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The Dionysian Worldview

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Translated from the German by Blue Energy People, Inc. (SUN), with AI assistance from Claude Opus 5.5.

Nietzsche Source, eKGWB/DW (German original, 1870)

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The Wild, Ecstatic Way of Seeing the World

1.

The Greeks spoke out the secret teachings of their way of seeing the world through their gods, and at the same time they kept those teachings hidden. They named two gods as the double source of their art: Apollo and Dionysus. In the world of art, these names stand for two opposite styles. These styles almost always go side by side, struggling with each other. Only once, at the moment when the Greek "Will" was in full bloom, did they seem to melt together into one work of art: the tragic drama of Athens. You see, there are two states in which a human being reaches the blissful feeling of being alive: in *dream* and in *wild frenzy*. The beautiful appearance of the dream world, where every person is a complete artist, is the father of all visual art, such as painting and sculpture. As we will see, it is also the father of an important half of poetry. In dreams we enjoy understanding *shapes* directly. Every form speaks to us. Nothing is unimportant, and nothing is pointless. Yet even when this dream reality is at its most alive, we still have a faint feeling, shining through, that it is only *appearance*. Only when that feeling stops do the unhealthy effects begin. Then the dream no longer refreshes us, and the natural healing power of dreaming comes to an end. But inside that limit, it is not just the pleasant and friendly pictures that we seek out in ourselves with that all-understanding sense. We also look at serious, sad, gloomy and dark things with the same pleasure. Only here, too, the veil of appearance has to keep fluttering. It must not completely cover up the basic shapes of what is real. So, while the dream is a single person's way of playing with reality, the art of the sculptor (in the broad sense of anyone who makes images) is *playing with the dream*. A statue, as a

block of marble, is something very real. But the real thing behind the statue *as a dream figure* is the living person of the god. As long as the statue still floats before the artist's eyes as a picture in his imagination, he is still playing with reality. When he turns this picture into marble, he is playing with the dream.

So in what sense could *Apollo* be made into the god of *art*? Only in the sense that he is the god of the pictures we see in dreams. He is "the shining one" through and through. At his deepest root, he is the god of the sun and of light, who shows himself in brightness. "Beauty" is his natural element, and eternal youth goes along with him. But the beautiful appearance of the dream world is also his kingdom. Dreams have a higher truth and a kind of perfection, compared with everyday reality, which we only understand in bits and pieces. This raises him up to be the god who tells the future, but just as surely to be the god of art. The god of beautiful appearance must also be the god of true knowledge. But there is a delicate limit that the dream picture must not cross, or else it becomes unhealthy. Past that limit, appearance does not just fool us in a playful way, it truly deceives us. That limit must also be part of Apollo's nature: that sense of moderation and keeping within bounds, that freedom from wilder impulses, that wisdom and calm of the sculptor god. His eye must be calm like the sun. Even when it looks angry or annoyed, the sacred glow of beautiful appearance still rests on it.

The art of the wild, ecstatic side, on the other hand, is based on playing with frenzy, with ecstasy. There are mainly two forces that lift simple, natural people up into the forgetting yourself that comes with wild frenzy: the springtime urge and intoxicating drink. Their effects are shown in symbol form in the figure of Dionysus. In both states, the sense of being a separate self is broken through. The personal self disappears completely before the bursting power of what is common to all humans, and even of what is common to all of nature. The fest-

ivals of Dionysus do not only bring people together with other people. They also make peace between people and nature. The earth gives its gifts freely, and the wildest animals come near in peace: panthers and tigers pull Dionysus's chariot, which is crowned with flowers. All the walls between social classes, which need and unfair rules have set up between people, disappear. The slave is a free man. The noble and the low-born join together in the same Bacchic choirs, the singing groups of Dionysus. Like good news spreading, the message of "the harmony of the world" rolls from place to place in ever-growing crowds. Singing and dancing, a person shows that he belongs to a higher, more ideal community. He has forgotten how to walk and how to talk. More than that: he feels enchanted, and he really has become something different. Just as the animals talk and the earth gives milk and honey, something supernatural also rings out of him. He feels like a god. What used to live only in his imagination, he now feels in his own body. What do pictures and statues mean to him now? The person is no longer an artist; he has become a work of art. He walks around as enraptured and lifted up as he once saw the gods walk in his dreams. Here it is the artistic power of nature that shows itself, no longer the power of one human being. A nobler clay, a more precious marble is being kneaded and carved here: the human being. This person, shaped by Dionysus the artist, relates to nature the way a statue relates to the artist of the calm, image-making side.

Now, if wild frenzy is nature's way of playing with human beings, then the creating done by the artist of the wild, ecstatic side is playing with frenzy. If you have not experienced this state yourself, you can only understand it through comparison. It is something like dreaming and, at the same time, sensing that the dream is a dream. In the same way, the Dionysus worshipper must be in wild frenzy and, at the same time, be lying in wait behind himself as an observer. Being an artist of the wild, ecstatic side does not mean switching back and forth

between a clear head and frenzy. It means having both at the same time, side by side.

This side-by-side marks the high point of Greek culture. At first, only Apollo was a Greek god of art. It was his power that calmed down Dionysus, who came storming in from Asia, enough that the most beautiful brotherhood could grow between them. Here it is easiest to understand the amazing idealism of the Greek character. Among the Asian peoples, this nature worship meant the crudest letting-loose of the lower urges. It was an animal-like life where everyone slept with everyone, and for a set time it broke all the bonds that hold society together. But among the Greeks it became a festival for saving the world, a day of glorifying transformation. All the lofty urges of their nature showed themselves in this way of turning the wild orgy into something ideal.

