

**ФРИДРИХ
ВИЛЬГЕЛЬМ
НИЦШЕ**

THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

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The Birth of Tragedy

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The Birth of Tragedy / or Hellenism and Pessimism:

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Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

The Birth of Tragedy / or Hellenism and Pessimism

INTRODUCTION. ¹

Frederick Nietzsche was born at Röcken near Lützen, in the Prussian province of Saxony, on the 15th of October 1844, at 10 a.m. The day happened to be the anniversary of the birth of Frederick-William IV., then King of Prussia, and the peal of the local church-bells which was intended to celebrate this event, was, by a happy coincidence, just timed to greet my brother on his entrance into the world. In 1841, at the time when our father was tutor to the Altenburg Princesses, Theresa of Saxe-Altenburg, Elizabeth, Grand Duchess of Oldenburg, and Alexandra, Grand Duchess Constantine of Russia, he had had the honour of being presented to his witty and pious sovereign. The meeting seems to have impressed both parties very favourably; for, very shortly after it had taken place, our father received his living at Röcken "by supreme command."

¹ This Introduction by E. Förster-Nietzsche, which appears in the front of the first volume of Naumann's Pocket Edition of Nietzsche, has been translated and arranged by Mr. A. M. Ludovici.

His joy may well be imagined, therefore, when a first son was born to him on his beloved and august patron's birthday, and at the christening ceremony he spoke as follows: – "Thou blessed month of October! – for many years the most decisive events in my life have occurred within thy thirty-one days, and now I celebrate the greatest and most glorious of them all by baptising my little boy! O blissful moment! O exquisite festival! O unspeakably holy duty! In the Lord's name I bless thee! – With all my heart I utter these words: Bring me this, my beloved child, that I may consecrate it unto the Lord. My son, Frederick William, thus shalt thou be named on earth, as a memento of my royal benefactor on whose birthday thou wast born!"

Our father was thirty-one years of age, and our mother not quite nineteen, when my brother was born. Our mother, who was the daughter of a clergyman, was good-looking and healthy, and was one of a very large family of sons and daughters. Our paternal grandparents, the Rev. Oehler and his wife, in Pöbels, were typically healthy people. Strength, robustness, lively dispositions, and a cheerful outlook on life, were among the qualities which every one was pleased to observe in them. Our grandfather Oehler was a bright, clever man, and quite the old style of comfortable country parson, who thought it no sin to go hunting. He scarcely had a day's illness in his life, and would certainly not have met with his end as early as he did – that is to say, before his seventieth year – if his careless disregard of all caution, where his health was concerned, had not led to

his catching a severe and fatal cold. In regard to our grandmother Oehler, who died in her eighty-second year, all that can be said is, that if all German women were possessed of the health she enjoyed, the German nation would excel all others from the standpoint of vitality. She bore our grandfather eleven children; gave each of them the breast for nearly the whole of its first year, and reared them all. It is said that the sight of these eleven children, at ages varying from nineteen years to one month, with their powerful build, rosy cheeks, beaming eyes, and wealth of curly locks, provoked the admiration of all visitors. Of course, despite their extraordinarily good health, the life of this family was not by any means all sunshine. Each of the children was very spirited, wilful, and obstinate, and it was therefore no simple matter to keep them in order. Moreover, though they always showed the utmost respect and most implicit obedience to their parents – even as middle-aged men and women – misunderstandings between themselves were of constant occurrence. Our Oehler grandparents were fairly well-to-do; for our grandmother hailed from a very old family, who had been extensive land-owners in the neighbourhood of Zeitz for centuries, and her father owned the baronial estate of Wehlitz and a magnificent seat near Zeitz in Pacht. When she married, her father gave her carriages and horses, a coachman, a cook, and a kitchenmaid, which for the wife of a German minister was then, and is still, something quite exceptional. As a result of the wars in the beginning of the nineteenth

century, however, our great-grandfather lost the greater part of his property.

Our father's family was also in fairly comfortable circumstances, and likewise very large. Our grandfather Dr. Nietzsche (D.D. and Superintendent) married twice, and had in all twelve children, of whom three died young. Our grandfather on this side, whom I never knew, must certainly have been a distinguished, dignified, very learned and reserved man; his second wife – our beloved grandmother – was an active-minded, intelligent, and exceptionally good-natured woman. The whole of our father's family, which I only got to know when they were very advanced in years, were remarkable for their great power of self-control, their lively interest in intellectual matters, and a strong sense of family unity, which manifested itself both in their splendid readiness to help one another and in their very excellent relations with each other. Our father was the youngest son, and, thanks to his uncommonly lovable disposition, together with other gifts, which only tended to become more marked as he grew older, he was quite the favourite of the family. Blessed with a thoroughly sound constitution, as all averred who knew him at the convent-school in Rossleben, at the University, or later at the ducal court of Altenburg, he was tall and slender, possessed an undoubted gift for poetry and real musical talent, and was moreover a man of delicate sensibilities, full of consideration for his whole family, and distinguished in his manners.

My brother often refers to his Polish descent, and in later years

he even instituted research-work with the view of establishing it, which met with partial success. I know nothing definite concerning these investigations, because a large number of valuable documents were unfortunately destroyed after his breakdown in Turin. The family tradition was that a certain Polish nobleman Nicki (pronounced Nietzky) had obtained the special favour of Augustus the Strong, King of Poland, and had received the rank of Earl from him. When, however, Stanislas Leszczyński the Pole became king, our supposed ancestor became involved in a conspiracy in favour of the Saxons and Protestants. He was sentenced to death; but, taking flight, according to the evidence of the documents, he was ultimately befriended by a certain Earl of Brühl, who gave him a small post in an obscure little provincial town. Occasionally our aged aunts would speak of our great-grandfather Nietzsche, who was said to have died in his ninety-first year, and words always seemed to fail them when they attempted to describe his handsome appearance, good breeding, and vigour. Our ancestors, both on the Nietzsche and the Oehler side, were very long-lived. Of the four pairs of great-grandparents, one great-grandfather reached the age of ninety, five great-grandmothers and-fathers died between eighty-two and eighty-six years of age, and two only failed to reach their seventieth year.

The sorrow which hung as a cloud over our branch of the family was our father's death, as the result of a heavy fall, at the age of thirty-eight. One night, upon leaving some friends whom

he had accompanied home, he was met at the door of the vicarage by our little dog. The little animal must have got between his feet, for he stumbled and fell backwards down seven stone steps on to the paving-stones of the vicarage courtyard. As a result of this fall, he was laid up with concussion of the brain, and, after a lingering illness, which lasted eleven months, he died on the 30th of July 1849. The early death of our beloved and highly-gifted father spread gloom over the whole of our childhood. In 1850 our mother withdrew with us to Naumburg on the Saale, where she took up her abode with our widowed grandmother Nietzsche; and there she brought us up with Spartan severity and simplicity, which, besides being typical of the period, was quite *de rigueur* in her family. Of course, Grand-mamma Nietzsche helped somewhat to temper her daughter-in-law's severity, and in this respect our Oehler grandparents, who were less rigorous with us, their eldest grandchildren, than with their own children, were also very influential. Grandfather Oehler was the first who seems to have recognised the extraordinary talents of his eldest grandchild.

From his earliest childhood upwards, my brother was always strong and healthy; he often declared that he must have been taken for a peasant-boy throughout his childhood and youth, as he was so plump, brown, and rosy. The thick fair hair which fell picturesquely over his shoulders tended somewhat to modify his robust appearance. Had he not possessed those wonderfully beautiful, large, and expressive eyes, however, and had he not

been so very ceremonious in his manner, neither his teachers nor his relatives would ever have noticed anything at all remarkable about the boy; for he was both modest and reserved.

