when you, my deeply respected friend, receive it. Perhaps after an evening walk through the winter snow, you look at the unbound Prometheus on the title page and read my name. You immediately feel sure that, whatever this book may contain, its author has something serious and urgent to say. You are equally sure that, in everything he thought out, he conversed with you as if you were present, and could write down only something that answered to that presence. You will remember that I gathered my thoughts on these matters at the same time that you were writing your magnificent commemorative essay on Beethoven. That is, amid the terrors and grandeurs of the war that had just broken out. But anyone who thinks this gathering of thoughts set patriotic excitement against aesthetic self-indulgence, or brave seriousness against cheerful play, would be mistaken. If such people actually read this book, they may instead discover to their surprise how seriously German the problem we are dealing with is. We place it right at the center of German hopes, as their vortex and turning point. Yet these same people may find it altogether offensive to see an aesthetic problem taken so seriously. That is, if they can see in art nothing

more than an amusing sideline, a jingling of bells that one could easily do without, alongside the “seriousness of existence.” As if no one knew what such a “seriousness of existence” amounts to when this contrast is made! For the instruction of these serious people, let me say 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 here dedicate this book as my lofty forerunner and champion on this path.

Basel, end of the year 1871.

Section 1



We will have gained a great deal for the science of aesthetics once we reach not just a logical understanding but the direct certainty of seeing this: art's continuing development depends on the duality of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*. In much the same way, reproduction depends on the two sexes, with their constant struggle and reconciliation only at intervals. We take these names from the Greeks. The Greeks made the profound secret teachings of their understanding of art accessible to anyone with insight, not through concepts, but through the strikingly clear figures of their gods. Our recognition is tied to their two gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus. In the Greek world, the image-maker's art, the Apollonian, and the imageless art of music, the art of Dionysus, stand enormously opposed in origin and aims. These two very different drives move alongside each other, usually in open conflict. They provoke each other into ever new and more powerful creations, which carry on the struggle between these opposites. The shared word "art" only seems to bridge that struggle. At last, through a miraculous metaphysical act of the Greek "will," they appear paired together. In that pairing they finally produce Attic tragedy, a work of art that is as Dionysian as it is Apollonian.

To bring these two drives closer to us, let us first imagine them as the separate art worlds of *dreaming* and *intoxication*. Between these physiological phenomena we can observe a contrast corresponding to the one between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. According to Lucretius, it was in dreams that

the splendid figures of the gods first appeared to human souls. In dreams the great sculptor saw the delightful bodily forms of superhuman beings. Asked about the secrets of poetic creation, the Greek poet would likewise have pointed to dreams. He would have given much the same instruction as Hans Sachs gives in *The Mastersingers*:

My friend, that is exactly the poet's work:

To note and interpret his dreaming.

Believe me, a person's truest illusion

Is revealed to him in a dream:

All the art and craft of poetry

Is nothing but interpreting true dreams.

The beautiful semblance of dream worlds, which every person creates as a complete artist, is the precondition of all visual art. It is also, as we will see, the precondition of an important half of poetry. We enjoy these forms through direct understanding. Every shape speaks to us; nothing is unimportant or unnecessary. Even when this dream reality is most alive, we still have a glimmering sense of its being *semblance*. At least that is my experience. I could offer much evidence, including statements by poets, that it is frequent, indeed normal. The philosophical person even suspects that beneath this reality in which we live and exist, a second, quite different reality is hidden, so that this reality too is a semblance. Schopenhauer actually identifies the gift of sometimes seeing people and all things as mere phantoms or dream images as the mark of philosophical ability. The person responsive to art relates to the reality of dreams as the philosopher relates to the reality of existence. He watches closely and gladly. From these images he interprets life for himself; through these events he practices for life. It is not just pleasant, friendly images that he experiences with this complete understanding. Serious, gloomy, sad, and dark things, sudden obstacles, the teasing tricks of chance, anxious expectations—in short, the whole “divine comedy” of life, including the *Inferno*—pass before him. And not just like a shadow play, since he lives and suffers along with these scenes. Yet that fleeting sense of semblance is still there. Perhaps some people, like me, remember that in the dangers and terrors of a dream they have some-

times called out to themselves, taking courage, 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 consecutive nights. These facts clearly show that our innermost being, the shared foundation of us all, experiences dreaming with deep pleasure and joyful necessity.

The Greeks also expressed this joyful necessity of dreaming in their Apollo. Apollo, as the god of all image-making powers, is also the god of prophecy. The root meaning of his name makes him the "shining one," the god of light. He also rules over the beautiful semblance of the inner world of imagination. The higher truth and perfection of these states, compared with the only partly understandable reality of waking life, together with a deep awareness of nature's healing and helpful power in sleep and dreams, are the symbolic counterpart of the gift of prophecy and of the arts in general, which make life possible and worth living. But the image of Apollo must also include that delicate line the dream image must not cross if it is not to become pathological. Otherwise its semblance would deceive us as crude reality. Apollo must have that measured restraint, that freedom from wilder impulses, that wise calm of the image-making god. His eye must be "sunlike," in keeping with his origin. Even when it looks angry and displeased, the blessing of beautiful semblance rests on him. And so, in an unusual sense, what Schopenhauer says of the person caught in the veil of Maya might apply to Apollo. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I S. 416: "Just as, on the raging sea, boundless in every direction, which howls as it raises and lowers mountains of waves, a sailor sits in a boat, trusting the frail vessel, so the individual person sits calmly amid a world of torments, supported by and trusting in the principle of individuation." Indeed, we could say that Apollo gives the highest expression to unshakable trust in that principle of individuation and to the calm of a person caught in it, sitting at rest. We might even call Apollo the magnificent divine image of the principle of individuation. From his gestures and looks, all the pleasure and wisdom of "semblance," together with its beauty, would speak to us.

In the same passage, Schopenhauer described the tremendous *horror* that grips a person who suddenly loses confidence in the forms through which we know appearances, when the principle of sufficient reason seems, in one of its forms, to admit an exception. Add to this horror the blissful ecstasy that rises from the deepest ground of human beings, indeed of nature, when the principle of individuation breaks down in the same way. Then we gain a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*. The analogy of *intoxication* brings it closest to us. Under the influence of the intoxicating drink celebrated in hymns by all early humans and peoples, or with the mighty approach of spring, which fills all nature with pleasure, those Dionysian impulses awaken. As they grow stronger, the subjective element fades into complete self-forgetfulness. In the German Middle Ages too, ever-growing crowds driven by the same Dionysian power surged from place to place, singing and dancing. In these dancers of Saint John and Saint Vitus we recognize the Greeks' Bacchic choruses, whose earlier history leads back through Asia Minor to Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea festivals. Some people, through lack of experience or dullness, turn away from such phenomena as if from "epidemic diseases." Feeling healthy themselves, they respond with mockery or pity. The poor things have no idea 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, the bond between one human being and another is not simply renewed. Nature too, alienated, hostile, or subjugated, once again celebrates her reconciliation with her lost son, humanity. The earth freely offers its gifts, and the beasts of prey from the rocks and deserts approach peacefully. The chariot of Dionysus is covered with flowers and garlands. Panthers and tigers walk beneath his yoke. Turn Beethoven's jubilant song of "Joy" into a painting, and do not let your imagination fall short when the millions sink into the dust in awe: then you can approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man. Now all the rigid, hostile boundaries that necessity, arbitrary power, or "impudent fashion" set up between people break apart. Now, with this gospel of universal harmony, everyone feels not merely united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but one with him. It is as if the veil of Maya had

been torn apart and were fluttering in shreds before the mysterious primal unity. Through singing and dancing, people express their membership in a higher community. They have forgotten how to walk and speak and are on their way to dancing up into the air. Their gestures speak of enchantment. Just as animals now speak and the earth gives milk and honey, something supernatural also sounds out from them. Each person feels like a god, and now moves in the same ecstasy and elevation as the gods he saw moving in dreams. The human being is no longer an artist, but has become a work of art. Here, in the shudders of intoxication, the artistic power of all nature reveals itself, to the highest, most blissful satisfaction of the primal unity. The noblest clay and the most precious marble, the human being, is kneaded and carved here. The cry of the Eleusinian mysteries sounds out to the chisel strokes of the Dionysian world-artist: "Do you fall to the ground, 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 break out of nature itself, *without the human artist acting as a go-between*. In them, nature's artistic drives find their first, direct satisfaction. On the one hand there is the world of dream images, whose perfection has no connection with an individual's intellectual level or artistic education. On the other there is the reality of intoxication, which likewise pays no attention to the individual. Indeed, it seeks to destroy the individual and redeem him through a mystical feeling of oneness. In relation to these immediate artistic states of nature, every artist is an "imitator." He is either an Apollonian artist of dreams or a Dionysian artist of intoxication, or finally—as in Greek tragedy, for example—an artist of both intoxication and dreams. We might imagine this last artist sinking down alone, apart from the ecstatic choruses, in Dionysian drunkenness and mystical self-abandonment. Then, through the influence of Apollonian dreaming, his own condition—his oneness with the innermost ground of the world—is revealed to him *in a symbolic dream image*.

After these general assumptions and contrasts, we now approach the *Greeks*. We want to recognize to what degree and to what height these *artistic drives of nature* had developed in them. This will enable us to understand and appreciate more deeply the Greek artist's relationship to his original models, or, in Aristotle's expression, "the imitation of nature." Despite all the Greeks' literature about dreams and their many dream anecdotes, we can speak of their

dreams only by conjecture, though still with considerable confidence. Their eye had an unbelievably precise and sure gift for visual form, along with a bright, straightforward pleasure in color. We cannot help assuming, to the shame of everyone born later, that their dreams too had a logical causal order of lines and outlines, colors and groups, and a sequence of scenes resembling their finest relief sculptures. If comparison were possible, the perfection of these dreams would certainly justify calling the dreaming Greeks Homers and Homer a dreaming Greek. This would be true in a deeper sense than when a modern person dares to compare himself with Shakespeare on the subject of his own dreams.

By contrast, we need not speak merely by conjecture when revealing the enormous gulf separating 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 show that Dionysian festivals existed. At best, their character compares with that of the Greek festivals as the bearded satyr, who received his name and attributes from the goat, compares with Dionysus himself. Almost everywhere, these festivals centered on extravagant sexual license, whose waves swept over all family life and its respected rules. The wildest beasts of nature were unleashed here, reaching that disgusting mixture of lust and cruelty that has always seemed to me the true “witches’ brew.” News of these festivals reached the Greeks by every land and sea route. For a time, it seems, they were entirely protected and secured against the festivals’ feverish impulses by the figure of Apollo, standing here in all his pride. There was no more dangerous power against which he could hold up the head of Medusa than this grotesque, uncouth Dionysian power. Doric art made this majestic, rejecting posture of Apollo permanent. Resistance became more doubtful, even impossible, when similar drives finally broke out from the deepest roots of Greek life itself. Now the Delphic god’s action was limited to taking the destructive weapons out of his mighty opponent’s hand through a timely reconciliation. This reconciliation is the most important moment in the history of Greek worship. Wherever we look, the changes brought about by this event are visible. It was a reconciliation between two opponents, with a sharp definition

of the boundaries they must now observe, and with periodic exchanges 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 this peace settlement, we now recognize what the Greeks' Dionysian orgies meant. Compared with the Babylonian Sacaea festivals and their regression of humanity to the tiger and the ape, they were festivals of the world's deliverance and days of transfiguration. Only with the Greeks does nature reach its artistic jubilation; only with them does the tearing apart of the principle of individuation become an artistic phenomenon. That horrible witches' brew of lust and cruelty had no power here. Only the strange mixture and doubleness in the emotions of Dionysian enthusiasts recall it—as medicines recall deadly poisons. This is the phenomenon in which pain awakens pleasure and jubilation tears sounds of agony from the chest. Out of the highest joy comes a scream of horror or a longing lament for an irreplaceable loss. In these Greek festivals, a sentimental side of nature seems to break out, as if nature had to sigh over being broken into individuals. The song and body language of these enthusiasts, with their twofold mood, were new and unheard-of to the Homeric Greek world. In particular, Dionysian *music* filled that world with terror and horror. Music may already have seemed familiar as an Apollonian art, but strictly speaking, it was known only as the wave-like beat of rhythm. Rhythm's power to shape forms had been developed to represent Apollonian states. Apollo's music was Doric architecture in sounds, but in sounds only hinted at, like those of the cithara. Precisely the element that makes up the character of Dionysian music, and therefore of music in general, is carefully kept away as un-Apollonian: the shattering power of sound, the unified flow of melody, and the completely incomparable world of harmony. In the Dionysian dithyramb, human beings are driven to develop all their symbolic abilities to their highest intensity. Something never felt before presses for expression: the destruction of the veil of Maya, oneness as the spirit of the species, indeed of nature. Now the essence of nature must express itself symbolically. A new world of symbols is needed. First comes the full symbolism of the body, not just the symbolism of the mouth, face, and words, but the complete gesture of dance, moving every limb rhythmically. Then the other

symbolic powers, those of music, suddenly grow with wild force in rhythm, dynamics, and harmony. To grasp this total unleashing of all symbolic powers, a person must already have reached that height of self-abandonment that seeks symbolic expression through these powers. Thus the dithyrambic servant of Dionysus is understood only by his own kind! How astonished the Apollonian Greek must have been to look at him! His astonishment was all the greater because it was mixed with the horror of realizing that all this was not really so foreign to him after all. Indeed, his Apollonian consciousness only covered this Dionysian world from his sight like a veil.

Section 3



To understand this, we must take down the artful building of *Apollonian culture*, stone by stone, as it were, until we see the foundations on which it rests. The first things we notice are the magnificent figures of the *Olympian* gods standing on its pediments. Their deeds, shown in reliefs that shine far into the distance, decorate its friezes. Apollo stands among them as one god beside others, with no claim to first place, but we must not let that confuse us. The same drive that took visible form in Apollo gave birth to this whole Olympian world. In this sense, we may regard Apollo as its father. What enormous need gave rise to so radiant a company of Olympian beings?

Anyone who approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart, looking for moral elevation, even holiness, for disembodied spirituality, for loving looks full of compassion, will soon have to turn away in disappointment and irritation. Nothing here suggests self-denial, spirituality, or duty. Only a lush, indeed triumphant existence speaks to us here, in which everything that exists is made divine, whether good or evil. The observer may stand quite taken aback before this fantastic overflow of life. He may ask with what magic potion in their bodies these high-spirited people must have enjoyed life, so that wherever they look, Helen smiles back at them, the ideal image of their own existence, “floating in sweet sensuality.” But we must call out to this observer, who has already turned to leave: “Do not go away. First listen to what Greek folk wisdom says about this very life, which spreads before you here with such

inexplicable cheerfulness. The old story goes that King Midas hunted for a long time in the forest for the wise *Silenus*, companion of Dionysus, without catching him. When Silenus finally fell into his hands, the king asked what was the very best and most excellent thing for human beings. Stiff and motionless, the daemon remained silent. At last, forced by the king, he broke into shrill laughter and these words: ‘Wretched creatures 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 thing is completely beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best thing for you is—to die soon.’”

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

Now the enchanted mountain of Olympus seems to open up and show us its roots. The Greek knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence. To be able to live at all, he had to place before them the shining dream creation of the Olympians. There was that enormous distrust of the Titanic powers of nature; Moira, mercilessly enthroned above all knowledge; the vulture of Prometheus, the great friend of humanity; the terrible fate of wise Oedipus; the ancestral curse of the house of Atreus, which forces Orestes to murder his mother. In short, there was the forest god’s entire philosophy, together with its mythical examples, which brought the melancholy Etruscans to ruin. Through the Olympians, that artistic *world in between*, the Greeks continually overcame it anew, or at least covered it up and removed it from sight. Out of the deepest necessity, the Greeks had to create these gods in order to live. We should probably imagine the process like this: from the original Titanic order of gods, an order of terror, the Apollonian drive for beauty gradually developed the Olympian order of gods, an order of joy, as roses burst out of a thornbush. How else could this people, so sensitive, so fiercely desiring, so uniquely capable of *suffering*, have endured existence if it had not been shown to them in their gods, surrounded by a higher glory? The same drive that calls art into life, as the supplement and completion of existence that tempts us to keep living, also brought the Olympian world into being. In it, the Greek “will” held up to itself

a transfiguring mirror. Thus the gods justify human life by living it themselves—the only sufficient justification of God! Existence in the bright sunshine of such gods is felt to be desirable in itself. The real *pain* of the Homeric people concerns leaving it, above all leaving it soon. Reversing the wisdom of Silenus, we could now say of them: “The very worst thing for them is to die soon, and the second worst is to die at all.” When a lament does sound, it speaks again of short-lived Achilles, of the human race changing and passing like leaves, of the fall of the heroic age. It is not unworthy of the greatest hero to long to keep living, even as a day laborer. At the Apollonian stage, the “will” desires this existence so fiercely, and the Homeric person feels so much at one with it, that even lament becomes a song in its praise.

Here we must make something clear. This harmony, indeed unity, between human beings and nature, which modern people look at with such longing, and for which Schiller established the special term “naive,” is by no means a simple, seemingly unavoidable condition that arises on its own. It is not something we *must* encounter at the entrance to every culture as a paradise of humanity. Only an age that tried to imagine Rousseau’s *Emile* as an artist as well, and believed it had found in Homer just such an artist-*Emile* raised close to nature’s heart, could believe that. Wherever we meet the “naive” in art, we must recognize the highest achievement of Apollonian culture. This culture must always first overthrow an empire of Titans and kill monsters. Through powerful deceptive images and pleasurable illusions, it must have overcome a terrifying depth in its view of the world and an acutely sensitive capacity for suffering. But how rarely the naive is achieved—that complete absorption in the beauty of semblance! How inexpressibly great *Homer* is, therefore. As an individual, he stands in the same relationship to that Apollonian popular culture as the individual dream-artist stands 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. It is the kind of illusion that nature so often uses to achieve its aims. An illusory image hides the true goal. We reach out our hands toward that image, and nature achieves its goal through our deception. In the Greeks, the “will” wanted to look at itself, trans-

figured in genius and the world of art. To glorify itself, its creatures had to feel that they themselves deserved glorification. They had to see themselves again in a higher sphere, without this perfected world of vision acting as a command or a reproach. This is the sphere of beauty in which they saw their mirror images, the Olympians. With this reflection of beauty, the Greek “will” fought against the talent for suffering and for the wisdom of suffering that went hand in hand with its artistic talent. As the monument to its victory, Homer stands before us, the naive artist.

Section 4



The analogy with dreams teaches us something about this naive artist. Picture a dreamer who, in the middle of the illusion of the dream world and without disturbing it, calls to himself: “It is a dream; I want to keep dreaming it.” From this we must infer a deep inner pleasure in looking at dreams. On the other hand, to dream at all with this inner pleasure in looking, we must have completely forgotten the day and its terrible intrusiveness. Under the guidance of Apollo, the interpreter of dreams, we may explain all these phenomena roughly as follows. Of life’s two halves, waking and dreaming, we certainly think the first far more preferable, important, worthy, and worth living—indeed, the only half really lived. Yet, however paradoxical it may seem, I would assert, for that mysterious ground of our being whose appearance we are, precisely the opposite valuation of the dream. The more I see those all-powerful artistic drives in nature, and in them a passionate longing for semblance, for deliverance through semblance, the more I feel driven to a metaphysical assumption. What truly exists, the primal unity, as that which eternally suffers and is full of contradictions, also needs the enchanting vision, the pleasurable semblance, for its continual deliverance. We, completely caught in this semblance and made up of it, are compelled to experience it as what truly does not exist: that is, as a constant becoming in time, space, and causality, or, in other words, as empirical reality. Let us therefore set aside our own “reality” for a moment. Let us understand our existence as we experience it, and that of the world in general, as a

representation produced by the primal unity at every moment. Then we must now regard the dream as the *semblance of semblance*, and therefore as an even higher satisfaction of the primal desire for semblance. For this same reason, nature's innermost core 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, showed us in a symbolic painting how semblance is taken down one level into semblance: the primal process of the naive artist and also of Apollonian culture. In his *Transfiguration*, the lower half, with the possessed boy, the despairing bearers, and the helpless, frightened disciples, shows us the reflection of eternal primal pain, the world's only ground. Here "semblance" is the reflection of eternal contradiction, the father of things. Out of this semblance a new, vision-like world of semblance rises like an ambrosial fragrance. Those caught in the first semblance see nothing of it: a radiant floating in the purest bliss and a painless contemplation shining from wide-open eyes. Here, in the highest artistic symbolism, we have before our eyes that Apollonian world of beauty and its foundation, the terrible wisdom of Silenus. Through intuition, we grasp their mutual necessity. But Apollo once again appears to us as the principle of individuation made divine. Only in this principle is the eternally achieved goal of the primal unity, its deliverance through semblance, fulfilled. With grand gestures he shows us how the whole world of torment is needed, so that it drives the individual to produce the vision that delivers him. Then, absorbed in looking at it, the individual sits calmly in his rocking boat in the middle of the sea.

Treating individuation as divine, if we think of this as issuing commands and rules at all, means recognizing only one law: the individual. That means keeping within the individual's boundaries, *measure* in the Greek sense. As an ethical god, Apollo demands measure from his followers, and self-knowledge so that they can keep to it. So alongside the aesthetic necessity of beauty run the demands "Know yourself" and "Not too much!" Self-conceit and excess, meanwhile, were regarded as the truly hostile spirits of the non-Apollonian sphere, and therefore as qualities of the pre-Apollonian age, the age of the Titans, and of the world outside the Apollonian, the world of barbarians. Because of his

Titanic love for human beings, Prometheus had to be torn apart by vultures. Because of his excessive wisdom, which solved the Sphinx's riddle, Oedipus had to plunge into a bewildering whirlpool of crimes. This was how the Delphic god interpreted the Greek past.