But Greek culture was never in greater danger than when the new god came storming in. And yet the wisdom of Apollo of Delphi never showed itself in a more beautiful light. At first he resisted. Then he wrapped his mighty opponent in the finest web, so that Dionysus could hardly notice that he was walking around half a prisoner. The priests at Delphi saw clearly how deeply the new worship could help renew society, and they supported it to serve their political and religious goals. The artist of the calm, image-making side learned from the revolutionary art of Bacchus worship, but with careful moderation. And finally, the rule over the year in the Delphic calendar of worship was split between Apollo and Dionysus. Through all this, both gods came out of their contest as winners, so to speak: a making peace right on the battlefield. If you want to see really clearly how strongly the calm, image-making element held down the irrational, supernatural side of Dionysus, think of this: in the older period of music, the style of the wild hymn to Dionysus was at the same time the style called "the calm one." Now, the stronger the artistic spirit of

Apollo grew, the more freely his brother god Dionysus developed. At the same time as Apollo reached the full, almost motionless sight of beauty, in the age of the sculptor Phidias, Dionysus was explaining the riddles and horrors of the world in tragic drama. And in tragic music he spoke out nature's innermost thought: the weaving of the "Will" in and above everything that appears.

Music can also be an art of the calm, image-making side. But strictly speaking, only rhythm had its shaping, *sculpting* power developed to show the states of that calm, image-making side. Apollo's music is like architecture built out of sound. On top of that, it uses sounds that are only hinted at, the kind you get from the kithara, an ancient Greek string instrument. The very thing that makes up the character of the wild, ecstatic side's music, and in fact of all music, was carefully kept out: the shattering, overwhelming power of sound, and the completely one-of-a-kind world of harmony. The Greeks had a very fine feeling for harmony. We can tell this from the strict way they described the character of each of their *musical scales*. Still, they felt much less need than people do today for harmony that is *fully worked out* and actually heard out loud. In a chain of harmonies, and even in its shortened form, which we call melody, the deep life-force (the Will) shows itself completely directly, without first having to take on any outward appearance. Any single person or thing can serve as a comparison, a kind of single example of a general rule. But the artist of the wild, ecstatic side works the other way around: he lays out the true nature of everything that appears in a way you can understand directly. After all, he has command over the chaos of the deep life-force (the Will) before it has taken any shape. Out of that chaos, in every creative moment, he can make a new world, *but also the old one*, the world we already know as appearance. In that second sense, he is a tragic musician.

In the wild frenzy of the wild, ecstatic side, nature shows itself at its greatest strength. This happens when the soul storms wildly up and down through all its scales, as if it were a musical instrument, under the excitement of drugs and intoxicating drinks, or when the spring-time urge breaks loose. In these moments, nature binds separate beings back together and lets them feel that they are one. Seen this way, the sense of being a separate self looks like a lasting state of weakness in the deep life-force (the Will). The more rundown and decayed the Will is, the more everything crumbles into separate pieces. And the more selfish and willful an individual becomes, the weaker the whole living body is that he belongs to and serves. So in those states of frenzy, a kind of yearning, sad streak of the Will breaks out, a "sighing of the creature" for what has been lost. Out of the very highest pleasure comes a scream of horror, the longing cries of mourning for a loss that can never be replaced. Rich, overflowing nature celebrates its wild carnival, like the Roman festival of Saturnalia, and its funeral at the same time. The feelings of nature's priests are mixed in the strangest way: pain wakes up pleasure, and joy tears agonized cries out of their chests. The god called "the Releaser" has set everything free from itself and transformed everything. The singing and the acting-out of crowds stirred up like this, in which nature found a voice and a way to move, was something completely new and unheard of for the Greek world of Homer. To that world it seemed like something from the East, something it first had to tame with its enormous power of rhythm and shaping. And it did tame it, just as at the same time it tamed the Egyptian style of temple building. It was the people of Apollo who put this overpowering instinct into the chains of beauty. They put the most dangerous forces of nature, its wildest beasts, under the yoke, like animals made to pull a plow. You admire the idealizing power of Greek culture most of all when you compare how it made the festival of Dionysus spiritual with what grew out of the same roots among other peoples. Similar festivals are extremely

old and can be found everywhere. The most famous was in Babylon, under the name of the Sacaea. There, during a festival lasting five days, every bond of state and society was torn apart. But the center of it all was sexual lawlessness, the destruction of all family life through unlimited prostitution. The opposite of this is the picture of the Greek festival of Dionysus that Euripides paints in his play The Bacchae. Out of it flows the same charm, the same musical frenzy of glorifying transformation, that the sculptors Scopas and Praxiteles packed into their statues. In the play, a messenger tells how he drove his herds up to the mountaintops in the heat of midday. That is the right moment and the right place to see things no one has seen. Now the god Pan is asleep. Now the sky is the still background for a blaze of glory. Now the day is *in full bloom*. On a high mountain pasture, the messenger notices three groups of women, lying scattered across the ground and resting modestly and decently. Many women are leaning against the trunks of fir trees. Everyone is sleeping. Suddenly the mother of Pentheus starts to shout for joy. Sleep is chased away and they all jump up, a perfect example of good manners. The young girls and the women let their curls fall down over their shoulders. They straighten their deerskins wherever the ribbons and bows came loose while they slept. They wrap snakes around themselves like belts, and the snakes lick their cheeks like tame pets. Some women pick up young wolves and fawns in their arms and nurse them. Everyone decorates themselves with crowns of ivy and bindweed. One knock of the thyrsus, the sacred staff of Dionysus, against a rock, and water bubbles out. One tap of the staff on the ground, and a spring of wine rises up. Sweet honey drips from the branches. If someone just touches the ground with their fingertips, snow-white milk spurts out. This is a completely enchanted world. Nature is celebrating its festival of making peace with human beings. The myth says that Apollo put the torn-apart Dionysus back together again. This is the picture of

