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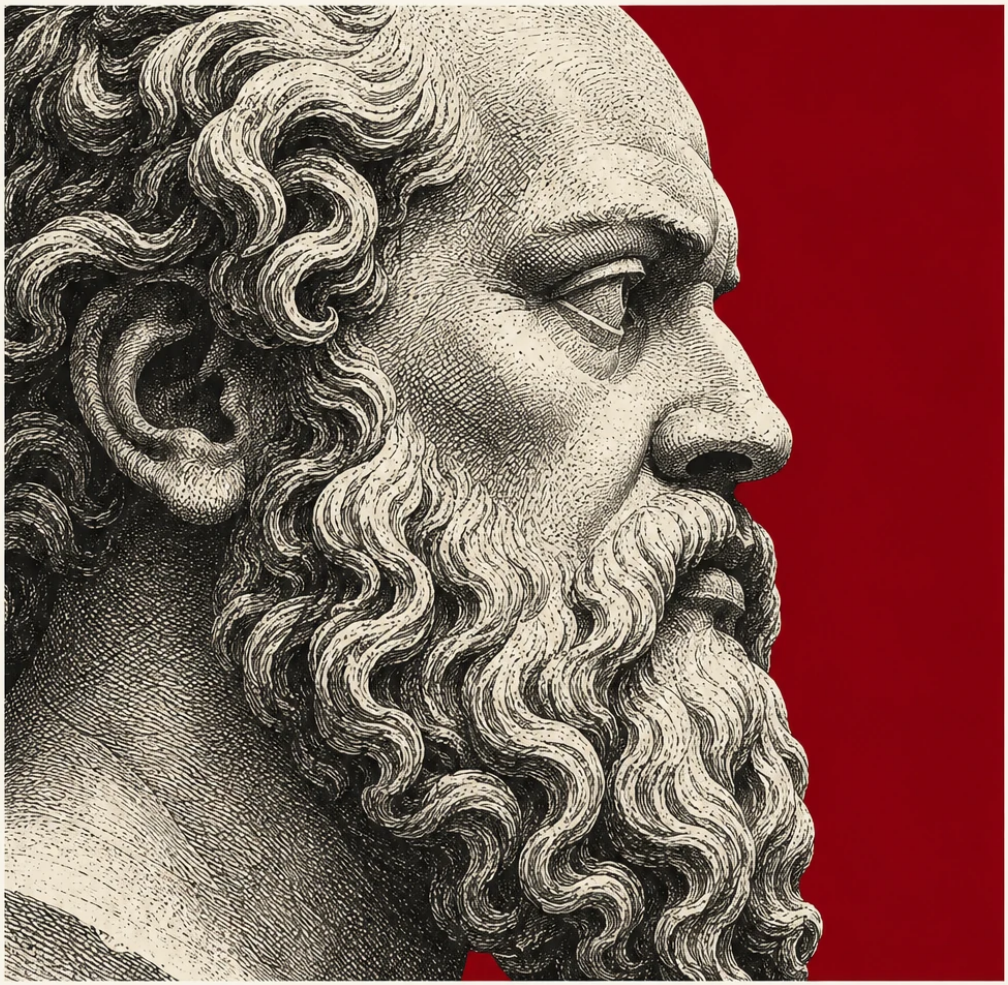

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Socrates and Greek Tragedy

By

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Basel.

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1.

Greek tragedy perished otherwise than all the older sister genres of art: it died by suicide, in consequence of an insoluble conflict, and thus tragically, whereas all those others passed away at a great age in the fairest and most peaceful of deaths. For if it accords with a happy state of nature to depart from life leaving fair offspring and without convulsion, then the end of those older genres shows us just such a happy state of nature: they sink slowly from sight, and before their dimming eyes already stands their fairer progeny, impatiently lifting its head with a bold gesture. With the death of Greek tragedy, on the other hand, there arose an immense void, felt deeply everywhere; as once, in the days of Tiberius, Greek sailors heard upon a lonely isle the harrowing cry: "Great Pan is dead": so now it rang through the Hellenic world like a sorrowful note of lament: "Tragedy is dead! Poetry itself has perished with her! Away, away with you, stunted, emaciated epigones! Away to Hades, that there for once you may eat your fill of the crumbs of the former masters!"

But when after all a new genre of art did blossom forth, one that revered tragedy as its forerunner and mistress, it was perceived with horror that it bore indeed its mother's features, but those very features she had shown in her long death-struggle. This death-struggle of tragedy was fought by *Euripides*; that later genre is known as *New*

Attic Comedy. In it the degenerate form of tragedy lived on, as a monument to her exceedingly laborious and violent passing.

Given this connection, the passionate attachment which the poets of the newer comedy felt for Euripides is understandable; so that we are no longer surprised by the wish of Philemon, who would gladly have had himself hanged at once, merely in order to be able to seek out Euripides in the underworld: if only he could be sure that the departed was still in his right mind even now. But if one wishes to designate, in all brevity and without claiming to say anything exhaustive, what Euripides has in common with Menander and Philemon, and what had so stirring and exemplary an effect upon them, it suffices to say that *the spectator* was brought onto the stage by Euripides. Whoever has recognized from what material the Promethean tragedians before Euripides formed their heroes, and how remote from them was any intention of bringing the faithful mask of reality onto the stage, will also be clear about the wholly divergent tendency of Euripides. Through him the man of everyday life pressed forward from the spectators' seats onto the scene; the mirror, in which formerly only the great and bold features had found expression, now displayed that painful fidelity which conscientiously reproduces even the botched lines of nature. Odysseus, the typical Hellene of the older art, now sank beneath the hands of the newer poets into the figure of the Graeculus, who from now on stands at the centre of dramatic interest as the good-natured, crafty house-slave. What Euripides, in the Aristophanic Frogs, credits to himself as a merit, namely that by his household remedies he freed the tragic art of its pompous corpulence, is to be felt above all in his tragic heroes. In essence the spectator now saw and heard his double upon the Euripidean stage, and rejoiced that this double knew so well how to talk. But matters did not rest with this joy: people learned from Euripides how to speak themselves, and of this he boasts in his contest with Aeschylus: how

through him the people had now learned to observe, to debate and to draw conclusions according to the rules of art and with the slyest sophistications. Through this revolution in public speech he made the newer comedy possible at all. For from now on it was no longer a secret how, and with what maxims, everyday commonplaceness might be represented on the stage. Bourgeois mediocrity, upon which Euripides founded all his political hopes, now had its say, whereas until then the demigod in tragedy, and the drunken satyr or the demigod in comedy, had determined the character of the language. And so the Aristophanic Euripides stresses to his own credit how he had portrayed the common, familiar, everyday life and doings of men, upon which everyone is competent to pass judgement. If now the whole mass philosophized, and administered land and goods, conducted lawsuits, and so forth, with unheard-of cleverness, this was his merit and the result of the wisdom he had inoculated into the people.