The Apollonian Greek also thought the effect produced by the *Dionysian* was "Titanic" and "barbaric." Yet he could not hide from himself that he was also inwardly related to those overthrown Titans and heroes. Indeed, he had to feel something more: his whole existence, with all its beauty and moderation, rested on a hidden foundation of suffering and knowledge, which the Dionysian revealed to him again. And look! Apollo could not live without Dionysus! The "Titanic" and the "barbaric" were ultimately just as necessary as the Apollonian! Now imagine the ecstatic sound of the Dionysian celebration entering this world built on semblance and moderation and held in check by artifice, in ever more enticing, magical melodies. Imagine all the *excess* of nature in pleasure, suffering, and knowledge sounding out in them, rising to a piercing scream. What could Apollo's chanting artist, with his ghostly harp music, amount to beside this demonic song of the people? The Muses of the arts of "semblance" grew pale before an art that spoke the truth in its intoxication. The wisdom of Silenus cried out "Misery! Misery!" against the cheerful Olympians. Here the individual, with all his limits and measures, sank into the self-forgetfulness of Dionysian states and forgot Apollo's rules. *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 canceled and destroyed. But it is just as certain that wherever the first assault was withstood, the Delphic god's authority and majesty expressed themselves more rigidly and threateningly than ever. I can explain the *Doric* state and Doric art only as a permanent armed camp of the Apollonian. Only through unceasing resistance to the Titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysian could such a defiantly unyielding art, enclosed in fortifications, such a warlike and harsh education, and such a cruel and ruthless state endure for long.

Up to this point, we have developed in more detail what I noted at the beginning of this essay: how the Dionysian and the Apollonian ruled Greek life through ever new, successive births, each intensifying the other. Under the rule of the Apollonian drive for beauty, the Homeric world developed out of the “bronze” age, with its battles of Titans and its harsh folk philosophy. This “naive” splendor was swallowed in turn by the flooding stream of the Dionysian. In opposition to this new power, the Apollonian rose to the rigid majesty of Doric art and its view of the world. In this way, the earlier history of Greece, through the struggle of these two hostile principles, falls into four great artistic stages. Unless we regard the last period reached, the period of Doric art, as the peak and purpose of these artistic drives, we are now pushed to ask further about the ultimate plan behind this becoming and activity. Here the magnificent and highly praised artwork of *Attic tragedy* and the dramatic dithyramb presents itself to our eyes as the shared goal of both drives. After a long earlier struggle, their mysterious marriage glorified itself in such a child—who is both Antigone and Cassandra.

Section 5



We now approach the real goal of our inquiry: to understand the Dionysian-Apollonian genius and his artwork, or at least to gain an intuitive understanding of that mystery of unity. Our first question here is where the new seed that later developed into tragedy and the dramatic dithyramb first made itself felt in the Greek world. Antiquity itself gives us a visual answer. In sculptures, engraved gems, and similar works, it places *Homer and Archilochus* side by side as the founding fathers and torchbearers of Greek poetry. It does so with the sure feeling that only these two should be regarded as equally original natures, from whom a stream of fire flows onward through all later Greek generations. Homer, the aged dreamer absorbed in himself, the model of the Apollonian, naïve artist, now looks in astonishment at the passionate head of Archilochus, that warlike servant of the Muses driven wildly through existence. Modern aesthetics knew only how to add the interpretation that here the first “subjective” artist was set against the “objective” one. This interpretation does little for us. We recognize the subjective artist only as a bad artist. In every kind and level of art, our first and foremost demand is that the subjective be overcome, the artist freed from the “I,” and every individual will and desire silenced. Indeed, without objectivity, without pure contemplation free from personal interests, we cannot believe in even the smallest truly artistic creation. So our aesthetics must first solve this problem: how is the “lyric poet” possible as an artist? The experience of every age shows that he always says “I” and sings through the whole

chromatic scale of his passions and desires before us. It is precisely this Archilochus, beside Homer, who frightens us with the cry of his hatred and mockery, with the drunken outbursts of his desire. As the first so-called subjective artist, isn't he therefore really a nonartist? But then where does the reverence shown to him as a poet come from—reverence shown especially by the Delphic oracle itself, the hearth of "objective" art, in some very remarkable pronouncements?

Schiller shed light on his own process of composing poetry through a psychological observation that he himself could not explain, though he did not find it troubling. He admits that the preparatory state before the act of composing did not consist of a series of images before and within him, with thoughts arranged in a causal order. Rather, it was a *musical mood*: "At first my feeling has no definite, clear object; this forms only later. A certain musical state of mind comes first, and only then does the poetic idea follow." Now add the most important phenomenon of all ancient lyric poetry: the union, indeed identity, *of the lyric poet with the musician*, which was everywhere taken as natural. Compared with this, our modern lyric poetry looks like a statue of a god without a head. On the basis of the aesthetic metaphysics set out earlier, we can now explain the lyric poet as follows. First, as a Dionysian artist, he has become completely one with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction. He produces the image of this primal unity as music, if music has rightly been called a repetition of the world and a second casting of it. But now, under the influence of Apollonian dreaming, this music becomes visible to him again as if in a *symbolic dream image*. That reflection of primal pain in music, without images or concepts and with its deliverance in semblance, now produces a second reflection, as a single symbol or example. The artist has already given up his subjectivity in the Dionysian process. The image that now shows him his unity with the heart of the world is a dream scene. It makes perceptible that primal contradiction and primal pain, together with the primal pleasure of semblance. The lyric poet's "I" therefore sounds from the depths of being. His "subjectivity," in the sense used by modern aesthetic theorists, is an imagined thing. When Archilochus, the Greeks' first lyric poet, declares his raging love and also 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 into sleep—as Euripides describes such sleep for us in *The Bacchae*, on a high mountain pasture in the midday sun. Now Apollo approaches and touches him with the laurel. The sleeper’s Dionysian-musical enchantment now seems to spray sparks of images around him: lyric poems, which at their highest development are called tragedies and dramatic dithyrambs.

The sculptor, and likewise the epic poet who is related to him, is absorbed in the pure contemplation of images. The Dionysian musician has no image at all, but is himself entirely primal pain and its primal echo. From the mystical state of self-abandonment and unity, the lyric genius feels a world of images and symbols growing. This world has a completely different coloring, causal order, and speed from the world of the sculptor and epic poet. The epic poet lives in these images, and only in them, with joyful contentment. He never tires of looking lovingly at their smallest details. Even the image of angry Achilles is only an image to him. He enjoys its angry expression with that dreamlike pleasure in semblance, so that this mirror of semblance protects him from becoming one with his figures and merging with them. The lyric poet’s images, by contrast, are nothing but *himself*, as it were only different forms in which he becomes an object. That is why, as the center that sets that world in motion, he may say “I.” But this selfhood is not the same as that of a waking, empirically real person. It is the only selfhood that truly exists at all, eternal and resting at the foundation of things. Through its images, the lyric genius sees right through to that foundation. Now let us imagine him seeing among these images *himself* as a person without genius: that is, his “subject,” the whole swarm of subjective passions and impulses of will directed at a particular thing that seems real to him. If it now seems that the lyric genius and the person without genius attached to him are one, and that the former is speaking that little word “I” about himself, this semblance can no longer mislead us. It certainly misled those who called the lyric poet the subjective poet. In truth, Archilochus, the passionately inflamed person who loves and hates, is only a

vision of the genius. This genius is no longer Archilochus, but the genius of the world, and expresses his primal pain symbolically in that image of the person Archilochus. By contrast, Archilochus the subjective person who wills and desires can never, under any circumstances, be a poet. But it is by no means necessary for the lyric poet to see only the appearance of the person Archilochus before him as a reflection of eternal being. Tragedy proves how far the lyric poet's world of visions can move away from that appearance, even though it admittedly lies closest to him at first.

Schopenhauer did not hide from himself the difficulty that the lyric poet presents for a philosophical understanding of art. He believes he has found a way out, but I cannot follow him along it. Yet he alone, in his profound metaphysics of music, had been given the means to remove that difficulty decisively. I believe I have done so here in his spirit and in his honor. Instead, he identifies the distinctive nature of song as follows (*Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, S. 295): "It is the subject of willing, that is, one's own willing, that fills the singer's consciousness, often as a released, satisfied willing (joy), but still more often as an obstructed willing (sorrow). It is always an emotion, a passion, a stirred-up state of mind. Yet alongside this and at the same time, the sight of the surrounding natural world makes the singer conscious of himself as the subject of pure, will-less knowing. The unshakable, blissful calm of this knowing now contrasts with the pressure of willing, which is always limited and still needy. The feeling of this contrast, this interplay, is really what the song as a whole expresses, and what makes up the lyrical state in general. In this state, pure knowing seems to approach us to free us from willing and its pressure. 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, the immediate beauty of our surroundings, in which pure, will-less knowledge presents itself to us, draws us away from willing. That is why in song and in the lyrical mood, willing (the personal interest in a goal) and pure contemplation of the surroundings before us are strangely mixed together. Connections between the two are sought and imagined. The subjective mood, the state of the will,

imparts its coloring to the surroundings being contemplated, and these in turn reflect their coloring onto that mood. A genuine song is the imprint of this entire state of mind, so mixed and divided.”

Who could fail to recognize in this description that lyric poetry is being characterized as an incompletely achieved art, an art that seems always to be leaping and rarely reaching its goal? Indeed, it is described as a half-art whose *essence* is supposed to consist in a strange mixture of willing and pure contemplation: that is, of the nonaesthetic and the aesthetic state. We argue instead that this entire contrast between the subjective and the objective, by which even Schopenhauer still classifies the arts as if using a measuring rod of value, has no place at all in aesthetics. The subject, the individual who wills and pursues his selfish aims, can be thought of only as art’s opponent, not its origin. But insofar as the subject is an artist, he is already freed from his individual will. He has become something like a medium through which the one truly existing subject celebrates its deliverance in semblance. For above all, this must be clear to us, to humble *and* elevate us: the whole comedy of art is certainly not performed for us, say for the sake of our improvement and education. Nor are we the real creators of that art world. But we may assume that for its true creator we ourselves are already images and artistic projections, and that our highest dignity lies in our significance as works of art. For only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* are existence and the world eternally *justified*. Of course, our awareness of this significance of ours is hardly different from the awareness painted warriors have of the battle shown on their canvas. Thus all our knowledge of art is at bottom completely 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, gives himself eternal enjoyment. Only insofar as the genius merges, in the act of artistic creation, with that primal artist of the world does he know anything about the eternal essence of art. For in that state he is, in a marvelous way, like the uncanny image in the fairy tale 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



As for Archilochus, scholarly research has found that he introduced the *folk song* into literature, and that because of this deed he holds his unique place beside Homer in the general esteem of the Greeks. But what is the folk song, as opposed to the thoroughly Apollonian epic? It is nothing other than the lasting trace of a union of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Its enormous spread across all peoples, growing through ever new births, is evidence for us of how strong that double artistic drive of nature is. This drive leaves its traces in the folk song in the same way that the orgiastic movements of a people make themselves permanent in its music. Indeed, it would also have to be provable historically that every period rich in folk songs was at the same time stirred most powerfully by Dionysian currents. We must always regard these currents as the underlying ground and precondition of the folk song.

For us, though, the folk song counts first of all as a musical mirror of the world, as original melody that now looks for a parallel dream appearance and expresses it in poetry. *So melody is the first and universal thing*, and for that reason it can undergo several objectifications, in several texts. In the simple judgment of the people it is also by far the more important and the more necessary part. Melody gives birth to poetry out of itself, and does so again and again. This is all that *the stanza form of the folk song* wants to tell us. I always looked at this phenomenon with astonishment, until I finally found this explanation. Whoever examines a collection of folk songs from this point of view, for exam-

ple The Boy's Magic Horn, will find countless examples of how the continually birthing melody sprays sparks of images around itself. In their colorfulness, their sudden changes, even their mad tumbling over one another, these images reveal a force utterly foreign to epic semblance and its calm flowing on. From the standpoint of the epic, this uneven and irregular world of images in lyric poetry can simply be condemned. And the solemn epic rhapsodes of the Apollonian festivals in the age of Terpander certainly did condemn it.

In the poetry of the folk song, then, we see language strained to the utmost to *imitate music*. That is why a new world of poetry begins with Archilochus, one that contradicts the Homeric world at its deepest ground. With this we have named the only possible relationship between poetry and music, word and tone: the word, the image, the concept looks for an expression analogous to music, and now suffers the force of music itself. In this sense we may distinguish two main currents in the history of the Greek language, depending on whether the language imitated the world of appearances and images or the world of music. One only needs to think more deeply about the linguistic difference in coloring, sentence structure, and vocabulary between Homer and Pindar to grasp the meaning of this opposition. It even becomes tangibly clear that between Homer and Pindar the *orgiastic flute melodies of Olympus* must have sounded. Even in the age of Aristotle, in the midst of an infinitely more developed music, they still swept people away into drunken enthusiasm. And in their original effect they certainly provoked all the poetic means of expression of the people of that time to imitate them. Here I recall a familiar phenomenon of our own day, one that our aesthetics finds merely offensive. Again and again we see how a Beethoven symphony forces individual listeners to speak in images. A comparison of the different worlds of images that a single piece of music produces may look quite fantastically colorful, even contradictory. But to exercise one's poor wit on such comparisons, and to overlook the phenomenon, which truly deserves an explanation, is exactly in the manner of that aesthetics. Even when the composer himself has spoken about a composition in images—for example, when he calls a symphony pastoral, one movement "Scene at the Brook," and another "Merry Gathering of Country Folk"—

these are likewise only ideas that are likenesses, born from the music—and not, say, the imitated objects of the music—ideas that cannot teach us anything about the *Dionysian* content of the music, and that have no exclusive value beside other images. We must now transfer this process of music discharging itself in images to a youthfully fresh, linguistically creative crowd of people, in order to get an inkling of how the strophic folk song arises and how the whole power of language is stirred up by the new principle of imitating music.

If we may regard lyric poetry as the imitative shining forth of music in images and concepts, we can now ask: “What does music *appear* as in the mirror of imagery and concepts?” *It appears as will*, taking the word in Schopenhauer’s sense, that is, as the opposite of the aesthetic mood, which is purely contemplative and free of will. Here we must distinguish, as sharply as possible, the concept of essence from the concept of appearance. For music, in its essence, cannot possibly be will, because as will it would have to be banished completely from the realm of art—for will is what is unaesthetic in itself. But it appears as will. To express its appearance in images, the lyric poet needs every stirring of passion, from the whisper of affection to the rumble of madness. Under the urge to speak about music in Apollonian likenesses, he understands all of nature, and himself within it, only as that which eternally wills, desires, and longs. But insofar as he interprets music in images, he himself rests in the quiet calm of the sea that belongs to Apollonian contemplation, however much everything he sees through the medium of music is in pressing, driving motion around him. Indeed, when he catches sight of himself through the same medium, his own image shows itself to him in a state of unsatisfied feeling. His own willing, longing, groaning, and rejoicing is a likeness 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 will, while he himself, completely released from the craving of will, is a pure, untroubled eye of the sun.

This whole discussion insists that lyric poetry depends on the spirit of music just as much as music itself, in its complete boundlessness, does not *need* the image and the concept but only *tolerates* them beside itself. The lyric poet’s poetry can say nothing that was not already contained, in the greatest possible

generality and universal validity, in the music that forced him to speak in images. For this very reason, the world symbolism of music can in no way be fully captured in language. Music refers symbolically to the primal contradiction and primal pain in the heart of the primal unity, and so it symbolizes a sphere that is above all appearance and before all appearance. Compared with it, every appearance is rather only a likeness. So *language*, as the organ and symbol of appearances, can never and nowhere turn the innermost depth of music outward. Whenever language takes up the imitation of music, it stays in only an external contact with music, while the deepest meaning of music cannot be brought one step closer to us by all lyrical eloquence.

Section 7



We must now call on all the artistic principles discussed so far to find our way through the labyrinth that we have to name *the origin of Greek tragedy*. I do not think I am saying anything absurd when I say that the problem of this origin has not even been seriously posed so far, let alone solved. This is true however often the scattered scraps of ancient tradition have been stitched together by clever combination and torn apart again. This tradition tells us with complete decisiveness *that tragedy arose from the tragic chorus*, and that originally it was only chorus and nothing but chorus. That gives us the duty to look into the heart of this tragic chorus as the real original drama. We must not let ourselves be satisfied in any way by the usual stock phrases about art—that the chorus is the ideal spectator, or that it has to represent the people over against the princely region of the stage. That last explanation sounds lofty to many a politician. It suggests that the unchanging moral law was presented by the democratic Athenians in the people's chorus, which always turns out to be right over against the passionate excesses and extravagances of kings. A remark of Aristotle's may suggest this idea ever so strongly. Still, it has no influence on the original formation of tragedy, because the whole opposition of people and prince, indeed every political and social sphere, is excluded from those purely religious origins. But even with regard to the classical form of the chorus that we know from Aeschylus and Sophocles, we would consider it blasphemy to speak here of a presentiment of a "constitutional popular representation."

Others have not shrunk from this blasphemy. The ancient constitutions of states did not know a constitutional popular representation in practice, and I hope they did not even “have a presentiment” of one in their tragedy.

Much more famous than this political explanation of the chorus is the idea of A. W. Schlegel. He recommends that we regard the chorus in a way as the sum and extract of the crowd of spectators, as the “ideal spectator.” Held up against that historical tradition that tragedy was originally only chorus, this view shows itself for what it is: a crude, unscientific, yet brilliant claim. It got its brilliance only from its concentrated form of expression, from the truly German bias for everything called “ideal,” and from our momentary astonishment. For we are astonished as soon as we compare the theater audience we know so well with that chorus, and ask ourselves whether it could ever be possible to idealize out of this audience anything analogous to the tragic chorus. We quietly deny this, and now we wonder just as much at the boldness of Schlegel’s claim as at the totally different nature of the Greek audience. For we had always thought that the right spectator, whoever they may be, must always stay aware that they have a work of art before them and not an empirical reality. The tragic chorus of the Greeks, however, is compelled to recognize real beings in the flesh in the figures on the stage. The chorus of Oceanids really believes it sees the Titan Prometheus before it, and takes itself to be just as real as the god of the stage. And that is supposed to be the highest and purest kind of spectator, to hold Prometheus to be bodily present and real, as the Oceanids do? And it would be the sign of the ideal spectator to run onto the stage and free the god from his tortures? We had believed in an aesthetic audience. We had considered the individual spectator more capable the better able they were 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 act on them not aesthetically at all, but bodily and empirically. “Oh, these Greeks!” we sigh; “they overturn our aesthetics!” But since we were used to it, we repeated Schlegel’s saying whenever the chorus came up.

But that very explicit tradition speaks against Schlegel here. The chorus by itself, without a stage—that is, the primitive form of tragedy—and that chorus of ideal spectators do not fit together. What kind of art form would that be, one drawn out of the concept of the spectator, whose real form would have to be the “spectator as such”? The spectator without a spectacle is a nonsensical concept. We fear that tragedy’s birth can be explained neither from respect for the moral intelligence of the masses nor from the concept of the spectator without a play. We consider this problem too deep to be even touched by such shallow ways of looking at it.

Schiller had already shown a far more valuable insight into the meaning of the chorus in his famous preface to *The Bride of Messina*. He regarded the chorus as a living wall that tragedy draws around itself, to shut itself off cleanly from the real world and to preserve its ideal ground and its poetic freedom.

With this chief weapon of his, Schiller fights against the common idea of the natural, against the illusion that is usually demanded in dramatic poetry. The day itself on the stage is only artificial, he says, the architecture only symbolic, and metrical language ideal in character. Even so, the error still prevails overall: it is not enough to tolerate merely as a poetic freedom what is in fact the essence of all poetry. The introduction of the chorus, he says, is the decisive step by which war is openly and honestly declared on every naturalism in art.—It is this kind of view, it seems to me, for which our age, which fancies itself superior, uses the dismissive slogan “pseudo-idealism.” I fear that, with our present worship of the natural and the real, we have arrived at the opposite pole of all idealism, namely the region of the waxworks. There is art in these too, as in certain popular novels of the present day. Only let no one torment us with the claim that this art has overcome the “pseudo-idealism” of Schiller and Goethe.

Of course it is an “ideal” ground on which, according to Schiller’s correct insight, the Greek satyr chorus, the chorus of original tragedy, walks: a ground raised high above the real walking path of mortals. For this chorus the Greek built the floating scaffolding of a fictional *state of nature* and placed fictional *beings of nature* on it. Tragedy grew up on this foundation, and for that reason

alone it was, of course, relieved from the beginning of any painstaking copying of reality. Still, this is not a world fancifully dreamed up at random between heaven and earth. It is rather a world with the same reality and credibility that Olympus and its inhabitants had for the believing Greek. The satyr, as the Dionysian chorus member, lives in a reality granted by religion, under the sanction of myth and cult. That tragedy begins with him, and that the Dionysian wisdom of tragedy speaks out of him, is a phenomenon as strange to us as the origin of tragedy from the chorus altogether. Perhaps we can gain a starting point for our reflection if I put forward this claim: the satyr, the fictional being of nature, stands to the cultured person in the same relation as Dionysian music stands to civilization. Of civilization Richard Wagner says that music cancels it out as daylight cancels out lamplight. In the same way, I believe, the cultured Greek felt himself canceled out in the face of the satyr chorus. And this is the immediate effect of Dionysian tragedy: the state and society, indeed the gulfs between one person and another, give way to an overpowering feeling of unity that leads back to the heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort—with which, as I already hint here, every true tragedy sends us away—is that life at the foundation of things, despite all change of appearances, is indestructibly powerful and full of joy. This comfort appears with bodily clarity as the satyr chorus, as a chorus of beings of nature who live on indestructibly, so to speak, behind all civilization, and who remain eternally the same despite all change of generations and all the history of peoples.

With this chorus the deep-thinking Greek comforts himself. This Greek is uniquely capable of the most delicate and the heaviest suffering. With a sharp gaze he has looked into the terrible work of destruction in so-called world history, as well as into the cruelty of nature, and he is in danger of longing for a Buddhist denial of the will. Art saves him, and through art—life saves him for itself.

The rapture of the Dionysian state, with its destruction of the usual barriers and limits of existence, contains during its duration a *lethargic* element, in which everything personally experienced in the past is submerged. In this way, through this gulf of forgetting, the world of everyday reality and the world of

Dionysian reality are separated from each other. But as soon as that everyday reality returns to consciousness, it is felt as such with disgust. An ascetic, will-denying mood is the fruit of those states. In this sense the Dionysian person resembles Hamlet. Both have once looked truly into the essence of things. They have *understood*, and acting disgusts them. For their action can change nothing in the eternal essence of things. They feel it as ridiculous or shameful that they are expected to set right again a 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, from an excess of possibilities, so to speak, never gets to act. Not reflection, no!—true knowledge, insight into the terrifying truth, outweighs every motive that drives toward action, in Hamlet as in the Dionysian person. Now no comfort has any hold. The longing reaches beyond a world after death, beyond the gods themselves. Existence, together with its glittering reflection in the gods or in an immortal beyond, is denied. Aware of the truth once seen, the human being now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of being. Now they understand what is symbolic in the fate of Ophelia. Now they recognize the wisdom of the forest god Silenus. It disgusts them.