He received his early schooling at a preparatory school, and later at a grammar school in Naumburg. In the autumn of 1858, when he was fourteen years of age, he entered the Pforta school, so famous for the scholars it has produced. There, too, very severe discipline prevailed, and much was exacted from the pupils, with the view of inuring them to great mental and physical exertions. Thus, if my brother seems to lay particular stress upon the value of rigorous training, free from all sentimentality, it should be remembered that he speaks from experience in this respect. At Pforta he followed the regular school course, and he did not enter a university until the comparatively late age of twenty. His extraordinary gifts manifested themselves chiefly in his independent and private studies and artistic efforts. As a boy his musical talent had already been so noticeable, that he himself and other competent judges were doubtful as to whether he ought not perhaps to devote himself altogether to music. It is, however, worth noting that everything he did in his later years, whether in Latin, Greek, or German work, bore the stamp of perfection – subject of course to the limitation imposed upon him by his years. His talents came very suddenly to the fore, because he had allowed them to grow for such a long time in concealment. His very first performance in philology, executed while he was a student under Ritschl, the famous philologist, was also typical of

him in this respect, seeing that it was ordered to be printed for the *Rheinische Museum*. Of course this was done amid general and grave expressions of doubt; for, as Dr. Ritschl often declared, it was an unheard-of occurrence for a student in his third term to prepare such an excellent treatise.

Being a great lover of out-door exercise, such as swimming, skating, and walking, he developed into a very sturdy lad. Rohde gives the following description of him as a student: with his healthy complexion, his outward and inner cleanliness, his austere chastity and his solemn aspect, he was the image of that delightful youth described by Adalbert Stifter.

Though as a child he was always rather serious, as a lad and a man he was ever inclined to see the humorous side of things, while his whole being, and everything he said or did, was permeated by an extraordinary harmony. He belonged to the very few who could control even a bad mood and conceal it from others. All his friends are unanimous in their praise of his exceptional evenness of temper and behaviour, and his warm, hearty, and pleasant laugh that seemed to come from the very depths of his benevolent and affectionate nature. In him it might therefore be said, nature had produced a being who in body and spirit was a harmonious whole: his unusual intellect was fully in keeping with his uncommon bodily strength.

The only abnormal thing about him, and something which we both inherited from our father, was short-sightedness, and this was very much aggravated in my brother's case, even in his

earliest schooldays, owing to that indescribable anxiety to learn which always characterised him. When one listens to accounts given by his friends and schoolfellows, one is startled by the multiplicity of his studies even in his schooldays.

In the autumn of 1864, he began his university life in Bonn, and studied philology and theology; at the end of six months he gave up theology, and in the autumn of 1865 followed his famous teacher Ritschl to the University of Leipzig. There he became an ardent philologist, and diligently sought to acquire a masterly grasp of this branch of knowledge. But in this respect it would be unfair to forget that the school of Pforta, with its staff of excellent teachers – scholars that would have adorned the chairs of any University – had already afforded the best of preparatory trainings to any one intending to take up philology as a study, more particularly as it gave all pupils ample scope to indulge any individual tastes they might have for any particular branch of ancient history. The last important Latin thesis which my brother wrote for the Landes-Schule, Pforta, dealt with the Megarian poet Theognis, and it was in the rôle of a lecturer on this very subject that, on the 18th January 1866, he made his *first appearance in public* before the philological society he had helped to found in Leipzig. The paper he read disclosed his investigations on the subject of Theognis the moralist and aristocrat, who, as is well known, described and dismissed the plebeians of his time in terms of the heartiest contempt. The aristocratic ideal, which was always so dear to my brother, thus

revealed itself for the first time. Moreover, curiously enough, it was precisely *this* scientific thesis which was the cause of Ritschl's recognition of my brother and fondness for him.

The whole of his Leipzig days proved of the utmost importance to my brother's career. There he was plunged into the very midst of a torrent of intellectual influences which found an impressionable medium in the fiery youth, and to which he eagerly made himself accessible. He did not, however, forget to discriminate among them, but tested and criticised the currents of thought he encountered, and selected accordingly. It is certainly of great importance to ascertain what those influences precisely were to which he yielded, and how long they maintained their sway over him, and it is likewise necessary to discover exactly when the matured mind threw off these fetters in order to work out its own salvation.

The influences that exercised power over him in those days may be described in the three following terms: Hellenism, Schopenhauer, Wagner. His love of Hellenism certainly led him to philology; but, as a matter of fact, what concerned him most was to obtain a wide view of things in general, and this he hoped to derive from that science; philology in itself, with his splendid method and thorough way of going to work, served him only as a means to an end.

If Hellenism was the first strong influence which already in Pforta obtained a sway over my brother, in the winter of 1865-66, a completely new, and therefore somewhat subversive, influence

was introduced into his life with Schopenhauer's philosophy. When he reached Leipzig in the autumn of 1865, he was very downcast; for the experiences that had befallen him during his one year of student life in Bonn had deeply depressed him. He had sought at first to adapt himself to his surroundings there, with the hope of ultimately elevating them to his lofty views on things; but both these efforts proved vain, and now he had come to Leipzig with the purpose of framing his own manner of life. It can easily be imagined how the first reading of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* worked upon this man, still stinging from the bitterest experiences and disappointments. He writes: "Here I saw a mirror in which I espied the world, life, and my own nature depicted with frightful grandeur." As my brother, from his very earliest childhood, had always missed both the parent and the educator through our father's untimely death, he began to regard Schopenhauer with almost filial love and respect. He did not venerate him quite as other men did; Schopenhauer's *personality* was what attracted and enchanted him. From the first he was never blind to the faults in his master's system, and in proof of this we have only to refer to an essay he wrote in the autumn of 1867, which actually contains a criticism of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

Now, in the autumn of 1865, to these two influences, Hellenism and Schopenhauer, a third influence was added – one which was to prove the strongest ever exercised over my brother – and it began with his personal introduction to Richard

Wagner. He was introduced to Wagner by the latter's sister, Frau Professor Brockhaus, and his description of their first meeting, contained in a letter to Erwin Rohde, is really most affecting. For years, that is to say, from the time Billow's arrangement of *Tristan and Isolde* for the pianoforte, had appeared, he had already been a passionate admirer of Wagner's music; but now that the artist himself entered upon the scene of his life, with the whole fascinating strength of his strong will, my brother felt that he was in the presence of a being whom he, of all modern men, resembled most in regard to force of character.

Again, in the case of Richard Wagner, my brother, from the first, laid the utmost stress upon the man's personality, and could only regard his works and views as an expression of the artist's whole being, despite the fact that he by no means understood every one of those works at that time. My brother was the first who ever manifested such enthusiastic affection for Schopenhauer and Wagner, and he was also the first of that numerous band of young followers who ultimately inscribed the two great names upon their banner. Whether Schopenhauer and Wagner ever really corresponded to the glorified pictures my brother painted of them, both in his letters and other writings, is a question which we can no longer answer in the affirmative. Perhaps what he saw in them was only what he himself wished to be some day.

The amount of work my brother succeeded in accomplishing, during his student days, really seems almost incredible. When

we examine his record for the years 1865-67, we can scarcely believe it refers to only two years' industry, for at a guess no one would hesitate to suggest four years at least. But in those days, as he himself declares, he still possessed the constitution of a bear. He knew neither what headaches nor indigestion meant, and, despite his short sight, his eyes were able to endure the greatest strain without giving him the smallest trouble. That is why, regardless of seriously interrupting his studies, he was so glad at the thought of becoming a soldier in the forthcoming autumn of 1867; for he was particularly anxious to discover some means of employing his bodily strength.

He discharged his duties as a soldier with the utmost mental and physical freshness, was the crack rider among the recruits of his year, and was sincerely sorry when, owing to an accident, he was compelled to leave the colours before the completion of his service. As a result of this accident he had his first dangerous illness.

While mounting his horse one day, the beast, which was an uncommonly restive one, suddenly reared, and, causing him to strike his chest sharply against the pommel of the saddle, threw him to the ground. My brother then made a second attempt to mount, and succeeded this time, notwithstanding the fact that he had severely sprained and torn two muscles in his chest, and had seriously bruised the adjacent ribs. For a whole day he did his utmost to pay no heed to the injury, and to overcome the pain it caused him; but in the end he only swooned, and a

dangerously acute inflammation of the injured tissues was the result. Ultimately he was obliged to consult the famous specialist, Professor Volkmann, in Halle, who quickly put him right.