Dionysus newly created by Apollo, rescued from being torn to pieces in Asia.

2.

The Greek gods, in the perfect form in which we already meet them in Homer, should certainly not be understood as having been born out of hardship and need. Such beings were surely not dreamed up by a mind shaken with fear. A brilliant imagination did not throw its pictures up into the blue sky in order to turn away from life. What speaks out of these gods is a religion of life, not a religion of duty, or of self-denial, or of pure spirit. All these figures breathe the triumph of being alive, and a rich, overflowing feeling for life goes along with their worship. They make no demands. In them, whatever exists is made divine, no matter whether it is good or evil. Measured against the seriousness, holiness and strictness of other religions, the Greek religion is in danger of being underrated as a fanciful kind of game. That is, unless you bring to mind a feature of the deepest wisdom that is often misunderstood. Once you see it, this carefree, pleasure-loving life of the gods, like the gods of the philosopher Epicurus, suddenly looks like the creation of a matchless people of artists, and almost like their greatest creation. It is the philosophy of the *ordinary people* that the captured woodland god (Silenus) reveals to mortals: "best never to be born, next best to die soon". This same philosophy forms the background of that world of the gods. The Greek knew the terrors and horrors of existence, but he covered them up so that he could go on living. In the image Goethe used, it was a cross hidden under roses. That shining reign of the Olympian gods only came to power because the dark rule of fate, called moira by the Greeks, had to be hidden. This was the fate that decided Achilles would die young and Oedipus would make a horrible marriage to his own mother. It was to be hidden behind the dazzling figures of Zeus, Apollo, Hermes and the

others. If someone had taken away the artistic *appearance* of that *in-between world*, people would have had to follow the wisdom of the woodland god (Silenus), the companion of the *wild, ecstatic side*. It was out of this *hardship* that the artistic genius of this people created these gods. That is why the question of how a good god can allow evil in the world was never a Greek problem. People were careful not to blame the gods for the existence of the world, and so for the way it is. Even the gods are subject to necessity, called ananke by the Greeks. Admitting this shows a very rare kind of wisdom.

To see their existence, just the way it is, in a mirror that glorifies and transforms it, and to protect themselves with this mirror against the Medusa, the monster whose face turns you to stone: that was the brilliant strategy of the Greek "Will" for being able to live at all. For how else could that endlessly sensitive people, so splendidly gifted for *suffering*, have endured existence, if that *same* existence had not been shown to them in their gods, bathed in a higher glory? The same drive that brings art into being, as the thing that completes and perfects existence and tempts us to keep on living, also gave rise to the world of Olympus: a world of beauty, of calm, and of enjoyment.

Because of the effect of such a religion, people in the Homeric world saw life as the thing most worth striving for in itself: life in the bright sunshine of gods like these. The *pain* of Homer's people is all about leaving this existence, and above all about leaving it too soon. Whenever they do lament, the lament is about "short-lived Achilles", about how quickly one human generation replaces the next, about how the age of heroes has vanished. Even the greatest hero is not ashamed to long for more life, even if it were only as a hired day-laborer. Never has the deep life-force (the Will) spoken out more openly than in Greek culture, where even the cry of grief is still a song of praise for life. That is why modern people long for that time, when they think they can hear perfect harmony between nature and human

beings. That is why "Greek" is the password for everyone who, in consciously saying yes to the Will, has to look around for shining role models. And that is why, finally, pleasure-seeking writers came up with the idea of "Greek cheerfulness", so that, with no respect at all, a loose and lazy life now dares to excuse itself with the word "Greek", and even to take pride in it.

In all these ideas, which wander off from the noblest thing into the most vulgar, Greek culture has been taken far too crudely and simply. It has been shaped, so to speak, after the model of nations that are straightforward and one-sided, such as the Romans. Yet you would expect a need for artistic appearance even in the way of seeing the world of a people who usually turned whatever they touched into gold. And in fact, as already hinted, we do find a huge illusion in this way of seeing the world: the same illusion that nature uses again and again to reach its goals. The real goal is hidden behind an illusory image. We reach out our hands toward that image, and through this trick nature reaches its real goal. In the Greeks, the Will wanted to look at itself transformed into a work of art. In order to glorify itself, its creatures had to feel that they themselves were worth glorifying. They had to see themselves again in a higher realm, lifted up into the ideal, as it were, but without this perfect world they looked at acting like a command or a reproach. This is the realm of beauty, where they see their mirror images: the Olympian gods. With this weapon, the Greek Will fought against the talent that goes hand in hand with the artistic one: the talent for *suffering*, and for the wisdom that comes from suffering. Tragedy was born out of this struggle, as a monument to its *victory*.