Here, in this greatest danger to the will, *art* approaches as a saving, healing sorceress. Only art can bend those disgusted thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into ideas that one can live with. These ideas are the *sublime*, as the artistic taming of the horrible, 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. In the middle world of these Dionysian companions, those fits of disgust described just now were spent.

Section 8



The satyr and the idyllic shepherd of our more recent age are both products of a longing for the original and the natural. But with what a firm, fearless grip the Greek seized his forest man, and how bashfully and softly the modern person toyed with the flattering picture of a tender, fluting, soft-natured shepherd! In his satyr the Greek saw nature on which no knowledge had yet worked, nature in which the bolts of culture had not yet been broken open. That is why, for him, the satyr did not yet merge with the ape. On the contrary, the satyr was the original image of the human being, the expression of the human being's highest and strongest stirrings. He was an inspired reveler, delighted by the nearness of the god. He was a suffering companion, in whom the suffering of the god is repeated. He was a proclaimer of wisdom out of the deepest breast of nature. He was a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature, which the Greek is used to viewing with reverent wonder. The satyr was something sublime and divine. He had to seem so especially to the painfully broken gaze of the Dionysian person. The dressed-up, lying shepherd would have offended such a person. His eye rested with sublime satisfaction on nature's grand script, unveiled and undiminished. Here the illusion of culture was wiped away from the original image of the human being. Here the true human being revealed himself, the bearded satyr, shouting for joy up to his god. Before him the cultured person shrank into a lying caricature. For these beginnings of tragic art, too, Schiller is right: the chorus is a living wall against onrushing reality,

because it—the satyr chorus—portrays existence more truthfully, more really, and more completely than the cultured person, who commonly takes himself to be the only reality. The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world, as the fantastic impossibility of a poet's brain. It wants to be exactly the opposite, the unvarnished expression of truth, and for that very reason it must throw off the lying finery of the supposed reality of the cultured person. The contrast between this real truth of nature and the lie of culture, which poses as the only reality, is like the contrast between the eternal core of things, the thing in itself, and the whole world of appearances. Tragedy, with its metaphysical comfort, points to the eternal life of that core of existence, amid the continual passing away of appearances. In the same way, the symbolism of the satyr chorus already expresses in a likeness that original relationship between the thing in itself and appearance. That idyllic shepherd of the modern person is only a counterfeit of the sum of illusions of education that he takes for nature. The Dionysian Greek wants truth and nature in their highest force—he sees himself enchanted into a satyr.

Under such moods and insights the ecstatic crowd of Dionysus's servants rejoices. Their power transforms them even before their own eyes, so that they imagine they see themselves as restored spirits of nature, as satyrs. The later constitution of the tragic chorus is the artistic imitation of that natural phenomenon. With it, however, a separation of Dionysian spectators from those under the Dionysian spell became necessary. Only we must always keep in mind that the audience of Attic tragedy found itself again in the chorus of the orchestra, and 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 saying must open 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 the seating area was built in terraces rising in concentric arcs. This made it possible for everyone to actually *survey* the whole cultured world around them, and in full, satisfied gazing to imagine themselves a member of

the chorus. From this insight we may call the chorus, at its primitive stage in original tragedy, a self-mirroring of the Dionysian person. This phenomenon can be made clearest by the process of the actor. If truly gifted, the actor sees the image of the role he is to play hovering before his eyes so that he can almost touch it. The satyr chorus is first of all a vision of the Dionysian mass, just as the world of the stage is in turn a vision of this satyr chorus. The force of this vision is strong enough to make the gaze dull and insensitive to the impression of "reality," to the educated people lounging in the rows of seats all around. The form of the Greek theater recalls a lonely mountain valley. The architecture of the stage looks like a shining cloud image that the Bacchae, roaming in the mountains, see from the heights. It is the glorious frame in whose middle the image of Dionysus is revealed to them.

That original artistic phenomenon, which we bring up here to explain the tragic chorus, is almost offensive given our scholarly view of the elementary artistic processes. Yet nothing can be more certain than that the poet is a poet only because he sees himself surrounded by figures who live and act before him, and into whose innermost being he looks. Because of a peculiar weakness of modern talent, we tend to imagine the original aesthetic phenomenon as too complicated and abstract. For the genuine poet, the metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a substitute image that really hovers before him in place of a concept. For him a character is not a whole composed of pieced-together individual traits, but a person who is insistently alive before his eyes. This person differs from a painter's comparable vision only in that it keeps living and acting on. What makes Homer describe things so much more vividly than all other poets? Because he looks at so much more. We talk about poetry so abstractly because we are all in the habit of being bad poets. At bottom the aesthetic phenomenon is simple. If one only has the ability to see a lively play continuously and to live always surrounded by crowds of spirits, one is a poet. If one only feels the urge to transform oneself and to speak out of other bodies and souls, one is a dramatist.

Dionysian excitement is able to pass this artistic gift on to a whole crowd: to see itself surrounded by such a host of spirits, with whom it knows itself to be inwardly one. This process of the tragic chorus is the original *dramatic* phenomenon: to see oneself transformed before oneself, and now to act as if one had really entered another body, another character. This process stands at the beginning of the development of drama. Here is something different from the rhapsode, who does not fuse with his images but, like the painter, sees them with a contemplative eye outside himself. Here there is already a giving up of the individual by entering into a foreign nature. And this phenomenon appears like an epidemic: a whole crowd feels enchanted in this way. The dithyramb is therefore essentially different from every other choral song. The maidens who solemnly walk to the temple of Apollo with laurel branches in their hands, singing a processional song, remain who they are and keep their civic names. The dithyrambic chorus is a chorus of transformed people, in whom their civic past and their social position are completely forgotten. They have become the timeless servants of their god, living outside all spheres of society. All other choral lyric of the Greeks is only an enormous intensification of the Apollonian individual singer. In the dithyramb, by contrast, a community of unconscious actors stands before us, who look at one another as transformed.

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

From this insight we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus that again and again discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images. Those choral parts with which tragedy is interwoven are thus, in a way, the mother's 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 original ground of tragedy radiates out that vision of the drama. The vision is thoroughly a dream appearance and in that respect epic in nature. On the other hand, as the objectification of a Dionysian state, it represents not Apollonian

redemption in semblance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his becoming one with primal being. The drama is thus the Apollonian way of making Dionysian insights and effects perceptible to the senses, and by this it is separated from the epic as by an enormous gulf.

The *chorus* of Greek tragedy, the symbol of the whole Dionysian-excited mass, finds its full explanation in this view of ours. We were used to the position of a chorus on the modern stage, especially an opera chorus. So we could not understand at all how the tragic chorus of the Greeks could be older, more original, indeed more important than the real “action”—as the tradition so clearly reported. We also could not reconcile that reported high importance and originality with the fact that the chorus was nevertheless composed of lowly, serving beings—at first even only of goatlike satyrs. And the orchestra in front of the stage always remained a riddle to us. Now we have come to see that the stage, together with the action, was at bottom and originally conceived only as a *vision*. The only “reality” is 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 *act* itself. In this position of complete service toward the god, it is nevertheless the highest, that is, the Dionysian, expression of *nature*. For that reason it speaks, like nature, in inspiration, in oracles and sayings of wisdom. As the one who *suffers with* the god, it is at the same time the *wise* one, proclaiming truth out of the heart of the world. So arises that fantastic and apparently offensive figure of the wise and inspired satyr, who is at the same time “the simple-minded human being” in contrast to the god. He is an image of nature and its strongest drives, indeed a symbol of them, and at the same time a proclaimer of its wisdom and art: musician, poet, dancer, seer of spirits in one person.

Dionysus, the actual hero of the stage and center of the vision, is, according to this insight and according to tradition, not truly present at first, in the very oldest period of tragedy. He 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 exciting the mood of the listeners to such a Dionysian degree that, when the tragic hero appears on the stage, they do not see the misshapen, masked man, but a visionary figure born, as it were, from their own rapture. Imagine Admetus, deep in thought, remembering his wife Alcestis, who has just died, and consuming himself entirely in seeing her with his mind—how suddenly a veiled female figure, similar in shape and similar in walk, is led toward him. Imagine his sudden, trembling unrest, his stormy comparing, his instinctive conviction—and we have an analogue to the feeling with which the Dionysian-excited spectator saw the god stride toward him on the stage, the god with whose suffering the spectator had already become one. Involuntarily the spectator transferred the whole image of the god, trembling magically before his 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 is veiled, and a new world, clearer, more understandable, more gripping than the first and yet more shadowlike, is born anew before our eyes in continual change. Accordingly we recognize in tragedy a thoroughgoing contrast of style. Language, color, mobility, and dynamics of speech come apart as wholly separate spheres of expression, on one side in the Dionysian lyric of the chorus and on the other in the Apollonian dream world of the stage. 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. They are 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 shaping speaks to him from the stage. Now Dionysus no longer speaks 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 its dialogue, looks simple, clear, and beautiful. In this sense, the dialogue is an image of the Greek, whose nature reveals itself in dance. In dancing, the greatest strength remains only a potential, but shows itself in the suppleness and richness of the movement. In the same way, the speech of Sophocles' heroes surprises us with its Apollonian precision and brightness. We immediately imagine that we can see into the deepest core of their being, and are a little surprised that the way to that core is so short. But suppose we look past the hero's character as it comes to the surface and becomes visible. At bottom, it is no more than a light-image projected onto a dark wall—an appearance through and through. Suppose instead that we enter the myth projected in these bright reflections. We suddenly experience something that reverses a familiar optical effect. When we make a determined effort to look at the sun and turn away blinded, we see dark, colored spots before our eyes, as if they were a remedy. In the opposite way, those bright images of Sophocles' hero—in short, the Apollonian quality of the mask—are necessary products of a look into the terrifying depths of nature. They are like shining spots that heal eyes injured by a horrifying night. Only in this sense can we believe we have rightly understood the serious and important idea of “Greek cheerfulness.” In our own time, though, we encounter its misunderstood version everywhere: cheerfulness as comfortable ease, free from danger.

The figure who suffers most on the Greek stage, the ill-fated *Oedipus*, was understood by Sophocles as a noble person. Despite his wisdom, he is destined for error and misery. But in the end, his immense suffering makes him exert a magical, blessing power on those around him, one that continues even after his death. The noble person does not sin: that is what this deeply thoughtful poet wants to tell us. His actions may destroy every law, every natural order, even the moral world itself. Yet those very actions create a higher, magical circle of effects that establish a new world on the ruins of the overthrown old one. This is what the poet wants to tell us insofar as he is also a religious thinker. As a poet, he first shows us a wonderfully tangled knot of a legal case. The judge slowly unravels it, link by link, to his own destruction. The genuinely Greek delight in this unraveling through argument is so great that it gives the whole work a touch of superior cheerfulness. Everywhere, it takes the edge off the horrifying circumstances underlying the case. In “*Oedipus at Colonus*,” we find this same cheerfulness, but raised into an endless transfiguration. Facing the old man overwhelmed by misery, who is exposed to everything that happens to him purely as someone who *suffers*, stands a supernatural cheerfulness. It comes down from the divine realm and suggests that, through his completely passive conduct, the hero achieves his greatest power to act, extending far beyond his life. In contrast, his conscious plans and efforts earlier in life had only led him into passivity. In this way, the tangled knot of the case in the *Oedipus* story, which no mortal eye can unravel, is slowly undone. And the deepest human joy comes over us at this divine counterpart to reasoning through arguments. Even if this explanation has done justice to the poet, we can still ask whether it has exhausted the myth’s content. Here it becomes clear that the poet’s entire interpretation is just that light-image which healing nature holds before us after we have looked into the abyss. *Oedipus*, his father’s murderer, his mother’s husband! *Oedipus*, who solved the Sphinx’s riddle! What does this mysterious set of three fateful deeds tell us? An ancient folk belief, especially widespread in Persia, says that a wise magician can be born only from incest. With *Oedipus*, who solves the riddle and marries his mother, in mind, we must immediately interpret it this way: where prophetic and magical powers have broken the spell

of the present and future, the rigid law that separates things into individuals, and nature's own magic in general, some monstrous violation of nature—incest, in that case—must have come first as the cause. How else could someone force nature to give up its secrets, except by successfully resisting it—that is, through something unnatural? I see this insight expressed in that terrible set of three events in Oedipus' fate. The same person who solves the riddle of nature—that Sphinx with its double nature—must also break nature's most sacred laws as his father's murderer and his mother's husband. Indeed, the myth seems to whisper to us that wisdom, and specifically Dionysian wisdom, is an unnatural horror. Anyone whose knowledge plunges nature into the abyss of destruction must also experience nature's dissolution in himself. "The point of wisdom turns against the wise person: wisdom is a crime against nature." The myth calls out terrifying statements like these to us. But the Greek poet touches the myth's grand and frightening statue of Memnon like a sunbeam, so that it suddenly starts to sing—in the melodies of Sophocles!

Against this glory of passivity I now set the glory of action that shines around Aeschylus' *Prometheus*. What Aeschylus the thinker had to tell us here, but as a poet only lets us sense through his symbolic picture, the young Goethe knew how to reveal in the daring words of his Prometheus:

"Here I sit, making people
In my own image,
A race that will be like me,
To suffer, to cry,
To enjoy life and be glad,
And to pay no attention to you,
Like me!"

Rising to the stature of a Titan, the human being fights to win his own culture and forces the gods to join forces with him. Through wisdom that is entirely his own, he holds existence and its limits in his hand. In its basic idea, this poem about Prometheus is the true hymn to impiety. Yet its most wonderful feature is its deeply Aeschylean drive toward *justice*. On one side is the boundless suffering of the daring "individual." On the other is the distress of

the gods, even a foreboding of a twilight of the gods. These two worlds of suffering have a power that forces reconciliation and metaphysical oneness. All this strongly recalls the central point and main principle of Aeschylus' view of the world: above gods and humans, Moira sits enthroned as eternal justice. Given the astonishing boldness with which Aeschylus places the Olympian world on his scales of justice, we must remember that this deeply thoughtful Greek had an unshakably solid foundation for metaphysical thought in his mystery rites. All his skeptical impulses could therefore discharge themselves against the Olympians. The Greek artist in particular felt a dark sense of mutual dependence in relation to these gods. It is precisely this feeling that Aeschylus' Prometheus symbolizes. The Titan-like artist found in himself the defiant belief that he could create human beings and at least destroy Olympian gods. He could do this through his higher wisdom, though he was forced to pay for it with eternal suffering. The glorious "ability" of great genius, for which even eternal suffering is too small a price, the stern pride of the *artist*: these are the content and soul of Aeschylus' poetry. Meanwhile, in his Oedipus, Sophocles strikes up the opening notes of the *saint's* victory song. But even Aeschylus' interpretation of the myth does not measure the full depth of its astonishing terror. Rather, the artist's joy in bringing things into being, the cheerfulness of artistic creation that defies every disaster, is only a bright image of clouds and sky reflected in a black lake of sadness. The Prometheus legend is an original possession of the entire family of Aryan peoples, and evidence of their gift for profound tragedy. Indeed, it may not be unlikely that this myth has the same characteristic meaning for the Aryan nature that the myth of the Fall has for the Semitic nature, and that the two myths are related like brother and sister. The Prometheus myth rests on the tremendous value that a naive early humanity placed on *fire* as the true safeguard of every rising culture. But those contemplative early humans saw it as a violation, a theft from divine nature, for people to control fire freely instead of receiving it only as a gift from heaven, as a lightning bolt that kindles a fire or the sun's warming blaze. So the very first philosophical problem presents a painful, insoluble conflict between humanity and god, setting it like a boulder at the entrance to every culture. Humanity

wins the best and highest things it can share in through a violation, and must then accept its consequences: the whole flood of suffering and grief with which the offended gods in heaven afflict—and must afflict—the nobly striving human race. This is a harsh thought. Through the *dignity* it gives to the violation, it stands in a strange contrast to the Semitic myth of the Fall. That myth saw curiosity, deceptive pretenses, susceptibility to seduction, lust—in short, a series of mainly female inclinations—as the origin of evil. What distinguishes the Aryan idea is its exalted view of *active sin* as the specifically Promethean virtue. This also provides the ethical foundation of pessimistic tragedy: the *justification* of human evil, both human guilt and the suffering it brings on. The evil in the nature of things—which the contemplative Aryan is not inclined to explain away—the conflict at the heart of the world, reveals itself to him as an intermingling of different worlds, a divine and a human world, for example. Each is justified as an individual, but as a separate entity beside another, each must suffer for its individuality. When the individual heroically presses toward the universal, tries to step beyond the spell of individuality and wants to be the *one* being of the world itself, he experiences in himself the primal conflict hidden in things. That is, he commits a violation and suffers. Thus the Aryans understand violation as male, and the Semites understand sin as female, just as the primal violation is committed by a man and the primal sin by a woman. Besides, the witches' chorus says:

“We aren't so particular about it:

A woman does it in a thousand steps;

But however fast she goes,

A man does it in a single jump.”

Anyone who understands that deepest core of the Prometheus legend—the necessity of violation imposed on the individual with Titanic ambitions—must also feel how un-Apollonian this pessimistic idea is. Apollo wants to bring individual beings to rest precisely by drawing boundaries between them. With his demands for self-knowledge and moderation, he keeps reminding them that these boundaries are the world's most sacred laws. But this Apollonian tendency must not make form freeze into Egyptian stiffness and coldness. The

attempt to prescribe a course and a territory for each individual wave must not kill the movement of the whole lake. So, from time to time, the high tide of the Dionysian once again destroyed all those small circles in which the one-sidedly Apollonian “will” tried to imprison the Greek world. This suddenly swelling Dionysian tide then lifts the individual little crests of the waves onto its back, as Prometheus’ brother, the Titan Atlas, lifts the earth. This Titanic urge to become, as it were, an Atlas for all individuals, and carry them higher and higher, farther and farther on a broad back, is what the Promethean and Dionysian have in common. In this respect, Aeschylus’ Prometheus is a Dionysian mask. But in that deep drive toward justice mentioned earlier, Aeschylus reveals to an understanding observer his descent on his father’s side from Apollo, the god of individuality and the boundaries of justice. So the dual character of Aeschylus’ Prometheus, his simultaneously Dionysian and Apollonian nature, might be expressed in this conceptual formula: “Everything that exists is just and unjust, and equally justified in both.”

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

Section 10



An unquestionable tradition tells us that Greek tragedy in its earliest form dealt only with the sufferings of Dionysus, and that for a long time Dionysus was its only stage hero. But we can say with equal certainty that, right up to Euripides, Dionysus never stopped being the tragic hero. All the famous figures of the Greek stage—Prometheus, Oedipus, and the rest—are only masks of that original hero, Dionysus. A god stands behind all these masks. That is the one essential reason for the characteristic “ideal quality” of those famous figures, which has so often inspired amazement. Someone—I do not know who—has claimed that all individuals, as individuals, are comic and therefore not tragic. From this we could conclude that the Greeks simply *could not* tolerate individuals on the tragic stage. They do seem to have felt that way. In general, Plato’s distinction between the “Idea” and the “idol,” or copy, and his different valuation of the two, are deeply rooted in the Greek character. To use Plato’s terms, we could describe the tragic figures of the Greek stage roughly like this: the one truly real Dionysus appears in a multitude of forms, wearing the mask of a struggling hero and caught, as it were, in the net of the individual will. As the god now speaks and acts in this appearance, he resembles an individual who makes mistakes, strives, and suffers. That he *appears* at all with this epic precision and clarity is the work of Apollo, the interpreter of dreams. Through this symbolic appearance, Apollo explains the chorus’ Dionysian state to it. But in truth this hero is the suffering Dionysus of the mysteries, the god who experiences in him-

self the suffering of being divided into individuals. Wonderful myths tell how the Titans cut him to pieces as a boy, and how in this state he is now worshiped as Zagreus. This suggests that the dismemberment, the specifically Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire. We should therefore see the state of being divided into individuals as the source and original basis of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself. The Olympian gods came from this Dionysus' smile, and human beings from his tears. In his existence as a dismembered god, Dionysus has the double nature of a cruel, savage demon and a mild, gentle ruler. But those fully initiated in the mysteries placed their hope in a rebirth of Dionysus. We must now try to understand this as the end of division into individuals. Their roaring song of celebration rang out for this coming third Dionysus. Only in this hope is there a ray of joy on the face of the torn world, shattered into individuals. The myth illustrates this through Demeter, sunk in eternal grief. For the first time she *rejoices* again when she is told that she can give birth to Dionysus *once more*. In the ideas just described, we already have all the elements of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, and with them *tragedy's teaching of the mysteries*: the basic insight that everything that exists is one; the view that division into individuals is the original basis of evil; and art as the joyful hope that the spell of this division can be broken, as the foreboding of a restored unity.—

It was suggested earlier that Homeric epic is the poetry of Olympian culture, through which that culture sang its own song of victory over the terrors of the battle with the Titans. Now, under the overwhelming influence of tragic poetry, the Homeric myths are reborn once again. In this migration of their souls, they show that Olympian culture, too, has meanwhile been defeated by a still deeper view of the world. The defiant Titan Prometheus had warned his Olympian tormentor that one day his rule would face the greatest danger unless he joined forces with Prometheus in time. In Aeschylus, we see the alliance of the frightened Zeus, fearful of his own end, with the Titan. In this way, the earlier age of the Titans is brought back up from Tartarus into the light after all. The philosophy of wild, naked nature looks at the myths of the Homeric world as they dance past, and it wears the unveiled face of truth. They

turn pale and tremble before this goddess' lightning gaze—until the mighty fist of the Dionysian artist forces them into the service of the new god. Dionysian truth takes over the entire realm of myth as a set of symbols for *its* insights. It expresses them partly in the public worship of tragedy, partly in the secret performances of dramatic mystery festivals, but always beneath the old mythical covering. What power was it that freed Prometheus from his vultures and turned myth into a vehicle for Dionysian wisdom? It was the Herculean power of music. Reaching its highest expression in tragedy, music knows how to interpret myth with a new and deeply profound meaning. Earlier, we already had to identify this as music's most powerful ability. For every myth is destined to creep gradually into the narrow confines of a supposedly historical reality, and to be treated by some later age as a one-time event claiming historical truth. The Greeks were already well on their way to using ingenuity and arbitrary decisions to recast their whole mythical dream of youth as a *history of their youth* based on historical events and practical causes. This is how religions usually die: an orthodox dogmatism, with its strict, rational scrutiny, organizes a religion's mythical premises into a fixed set of historical events. People begin anxiously defending the myths' credibility while resisting any natural continuation of their life and growth. In other words, the feeling for myth dies, and in its place comes religion's claim to historical foundations. The newborn genius of Dionysian music now took hold of this dying myth. In its hand, the myth blossomed once more, with colors it had never shown before and a fragrance that awakened a longing foreboding of a metaphysical world. After this last blaze of brightness, it collapses. Its leaves wither, and soon antiquity's mocking Lucians snatch at the faded, ruined flowers carried off by every wind. Through tragedy, myth reaches its deepest content and its most expressive form. Once again it rises like a wounded hero, and all its remaining strength, together with the wise calm of someone dying, burns in its eye with one last powerful light.