In October 1868, my brother returned to his studies in Leipzig with double joy. These were his plans: to get his doctor's degree as soon as possible; to proceed to Paris, Italy, and Greece, make a lengthy stay in each place, and then to return to Leipzig in order to settle there as a privat docent. All these plans were, however, suddenly frustrated owing to his premature call to the University of Bale, where he was invited to assume the duties of professor. Some of the philological essays he had written in his student days, and which were published by the *Rheinische Museum*, had attracted the attention of the Educational Board at Bale. Ratsherr Wilhelm Vischer, as representing this body, appealed to Ritschl for fuller information. Now Ritschl, who had early recognised my brother's extraordinary talents, must have written a letter of such enthusiastic praise ("Nietzsche is a genius: he can do whatever he chooses to put his mind to"), that one of the more cautious members of the council is said to have observed: "If the proposed candidate be really such a genius, then it were better did we not appoint him; for, in any case, he would only stay a short time at the little University of Bale." My brother ultimately accepted the appointment, and, in view of his published philological works, he was immediately granted the doctor's degree by the University of Leipzig. He was twenty-four years and six months old when he took up his position as professor in Bale, – and it was with a heavy

heart that he proceeded there, for he knew "the golden period of untrammelled activity" must cease. He was, however, inspired by the deep wish of being able "to transfer to his pupils some of that Schopenhauerian earnestness which is stamped on the brow of the sublime man." "I should like to be something more than a mere trainer of capable philologists: the present generation of teachers, the care of the growing broods, – all this is in my mind. If we must live, let us at least do so in such wise that others may bless our life once we have been peacefully delivered from its toils."

When I look back upon that month of May 1869, and ask both of friends and of myself, what the figure of this youthful University professor of four-and-twenty meant to the world at that time, the reply is naturally, in the first place: that he was one of Ritschl's best pupils; secondly, that he was an exceptionally capable exponent of classical antiquity with a brilliant career before him; and thirdly, that he was a passionate adorer of Wagner and Schopenhauer. But no one has any idea of my brother's independent attitude to the science he had selected, to his teachers and to his ideals, and he deceived both himself and us when he passed as a "disciple" who really shared all the views of his respected master.

On the 28th May 1869, my brother delivered his inaugural address at Bale University, and it is said to have deeply impressed the authorities. The subject of the address was "Homer and Classical Philology."

Musing deeply, the worthy councillors and professors walked homeward. What had they just heard? A young scholar discussing the very justification of his own science in a cool and philosophically critical spirit! A man able to impart so much artistic glamour to his subject, that the once stale and arid study of philology suddenly struck them – and they were certainly not impressionable men – as the messenger of the gods: "and just as the Muses descended upon the dull and tormented Boeotian peasants, so philology comes into a world full of gloomy colours and pictures, full of the deepest, most incurable woes, and speaks to men comfortingly of the beautiful and brilliant godlike figure of a distant, blue, and happy fairyland."

"We have indeed got hold of a rare bird, Herr Ratsherr," said one of these gentlemen to his companion, and the latter heartily agreed, for my brother's appointment had been chiefly his doing.

Even in Leipzig, it was reported that Jacob Burckhardt had said: "Nietzsche is as much an artist as a scholar." Privy-Councillor Ritschl told me of this himself, and then he added, with a smile: "I always said so; he can make his scientific discourses as palpitatingly interesting as a French novelist his novels."

"Homer and Classical Philology" – my brother's inaugural address at the University – was by no means the first literary attempt he had made; for we have already seen that he had had papers published by the *Rheinische Museum*; still, this particular discourse is important, seeing that it practically contains the

programme of many other subsequent essays. I must, however, emphasise this fact here, that neither "Homer and Classical Philology," nor *The Birth of Tragedy*, represents a beginning in my brother's career. It is really surprising to see how very soon he actually began grappling with the questions which were to prove the problems of his life. If a beginning to his intellectual development be sought at all, then it must be traced to the years 1865-67 in Leipzig. *The Birth of Tragedy*, his maiden attempt at book-writing, with which he began his twenty-eighth year, is the last link of a long chain of developments, and the first fruit that was a long time coming to maturity. Nietzsche's was a polyphonic nature, in which the most different and apparently most antagonistic talents had come together. Philosophy, art, and science – in the form of philology, then – each certainly possessed a part of him. The most wonderful feature – perhaps it might even be called the real Nietzschean feature – of this versatile creature, was the fact that no eternal strife resulted from the juxtaposition of these inimical traits, that not one of them strove to dislodge, or to get the upper hand of, the others. When Nietzsche renounced the musical career, in order to devote himself to philology, and gave himself up to the most strenuous study, he did not find it essential completely to suppress his other tendencies: as before, he continued both to compose and derive pleasure from music, and even studied counterpoint somewhat seriously. Moreover, during his years at Leipzig, when he consciously gave himself up to philological

research, he began to engross himself in Schopenhauer, and was thereby won by philosophy for ever. Everything that could find room took up its abode in him, and these juxtaposed factors, far from interfering with one another's existence, were rather mutually fertilising and stimulating. All those who have read the first volume of the biography with attention must have been struck with the perfect way in which the various impulses in his nature combined in the end to form one general torrent, and how this flowed with ever greater force in the direction of *a single goal*. Thus science, art, and philosophy developed and became ever more closely related in him, until, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, they brought forth a "centaur," that is to say, a work which would have been an impossible achievement to a man with only a single, special talent. This polyphony of different talents, all coming to utterance together and producing the richest and boldest of harmonies, is the fundamental feature not only of Nietzsche's early days, but of his whole development. It is once again the artist, philosopher, and man of science, who as one man in later years, after many wanderings, recantations, and revulsions of feeling, produces that other and rarer Centaur of highest rank – *Zarathustra*.

The Birth of Tragedy requires perhaps a little explaining – more particularly as we have now ceased to use either Schopenhauerian or Wagnerian terms of expression. And it was for this reason that five years after its appearance, my brother wrote an introduction to it, in which he very plainly expresses

his doubts concerning the views it contains, and the manner in which they are presented. The kernel of its thought he always recognised as perfectly correct; and all he deplored in later days was that he had spoiled the grand problem of Hellenism, as he understood it, by adulterating it with ingredients taken from the world of most modern ideas. As time went on, he grew ever more and more anxious to define the deep meaning of this book with greater precision and clearness. A very good elucidation of its aims, which unfortunately was never published, appears among his notes of the year 1886, and is as follows: —

"Concerning *The Birth of Tragedy*. — A book consisting of mere experiences relating to pleasurable and unpleasurable æsthetic states, with a metaphysico-artistic background. At the same time the confession of a romanticist *the sufferer feels the deepest longing for beauty — he begets it*; finally, a product of youth, full of youthful courage and melancholy.

"Fundamental psychological experiences: the word 'Apollonian' stands for that state of rapt repose in the presence of a visionary world, in the presence of the world of *beautiful appearance* designed as a deliverance from *becoming*; the word *Dionysos*, on the other hand, stands for strenuous becoming, grown self-conscious, in the form of the rampant voluptuousness of the creator, who is also perfectly conscious of the violent anger of the destroyer.

"The antagonism of these two attitudes and the *desires* that underlie them. The first-named would have the vision it conjures

up *eternal*: in its light man must be quiescent, apathetic, peaceful, healed, and on friendly terms with himself and all existence; the second strives after creation, after the voluptuousness of wilful creation, *i. e.* constructing and destroying. Creation felt and explained as an instinct would be merely the unremitting inventive action of a dissatisfied being, overflowing with wealth and living at high tension and high pressure, – of a God who would overcome the sorrows of existence by means only of continual changes and transformations, – appearance as a transient and momentary deliverance; the world as an apparent sequence of godlike visions and deliverances.