To a mass thus prepared and enlightened the newer comedy could now address itself, for which Euripides had become, as it were, the chorus-master; only that this time it was the chorus of spectators that had to be trained. As soon as this chorus had been schooled to sing in the Euripidean key, there arose that chess-like species of drama, the newer comedy, with its perpetual triumph of cunning and wiliness. But Euripides — the chorus-master — was praised unceasingly: indeed, people would have killed themselves in order to learn still more from him, had they not known that the tragic poets were just as dead as tragedy. With her, however, the Hellene had given up faith in his immortality: not only faith in an ideal past, but faith in an ideal future as well. The phrase from the well-known epitaph, "as an old man frivolous and whimsical," applies also to aged Hellenism. The moment, wit, frivolity, caprice are its highest deities; the fifth estate, that of the slave, now comes to power, at least in its cast of mind: and if one may still speak at all of "Greek cheerfulness," it is the cheerful-

ness of the slave, who has nothing weighty to answer for, nothing great to strive after, and knows nothing past or future to esteem more highly than the present. It was this semblance of "Greek cheerfulness" that so outraged the profound and fearsome natures of the first four centuries of Christianity: to them this womanish flight from earnestness and terror, this cowardly self-contentment with comfortable pleasure, appeared not merely contemptible but as the truly antichristian cast of mind. And it is to their influence that we must ascribe the fact that the view of Greek antiquity which lived on through the centuries clung with almost invincible tenacity to that pale-rose colour of cheerfulness — as if there had never been a sixth century with its birth of tragedy, its Mysteries, its Empedocles and Heraclitus, indeed as if the artworks of the great age did not exist at all, which yet — each one of them — cannot possibly be explained from the soil of such a senile and slavish pleasure in existence and cheerfulness, and point to an entirely different view of the world as the ground of their existence.

If it was last asserted that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage in order thereby, at the same time, to make the spectator truly capable for the first time of judging the drama, there arises the semblance that the older tragic art never escaped from a disproportion in its relation to the spectator: and one might be tempted to praise the radical tendency of Euripides to achieve a fitting relation between work of art and public as an advance beyond Sophocles. But "public" is only a word, and by no means a homogeneous and self-consistent magnitude. Whence should the artist derive the obligation to accommodate himself to a power whose strength lies solely in numbers? And if, by virtue of his gifts and his aims, he feels himself exalted above every single one of these spectators, how could he feel more respect for the collective expression of all these capacities subordinate to him than for the relatively most gifted individual spectator? In

truth no Greek artist treated his public, throughout a long life, with greater audacity and self-sufficiency than Euripides himself: he who, even when the masses threw themselves at his feet, in sublime defiance publicly struck his own tendency in the face, that very tendency by which he had triumphed over the masses. Had this genius possessed the slightest reverence for the pandemonium of the public, he would have collapsed beneath the club-blows of his failures long before the midpoint of his career. From this consideration we see that our expression, that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage in order to make the spectator truly capable of judgment, was only a provisional one, and that we must seek a deeper understanding of his tendency. Conversely, it is known on all sides how Aeschylus and Sophocles, throughout their lives and indeed far beyond them, stood in full possession of popular favour, and how therefore with these predecessors of Euripides there can be no talk whatever of a disproportion between work of art and public. What drove the richly gifted artist, ceaselessly urged on to create, so violently from the path above which shone the sun of the greatest poets' names and the cloudless sky of popular favour? What strange consideration for the spectator led him to set himself against the spectator? How could he, out of too high a regard for his public — disregard his public?

Euripides felt himself — this is the solution of the riddle just set forth — as a poet exalted indeed above the masses, but not above two of his spectators: the masses he brought onto the stage; those two spectators he revered as the only judges capable of judgment and the masters of all his art: following their directions and admonitions, he transferred the whole world of feelings, passions and states which until then had appeared on the spectators' benches as an invisible chorus at every festival performance into the souls of his stage heroes; to their demands he yielded when for these new characters he sought also the new word and the new tone; in their voices alone he heard

the valid verdicts on his work, as well as the encouragement that promised victory, whenever he saw himself condemned once again by the justice of the public.

Of these two spectators the one is — Euripides himself, Euripides *as thinker*, not as poet. Of him one might say that the extraordinary abundance of his critical talent, much as with Lessing, had, if not engendered, then at least continually fertilized a productive artistic secondary drive. With this gift, with all the brightness and nimbleness of his critical thinking, Euripides had sat in the theatre and strained to recognize anew, stroke by stroke, line by line, the masterpieces of his great predecessors, as though they were paintings grown dark. And here there had befallen him what cannot be unexpected to one initiated into the deeper secrets of Aeschylean tragedy: he perceived something incommensurable in every stroke and in every line, a certain deceptive definiteness and at the same time an enigmatic depth, indeed an infinity of background. Even the clearest figure still trailed a comet's tail that seemed to point into the uncertain, the unilluminable. The same twilight lay over the structure of the drama, and especially over the meaning of the chorus. And how doubtful the solution of the ethical problems remained to him! How questionable the treatment of the myths! How uneven the distribution of fortune and misfortune! Even in the language of the older tragedy much was offensive to him, or at least enigmatic; in particular he found too much pomp for simple circumstances, too many tropes and monstrosities for the plainness of the characters. Thus he sat restlessly brooding in the theatre, and he, the spectator, confessed to himself that he did not understand his great predecessors. But if he held understanding to be the true root of all enjoyment and all creation, he had to ask and look about him whether anyone else thought as he did and likewise admitted that incommensurability. But the many, and with them the best individuals, had only a mistrustful smile for him; yet none could

explain to him why, in the face of his misgivings and objections, the great masters were nonetheless in the right. And in this tormented state he found *the other spectator*, who did not comprehend tragedy and therefore did not respect it. In league with him he could dare, out of his isolation, to begin the tremendous struggle against the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles — not with polemical writings, but as a dramatic poet who sets *his* conception of tragedy against the traditional one. —

Before we call this other spectator by name, let us pause here a moment to recall to memory that impression of the discordant and incommensurable in the very nature of Aeschylean tragedy. Let us think of our own bewilderment in the face of the *chorus* and the *tragic hero* of that tragedy, neither of which we knew how to reconcile with our habits any more than with tradition — until we rediscovered that very duality as the origin and essence of Greek tragedy, as the expression of two interwoven artistic drives, *the Apollonian and the Dionysian*.

In accordance with this insight we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus which ever anew discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images. Those choral passages with which tragedy is interlaced are thus, in a sense, the maternal womb of the whole so-called dialogue, that is, of the entire stage-world, the drama proper. In several successive discharges this primal ground of tragedy radiates forth that vision of the drama: which is wholly a dream-appearance and to that extent of an epic nature, but which on the other hand, as the objectification of a Dionysian state, represents not the Apollonian redemption in semblance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his becoming one with primordial being. Thus the drama is the Apollonian embodiment of Dionysian insights and effects, and is thereby separated from the epic as by a tremendous chasm.

The *chorus* of Greek tragedy, the symbol of the entire Dionysianly excited mass, finds its full explanation in this our conception. Whereas we, accustomed to the position of a chorus on the modern stage, especially an operatic chorus, could not at all comprehend how that tragic chorus of the Greeks should be older, more original, indeed more important than the "action" proper — as tradition so clearly told us it was — whereas, again, we could not reconcile with that transmitted high importance and originality why it should nonetheless have been composed only of lowly, serving beings, indeed at first only of goat-footed satyrs, whereas the orchestra before the scene always remained a riddle to us, we have now arrived at the insight that the scene together with the action was basically and originally conceived only as *vision*, that the sole "reality" is precisely the chorus, which generates the vision out of itself and speaks of it with the entire symbolism of dance, of tone and of word. This chorus beholds in its vision its lord and master Dionysus and is therefore eternally the *serving* chorus: it sees how he, the god, suffers and is glorified, and therefore does not itself *act*. In this position, wholly one of service towards the god, it is nevertheless the highest, namely Dionysian, expression of *nature*, and therefore, like nature, it speaks in its enthusiasm oracles and words of wisdom: as the one who *suffers with*, it is at the same time the *wise* one, proclaiming the truth from the heart of the world. Thus arises that fantastic and seemingly so offensive figure of the wise and enraptured satyr, who is at the same time "the simple man" in contrast to the god: image of nature and its strongest drives, indeed their symbol, and at the same time proclaimer of its wisdom and art: musician, poet, dancer, seer of spirits in one person.