The wild frenzy of *suffering* and the *beautiful dream* each have their own world of the gods. The first, with all the overwhelming power of its nature, pushes into nature's innermost thoughts. It recognizes the terrible urge to exist, and at the same time the constant death of

everything that has come into existence. The gods it creates are both good and evil. They are like chance; they frighten you when some plan suddenly shows up in what they do; they have no pity and no delight in beauty. They are related to truth and come close to being pure ideas: only rarely, and with difficulty, do they thicken into actual figures. Looking at them turns you to stone: so how are you supposed to live with them? But you are not supposed to: that is their lesson.

If this world of the gods cannot be completely hidden away, like a forbidden secret, then people's eyes must be drawn away from it by placing something next to it: the shining dream-creation of the Olympian world. That is why the Olympian world's colors glow more fiercely and its figures become more sensual the more strongly the truth, or its symbol, makes itself felt. But the struggle between truth and beauty was never greater than when the worship of Dionysus invaded. In that worship, nature unveiled itself and spoke about its secret with horrifying clearness, using *sound*, and against that sound the seductive appearance almost lost its power. This spring of water rose in Asia, but in Greece it had to swell into a mighty river, because here, for the first time, it found what Asia had not offered it: the most sensitive feelings and the greatest capacity for suffering, paired with the lightest self-control and the sharpest insight. How did Apollo save Greek culture? The newcomer was pulled over into the world of beautiful appearance, the world of the Olympian gods. Many of the honors belonging to the most respected gods, such as Zeus and Apollo, were given up to him. Never has anyone made more fuss over a stranger. But then he was a terrifying stranger, a "hostis" in every sense of that Latin word, meaning both guest and enemy, powerful enough to smash the house that welcomed him. A great revolution began in every form of life: Dionysus pushed his way in everywhere, into art as well.

Looking, beauty and appearance mark out the territory of the calm, image-making side's art. It is the glorified world of the eye, which creates artistically in dream, with the eyelids closed. The *epic* poem also wants to put us into this dream state: with our eyes open we are supposed to see nothing, and to enjoy the inner pictures that the reciter of poems, the rhapsode, tries to stir us into making with his words and ideas. Here the effect of the visual arts is reached by a detour. The sculptor leads us through the carved marble to the *living* god he saw as in a dream, so that the figure he was really aiming at as his goal becomes clear to both the sculptor and the viewer, and the sculptor gets the viewer to see it too through the *in-between figure* of the statue. In the same way, the epic poet sees the same living figure and also wants to show it to others so they can look at it. But he no longer puts a statue between himself and people. Instead, he tells how that figure shows it is alive, through movement, sound, words and actions. He forces us to trace a whole set of effects back to their cause; he pushes us into putting together an artistic picture ourselves. He has reached his goal when we see the figure, or the group, or the scene clearly before us, when he passes on to us that dreamlike state in which he himself first created those pictures. The fact that the epic calls on us to shape images, as a sculptor does, proves how completely different lyric poetry is from the epic, because lyric poetry never aims at forming pictures. The only thing the two have in common is their material: the word, or more generally, the idea. So when we talk about "poetry", we do not mean a category on the same level as visual art and music. We mean a gluing together of two tools of art that are completely different in themselves. One of them is a path toward visual art, the other a path toward music. But both are only *paths* to creating art, not arts in themselves. In this sense, painting and sculpture are of course also only tools of art. The real art is the ability to create images, no matter whether you create them first yourself or re-create them after someone else. The *importance of art for*

culture rests on this ability, which all human beings share. The artist, as the one who pushes us toward art by means of the tools of art, cannot at the same time be the organ that soaks up and takes in the artistic activity.

The calm, image-making culture of Apollo worshipped images, whether in the temple, in the statue, or in Homer's epic poems. Its lofty goal was the moral demand for moderation, which runs side by side with the artistic demand for beauty. You can only demand moderation where moderation, the limit, is thought to be something you can know. To keep within your limits, you have to know them. That is why Apollo gave the warning "Know yourself." But the only mirror in which the Apollo-minded Greek could see himself, that is, come to know himself, was the Olympian world of the gods. There he recognized his own deepest nature, wrapped in the beautiful appearance of the dream. The moderation that ruled the new world of the gods, like a yoke on their necks, after the old world of the Titans had been overthrown, was the moderation of beauty. The limit the Greek had to keep to was the limit of beautiful appearance. After all, the deepest purpose of a culture turned toward appearance and moderation can only be to veil the truth. That is why the tireless researcher who served truth was given the same warning as the overpowerful Titan: "Nothing too much." In Prometheus, Greek culture was shown an example of how pushing human knowledge too far is equally ruinous for the one who gives it and the ones who receive it. Whoever wants his wisdom to hold up before the god must, like the poet Hesiod, "keep a measure in wisdom."