"This metaphysico-artistic attitude is opposed to Schopenhauer's one-sided view which values art, not from the artist's standpoint but from the spectator's, because it brings salvation and deliverance by means of the joy produced by unreal as opposed to the existing or the real (the experience only of him who is suffering and is in despair owing to himself and everything existing). – Deliverance in the *form* and its eternity (just as Plato may have pictured it, save that he rejoiced in a complete subordination of all too excitable sensibilities, even in the idea itself). To this is opposed the second point of view – art regarded as a phenomenon of the artist, above all of the musician; the torture of being obliged to create, as a Dionysian instinct.

"Tragic art, rich in both attitudes, represents the reconciliation of Apollo and Dionysos. Appearance is given the greatest importance by Dionysos; and yet it will be denied and cheerfully

denied. This is directed against Schopenhauer's teaching of *Resignation* as the tragic attitude towards the world.

"Against Wagner's theory that music is a means and drama an end.

"A desire for tragic myth (for religion and even pessimistic religion) as for a forcing frame in which certain plants flourish.

"Mistrust of science, although its ephemerally soothing optimism be strongly felt; the 'serenity' of the theoretical man.

"Deep antagonism to Christianity. Why? The degeneration of the Germanic spirit is ascribed to its influence.

"Any justification of the world can only be an *aesthetic* one. Profound suspicions about morality (– it is part and parcel of the world of appearance).

"The happiness of existence is only possible as the happiness derived from appearance. (*'Being' is a fiction invented by those who suffer from becoming.*)

"Happiness in becoming is possible only in the *annihilation* of the real, of the 'existing,' of the beautifully visionary, – in the pessimistic dissipation of illusions: – with the annihilation of the most beautiful phenomena in the world of appearance, Dionysian happiness reaches its zenith."

The Birth of Tragedy is really only a portion of a much greater work on Hellenism, which my brother had always had in view from the time of his student days. But even the portion it represents was originally designed upon a much larger scale than the present one; the reason probably being, that Nietzsche desired

only to be of service to Wagner. When a certain portion of the projected work on Hellenism was ready and had received the title *Greek Cheerfulness*, my brother happened to call upon Wagner at Tribschen in April 1871, and found him very low-spirited in regard to the mission of his life. My brother was very anxious to take some decisive step to help him, and, laying the plans of his great work on Greece aside, he selected a small portion from the already completed manuscript – a portion dealing with one distinct side of Hellenism, – to wit, its tragic art. He then associated Wagner's music with it and the name Dionysos, and thus took the first step towards that world-historical view through which we have since grown accustomed to regard Wagner.

From the dates of the various notes relating to it, *The Birth of Tragedy* must have been written between the autumn of 1869 and November 1871 – a period during which "a mass of æsthetic questions and answers" was fermenting in Nietzsche's mind. It was first published in January 1872 by E. W. Fritsch, in Leipzig, under the title *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. Later on the title was changed to *The Birth of Tragedy, or Hellenism and Pessimism*.

ELIZABETH FORSTER-NIETZSCHE.

WEIMAR, September 1905.

AN ATTEMPT AT SELF-CRITICISM

1

Whatever may lie at the bottom of this doubtful book must be a question of the first rank and attractiveness, moreover a deeply personal question, – in proof thereof observe the time in which it originated, *in spite* of which it originated, the exciting period of the Franco-German war of 1870-71. While the thunder of the battle of Wörth rolled over Europe, the ruminator and riddle-lover, who had to be the parent of this book, sat somewhere in a nook of the Alps, lost in riddles and ruminations, consequently very much concerned and unconcerned at the same time, and wrote down his meditations on the *Greeks*, – the kernel of the curious and almost inaccessible book, to which this belated prologue (or epilogue) is to be devoted. A few weeks later: and he found himself under the walls of Metz, still wrestling with the notes of interrogation he had set down concerning the alleged "cheerfulness" of the Greeks and of Greek art; till at last, in that month of deep suspense, when peace was debated at Versailles, he too attained to peace with himself, and, slowly recovering from a disease brought home from the field, made

up his mind definitely regarding the "Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of *Music*." – From music? Music and Tragedy? Greeks and tragic music? Greeks and the Art-work of pessimism? A race of men, well-fashioned, beautiful, envied, life-inspiring, like no other race hitherto, the Greeks – indeed? The Greeks were *in need* of tragedy? Yea – of art? Wherefore – Greek art?..

We can thus guess where the great note of interrogation concerning the value of existence had been set. Is pessimism *necessarily* the sign of decline, of decay, of failure, of exhausted and weakened instincts? – as was the case with the Indians, as is, to all appearance, the case with us "modern" men and Europeans? Is there a pessimism of *strength*? An intellectual predilection for what is hard, awful, evil, problematical in existence, owing to well-being, to exuberant health, to *fullness* of existence? Is there perhaps suffering in overfullness itself? A seductive fortitude with the keenest of glances, which *yearns* for the terrible, as for the enemy, the worthy enemy, with whom it may try its strength? from whom it is willing to learn what "fear" is? What means *tragic* myth to the Greeks of the best, strongest, bravest era? And the prodigious phenomenon of the Dionysian? And that which was born thereof, tragedy? – And again: that of which tragedy died, the Socratism of morality, the dialectics, contentedness and cheerfulness of the theoretical man – indeed? might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of weariness, of disease, of anarchically disintegrating instincts? And the "Hellenic cheerfulness" of the later Hellenism merely a

glowing sunset? The Epicurean will *counter* to pessimism merely a precaution of the sufferer? And science itself, our science – ay, viewed as a symptom of life, what really signifies all science? Whither, worse still, *whence* – all science? Well? Is scientism perhaps only fear and evasion of pessimism? A subtle defence against – *truth!* Morally speaking, something like falsehood and cowardice? And, unmorally speaking, an artifice? O Socrates, Socrates, was this perhaps *thy* secret? Oh mysterious ironist, was this perhaps thine – irony?..

2

What I then laid hands on, something terrible and dangerous, a problem with horns, not necessarily a bull itself, but at all events a *new* problem: I should say to-day it was the *problem of science* itself – science conceived for the first time as problematic, as questionable. But the book, in which my youthful ardour and suspicion then discharged themselves – what an *impossible* book must needs grow out of a task so disagreeable to youth. Constructed of nought but precocious, unripened self-experiences, all of which lay close to the threshold of the communicable, based on the groundwork of *art* – for the problem of science cannot be discerned on the groundwork of science, – a book perhaps for artists, with collateral analytical and retrospective aptitudes (that is, an exceptional kind of artists, for whom one must seek and does not even care to seek ...),

full of psychological innovations and artists' secrets, with an artists' metaphysics in the background, a work of youth, full of youth's mettle and youth's melancholy, independent, defiantly self-sufficient even when it seems to bow to some authority and self-veneration; in short, a firstling-work, even in every bad sense of the term; in spite of its senile problem, affected with every fault of youth, above all with youth's prolixity and youth's "storm and stress": on the other hand, in view of the success it had (especially with the great artist to whom it addressed itself, as it were, in a duologue, Richard Wagner) a *demonstrated* book, I mean a book which, at any rate, sufficed "for the best of its time." On this account, if for no other reason, it should be treated with some consideration and reserve; yet I shall not altogether conceal how disagreeable it now appears to me, how after sixteen years it stands a total stranger before me, – before an eye which is more mature, and a hundred times more fastidious, but which has by no means grown colder nor lost any of its interest in that self-same task essayed for the first time by this daring book, – *to view science through the optics of the artist, and art moreover through the optics of life...*

3

I say again, to-day it is an impossible book to me, – I call it badly written, heavy, painful, image-angling and image-entangling, maudlin, sugared at times even to femininism, uneven

in tempo, void of the will to logical cleanliness, very convinced and therefore rising above the necessity of demonstration, distrustful even of the *propriety* of demonstration, as being a book for initiates, as "music" for those who are baptised with the name of Music, who are united from the beginning of things by common ties of rare experiences in art, as a countersign for blood-relations *in artibus*. – a haughty and fantastic book, which from the very first withdraws even more from the *profanum vulgus* of the "cultured" than from the "people," but which also, as its effect has shown and still shows, knows very well how to seek fellow-enthusiasts and lure them to new by-ways and dancing-grounds. Here, at any rate – thus much was acknowledged with curiosity as well as with aversion – a *strange* voice spoke, the disciple of a still "unknown God," who for the time being had hidden himself under the hood of the scholar, under the German's gravity and disinclination for dialectics, even under the bad manners of the Wagnerian; here was a spirit with strange and still nameless needs, a memory bristling with questions, experiences and obscurities, beside which stood the name Dionysos like one more note of interrogation; here spoke – people said to themselves with misgivings – something like a mystic and almost mænadic soul, which, undecided whether it should disclose or conceal itself, stammers with an effort and capriciously as in a strange tongue. It should have *sung*, this "new soul" – and not spoken! What a pity, that I did not dare to say what I then had to say, as a poet: I could have done so perhaps!

