FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings

EDITED BY

RAYMOND GEUSS

University of Cambridge

AND

RONALD SPEIRS

University of Birmingham

TRANSLATED BY

RONALD SPEIRS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521639873

First published 1999
6th printing 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, 1844–1900.
[Selections. English. 1999]
The birth of tragedy and other writings / Friedrich Nietzsche;
edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs; translated by Ronald Speirs.
p. cm. – (Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 63016 9 (hardback). – ISBN 0 521 63987 5 (pbk.)
1. Philosophy, Modern. I. Geuss, Raymond. II. Speirs, Ronald.
III. Title. IV. Series.
B3312.E5G48 1999
193–dc21 98–35097 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-63016-0 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-63987-3 paperback

The Dionysiac World View

I

The Greeks, who simultaneously declare and conceal the mystery of their view of the world in their gods, established as the double source of their art two deities, Apollo and Dionysos. In the realm of art these names represent stylistic opposites which exist side by side and in almost perpetual conflict with one another, and which only once, at the moment when the Hellenic 'Will' blossomed, appeared fused together in the work of art that is Attic tragedy. For there are two states in which human beings attain to the feeling of delight in existence, namely in *dream* and in *intoxication*. Every human being is fully an artist when creating the worlds of dream, and the lovely semblance of dream is the father of all the arts of image-making, including, as we shall see, an important half of poetry. We dream with pleasure as we understand the *figure* directly; all forms speak to us; nothing is indifferent or unnecessary. Yet even while this dream-reality is most alive, we nevertheless retain a pervasive sense that it is *semblance*; only when this ceases to be the case do the pathological effects set in whereby dream no longer enlivens and the healing natural energy of its states ceases. Within that boundary, however, it is not just the pleasant and friendly images in us which we seek out with that complete sense of comprehension; things which are grave, sad, gloomy, and dark are contemplated with just as much pleasure, always provided that here too the veil of semblance is in fluttering movement and does not completely cover up the basic forms of the real. Thus, whereas in dream the individual human being plays with the real, the art of the image-maker (in the wider sense) is a ***playing with dream***. As a block of marble the statue is something very real, but the reality of the statue *as a dream figure* is the living person of the god. As long as the statue hovers as an image of fantasy before the eyes of the artist, he

is still playing with the real; when he translates this image into marble, he is playing with dream.

Now, in what sense could *Apollo* be made into a god *of art*? Only inasmuch as he is the god of dream-representations. He is the 'luminous one' through and through; at his deepest root he is a god of the sun and light who reveals himself in brilliance. 'Beauty' is his element, eternal youth his companion. But the lovely semblance of the world of dreams is his realm too; the higher truth, the perfection of these dream-states in contrast to the only partially intelligible reality of the daylight world, raise him to the status of a prophetic god, but equally certainly to that of an artistic god. The god of lovely semblance must be the god of true knowledge as well. But the image of Apollo must also include that delicate line which the dream image must not overstep if its effect is not to become pathological, in which case the semblance does not simply deceive but also cheats; it must include that measured limitation, that freedom from wilder impulses, that wise calm of the image-making god. His eye must be 'sun-like' and calm; even when it is angry and shows displeasure, the consecrated aura of lovely semblance surrounds it.

Dionysiac art, by contrast, is based on play with intoxication, with the state of ecstasy. There are two principal forces which bring naive, natural man to the self-oblivion of intense intoxication: the drive of spring and narcotic drink. Their effects are symbolized in the figure of Dionysos. In both states the *principium individuationis* is disrupted, subjectivity disappears entirely before the erupting force of the general element in human life, indeed of the general element in nature. Not only do the festivals of Dionysos forge a bond between human beings, they also reconcile human beings and nature. Freely the earth brings its gifts, the fiercest beasts approach one another in peace; the flower-decked chariot of Dionysos is drawn by panthers and tigers. All the caste-like divisions which necessity and arbitrary power have established between men disappear; the slave is a free-man, the aristocrat and the man of lowly birth unite in the same Bacchic choruses. In ever-swelling bands the gospel of 'universal harmony' rolls on from place to place; as they sing and dance, human beings express their membership of a higher, more ideal community; they have forgotten how to walk and speak. Yet it is more than this: they feel themselves to have been transformed by magic, and they really have become something different. Just as the animals now talk and the earth gives milk and honey, something supernatural now sounds out from within man. He feels him-

self to be a god; that which had previously lived only in his imagination he now feels in his own person. What does he now care for images and statues? Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art; man himself now moves with the same ecstasy and sublimity with which, in dream, he once saw the gods walk. The artistic force of nature, not that of an individual artist, reveals itself here; a nobler clay, a more precious marble is kneaded and chiselled here: the human being. This human being whom the artist Dionysos has formed stands in the same relation to nature as a statue does to the Apolline artist.

If intoxication is nature playing with human beings, the Dionysiac artist's creation is a playing with intoxication. If one has not experienced it for oneself this state can only be understood by analogy; it is rather like dreaming and at the same time being aware that the dream is a dream. Thus the attendant of Dionysos must be in a state of intoxication and at the same time he must lie in ambush, observing himself from behind. Dionysiac art manifests itself, not in the alternation of clear-mindedness and intoxication, but in their co-existence.