Into a world built up and artificially protected like this, the ecstatic sound of the festival of Dionysus now burst in. In that sound, the whole too-muchness, overflow, of nature revealed itself, as pleasure, suffering and knowledge all at once. Everything that had until then counted as a limit, as a rule of moderation, turned out here to be only

an artificial appearance. The "too-muchness" showed itself to be the truth. For the first time, the people's song roared out, wildly bewitching, with all the drunkenness of an overwhelming feeling. Next to that, what did Apollo's artist count for, chanting his hymns, with the timid, merely hinting notes of his lyre, the kithara? The musical element had before been passed down in closed poetic and musical guilds, like a caste, and kept away from any ordinary people taking part. The power of Apollo's spirit had forced it to stay at the level of a simple, building-block structure. But here music threw off every barrier. Rhythm, which before had only moved in the simplest zigzag, now loosened its limbs into the wild dance of the worshippers of Bacchus. The sound rang out, no longer thin and ghostly as before, but multiplied a thousand times by the crowd and joined by deep-toned wind instruments. And the most mysterious thing of all happened: harmony was born here, and as it moves, it lets us understand the will of nature directly. Now things were spoken out loud around Dionysus that had been artificially hidden in Apollo's world. All the shine of the Olympian gods grew pale before Silenus's dark wisdom. An art that spoke the truth in its ecstatic wild frenzy chased away the Muses of the arts of appearance. In the forgetting yourself of the Dionysian states, the individual, with all his limits and his moderation, went under. A downfall of the gods was close at hand.

So what was the aim of the deep life-force (the Will), which in the end is only one, when it let the wild, ecstatic elements in, against its own calm, image-making creation?

It was aiming at a new and higher device for living, a new way to make life bearable: the birth of the tragic idea.

3.

The ecstasy of the Dionysian state destroys the usual barriers and limits of life. While it lasts, it holds something numbing and sleep-like, into which everything you have lived through in the past sinks. So this gap of forgetting splits the world of everyday reality from the world of Dionysian reality. But as soon as that everyday reality comes back into your awareness, you feel it, just as it is, with disgust. The fruit of those states is a mood of self-denial, a mood that says no to the deep life-force (the Will). In thought, the wild, ecstatic side is set up as a higher order of the world, against a common and bad one. The Greek wanted to escape completely from this world of guilt and fate. He hardly comforted himself with hopes of a world after death. His longing went higher, beyond the gods. He said no to existence itself, together with its brightly glittering reflection in the gods. In the clear awareness of waking up from the wild frenzy, he sees everywhere how horrible or absurd it is to be human. It disgusts him. Now he understands the wisdom of the woodland god (Silenus).

Here the most dangerous limit has been reached, the furthest the Greek deep life-force (the Will) could allow, with its basic Apollo-like, hopeful principle. Here it acted at once with nature's healing power, to bend that life-denying mood back again. Its means was the tragic work of art and the tragic idea. Its aim could not possibly be to calm the Dionysian state, let alone crush it. Defeating it directly was impossible. And even if it had been possible, it would have been far too dangerous. For if this force were held back from pouring out, it would break through somewhere else and seep into every vein of life.

Above all, those disgusted thoughts about how horrible and absurd life is had to be turned into ideas you can live with. These are the awe-inspiring, which is art taming the horrible, and the laughable, which is art releasing the disgust we feel at the absurd. These two

elements, woven together, are joined into one work of art that imitates the wild frenzy, that is playing with frenzy.

The awe-inspiring and the laughable are a step beyond the world of beautiful appearance, because in both ideas we feel a contradiction. On the other hand, they are by no means the same as the truth. They are a veil over the truth. It is more see-through than beauty, but it is still a veil. So in them we have an in-between world between beauty and truth. In it, Dionysus and Apollo can come together. This world shows itself in playing with frenzy, not in being totally swallowed up by it. In the actor we recognize the Dionysian person again, the poet, singer and dancer who works by instinct, but now as a Dionysian person who is being played. The actor tries to reach that model through the shock of the awe-inspiring, or through the shock of laughter. He goes beyond beauty, and yet he does not look for the truth. He stays floating in the middle between the two. He does not strive for beautiful appearance, but he does strive for appearance. He does not strive for the truth, but for seeming truth, that is, a symbol, sign, of the truth. At first, of course, the actor was not a single person. After all, what was meant to be shown was the Dionysian crowd, the people. That is where the chorus singing the wild hymn to Dionysus came from. By playing with frenzy, the chorus itself, and also the surrounding chorus of spectators, were supposed to be unloaded, as it were, of their wild frenzy. From the point of view of Apollo's world, Greek culture needed to be healed and cleansed of guilt. Apollo, the true god of healing and cleansing, saved the Greek from the clear-seeing ecstasy and from disgust with life. He did it through the work of art of the tragic-comic idea.

The new world of art, the world of the awe-inspiring and the laughable, the world of "seeming truth," rested on a different view of the gods and a different way of seeing the world than the older world of beautiful appearance. People had come to know the horrors and ab-

surdities of life, the broken order and the senseless planning, and above all the enormous suffering in all of nature. This knowledge had pulled the veil off the figures that had been so artfully covered up: Moira, the goddess of fate, and the Furies, Medusa and the Gorgon. The Olympian gods were in the greatest danger. In the tragic-comic work of art they were saved, because they too were dipped into the sea of the awe-inspiring and the laughable. They stopped being only "beautiful." They soaked up, so to speak, that older order of gods and its awe-inspiring power. Now they split into two groups. Only a few floated in between, as gods who were sometimes awe-inspiring and sometimes laughable. Above all, Dionysus himself took on that double nature.