Dionysus, the real stage hero and centre of the vision, is, according to this insight and according to tradition, at first, in the very oldest period of tragedy, not truly present, but is only imagined as present: that is, originally tragedy is only "chorus" and not "drama". Later the

attempt was made to show the god as real and to represent the visionary figure together with its transfiguring frame as visible to every eye: with this the "drama" in the narrower sense begins. Now the dithyrambic chorus is given the task of exciting the mood of the listeners Dionysianly to such a degree that, when the tragic hero appears on the stage, they see not, say, the shapelessly masked man, but a visionary figure born, as it were, out of their own rapture. Let us imagine Admetus, in deep brooding, thinking of his recently departed wife Alcestis and wholly consuming himself in the spiritual contemplation of her — how now suddenly a veiled female figure of similar form and similar gait is led towards him: let us imagine his sudden trembling unrest, his tempestuous comparing, his instinctive conviction — and we have an analogue to the feeling with which the Dionysianly excited spectator saw the god stride towards him on the stage, the god with whose sufferings he has already become one. Involuntarily he transferred the entire image of the god, trembling magically before his soul, onto that masked figure and dissolved its reality, as it were, into a ghostly unreality. This is the Apollonian dream-state, in which the world of day veils itself and a new world, clearer, more comprehensible, more moving than that one and yet more shadowlike, is born anew before our eye in perpetual change. Accordingly we recognize in tragedy a thoroughgoing opposition of style: language, colour, mobility, dynamics of speech diverge, in the Dionysian lyric of the chorus on the one hand and in the Apollonian dream-world of the scene on the other, into utterly separate spheres of expression. The Apollonian appearances in which Dionysus objectifies himself are no longer "an eternal sea, a changing weaving, a glowing life", as is the music of the chorus, no longer those forces, only felt and not condensed into image, in which the enraptured servant of Dionysus senses the nearness of the god: now, from the scene, the clarity and firmness of epic shaping speaks to him, now Dionysus no longer speaks through forces but as an epic hero, almost with the language of Homer.

Everything that comes to the surface in the Apollonian part of Greek tragedy, in the dialogue, looks simple, transparent, beautiful. In this sense the dialogue is an image of the Hellene, whose nature reveals itself in the dance, because in the dance the greatest strength is only potential, yet betrays itself in the suppleness and luxuriance of movement. Thus the language of the Sophoclean hero surprises us by its Apollonian determinacy and brightness, so that we fancy we gaze at once into the innermost ground of its being, with some astonishment that the way to this ground is so short. But if we once look away from the character of the hero as it comes to the surface and becomes visible — which is basically nothing more than the light-image cast upon a dark wall, that is, appearance through and through — if we penetrate rather into the myth that projects itself in these bright reflections, then we suddenly experience a phenomenon that stands in an inverse relation to a familiar optical one. When, after a vigorous attempt to look straight at the sun, we turn away blinded, we have dark coloured spots before our eyes, as a remedy, as it were: conversely, those light-image appearances of the Sophoclean hero, in short the Apollonian of the mask, are necessary products of a gaze into the inner and terrible depths of nature, luminous spots, as it were, to heal the gaze wounded by gruesome night. Only in this sense may we believe that we rightly grasp the serious and significant concept of "Greek cheerfulness"; whereas, to be sure, we encounter the falsely understood concept of this cheerfulness, as a state of unendangered comfort, on every path and byway of the present.

The most sorrowful figure of the Greek stage, the ill-starred *Oedipus*, was understood by Sophocles as the noble man who, in spite of his wisdom, is destined for error and misery, but who at the end, through his tremendous suffering, exerts around him a magical, blessing-bestowing power that remains effective even beyond his passing. The noble man does not sin, the profound poet would tell us: through his

action every law, every natural order, indeed the moral world itself may perish, yet precisely through this action a higher magical circle of effects is drawn, which found a new world upon the ruins of the old one overthrown. This is what the poet, insofar as he is at the same time a religious thinker, would tell us: as poet he first shows us a wondrously tangled knot of a lawsuit, which the judge slowly, link by link, unties to his own ruin; the genuinely Hellenic delight in this dialectical solution is so great that a trace of superior cheerfulness thereby comes over the whole work, everywhere breaking the point off the horrifying presuppositions of that lawsuit. In "Oedipus at Colonus" we encounter this same cheerfulness, but raised up into an infinite transfiguration: over against the old man stricken by an excess of misery, who is abandoned to everything that befalls him purely as a *sufferer* — stands the unearthly cheerfulness that descends from the divine sphere and intimates to us that the sorrowful hero, in his purely passive conduct, attains his highest activity, which reaches far beyond his life, whereas his conscious striving and aspiring in his earlier life led him only into passivity. Thus the knot of the Oedipus fable, inextricably entangled to mortal eyes, is slowly unravelled — and the profoundest human joy comes over us at this divine counterpart of dialectic. If with this explanation we have done justice to the poet, it may still be asked whether the content of the myth is thereby exhausted: and here it becomes evident that the poet's whole conception is nothing but precisely that light-image which healing nature holds up before us after a glance into the abyss. Oedipus, the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, Oedipus the solver of the Sphinx's riddle! What does the mysterious triad of these fateful deeds tell us? There is an ancient folk belief, especially Persian, that a wise magus can be born only of incest: which, with regard to the riddle-solving Oedipus who weds his mother, we must at once interpret to mean that wherever, through prophetic and magical powers, the spell of present and future, the rigid law of individuation, and indeed the

very enchantment of nature has been broken, some monstrous violation of nature — such as incest in that case — must have preceded as its cause; for how could one compel nature to surrender her secrets, if not by victoriously resisting her, that is, through the unnatural? This insight I see stamped upon that appalling triad of the fates of Oedipus: the same man who solves the riddle of nature — that double-natured Sphinx — must also, as murderer of his father and husband of his mother, shatter the most sacred orders of nature. Indeed, the myth seems to wish to whisper to us that wisdom, and precisely Dionysian wisdom, is an abomination against nature, that he who through his knowledge plunges nature into the abyss of annihilation must also experience the dissolution of nature in his own person. "The point of wisdom turns against the wise: wisdom is a crime against nature": such terrible sentences the myth cries out to us: but the Hellenic poet touches the sublime and fearsome Memnon's column of the myth like a ray of sunlight, so that it suddenly begins to sound — in Sophoclean melodies!

Against the glory of passivity I now set the glory of activity which illuminates the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus. What Aeschylus the thinker had to tell us here, but what as poet he only lets us divine through his allegorical image, the youthful Goethe knew how to reveal to us in the audacious words of his Prometheus:

"Here I sit, forming men

In my own image,

A race that shall be like me,

To suffer, to weep,

To relish and to rejoice,

And to pay no heed to you,

As I!"