This co-existence marks the high point of Hellenic culture; originally, only Apollo is a Hellenic god of art, and it was his power which so moderated Dionysos when he came storming in from Asia that the most beautiful brotherly bond could come about. Nowhere can the incredible idealism of the Hellenic race be grasped more readily than here: a cult of nature which, amongst the peoples of Asia, had meant the crudest unleashing of the lower drives, a panhetaeric[1] animality which sundered all social ties for a certain period of time, was transformed amongst the Hellenes into a festival of universal redemption, a day of transfiguration. All the sublime drives of their character were revealed in this idealization of orgy.

Yet never was the Hellenic world in greater danger than during the stormy approach of the new god. Conversely, the wisdom of the Delphic god never showed itself in a more beautiful light. Reluctantly at first, he laid the finest of webs about his powerful antagonist so that the latter could hardly tell that he was wandering about in semi-captivity. When the Delphic priesthood perceived that the new cult had a profound effect on the processes of social regeneration, and promoted it in line with their political and religious intention; when the Apolline artist, with thoughtful moderation, learned from the revolutionary art of the rites of Bacchus; and, finally, when, in the ordering of the Delphic cult, sovereignty over the year

[1] 'Panhetaerism' is a state of universal sexual promiscuousness.

was shared between Apollo and Dionysos, both gods emerged victorious, as it were, from their contest: an act of reconciliation on the battlefield. Anyone who wants to see clearly just how powerfully the Apolline element held down the irrational, supernatural quality of the Dionysiac element, should consider that in the older period of music the *genos dithyrambikon* was also the *hesuchastikon*.[2] The more vigorously the Apolline spirit of art now flourished, the more freely did his brother-god Dionysos develop; in the same period as the first of them was attaining to the full, one might say immobile, vision of beauty, at the time of Phidias,[3] the other was interpreting the mysteries and terrors of the world in tragedy and giving voice in the music of tragedy to the innermost thought of nature: the weaving of the 'Will' in and above all appearances.

If music, too, is Apolline art, this applies, strictly speaking, only to rhythm, the *image-creating* energy of which was developed to represent Apolline states; the music of Apollo is architecture in sound, and, what is more, in the merely hinted-at sounds characteristic of the *cithara*. Cautiously it holds at a distance precisely that element which defines the character of Dionysiac music (and thus of music generally), the power of musical sound to shake us to the core and the quite incomparable world of harmony. The Greeks had the finest feeling for harmony, as their strict characterization of the *modes* obliges us to conclude, although the need for an *elaborated*, truly audible harmony was much weaker amongst them than it is in the modern world. In the sequence of harmonies, and even in their abbreviated form, so-called melody; the 'Will' reveals itself directly, without previously having embodied itself in a phenomenon. Every individual can, as it were, serve as a likeness, as an individual instance of a general rule; conversely, however, the Dionysiac artist presents the essence of everything that appears in a way that is immediately intelligible, for he has command over the chaos of the Will before it has assumed individual shape, and from it he can bring a new world into being at each creative moment, but *also the old world* with which we are already familiar as phenomenon. In this latter sense he is a tragic musician.

Nature expresses itself with its highest energy in Dionysiac intoxication, in the tumultuous, wild chase across all the scales of the soul under the influence of narcotic stimulants or when the drives of spring are unleashed; it binds individual creatures together again, and it makes them feel that

[2] 'The dithyrambic kind [of poetry] . . . is restful/calming'.

[3] Sculptor, active in Athens *c.* 460–430 BC.

they are one with each other, so that the *principium individuationis* appears, so to speak, to be a perpetual state of weakness of the Will. The more degenerate the Will is, the more everything fragments into individual elements; the more selfish and arbitrary the development of the individual, the weaker is the organism which it serves. This is why there erupts in those states what one might call a sentimental (*sentimentalisch*) tendency in the Will, a 'sigh of the creature' for what is lost; out of highest joy there comes a cry of horror, the yearning sounds of lament at some irredeemable loss. Abundant nature celebrates its saturnalian festivals and its rites of death at one and the same time. The affects of its priests are most wondrously mixed, pain awakens delight, rejoicing wrings sounds of agony from the breast. The god *ho lysios*[4] has transformed everything, redeemed and released everything from itself. The singing and the expressive gestures of a mass stimulated in this manner, and in whom nature acquired a voice and movement, was something new and unheard-of in the Homeric-Greek world; it struck the Greeks as something Oriental which they first had to tame with their enormous rhythmic and image-making energy, and which they did indeed tame, just as they tamed the Egyptian temple-style at the same time. It was the Apolline people who laid the chains of beauty on over-mighty instinct, who yoked and harnessed nature's most dangerous elements, her wildest beasts. The idealistic power of the Hellenic character is seen at its most admirable when one compares its spiritualization of the festival of Dionysos with what emerged from the same origin amongst other peoples. Similar festivals are very ancient and their existence is demonstrable everywhere, most notably in Babylon where they are known as the *sacaea*. Here, during five-day-long festivals, every political and social bond was torn apart; but the centre of the cult lay in the absence of all sexual discipline, in the destruction of all family life by unrestrained hetaerism. The very antithesis of this is to be found in the image of the Greek festivals of Dionysos, as drawn by Euripides in his *Bacchae*,[5] an image which radiates the same loveliness, the same transfiguring musical intoxication as Skopas and Praxiteles[6] embodied in their statues. A messenger describes how he had withdrawn with his herds to the very peaks of the mountains during the midday heat; this is the right moment and the right place to see the unseen; Pan is now asleep, the sky is now the unmoving background of a glory, the day now *blossoms*. On an alpine meadow the messenger notices three choruses of women lying in scattered