What did you want, you sacrilegious Euripides, when you tried to force this dying figure into your compulsory service once again? It died under your violent hands. Now you needed a counterfeit, masked myth, which, like the ape of Heracles, could do no more than dress itself up in the old finery. And just as

myth died on you, so did the genius of music. However greedily you reached out to plunder every garden of music, you still managed to produce only counterfeit, masked music. And because you abandoned Dionysus, Apollo abandoned you too. Drive all the passions out of their resting places and trap them in your circle; sharpen and polish a sophist's argumentative technique for your heroes' speeches—even your heroes have only imitated, masked passions, and speak only imitated, masked speeches.

Section 11



Greek tragedy died differently from all the older arts related to it. It died by suicide, as a result of an insoluble conflict—in other words, tragically. All the others faded away in old age, dying the most beautiful and peaceful of deaths. If a happy natural state means leaving life without convulsions and with beautiful descendants, then the end of those older arts shows us such a state. They slowly sink away, and before their dying eyes their more beautiful offspring already stand, impatiently lifting their heads with a bold gesture. The death of Greek tragedy, in contrast, left an enormous emptiness, deeply felt everywhere. Once, in the time of Tiberius, Greek sailors at a lonely island heard the shattering cry, “Great Pan is dead.” Now a painful lament seemed to sound through the Greek world: “Tragedy is dead! Poetry itself has been lost with it! Away, away with you stunted, skinny latecomers! Away to Hades, so that for once you can eat your fill of the crumbs left by the old masters!”

But when a new kind of art did bloom after all, honoring tragedy as its predecessor and teacher, people were horrified to see that it really did bear its mother’s features—but the very features she had shown in her long death struggle. *Euripides* fought this death struggle of tragedy. The later art form is known as *New Attic Comedy*. In it, tragedy’s degenerate form lived on, a memorial to its extremely painful and violent passing.

This connection makes the passionate affection that the poets of New Comedy felt for Euripides understandable. So Philemon's wish is no longer surprising: he was willing to have himself hanged at once, just to visit Euripides in the underworld—if only he could be sure that the dead man still had his wits about him. If we want to identify very briefly, without claiming to give an exhaustive account, what Euripides shares with Menander and Philemon, and what made him such an exciting model for them, it is enough to say that Euripides brought *the spectator* onto the stage. Anyone who has recognized the material from which the Promethean tragedians before Euripides shaped their heroes, and how far they were from intending to put a faithful mask of reality onstage, will also understand Euripides' completely different aim. Through him, the person of everyday life came out of the audience and onto the stage. The mirror that had previously shown only great, bold features now displayed that painstaking accuracy which conscientiously reproduces even nature's unsuccessful lines. Odysseus, the typical Greek of the older art, now sank in the hands of the newer poets to the figure of the little Greek, who from now on stands at the center of dramatic interest as the good-natured, sly household slave. In Aristophanes' "Frogs," Euripides takes credit for using his home remedies to free tragic art from its pompous bulk. This is felt above all in his tragic heroes. Essentially, the spectator now saw and heard his own double on Euripides' stage, and was delighted that this double knew how to speak so well. But it did not stop at delight: people learned to speak from Euripides themselves. He boasts of this himself in his contest with Aeschylus: through him, the people have now learned how to observe, conduct discussions, and draw conclusions skillfully and with the cleverest sophistical arguments. This transformation of public speech is what made New Comedy possible in the first place. From now on, it was no longer a secret how, and with what sayings, everyday life could be represented onstage. Ordinary middle-class mediocrity, on which Euripides based all his political hopes, now got its say. Until then, demigods had determined the character of speech in tragedy, and drunken satyrs or half-human beings in comedy. So Aristophanes' Euripides praises himself for presenting common, familiar, everyday life and activity, which everyone is qualified

to judge. If the whole crowd now philosophizes, manages its land and property, and conducts its lawsuits with unheard-of cleverness, this is his achievement and the result of the wisdom he has instilled in the people.

New Comedy could now address a crowd prepared and enlightened in this way. Euripides had, in a sense, become its chorus trainer, except that this time it was the chorus of spectators that had to be trained. As soon as it had learned to sing in Euripides' key, that chess-like form of drama arose: New Comedy, with its constant triumph of cunning and deviousness. Meanwhile Euripides—the chorus trainer—was praised without end. People would even have killed themselves to learn more from him, if they had not known that tragic poets were just as dead as tragedy. With tragedy, though, the Greek had given up his belief in his own immortality: not only belief in an ideal past, but also belief in an ideal future. The words from the familiar epitaph, “frivolous and cranky in old age,” also apply to the aging Greek world. The moment, the joke, frivolity, and whim are its highest gods. The fifth class, the slaves, now comes to power, at least in outlook. If we can still speak of “Greek cheerfulness” at all, it is the cheerfulness of the slave, who has no serious responsibilities, no great goals to strive for, and knows nothing in the past or future to value more highly than the present. It was this semblance of “Greek cheerfulness” that so outraged the profound and formidable people of the first four centuries of Christianity. To them, this effeminate flight from seriousness and terror, this cowardly satisfaction with comfortable pleasure, seemed not only contemptible but the truly anti-Christian outlook. Their influence accounts for the fact that the view of ancient Greece which lived on for centuries clung with almost invincible stubbornness to that pale pink shade of cheerfulness. It was as though there had never been a sixth century with its birth of tragedy, its mysteries, its Pythagoras and Heraclitus. Indeed, it was as though the artworks of the great age did not exist at all. Yet not one of them can be explained as growing out of such a senile, slavish pleasure in existence and cheerfulness. Each points to an entirely different view of the world as the basis of its existence.

We just claimed that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage in order, at the same time, to make the spectator truly capable of judging drama in the first place. This makes it seem that the older tragic art had never escaped a mismatch with its audience. We might be tempted to praise Euripides' radical aim of achieving a fitting relationship between artwork and audience as an advance beyond Sophocles. But "audience" is only a word, not at all a uniform, unchanging entity. Where would an artist's obligation to accommodate a force whose strength lies only in numbers come from? And if, in his gifts and intentions, he feels above each individual spectator, how could he feel more respect for the collective expression of all these abilities, inferior to his own, than for the comparatively most gifted individual spectator? In truth, no Greek artist treated his audience with greater boldness and self-sufficiency over a long life than Euripides himself. Even when the crowd threw itself at his feet, he still had the defiance to slap his own tendency in the face in public—the same tendency through which he had won over the crowd. If this genius had felt the slightest reverence for the audience's pandemonium, he would have collapsed under the club blows of his failures long before the middle of his career. This reflection shows us that our statement was only provisional: Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage to make the spectator truly capable of judgment. We must look for a deeper understanding of his aim. Conversely, everyone knows that Aeschylus and Sophocles fully enjoyed public favor throughout their lives and long afterward. So there can be no question of a mismatch between artwork and audience in these predecessors of Euripides. What drove this richly gifted artist, constantly urged to create, so violently off the path over which the sun of the greatest poets' names and the cloudless sky of public favor shone? What strange consideration for the spectator drove him toward the spectator? How could he, out of too much respect for his audience—disrespect his audience?

Here is the solution to the riddle just presented: as a poet, Euripides felt above the crowd, but not above two of his spectators. He brought the crowd onto the stage. But he revered those two spectators as the only competent judges and masters of all his art. Following their directions and warnings, he transferred into the souls of his stage heroes the whole world of feelings, pas-

sions, and experiences that had previously gathered on the audience benches as an invisible chorus at every festival performance. He yielded to their demands when he looked for new words and a new tone for these new characters. In their voices alone he heard valid judgments of his work, as well as encouragement promising victory whenever he found himself condemned once again by the court of the audience.

One of these two spectators is—Euripides himself, Euripides *as a thinker*, not as a poet. We could say of him that, as with Lessing, the extraordinary abundance of his critical talent continually nourished a secondary impulse toward artistic creation, even if it did not produce that impulse. With this gift, with all the clarity and agility of his critical thinking, Euripides had sat in the theater and worked to make out the masterpieces of his great predecessors, feature by feature, line by line, as though they were paintings that had darkened. Here he met with something that should not surprise anyone initiated into the deeper secrets of Aeschylean tragedy. In every feature and every line, he noticed something that would not fit any measure: a certain deceptive precision, together with a mysterious depth, even infinity, in the background. Even the clearest figure still had a comet's tail that seemed to point into the uncertain, into what could not be made clear. The same twilight lay over the structure of the drama, especially the meaning of the chorus. And how doubtful the solutions to the ethical problems remained to him! How questionable the treatment of the myths! How uneven the distribution of good and bad fortune! Even in the language of older tragedy, much offended him, or at least puzzled him. In particular, he found too much pomp for simple situations, too many figures of speech and monstrous expressions for the characters' simplicity. So he sat in the theater, restlessly brooding, and admitted to himself, as a spectator, that he did not understand his great predecessors. But since he considered understanding the true root of all enjoyment and creation, he had to ask and look around to see whether anyone thought as he did and likewise admitted that these works could not be measured. But the crowd, along with its best individuals, had only a suspicious smile for him. Yet no one could explain to him why, despite his doubts and objections, the great masters were still right. In

this agonizing state, he found *the other spectator*, who did not understand tragedy and therefore did not value it. Allied with him, he could dare to leave his isolation and begin the tremendous fight against the artworks of Aeschylus and Sophocles—not with polemical writings, but as a dramatist setting *his* idea of tragedy against the traditional one.—

Section 12



Before we name this other spectator, let us pause a moment to recall the impression described earlier: something divided and impossible to measure in the very nature of Aeschylean tragedy. Think of our own puzzlement at the *chorus* and the *tragic hero* of that tragedy. We could reconcile neither of them with our habits or with tradition—until we rediscovered that very duality as the origin and essence of Greek tragedy, the expression of two interwoven artistic drives, *the Apollonian and the Dionysian*.

To remove that original, all-powerful Dionysian element from tragedy, and to rebuild tragedy in a pure, new form on non-Dionysian art, morality, and a non-Dionysian view of the world: this is Euripides' aim, now revealed to us in a clear light.

At the end of his life, Euripides himself used a myth to put the question of this aim's value and meaning before his contemporaries in the most forceful way. Should the Dionysian be allowed to exist at all? Should it not be violently rooted out of Greek soil? Certainly, the poet tells us, if only it were possible. But the god Dionysus is too powerful. His most rational opponent—like Pentheus in “The Bacchae”—is unexpectedly enchanted by him, and afterward runs to his doom under this spell. The judgment of the two old men, Cadmus and Tiresias, also seems to be the old poet's judgment: the reflections of the cleverest individuals cannot overturn those ancient popular traditions, that endlessly perpetuated worship of Dionysus. Indeed, in the face of such mar-

velous powers, it is appropriate to show at least a diplomatically cautious participation. Even so, the god may take offense at such lukewarm involvement and finally turn the diplomat—as he does Cadmus here—into a dragon. This is what we are told by a poet who resisted Dionysus with heroic strength throughout a long life, only to end his career by glorifying his opponent and committing suicide. He is like a dizzy man who throws himself from a tower simply to escape the terrible spinning that he can no longer bear. That tragedy is a protest against the possibility of carrying out his aim. Alas, it had already been carried out! The astonishing thing had happened: by the time the poet took it back, his aim had already won. Dionysus had already been driven off the tragic stage, specifically by a demonic power speaking through Euripides. In a certain sense, Euripides too was only a mask. The god speaking through him was not Dionysus, nor Apollo, but a completely newborn demon called *Socrates*. This is the new opposition: the Dionysian and the Socratic. It destroyed the artwork that was Greek tragedy. Euripides may try to comfort us by taking back his position, but he does not succeed. The most magnificent temple lies in ruins. What use to us are its destroyer's laments and his admission that it was the most beautiful of all temples? And even the fact that art critics of every age have turned Euripides into a dragon as punishment—who could be satisfied with that miserable compensation?

Let us now take a closer look at that *Socratic* tendency with which Euripides fought and defeated Aeschylean tragedy.

We must now ask: even if carried out in its most ideal form, what goal could Euripides' intention of basing drama solely on the non-Dionysian have had? What form of drama was left if it was not to be born from the womb of music, in that mysterious Dionysian twilight? Only *dramatized epic*. But in this Apollonian field of art, a *tragic* effect is impossible to achieve. The content of the events presented makes no difference here. Indeed, I would claim that in his planned "Nausicaa," Goethe could not have made the suicide of that idyllic creature—which was to fill the fifth act—moving in a tragic way. The power of the epic-Apollonian is so enormous that, before our eyes, it transforms the most terrifying things through that delight in semblance and release through

semblance. The poet of dramatized epic can no more merge completely with his images than the epic reciter can. He is still a calm, unmoving act of contemplation, looking with wide eyes and seeing the images *before* him. At the deepest level, the actor in this dramatized epic always remains a reciter. The sacred quality of inward dreaming rests on all his actions, so that he is never wholly an actor.

How, then, does a play by Euripides compare with this ideal of Apollonian drama? As the younger reciter compares with the solemn reciter of ancient times—the younger one who describes his own nature this way in Plato’s “Ion”: “When I say something sad, my eyes fill with tears. But if what I say is frightening and terrible, the hair on my head stands on end with horror, and my heart pounds.” Here we no longer detect that epic absorption in semblance, that emotionless 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 and hair standing on end. As a Socratic thinker, he draws up the plan; as a passionate actor, he carries it out. He is not a pure artist either in planning or in carrying it out. So Euripidean drama is something both cold and fiery, equally capable of freezing and burning. It cannot achieve the Apollonian effect of epic. At the same time, it has freed itself as far as possible from Dionysian elements. Now, to have any effect at all, it needs new means of stimulation, which can no longer lie within the only two artistic drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. These means are cool, paradoxical *thoughts* in place of Apollonian visions, and fiery *emotions* in place of Dionysian ecstasies. And these thoughts and emotions are imitated with extreme realism, not immersed in the pure air of art at all.

We have now recognized at least this much: Euripides did not succeed at all in basing drama solely on the Apollonian. Instead, his non-Dionysian tendency went astray into a naturalistic, unartistic one. We can therefore move closer to the nature of *aesthetic Socratism*. Its highest law runs roughly like this: “Everything must be rational to be beautiful.” It parallels the Socratic statement, “Only the person who knows is virtuous.” With this rule in hand, Euripides measured every detail and corrected it according to the principle: language,

characters, dramatic structure, and choral music. What we so often tend to count as poetic shortcomings and a step backward in Euripides, compared with Sophocles' tragedy, is mostly the product of that penetrating critical process, that daring rationality. Euripides' *prologue* can serve as an example of how productive this rationalistic method was. Nothing could run more counter to our stage technique than the prologue in a drama by Euripides. A single person appears at the beginning of the play and tells us who they are, what precedes the action, what has happened so far, and even what will happen during the play. A modern playwright would call this a deliberate and unforgivable abandonment of the effect of suspense. We already know everything that will happen. Who will want to wait for it actually to happen? For this is certainly not the exciting relationship between a prophetic dream and a reality that occurs later. Euripides reasoned quite differently. The effect of tragedy never rested on epic suspense, on the stimulating uncertainty about what would happen now and afterward. Instead, it rested on those great rhetorical and lyrical scenes in which the main hero's passion and argument swelled into a broad, powerful river. Everything prepared the way for intense emotion, not for action. Whatever did not prepare for that emotion was considered objectionable. But what makes it hardest for listeners to surrender with pleasure to such scenes is a missing link, a gap in the fabric of the preceding story. As long as listeners still have to work out what this or that person means, or what underlies this or that conflict of inclinations and intentions, they cannot yet become fully absorbed in the suffering and actions of the main characters, or breathlessly share their suffering and fear. The tragedy of Aeschylus and Sophocles used the most ingenious artistic means to put all the threads needed for understanding into the spectator's hands in the first scenes, seemingly by chance. This feature demonstrates that noble artistry which, as it were, disguises the *necessary* formal elements and makes them appear accidental. Still, Euripides thought he noticed a peculiar restlessness in the spectator during those first scenes, as they worked out the arithmetic problem of the preceding story. As a result, the poetic beauty and intense emotion of the opening were lost on them. He therefore placed the prologue before the opening itself and put it in the mouth of some-

one who could be trusted. A god often had to guarantee the course of the tragedy to the audience, so to speak, and remove every doubt about the reality of the myth. Similarly, Descartes could prove the reality of the world we experience only by appealing to God's truthfulness and inability to lie. Euripides needs this same divine truthfulness once more at the end of his drama, to assure the audience of his heroes' future. This is the job of the notorious god lowered onto the stage by a machine. Between the epic preview and the look beyond the end lies the dramatic, lyrical present, the actual "drama."

So, as a poet, Euripides is above all the echo of his conscious insights. This is precisely what gives him such a memorable position in the history of Greek art. Thinking of his work as a critic and creator, he must often have felt that he was to bring the opening of Anaxagoras' book to life for drama. Its first words are: "In the beginning everything was together; then reason came and created order." And if Anaxagoras, with his "Nous," appeared among philosophers like the first sober person among nothing but drunks, Euripides too may have understood his relationship to the other tragic poets through a similar image. As long as the mind, the sole organizer and ruler of the universe, was still excluded from artistic creation, everything was still together in a chaotic primal mush. This is how Euripides had to judge; this is how he, as the first "sober" poet, had to condemn the "drunken" poets. Sophocles said of Aeschylus that he did the right thing, although unconsciously. This was certainly not said in Euripides' sense. He would have accepted only that Aeschylus did the wrong thing *because* he created unconsciously. Even the divine Plato generally speaks only ironically of the poet's creative power insofar as it is not conscious insight, and puts it on a level with the gift of the prophet and interpreter of dreams. The poet, he says, cannot compose until he has become unconscious and reason no longer lives in him. Like Plato, Euripides set out to show the world the opposite of the "unreasoning" poet. His basic aesthetic principle, "Everything must be conscious to be beautiful," is, as I said, the parallel of the Socratic principle, "Everything must be conscious to be good." Accordingly, we can regard Euripides as the poet of aesthetic Socratism. But Socrates was that *second spectator*, who did not understand older tragedy and therefore did not value it. Allied

with him, Euripides dared to be the herald of a new kind of artistic creation. If this brought older tragedy to its end, then aesthetic Socratism is the murderous principle. But since the struggle was directed against the Dionysian element of older art, we recognize Socrates as Dionysus' opponent: the new Orpheus who rises against Dionysus. Although destined to be torn apart by the maenads of the Athenian court, he nevertheless forces even the overwhelmingly powerful god to flee. Just as when he fled from Lycurgus, king of the Edonians, Dionysus saved himself in the depths of the sea: that is, in the mystical waters of a secret cult gradually spreading over the whole world.

Section 13



People in antiquity already noticed that Socrates and Euripides were moving in closely related directions. The clearest expression of this sound instinct was the story circulating in Athens that Socrates regularly helped Euripides write his plays. Supporters of the “good old days” named the two in the same breath when listing the people who were misleading the public in their own time. They blamed their influence for the way the old, solid strength of body and mind, the strength of the men of Marathon, was increasingly sacrificed to a questionable enlightenment. Meanwhile, physical and mental powers continued to waste away. Aristophanes’ comedy generally speaks of these men in this tone, half indignant and half contemptuous. This horrifies modern readers. They are happy enough to give up Euripides, but cannot get over their amazement that Aristophanes presents Socrates as the first and foremost *Sophist*, the mirror and embodiment of every sophistic ambition. Their only comfort is to pillory Aristophanes himself as a dissolute, lying Alcibiades of poetry. I will not defend Aristophanes’ deep instincts against these attacks here. Instead, I will continue to demonstrate how closely Socrates and Euripides belonged together in the feelings of the ancient world. We should remember, in particular, that Socrates opposed tragic art and stayed away from performances of tragedy. He appeared in the audience only when a new play by Euripides was being performed. But the most famous close pairing of their names occurs in the pro-

nouncement of the Delphic oracle. It called Socrates the wisest of human beings, but also ruled that Euripides deserved second prize in the contest of wisdom.

Sophocles was named third in this ranking. Compared with Aeschylus, he could boast that he did what was right because he *knew* what was right. Clearly, what sets these three men apart together as the three “knowing men” of their time is precisely the degree of clarity in this *knowledge*.

Socrates gave the sharpest expression to this new and unprecedented high regard for knowledge and insight. He discovered that he was the only person who admitted to himself that he *knew nothing*. On his critical journey through Athens, he visited its greatest statesmen, speakers, poets, and artists. Everywhere he found people imagining that they knew. To his amazement, he realized that all these celebrities lacked sound and reliable insight even into their own occupation. They practiced it only by instinct. “Only by instinct”: this phrase brings us to the heart and center of the Socratic tendency. With it, Socratism condemns existing art and existing ethics alike. Wherever it turns its examining gaze, it sees a lack of insight and the power of delusion. From that lack it concludes that what exists is inwardly wrong and worthless. Starting from this one point, Socrates believed he had to correct existence. He, a single individual, enters a world with a look of disdain and superiority, as the forerunner of a wholly different kind of culture, art, and morality. Yet we would count ourselves supremely fortunate if we could reverently catch hold of even a corner of that world’s robe.