Man, raising himself to the titanic, wins his culture for himself by his own struggle and compels the gods to ally themselves with him, because in his self-won wisdom he holds the existence and the limits of the gods in his hand. Yet the most wonderful thing about that Prometheus poem, which in its fundamental idea is the very hymn of impiety, is the profound Aeschylean striving for *justice*: the immeasurable suffering of the bold "individual" on the one side, and the divine need, indeed the presentiment of a twilight of the gods, on the other, the power of those two worlds of suffering compelling them to reconciliation, to metaphysical oneness — all this recalls in the strongest way the centre and chief tenet of the Aeschylean view of the world, which sees Moira enthroned above gods and men as eternal justice. Considering the astonishing boldness with which Aeschylus places the Olympian world upon his scales of justice, we must bear in mind that the profound Greek had an immovably firm foundation of metaphysical thought in his Mysteries, and that all his sceptical fits could discharge themselves upon the Olympians. The Greek artist in particular, when contemplating these deities, felt an obscure sense of mutual dependence: and it is precisely in the Prometheus of Aeschylus that this feeling is symbolized. The titanic artist found within himself the defiant belief that he could create men and at least destroy Olympian gods: and this through his higher wisdom, for which, to be sure, he was compelled to atone by eternal suffering. The glorious "ability" of the great genius, for which even eternal suffering is too small a price, the bitter pride of the *artist* — that is the content and soul of Aeschylean poetry, while Sophocles in his Oedipus strikes up, as a prelude, the victory song of the *saint*. But even with that interpretation which Aeschylus gave the myth, its astonishing depth of terror has not been fathomed: rather, the artist's delight in becoming, the self-sufficiency of artistic creation defying every calamity, is but a

bright image of clouds and sky mirrored upon a black lake of sorrow. The Prometheus legend is an original possession of the entire Aryan community of peoples and a document of their gift for the profoundly tragic; indeed it may not be without probability that this myth holds for the Aryan character the very same characteristic significance that the myth of the Fall holds for the Semitic, and that between the two myths there exists a degree of kinship like that between brother and sister. The presupposition of that Prometheus myth is the extravagant value which a naive humanity attaches to *fire* as the true palladium of every ascending culture: but that man should freely dispose of fire, and not merely receive it as a gift from heaven, as the kindling lightning bolt or the warming blaze of the sun, appeared to those contemplative primitive men as a sacrilege, as a robbery of divine nature. And so the very first philosophical problem sets up a painful, insoluble contradiction between man and god and shoves it like a boulder against the gate of every culture. The best and highest that mankind can partake of it attains through a sacrilege, and must then in turn accept its consequences, namely the whole flood of sufferings and sorrows with which the offended celestials must visit the nobly aspiring race of men — must: a bitter thought which, through the *dignity* it confers upon sacrilege, contrasts strangely with the Semitic myth of the Fall, in which curiosity, deceitful pretence, seducibility, lasciviousness, in short a series of chiefly feminine affections, are regarded as the origin of evil. What distinguishes the Aryan conception is the sublime view of *active sin* as the truly Promethean virtue: with which at the same time the ethical foundation of pessimistic tragedy is found, as the *justification* of human evil, and indeed both of human guilt and of the suffering it incurs. The calamity in the essence of things — which the contemplative Aryan is not inclined to quibble away — the contradiction at the heart of the world reveals itself to him as a confusion of different worlds, for example a divine and a human one, each of which is in the right as an individual, but as a

single one beside another must suffer for its individuation. In the heroic urge of the individual towards the universal, in the attempt to stride beyond the spell of individuation and to want to be the *one* world-being itself, he suffers in himself the primordial contradiction hidden in things, that is, he commits sacrilege and suffers. Thus by the Aryans sacrilege is understood as man, by the Semites sin as woman, just as the original sacrilege is committed by man, the original sin by woman. Besides, the chorus of witches says:

Whoever understands that innermost core of the Prometheus legend — namely the necessity of sacrilege imposed upon the titanically striving individual — must at the same time also feel the un-Apollonian character of this pessimistic conception: for Apollo seeks to bring individual beings to rest precisely by drawing boundary lines between them and by ever again reminding them of these, as the holiest laws of the world, with his demands for self-knowledge and measure. But lest, under this Apollonian tendency, form should freeze into Egyptian rigidity and coldness, lest the movement of the whole lake should die away in the effort to prescribe to the single wave its course and its domain, the high tide of the Dionysian from time to time destroys again all those little circles in which the one-sidedly Apollonian "will" seeks to confine Hellenism. That suddenly swelling tide of the Dionysian then takes the single little wave-crests of individuals upon its back, as the brother of Prometheus, the Titan Atlas, takes the earth. This titanic urge to become, as it were, the Atlas of all individuals and to carry them on a broad back higher and higher, farther and farther, is what the Promethean and the Dionysian have in common. In this respect the Aeschylean Prometheus is a Dionysian mask, while in that profound striving for justice mentioned earlier Aeschylus betrays to the discerning his paternal descent from Apollo, the god of individuation and of the boundaries of justice. And so the dual nature of the Aeschylean Prometheus, his at once Dionysian and Apollonian nature,

might be expressed in a conceptual formula thus — to the astonishment of the logician Euripides: "all that exists is just and unjust and equally justified in both."

That is your world! That is called a world! —

It is an incontestable tradition that Greek tragedy in its oldest form had as its subject only the sufferings of Dionysus, and that for a considerable time the sole stage hero present was Dionysus himself. But it may be asserted with equal certainty that never, right up to Euripides, did Dionysus cease to be the tragic hero; rather, all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage, Prometheus, Oedipus and so on, are merely masks of that original hero Dionysus. That behind all these masks a deity lies hidden is the one essential reason for the so often marvelled-at typical „ideality" of those celebrated figures. Someone, I know not who, has asserted that all individuals, as individuals, are comic and hence untragic: from which it might be inferred that the Greeks simply *could* not endure individuals on the tragic stage. And indeed they seem to have felt thus: just as, in general, that Platonic distinction and valuation of the „Idea" as opposed to the „idol", to the copy, is deeply rooted in the Hellenic nature. To avail ourselves of Plato's terminology, however, one would have to speak of the tragic figures of the Hellenic stage thus: the one truly real Dionysus appears in a multiplicity of figures, in the mask of a struggling hero and, as it were, entangled in the net of the individual will. As the god who now appears speaks and acts, he resembles an erring, striving, suffering individual: and that he *appears* at all with this epic definiteness and clarity is the work of Apollo, the interpreter of dreams, who interprets to the chorus its Dionysian state through that symbolic appearance. In truth, however, that hero is the suffering Dionysus of the Mysteries, that god who experiences in himself the sufferings of individuation, of whom wondrous myths tell how as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and is now, in this state, worshipped as Zagreus:

whereby it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth and stone, and that we are therefore to regard the state of individuation as the source and primal ground of all suffering, as something in itself reprehensible. From the smile of this Dionysus arose the Olympian gods, from his tears arose men. In that existence as a dismembered god Dionysus has the double nature of a cruel, savage daemon and of a mild, gentle-hearted ruler. The hope of the epoptae, however, was directed toward a rebirth of Dionysus, which we must now, full of presentiment, comprehend as the end of individuation: it was for this coming third Dionysus that the roaring song of jubilation of the epoptae resounded. And only in this hope is there a ray of joy upon the countenance of the world, torn asunder and shattered into individuals: as the myth portrays through Demeter, sunk in eternal mourning, who *rejoices* again for the first time when she is told that she may give birth to Dionysus *once more*. In the views we have cited we already have assembled all the constituents of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, and together with them *the mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of all that exists, the view of individuation as the primal ground of evil, of beauty and art as the joyful hope that the spell of individuation may be broken, as the presentiment of a oneness restored.

To expel that original and all-powerful Dionysian element from tragedy and to build it up anew and purely upon un-Dionysian art, morality and world-view — this is the tendency of Euripides that now reveals itself to us in bright illumination.