[4] Cult name of Dionysos: 'he who gives release'. [5] vv. 692ff. [6] Fourth-century sculptors.

groups on the ground and in decorous pose; many women stand leaning against pine trees; all slumber. Suddenly the mother of Pentheus breaks out in jubilation, sleep is banished, all leap to their feet, a model of noble comportment; the young girls and the women let their locks fall to their shoulders, the doe-skin is put in order if its ribbons and bows have become loosened during sleep. They gird themselves about with snakes which lick their cheeks confidingly, some women take young wolves and deer in their arms and suckle them. All adorn themselves with garlands of ivy; when the *thyrsus* is struck against a rock water bubbles forth, and when the earth is struck with a staff a fountain of wine rises up. Sweet honey drops from the twigs, and when someone touches the earth with just the tips of their fingers snow-white milk springs forth. This is an utterly enchanted world, nature celebrates its festival of reconciliation with mankind. The myth recounts that Apollo joined Dionysos together again after he had been dismembered. This is the image of Dionysos created anew by Apollo and saved from his Asiatic dismemberment.

2

The Greek gods, in the perfection with which they already appear in Homer, are certainly not to be understood as having been born of calamity and need; it is certain that such creatures were not conceived by a heart shaken by fear; it was not to turn away from life that a genial fantasy projected their images into the blue. What speaks out of them is a religion of life, not one of duty or asceticism or spirituality. All these figures breathe the triumph of existence, a luxuriant vitality accompanies their cult. They do not make demands; all that exists is deified in them, regardless of whether it is good or evil. Measured against the gravity, the sanctity and severity of other religions, Greek religion is in danger of being underestimated as a playful fantasy – unless one includes in one's representation of it an often overlooked trait of most profound wisdom, so that the Epicurean life of the gods suddenly appears to be a creation of that incomparable artist-people, indeed almost as its supreme creation. It is the philosophy of the *people* which the captive wood-god unveils to mortals: 'The best is not to be, the second best to die soon.' It is this same philosophy which forms the background of that pantheon. The Greeks knew the terrors and horrors of existence, but they covered them with a veil in order to be able to live: a cross hidden behind roses, to adopt Goethe's

symbol.[7] That luminous Olympian company only came to rule so that the sombre sway of *moira*, which determined Achilles' early death and the horrifying marriage of Oedipus, should be hidden by the radiant figures of Zeus, Apollo, Hermes, etc. If someone had removed the artistic *semblance* of that *middle world*, the Greeks would have had to follow the wisdom of the wood-god, the companion of *Dionysos*. It was out of this *necessity* that the artistic genius of this people created these gods. For this reason, theodicy was never a Hellenic problem; they took care never to attribute the existence of the world, and hence responsibility for the way it is, to the gods. The gods, too, are subject to *ananke*;[8] this is a confession of the rarest wisdom. To view its own existence in a transfiguring mirror and to protect itself with this mirror against the Medusa – this was the genial strategy adopted by the Hellenic 'Will' in order to be able to live at all. For how else could that infinitely sensitive people with such brilliant talent for *suffering* have been able to bear life, if *that self-same life* had not been revealed to them in their gods, suffused with a higher glory! The same drive which summons art into being in order to perfect existence, to augment it and seduce men into continuing to live, also led to the creation of the Olympian world, a world of beauty, calm and pleasure.

Under the influence of such a religion life is understood in the Homeric world as that which is inherently desirable: life beneath the sunshine of such gods. The *pain* of Homeric man related to departure from this existence, above all to imminent departure. If a lament is heard at all, it sings again of short-lived Achilles, of the rapid succession of the generations of mankind, of the passing of the heroic age. It is not unworthy of the greatest hero to long to go on living, even as a day-labourer. The 'Will' never expressed itself more plainly than in the Hellenes, whose very lament is still a song of praise. For this reason modern man feels a longing for that time when he believes he can hear nature and mankind in complete harmony; for this reason the Hellenic is the solution for all those who need to look about them for radiant models for the conscious affirmation of their will; for this reason, finally, the concept of 'Greek cheerfulness' has emerged at the hands of pleasure-seeking writers, so that, with an utter lack of respect, a slovenly life of self-indulgence dares to excuse, indeed honour itself, with the word 'Greek'.

In all of these representations, ranging from the noblest to the most

[7] Goethe, *Die Geheimnisse. Ein Fragment* (1789) (*The Secrets. A Fragment*); *cf. The Birth of Tragedy* § 3.
[8] Necessity.

common and misguided, the Greeks are understood in too crude and simple a manner and, to a certain extent, shaped in accordance with the image of unambiguous and, so to speak, one-sided nations (e.g. the Romans). After all, it ought to be suspected that some need for artistic semblance will be present even in the world view of a people which habitually turns everything it touches into gold. And we do indeed find, as we have indicated, an enormous illusion in this world view, the same illusion as nature regularly employs to achieve its goals. The true goal is obscured by a deluding image; we stretch out our hands towards the image, and nature achieves its goal by means of this deception. In the Greeks the Will wished to gaze on a vision of itself transfigured in a work of art; in order that the Will might glorify itself, its creatures too had to feel themselves to be worthy of glorification; they had to recognize a reflection of themselves in a higher sphere, elevated to the ideal, as it were, without feeling that the perfected world of their vision was an imperative or a reproach. This is the sphere of beauty in which they see their mirror images, the Olympians. With this weapon the Hellenic 'Will' fought against the talent for *suffering* and for the wisdom of suffering that is the correlative of artistic talent. Out of this struggle, and as a monument to its *victory*, tragedy was born.