This is the enormous misgiving that takes hold of us every time we face Socrates. Again and again it drives us to understand the meaning and purpose of this most questionable figure of antiquity. Who is this person who can dare, all alone, to reject the Greek spirit? In Homer, Pindar, and Aeschylus, in Phidias, in Pericles, in the Pythia and Dionysus, that spirit is assured of our astonished worship, as both its deepest abyss and its greatest height. What demonic power can dare to pour this magic drink into the dust? What demigod

is this, whom the chorus of the spirits of humanity's noblest people must address in these words: "Woe! Woe! You have destroyed it, the beautiful world, with your mighty fist; it falls, it breaks apart!"

The extraordinary phenomenon called the "daimonion of Socrates" gives us a key to his nature. In certain situations, when his immense intellect began to waver, he found firm support in a divine voice that spoke at such moments. Whenever this voice comes, it always *warns* him *off*. In this completely 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 acts critically and gives warnings. But in Socrates instinct becomes the critic and consciousness the creator—a genuine monstrosity caused by a deficiency! What we see here is a monstrous lack of any mystical capacity. Socrates could therefore be called the distinctive *non-mystic*. His logical nature has grown as excessively, through a kind of additional conception, as instinctive wisdom has in the mystic. On the other hand, the logical drive appearing in Socrates was completely unable to turn against itself. In its unchecked flow it displays a natural force of the kind we encounter, with startled amazement, only in the very greatest instinctive powers. Anyone who has felt even a breath of the divine innocence and certainty of Socrates' approach to life in Plato's writings also feels something else. The enormous driving wheel of logical Socratism is moving, as it were, *behind* Socrates. We must look through him as through a shadow to see it. Yet he himself had some inkling of this relationship. This shows in the dignified seriousness with which he asserted his divine calling everywhere, even before his judges. It was basically as impossible to refute him on this point as it was to approve of his influence, which dissolved the instincts. In this conflict, which could not be resolved, only one form of condemnation was appropriate once he had been brought before the tribunal of the Greek state: exile. They could have sent him across the border as something wholly puzzling, impossible to classify or explain. No later generation would then have had the right to accuse the Athenians of a shameful act. But Socrates himself seems to have made sure that the sentence was death, not merely exile. He did so with complete clarity 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 drinking party at first light, the last of the drinkers to depart, and begins a new day. Behind him, on the benches and the floor, his sleepy drinking companions remain to dream of Socrates, the true man of love. *The dying Socrates* became a new ideal for noble Greek youth, one never seen before. Above all, Plato, the typical young Greek, threw himself before this image with all the passionate devotion of his enthusiastic soul.

Section 14



Now imagine Socrates turning his single great Cyclops' eye toward tragedy. The lovely madness of artistic inspiration had never glowed in that eye. Imagine how it was unable to look with pleasure into the Dionysian depths. What could it actually have seen in the "sublime and highly praised" art of tragedy, as Plato calls it? Something thoroughly unreasonable, with causes that seemed to have no effects and effects that seemed to have no causes. Moreover, the whole thing was so colorful and varied that it must repel a levelheaded person, while providing dangerous tinder for excitable and sensitive souls. We know the only kind of poetry he understood: *the Aesopian fable*. Surely he understood it with the same smiling indulgence with which honest, good Gellert praises poetry in the fable of the bee and the hen:

"You see in me what use it has:

To tell someone who has little sense

The truth by means of an image."

But tragic art did not even seem to Socrates to "tell the truth." Quite apart from that, it addressed people who had "little sense," not philosophers. This gave him two reasons to keep away. Like Plato, he counted it among the flattering arts, which present only what is pleasant, not what is useful. He therefore demanded that his followers abstain and keep strictly apart from such unphilosophical attractions. He was so successful that the young writer of tragedies, Plato, first burned his poems so that he could become Socrates' student. But

where unconquerable talents fought against Socrates' principles, those principles, together with the force of his enormous personality, were still strong enough to push poetry itself into new and previously unknown positions.

Plato himself is an example. In condemning tragedy and art in general, he certainly went no less far than his teacher's naive cynicism. Yet an irresistible artistic need forced him to create an art form inwardly related to the existing forms he had rejected. Above all, the new artwork must not be open to Plato's main objection to the older art: that it imitated an illusory image and so belonged to a sphere even lower than the world of experience. We therefore see Plato trying to go beyond reality and present the idea underlying that pseudo-reality. But by this roundabout route Plato the thinker had reached exactly the place where he had always been at home as a poet, and from which Sophocles and all the older art solemnly protested against his objection. Tragedy had absorbed all the earlier kinds of art. In an unusual sense, the same can be said of the Platonic dialogue. Made by mixing all the existing styles and forms, it hovers between narrative, lyric, and drama, between prose and poetry. In doing so, it also broke the strict older rule requiring a single linguistic form. The *Cynic* writers went still further along this path. With the greatest mixture of styles, shifting back and forth between prose and metrical forms, they also produced a literary image of the "Socrates gone mad" whom they regularly portrayed in their lives. The Platonic dialogue was, so to speak, the boat in which the shipwrecked older poetry escaped with all its children. Crowded into a narrow space and fearfully obedient to their one helmsman, Socrates, they now sailed into a new world. That world could never get enough of the fantastic spectacle of this procession. In fact, Plato gave all later generations the model of a new art form: the *novel*. It can be described as the Aesopian fable raised to an infinitely higher power. In it, poetry lives under dialectical philosophy in a hierarchy like the one that placed this same philosophy under theology for many centuries: as a servant. This was the new position into which Plato pushed poetry under the pressure of the demonic Socrates.

Here *philosophical thought* grows over art and forces it to cling tightly to the trunk of dialectic. The *Apollonian* tendency has enclosed itself in a cocoon of logical schematism. We noticed something similar in Euripides, as well as a translation of the *Dionysian* into naturalistic emotion. Socrates, the dialectical hero of Plato's drama, reminds us of the related nature of Euripides' hero. That hero must defend his actions with arguments and counterarguments, and so often risks losing our tragic sympathy. For who could fail to recognize the *optimistic* element in the nature of dialectic? It holds its festival of rejoicing in every inference and can breathe only in cool clarity and consciousness. Once this optimistic element has entered tragedy, it must gradually overgrow its Dionysian regions and necessarily drive tragedy to destroy itself—ending in its fatal leap into bourgeois drama. Just consider the consequences of these 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. Now the virtuous hero must be a dialectician. Now there must be a necessary, visible connection between virtue and knowledge, belief and morality. Now Aeschylus' transcendental resolution of justice is degraded into the shallow, brazen principle of "poetic justice," with its usual god from the machine.

In relation to this new Socratic, optimistic world of the stage, how does the *chorus* now appear—and with it the whole musical, Dionysian foundation of tragedy? As something incidental, a reminder of tragedy's origin that could easily be done without. Yet we have seen that the chorus can be understood only as the *cause* of tragedy and of the tragic in general. The awkwardness about the chorus already appears in Sophocles. This is an important sign that tragedy's Dionysian ground is already beginning to crumble in his work. He no longer dares to entrust the main effect to the chorus. Instead, he limits its scope so much that it now seems almost on the same level as the actors, as though it had been lifted out of the orchestra and onto the stage. This completely destroys its nature, even if Aristotle approves precisely this conception of the chorus. Sophocles recommended this shift in the chorus' position through his practice, at any rate, and, according to tradition, even in a written work. It is the first step

toward the chorus' *destruction*. The stages of this destruction follow one another with frightening speed in Euripides, Agathon, and the newer comedy. Optimistic dialectic uses its chains of inference as a whip to drive *music* out of tragedy. In other words, it destroys tragedy's nature. That nature can be understood only as the manifestation and translation into images of Dionysian states, as the visible symbolization of music, as the dream world of Dionysian intoxication.

We therefore have to assume that an anti-Dionysian tendency was at work even before Socrates, and merely found an expression of unprecedented power in him. If so, we must not shrink from asking what a phenomenon like Socrates points toward. After all, in the face of Plato's dialogues we cannot understand him as a merely destructive, negative power. The immediate effect of the Socratic drive certainly tended toward the breakdown of Dionysian tragedy. Yet a profound experience in Socrates' own life forces us to ask whether Socratism and art *necessarily* stand only at opposite poles, and whether the birth of an "artistic Socrates" would really be self-contradictory.

For this tyrannical logician did sometimes feel, in relation to art, a gap, an emptiness, a half reproach, a duty he might have neglected. As he tells his friends in prison, the same dream vision often came to him, always saying the same thing: "Socrates, practice music!" Until his last days, he reassures himself with the thought that his philosophy is the highest art of the Muses. He does not really believe that a deity would remind him to practice that "common, popular music." Finally, in prison, to relieve his conscience completely, he agrees to practice even this music he thinks so little of. In this spirit he writes a hymn of introduction to Apollo and puts some Aesopian fables into verse. Something like his warning divine voice drove him to these exercises. It was his Apollonian insight that, like a barbarian king, he did not understand a noble image of a god and risked offending a deity—through his failure to understand. Those words from Socrates' dream vision are the only sign of a misgiving about the limits of the logical nature. Perhaps, he must have asked himself, what I

cannot understand is not necessarily unreasonable? Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is excluded? Perhaps art is even a necessary counterpart and supplement to science?

Section 15



Following these last questions and their intimations, we must now say how Socrates' influence has spread over later generations, right up to this moment and indeed into the whole future. It is like a shadow that keeps growing in the evening sun. We must say how this influence repeatedly forces the creation of *art* anew—art in its widest and deepest, already metaphysical sense—and how, being endless itself, it guarantees that art too will be endless.

Before we could recognize this, before the innermost dependence of all art on the Greeks, the Greeks from Homer to Socrates, had been convincingly demonstrated, our experience of these Greeks had to resemble the Athenians' experience of Socrates. Almost every age and level of culture has at some point tried, in deep frustration, to free itself from the Greeks. In their presence, everything people themselves had achieved, everything seemingly completely original and sincerely admired, suddenly seemed to lose its color and life. It shrank into a failed copy, even a caricature. So time and again heartfelt rage breaks out against that presumptuous little people who dared to call everything foreign “barbaric” for all time. Who are these people, we ask, who can show only a brief historical splendor, institutions with a ridiculously limited scope, and a questionable moral worth, and who are even marked by ugly vices? Yet they claim the dignity and special position among nations that genius holds among the masses. Unfortunately, people have not been lucky enough to find a cup of hemlock with which such a being could simply be disposed of. All the poison

that envy, slander, and rage produced was not enough to destroy that self-sufficient magnificence. So people feel ashamed and afraid before the Greeks—unless someone prizes truth above everything and therefore dares to admit this truth too: the Greeks hold the reins of our culture and every culture. But almost always, chariot and horses are made of inferior material, unworthy of their drivers' glory. The drivers then think it a joke to send such a team plunging into the abyss, which they themselves clear with Achilles' leap.

To show that Socrates too deserves the dignity of such leadership, we need only recognize in him the model of a way of existing unknown before him: the model of the *theoretical person*. Our next task is to understand this person's meaning and goal. Like the artist, the theoretical person takes endless satisfaction in what exists. This satisfaction protects both of them against the practical ethics of pessimism and its eyes of Lynceus, which shine only in the dark. Whenever truth is unveiled, the artist gazes in delight only at what still remains a covering even after the unveiling. The theoretical person, by contrast, enjoys and takes satisfaction in the discarded covering. The greatest pleasure this person seeks is the process of unveiling, always happily succeeding through one's own efforts. Science would not exist if its concern were only with that *one* naked goddess and nothing else. For then its followers would feel like people trying to dig a hole straight through the earth. Each sees that even with the greatest effort, lasting a lifetime, he can dig through only a tiny part of its enormous depth. Before his eyes, the next person's work fills that part back in. A third person therefore seems sensible in choosing, on his own initiative, a new spot for his drilling attempts. Now suppose someone convincingly proves that this direct route cannot reach the goal on the opposite side of the earth. Who would still want to go on working in those old depths, unless meanwhile he had learned to find satisfaction in discovering precious stones or laws of nature? That is why Lessing, the most honest theoretical person, dared to say that searching for truth mattered more to him than truth itself. This revealed the fundamental secret of science, to the astonishment and even annoyance of scientific people. Admittedly, beside this isolated insight, this excess of honesty if not high spirits, stands a profound *delusion* that first entered the world in the

person of Socrates. It is the unshakable belief that thought, guided by causality, reaches into the deepest abysses of being, and that thought can not only know being but even *correct* it. This sublime metaphysical delusion accompanies science as an instinct. Again and again it leads science to its limits, where it must turn into *art—the real goal of this mechanism*.

Now let us look at Socrates by the torchlight of this idea. He appears as the first person who, led by this scientific instinct, could not only live but—far more important—also die. That is why the image of the *dying Socrates*, the man whom knowledge and reasoning have freed from the fear of death, is the coat of arms above the entrance to science. It reminds everyone of science's purpose: to make existence appear understandable and therefore justified. Of course, when reasoning is not enough, *myth* must ultimately serve this purpose too. I have just described myth as a necessary consequence, indeed as the aim, of science.

Think of Socrates as the initiator into the mysteries of science. After him, one school of philosophy replaces another, like wave following wave. An unimagined universality of the desire for knowledge spreads through the broadest reaches of the educated world. Regarded as the proper task of everyone with higher abilities, science is carried out onto the open sea, from which it has never since been completely driven back. Only through this universality was a shared net of thought stretched over the whole globe, even opening views onto the laws of an entire solar system. Anyone who pictures all this, along with today's astonishingly high pyramid of knowledge, cannot help seeing Socrates as the single turning point and vortex of so-called world history. Imagine that this whole incalculable amount of energy spent on that worldwide tendency had *not* served knowledge. Suppose it had been used for the practical—that is, self-ish—goals of individuals and peoples instead. General wars of annihilation and continual migrations of peoples would probably have weakened the instinctive joy in living so much that suicide would have become customary. An individual might then feel his last 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 ethic of

genocide out of pity. Such pessimism, moreover, 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.

Against this practical pessimism, Socrates is the original model of the theoretical optimist. With the belief just described that the nature of things can be fully understood, this optimist gives knowledge and understanding the power of a universal medicine and sees error as evil itself. To penetrate those underlying reasons and separate true knowledge from semblance and error seemed to the Socratic person the noblest, indeed the only truly human calling. Similarly, from Socrates onward, the mechanism of concepts, judgments, and inferences was valued above all other abilities as nature's highest activity and most admirable gift. Even the most sublime moral actions, impulses of compassion, self-sacrifice, and heroism, and that hard-won ocean calm of the soul that the Apollonian Greek called self-restraint, were derived by Socrates and his like-minded successors, down to the present day, from the dialectic of knowledge. Accordingly, they declared these things teachable. Anyone who has personally experienced the pleasure of Socratic knowledge, and feels how it tries in ever-widening circles to embrace the whole world of appearances, will thereafter feel no stronger spur toward existence than the desire to complete that conquest and weave the net so firmly that nothing can penetrate it. To someone in this state of mind, Plato's Socrates appears as the teacher of a completely new form of "Greek cheerfulness" and happiness in existence. This seeks an outlet in action. It will generally find that outlet in drawing ideas out of noble young men and educating them, with the ultimate aim of producing genius.

But now science, spurred on by its powerful delusion, rushes unstoppably to its limits. There the optimism hidden in the nature of logic breaks down. For the circumference of the circle of science has infinitely many points. We still cannot even see how the circle could ever be completely measured. Yet a noble and gifted person inevitably reaches such boundary points on the circumference, even before the midpoint of life, and stares into what cannot be illumi-

nated. Here, to his horror, he sees logic coil around itself at these limits and finally bite its own tail. Then a new form of knowledge breaks through: *tragic knowledge*. Simply to be bearable, it needs art as a protection and remedy.

With eyes strengthened and refreshed by the Greeks, let us look at the highest spheres of the world surrounding us. We see the hunger for insatiable, optimistic knowledge, exemplified in Socrates, turn into tragic resignation and a need for art. At its lower levels, however, that same hunger must express hostility to art and inwardly detest Dionysian, tragic art above all. The struggle of Socratism against Aeschylean tragedy, for example, has illustrated this.

Here, with moved hearts, we knock at the gates of the present and the future. Will that “turning” lead to ever-new forms of genius, and specifically to a *Socrates who practices music*? Will the net of art spread over existence, even under the names of religion or science, be woven ever more firmly and finely? Or is it destined to be torn to shreds amid the restlessly barbaric activity and turmoil that now calls itself “the present”? Worried but not without comfort, we stand aside for a little while as observers allowed to witness those enormous struggles and transitions. Ah! The spell of these struggles is that anyone who watches them must also fight them!

Section 16



Through this detailed historical example, we have tried to make one point clear: tragedy dies when the spirit of music disappears, just as surely as it can be born only from that spirit. To make this claim seem less strange, and also to show where our insight came from, we must now face similar phenomena in the present with an open gaze. We must enter the very struggles that, as I just said, are being fought in the highest spheres of our present world between insatiable, optimistic knowledge and the tragic need for art. Here I will set aside all the other opposing drives that work against art, and especially tragedy, in every age. Even today they spread with such confidence of victory that, among the theatrical arts, for example, only farce and ballet flourish with any luxuriance, putting out blossoms whose scent perhaps does not please everyone. I want to speak only of the *most distinguished opposition* to the tragic view of the world. By this I mean science, which is optimistic in its deepest nature, with its ancestor Socrates at its head. Soon I will also name the powers that seem to me to guarantee *a rebirth of tragedy*—and what other happy hopes for the German spirit!

Before we plunge into these struggles, let us put on the armor of the insights we have gained so far. Others work hard to derive the arts from a single principle, treating it as the necessary source of life for every artwork. In contrast, I keep my eyes fixed on those two Greek gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus. I recognize in them the living, visible representatives of *two* worlds of art, different

in their deepest nature and highest goals. Apollo stands before me as the glorifying spirit of the principle of individuation. Only through him can release in semblance truly be achieved. But under Dionysus' mystical cry of joy, the spell of individuation is broken. The way lies open to the Mothers of being, to the innermost core of things. An enormous gulf thus opens between the visual art of form, as Apollonian art, and music, as Dionysian art. Only one of the great thinkers saw this opposition clearly enough to give music a character and origin distinct from all the other arts, even without the guidance of this Greek symbolism of the gods. Unlike all the other arts, he held, music is not a copy of appearance but a direct copy of the will itself. It therefore presents *the metaphysical counterpart to everything physical in the world*, the thing in itself as the counterpart to every appearance. (Schopenhauer, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, p. 310). This is the most important insight in all aesthetics. Taken seriously, it is where aesthetics first begins. Richard Wagner has set his seal on it, confirming its eternal truth, when he states in "Beethoven" that music must be judged by completely different aesthetic principles from all the visual arts, and not at all by the category of beauty. An erroneous aesthetics, however, guided by a misdirected and degenerate art, has become accustomed to taking the concept of beauty valid in the world of visual form and demanding a similar effect from music as from works of visual art: namely, the arousal of *pleasure in beautiful forms*. Once I recognized that enormous opposition, I felt a strong urge to approach the nature of Greek tragedy, and with it the deepest revelation of the Greek genius. Only now did I believe I possessed the magic power to move beyond the phrases of our customary aesthetics and bring tragedy's fundamental problem vividly before my mind. This gave me such a strangely distinctive view into the Greek world that I had to feel our so proudly self-important scholarship on classical Greece had so far mainly known only how to feast on shadow plays and externals.

Perhaps we can touch on that fundamental problem with this question: what aesthetic effect arises when the Apollonian and Dionysian powers of art, separate in themselves, become active alongside each other? Or, more briefly: how does music relate to image and concept? Richard Wagner praises

Schopenhauer for unsurpassable clarity and transparency of presentation on precisely this point. Schopenhauer discusses it most fully in the following passage, which I will reproduce here at its full length. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, p. 309: “From all this it follows that we can regard the world of appearances, or nature, and music as two different expressions of the same thing. That thing itself is therefore the only link between them that makes their analogy possible. We must know it to understand that analogy. Accordingly, when considered as an expression of the world, music is a language of the highest degree of universality. Its relation even to the universality of concepts is roughly like their relation to individual things. But its universality is by no means the empty universality of abstraction. It is of a completely different kind and is combined with clear definition throughout. In this it resembles geometrical figures and numbers. As the universal forms of all possible objects of experience, applicable to all of them in advance of experience, these are nevertheless not abstract, but directly perceptible and completely definite. All possible efforts, impulses, and expressions of the will, all those processes within human beings that reason throws into the broad negative concept of feeling, can be expressed through the infinitely many possible melodies. But they are always expressed in the universality of form alone, without material content; always only as they are in themselves, not as appearances—as though they were their innermost soul without a body. Music has this intimate relationship with the true nature of all things. This also explains why, when appropriate music accompanies any scene, action, event, or setting, it seems to unlock its most secret meaning for us and serves as its truest and clearest commentary. It likewise explains why someone who gives himself over entirely to the impression of a symphony feels as if every possible event in life and the world were passing before him. Yet on reflection he can point to no similarity between that play of sounds and the things that appeared in his mind. For, as I have said, music differs from all the other arts in this: it is not a copy of appearance, or more precisely of the will’s adequate objectivity, but a direct copy of the will itself. It therefore presents the metaphysical counterpart to everything physical in the world, the thing in itself as the counterpart to every appearance. Accordingly,

we could just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will. This explains why music immediately gives heightened significance to every painting, indeed to every scene of actual life and the world. Of course, it does so all the more, the more closely its melody corresponds to the inner spirit of the given appearance. This is the basis on which we can set a poem to music as a song, a visual presentation as pantomime, or both as opera. Such individual images of human life, set beneath the universal language of music, are never connected with it or matched to it by any complete necessity. Their relation to it is only that of an arbitrarily chosen example to a general concept. In the definite form of reality, they present what music states in the universality of form alone. For melodies are, in a sense, like general concepts, an abstraction from reality. Reality—that is, the world of individual things—provides what can be perceived, what is particular and individual, the single case, for both the universality of concepts and the universality of melodies. But these two universalities are in a certain respect opposites. Concepts contain only the forms first abstracted from perception, as though they were the outer shell peeled off things, and are therefore abstractions in the strictest sense. Music, on the other hand, gives the innermost core preceding all form, or the heart of things. This relationship could be expressed very well in the language of the Scholastics: concepts are universals after the thing, music gives universals before the thing, and reality gives universals in the thing. But, as I have said, a relationship between a composition and a visual presentation is possible at all because the two are merely very different expressions of the same inner nature of the world. When such a relationship really exists in an individual case—when the composer has known how to express in music’s universal language the movements of the will that form the core of an event—then the melody of the song, the music of the opera, is expressive. But the analogy the composer has found between the two must have arisen from a direct knowledge of the world’s nature, without his reason being aware of it. It must not be a consciously intentional imitation mediated by concepts. Otherwise the music does not express the inner nature, the will itself, but merely imitates its appearance inadequately, as all music that is strictly imitative does.” —

Following Schopenhauer's teaching, then, we understand music immediately as the language of the will. We feel our imagination stirred to give form to the 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, an image or concept gains heightened significance under the influence of music that truly corresponds to it. Dionysian art therefore generally has two effects on the Apollonian artistic capacity. Music prompts us to *see the Dionysian universal in symbolic images*. Music then makes the symbolic image stand out *with the highest significance*. From these facts, understandable in themselves and open to any deeper observation, I infer music's ability to give birth to *myth*—that is, the most meaningful example—and specifically to *tragic* myth: the myth that speaks of Dionysian knowledge in symbolic images. In the case of the lyric poet, I have shown how music struggles within the poet to express its nature in Apollonian images. Now let us imagine that music at its highest intensity must also seek its fullest expression in images. We must then consider it possible that music can also find the symbolic expression of its own Dionysian wisdom. And where else should we look for this expression, if not in tragedy and in the concept of *the tragic* in general?