Or at least as a philologist: – for even at the present day well-nigh everything in this domain remains to be discovered and disinterred by the philologist! Above all the problem, *that* here there *is* a problem before us, – and that, so long as we have no answer to the question "what is Dionysian?" the Greeks are now as ever wholly unknown and inconceivable...

4

Ay, what is Dionysian? – In this book may be found an answer, – a "knowing one" speaks here, the votary and disciple of his god. Perhaps I should now speak more guardedly and less eloquently of a psychological question so difficult as the origin of tragedy among the Greeks. A fundamental question is the relation of the Greek to pain, his degree of sensibility, – did this relation remain constant? or did it veer about? – the question, whether his ever-increasing *longing for beauty*, for festivals, gaieties, new cults, did really grow out of want, privation, melancholy, pain? For suppose even this to be true – and Pericles (or Thucydides) intimates as much in the great Funeral Speech: – whence then the opposite longing, which appeared first in the order of time, the *longing for the ugly*, the good, resolute desire of the Old Hellene for pessimism, for tragic myth, for the picture of all that is terrible, evil, enigmatical, destructive, fatal at the basis of existence, – whence then must tragedy have sprung? Perhaps from *joy*, from strength, from exuberant health, from

over-fullness. And what then, physiologically speaking, is the meaning of that madness, out of which comic as well as tragic art has grown, the Dionysian madness? What? perhaps madness is not necessarily the symptom of degeneration, of decline, of belated culture? Perhaps there are – a question for alienists – neuroses of *health*? of folk-youth and youthfulness? What does that synthesis of god and goat in the Satyr point to? What self-experience what "stress," made the Greek think of the Dionysian reveller and primitive man as a satyr? And as regards the origin of the tragic chorus: perhaps there were endemic ecstasies in the eras when the Greek body bloomed and the Greek soul brimmed over with life? Visions and hallucinations, which took hold of entire communities, entire cult-assemblies? What if the Greeks in the very wealth of their youth had the will *to be* tragic and were pessimists? What if it was madness itself, to use a word of Plato's, which brought the *greatest* blessings upon Hellas? And what if, on the other hand and conversely, at the very time of their dissolution and weakness, the Greeks became always more optimistic, more superficial, more histrionic, also more ardent for logic and the logicising of the world, – consequently at the same time more "cheerful" and more "scientific"? Ay, despite all "modern ideas" and prejudices of the democratic taste, may not the triumph of *optimism*, the *common sense* that has gained the upper hand, the practical and theoretical *utilitarianism*, like democracy itself, with which it is synchronous – be symptomatic of declining vigour, of approaching age,

of physiological weariness? And *not* at all – pessimism? Was Epicurus an optimist – because a *sufferer*?.. We see it is a whole bundle of weighty questions which this book has taken upon itself, – let us not fail to add its weightiest question! Viewed through the optics of *life*, what is the meaning of – morality?..

5

Already in the foreword to Richard Wagner, art – and *not* morality – is set down as the properly *metaphysical* activity of man; in the book itself the piquant proposition recurs time and again, that the existence of the world is *justified* only as an æsthetic phenomenon. Indeed, the entire book recognises only an artist-thought and artist-after-thought behind all occurrences, – a "God," if you will, but certainly only an altogether thoughtless and unmoral artist-God, who, in construction as in destruction, in good as in evil, desires to become conscious of his own equable joy and sovereign glory; who, in creating worlds, frees himself from the *anguish* of fullness and *overfullness*, from the *suffering* of the contradictions concentrated within him. The world, that is, the redemption of God *attained* at every moment, as the perpetually changing, perpetually new vision of the most suffering, most antithetical, most contradictory being, who contrives to redeem himself only in *appearance*: this entire artist-metaphysics, call it arbitrary, idle, fantastic, if you will, – the point is, that it already betrays a spirit,

which is determined some day, at all hazards, to make a stand against the *moral* interpretation and significance of life. Here, perhaps for the first time, a pessimism "Beyond Good and Evil" announces itself, here that "perverseness of disposition" obtains expression and formulation, against which Schopenhauer never grew tired of hurling beforehand his angriest imprecations and thunderbolts, – a philosophy which dares to put, derogatorily put, morality itself in the world of phenomena, and not only among "phenomena" (in the sense of the idealistic *terminus technicus*), but among the "illusions," as appearance, semblance, error, interpretation, accommodation, art. Perhaps the depth of this *antimoral* tendency may be best estimated from the guarded and hostile silence with which Christianity is treated throughout this book, – Christianity, as being the most extravagant burlesque of the moral theme to which mankind has hitherto been obliged to listen. In fact, to the purely æsthetic world-interpretation and justification taught in this book, there is no greater antithesis than the Christian dogma, which is *only* and will be only moral, and which, with its absolute standards, for instance, its truthfulness of God, relegates – that is, disowns, convicts, condemns – art, *all* art, to the realm of *falsehood*. Behind such a mode of thought and valuation, which, if at all genuine, must be hostile to art, I always experienced what was *hostile to life*, the wrathful, vindictive counterwill to life itself: for all life rests on appearance, art, illusion, optics, necessity of perspective and error. From the very first Christianity was, essentially and

thoroughly, the nausea and surfeit of Life for Life, which only disguised, concealed and decked itself out under the belief in "another" or "better" life. The hatred of the "world," the curse on the affections, the fear of beauty and sensuality, another world, invented for the purpose of slandering this world the more, at bottom a longing for. Nothingness, for the end, for rest, for the "Sabbath of Sabbaths" – all this, as also the unconditional will of Christianity to recognise *only* moral values, has always appeared to me as the most dangerous and ominous of all possible forms of a "will to perish"; at the least, as the symptom of a most fatal disease, of profoundest weariness, despondency, exhaustion, impoverishment of life, – for before the tribunal of morality (especially Christian, that is, unconditional morality) life *must* constantly and inevitably be the loser, because life *is* something essentially unmoral, – indeed, oppressed with the weight of contempt and the everlasting No, life *must* finally be regarded as unworthy of desire, as in itself unworthy. Morality itself what? – may not morality be a "will to disown life," a secret instinct for annihilation, a principle of decay, of depreciation, of slander, a beginning of the end? And, consequently, the danger of dangers?.. It was *against* morality, therefore, that my instinct, as an intercessory-instinct for life, turned in this questionable book, inventing for itself a fundamental counter – dogma and counter-valuation of life, purely artistic, purely *anti-Christian*. What should I call it? As a philologist and man of words I baptised it, not without some liberty – for who could be sure of

the proper name of the Antichrist? – with the name of a Greek god: I called it *Dionysian*.