Euripides himself, in the evening of his life, set before his contemporaries in a myth, with the utmost emphasis, the question of the worth and significance of this tendency. May the Dionysian exist at all? Ought it not to be rooted out by force from Hellenic soil? Certainly, the poet tells us, if only it were possible: but the god Dionysus is too

mighty; the most sensible opponent — like Pentheus in the "Bacchae" — is unexpectedly bewitched by him and afterwards runs, under this enchantment, to his doom. The judgement of the two old men, Cadmus and Tiresias, seems also to be the judgement of the aged poet: that the reflection of the cleverest individuals does not overturn those ancient popular traditions, that eternally self-propagating worship of Dionysus; indeed, that it is fitting, in the face of such wondrous powers, to show at least a diplomatically cautious participation: whereby it nevertheless remains possible that the god may take offence at so lukewarm an involvement and in the end transform the diplomat — as here Cadmus — into a dragon. This is what a poet tells us who had resisted Dionysus with heroic strength through a long life — only to close his career at its end with a glorification of his adversary and with a suicide, like one seized by vertigo who, merely to escape the dreadful, no longer bearable whirl, hurls himself down from the tower. That tragedy is a protest against the practicability of his tendency; alas, and it had already been put into practice! The wondrous thing had happened: when the poet recanted, his tendency had already triumphed. Dionysus had already been chased from the tragic stage, and indeed by a daemonic power speaking through Euripides. Euripides too was, in a certain sense, only a mask: the deity that spoke through him was not Dionysus, nor Apollo either, but an altogether newborn daemon, called *Socrates*. This is the new opposition: *the Dionysian and the Socratic*, and the artwork of Greek tragedy perished upon it. Though Euripides may now seek to console us by his recantation, he does not succeed: the most glorious temple lies in ruins; what use to us is the lament of the destroyer and his confession that it was the most beautiful of all temples? And even that Euripides has, by way of punishment, been turned into a dragon by the art critics of all ages — whom could this pitiful compensation satisfy?

Let us now draw near to that *Socratic* tendency with which Euripides combated and conquered Aeschylean tragedy.

What goal — so we must now ask ourselves — could the Euripidean intention to found drama solely upon the un-Dionysian possibly have had, in the highest ideality of its execution? What form of drama still remained, if it was not to be born from the womb of music, in that mysterious twilight of the Dionysian? Only *the dramatized epic*: in which Apollonian domain of art, to be sure, the *tragic* effect is unattainable. Here the content of the events portrayed does not matter; indeed, I would maintain that it would have been impossible for Goethe, in his projected "Nausicaa", to make the suicide of that idyllic being — which was to fill the fifth act — tragically moving: so uncommonly great is the power of the epic-Apollonian that it enchants the most terrible things before our eyes with that delight in semblance and that redemption through semblance. The poet of the dramatized epic can no more fuse completely with his images than can the epic rhapsode: it is still always a calmly unmoved contemplation, gazing out of wide-open eyes, that sees the images *before* it. The actor in this dramatized epic still remains, at the deepest ground, a narrating rhapsode; the consecration of the inner dreamer lies upon all his actions, so that he is never wholly an actor. Only by this path can we approach with understanding Goethe's *Iphigenia*, in which we must revere the highest dramatic-epic birth.

How, then, does the Euripidean play relate to this ideal of the purely Apollonian drama? As the younger rhapsode relates to the solemn rhapsode of olden times — that younger one who describes his nature thus in Plato's "Ion": "when I say something sad, my eyes fill with tears; but if what I say is terrible and dreadful, then the hairs of my head stand on end with horror, and my heart pounds." Here we notice nothing more of that epic lostness in semblance, of the passionless coolness of the true actor, who precisely in his highest activity is

wholly semblance and delight in semblance. Euripides is the actor with the pounding heart, with the hair standing on end; as Socratic thinker he draws up the plan, as passionate actor he carries it out. A pure artist he is neither in the planning nor in the carrying out. Thus the Euripidean drama is a thing at once cool and fiery, equally capable of freezing and of burning; it is impossible for it to attain the Apollonian effect of the epic, while on the other hand it has detached itself as far as possible from the Dionysian elements, and now, in order to have any effect at all, it needs new means of excitement, which can no longer lie within the two sole artistic drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. These means of excitement are cool paradoxical *thoughts* — in place of Apollonian contemplations — and fiery *affects* — in place of Dionysian raptures — and indeed thoughts and affects that are highly real, true to nature, in no way dipped in the ether of art.

If, then, we have recognized this much, that Euripides did not succeed at all in founding drama on the Apollonian alone, that his Apollonian tendency rather strayed into a naturalistic and inartistic one, we may now venture to draw nearer to the essence of *aesthetic Socratism*, whose supreme law runs roughly thus: "everything must be intelligible in order to be beautiful"; as a parallel to the Socratic "only he who knows is virtuous." With this canon in hand Euripides measured every single thing and rectified it according to this principle: the language, the characters, the dramaturgical structure, the choral music. What, in comparison with Sophoclean tragedy, we are so often wont to count against Euripides as poetic deficiency and regression is for the most part the product of that penetrating critical process, of that audacious intelligibility. Let the Euripidean *prologue* serve us as an example of the productiveness of that rationalistic method. Nothing can be more repugnant to our stagecraft than the prologue in the drama of Euripides. That a single person stepping forward at the opening of the play should relate who he is, what precedes the action, what has happened

up to now, indeed what will happen in the course of the play: this a modern playwright would call a wanton and unpardonable renunciation of the effect of suspense. For one knows everything that is going to happen; who will want to wait and see it actually happen? — since here there is by no means the thrilling relation of a prophetic dream to a reality that comes to pass later. Euripides reflected quite otherwise. The effect of tragedy never rested on epic suspense, on the enticing uncertainty as to what would happen now and afterwards, but rather on those great rhetorical-lyrical scenes in which the passion and the dialectic of the chief hero swelled into a broad and mighty torrent. Everything prepared for pathos, not for action: and whatever did not prepare for pathos was held to be objectionable. But what most hinders the pleasurable surrender to such scenes is a link missing for the hearer, a gap in the fabric of the antecedent story: so long as the hearer must still work out what this or that person signifies, what presuppositions this or that conflict of inclinations and intentions has, his full immersion in the suffering and doing of the chief characters, the breathless suffering-with and fearing-with, is not yet possible. Aeschylean-Sophoclean tragedy employed the most ingenious artistic means to put into the spectator's hands in the first scenes, as if by chance, all those threads necessary for understanding: a trait in which that noble artistry proves itself which, as it were, masks the *necessary* formal element and lets it appear as something accidental. Nevertheless Euripides believed he observed that during those first scenes the spectator was in a peculiar unrest, trying to work out the arithmetic problem of the antecedent story, so that the poetic beauties and the pathos of the exposition were lost on him. Therefore he placed the prologue even before the exposition and put it into the mouth of a person who could be trusted: a deity often had, as it were, to guarantee the course of the tragedy to the public and to remove every doubt as to the reality of the myth: in a manner similar to that in which Descartes could prove the reality of the empirical

world only by appealing to the truthfulness of God and His incapacity to lie. Euripides needs this same divine truthfulness once more at the close of his drama, in order to assure the public of the future of his heroes; this is the task of the notorious deus ex machina. Between the epic preview and the epic prospect lies the dramatic-lyrical present, the "drama" proper.