The tragic cannot honestly be derived from the nature of art as people usually understand it, solely under the categories of semblance and beauty. Only through the spirit of music do we understand joy in the destruction of the individual. For individual examples of such destruction merely make clear to us the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art. This art expresses the will in its omnipotence, as though behind the principle of individuation: eternal life beyond all appearance and despite all destruction. The metaphysical joy in the tragic translates instinctive, unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of images. The hero, the highest appearance of the will, is negated to our delight because he is only an appearance, and his destruction does not touch the will's eternal life. "We believe in eternal life," tragedy cries, while music is the immediate idea of this life. The artist who works in visual forms has a completely different goal. Here Apollo overcomes the individual's suffering through a radiant glorification of *the eternity of appearance*. Here beauty triumphs over the suffering

inherent in life. In a certain sense, a lie erases pain from nature's features. In Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism, that same nature speaks to us in its true, undisguised voice: "Be as I am! Beneath the unceasing change of appearances, I am the primal mother, eternally creative, eternally compelling existence, eternally satisfied by this change of appearances!"

Section 17



Dionysian art too wants to convince us of the eternal joy of existence. But we are to seek this joy not in appearances, but behind them. We are to recognize that everything that comes into being must be ready for a painful end. We are forced to look into the terrors of individual existence—and yet we are not to freeze in horror. Metaphysical comfort momentarily pulls us out of the machinery of changing forms. For brief moments we really are the primal being itself and feel its unrestrained hunger and joy in existence. The struggle, torment, and destruction of appearances now seem necessary to us, given the excess of countless forms of existence pushing and shoving their way into life, given the overflowing fertility of the world-will. The raging sting of these torments pierces us at the very moment when we have, as it were, become one with the immeasurable primal joy in existence, and when, in Dionysian rapture, we sense that this joy is indestructible and eternal. Despite fear and pity, we are happily alive—not as individuals, but as the *one* living being with whose joy in procreation we have merged.

The history of Greek tragedy's origin now tells us with luminous certainty how the Greeks' tragic artwork really was born from the spirit of music. Through this idea, we believe we have for the first time done justice to the chorus' original and so astonishing meaning. At the same time, however, we must admit that the meaning of tragic myth set out earlier never became conceptually clear to Greek poets, let alone Greek philosophers. In a sense, their heroes

speak more superficially than they act. Myth by no means finds its adequate objective expression in the spoken word. The structure of the scenes and the visible images reveal a deeper wisdom than the poet himself can put into words and concepts. The same thing is observed in Shakespeare. His Hamlet, for example, speaks more superficially than he acts in a similar sense. The lesson of Hamlet mentioned earlier must therefore be drawn not from the words, but from a deepened view and overview of the whole. Of course, Greek tragedy reaches us only as spoken drama. I have even suggested that this mismatch between myth and word could easily tempt us to think it shallower and less meaningful than it is. We might therefore also assume it had a more superficial effect than ancient testimony says it must have had. How easily we forget that what the poet of words failed to achieve—the highest spiritualization and ideality of myth—he could achieve at every moment as a creative musician! We, admittedly, must reconstruct the overwhelming power of the musical effect almost by scholarly means if we are to receive anything of that incomparable comfort that must belong to true tragedy. Yet we would have felt even this overwhelming musical power as such only if we had been Greeks. Compared with the infinitely richer music we know and are familiar with, we believe we hear in the entire development of Greek music only the youthful song of musical genius, sung with a timid awareness of its strength. As the Egyptian priests say, the Greeks are eternal children. In tragic art too, they are only children who do not know what a sublime toy has come into being under their hands—and is being smashed to pieces.

The spirit of music struggles toward revelation in images and myth, with increasing intensity from the beginnings of lyric poetry to Attic tragedy. Then, just after achieving a rich flowering, this struggle suddenly breaks off and seems to disappear from the surface of Greek art. Meanwhile, the Dionysian view of the world born from this struggle lives on in the mysteries. Through the strangest transformations and degenerations, it never stops attracting more serious natures. Might it not one day rise again from its mystical depths as art?

The question that concerns us here is whether the opposing power against which tragedy broke has enough strength for all time to prevent the artistic reawakening of tragedy and the tragic view of the world. Ancient tragedy was pushed off its course by the dialectical drive toward knowledge and the optimism of science. If so, this fact would imply 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 the demonstration of those limits has destroyed its claim to universal validity, could we hope for a rebirth of tragedy. As the symbol of that form of culture, we would have to set up *Socrates practicing music*, in the sense discussed earlier. In this contrast, by the spirit of science I mean the belief that first came to light in the person of Socrates: that nature can be fully understood and knowledge can cure everything.

Anyone who remembers the immediate consequences of this restlessly advancing spirit of science will at once recall how it destroyed *myth*. Through that destruction, poetry was driven from its natural, ideal ground and became homeless. If we were right to credit music with the power to give birth to myth again from within itself, we must also look for the spirit of science along the path where it opposes this myth-creating power of music. This happens in the development of the *newer Attic dithyramb*. Its music no longer expressed the inner nature, the will itself, but reproduced appearance inadequately through an imitation mediated by concepts. Truly musical natures turned away from this inwardly degenerate music with the same disgust they felt toward Socrates' art-killing tendency. Aristophanes' sure instinct certainly grasped the truth when he included Socrates himself, Euripides' tragedy, and the music of the newer dithyrambic poets in the same feeling of hatred, sensing the signs of a degenerate culture in all three phenomena. Through this newer dithyramb, music was sacrilegiously made into an imitative portrait of appearance—for example, of a battle or a storm at sea—and so was completely robbed of its myth-creating power. Suppose music tries to excite our pleasure only by forcing us to look for external similarities between an event in life or nature and certain rhythmic figures and characteristic musical sounds. Suppose our understanding is to find satisfaction in recognizing these similarities. Then we are dragged

down into a state of mind in which receiving myth is impossible. For myth asks to be felt and seen 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 reflected 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. Now music has become a poor copy of appearance, and is therefore infinitely poorer than appearance itself. Through this poverty, it even degrades appearance itself in our feelings. Thus, for example, a battle imitated musically in this way is exhausted in marching noise, signal calls, and the like, and our imagination is held fast to precisely these superficial details. Tone painting is therefore the opposite in every respect of the myth-creating power of true music. Through it, appearance becomes still poorer than it is, whereas through Dionysian music the individual appearance is enriched and expanded into an image of the world. It was a powerful victory for the un-Dionysian spirit when, in the development of the newer dithyramb, it alienated music from itself and degraded it into a slave of appearance. Euripides, who in a higher sense must be called thoroughly unmusical by nature, is for this very reason a passionate supporter of the newer dithyrambic music. With a robber's lavishness, he uses all its showpieces and mannerisms.

We see the power of this un-Dionysian, anti-mythical spirit operating in another direction when we look at the growing predominance of *character portrayal* and psychological refinement in tragedy from Sophocles onward. A character is no longer to be allowed to expand into an eternal type. On the contrary, artfully added minor traits and shadings, and the most delicate definition of every line, are to make the character seem so individual that the spectator no longer feels the myth at all. Instead, the spectator feels the artist's powerful truth to nature and ability to imitate. Here too we see the victory of appearance over the universal, and pleasure in the individual specimen, as though it were an anatomical preparation. We are already breathing the air of a theoretical world that values scientific knowledge more highly than the artistic reflection of a universal rule. The movement toward the characteristic advances quickly.

Sophocles still paints whole characters and harnesses myth to unfold them with refinement. Euripides already paints only large individual character traits that find expression in violent passions. In the newer Attic comedy, only masks with *one* expression remain: frivolous old men, cheated pimps, cunning slaves, endlessly repeated. Where has the myth-making spirit of music gone now? What remains of music is either music of excitement or music of recollection: either a stimulant for dulled, worn-out nerves, or tone painting. For the former, the words set to it hardly matter anymore. Already in Euripides, things become quite sloppy as soon as his heroes or choruses begin to sing. How far might this have gone with his brazen successors?

But the new un-Dionysian spirit reveals itself most clearly in the *endings* of the newer dramas. At the end of the old tragedy, one could feel the metaphysical comfort without which pleasure in tragedy cannot be explained at all. Perhaps the reconciling sound from another world rings out most purely in Oedipus at Colonus. Now that the spirit of music has fled from tragedy, tragedy is, strictly speaking, dead. For where could that metaphysical comfort now be found? People therefore sought an earthly resolution of the tragic dissonance. After fate had tortured the hero sufficiently, he reaped his well-deserved reward in a splendid marriage or honors from the gods. The hero had become a gladiator who, after being thoroughly mauled and covered with wounds, was occasionally granted his freedom. The god from the machine has replaced metaphysical comfort. I do not mean that the advancing un-Dionysian spirit destroyed the tragic view of the world everywhere and completely. We know only that this view had to flee out of art into a kind of underworld, degenerating into a secret cult. But over the broadest surface of the Greek world raged the consuming breath of that spirit. It reveals itself in the form of “Greek cheerfulness” discussed earlier as a senile, unproductive joy in existence. This cheerfulness is the opposite of the magnificent “naivety” of the older Greeks. As we have described it, that naivety must be understood as the blossom of Apollonian culture growing from a dark abyss, as the victory the Greek will wins over suffering and the wisdom of suffering by reflecting itself in beauty. The noblest form of that other, Alexandrian “Greek cheerfulness” is the cheer-

fulness of *the theoretical person*. It shows the very characteristics I have just derived from the un-Dionysian spirit. It fights Dionysian wisdom and art. It tries to dissolve myth. Instead of metaphysical comfort, it offers an earthly harmony, indeed a god from the machine of its own: the god of machines and melting pots. In other words, it offers the powers of nature's spirits, understood and used in the service of a higher selfishness. It believes in correcting the world through knowledge, in a life guided by science. And it really can confine an individual within a very narrow circle of solvable tasks, inside 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 some way to keep its creatures in life and force them to go on living, by spreading an illusion over things. One person is held fast by the Socratic delight in knowing, and by the delusion that knowing can heal the eternal wound of existence. Another is caught in the seductive veil of beauty that art waves before their eyes. Yet another is caught by metaphysical comfort, the belief that beneath the whirl of appearances eternal life flows on, indestructible. I will say nothing of the commoner illusions, which are almost stronger still, and which the will keeps ready at every moment. Those three levels of illusion exist only for the more nobly endowed natures. These natures feel the weight and burden of existence with a deeper displeasure, and they can only be tricked out of that displeasure by specially chosen stimulants. Everything we call culture is made of these stimulants. Depending on the proportions of the mixture, we get a culture that is mainly *Socratic*, or *artistic*, or *tragic*. Or, if you will allow examples from history: there is either an Alexandrian culture, or a Hellenic one, or a Buddhist one.

Our whole modern world is caught in the net of Alexandrian culture. Its ideal is the *theoretical person*, equipped with the highest powers of knowing and working in the service of science. The original model and ancestor of that person is Socrates. All our means of education had this ideal in view from the start. Every other kind of existence has to struggle up painfully on the side, as an existence that is allowed, not one that is intended. In an almost frightening way, for

a long time the educated person was found only in the form of the scholar. Even our poetic arts had to develop out of scholarly imitations. And in the main effect of rhyme we can still see how our poetic form arose from artificial experiments with a language that was not native, a truly scholarly one. How incomprehensible a true Greek would find *Faust*, the modern cultured person, who is perfectly understandable to us. This is the Faust who storms through all the academic faculties without being satisfied, and who, out of a drive for knowledge, gives himself over to magic and the devil. We only need to set him beside Socrates for comparison to see that modern people are beginning to sense the limits of that Socratic delight in knowing. Out of the wide, barren sea of knowledge, they long for a shore. Once, speaking to Eckermann about Napoleon, Goethe remarked: "Yes, my good friend, there is also a productivity of deeds." In his charming, naive way he was reminding us that the person who is not theoretical strikes modern people as something hard to believe and astonishing. It takes the wisdom of a Goethe all over again to find such a strange form of existence understandable, even forgivable.

And now we must not hide from ourselves what lies concealed in the womb of this Socratic culture. It is an optimism that imagines itself to have no limits! We must not be alarmed now when the fruits of this optimism ripen. Such a culture has leavened society through and through, down to its lowest layers, and that society gradually begins to tremble with extravagant surges and desires. The belief in earthly happiness for everyone, and the belief that such a universal culture of knowledge is possible, gradually turn into the threatening demand for an Alexandrian earthly happiness. They turn into the summoning of a Euripidean god from the machine! We should take note: Alexandrian culture needs a class of slaves if it is to last. But in its optimistic view of existence it denies that such a class is necessary. So when its beautiful words of seduction and reassurance about the "dignity of the human being" and the "dignity of labor" have lost their effect, it moves gradually toward a horrifying destruction. There is nothing more terrible than a barbarian class of slaves that has learned to see its existence as a wrong and is getting ready to take revenge, not only for itself but for all generations. Who will dare, in the face of such threatening

storms, to appeal with confident courage to our pale and tired religions? Down to their foundations they have degenerated into religions for scholars. Myth, the necessary precondition of every religion, is already paralyzed everywhere. Even in this realm that optimistic spirit has come to rule, the very spirit we have just named the seed of destruction in our society.

The disaster that slumbers in the womb of theoretical culture is slowly beginning to frighten modern people. Restless, they reach into the store of their experience for ways to avert the danger, without really believing in those ways themselves. In other words, they are beginning to sense their own consequences. Meanwhile, great natures with broad gifts have acted with unbelievable level-headedness. They have known how to use the very equipment of science to lay out the limits of knowing in general, and how conditioned it is. In doing so they have decisively denied the claim of science to universal validity and universal purposes. In this demonstration, for the first time, a delusion was recognized for what it is: the delusion that, with causality as its guide, claims it can fathom the innermost essence of things. The immense courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer* won the hardest victory of all. It was the victory over the optimism hidden in the very nature of logic, which in turn is the foundation of our culture. That optimism believed that all the riddles of the world can be known and fathomed. It relied on the eternal truths, which it never questioned. It treated space, time and causality as completely unconditioned laws of the widest possible validity. Kant showed that these laws in fact only served to raise mere appearance, the work of *Maya*, to the one highest reality. They put appearance in the place of the innermost and true essence of things, and so they made real knowledge of that essence impossible. That is, to use a saying of Schopenhauer's, they put the dreamer to sleep even more soundly (W. a. W. u. V. I, p. 498). With this insight a culture is ushered in that I dare to call tragic. Its most important mark is that wisdom takes the place of science as the highest goal. Wisdom is not deceived by the seductive distractions of the sciences. It turns with an unmoved gaze to the picture of the world as a whole, and tries to take the eternal suffering into itself, with a feeling of sympathetic love, as its own suffering. Imagine a rising generation with this fearless gaze, with this

heroic reach toward the immense. Imagine the bold stride of these dragon-slayers, and the proud daring with which they turn their backs on all the weakling doctrines of that optimism, in order to “live resolutely” in the whole and the full. Must the tragic person of this culture not long for a new art, as they educate themselves toward seriousness and terror? Must they not long for the art of metaphysical comfort, for tragedy, as the Helen who belongs to them, and cry out with Faust:

And should I not, by the most yearning force,
Draw into life that one and only form?

Socratic culture has now been shaken from two sides. It can hold the scepter of its infallibility only with trembling hands. First, it is afraid of its own consequences, which it is at last beginning to sense. Second, it is no longer convinced, with its earlier naive confidence, that its foundation is valid forever. So it is a sad spectacle to watch the dance of its thinking. Longingly, it keeps throwing itself at new figures to embrace them, and then suddenly, shuddering, lets them go again, as Mephistopheles lets go of the seductive lamias. This is indeed the mark of that “break” which everyone is in the habit of calling the primal suffering of modern culture. The theoretical person is frightened by the consequences, and, unsatisfied, no longer dares to trust themselves to the terrible icy stream of existence. Anxiously they run up and down the bank. They no longer want to have anything whole, whole even with all the natural cruelty of things. That is how far the optimistic way of looking at things has made them soft. On top of that, they feel that a culture built on the principle of science must perish once it begins to become *illogical*, that is, once it begins to flee back from its own consequences. Our art reveals this general distress. It is useless to lean on all the great productive periods and natures by imitating them. It is useless to gather the whole “world literature” around modern people for their comfort, and to set them down among the art styles and artists of every age, so that they can give them names, as Adam did with the animals. They still remain the eternally hungry, the “critic” without desire or strength, the Alexandrian person. At bottom this person is a librarian and proofreader, and goes miserably blind from book dust and misprints.

Section 19



We cannot describe the innermost content of this Socratic culture more sharply than by calling it *the culture of opera*. In this field the culture has spoken out, with a naivety all its own, about what it wants and what it knows. That is astonishing when we hold the origin of opera and the facts of its development up against the eternal truths of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. First I recall how the representational style and recitative began. Is it believable that this wholly externalized music of opera, which is incapable of devotion, could be welcomed and cherished with such enthusiastic favor, as if it were the rebirth of all true music? And that by an age out of which the unspeakably sublime and holy music of Palestrina had just risen? On the other hand, who would want to blame only the amusement-hungry luxury of those Florentine circles, and the vanity of their dramatic singers, for the delight in opera that spread so impetuously? In the same period, indeed among the same people, a passion for a half-musical way of speaking awoke. This happened right beside the vaulted structure of Palestrina's harmonies, on which the whole Christian Middle Ages had been building. I can explain it to myself only by a *tendency from outside art* that was at work in the very nature of recitative.

The listener wants to hear the words clearly beneath the singing. The singer meets this wish by speaking more than singing, and by sharpening the emotional expression of the words in this half-song. By sharpening the emotional force in this way, the singer makes the words easier to understand and over-

comes the half of the music that is left over. The real danger that now threatens the singer is giving the music the upper hand at the wrong moment. That would immediately destroy both the emotional force of the speech and the clarity of the words. Yet at the same time the singer always feels the urge to let out the music and to show off the voice like a virtuoso. Here the “poet” comes to the singer’s aid. The poet knows how to offer plenty of occasions for lyrical outcries, for repeating words and maxims, and so on. At these places the singer can now rest in the purely musical element, with no regard for the words. In the representational style, speech that is forceful with feeling but only half sung alternates with outcries that are fully sung. This quickly shifting effort works now on the listener’s concepts and ideas, now on the listener’s musical ground. It is so completely unnatural, and so deeply opposed to the artistic drives of the Dionysian and the Apollonian alike, that we have to conclude recitative has an origin outside all artistic instincts. By this description, recitative is to be defined as a mixing of epic and lyric delivery. It is by no means an inwardly lasting mixture, which could not be achieved with things so utterly unlike. It is the most external, mosaic-like gluing together, and nothing like it has any model in nature or experience. *But this was not the opinion of the inventors of recitative:* they themselves believed, and their age with them, that the representational style had solved the secret of ancient music. Only that secret, they thought, could explain the immense effect of an Orpheus, an Amphion, and even of Greek tragedy. The new style was regarded as the reawakening of the most effective music, the music of ancient Greece. Indeed, the general and thoroughly popular view saw the Homeric world *as the primal world*. So people could give themselves over to the dream that they had now climbed back down into the paradise-like beginnings of humanity. In that time music, too, must necessarily have had the unsurpassed purity, power and innocence that the poets tell of so touchingly in their shepherd plays. Here we see into the innermost coming-to-be of this truly modern art form, opera. A powerful need forces an art into being here, but it is a need of a nonaesthetic kind: the longing for the idyll, the belief in a primeval existence of the artistic and good human being. Recitative was regarded as the rediscovered language of that primal human being. Opera

was regarded as the rediscovered land of that idyllically or heroically good creature, who at the same time follows a natural artistic drive in all its actions. Whatever it has to say, it sings at least a little, so as to sing at once in full voice at the slightest stirring of feeling. It does not matter to us now that the humanists of the time used this newly created picture of the paradisaical artist to fight the old church idea of the human being as inherently corrupt and lost. So opera is to be understood as the opposing dogma of the good human being. But with that dogma a comfort had also been found against the pessimism toward which the serious-minded people of that time, in the dreadful insecurity of all conditions, were most strongly pushed. It is enough that we have recognized how the real magic of this new art form, and so its origin, lies in the satisfaction of a wholly nonaesthetic need. That need was the optimistic glorification of the human being as such, and the view of the primal human being as naturally good and artistic. This principle of opera has gradually turned into a threatening and horrifying *demand*, which we, in the face of the socialist movements of the present day, can no longer ignore. The “good primal human being” wants their rights. What paradisaical prospects!