The *intoxication* of *suffering* and the *beautiful dream* have different pantheons. By virtue of the omnipotence of its character, the former penetrates to the innermost thoughts of nature, it recognizes the fearful drive to exist and at the same time the perpetual death of everything that comes into existence; the gods which this intoxication creates are good and evil, they resemble chance, they startle us by the sudden emergence of a plan in their actions, they are pitiless and without delight in beauty. They are related to truth and approximate to concepts; rarely and only with difficulty do they become concentrated in figures. Looking at them turns the viewer to stone; how is one to live with them? Yet it is not intended that one should; that is their lesson.

If this pantheon cannot be concealed completely, like some punishable secret, the human gaze must be distracted from it by placing next to it the radiant, dream-born world of the Olympians; this is why the intensity of their colours, the sensuousness of their figures, grows ever greater, the more powerfully truth or its symbol makes its presence felt. Never was the struggle between truth and beauty greater than when the worship of Dionysos invaded Greece; here nature unveiled itself and spoke of its secret with terrifying clarity, in *musical sound*, in the face of which seductive

semblance almost lost its power. The source of this spring lay in Asia, but in Greece it had to become a river because here, for the first time, it encountered something which Asia had never offered, the most easily aroused sensibility and capacity for suffering, paired with the lightest mental alertness and clear-sightedness. How did Apollo save the Hellenes? The new arrival was drawn over into the world of beautiful semblance, into the world of the Olympians; many of the honours due to the most highly respected deities, to Zeus and Apollo, for example, were sacrificed to him. Never was more fuss made of a stranger; on the other hand, he was a fearful stranger (*hostis* in every sense of the word),[9] powerful enough to demolish the house of his host. A great revolution began in all forms of life: Dionysos penetrated into every area, including that of art.

The gaze, the beautiful, semblance: these things delimit the territory of Apolline art. It is the transfigured world of the eye which is artistically creative in dream, when our eyes are closed. *Epic poetry*, too, seeks to put us into this state of dreaming; our open eyes are to see nothing while we feast our gaze on the inner images which the bard seeks to induce us to produce by means of his concepts. The effect of the plastic arts is achieved here in a roundabout way. By means of carved marble the sculptor leads us to the *living* god he has seen in a dreamlike vision, so that the figure that hovers as the real *telos*[10] before the mind's eye becomes clear to both the sculptor and the viewer, and the former causes the latter to recreate his vision retrospectively via the *mediating figure* of the statue. The epic poet, too, sees the same living figure and wants to let others see it, but he no longer places a statue between himself and others; rather he tells in a story how that figure demonstrates its life, in movement, tone, word and action; he forces us to trace a mass of effects back to their cause; he requires us to engage in artistic composition. He has reached his goal when we see clearly before us the figure or group or image, when he has conveyed to us that dreamlike state in which he himself first engendered those representations. The demand of epic poetry that we should create in a *plastic* manner proves just how absolute the difference is between lyric and epic poetry, since lyric poetry never has the formation of images as its goal. The only common ground they share is something material, the word, which is even more general than the concept; when we speak of poetry we do not thereby have a category which is coordinated with the plastic arts and music, but rather a conglutination of two totally different artistic means, one of which

[9] Means both 'stranger' and 'enemy'. [10] Goal, objective, aim.

signifies a way towards plastic art, the other a way towards music, but both of which are only *ways* to the creation of art, not arts themselves. In this sense painting and sculpture are, of course, also only artistic means; true art is the ability to create images, regardless of whether this is a creation in advance or in retrospect. It is on this quality – a general human quality – that the *cultural significance* of art rests. The artist, as one who uses artistic means to induce others to produce art, cannot at the same time be the absorbing organ of artistic activity.

The image-worship of Apolline *culture*, whether expressed in temples, in statues, or in the Homeric epic, had its sublime goal in the ethical demand for *measure* which runs parallel to the aesthetic demand for beauty. It is only possible to demand measure where measure and limits are held to be *knowable*. In order to be able to respect one's limits, one has to know what they are; hence the Apolline warning *gnothi seauton*.[11] But the only mirror in which the Greek could see himself, i.e. know himself, was the world of the Olympian gods; in this, however, he recognized the very core of his own nature, veiled by the beautiful semblance of dream. The new pantheon (in contrast to the overthrown world of the Titans) moved beneath the yoke of the measure of beauty; the limit which the Greeks had to observe was that of beautiful semblance. The innermost purpose of a culture directed towards semblance and measure can only be the veiling of truth; the warning *meden agan*[12] was called out to the tireless researcher labouring in the service of *truth*, just as it was to the over-mighty Titan. In Prometheus the Greeks were shown an example of the pernicious effect which the excessive promotion of human knowledge has both on what is promoted and on those who promote it. Anyone who wishes to prove himself and his wisdom before this god must, like Hesiod, *metron echein sophies*.[13]

It was into a world built up and artificially protected like this that the ecstatic tones of the festival of Dionysos now penetrated, tones in which all the *excess* of pleasure and suffering and knowledge in nature revealed itself at one and the same time. Here everything which, up to this point, had been acknowledged as a limit, as a definition of measure, proved to be an artificially created illusion: 'excess' unveiled itself as the truth. For the first time there roared out the daemonically fascinating song of the people in all the

[11] 'Know thyself': one of the two mottoes carved over the entrance to Apollo's oracle at Delphi.