6

You see which problem I ventured to touch upon in this early work?.. How I now regret, that I had not then the courage (or immodesty?) to allow myself, in all respects, the use of an *individual language* for such *individual* contemplations and ventures in the field of thought – that I laboured to express, in Kantian and Schopenhauerian formulæ, strange and new valuations, which ran fundamentally counter to the spirit of Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as to their taste! What, forsooth, were Schopenhauer's views on tragedy? "What gives" – he says in *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, II. 495 – "to all tragedy that singular swing towards elevation, is the awakening of the knowledge that the world, that life, cannot satisfy us thoroughly, and consequently is *not worthy* of our attachment In this consists the tragic spirit: it therefore leads to *resignation*." Oh, how differently Dionysos spoke to me! Oh how far from me then was just this entire resignationism! – But there is something far worse in this book, which I now regret even more than having obscured and spoiled Dionysian anticipations with Schopenhauerian formulæ: to wit, that, in general, I *spoiled* the grand *Hellenic problem*, as it had opened up before me, by the admixture of the most modern things! That I entertained hopes, where nothing was to be hoped

for, where everything pointed all-too-clearly to an approaching end! That, on the basis of our latter-day German music, I began to fable about the "spirit of Teutonism," as if it were on the point of discovering and returning to itself, – ay, at the very time that the German spirit which not so very long before had had the will to the lordship over Europe, the strength to lead and govern Europe, testamentarily and conclusively *resigned* and, under the pompous pretence of empire-founding, effected its transition to mediocritisation, democracy, and "modern ideas." In very fact, I have since learned to regard this "spirit of Teutonism" as something to be despaired of and unsparingly treated, as also our present *German music*, which is Romanticism through and through and the most un-Grecian of all possible forms of art: and moreover a first-rate nerve-destroyer, doubly dangerous for a people given to drinking and revering the unclear as a virtue, namely, in its twofold capacity of an intoxicating and stupefying narcotic. Of course, apart from all precipitate hopes and faulty applications to matters specially modern, with which I then spoiled my first book, the great Dionysian note of interrogation, as set down therein, continues standing on and on, even with reference to music: how must we conceive of a music, which is no longer of Romantic origin, like the German; but of *Dionysian*?..

7

– But, my dear Sir, if *your* book is not Romanticism, what

in the world is? Can the deep hatred of the present, of "reality" and "modern ideas" be pushed farther than has been done in your artist-metaphysics? – which would rather believe in Nothing, or in the devil, than in the "Now"? Does not a radical bass of wrath and annihilative pleasure growl on beneath all your contrapuntal vocal art and aural seduction, a mad determination to oppose all that "now" is, a will which is not so very far removed from practical nihilism and which seems to say: "rather let nothing be true, than that *you* should be in the right, than that *your* truth should prevail!" Hear, yourself, my dear Sir Pessimist and art-deifier, with ever so unlocked ears, a single select passage of your own book, that not ineloquent dragon-slayer passage, which may sound insidiously rat-charming to young ears and hearts. What? is not that the true blue romanticist-confession of 1830 under the mask of the pessimism of 1850? After which, of course, the usual romanticist finale at once strikes up, – rupture, collapse, return and prostration before an old belief, before *the* old God... What? is not your pessimist book itself a piece of anti-Hellenism and Romanticism, something "equally intoxicating and befogging," a narcotic at all events, ay, a piece of music, of *German* music? But listen:

Let us imagine a rising generation with this undauntedness of vision, with this heroic impulse towards the prodigious, let us imagine the bold step of these dragon-slayers, the proud daring with which they turn their backs on all the effeminate doctrines of optimism, in order "to

live resolutely" in the Whole and in the Full: *would it not be necessary* for the tragic man of this culture, with his self-discipline to earnestness and terror, to desire a new art, *the art of metaphysical comfort*, tragedy as the Helena belonging to him, and that he should exclaim with Faust:

"Und sollt ich nicht, sehnsüchtigster Gewalt,
In's Leben ziehn die einzigste Gestalt?"²

"Would it not be *necessary*?" ... No, thrice no! ye young romanticists: it would *not* be necessary! But it is very probable, that things may *end* thus, that ye may end thus, namely "comforted," as it is written, in spite of all self-discipline to earnestness and terror; metaphysically comforted, in short, as Romanticists are wont to end, as *Christians*... No! ye should first of all learn the art of earthly comfort, ye should learn to *laugh*, my young friends, if ye are at all determined to remain pessimists: if so, you will perhaps, as laughing ones, eventually send all metaphysical comfortism to the devil – and metaphysics first of all! Or, to say it in the language of that Dionysian ogre, called *Zarathustra*:

"Lift up your hearts, my brethren, high, higher! And do not forget your legs! Lift up also your legs, ye good dancers – and better still if ye stand also on your heads!

"This crown of the laughter, this rose-garland crown – I

² And shall not I, by mightiest desire, In living shape that sole fair form acquire?
SWANWICK, trans. of Faust.

myself have put on this crown; I myself have consecrated my laughter. No one else have I found to-day strong enough for this.

"Zarathustra the dancer, Zarathustra the light one, who beckoneth with his pinions, one ready for flight, beckoning unto all birds, ready and prepared, a blissfully light-spirited one: —

"Zarathustra the soothsayer, Zarathustra the sooth-laughter, no impatient one, no absolute one, one who loveth leaps and side-leaps: I myself have put on this crown!

"This crown of the laughter, this rose-garland crown – to you my brethren do I cast this crown! Laughing have I consecrated: ye higher men, *learn*, I pray you – to laugh!"

Thus spake Zarathustra, lxxiii. 17, 18, and 20.

SILS-MARIA, OBERENGADIN, August 1886.

FOREWORD TO RICHARD WAGNER

In order to keep at a distance all the possible scruples, excitements, and misunderstandings to which the thoughts gathered in this essay will give occasion, considering the peculiar character of our æsthetic publicity, and to be able also to write the introductory remarks with the same contemplative delight, the impress of which, as the petrification of good and elevating hours, it bears on every page, I form a conception of the moment when you, my highly honoured friend, will receive this essay; how you, say after an evening walk in the winter snow, will behold the unbound Prometheus on the title-page, read my name, and be forthwith convinced that, whatever this essay may contain, the author has something earnest and impressive to say, and, moreover, that in all his meditations he communed with you as with one present and could thus write only what befitted your presence. You will thus remember that it was at the same time as your magnificent dissertation on Beethoven originated, viz., amidst the horrors and sublimities of the war which had just then broken out, that I collected myself for these thoughts. But those persons would err, to whom this collection suggests no

more perhaps than the antithesis of patriotic excitement and æsthetic revelry, of gallant earnestness and sportive delight. Upon a real perusal of this essay, such readers will, rather to their surprise, discover how earnest is the German problem we have to deal with, which we properly place, as a vortex and turning-point, in the very midst of German hopes. Perhaps, however, this same class of readers will be shocked at seeing an æsthetic problem taken so seriously, especially if they can recognise in art no more than a merry diversion, a readily dispensable court-jester to the "earnestness of existence": as if no one were aware of the real meaning of this confrontation with the "earnestness of existence." These earnest ones may be informed that I am convinced that art is the highest task and the properly metaphysical activity of this life, as it is understood by the man, to whom, as my sublime protagonist on this path, I would now dedicate this essay.

BASEL, *end of the year* 1871.

THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

1

We shall have gained much for the science of æsthetics, when once we have perceived not only by logical inference, but by the immediate certainty of intuition, that the continuous development of art is bound up with the duplexity of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*: in like manner as procreation is dependent on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual conflicts with only periodically intervening reconciliations. These names we borrow from the Greeks, who disclose to the intelligent observer the profound mysteries of their view of art, not indeed in concepts, but in the impressively clear figures of their world of deities. It is in connection with Apollo and Dionysus, the two art-deities of the Greeks, that we learn that there existed in the Grecian world a wide antithesis, in origin and aims, between the art of the shaper, the Apollonian, and the non-plastic art of music, that of Dionysus: both these so heterogeneous tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance, and continually inciting each other to new and more powerful births, to perpetuate in them the strife of this antithesis, which is but seemingly bridged over by their mutual

term "Art"; till at last, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic will, they appear paired with each other, and through this pairing eventually generate the equally Dionysian and Apollonian artwork of Attic tragedy.