Thus Euripides as a poet is above all the echo of his conscious insights; and precisely this gives him so memorable a position in the history of Greek art. With regard to his critical-productive creation he must often have felt as though he were to bring to life for the drama the beginning of the treatise of Anaxagoras, whose first words run: "In the beginning all things were together; then came the understanding and created order." And if Anaxagoras with his "Nous" appeared among the philosophers like the first sober man among nothing but drunkards, Euripides too may have conceived his relation to the other poets of tragedy under a similar image. So long as the sole orderer and ruler of the universe, the Nous, was still excluded from artistic creation, all things were still together in a chaotic primordial porridge: thus Euripides had to judge, thus he had to condemn the "drunken" poets as the first "sober" one. What Sophocles said of Aeschylus, that he did what was right, though unconsciously, was certainly not said in the spirit of Euripides, who would have granted only so much: that Aeschylus, *because* he created unconsciously, created what was wrong. The divine Plato too speaks of the creative faculty of the poet, insofar as it is not conscious insight, for the most part only ironically, and sets it on a level with the gift of the soothsayer and the interpreter of dreams; since the poet, he says, is not capable of composing until he has become unconscious and no understanding dwells in him any longer. Euripides undertook, as Plato too undertook, to show the world the counterpart of the "unintelligent" poet: his aesthetic principle "everything must be conscious in order to be beauti-

ful" is, as I said, the parallel to the Socratic "everything must be conscious in order to be good." Accordingly Euripides may count for us as the poet of aesthetic Socratism. Socrates, however, was that *second spectator* who did not comprehend the older tragedy and therefore did not respect it; in league with him Euripides dared to be the herald of a new artistic creation. If the older tragedy perished by this, then aesthetic Socratism is the murderous principle: but insofar as the struggle was directed against the Dionysian of the older art, we recognize in Socrates the adversary of Dionysus, the new Orpheus who rises up against Dionysus and, although destined to be torn to pieces by the Maenads of the Athenian court of justice, nevertheless compels the overmighty god himself to flee: who, as on that former occasion when he fled from Lycurgus, king of the Edonians, saved himself in the depths of the sea, namely in the mystical floods of a secret cult that gradually overspread the whole world.

That Socrates stood in a close relation of tendency to Euripides did not escape the notice of contemporary antiquity; and the most eloquent expression of this happy instinct for the scent is that tale which circulated in Athens, that Socrates was wont to help Euripides in his poetizing. Both names were spoken in one breath by the adherents of the „good old days“ whenever it came to enumerating the seducers of the people in the present: on whose influence it depended, they said, that the old Marathonian, square-built soundness of body and soul was falling more and more a sacrifice to a dubious enlightenment, amid a progressive withering of bodily and spiritual powers. In this key, half in indignation, half in contempt, Aristophanic comedy is wont to speak of those men, to the dismay of the moderns, who are indeed glad to abandon Euripides, but cannot sufficiently wonder that Socrates should appear in Aristophanes as the first and foremost *Sophist*, as the mirror and epitome of all sophistic endeavours: whereby the one consolation afforded is to pillory Aristophanes him-

self as a dissolute, lying Alcibiades of poetry. Without here defending the profound instincts of Aristophanes against such attacks, I continue to demonstrate, out of the ancient feeling itself, the close affinity of Socrates and Euripides; in which sense it should be recalled in particular that Socrates, as an opponent of tragic art, refrained from attending tragedy, and appeared among the spectators only when a new play of Euripides was being performed. Most famous, however, is the close juxtaposition of the two names in the Delphic oracle, which designated Socrates as the wisest of men, but at the same time delivered the judgement that to Euripides was due the second prize in the contest of wisdom.

Third in this scale of rank was named Sophocles: he who could boast, against Aeschylus, that he did what was right, and did so because he *knew* what was right. Evidently it is precisely the degree of clarity of this *knowing* that distinguishes those three men in common as the three „knowing ones" of their age.

But the sharpest word for that new and unheard-of esteem for knowledge and insight was spoken by Socrates when he found himself to be the only one who would admit to himself that he *knew nothing*; whereas, on his critical pilgrimage through Athens, calling upon the greatest statesmen, orators, poets and artists, he everywhere encountered the conceit of knowledge. With astonishment he recognized that all those celebrities were without correct and certain insight even into their own calling, and pursued it only by instinct. „Only by instinct": with this expression we touch the heart and centre of the Socratic tendency. With it Socratism condemns existing art as much as existing ethics: wherever it directs its probing gaze, it sees the lack of insight and the power of illusion, and from this lack it infers the inner perversity and reprehensibility of what exists. From this one point Socrates believed he must correct existence: he, the individual, with an air of disdain and superiority, as the forerunner of

a wholly different kind of culture, art and morality, steps into a world whose hem we would count it our greatest good fortune to catch reverently at.

This is the tremendous misgiving that seizes us each time in the face of Socrates and that incites us again and again to recognize the sense and purpose of this most questionable phenomenon of antiquity. Who is this that may dare, as a single individual, to negate the Greek nature, which, as Homer, Pindar and Aeschylus, as Phidias, as Pericles, as Pythia and Dionysus, as the deepest abyss and the loftiest height, is assured of our astonished adoration? What daemonic power is it that may make so bold as to pour this magic potion into the dust? What demigod is it to whom the spirit-chorus of the noblest of mankind must cry out: „Woe! Woe! Thou hast destroyed it, the beautiful world, with mighty fist; it falls, it crumbles!"

A key to the nature of Socrates is offered us by that wondrous phenomenon which is called the „daimonion of Socrates". In particular situations, in which his tremendous understanding began to waver, he gained a firm hold through a divine voice which made itself heard at such moments. This voice, whenever it comes, always *dissuades*. Instinctive wisdom shows itself in this wholly abnormal nature only in order to step *obstructively* here and there in the way of conscious knowing. Whereas in all productive men it is precisely instinct that is the creative-affirmative force, and consciousness that behaves critically and dissuasively: in Socrates instinct becomes the critic, consciousness the creator — a veritable monstrosity per defectum! And indeed we perceive here a monstrous defectus of every mystical disposition, so that Socrates might be designated the specific *non-mystic*, in whom the logical nature is developed, through a superfoetation, as excessively as is that instinctive wisdom in the mystic. On the other hand, however, it was entirely denied to that logical drive which appears in Socrates to turn against itself: in this unfettered onrush it

displays a force of nature such as we encounter, to our shuddering surprise, only in the very greatest instinctive powers. Whoever has felt from the Platonic writings even a breath of that divine naivety and sureness of the Socratic direction of life also feels how the tremendous driving wheel of logical Socratism is in motion, as it were, *behind* Socrates, and how this must be viewed through Socrates as through a shadow. That he himself, however, had some presentiment of this relation is expressed in the dignified earnestness with which he asserted his divine calling everywhere, and even before his judges. To refute him in this was at bottom as impossible as to approve of his instinct-dissolving influence. In this insoluble conflict, once he had been brought before the forum of the Greek state, only one single form of condemnation was called for: banishment; as something thoroughly enigmatic, unclassifiable, inexplicable, he might have been shown over the border without any posterity being in the right to accuse the Athenians of a shameful deed. But that death, and not merely banishment, was pronounced upon him, Socrates himself seems to have brought about, with perfect clarity and without the natural shudder before death: he went to his death with that calm with which, according to Plato's description, he leaves the symposium as the last of the revellers in the early dawn, to begin a new day; while behind him, on the benches and on the floor, his drowsy table-companions remain behind, to dream of Socrates, the true eroticist. *The dying Socrates* became the new, never before beheld ideal of noble Greek youth: above all others the typical Hellenic youth, Plato, prostrated himself before this image with all the ardent devotion of his fiery soul.

