TRAGEDY AND AFFIRMATION

TRAGEDY AND AFFIRMATION:
AN INTERPRETATION OF SECTION 18
IN NIETZSCHE'S *THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an interpretation of a passage from section 18 of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the passage, Nietzsche makes two puzzling claims which have generated interest in the recent secondary literature: (1) he says that the effect of tragedy is an illusion, and (2) he equates tragic culture with Buddhism. Some commentators have argued that these two claims contradict the book's central theses. I canvass two such readings: Maudemarie Clark's "standard interpretation" and Paul de Man's "postmodernist interpretation." I examine and reject both readings on the grounds that they fail to interpret some of Nietzsche's key terminology correctly. In opposition to these interpretations, I then formulate a more positive reading of section 18 which establishes that both claims are actually consistent with the rest of the text.

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To Jillian,

my Dionysian free spirit

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Birth of Tragedy poses serious challenges for interpreters wishing to remain faithful to the text's notoriously complex argument. Faced with what appear to be contradictory assertions in this argument, some commentators have argued that Nietzsche's first book is incoherent. In particular, a passage from section 18 has generated such debate about the text's coherence in the recent secondary literature. Nietzsche states the passage in question as follows:

> It is an eternal phenomenon: the insatiable will always finds a way to detain its creatures in life and compel them to live on, by means of an illusion spread over things. One is chained by the Socratic love of knowledge and the delusion of being able thereby to heal the eternal wound of existence; another is ensnared by art's seductive veil of beauty fluttering before his eyes; still another by the metaphysical comfort that beneath the whirl of phenomena eternal life flows on indestructibly--to say nothing of the more vulgar and almost more powerful illusions which the will always has at hand. These three stages of illusion are actually designed only for the more nobly formed natures, who actually feel profoundly the weight and burden of existence, and must be deluded by exquisite stimulants into forgetfulness of their displeasure. All that we call culture is made up of these stimulants; and, according to the proportion of the ingredients, we have either a dominantly *Socratic* or *artistic* or *tragic* culture; or, if historical exemplifications are permitted, there is either an Alexandrian or a Hellenic or a Buddhistic culture. (BT § 18: 109-110)[1]

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[1]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966). For the German text I have consulted *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. III 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (Berline: De Gruyter, 1972), 4-152. All references to the Kaufmann

One of the most troubling things about this passage is that Nietzsche seems to place the Apollonian, the Dionysian, and the Socratic all on a par as "three stages of illusion." Admittedly, Nietzsche only mentions the Socratic by name. Nonetheless, the reference to "art's seductive veil of beauty fluttering before his eyes" seems to correspond perfectly to his description of the Apollonian, and the claim about "the metaphysical comfort that beneath the whirl of phenomena eternal life flows on indestructibly" seems to accord with his conception of the Dionysian. The implication is that this assertion seems to be at odds with what is usually taken to be Nietzsche's overriding contention in the *Birth*: that the Dionysian, unlike the Apollonian or the Socratic, provides the full truth about reality and not merely an illusion. It would seem, then, that Nietzsche is guilty of holding two inconsistent claims. On one hand, he says that the Dionysian is an illusion, while on the other hand, he maintains throughout the rest of the *Birth* that the Dionysian provides spectators with the truth about the way reality is in itself.

Another curious feature of this passage is that Nietzsche associates tragic culture with "Buddhistic culture." This seems problematic because he has staked so much of his argument up to this point in the text on showing that tragedy is life-affirming. Yet in this passage, Nietzsche appears to contradict himself by implying that the historical example of tragic culture is actually a Buddhistic culture of resignation, or withdrawal from life. In fact, this latter claim seems so odd that Kaufmann actually added a footnote to his translation of the *Birth* which states that the term "Buddhistic" makes no

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translation embedded: (BT § : page). When a dispute about translation or Nietzsche's language is at issue, I have also cited the German text: (KGW III 1, § : page).

sense in this context and therefore must "depend on some misconception."[2] Additionally, it seems strange that Nietzsche would even want to distinguish artistic culture from tragic culture, given his contention that Greek tragic drama represents the highest form of art. Is tragic culture therefore not an artistic culture? And even if Nietzsche still insisted on distinguishing between different kinds of artistic culture, it would perhaps make more sense for him to distinguish tragic culture from the Apollonian culture of the Homeric epic, rather than merely "artistic culture" in general.

How should we think about this passage from section 18 and its relation to many of the other claims presented throughout the text? In this thesis, I offer an interpretation of section 18 which rejects Kaufmann's view that these claims depend upon some sort of misconception. In fact, I shall argue that the passage ought to be read as fully consistent with Nietzsche's main claims in the *Birth.* I begin with an examination of two ways of dealing the apparent difficulties associated with section 18. These two interpretations clearly do not exhaust the possibilities for ways to read the text. However, I have chosen to emphasize them as representative of the two most general orientations toward the *Birth.* I call them "the standard interpretation" and "the post-modernist interpretation." The details of these two orientations will become clear in what follows. For now, it should be noted that both of these interpretations accept that section 18 contains contradictions, but they differ quite radically in how they account for them.