Two types of people show best how it was possible to live again in this tragic period of Greek culture: Aeschylus and Sophocles. For Aeschylus, who was a thinker, the awe-inspiring shows itself most of all in a grand, magnificent justice. In his work, human beings and gods are bound together in a very close, personal way. For him, what is divine, what is just, what is moral, and what is *happy* are all woven together into one. This is the scale on which every single being, whether human or Titan, is weighed. The gods themselves are rebuilt to fit this standard of justice. Take one example. The common folk believed in a demon who blinds people and tempts them into guilt. This belief was left over from that ancient world of the gods that the Olympian gods had pushed off the throne. Aeschylus corrects it: the demon becomes a tool in the hand of Zeus, who punishes justly. There was another very old idea, also foreign to the Olympian gods: the idea of a family curse passed down through the generations. Aeschylus strips this idea of all its harshness. In his plays, no single person is *forced* to commit a crime, and everyone can escape.

Aeschylus finds the awe-inspiring in how grand the justice of the Olympian gods is. Sophocles, strangely and wonderfully, finds it in

how impossible it is to see through that justice. He brings back the ordinary people's point of view on every point. To him, a terrible fate that a person did not deserve seemed awe-inspiring. The truly unsolvable riddles of human life were what inspired his tragedies. In his work, suffering goes through a glorifying transformation: it is seen as something that makes a person holy. The distance between the human and the divine is too huge to measure. So the right attitude is the deepest humility and acceptance. The real virtue is what the Greeks called sophrosyne, self-restraint, which is really a negative virtue, a virtue of holding back. Heroic humanity is the noblest kind of humanity, but it lacks that virtue. The fate of the heroes shows how endless that gap between humans and gods is. There is hardly any real *guilt*. There is only a lack of understanding about what a human being is worth and where a human's limits lie.

This point of view is certainly deeper and more inward than the one Aeschylus held. It comes much closer to the truth of the wild, ecstatic side, and it says that truth out loud without many symbols. And yet, even so, we can see that Apollo's moral rule has been woven into this wild, ecstatic way of seeing the world. In Aeschylus, disgust is dissolved into an awe-filled shudder before the wisdom of the world's order, a wisdom that is only *hard* to recognize because humans are weak. In Sophocles, this shudder is even greater, because that wisdom cannot be understood at all. His is a pure mood of devotion to the gods, a mood with no struggle in it. The devotion in Aeschylus, on the other hand, always has the job of defending the justice of the gods, and so it keeps getting stuck in front of new problems. Apollo commands people to search for the "limit of the human." For Sophocles, this limit can be known, but it is narrower and tighter than what Apollo meant by it in the time before the wild, ecstatic side arrived. The problem for Sophocles is that humans do not know

enough about themselves. The problem for Aeschylus is that humans do not know enough about the gods.

Devotion to the gods: the most amazing mask that the urge to live can wear! Giving yourself up to a perfect *dream world*, which is credited with the highest moral *wisdom*! Running away from the truth so that you can worship it from far off, wrapped in clouds! Making peace with reality *because* it is a riddle! Not wanting the riddle solved, because we are not gods! Throwing yourself down in the dust and enjoying it, feeling calm and happy in the middle of misfortune! A human giving up his own self at the very moment he expresses himself most fully! Glorifying the horrors and terrors of existence, and transforming them, as if they were the medicine *against* existence! A joyful life lived while looking down on life! The deep life-force (the Will) winning its triumph by saying no to itself!

At this level of understanding there are only two paths: the path of the *saint* and the path of the *tragic artist*. Both have this in common: even though they see with total clarity that existence is worthless, they can still go on living without feeling a crack in their way of seeing the world. The disgust at going on living is felt as a means for creating something, whether that is something holy or something artistic. The terrible or the absurd lifts them up, because it only *appears* to be terrible or absurd. Here, at the very peak of this way of seeing the world, the magic power of the wild, ecstatic side still proves itself. Everything real melts away into appearance. And behind that appearance, the single, unified *nature of the Will* shows itself, wrapped in the glory of wisdom and truth, in a dazzling shine. *Illusion, grand illusion, has reached its highest point.*

Now it will no longer seem impossible to understand this: the same deep life-force (the Will) that, as the calm, image-making side, had put the Greek world in order, also took in its other form, the wild,

ecstatic Will. The struggle between these two forms of the Will had an extraordinary goal. Its goal was to create a *higher possibility of existence*, and within that, to reach an even *higher glorifying* through art. The form of glorifying was no longer the art of appearance, but tragic art. But tragic art had completely soaked up that art of appearance into itself. Apollo and Dionysus had joined together. The wild, ecstatic element had pushed its way into the calm life of Apollo, and appearance had set itself up as a limit there too. In the same way, the wild, tragic art was no longer pure "truth." The singing and dancing were no longer a natural wild frenzy that happens by instinct. The chorus, stirred up by Dionysus, was no longer a crowd of common people seized without knowing it by a springtime urge. Now the truth is *shown through symbols*. It makes use of appearance, and so it can, and must, use the arts of appearance as well. But already there is a big difference from the earlier art. First, now all the tools of art that create appearance are called in to help *together*. Second, the statue walks, the painted panels of the stage machinery shift around, and the same back wall shows the eye first a temple and then a palace. So at the same time we notice a certain *indifference toward appearance*. Here appearance has to give up its eternal claims and its demands to rule. Appearance is no longer enjoyed *as appearance* at all, but as a *symbol*, as a sign of the truth. That is the reason for the mixing of the different tools of art, which on its own terms would be offensive. The clearest sign of this low regard for appearance is the *mask*.