[12] 'Not too much': the other of the two mottoes at Apollo's oracle in Delphi; *cf.* also above, *The Birth of Tragedy* § 4.

[13] 'To keep the measure of wisdom', from an epigram by Pindar on Hesiod (Pindarus I in *Epigrammatica Graeca* ed. Page, Oxford, 1975). *Cf.* Hesiod *Works and Days* 694 and Theognis 876, 614, 694.

drunkenness of an over-mighty feeling; what, compared with this, did the psalm-singing artist of Apollo signify, with the timorously hinted-at sounds of his *cithara*? The element of music had hitherto been propagated in caste-like guilds and thereby kept at a distance from all profane involvement; it had also been forced by the might of the Apolline genius to remain on the level of simple architectonics; here, however, it cast off all constraints. Rhythm, which had previously moved only in the simplest zig-zag pattern, now loosened its limbs for a Bacchanalian dance; *musical sound* rang out, no longer in ghost-like attenuation, but in the thousand-fold intensification of the mass and in the accompaniment of deep-voiced wind instruments. And the most mysterious thing of all occurred: here harmony was born, which, in its movement, makes the will of nature immediately intelligible. Things in the ambit of Dionysos became audible which had lain artificially hidden in the Apolline world: all the shimmering light of the Olympian gods paled before the wisdom of Silenus. A kind of art which spoke the truth in its ecstatic intoxication chased away the Muses of the arts of semblance; in the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac states the individual with all his limits and measures sank out of sight; a twilight of the gods was imminent.

What did the Will, which, after all, is ultimately a *single* entity, intend when it granted admission to the Dionysiac elements, contrary to its own Apolline creation?

The goal was a new and higher *mechane*[14] of existence, the birth of the *tragic thought*.

3

The ecstasy of the Dionysiac state, which destroys the usual barriers and limits of existence, contains, for as long as it lasts, a *lethargic* element in which all personal experiences from the past are submerged. This gulf of oblivion thus separates the worlds of everyday life and Dionysiac experience from one another. But as soon as daily reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such with a sense of *revulsion*; the fruit of these states is an *ascetic*, will-negating mood. In thought the Dionysiac, as a higher order of the world, is contrasted with a common and bad order of things; the Greek desired to flee absolutely from this world of guilt and fate. He hardly sought comfort in looking forward to a world beyond death; his yearning

[14] Means.

went higher, beyond the gods, he negated existence and its gay, treacherous mirage of gods. In the consciousness that follows his awakening from intoxication he sees the terrible and absurd aspects of human existence wherever he looks; it disgusts him. Now he understands the wisdom of the wood-god.

Here the most dangerous limit had been reached which the Hellenic Will, with its fundamental principle of Apolline optimism, could permit. Here it immediately began to put its natural healing powers into effect in order to turn around that mood of negation; its means are the tragic work of art and the tragic idea. It could certainly not be its intention to weaken or indeed suppress the Dionysiac state; it was not possible to force it directly into submission, and if it was possible, then it was far too dangerous; for if a barrier was erected to the discharge of the element, it would find an outlet elsewhere and penetrate all the arteries of life.

What mattered above all was to transform those repulsive thoughts about the terrible and absurd aspects of existence into representations with which it was possible to live; these representations are the *sublime*, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means, and the *comical*, whereby disgust at absurdity is discharged by artistic means. These two interwoven elements are unified in a work of art which imitates and plays with intoxication.

The sublime and the comical are a step beyond the world of beautiful semblance, for a contradiction is felt in both concepts. On the other hand, they are in no sense identical with truth; they cast a veil over truth, which, although it is more transparent than beauty, nevertheless remains a veil. Thus what we have in these two things is a *middle world* between beauty and truth; here it is possible to deny Dionysos and Apollo. This world reveals itself in a playing with intoxication, not in complete entrapment by it. In the actor we recognize Dionysiac man, the instinctive poet, singer, dancer, but Dionysiac man as he is *played*. He seeks to emulate his model in the emotional upheaval of the sublime or of laughter; he goes beyond beauty and yet he does not seek truth. He remains hovering half-way between these things. He does not strive after beautiful semblance, but he does strive after semblance, not after truth, but after *probability*. (Symbol, sign of truth.) Of course, the actor was originally not a single individual; the intention was to represent the Dionysiac mass, the people; hence the dithyrambic chorus. By playing with intoxication the aim was, as it were, to discharge the intoxication of the actor and of the surrounding chorus of spectators. From the standpoint of the Apolline world, the Hellenic

character was to be *healed* and *expiated*: Apollo, the true god of healing and expiation, saved the Greeks from clear-sighted, prophetic ecstasy and revulsion at existence – through the work of art which embodied tragi-comical thought.