First, consider the standard interpretation. Faced with the claims in section 18, one could simply claim that the text is flagrantly inconsistent. Maudemarie Clark reads the text this way and argues that the inconsistencies

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[2]BT § 18: 110, note 1.

in section 18 arise from a deep conflict in Nietzsche's values.[3] I refer to Clark's reading as "the standard interpretation" because she believes, in accordance with perhaps the majority of Nietzsche scholars, that Nietzsche incorporates Schopenhauer's metaphysics with only a few minor modifications into the *Birth.* More specifically, Clark agrees with the view that the Apollonian and Dionysian duality reproduces the Schopenhauerian metaphysical distinction between representation and will. Clark goes on to argue that the contradictions in section 18 stem from Nietzsche's adherence to Schopenhauer's metaphysics and its pessimistic view of life *and* his simultaneous desire to avoid any negative valuation of human existence. On Clark's reading, then, Nietzsche unwittingly generates the inconsistency because of a deep-seated conflict in his position which he is unable to resolve at this early stage of his career.

A second way of approaching the inconsistency involves showing that the contradiction is not vicious, but rather that it performs some important role in the text. Paul de Man takes this approach and argues that the inconsistency in section 18 stems from a conflict between Nietzsche's stated theory and his rhetorical praxis.[4] The whole point of this contradiction is to exhibit the alleged fact that theoretical language always undermines itself. According to de Man, Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer's metaphysics and therefore does not really believe those Schopenhauerian doctrines about the will which he inscribes at crucial places in the *Birth.* Instead, de Man thinks that Nietzsche only asserts these metaphysical theses for the rhetorical purpose of showing that they always lead one into contradiction; and section

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[3]Maudemarie Clark, "Language and Deconstruction: Nietzsche, de Man, and Postmodernism," in *Nietzsche as Post-Modernist,* ed. Clayton Koelb (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 75-90.

[4]Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 79-102.

18 is supposed to exhibit this contradiction. I call de Man's reading the "postmodernist reading" because it takes for granted that Nietzsche holds a postmodernist thesis about language: that all language is figurative and thus incapable of stating any literal truths about reality whatsoever. On de Man's reading, the *Birth* is therefore not a theoretical treatise which aims at directly stating literal truths. Instead, it is a work of art which attempts to show the deficiency of all conceptual discourse.

The implications of these two views are important for Nietzsche scholarship. Clark's version of the standard interpretation entails that *The Birth of Tragedy* is an immature work, a text whose Schopenhauerian views Nietzsche would devote much of his subsequent writings to repudiating. Clark sums up this notion thus: "The straightforward or analytical response to such contradictions at the heart of *The Birth of Tragedy* is that they reveal the book's incoherence and explain why Nietzsche spent so much of his later working rejecting it."[5] By contrast, the implication of de Man's reading would seem to be that Nietzsche had completely broken with Schopenhauer by the time he wrote the *Birth*. On this view, Nietzsche had formulated a position quite early in his career which he would not substantially change throughout the remainder of his productive life. Accordingly, Nietzsche's *oeuvre* does not inscribe a developmental pattern; the later works merely extend and restate the central insights first expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

I shall argue that the standard interpretation and the postmodernist interpretation both rely on fundamental misunderstandings of Nietzsche's key terminology. I focus on two of Nietzsche's principal terms: "will" and "Dionysian." I shall contend that once Nietzsche's terminology is clarified, we

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[5]Clark, 80-81.

find that he neither completely adopted Schopenhauer's metaphysics nor did he completely break with Schopenhauer. Instead, he recognized the limitations of Schopenhauer's conception of metaphysics and modified his own metaphysics accordingly. In short, *The Birth of Tragedy* represents a progressive movement beyond Schopenhauer but not a radical rupture.

In chapter 1, I sketch Clark's version of the standard interpretation and addresses some of its *prima facie* difficulties. Clark's thesis involves two parts. First, she claims that Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer's assessment of human life as not worth living. I argue that Clark is correct about this claim--at least insofar as Nietzsche says that life is terrible and horrifying--but that the textual evidence is inconclusive as to *why* Nietzsche believes this. The second part of Clark's thesis is that Dionysian art gives its spectators an apprehension of the truth of reality-in-itself, which she believes Nietzsche calls "Dionysus" or "will." I begin to cast doubt on this idea by examining material which Nietzsche wrote prior to the *Birth* which criticizes Schopenhauer's whole metaphysical conception of will. If, as this material seems to indicate, Nietzsche (at least in private) believed that we can never have access to reality-in-itself, then we ought to be highly suspicious of Clark's attempt to attribute this very position to Nietzsche in the *Birth*. I then examine the passages which Clark quotes from the *Birth* which describe the experience of Apollonian and Dionysian art. I show that in each case Nietzsche actually uses qualifying phrases which appear to indicate that the Schopenhauerian language should not be taken literally.