So the wild, ecstatic side makes a demand on the spectator. Everything should look enchanted to him. He should always see more than the symbol. The whole visible world of the stage and the dancing floor should be a *kingdom of wonders*. But where is the power that puts him into this mood of believing in wonders, the mood in which he sees everything as enchanted? Who defeats the power of appearance and shrinks it down into a mere symbol?

It is *music*.

4.

Take what we call "feeling." The philosophy that follows the path of Schopenhauer teaches us to understand it as a bundle of unconscious ideas and states of the Will. The strivings of the Will show themselves as pleasure and pain, and in this they differ only in amount. There are no different kinds of pleasure. There are only different degrees of it, and a huge number of pictures that go with a feeling. By pleasure we should understand that the *one* Will is satisfied. By pain we should understand that it is not satisfied.

So in what way is a feeling passed on to others? In part, but only in a very small part, it can be turned into thoughts, meaning conscious ideas. Of course, this only applies to the part made up of the pictures that go with a feeling. But even in this area of feeling there always remains a leftover that cannot be broken down. Language, and so the concept, can only deal with the part that can be broken down. This sets the limit of "*poetry*" when it comes to expressing feeling.

The two other ways of sharing a feeling are completely instinctive. They work without our being aware of them, and yet they do their job well. They are *body language* and the *language of sound*. Body language is made of signs that everyone understands, and it comes from reflex movements. These signs can be seen. The eye that sees them passes on, right away, the inner state that caused the gesture and that the gesture stands for. Most of the time, the person watching feels a sort of sympathetic twitch in the very same parts of the face or body whose movement he is watching. Here, "symbol, sign" means a very imperfect, piece-by-piece copy, a hinting sign whose meaning people have to agree on. The only difference in this case is that the shared

understanding is *instinctive*: it has not passed through clear, conscious thought.

So *what* does the *gesture* stand for, in that two-sided thing we call feeling?

Clearly it stands for *the picture that goes with a feeling*. Only that picture can be hinted at by a visible gesture, imperfectly and piece by piece. A picture can only be stood for by another picture.

Painting and sculpture show people in the middle of a gesture. In other words, they copy the sign, and they have done their job when we understand the sign. The pleasure of the viewer comes from understanding the sign, even though it is only an appearance.

The actor, on the other hand, really performs the sign, not just as an appearance. But his effect on us does not depend on our understanding the sign. Instead, we sink into the feeling that the sign stands for. We do not stop at the pleasure of appearance, at beautiful appearance.

In the same way, the stage scenery in a play does not give us the pleasure of appearance at all. We take it as a sign and understand the real thing it points to. That is why wax dummies and real plants are perfectly fine for us here, right next to scenery that is all painted. This proves that what we are picturing here is reality, not artful appearance. The goal here is seeming truth, no longer beauty.

But what is beauty? To say "The rose is beautiful" only means this: the rose has a good appearance; it has something pleasantly glowing about it. Nothing is meant to be said about what it really is underneath. It pleases us and gives us pleasure as an appearance. That is, the deep life-force (the Will) is satisfied by how it looks, and our joy in being alive is boosted by it. In its appearance, the rose is a faithful copy of its own will, which is the same thing as this shape. In its appearance, it matches what its species is meant to be. The more it

does that, the more beautiful it is. If, in its true nature, it matches what its species is meant to be, then it is "good."

"A beautiful painting" only means that the idea we have of what a painting should be is fulfilled here. But when we call a painting "good," we mean that our idea of a painting matches the true *nature* of a painting. Most of the time, though, people take "a beautiful painting" to mean a painting that shows something beautiful. That is the judgment of ordinary people who are not experts. They enjoy the beauty of the subject matter. And *that* is how we are supposed to enjoy the visual arts inside a play, except that here the task cannot be to show only beautiful things. It is enough if it seems *true*. The object being shown should be taken in as vividly and as close to real life as possible. It should feel like the truth. This is a demand that is the exact *opposite* of what every work of beautiful appearance asks for.

But if the gesture stands for the pictures that go with a feeling, then what sign is used to *share* with us the stirrings of the deep life-force (the Will) *itself*, so that we understand them? What is the instinctive go-between here?

The *go-between* is *sound*. To be more exact, what sound stands for are the different kinds of pleasure and pain, without any picture that goes with them.

Everything we can say to describe the different kinds of painful feeling is really just pictures taken from ideas that body language has made clear. For example, we talk about sudden fright, or about pain that "throbs, pulls, twitches, stabs, cuts, bites, tickles." These words seem to express certain on-and-off patterns of the deep life-force (the Will). In short, in the signs of the language of sound, they express *rhythm*. The many ways the Will grows stronger, and the changing amounts of pleasure and pain, we find again in the *loudness and softness* of sound. But the true heart of sound hides in *harmony*, and it cannot be ex-

pressed through any comparison. The Will and its sign, harmony, are both, at bottom, *pure logic*! Rhythm and loudness and softness are still, in a way, the outer sides of the Will as it shows itself through signs. They still carry, almost, the stamp of something that merely appears. Harmony, though, is the sign of the pure essence of the Will. So in rhythm and in loudness and softness, the single appearance can still be described as an appearance. *From this side, music can be developed into an art of appearance*. The part that can never be broken down, harmony, speaks of the Will both outside and inside every form in which things appear. So it is not just a sign of feeling, but a *symbol of the whole world*. Ordinary concepts and words have no power at all in *its* realm.