The new art-world, that of the sublime and the comical, the art world of 'probability', rested on a different view of the gods and the world than the older art world of beautiful semblance. Recognition of the terrors and absurdities of existence, of the disturbed order and the unreasonable but planned nature of events, indeed of the most enormous *suffering* throughout the whole of nature, had removed the veil from the artificially hidden figures of *moira* and the Erinyes, of Medusa and the Gorgon: the Olympian gods were in the greatest danger. In the tragi-comical work of art they were saved in that they too were plunged into the sea of the sublime and the comical; they cease to be only 'beautiful'; they absorbed, as it were, the older order of gods and their sublimity. They now split into two groups, with only a few hovering in between, deities who were sometimes sublime and at other times comical. Above all, Dionysos himself was given this divided character.

Two types, Aeschylus and Sophocles, best demonstrate how it was now possible to live in the tragic period of Greek culture. The former sees the sublime chiefly in magnificent justice. He sees men and gods in the closest subjective commonality: the divine, the just, the moral, and the ***happy*** are seen by him as being intertwined in a unified whole. The individual, whether man or Titan, is weighed in the same scales. The gods are reconstructed in accordance with this norm of justice. Thus, for example, the popular belief in a daemon who blinds men and seduces them into guilt – a remnant of that ancient pantheon which was dethroned by the Olympians – was corrected by making this daemon a tool in the hands of Zeus who punishes justly. The equally ancient thought, one that was also alien to the Olympians, that a whole family could be cursed, is divested of all its acerbity, since, in Aeschylus' view, there is no ***necessity*** for the individual to commit a crime, so that everyone can escape unharmed.

Whereas Aeschylus sees the sublime in the sublimity of Olympian justice, Sophocles sees it – strangely enough – in the sublime obscurity of Olympian justice. He restores the standpoint of the people on every count. The undeservedness of a terrible fate seemed sublime to him, the truly insoluble puzzles of human existence were his tragic muse. Suffering undergoes transfiguration in his work; it is understood as something

sanctifying. The distance between the human and the divine is immeasurable; thus propriety demands the most profound submission and resignation. The true virtue is *sophrosyne*,[15] actually a negative virtue. Heroic mankind is noblest mankind without that virtue; its fate demonstrates that infinite gulf. *Guilt* hardly exists, only a lack of insight into the worth of man and his limits.[16]

This standpoint is at any rate deeper and more inward than that of Aeschylus; it comes significantly closer to the Dionysiac truth and expresses it without using many symbols – and nevertheless we can recognize here the ethical principle of Apollo woven into the Dionysiac view of the world. In the case of Aeschylus revulsion is dissolved in a sublime shiver of awe at the wisdom of the world's order, an order which is only *difficult* to recognize because of human weakness. In the case of Sophocles the shiver of awe is even greater because that wisdom is quite unfathomable. It is the pure mood of piety which does not struggle, whereas the Aeschylean view always has the task of justifying divine justice and is therefore brought to a standstill by ever new problems. In Sophocles' view the 'limit of man', which Apollo commands us to search for, is knowable, but it is narrower and more confined than Apollo meant it to be in the pre-Dionysiac period. Man's lack of knowledge about himself is the Sophoclean problem; man's lack of knowledge about the gods is that of Aeschylus.

Piety, most wondrous mask of the drive for life! Devotion to a perfected *dream-world*, endowed with the highest moral *wisdom*. A flight from truth in order to be able to worship it from afar, shrouded in clouds! Reconciliation with reality *because* it is mysterious! A disinclination to solve puzzles because we are not gods! The pleasure found in falling in the dust, the peace of happiness in misfortune! The supreme self-abandonment of man in his supreme expression! Glorification and transfiguration of the devices of terror and atrocities of existence as the means to cure us *of* existence! Living joyfully in scorn of life! The triumph of the will in its negation!

On this level of knowledge there are only two paths, the path of the *saint* and the path of the *tragic artist*; what they both have in common is the ability to carry on living even in the clearest knowledge of the nullity of

[15] Traditionally translated as 'temperance'.

[16] The German is ambiguous at this point: *seine Grenzen* may mean 'his' (man's) or 'its' limits (the limits of the worth of man).

existence, without sensing a rupture in their view of the world. Disgust at the continuation of life is felt to be a means of creation, either saintly creation or artistic. The terrifying or the absurd is uplifting because it is only *seemingly* terrible or absurd. The Dionysiac power of enchantment proves itself even here, at the very summit of this view of the world: all that is real is dissolved in semblance, and behind it the unified ***nature of the Will*** manifests itself, completely cloaked in the glory of wisdom and truth and in blinding radiance. *Illusion, delusion is at its peak.*

It will now no longer strike anyone as incomprehensible that the same Will which, in its Apolline form, ordered the Hellenic world, also incorporated its other manifestation, the Dionysiac Will. The struggle between both manifestations of the Will had an extraordinary goal, the creation of a *higher possibility of existence* and the attainment thereby of a yet ***higher*** *glorification* (through art). The form of glorification was no longer the art of semblance but rather the tragic art, in which, however, the art of semblance has been entirely absorbed. Apollo and Dionysos have become united. Just as the Dionysiac element penetrated Apolline life, just as semblance established itself as a limit here too, so, equally, Dionysiac-tragic art is no longer 'truth'. In tragedy the singing and dancing is no longer the instinctive intoxication of nature; no longer is the Dionysiacally excited mass of the chorus the popular mass which has been seized unconsciously by the drive of spring. Truth is now *symbolized*, it makes use of semblance, it therefore can and must also use the arts of semblance. But here already there emerges a great difference from earlier art, in that all the artistic means of semblance are *jointly* called on to assist, so that the statue now walks about, the painted scenery moves about on the periacts,[17] the same rear wall presenting first a temple, then a palace to the spectator's gaze. Thus we observe at the same time a certain ***indifference to semblance*** which now has to give up its eternal claims, its sovereign demands. Semblance is certainly not enjoyed as *semblance* any longer, but rather as a ***symbol***, as a sign of truth. Hence the – inherently objectionable – fusing of the artistic means. The clearest indication of this lack of regard for semblance is the *mask*.