In order to bring these two tendencies within closer range, let us conceive them first of all as the separate art-worlds of *dreamland* and *drunkenness*; between which physiological phenomena a contrast may be observed analogous to that existing between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. In dreams, according to the conception of Lucretius, the glorious divine figures first appeared to the souls of men, in dreams the great shaper beheld the charming corporeal structure of superhuman beings, and the Hellenic poet, if consulted on the mysteries of poetic inspiration, would likewise have suggested dreams and would have offered an explanation resembling that of Hans Sachs in the *Meistersingers*:

Mein Freund, das grad' ist Dichters Werk,
dass er sein Träumen deut' und merk'.
Glaubt mir, des Menschen wahrster Wahn
wird ihm im Traume aufgethan:
all' Dichtkunst und Poeterei
ist nichts als Wahrtraum-Deuterei.³

³ My friend, just this is poet's task: His dreams to read and to unmask. Trust me, illusion's truths thrice sealed In dream to man will be revealed. All verse-craft and poetisation Is but soothdream interpretation.

The beautiful appearance of the dream-worlds, in the production of which every man is a perfect artist, is the presupposition of all plastic art, and in fact, as we shall see, of an important half of poetry also. We take delight in the immediate apprehension of form; all forms speak to us; there is nothing indifferent, nothing superfluous. But, together with the highest life of this dream-reality we also have, glimmering through it, the sensation of its appearance: such at least is my experience, as to the frequency, ay, normality of which I could adduce many proofs, as also the sayings of the poets. Indeed, the man of philosophic turn has a foreboding that underneath this reality in which we live and have our being, another and altogether different reality lies concealed, and that therefore it is also an appearance; and Schopenhauer actually designates the gift of occasionally regarding men and things as mere phantoms and dream-pictures as the criterion of philosophical ability. Accordingly, the man susceptible to art stands in the same relation to the reality of dreams as the philosopher to the reality of existence; he is a close and willing observer, for from these pictures he reads the meaning of life, and by these processes he trains himself for life. And it is perhaps not only the agreeable and friendly pictures that he realises in himself with such perfect understanding: the earnest, the troubled, the dreary, the gloomy, the sudden checks, the tricks of fortune, the uneasy presentiments, in short, the whole "Divine Comedy" of life, and the Inferno, also pass before him, not merely like pictures on the

wall – for he too lives and suffers in these scenes, – and yet not without that fleeting sensation of appearance. And perhaps many a one will, like myself, recollect having sometimes called out cheerfully and not without success amid the dangers and terrors of dream-life: "It is a dream! I will dream on!" I have likewise been told of persons capable of continuing the causality of one and the same dream for three and even more successive nights: all of which facts clearly testify that our innermost being, the common substratum of all of us, experiences our dreams with deep joy and cheerful acquiescence.

This cheerful acquiescence in the dream-experience has likewise been embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo: for Apollo, as the god of all shaping energies, is also the soothsaying god. He, who (as the etymology of the name indicates) is the "shining one," the deity of light, also rules over the fair appearance of the inner world of fantasies. The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the only partially intelligible everyday world, ay, the deep consciousness of nature, healing and helping in sleep and dream, is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the faculty of soothsaying and, in general, of the arts, through which life is made possible and worth living. But also that delicate line, which the dream-picture must not overstep – lest it act pathologically (in which case appearance, being reality pure and simple, would impose upon us) – must not be wanting in the picture of Apollo: that measured limitation, that freedom from the wilder emotions,

that philosophical calmness of the sculptor-god. His eye must be "sunlike," according to his origin; even when it is angry and looks displeased, the sacredness of his beauteous appearance is still there. And so we might apply to Apollo, in an eccentric sense, what Schopenhauer says of the man wrapt in the veil of Mâyâ⁴: *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, I. p. 416: "Just as in a stormy sea, unbounded in every direction, rising and falling with howling mountainous waves, a sailor sits in a boat and trusts in his frail barque: so in the midst of a world of sorrows the individual sits quietly supported by and trusting in his *principium individuationis*." Indeed, we might say of Apollo, that in him the unshaken faith in this *principium* and the quiet sitting of the man wrapt therein have received their sublimest expression; and we might even designate Apollo as the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*, from out of the gestures and looks of which all the joy and wisdom of "appearance," together with its beauty, speak to us.

In the same work Schopenhauer has described to us the stupendous *awe* which seizes upon man, when of a sudden he is at a loss to account for the cognitive forms of a phenomenon, in that the principle of reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to admit of an exception. Add to this awe the blissful ecstasy which rises from the innermost depths of man, ay, of nature, at this same collapse of the *principium individuationis*, and we shall gain an insight into the being of the *Dionysian*, which is brought

⁴ Cf. *World and Will as Idea*, 1. 455 ff., trans. by Haldane and Kemp.

within closest ken perhaps by the analogy of *drunkenness*. It is either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the hymns of all primitive men and peoples tell us, or by the powerful approach of spring penetrating all nature with joy, that those Dionysian emotions awake, in the augmentation of which the subjective vanishes to complete self-forgetfulness. So also in the German Middle Ages singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in number, were borne from place to place under this same Dionysian power. In these St. John's and St. Vitus's dancers we again perceive the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their previous history in Asia Minor, as far back as Babylon and the orgiastic Sacæa. There are some, who, from lack of experience or obtuseness, will turn away from such phenomena as "folk-diseases" with a smile of contempt or pity prompted by the consciousness of their own health: of course, the poor wretches do not divine what a cadaverous-looking and ghastly aspect this very "health" of theirs presents when the glowing life of the Dionysian revellers rushes past them.

Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the covenant between man and man again established, but also estranged, hostile or subjugated nature again celebrates her reconciliation with her lost son, man. Of her own accord earth proffers her gifts, and peacefully the beasts of prey approach from the desert and the rocks. The chariot of Dionysus is bedecked with flowers and garlands: panthers and tigers pass beneath his yoke. Change Beethoven's "jubilee-song" into a painting, and, if

your imagination be equal to the occasion when the awestruck millions sink into the dust, you will then be able to approach the Dionysian. Now is the slave a free man, now all the stubborn, hostile barriers, which necessity, caprice, or "shameless fashion" has set up between man and man, are broken down. Now, at the evangel of cosmic harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, blended with his neighbour, but as one with him, as if the veil of Mâyâ has been torn and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious Primordial Unity. In song and in dance man exhibits himself as a member of a higher community, he has forgotten how to walk and speak, and is on the point of taking a dancing flight into the air. His gestures bespeak enchantment. Even as the animals now talk, and as the earth yields milk and honey, so also something super-natural sounds forth from him: he feels himself a god, he himself now walks about enchanted and elated even as the gods whom he saw walking about in his dreams. Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: the artistic power of all nature here reveals itself in the tremors of drunkenness to the highest gratification of the Primordial Unity. The noblest clay, the costliest marble, namely man, is here kneaded and cut, and the chisel strokes of the Dionysian world-artist are accompanied with the cry of the Eleusinian mysteries: "Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen? Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?"⁵

⁵ Te bow in the dust, oh millions? Thy maker, mortal, dost divine? Cf. Schiller's "Hymn to Joy"; and Beethoven, Ninth Symphony. – TR.

Thus far we have considered the Apollonian and his antithesis, the Dionysian, as artistic powers, which burst forth from nature herself, *without the mediation of the human artist*, and in which her art-impulses are satisfied in the most immediate and direct way: first, as the pictorial world of dreams, the perfection of which has no connection whatever with the intellectual height or artistic culture of the unit man, and again, as drunken reality, which likewise does not heed the unit man, but even seeks to destroy the individual and redeem him by a mystic feeling of Oneness. Anent these immediate art-states of nature every artist is either an "imitator," to wit, either an Apollonian, an artist in dreams, or a Dionysian, an artist in ecstasies, or finally – as for instance in Greek tragedy – an artist in both dreams and ecstasies: so we may perhaps picture him, as in his Dionysian drunkenness and mystical self-abnegation, lonesome and apart from the revelling choruses, he sinks down, and how now, through Apollonian dream-inspiration, his own state, *i. e.*, his oneness with the primal source of the universe, reveals itself to him *in a symbolical dream-picture*.