Now we understand what body language and the language of sound mean for the *work of art born from the wild, ecstatic side*. In the people's raw, natural springtime wild hymn to Dionysus, a person does not want to express himself as a single individual, but as a *human as part of the whole species*. The fact that he stops being a separate individual is shown through the signs the eye can see, through body language. He speaks in gestures as a *satyr (half-goat nature spirit)*, as a creature of nature among other creatures of nature. And he does this in a heightened kind of body language: the *gestures of dance*. But through sound he speaks out nature's innermost thoughts. Here it is not only the spirit of the species that makes itself understood, as in *gesture*, but the spirit of existence itself, the Will, which makes itself understood directly. So with gesture he stays inside the limits of the species, that is, inside the world of appearances. But with sound he dissolves the world of appearances, so to speak, back into its original oneness. The world of illusion (Maya) vanishes before his magic.

But when does the natural, early human turn to the signs of sound? When is body language no longer enough? When does sound become music?

Above all, in the most extreme states of pleasure and pain of the Will: when the Will is rejoicing, or when it is frightened to death. In short, in the *wild frenzy of feeling*: in the *scream*. How much more powerful and direct a scream is than a look! But the gentler stirrings of the Will have their sound-signs too. In general, every gesture has a sound that runs alongside it. But only the wild frenzy of feeling manages to raise that sound into pure musical tone.

The closest and most common blending of a kind of gesture-sign with sound is called *language*. In a word, the true nature of a thing is stood for by the sound: by how it rises and falls, how strong it is, and the rhythm in which it rings out. The picture that goes with a feeling, the image, the way the thing appears, is stood for by the gesture of the mouth. The signs can be, and must be, of many kinds. But they grow instinctively, following great and wise rules. A sign that we remember is a *concept*. When we hold it in memory, the sound fades away completely, so in a concept only the sign of the picture that goes with a feeling is kept. Whatever we can name and tell apart, we "grasp" (that is, we form a concept of it).

When feeling grows stronger, the true nature of the word shows itself more clearly and more physically through the sign of sound. That is why the word rings out more. Chanted speech is, so to speak, a return to nature. The sign, which gets worn down and dull through everyday use, gets its original power back.

Now, in a row of words, that is, through a chain of symbols, something new and bigger is supposed to be shown in symbolic form. At this higher level, rhythm, loudness and softness, and harmony are needed once again. This bigger circle now rules over the smaller circle of the single word. Words have to be chosen, and they have to be put in a new order. This is where poetry begins. When a sentence is spoken in a half-singing way, it is not simply one word-sound after

another. That is because a word only has a sound in relation to the others. Its true nature, the meaning that the symbol stands for, changes depending on where the word is placed. To put it another way: the single symbol of the word is constantly being shaped anew by the larger unity of the sentence, and by the deeper reality that the sentence stands for. A chain of ideas is a thought. So a thought is the higher unity of the pictures that go with a feeling. The true nature of a thing is out of the thought's reach. But a thought still works on us as a motive, as something that stirs the deep life-force (the Will). This can be explained because the thought has already become a familiar symbol, a sign, for something the Will does: for a stirring of the Will and for the way the Will shows itself, both at once. When the thought is spoken aloud, though, so that it carries the symbolic power of sound, it works far more strongly and directly. When it is sung, it reaches the peak of its effect, as long as the melody is an understandable symbol of what the thought wants. If that is not the case, then it is the string of sounds that affects us, while the string of words, the thought itself, stays distant and means nothing to us.

A word can work mainly as a symbol of the picture that goes with a feeling, or mainly as a symbol of the original stirring of the Will. In other words, it can stand for images or for feelings. Depending on which of these it does, poetry splits into two paths: the epic, which tells stories, and the lyric, which expresses feelings. The first path leads toward the visual arts, like painting and sculpture. The second leads toward music. In the epic, the joy of looking at appearances is in charge. In the lyric, the deep life-force (the Will) shows itself. The epic breaks away from music, while the lyric stays joined to it.

But in the wild hymn to Dionysus, the Dionysus worshipper, swept away by his passion, is pushed to raise all his powers of expression to their very highest. Something never felt before is pressing to come out: the breaking down of the sense of being a separate self, the

feeling of being one with the spirit of the whole human species, and even of nature itself. Now the very essence of nature is supposed to express itself. For this, a new world of symbols is needed. The pictures that go with the feeling are turned into symbols as images of a heightened, larger-than-life human being. They are acted out with the greatest physical energy, through the whole language of the body, through the movements of dance. But the world of the Will also demands a symbolic expression like nothing ever heard before. The forces of harmony, of loudness and softness, and of rhythm suddenly grow wild and violent. Poetry, too, which is shared between these two worlds, reaches a new realm. It has both the vivid, real-feeling images of the epic and the wild frenzy of feeling in sound found in the lyric. To grasp this total unleashing of all the powers of expression, you need the same heightened state of being that created it. The Dionysus worshipper singing the wild hymn is understood only by people like himself. That is why this whole new world of art, with its strange, wild, tempting wonder, rolls its way through the calm, image-making side of Greek culture amid terrible *struggles*. —

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