Let us now imagine the one great Cyclops eye of Socrates turned upon tragedy, that eye in which the sweet madness of artistic rapture had never glowed; let us imagine how that eye was denied the power to gaze with pleasure into the Dionysian abysses — what, then, must it really have beheld in the “sublime and highly lauded” tragic art, as

Plato calls it? Something thoroughly irrational, with causes that seemed to be without effects and effects that seemed to be without causes, and the whole so motley and manifold besides that it must be repugnant to a level-headed disposition, while for excitable and sensitive souls it was dangerous tinder. We know which single genre of poetry he comprehended, the *Aesopian fable*: and this surely happened with that smiling accommodation with which the honest, good Gellert sings the praise of poetry in the fable of the bee and the hen:

But now it seemed to Socrates that tragic art did not even "tell the truth": quite apart from the fact that it addresses itself to him who "does not possess much understanding", and thus not to the philosopher: a twofold reason for keeping away from it. Like Plato, he reckoned it among the flattering arts, which represent only the agreeable, not the useful, and therefore demanded of his disciples abstinence and strict separation from such unphilosophical allurements; with such success that the youthful tragic poet Plato first of all burned his poems in order to be able to become a pupil of Socrates. But where invincible natural gifts struggled against the Socratic maxims, their power, together with the impact of that tremendous character, was still great enough to force poetry itself into new positions hitherto unknown.

An example of this is the Plato just mentioned: he who, in the condemnation of tragedy and of art in general, certainly did not lag behind the naive cynicism of his master, was nevertheless compelled, out of sheer artistic necessity, to create an art form that is inwardly akin precisely to those existing art forms which he had rejected. The chief reproach that Plato had to make against the older art — that it is the imitation of a semblance-image, and thus belongs to a sphere still lower than the empirical world — must above all not be directed against the new work of art: and so we see Plato striving to go beyond reality and to represent the idea underlying that pseudo-reality. But in

this way Plato the thinker had arrived by a detour at the very place where he had always been at home as a poet, and from which Sophocles and the whole of the older art had solemnly protested against that reproach. If tragedy had absorbed into itself all earlier genres of art, the same may in turn be said, in an eccentric sense, of the Platonic dialogue, which, engendered by a mixture of all existing styles and forms, hovers midway between narrative, lyric and drama, between prose and poetry, and has thereby also broken through the strict older law of unity of linguistic form; along which path the *Cynic* writers went still further, who, in the utmost motleyness of style, in wavering back and forth between prosaic and metrical forms, also attained the literary image of the "raving Socrates" whom they were wont to enact in life. The Platonic dialogue was, as it were, the boat in which the shipwrecked older poetry saved itself together with all its children: crowded together into a narrow space and anxiously submissive to the one helmsman Socrates, they now sailed into a new world, which could never gaze its fill at the fantastic spectacle of this procession. Truly, Plato gave to all posterity the model of a new art form, the model of the *novel*: which may be described as the infinitely heightened Aesopian fable, in which poetry lives in a rank relation to dialectical philosophy similar to that in which, for many centuries, this same philosophy stood to theology: namely as ancilla. This was the new position of poetry, into which Plato forced it under the pressure of the daemonic Socrates.

Here *philosophical thought* overgrows art and compels it to cling closely to the trunk of dialectic. The *Apollonian* tendency has pupated in logical schematism: just as we had to perceive something corresponding in Euripides, and in addition a translation of the *Dionysian* into naturalistic affect. Socrates, the dialectical hero of the Platonic drama, reminds us of the kindred nature of the Euripidean hero, who must defend his actions by argument and counter-argument and thereby so

often runs the risk of forfeiting our tragic pity: for who could fail to recognize the *optimistic* element in the essence of dialectic, which celebrates its jubilee in every conclusion and can breathe only in cool clarity and consciousness: the optimistic element which, once it has penetrated into tragedy, must gradually overgrow its Dionysian regions and necessarily drive it to self-destruction — to the death-leap into bourgeois drama. One need only call to mind the consequences of the Socratic propositions: "Virtue is knowledge; sin is committed only out of ignorance; the virtuous man is the happy man": in these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of tragedy. For now the virtuous hero must be a dialectician, now there must be a necessary, visible bond between virtue and knowledge, faith and morality, now the transcendental solution of justice in Aeschylus is degraded to the shallow and insolent principle of "poetic justice" with its customary deus ex machina.

How, in the face of this new Socratic-optimistic stage-world, do the *chorus* and, in general, the whole musical-Dionysian substratum of tragedy now appear? As something accidental, as a reminiscence of the origin of tragedy that could well be dispensed with; whereas we have in fact come to see that the chorus can be understood only as the *cause* of tragedy and of the tragic in general. Already in Sophocles that embarrassment with regard to the chorus begins — an important sign that already in him the Dionysian ground of tragedy is beginning to crumble. He ventures to put the chorus to an entirely new use, as a fellow participant in the action, as an actor, thus, as it were, to lift it out of the orchestra into the scene: whereby, to be sure, its essence is utterly destroyed, even though Aristotle gives his approval precisely to this conception of the chorus. That displacement of the chorus's position, which Sophocles in any case recommended through his practice and, according to tradition, even through a treatise, is the first step towards the *annihilation* of the chorus, whose phases follow one

upon another with terrifying rapidity in Euripides, Agathon and New Comedy. Optimistic dialectic drives *music* out of tragedy with the scourge of its syllogisms: that is, it destroys the essence of tragedy, which can be interpreted solely as a manifestation and embodiment in images of Dionysian states, as the visible symbolization of music, as the dream-world of a Dionysian intoxication.

If, then, we must even assume an anti-Dionysian tendency already at work before Socrates, which merely gains in him an unprecedentedly grandiose expression: we must not shrink back from the question of what such a phenomenon as that of Socrates points to: a phenomenon which, in view of the Platonic dialogues, we are not able to comprehend as a merely dissolving, negative power. And however certainly the most immediate effect of the Socratic impulse tended towards a disintegration of Dionysian tragedy, a profound experience in the life of Socrates himself compels us to ask whether between Socratism and art there *necessarily* exists only an antipodal relation, and whether the birth of an "artistic Socrates" is in itself something altogether self-contradictory.

For that despotic logician had, now and then, in the face of art, the feeling of a gap, a void, a half-reproach, a duty perhaps neglected. Often, as he tells his friends in prison, one and the same dream-apparition came to him, which always said the same thing: "Socrates, practise music!" Up to his last days he soothes himself with the opinion that his philosophizing is the highest art of the Muses, and does not really believe that a deity would remind him of that "common, popular music." At last, in prison, in order to unburden his conscience entirely, he consents even to practise that music which he held in low esteem. And in this frame of mind he composes a prooemium to Apollo and puts a few Aesopian fables into verse. It was something akin to the daemonic warning voice that urged him to these exercises; it was his Apollonian insight that, like a barbarian king, he did not

understand a noble image of a god and was in danger of sinning against a deity — through his not understanding. That word of the Socratic dream-apparition is the only sign of any misgiving about the limits of the logical nature: perhaps — so he must have asked himself — what is not intelligible to me is not therefore also unintelligent? Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is banished? Perhaps art is even a necessary correlative and supplement of science?

In the spirit of these last presentient questions it must now, in conclusion, be declared how the influence of Socrates, down to this very moment, indeed into all futurity, has spread out over posterity like a shadow that grows ever larger in the evening sun; how that influence again and again compels the re-creation of *art* — and indeed of art in the already metaphysical, broadest and deepest sense — and, by its own infinity, also guarantees the infinity of art.