After these general premisings and contrastings, let us now approach the *Greeks* in order to learn in what degree and to what height these *art-impulses of nature* were developed in them: whereby we shall be enabled to understand and

appreciate more deeply the relation of the Greek artist to his archetypes, or, according to the Aristotelian expression, "the imitation of nature." In spite of all the dream-literature and the numerous dream-anecdotes of the Greeks, we can speak only conjecturally, though with a fair degree of certainty, of their *dreams*. Considering the incredibly precise and unerring plastic power of their eyes, as also their manifest and sincere delight in colours, we can hardly refrain (to the shame of every one born later) from assuming for their very dreams a logical causality of lines and contours, colours and groups, a sequence of scenes resembling their best reliefs, the perfection of which would certainly justify us, if a comparison were possible, in designating the dreaming Greeks as Homers and Homer as a dreaming Greek: in a deeper sense than when modern man, in respect to his dreams, ventures to compare himself with Shakespeare.

On the other hand, we should not have to speak conjecturally, if asked to disclose the immense gap which separated the *Dionysian Greek* from the Dionysian barbarian. From all quarters of the Ancient World – to say nothing of the modern – from Rome as far as Babylon, we can prove the existence of Dionysian festivals, the type of which bears, at best, the same relation to the Greek festivals as the bearded satyr, who borrowed his name and attributes from the goat, does to Dionysus himself. In nearly every instance the centre of these festivals lay in extravagant sexual licentiousness, the waves of which overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the very wildest beasts of nature

were let loose here, including that detestable mixture of lust and cruelty which has always seemed to me the genuine "witches' draught." For some time, however, it would seem that the Greeks were perfectly secure and guarded against the feverish agitations of these festivals (– the knowledge of which entered Greece by all the channels of land and sea) by the figure of Apollo himself rising here in full pride, who could not have held out the Gorgon's head to a more dangerous power than this grotesquely uncouth Dionysian. It is in Doric art that this majestically-rejecting attitude of Apollo perpetuated itself. This opposition became more precarious and even impossible, when, from out of the deepest root of the Hellenic nature, similar impulses finally broke forth and made way for themselves: the Delphic god, by a seasonably effected reconciliation, was now contented with taking the destructive arms from the hands of his powerful antagonist. This reconciliation marks the most important moment in the history of the Greek cult: wherever we turn our eyes we may observe the revolutions resulting from this event. It was the reconciliation of two antagonists, with the sharp demarcation of the boundary-lines to be thenceforth observed by each, and with periodical transmission of testimonials; – in reality, the chasm was not bridged over. But if we observe how, under the pressure of this conclusion of peace, the Dionysian power manifested itself, we shall now recognise in the Dionysian orgies of the Greeks, as compared with the Babylonian Sacæa and their retrogression of man to the tiger

and the ape, the significance of festivals of world-redemption and days of transfiguration. Not till then does nature attain her artistic jubilee; not till then does the rupture of the *principium individuationis* become an artistic phenomenon. That horrible "witches' draught" of sensuality and cruelty was here powerless: only the curious blending and duality in the emotions of the Dionysian revellers reminds one of it – just as medicines remind one of deadly poisons, – that phenomenon, to wit, that pains beget joy, that jubilation wrings painful sounds out of the breast. From the highest joy sounds the cry of horror or the yearning wail over an irretrievable loss. In these Greek festivals a sentimental trait, as it were, breaks forth from nature, as if she must sigh over her dismemberment into individuals. The song and pantomime of such dually-minded revellers was something new and unheard-of in the Homeric-Grecian world; and the Dionysian *music* in particular excited awe and horror. If music, as it would seem, was previously known as an Apollonian art, it was, strictly speaking, only as the wave-beat of rhythm, the formative power of which was developed to the representation of Apollonian conditions. The music of Apollo was Doric architectonics in tones, but in merely suggested tones, such as those of the cithara. The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music (and hence of music in general) is carefully excluded as un-Apollonian; namely, the thrilling power of the tone, the uniform stream of the melos, and the thoroughly incomparable world of harmony. In the Dionysian dithyramb man is incited to the

highest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced struggles for utterance – the annihilation of the veil of Mâyâ, Oneness as genius of the race, ay, of nature. The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; a new world of symbols is required; for once the entire symbolism of the body, not only the symbolism of the lips, face, and speech, but the whole pantomime of dancing which sets all the members into rhythmical motion. Thereupon the other symbolic powers, those of music, in rhythemics, dynamics, and harmony, suddenly become impetuous. To comprehend this collective discharge of all the symbolic powers, a man must have already attained that height of self-abnegation, which wills to express itself symbolically through these powers: the Dithyrambic votary of Dionysus is therefore understood only by those like himself! With what astonishment must the Apollonian Greek have beheld him! With an astonishment, which was all the greater the more it was mingled with the shuddering suspicion that all this was in reality not so very foreign to him, yea, that, like unto a veil, his Apollonian consciousness only hid this Dionysian world from his view.

3

In order to comprehend this, we must take down the artistic structure of the *Apollonian culture*, as it were, stone by stone, till we behold the foundations on which it rests. Here we observe

first of all the glorious *Olympian* figures of the gods, standing on the gables of this structure, whose deeds, represented in far-shining reliefs, adorn its friezes. Though Apollo stands among them as an individual deity, side by side with others, and without claim to priority of rank, we must not suffer this fact to mislead us. The same impulse which embodied itself in Apollo has, in general, given birth to this whole Olympian world, and in this sense we may regard Apollo as the father thereof. What was the enormous need from which proceeded such an illustrious group of Olympian beings?

Whosoever, with another religion in his heart, approaches these Olympians and seeks among them for moral elevation, even for sanctity, for incorporeal spiritualisation, for sympathetic looks of love, will soon be obliged to turn his back on them, discouraged and disappointed. Here nothing suggests asceticism, spirituality, or duty: here only an exuberant, even triumphant life speaks to us, in which everything existing is deified, whether good or bad. And so the spectator will perhaps stand quite bewildered before this fantastic exuberance of life, and ask himself what magic potion these madly merry men could have used for enjoying life, so that, wherever they turned their eyes, Helena, the ideal image of their own existence "floating in sweet sensuality," smiled upon them. But to this spectator, already turning backwards, we must call out: "depart not hence, but hear rather what Greek folk-wisdom says of this same life, which with such inexplicable cheerfulness spreads out before thee." There

is an ancient story that king Midas hunted in the forest a long time for the wise *Silenus*, the companion of Dionysus, without capturing him. When at last he fell into his hands, the king asked what was best of all and most desirable for man. Fixed and immovable, the demon remained silent; till at last, forced by the king, he broke out with shrill laughter into these words: "Oh, wretched race of a day, children of chance and misery, why do ye compel me to say to you what it were most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is for ever beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. The second best for you, however, is soon to die."

How is the Olympian world of deities related to this folk-wisdom? Even as the rapturous vision of the tortured martyr to his sufferings.

Now the Olympian magic mountain opens, as it were, to our view and shows to us its roots. The Greek knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence: to be able to live at all, he had to interpose the shining dream-birth of the Olympian world between himself and them. The excessive distrust of the titanic powers of nature, the Moira throning inexorably over all knowledge, the vulture of the great philanthropist Prometheus, the terrible fate of the wise Œdipus, the family curse of the Atridæ which drove Orestes to matricide; in short, that entire philosophy of the sylvan god, with its mythical exemplars, which wrought the ruin of the melancholy Etruscans – was again and again surmounted anew by the Greeks through the artistic *middle*

world

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