Thus a Dionysiac demand is made of the spectator, namely that everything should be imagined as having been transformed by magic, that he should always see more than the symbol, that the entire, visible world of the stage and the orchestra is the ***realm of wonder***. But where is the power

[17] Machines for shifting the painted backdrops that formed the scenery in a Greek theatre.

which transports him into the mood where he believes in wonders, so that he sees everything as having been enchanted? Who defeats the power of semblance and reduces it to the status of a symbol?

This power is *music*.

4

The philosophy which follows the lead given by Schopenhauer teaches us that what we call 'feeling' is to be understood as a complex of unconscious representations and states of will. The exertions of the will express themselves, however, as pleasure or lack of pleasure, and in this they exhibit only quantitative differences. There are no kinds of pleasure, but there are degrees of pleasure and a vast number of accompanying representations. Pleasure is to be understood as the satisfaction of the *one* will, the lack of pleasure as its non-satisfaction.

In what way does feeling convey itself? In part, but only in small part, it can be transposed into thoughts, which is to say, into conscious representations; this of course only applies to the part made up of the accompanying representations. But in this area of feeling there always remains an indissoluble residue. It is only the dissoluble part that language, which is to say, concepts, has anything to do with; this defines the limit of '*poetry*' as far as its ability to express feeling is concerned.

The two other forms of emotional expression are thoroughly instinctive, without consciousness, and yet they operate in a purposive way; these are the language of *gesture* and *musical tone*. The language of gesture consists of generally intelligible symbols and is produced by reflex movements. These symbols are visible; the eye which sees them immediately conveys the state which gave rise to the gesture and which it symbolizes; mostly the spectator feels a sympathetic innervation of the same parts of the face or limbs which he sees in motion. Here 'symbol' means a quite imperfect, partial copy, an allusive sign which requires agreement for its comprehension; except that in this case the general understanding is *instinctive*, not one which has passed through a clear state of consciousness.

What, then, does *gesture* symbolize of that double-natured being that is feeling?

Clearly, the *accompanying representation*, for this alone can be alluded to, in an imperfect and partial manner, by the visible gesture; an image can only be symbolized by an image.

Painting and sculpture represent human beings through gesture; i.e. they imitate the symbol and have achieved their effects when we have understood the symbol. The pleasure of looking at them consists in understanding the symbol, despite the fact that it is semblance.

The actor, by contrast, represents the symbol in reality, not just in semblance; but his effect on us does not rest on our understanding the symbol; rather we immerse ourselves in the feeling which is being symbolized and do not merely take pleasure in semblance, in beautiful semblance.

Thus stage decoration does not excite the pleasure of semblance at all; rather we take it to be a symbol and understand the reality it alludes to. We find wax dolls and real flowers quite acceptable alongside others which are merely painted, which proves that what we bring to mind here is reality and not artistic semblance. Here the task is no longer beauty but probability.

But what is beauty? 'The rose is beautiful' means only that the rose has a good appearance (*Schein*), it has a pleasingly luminous quality. There is no intention to say anything about its essence. It pleases, it arouses pleasure, as appearance, i.e. the Will is satisfied by the way it appears, pleasure in existence is promoted thereby. The rose is, in its appearance, a faithful copy of its Will, which is identical with this form; in its appearance it corresponds to the purpose intended for its species. The more it does so, the more beautiful it is; if its character corresponds to the purpose intended, the rose is 'good'.

'A beautiful painting' simply means: our idea of a painting is fulfilled here; but when we call a painting 'good' we define our idea of a painting as one which corresponds to the *essence* of a painting. Mostly, however, what is meant by 'a beautiful painting' is a painting which represents something beautiful; this is how laymen judge paintings. They enjoy the beauty of the subject; *this* is how we are meant to enjoy the plastic arts in drama, except that it cannot be the task here to represent only beautiful things; it is enough for things to appear *true*. The object represented is meant to be received in as lively and sensuous a manner as possible; it is meant to have the effect of truth; the entirely *opposite* demand is made by every work of beautiful semblance.

But if gesture symbolizes the representations which accompany feeling, by what symbol are the stirrings of the *Will* itself *conveyed* to us? Which is the instinctive mediation here?

Mediation by *musical sound*. To be more precise, what is symbolized by musical sound is the various modes of pleasure and displeasure – without

any accompanying representation.