Beside this I place another confirmation, just as clear, of my view that opera is built on the same principles as our Alexandrian culture. Opera is the birth of the theoretical person, the critical layperson, not of the artist. It is one of the strangest facts in the history of all the arts. It was the demand of truly unmusical listeners that above all one must understand the words. So a rebirth of music was to be expected, they said, only if someone discovered some manner of singing in which the text ruled over the counterpoint like a master over a servant. For the words, they said, were as much nobler than the accompanying system of harmony as the soul is nobler than the body. In the beginnings of opera, the combination of music, picture and word was handled with the amateurish, unmusical crudeness of these views. In the spirit of this aesthetic, the first experiments also came about in the distinguished lay circles of Florence, through poets and singers whom those circles patronized. The person who is powerless in art produces a kind of art for themselves, precisely because they are the unartistic human being as such. Because they have no sense of the

Dionysian depth of music, they turn their enjoyment of music into an intellectual rhetoric of words and tones for passion in the representational style, and into the sensual pleasure of vocal artistry. Because they cannot see a vision, they force the stage machinist and the set designer into their service. Because they do not know how to grasp the true nature of the artist, they conjure up before them, to their own taste, the “artistic primal human being,” that is, the human being who sings and speaks verses in passion. They dream themselves into a time when passion was enough to produce songs and poems, as if every emotion had been able to create something artistic. The precondition of opera is a false belief about the artistic process. It is that idyllic belief that really every feeling human being is an artist. In the sense of this belief, opera is the expression of amateurism in art, which dictates its laws with the cheerful optimism of the theoretical person.

If we wished to unite the two ideas just described, both at work in the origin of opera, under one concept, we would have nothing left but to speak of an *idyllic tendency of opera*. For this we would need to use only Schiller’s way of putting it and his explanation. Either, he says, nature and the ideal are an object of grief, when nature is presented as lost and the ideal as unattained. Or both are an object of joy, when they are imagined as real. The first gives the elegy in the narrower sense, the other the idyll in the widest sense. Now we must point out at once what the two ideas in the origin of opera have in common: in them the ideal is not felt as unattained, nor nature as lost. According to this feeling, there was a primeval age of humanity in which human beings lay at the heart of nature. In this naturalness they had also reached the ideal of humanity, in a paradisaal goodness and artistry. We were all supposed to descend from this perfect primal human being. Indeed, we would still be that being’s faithful likeness. We would only have to throw something off ourselves in order to recognize ourselves again as this primal human being. We would do it by freely shedding superfluous scholarship and overly rich culture. The educated person of the Renaissance let their operatic imitation of Greek tragedy lead them back to such a harmony of nature and ideal, to an idyllic reality. They used this tragedy as Dante used Virgil, to be led as far as the gates of paradise. From there they

went on further by themselves. They passed from an imitation of the highest Greek art form to a “restoration of all things,” to a re-creation of the original art world of human beings. What confident good-naturedness these daring efforts show, right in the womb of theoretical culture!—a good-naturedness that can be explained only by the comforting belief that “the human being as such” is the eternally virtuous opera hero, the eternally fluting or singing shepherd. Such a person must in the end always find themselves again as that, if they should ever really have lost themselves for a time. It is only the fruit of that optimism, which rises here out of the depths of the Socratic view of the world like a sweetish, seductive column of fragrance.

Written on the face of opera, then, is by no means that elegiac pain of an eternal loss. It is rather the cheerfulness of eternal rediscovery, the comfortable pleasure in an idyllic reality, which at least one can picture as real at every moment. One may sense now and then that this supposed reality is nothing but fantastic, silly trifling. Anyone who could measure it against the terrible seriousness of true nature, and compare it with the actual primal scenes of humanity’s beginnings, would have to call out to it in disgust: Away with the phantom! Even so, one would be fooling oneself to think that such a trifling thing as opera could be chased away simply by a forceful shout, as one chases off a ghost. Whoever wants to destroy opera must take up the fight against that Alexandrian cheerfulness. It speaks out so naively in opera about its favorite idea, and opera is its true art form. But what can art itself expect from the working of an art form whose origins do not lie in the aesthetic realm at all? This art form has instead stolen across into the artistic territory from a half-moral sphere, and only here and there has it managed to disguise its hybrid origin. On what juices does this parasitic thing, opera, feed, if not on those of true art? Must we not suspect that, under its idyllic seductions and its Alexandrian flattering arts, the highest task of art, the one truly to be called serious, will degenerate into an empty, distracting tendency toward amusement? That task is to free the eye from the look into the horror of night, and to rescue the subject from the cramp of the stirrings of the will by the healing balm of semblance. What becomes of the eternal truths of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, with

such a mixing of styles as I demonstrated from the nature of the representational style? Where music is regarded as the servant and the text as the master, where music is compared to the body and the text to the soul? Where the highest goal will at best be aimed at a descriptive tone-painting, much as formerly in the New Attic dithyramb? Where music is completely estranged from its true dignity of being the Dionysian mirror of the world, so that nothing is left for it but to imitate the formal nature of appearance, as a slave of appearance, and to stir an external delight in the play of lines and proportions. Looked at strictly, this fateful influence of opera on music simply coincides with the whole development of modern music. The optimism lurking in the origin of opera and in the nature of the culture it represents has succeeded, with alarming speed, in stripping music of its Dionysian destiny in the world. It has stamped on music a character of playing with forms and giving pleasure. Only the metamorphosis of the Aeschylean human being into the Alexandrian person of cheerfulness may perhaps be compared with this change.

But suppose we were right, in the example just indicated, to connect the disappearance of the Dionysian spirit with a highly striking but so far unexplained transformation and degeneration of the Greek human being. Then what hopes must spring to life in us, if the surest omens guarantee us *the reverse process, the gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit* in our present world! It is not possible that the divine strength of Heracles will go slack forever in the luxurious servitude to Omphale. Out of the Dionysian ground of the German spirit a power has risen that has nothing in common with the basic conditions of Socratic culture. It can be neither explained nor excused by them. Rather, that culture feels it to be the terribly inexplicable, the overpoweringly hostile. This power is *German music*, as we must understand it above all in its mighty course like the sun's, from Bach to Beethoven and from Beethoven to Wagner. What can the knowledge-hungry Socratism of our day do, at best, with this demon rising from inexhaustible depths? No formula can be found, either from the jagged points and arabesques of operatic melody or with the help of the arithmetical counting board of the fugue and of contrapuntal dialectic, in whose thrice-mighty light one could make that demon submit and force it to speak.

What a spectacle, when our aestheticians now, with the catching-net of a “beauty” of their own, strike and grab at the genius of music romping before them with incomprehensible life, in movements that want to be judged by eternal beauty no more than by the sublime. One need only look at these patrons of music once, in the flesh and up close, when they cry so tirelessly Beauty! Beauty! See whether they look like nature’s favorite children, formed and spoiled in the lap of the beautiful, or whether they are not rather looking for a lying, concealing form for their own coarseness, and an aesthetic pretext for their own sober lack of feeling. I am thinking, for example, of Otto Jahn. But before German music the liar and hypocrite had better watch out. For it is precisely German music that, in the midst of all our culture, is the only pure, clear and purifying spirit of fire. From it and toward it, as in the teaching of the great Heraclitus of Ephesus, all things move in a double orbit. Everything we now call culture, education, civilization will one day have to appear before the unerring judge, Dionysus.

Let us remember next how the spirit of *German philosophy*, flowing from the same sources, was able, through Kant and Schopenhauer, to destroy the contented delight in existence of scientific Socratism by showing its limits. Let us remember how this showing introduced an infinitely deeper and more serious view of ethical questions and of art, which we can call outright *Dionysian wisdom* put into concepts. Where does the mystery of this unity between German music and German philosophy point us, if not to a new form of existence, about whose content we can inform ourselves only by guessing from Hellenic analogies? For the Hellenic model keeps an immeasurable value for us, who stand at the dividing line between two different forms of existence. All those transitions and struggles are also stamped in it in a classic, instructive form. Only we, as it were, live through the great main epochs of the Hellenic character by analogy in *reverse* order. For example, we now seem to be walking backward from the Alexandrian age to the period of tragedy. At the same time we have the feeling that the birth of a tragic age can mean, for the German spirit, only a return to itself, a blessed finding of itself again. For a long time immense powers pressing in from outside had forced it, while it lived on in

helpless barbarism of form, into servitude under their own form. Now at last, after its homecoming to the original spring of its being, it may dare to stride along boldly and freely before all peoples, without the leading strings of a Romance civilization. It needs only to know how to keep learning, unswervingly, from one people, the Greeks. Just to be able to learn from them at all is already a high honor and a distinguishing rarity. And when did we ever need these highest of teachers more than now, when we are living through *the rebirth of tragedy* and are in danger of knowing neither where it comes from nor being able to explain to ourselves where it wants to go?

Section 20



At some point an impartial judge should weigh when, and through which men, the German mind has struggled hardest to learn from the Greeks. We can confidently say that Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann deserve this particular praise for their noble struggle to develop themselves. But we would have to add that, since their time and the immediate effects of that struggle, efforts to follow the same path toward education and the Greeks have grown weaker and weaker, for reasons we cannot understand. To avoid losing all hope in the German mind, might we conclude that even these fighters failed at some crucial point to reach the heart of Greek life and establish a lasting bond of love between German and Greek culture? Perhaps an unconscious awareness of that failure made even more serious people doubtfully ask whether, after such predecessors, they could get any further along this path of education, or reach its goal at all. Since then, we have therefore seen judgments about the Greeks' value for education deteriorate in a deeply troubling way. People express pitying superiority in all kinds of camps, both intellectual and anti-intellectual. Elsewhere, utterly ineffective fine words play around with "Greek harmony," "Greek beauty," and "Greek cheerfulness." The very people whose honorable task could be to draw tirelessly from the Greek riverbed for the good of German education—the teachers in higher educational institutions—have become especially good at settling their accounts with the Greeks early and comfortably. They often go so far as to abandon the Greek ideal with skepticism and completely reverse the

true purpose of all study of antiquity. Anyone in these circles who has not used up all his energies trying to become a reliable proofreader of ancient texts or a natural historian examining language under a microscope may also try to acquire a “historical” understanding of Greek antiquity alongside other ancient cultures. But he invariably uses the methods and superior airs of our present educated historians. The actual educational power of higher institutions has probably never been lower or weaker than it is today. The “journalist,” the day’s slave made of paper, has beaten the teacher in higher education in every aspect of education. All that remains for the teacher is a transformation we have already witnessed many times: he too must now adopt the journalist’s way of speaking and the “light elegance” of that world, fluttering about as a cheerful, educated butterfly. How painfully confused people educated in this way must be when they stare at a phenomenon such as the reawakening of the Dionysian spirit and the rebirth of tragedy! It could only be understood by analogy with the deepest reaches of Greek genius, which has so far remained beyond understanding. In no other artistic period have so-called education and actual art faced each other with such estrangement and hostility as we see today. We understand why education this weak hates true art: it fears that art will destroy it. But surely an entire kind of culture—the Socratic-Alexandrian kind—must have run its course if it could taper off into such a delicate, feeble tip as our present education! Even heroes such as Schiller and Goethe were not allowed to break open the enchanted gate leading into the Greeks’ magic mountain. Their bravest struggles took them no further than the longing gaze Goethe’s Iphigenia sends from barbarian Tauris across the sea toward home. What hope would remain for the followers of such heroes if the gate did not suddenly open by itself on a completely different side, untouched by all the efforts of earlier culture—to the mystical sound of tragedy’s reawakened music?

Let no one try to undermine our belief in a rebirth of Greek antiquity that still lies ahead. That belief alone gives us hope that the German mind can be renewed and purified through music’s fiery magic. What else could we name that might awaken any comforting expectation for the future amid the desolation and exhaustion of our present culture? We look in vain for a single root

with strong branches, for a patch of fertile, healthy soil. Everywhere there is dust, sand, rigidity, and withering. Someone stranded in hopeless isolation could choose no better symbol than Dürer's knight with Death and the Devil: the armored knight with his hard, bronze gaze who knows how to travel his terrifying road, undistracted by his dreadful companions, yet without hope, alone with his horse and dog. Our Schopenhauer was such a Dürer knight. He had no hope at all, but he wanted the truth. There is no one like him.—

But how suddenly that wilderness of our exhausted culture, described in such dark colors, changes when Dionysian magic touches it! A storm wind seizes everything that is worn out, rotten, broken, or stunted. It wraps it all in a whirling red cloud of dust and carries it into the air like a vulture. Our bewildered eyes search for what has vanished. What they see looks as though it has risen from a buried depth into golden light: so full and green, so richly alive, so immeasurably filled with longing. Tragedy sits amid this abundance of life, suffering, and pleasure, in a state of sublime delight. It listens to a distant, sorrowful song. The song tells of the Mothers of Being, whose names are Delusion, Will, and Woe.—Yes, my friends, join me in believing in Dionysian life and in the rebirth of tragedy. The time of the Socratic human being is over. Crown yourselves with ivy, take the thyrsus staff in your hands, and do not be surprised when tigers and panthers lie down affectionately at your knees. Just dare now to be tragic human beings: you are to be redeemed. You are to lead the Dionysian procession from India to Greece! Prepare yourselves for a hard fight, but believe in your god's miracles!

Section 21



Returning from these words of encouragement to the mood appropriate for contemplation, I repeat that only the Greeks can teach us what such a sudden, almost miraculous awakening of tragedy means for the deepest foundations of a people's life. The people who celebrate the tragic mysteries are the people who fight the battles against Persia. And the people who have fought those wars in turn need tragedy as an essential restorative drink. Who would have expected this particular people to express basic political feeling, natural attachment to home, and the original masculine desire for battle with such steady strength, after the most powerful convulsions of the Dionysian spirit had stirred them to their depths for several generations? Whenever Dionysian excitement spreads widely, we can always feel that its release from the individual's chains first makes itself known by weakening political instincts, even to the point of indifference or hostility. On the other hand, Apollo, who creates states, is also the genius of the principle of individuation. Neither the state nor attachment to home can live without an affirmation of individual personality.

For a people starting from orgiastic ecstasy, there is only one road: the road to Indian Buddhism. With its longing for nothingness, Buddhism needs those rare ecstatic states that lift people above space, time, and individuality if it is to be bearable at all. Those states in turn demand a philosophy that teaches people to overcome the indescribable distress of the intervening states through an idea.

A people starting from the absolute authority of political impulses is just as inevitably drawn toward extreme worldliness. The Roman empire is its grandest but also its most terrifying expression.

Placed between India and Rome and pressed toward a tempting choice, the Greeks managed to invent a third form, in classical purity. They did not keep it for their own use for long, but for that very reason it became immortal. That the gods' favorites die young is true in everything. It is equally certain that they then live forever with the gods. We should not demand that the very noblest things have the tough durability of leather. The crude staying power found, for example, in the Roman national impulse probably does not belong among the necessary qualities of perfection. But what remedy enabled the Greeks, in their great period, not to exhaust themselves either in ecstatic brooding or in a consuming pursuit of world power and worldly honor, despite the extraordinary strength of their Dionysian and political impulses? How did they instead achieve that wonderful blend found in a fine wine that both fires us up and puts us in a reflective mood? We must remember the immense power of *tragedy*, which excites, purifies, and releases the energies of a people's whole life. We will only begin to understand its highest value when, as it did for the Greeks, it comes before us as the embodiment of every preventive healing power: the mediator between a people's strongest qualities, which in themselves are also the most dangerous.

Tragedy absorbs the highest orgiastic ecstasy of music. It thus brings music itself to perfection, among the Greeks as among us. But it then places the tragic myth and the tragic hero beside it. Like a mighty Titan, the hero takes the whole Dionysian world onto his back and relieves us of its weight. At the same time, through that same tragic myth in the person of its hero, tragedy can free us from the greedy urge for this existence. Its warning hand reminds us of another kind of being and a higher pleasure, for which the struggling hero prepares himself with a sense of what is coming, through his destruction rather than his victories. Tragedy places a sublime symbolic image—the myth—between its music's universal reach and the listener who is open to Dionysian experience. It makes the listener imagine that music is only a supreme means of

representation for bringing the myth's world of visible forms to life. Trusting this noble illusion, music can now move its limbs in a dithyrambic dance and give itself freely to an orgiastic feeling of liberty. As music in itself, without that illusion, it would not dare revel in this feeling. Myth protects us from music, while also giving music its highest freedom. In return, music gives tragic myth a metaphysical significance so powerful and convincing that words and images could never achieve it without this unique help. In particular, through music the tragic spectator gains a sure foretaste of a supreme pleasure, reached by a path through destruction and negation. He seems to hear the deepest abyss of things speaking clearly to him.

Perhaps these last sentences have only given this difficult idea a provisional expression, immediately understandable to very few people. If so, this is precisely where I must keep encouraging my friends to try again. I ask them to prepare themselves to understand the general statement by looking at a single example from our shared experience. For this example I cannot turn to people who use the images of events onstage, or the characters' words and emotions, as aids to approaching musical feeling. None of them speaks music as a native language. Even with those aids, they get no further than the entrance halls of musical perception and are never permitted to touch its innermost sanctuaries. Some, such as Gervinus, do not even reach the entrance halls by this route. I must instead turn only to those who are directly related to music, who find their mother's womb in it, so to speak, and who connect with things almost exclusively through unconscious musical relationships. I ask these genuine musicians whether they can imagine someone capable of perceiving the third act of "Tristan and Isolde," without any help from words or images, purely as an immense symphonic movement, without gasping his life away as every wing of his soul stretches out convulsively. Someone who, as happens here, has placed his ear against the heart chamber of the world's will, who feels its raging desire for existence pour from there into every vein of the world as a thundering torrent or the finest spray of a stream—should he not suddenly break apart? Should he be able to hear, inside the miserable glass shell of a human individual, the echo of countless cries of pleasure and pain from the "vast realm of the

world's night," without rushing irresistibly back to his original home during this shepherds' round dance of metaphysics? Yet if such a work can be perceived as a whole without denying individual existence, if such a creation could be made without smashing its creator, where do we find the solution to this contradiction?

Here the tragic myth and the tragic hero push between our highest musical excitement and that music. At bottom, they are only a symbolic image of the most universal facts, which music alone can speak of directly. But if we felt as purely Dionysian beings, myth as an image would remain beside us completely ineffective and unnoticed. It would not distract us for even a moment from listening to the echo of universals before things. Here, however, the *Apollonian* power bursts out, directed toward restoring the individual who has almost been shattered. It brings the healing balm of a delightful illusion. Suddenly we think we see only Tristan, lying still and dazed, asking himself, "The old tune—why does it wake me?" What previously struck us as a hollow sigh from the center of being now seems only to tell us how "desolate and empty is the sea." Where we thought we were breathlessly fading away as all our feelings stretched out convulsively, with very little still tying us to this existence, we now hear and see only the mortally wounded hero who nevertheless does not die, with his desperate cry: "Longing! Longing! To long while dying, not to die of longing!" Earlier, after such an excess and abundance of consuming agonies, the horn's jubilation cut into our hearts almost like the greatest agony of all. Now the jubilant 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 compassion nevertheless saves us from the world's primal suffering. In the same way, the symbolic image of myth saves us from directly contemplating the supreme idea of the world, and thought and language save us from the unrestrained outpouring of the unconscious will. Through that splendid Apollonian illusion, even the world of sound seems to confront us as a world of visible forms. It seems that here too only Tristan and Isolde's fate has been shaped and given a sculptural form in a material of the greatest delicacy and expressiveness.

In this way the Apollonian pulls us out of Dionysian universality and makes us delight in individuals. It attaches our compassion to them. Through them it satisfies our sense of beauty, which thirsts for great and sublime forms. It leads images of life past us and encourages us to grasp in thought the core of life they contain. With the immense force of the image, the concept, ethical teaching, and sympathetic feeling, the Apollonian lifts people out of their orgiastic self-destruction. It deceives them about the universal character of the Dionysian process, making them imagine that they see one particular picture of the world, such as Tristan and Isolde, and should simply *see* it better and more deeply *through music*. What is beyond Apollo's healing magic, if it can even make us imagine that the Dionysian really serves the Apollonian by strengthening its effects, and that music is essentially an art of representation for Apollonian content?

Through the preestablished harmony between the completed drama and its music, drama reaches a supreme degree of visibility that a drama of words alone could not otherwise attain. Every living figure onstage becomes simpler before us in the independently moving melodic lines, taking on the clarity of a curved line. We hear these lines side by side in changes of harmony that respond with the greatest delicacy to the movement of the action. Through these changes, the relationships between things become immediately perceptible to our senses, never merely abstract. We also recognize through them that the true nature of a character and a melodic line reveals itself purely only in these relationships. Music thus makes us see more, and more inwardly, than usual, and spread the action onstage before us like a delicate web. To our spiritualized eye, which looks within, the stage world is both infinitely expanded and illuminated from inside. What comparable result could a poet working with words offer? Using a much less perfect mechanism, he struggles to achieve that inward expansion and illumination of the visible stage world indirectly, starting from words and concepts. Musical tragedy also adds words, but it can at the same time place beside them the ground from which they arise, their birthplace, and make clear to us from within how words come into being.

But we could say just as firmly that the process described here is only a splendid semblance: the Apollonian *illusion* mentioned earlier, whose effect is meant to relieve us of the Dionysian pressure and excess. At bottom, the relationship between music and drama is exactly the reverse. Music is the actual idea of the world; drama is only a reflection of that idea, one particular shadow image of it. The identity between a melodic line and a living figure, or between harmony and the relationships defining that figure's character, is true in the opposite sense from what we might suppose while watching musical tragedy. We may move the figure as visibly as possible, bring it to life, and illuminate it from inside. It always remains only an appearance, with no bridge leading from it into true reality, into the heart of the world. Music, however, speaks from that heart. Countless appearances of that kind could pass before the same music without ever exhausting its nature. They would always be only its outward images. The popular and completely false opposition between soul and body explains nothing about the difficult relationship between music and drama and confuses everything. Yet the unphilosophical crudeness of that opposition seems, for who knows what reasons, to have become a favorite article of faith among our aesthetic thinkers. Meanwhile, they have learned nothing about the opposition between appearance and the thing in itself, or, for equally unknown reasons, have not wanted to learn anything about it.