Before this could be recognized, before the innermost dependence of every art upon the Greeks, the Greeks from Homer to Socrates, had been convincingly demonstrated, it had to go with us and these Greeks as it went with the Athenians and Socrates. Almost every age and stage of culture has at some time sought, with deep ill-humour, to free itself from the Greeks, because in their presence everything one had achieved oneself, everything seemingly quite original and most sincerely admired, suddenly seemed to lose colour and life and to shrivel into a botched copy, indeed into a caricature. And so, ever anew, the hearty rancour breaks forth against that presumptuous little people which dared to brand everything not native to it, for all time, as "barbarian": who are they, one asked oneself, who, though they can show only an ephemeral historical splendour, only ridiculously narrow institutions, only a dubious soundness of morals, and are even marked by ugly vices, nevertheless lay claim to that dignity and special rank among the peoples which belongs to genius among the

masses? Unfortunately one was not so fortunate as to find the cup of hemlock with which such a being could simply be done away with: for all the poison that envy, calumny and rancour bred within themselves did not suffice to destroy that self-sufficient magnificence. And so one is ashamed of the Greeks and afraid of them; unless someone should esteem truth above all things and thus dare to confess to himself this truth as well: that the Greeks, as charioteers, hold in their hands our culture and every culture, but that almost always chariot and horses are of too poor a stuff and unworthy of the glory of their drivers, who then think it a jest to drive such a team into the abyss: over which they themselves leap, with the bound of Achilles and the beauty of a rainbow.

To demonstrate this leading position of Socrates, it suffices to recognize in him the type of a form of existence unheard of before him, the type of *theoretical man*, into whose meaning and goal it is our final task to gain insight. Theoretical man, too, like the artist, takes an infinite satisfaction in what exists, and, like the artist, is shielded by that satisfaction from the practical ethics of pessimism and from its Lynceus eyes, which shine only in the dark. For whereas the artist, at every unveiling of truth, always remains clinging with enraptured gaze only to what, even now, after the unveiling, still remains veil, theoretical man delights and finds satisfaction in the cast-off veil, and has the highest goal of his pleasure in the process of an unveiling that is ever successful, accomplished by his own strength. There would be no science if it cared only for that *one* naked goddess and for nothing else. For then its disciples would have to feel like men who wished to dig a hole straight through the earth, each of whom sees that, with the greatest and lifelong exertion, he is able to dig through only a very small piece of the tremendous depth, which before his eyes is filled in again by the labour of the next man, so that a third seems to do well if he chooses, on his own account, a new spot for his attempts at bor-

ing. If now someone proves convincingly that the antipodal goal cannot be reached by this direct path, who will still wish to go on working in the old depths, unless he has meanwhile let himself be content with finding precious stones or discovering laws of nature? Therefore Lessing, the most honest of theoretical men, dared to declare that he cared more for the seeking of truth than for truth itself: whereby the fundamental secret of science was laid bare, to the astonishment, indeed the vexation, of the scientific. Now, to be sure, beside this isolated insight, as an excess of honesty if not of exuberance, there stands a profound *illusory notion*, which first came into the world in the person of Socrates: that unshakable faith that thought, following the guiding thread of causality, reaches down into the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it. This sublime metaphysical illusion is bestowed upon science as an instinct, and leads it again and again to its limits, where it must undergo its reversal into *art*: *which is really what this mechanism is aiming at*.

If we now look upon Socrates by the torch of this thought, he appears to us as the first who could not only live by the hand of that instinct of science, but — what is far more — also die by it: and therefore the image of *the dying Socrates*, as of the man raised above the fear of death through knowledge and reasons, is the coat of arms that hangs above the entrance gate of science, reminding everyone of its vocation, namely to make existence appear comprehensible and thereby justified: to which end, to be sure, when reasons do not suffice, *myth* too must finally serve, which I have just now designated as the necessary consequence, indeed as the purpose, of science.

Whoever once makes vivid to himself how, after Socrates, the mystagogue of science, one school of philosophers succeeds another, like wave upon wave; how a never-imagined universality of the greed for knowledge, across the widest reaches of the cultured world, and as

the true task for everyone of higher ability, led science out onto the high seas, from which it has never since been wholly driven back; how through this universality a common net of thought was for the first time stretched over the entire globe, indeed with prospects onto the lawfulness of a whole solar system; whoever calls all this to mind, together with the astonishingly lofty pyramid of knowledge of the present day, cannot keep himself from seeing in Socrates the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history. For if one were to imagine this whole incalculable sum of force, which has been expended for that world-tendency, applied *not* in the service of knowing but to the practical, that is, egoistic aims of individuals and peoples, then in universal wars of annihilation and continual migrations of peoples the instinctive lust for life would probably have been so weakened that, suicide having become habitual, the individual might perhaps feel the last remnant of a sense of duty when, like the inhabitant of the Fiji Islands, he strangles his parents as a son, his friend as a friend: a practical pessimism that could even engender a gruesome ethic of genocide out of pity — which, moreover, is present and has been present everywhere in the world where art has not appeared in some form or other, especially as religion and science, as the remedy and defence against that pestilential breath.

In the face of this practical pessimism Socrates is the archetype of the theoretical optimist, who, in the faith we have described in the fathomability of the nature of things, ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a universal medicine and understands error as evil in itself. To penetrate into those grounds and to sever true knowledge from semblance and from error seemed to Socratic man the noblest, even the only truly human calling: just as that mechanism of concepts, judgments and inferences was, from Socrates onward, prized above all other faculties as the highest activity and the most admirable gift of nature. Even the most sublime moral deeds, the stirrings

of pity, of self-sacrifice, of heroism, and that hard-won calm of the sea of the soul which the Apollonian Greek called sophrosyne, were derived by Socrates and his like-minded successors, down to the present day, from the dialectic of knowledge, and accordingly designated as teachable. Whoever has experienced in himself the pleasure of a Socratic insight and feels how it seeks, in ever wider rings, to encompass the whole world of appearances, will thenceforth feel no spur that could urge him towards existence more keenly than the craving to complete that conquest and to spin the net impenetrably tight. To one so disposed the Platonic Socrates then appears as the teacher of an entirely new form of „Greek cheerfulness" and blissfulness in existence, which seeks to discharge itself in actions and will find this discharge mostly in maieutic and educative influences upon noble youths, for the purpose of ultimately begetting the genius.

But now science, spurred on by its powerful illusion, hastens irresistibly to its limits, where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck. For the periphery of the circle of science has infinitely many points, and while it is not at all yet to be foreseen how the circle could ever be completely measured out, the noble and gifted man nevertheless, even before the middle of his existence and inevitably, comes upon such boundary points of the periphery, where he stares into what cannot be illumined. When he here sees to his horror how logic at these limits coils round upon itself and at last bites its own tail — then the new form of insight breaks through, *tragic insight*, which, merely to be endured, needs art as protection and remedy.

If we look, with eyes strengthened and refreshed by the Greeks, upon the highest spheres of that world which floods around us, we perceive the greed of insatiable optimistic knowledge, which appears in Socrates as its prototype, turned into tragic resignation and need of art: while, to be sure, this same greed, on its lower levels, must express itself as hostile to art and must above all inwardly abhor Dionysian-

tragic art, as was shown by way of example in the struggle of Socratism against Aeschylean tragedy.

Here, then, with stirred hearts, we knock at the gates of the present and the future: will that „reversal“ lead to ever new configurations of the genius, and precisely of *the music-making Socrates*? Will the net of art spread over existence, be it also under the name of religion or of science, be woven ever more firmly and delicately, or is it destined to be torn to shreds amid the restlessly barbaric bustle and whirl that now calls itself the „present“? — Anxious, yet not disconsolate, we stand aside for a little while, as contemplative ones who are permitted to be witnesses of those tremendous struggles and transitions. Alas! It is the magic of these struggles that whoever beholds them must also fight them!

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