Everything we can say to characterize the various feelings of displeasure are images of the representations which have become clear through the symbolism of gesture, as when we speak, for example, about pain as something which 'beats, aches, twitches, stabs, cuts, bites, or tickles'. These seem to express certain 'frequencies' of the Will – in short, to use the language of musical sound, they express *rhythm*. In the *dynamics* of musical sound we recognize the degree of the intensifications of the Will, the varying quantity of pleasure and displeasure. But its true essence conceals itself, without allowing itself to be expressed symbolically, in *harmony*. The Will and its symbol – harmony – are both, ultimately, *pure logic*! Whereas rhythm and dynamics are still to a certain extent the external aspect of the Will as it reveals itself in symbols, whereas they still almost have something of the type 'phenomenon' about them, harmony is the symbol of the pure essence of the Will. Accordingly, the individual phenomenon can still be characterized *as* a phenomenon in rhythm and dynamics; *approached from this angle, music can be developed into an art of semblance*. The indissoluble residue, harmony, speaks of the Will outside and within all phenomenal forms; thus it is a *symbol*, not just of feeling but of the *world*. In *its* sphere the concept is quite powerless.

We now understand the significance of the language of gesture and musical sound for the *Dionysiac work of art*. In the primitive, popular dithyramb of Spring man wants to express himself not as an individual but as the *human species*. The fact that he has ceased to be an individual human being is expressed by the symbolism of the eyes, the language of gesture, for in his gestures he speaks as a *satyr*, as a creature of nature amongst other creatures of nature, and, what is more, he does so in the intensified language of gesture, in the *gestures of dance*. By means of musical sound, however, he expresses the innermost thoughts of nature; it is not just the genius of the species (which is expressed by *gesture*), rather it is the genius of existence itself, the Will, which makes itself understood directly in this way. When he uses gesture man remains within the limits of the species, which is to say, within the limits of the phenomenal world; when he produces musical sound, however, he dissolves the phenomenal world, as it were, into its original unity; the world of maya disappears before the magic of music.

But when does natural man attain to the symbolism of musical sound? When does the language of gesture no longer suffice? When does sound

become music? Above all, in the supreme states of pleasure and displeasure experienced by the will, as a will which rejoices or a will which is frightened to death, in short *in the intoxication of feeling*: in the *shout*. How much more powerful and immediate is a shout, compared with something seen! But the gentler stirrings of the will, too, have their symbols in sound; in general, there is a sound to parallel every gesture; but its intensification to pure musical sound can only be achieved through the intoxication of feeling.

The most intimate and frequent fusion of a kind of gestural language with sound is called *language*. In the tone and cadence of a word, by the strength and rhythm of its sound, the essence of a thing is symbolized, by the gesture of the mouth the accompanying representation is shown, the image, the appearance of its essence. Symbols can and must be many things; but they grow instinctively and with great and wise conformity to a law. A symbol that is remembered is a *concept*; since the sound fades away entirely when preserved in memory, only the symbol of the accompanying representation is present in the concept. One 'understands' things which one can designate and differentiate.

When emotion is intensified the essence of the word reveals itself more clearly and more sensuously in the symbol of sound; which is why it resounds more. The *Sprechgesang* is, as it were, a return to nature; the symbol which gets blunted in use regains its original strength once more.

In a sequence of words, i.e. by a chain of symbols, something new and greater is to be represented; rhythm, dynamics and harmony again become necessary on this level of expression. This higher sphere now governs the more limited sphere of the individual word; it becomes necessary to select words, to put them in a new order; poetry begins. The spoken melody of a sentence is not just the sequence of the sounds of the words; for a word has only a quite relative sound, because its character, the content presented by the symbol, varies according to its position. In other words: the individual symbol of the word is constantly being re-defined by the higher unity of the sentence and the character this symbolizes. A chain of concepts is a thought; in other words, this is the higher unity of the accompanying representations. The essence of the thing is inaccessible to thought; the fact that it has an effect on us as a motive, as a stimulant of the will, can be explained by the fact that the thought has already become a remembered symbol for a manifestation of the will, for a movement and a phenomenon

of the will in one. But when it is spoken, i.e. with the symbolism of sound, its effect is incomparably more powerful and direct. When it is sung, when melody is the intelligible symbol of its will, it reaches the summit of its effect; if this is not the case, it is the sequence of sounds which affects us, and the sequence of words, the thought, remains something distant and indifferent.

Now, depending on whether the effect of a word is mainly intended to be the symbol of an accompanying representation or the symbol of the original movement of the will, depending, in other words, on whether images or feelings are to be symbolized, two separate paths open up for poetry: the epic and the lyric. The former leads to the plastic arts, the latter to music. Pleasure in the phenomenal world governs epic poetry; the will reveals itself in lyric poetry. The former sets itself free of music, the latter remains bound up with it.

In the Dionysiac dithyramb the Dionysiac enthusiast is stimulated to the utmost intensity of all his symbolic powers; something never felt before demands to be expressed: the annihilation of *individuatio*, one-ness in the genius of the species, indeed of nature. Now the essence of nature is to be expressed; a new world of symbols is needed; the accompanying representations acquire a symbol in the images of an intensified human being; they are represented with supreme physical energy by the whole symbolism of the body, in the gesture of dance. But the world of the Will, too, demands to be expressed symbolically in an unheard-of manner, the powers of harmony, dynamics, and rhythm suddenly grow tempestuously. Shared between both worlds, poetry, too, attains to a new sphere where there is, at one and the same time, sensuousness of imagery, as in epic poetry, and the emotional intoxication of sound, as in lyric. To grasp this complete unleashing of all symbolic energies, the same intensification of the essence which created them is needed; the servant of Dionysos can be understood only by those who are like him. For that reason this whole new world of art, in all its utterly strange, seductive wonder, advances through the Apolline culture of the Hellenes amidst terrible *struggles*.

(Written in 1870; unpublished in Nietzsche's lifetime.)