Our analysis might seem to have shown that the Apollonian in tragedy wins a complete victory, through its illusion, over music's original Dionysian element, and makes music serve its own purpose: the greatest possible clarification of the drama. If so, a very important qualification must be added. At the most essential point of all, that Apollonian illusion is broken through and destroyed. With music's help, the drama unfolds before us with every movement and figure illuminated clearly from within, as though we were watching fabric take shape through a loom's rising and falling movements. As a whole, it achieves an effect *beyond every Apollonian artistic effect*. In tragedy's total effect, the Dionysian regains the upper hand. Tragedy closes with a sound that could never come from the realm of Apollonian art. The Apollonian illusion thus reveals itself for what it is: a veil maintained throughout the tragedy over its

actual Dionysian effect. That effect is so powerful that, at the end, it drives the Apollonian drama itself into a sphere where it begins to speak with Dionysian wisdom and denies both itself and its Apollonian visibility. We could therefore truly symbolize the difficult relationship between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy through a brotherly alliance of the two gods. Dionysus speaks Apollo's language, but finally Apollo speaks Dionysus's language. With this, the highest goal of tragedy and of art altogether is reached.

Section 22



Let an attentive friend recall, from his own experience, the effect of a genuine musical tragedy in its pure, unmixed form. I think I have described both sides of that effect in a way that will now allow him to interpret his own experiences. He will remember that, as he watched the myth moving before him, he felt himself raised toward a kind of complete knowledge. His eyes seemed no longer limited to surfaces but able to penetrate within. With music's help, he seemed to see the movements of the will, the struggle of motives, and the swelling stream of passions made visible to the senses, like a wealth of vividly moving lines and figures. Through them he could dive into the subtlest secrets of unconscious impulses. He becomes aware that the drives directing him toward visibility and transfiguration have been intensified to their highest degree. Yet he feels just as clearly that this long series of Apollonian artistic effects does *not* produce the happy lingering in contemplation free from willing that a sculptor or epic poet—the truly Apollonian artists—produces in him through art. In other words, it means the justification of the world of individual existence achieved in that contemplation, which is the summit and essence of Apollonian art. He looks at the transfigured world onstage and nevertheless denies it. He sees the tragic hero before him in epic clarity and beauty, yet takes pleasure in his destruction. He understands the action onstage to its depths, yet gladly takes refuge in what cannot be understood. He feels that the hero's actions are justified, yet is even more uplifted when those actions destroy the

person responsible for them. He shudders at the sufferings that will strike the hero, yet senses in them a higher, far more powerful pleasure. He sees more, and more deeply, than ever, yet wishes he were blind. Where should we trace this remarkable division within him, this breaking of the Apollonian summit, if not to *Dionysian* magic? While apparently exciting Apollonian impulses to their highest pitch, that magic can still force this overflowing Apollonian power to serve it. *Tragic myth* can only be understood as Dionysian wisdom put into images through Apollonian artistic means. It leads the world of appearances to the boundaries where it denies itself and tries to take refuge again in the womb of the one true reality. There it seems to join Isolde in singing this metaphysical swan song:

In the sea of delight's
surging swell,
in the waves of fragrance's
ringing sound,
in the world breath's
all-embracing flow—
to drown—to sink—
unconscious—supreme pleasure!

Through the genuinely aesthetic listener's experiences, we thus bring the tragic artist himself before our minds. Like a richly productive god of individual existence, he creates his figures, in a sense that hardly allows us to understand his work as an "imitation of nature." But then his immense Dionysian drive swallows this whole world of appearances. Behind that world, and through its destruction, it lets us sense a supreme original artistic joy in the womb of the primal unity. Our aesthetic thinkers have nothing to report about this return to our original home, the brotherly alliance of the two artistic gods in tragedy, or the listener's simultaneous Apollonian and Dionysian excitement. Instead, they tirelessly describe what is truly tragic as the hero's struggle against fate, the victory of a moral order in the world, or a release of emotions brought about by tragedy. Their persistence makes me think that they may not be people open to aesthetic excitement at all, and that perhaps they count only

as moral beings when they listen to tragedy. Since Aristotle, there has never been an explanation of the tragic effect from which we could infer artistic states or aesthetic activity in listeners. Sometimes the account says that serious events drive compassion and fear toward a relieving release. Sometimes we are supposed to feel uplifted and inspired by the victory of good and noble principles, or by the hero's sacrifice in the spirit of a moral view of the world. I certainly believe that this, and only this, is tragedy's effect on many people. But it follows just as clearly that all these people, along with the aesthetic thinkers interpreting for them, have experienced nothing of tragedy as a supreme *art*. That release of troubled feelings, Aristotle's catharsis, which philologists cannot quite decide whether to classify as a medical or a moral phenomenon, recalls a remarkable insight of Goethe's. "Without a lively interest in suffering," he says, "I too have never managed to work on any tragic situation, so I have preferred to avoid such situations rather than seek them out. Might one of the ancients' advantages also have been that even the greatest emotional intensity was only aesthetic play for them, whereas for us the truth of nature must contribute to the creation of such a work?" After our splendid experiences, we can now answer this deeply thoughtful final question with yes. Musical tragedy in particular has astonished us by showing how even the greatest emotional intensity can truly be only aesthetic play. We may therefore believe that only now can the original phenomenon of the tragic be described with some success. Anyone who can still speak only of those substitute effects from outside aesthetics, and feels unable to rise above the process of suffering and moral feeling, may well despair of his aesthetic nature. We can recommend as a harmless alternative that he interpret Shakespeare in Gervinus's manner and diligently hunt down "poetic justice."

With the rebirth of tragedy, the *aesthetic listener* has also been reborn. Until now, a strange substitute usually occupied his seat in the theater: the "critic," with pretensions that were half moral and half scholarly. In his previous sphere, everything was artificial, coated with only a semblance of life. The performing artist really no longer knew what to do with a listener who behaved so critically. Together with the playwright or opera composer who inspired him, he anx-

iously searched for the last traces of life in this demanding, empty being, incapable of enjoyment. Yet the audience had consisted of just such “critics.” Students, schoolboys, and even the most harmless female creature had already been prepared, without knowing it, by education and newspapers to perceive a work of art in the same way. Faced with such an audience, artists of a nobler nature counted on arousing moral and religious forces. An appeal to the “moral order of the world” served as a substitute where a powerful artistic spell should really have enchanted the genuine listener. Or the playwright presented a grander, or at least exciting, political or social tendency of the present so clearly that the listener could forget his critical exhaustion. He could then give himself to emotions like those felt in patriotic or warlike moments, before Parliament’s speakers’ platform, or when crime and vice are condemned. This estrangement from art’s actual aims sometimes had to lead to an outright cult of the message. But here, as has always happened in every artificially contrived art, those tendencies deteriorated with tremendous speed. For example, the aim of using theater as a means of morally educating the people, taken seriously in Schiller’s time, is already counted among the unbelievable relics of an education we have left behind. While the critic came to rule in theater and concert, the journalist in school, and the press in society, art deteriorated into entertainment of the lowest kind. Aesthetic criticism was used to bind together a vain, distracted, selfish, and also miserably unoriginal social world. Its meaning is revealed by Schopenhauer’s parable of the porcupines. Never has there been so much chatter about art, and so little respect for it. But can we still socialize with someone who can chat about Beethoven and Shakespeare? Let everyone answer according to his own feelings. His answer will in any case show what he means by “education”—provided he tries to answer at all and has not already been struck silent with surprise.

On the other hand, someone endowed by nature with nobler and more delicate gifts, even if he had gradually become a critical barbarian in the way described, might have a different story to tell. A successful performance of *Lohengrin*, for example, may have affected him in a way as unexpected as it was completely incomprehensible. Perhaps he simply lacked any guiding hand to

take hold of him, warn him, and explain what had happened. So that feeling, incomprehensibly different and entirely beyond comparison, which shook him then, remained isolated. Like a mysterious star, it shone briefly and went out. For that moment, he had sensed what an aesthetic listener is.

Section 23



Anyone who wants to examine closely whether he is related to the true aesthetic listener or belongs among Socratic, critical people need only ask himself honestly what he feels when he encounters a *miracle* represented onstage. Does it offend his historical sense, with its insistence on strict psychological cause and effect? Does he allow the miracle through a kindly concession, as something understandable to children but foreign to himself? Or does he experience something else? This lets him measure how far he is capable of understanding *myth* at all: the concentrated picture of the world which, as a shortened expression of appearance, cannot do without miracles. On close examination, however, almost everyone will probably feel so broken down by the critical and historical spirit of our education that he can only make the former existence of myth believable to himself through scholarship and the help of abstract ideas. But without myth, every culture loses its healthy, creative natural power. Only a horizon enclosed by myths brings an entire cultural movement together as a unity. Only myth saves all the powers of imagination and the Apollonian dream from aimless wandering. Myth's images must be the unseen, ever-present guardian spirits under whose protection the young soul grows up, and through whose signs the grown man interprets his life and struggles. Even the state knows no unwritten laws more powerful than its mythical foundation, which guarantees its connection to religion and its growth out of mythical ideas.

Now place beside this the abstract human being, guided by no myths, abstract education, abstract customs, abstract law, and the abstract state. Bring to mind the artistic imagination's lawless wandering, restrained by no native myth. Imagine a culture with no fixed and sacred original home, condemned instead to exhaust every possibility and feed poorly on every culture. That is the present, the outcome of the Socratic impulse directed toward destroying myth. The person without myth now stands forever hungry among all the pasts, digging and burrowing for roots, even if he must dig for them in the most remote ancient worlds. What do our dissatisfied modern culture's immense historical need, its gathering of countless other cultures around itself, and its consuming desire for knowledge point to, if not the loss of myth, of its mythical home and mythical mother's womb? Ask whether this culture's feverish and deeply disturbing activity is anything other than a hungry person's greedy grabbing and hunting for food. Who would still want to give anything to such a culture? Nothing it swallows can satisfy it, and at its touch even the strongest, healthiest food usually turns into "history and criticism."

We would also have to despair painfully of our German nature if it had already become as inseparably entangled with its culture, indeed as completely one with it, as we can observe to our horror in civilized France. For a long time that unity of people and culture was France's great advantage and the cause of its enormous predominance. Looking at it now, however, we may be forced to count ourselves fortunate that our own deeply questionable culture has so far had nothing in common with the noble core of our national character. All our hopes instead reach longingly toward this perception: beneath this restless cultural life, jerking up and down, and these educational convulsions, a splendid, inwardly healthy, ancient power lies hidden. Only in momentous times does it stir with tremendous force, then it dreams again toward a future awakening. The German Reformation grew out of this depth. In its chorale the future melody of German music first sounded. Luther's chorale sounded so deep, brave, and full of soul, so overwhelmingly good and tender, like the first beckoning Dionysian call emerging from a densely overgrown thicket as spring

approaches. In an answering, competing echo came that festive procession of Dionysian enthusiasts, consecrated and exuberant. We owe German music to them—and we will owe them *the rebirth of German myth!*

I know that I must now lead the friend who follows sympathetically to a high place of solitary reflection, where he will have few companions. I call out to encourage him: we must hold fast to our radiant guides, the Greeks. To purify our aesthetic understanding, we have so far borrowed from them those images of two gods, each ruling a separate artistic realm. Greek tragedy has given us a sense of how they touch and strengthen each other. We had to see the destruction of Greek tragedy as caused by a remarkable tearing apart of these two original artistic drives. This process went together with a degeneration and transformation of the Greek national character, calling us to think seriously about how necessarily and closely art and the people, myth and custom, tragedy and the state, are joined at their foundations. That destruction of tragedy was also the destruction of myth. Until then the Greeks were involuntarily compelled to connect everything they experienced immediately with their myths, and indeed to understand it only through that connection. Even the immediate present therefore had to appear to them at once in the light of eternity and, in a certain sense, timeless. The state and art both immersed themselves in this stream of the timeless to find relief from the burden and greed of the moment. A people, like an individual, is worth exactly as much as its ability to stamp its experiences with eternity. In this way it is, so to speak, removed from worldliness and shows its unconscious inner conviction that time is relative and that life's true meaning is metaphysical. The opposite happens when a people starts understanding itself historically and smashing the mythical fortifications around it. This is usually linked to a decisive turn toward worldliness, a break with the unconscious metaphysics of its former existence, with all the ethical consequences involved. Greek art, especially Greek tragedy, held back the destruction of myth above all. Art had to be destroyed too before people could cut themselves off from their native soil and live without restraint in the wilderness of thought, custom, and action. Even now, that metaphysical drive tries to create a form of transfiguration for itself, though a weakened one, in the

Socratic character of science that urges people to live. But on lower levels, the same drive led only to a feverish search that gradually lost itself in a pandemonium of myths and superstitions piled up from everywhere. The Greek sat in the middle of it with his heart still unsatisfied, until he learned either to mask that fever with Greek cheerfulness and Greek frivolity, as a little Greek, or to numb himself completely in some dully stupefying Oriental superstition.

Since the reawakening of Alexandrian-Roman antiquity in the fifteenth century, after a long interlude that is hard to describe, we have come strikingly close to that condition. At the heights we find the same overflowing desire for knowledge, the same unsatisfied happiness in discovery, the same immense worldliness. Alongside it are homeless wandering, a greedy pushing toward foreign tables, a frivolous worship of the present or a dully numbed withdrawal: everything viewed from the standpoint of the age, of the "present day." These matching symptoms suggest a matching lack at the heart of this culture: the destruction of myth. It seems almost impossible to transplant a foreign myth with lasting success without doing disastrous damage to the tree through that transplanting. Perhaps the tree may someday be strong and healthy enough to cast out that foreign element again through a terrible struggle. Usually, however, it must waste away in sickness and stunted growth, or consume itself in diseased overgrowth. We think so highly of the pure and vigorous core of German nature that we dare to expect precisely this casting out of forcibly implanted foreign elements from it, and consider it possible that the German mind will return to itself. Some may think that this mind must begin its struggle by casting out the Romance influence. They might see outward preparation and encouragement for this in the victorious bravery and bloody glory of the last war. But they must seek the inner necessity in an effort always to remain worthy of the sublime pioneers on this path: Luther as well as our great artists and poets. Yet they must never believe that they can fight such battles without their household gods, without their mythical home, without a "restoration" of everything German! If the German looks around timidly for a guide to take

him back to the home long lost, whose roads and paths he hardly knows anymore, he need only listen to the delightfully beckoning call of the Dionysian bird swaying above him, wanting to show him the way there.

Section 24



Among musical tragedy's distinctive artistic effects, we had to emphasize an Apollonian *illusion*. It is meant to save us from becoming directly one with Dionysian music, while allowing our musical excitement to discharge itself in an Apollonian realm, through a visible intermediate world placed between us and the music. We thought we had observed that this very discharge made that intermediate world of the action onstage—the drama altogether—visible and understandable from within to a degree unattainable in any other Apollonian art. Here that art seemed to have been given wings and raised up by the spirit of music. We therefore had to recognize the highest intensification of its powers, and see in that brotherly alliance of Apollo and Dionysus the summit of both Apollonian and Dionysian artistic aims.

Yet precisely when music illuminated the Apollonian image from within, the image failed to produce the distinctive effect of weaker degrees of Apollonian art. An epic or a stone brought to life can compel the watching eye toward calm delight in the world of individual existence. Here that result could not be achieved, despite greater vitality and clarity. We watched the drama and penetrated its moving inner world of motives with a searching gaze. Yet we felt as though only a symbolic image were passing before us, whose deepest meaning we thought we could almost guess. We wanted to pull it aside like a curtain to see the original image behind it. The picture's greatest clarity did not satisfy us, because it seemed to reveal something and conceal something at the same

time. Its revelation through images seemed to invite us to tear the veil and uncover the mysterious background. But that very complete, illuminated visibility held our eyes spellbound and stopped them from penetrating deeper.

Someone who has never experienced this need to look and at the same time long to go beyond looking will hardly be able to imagine how distinctly and clearly these two processes coexist, and are felt together, in contemplating tragic myth. Genuinely aesthetic spectators will confirm that this coexistence is the most remarkable of tragedy's distinctive effects. Now transfer this experience of the aesthetic spectator to an analogous process in the tragic artist, and you will understand the origin of *tragic myth*. It shares with the Apollonian artistic realm the full pleasure of seeming and looking. At the same time it denies that pleasure and finds still higher satisfaction in destroying the visible world of seeming. Tragic myth's immediate content is an epic event glorifying a struggling hero. But where does its puzzling characteristic come from? Why are the sufferings in the hero's fate, the most painful acts of overcoming, the most agonizing conflicts between motives—in short, examples of Silenus's wisdom, or, in aesthetic terms, the ugly and the disharmonious—repeatedly represented in countless forms with such fondness, precisely during a people's most flourishing and youthful age? Must it not be because a higher pleasure is perceived in all this?

That life really is so tragic would do very little to explain the origin of an art form. After all, art is not merely an imitation of natural reality. It is a metaphysical addition to natural reality, placed beside it in order to overcome it. Insofar as tragic myth belongs to art at all, it fully shares this metaphysical aim of transfiguration that belongs to art as a whole. But what does it transfigure when it presents the world of appearances through the image of a suffering hero? Least of all the "reality" of that world of appearances, since it tells us precisely: "Look! Look closely! This is your life! This is the hour hand on the clock of your existence!"

Did myth show this life in order to transfigure it for us by doing so? If not, where does the aesthetic pleasure lie with which we let these images too pass before us? I am asking about aesthetic pleasure. I know very well that many of

these images can sometimes also produce moral enjoyment, perhaps in the form of compassion or a moral triumph. But anyone wanting to derive the tragic effect solely from these moral sources, as has been customary in aesthetics for far too long, should not imagine that he has thereby done something for art. Art must demand purity in its own realm above all. The first requirement in explaining tragic myth is precisely to seek its distinctive pleasure within the purely aesthetic sphere, without straying into compassion, fear, or moral sublimity. How can the ugly and the disharmonious, the content of tragic myth, awaken aesthetic pleasure?

Here we need to make a bold leap into a metaphysics of art. I repeat the earlier proposition that existence and the world appear justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In this sense, tragic myth in particular must convince us that even the ugly and the disharmonious are an artistic game the will plays with itself in the eternal fullness of its pleasure. This original phenomenon of Dionysian art is difficult to grasp. It becomes directly understandable and immediately accessible only through the remarkable significance of *musical dissonance*. More generally, music placed beside the world can alone give us an idea of what it means to justify the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The pleasure produced by tragic myth comes from the same home as the pleasurable feeling of dissonance in music. The Dionysian, with its primal pleasure perceived even in pain, is the common womb from which music and tragic myth are born.

Have we not now made the difficult problem of the tragic effect much easier by bringing in the musical relationship of dissonance? We now understand what it means, in tragedy, to want to look and at the same time long to go beyond looking. With dissonance used artistically, we would have to describe the same state by saying that we want to hear and at the same time long to go beyond hearing. That reaching toward infinity, that beating of longing's wings amid the greatest pleasure in clearly perceived reality, reminds us that in both states we must recognize a Dionysian phenomenon. Again and again it reveals the playful building and smashing of the world of individuals as an outpouring

of primal pleasure. It is much like Heraclitus the Obscure's comparison of the world-forming power to a child who moves stones back and forth in play, builds piles of sand, and knocks them down again.

To judge a people's Dionysian capacity correctly, we therefore must think not only of its music. We must just as necessarily consider its tragic myth as the second witness to that capacity. Given this extremely close relationship between music and myth, we can likewise suppose that the degeneration and corruption of one will be linked to the withering of the other, if a weakening of myth expresses a weakening of Dionysian power at all. A look at the development of German life should leave us in no doubt about either. In opera and in the abstract character of our existence without myth, in art degraded to mere amusement and in a life guided by concepts, we discovered the nature of Socratic optimism: equally unartistic and destructive of life. For our comfort, however, there were signs that the German mind nevertheless rests and dreams in an inaccessible depth, undestroyed in its splendid health, depth, and Dionysian strength, like a knight who has sunk into sleep. From that depth the Dionysian song rises to us, letting us understand that this German knight still dreams his ancient Dionysian myth in visions both blessed and solemn. Let no one believe that the German mind has lost its mythical home forever, when it still understands so clearly the birds' voices telling of that home. One day it will find itself awake, with all the freshness of morning after an immense sleep. Then it will kill dragons, destroy the treacherous dwarfs, and awaken Brünnhilde. Even Wotan's spear will not be able to block its way!

My friends, you who believe in Dionysian music also know what tragedy means for us. In it we have tragic myth, reborn from music. In that myth you may hope for everything and forget what is most painful! What is most painful for us all is the long degradation in which German genius lived, estranged from house and home, serving treacherous dwarfs. You understand these words, just as you will understand my hopes in the end.

Section 25



Music and tragic myth equally express a people's Dionysian capacity and cannot be separated. Both come from an artistic realm beyond the Apollonian. Both transfigure a region in whose chords of pleasure dissonance, like the terrifying picture of the world, fades away with a seductive sound. Both play with the sting of distress, trusting their extraordinarily powerful magic. Through this play, both justify the existence even of the "worst world." Here, measured against the Apollonian, the Dionysian reveals itself as the eternal and original artistic power that calls the whole world of appearances into existence. Within that world a new, transfiguring semblance becomes necessary to keep the living world of individual existence attached to life. If we could imagine dissonance becoming human—and what else is a human being?—that dissonance would need a splendid illusion in order to live, an illusion covering its own nature with a veil of beauty. This is Apollo's true artistic purpose. Under his name we gather all those countless illusions of beautiful seeming that make existence worth living at every moment and urge us to experience the next one.

Yet only so much of that foundation of all existence, the world's Dionysian ground, may enter an individual's consciousness as the Apollonian power of transfiguration can overcome again. These two artistic drives are therefore forced to develop their strengths in strict proportion to each other, according

to the law of eternal justice. Where the Dionysian powers rise as violently as we are witnessing, Apollo must already have descended to us wrapped in a cloud. A coming generation will probably see the richest effects of his beauty.

Anyone could feel most surely, through intuition, why that effect is necessary if he once felt himself transported back into ancient Greek life, even in a dream. Imagine walking beneath tall Ionic colonnades, looking up toward a horizon cut off by pure and noble lines, with reflections of your transfigured figure beside you in shining marble. All around are people walking solemnly or moving gently, their voices sounding harmoniously and their gestures moving in rhythm. With beauty continually pouring in like this, would you not have to raise your hand to Apollo and cry: "How fortunate you Greek people are! How great Dionysus must be among you, if the Delian god thinks such spells necessary to heal your dithyrambic madness!" But an old Athenian, looking up at someone in this mood with Aeschylus's sublime gaze, might reply: "But say this too, strange visitor: how much this people must have suffered to become so beautiful! Now follow me to tragedy, and sacrifice with me in the temple of both gods!"