Chapter 2 turns to de Man's reading. The merit of De Man's interpretation is that, unlike Clark's, it tries to reconcile the unpublished criticisms of Schopenhauer with the appearance of the Schopenhauerian doctrines in the *Birth*. De Man argues that Nietzsche does not really believe the

Schopenhauerian claims about the metaphysical will which appear throughout the *Birth*. De Man focuses on Nietzsche's claim that music is the immediate image of the will. He argues that Nietzsche only states this claim as part of a larger rhetorical strategy which attempts to show the inadequacy of conceptual discourse. I first demonstrate how de Man misreads Nietzsche's use of the term "Dionysus." Contrary to what de Man assumes, Nietzsche does not equate Dionysus with reality-in-itself or will. Instead, Dionysus is merely a figure which stands for, or *represents*, reality-in-itself. Reality-in-itself, however, is inaccessible to human beings, and thus Dionysian art only gives spectators an apprehension of the figure of Dionysus. I then turn to de Man's reading of the term "will." While de Man demonstrates with the aid of the manuscript notes of the *Birth* that Nietzsche believed Schopenhauer's will could be neither reality-in-itself nor the origin of music, it does not follow (as de Man claims) that Nietzsche cannot then assert and believe the thesis that music is the immediate image of the will. What de Man fails to notice is that Nietzsche has shifted his conception of will away from the Schopenhauerian reality-in-itself to what we might call the most general form of appearance. And as I shall demonstrate, music *can* be the immediate image of the most general form of appearance.[6]

Chapter 3 returns to the passage from section 18. First, I argue that Nietzsche *does* explicitly say elsewhere in the *Birth* that the Dionysian effect of tragedy is an illusion. In fact, illusion of the Dionysian emerges as soon as the Dionysian cult is Hellenized. Much of the confusion about this notion of the illusion in tragedy seems to stem from the fact that commentators usually fail to distinguish two important senses of the Dionysian at work in

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[6]For this argument, I closely follow Henry Staten, "Appendix: *The Birth of Tragedy* Reconstructed," in *Nietzsche's Voice* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 187-216.

Nietzsche's account. On one hand, there is a non-aesthetic Dionysian which expresses itself in orgiastic rituals and sometimes even in the literal destruction of individuals. On the other hand, there is the aesthetic Dionysian found in tragic drama. The aesthetic Dionysian manifests itself in an artistic representation of the breakdown of individuation, and such representation is possible because the subject matter of all true tragedy is myth.

Furthermore, any culture which fails to make this move into the realm of artistic representation and myth is in danger of becoming a "Buddhistic culture" for which life is negatively valued. It is precisely this non-aesthetic culture which Nietzsche refers to as "tragic culture" in section 18. A tragic culture must therefore be sharply distinguished from the sort of life-affirming artistic culture that embraces tragic drama. Thus, when Nietzsche associates tragic culture with Buddhism in section 18, he does not contradict one of the text's main theses. Contrary to both Clark and de Man, then, the problematic claims in the section 18 passage are actually consistent with Nietzsche's main theses in the text.

One proviso must be stated at the outset. I do not attempt to evaluate the majority of Nietzsche's claims about the Greeks or their art on the basis of their textual or historical accuracy. Although it is admittedly difficult at times to divide these more empirical concerns from the strictly philosophical ones, I shall nonetheless attempt to trace a line through the text which allows me to leave most of the claims about ancient Greece unchallenged. To compare Nietzsche's stated views about Euripides with the relevant textual material, for example, is simply beyond the scope of this work. Instead, I shall endeavor to limit my focus to the alleged metaphysical claims of the book and some immediately related philosophical issues such as Nietzsche's conception of

music, its relation to image and myth, and some of his views about the nature of language. The main task is to understand Nietzsche's philosophical position and to determine when and how some commentators go amiss when attempting to interpret this position.

CHAPTER 1
THE STANDARD INTERPRETATION

Maudemarie Clark argues that the contradictions in section 18 are the result of an underlying conflict in Nietzsche's values. She believes that Nietzsche accepts Schopenhauer's description of human life as essentially not worth living while simultaneously attempting to demonstrate the purported life-affirming power of art. The problem is that if life is truly not worth living, then nothing in the nature of art could, in the end, allow Nietzsche to escape Schopenhauer's negative valuation of human existence while maintaining a truthful perspective on the world. Clark believes that Nietzsche is therefore eventually forced to admit in section 18 that the life-affirming effect of tragedy must be merely an illusion. According to Clark, then, the contradictory remarks in section 18 disclose the irresolvable tension between Nietzsche's views about truth and affirmation which she believes infects his whole conception of the Dionysian. She concludes that the section 18 passage should be read as exhibiting the incoherence of Nietzsche's thought at this early stage in his career.

The purpose of this chapter is to challenge Clark's explanation of these contradictions by questioning one of her most crucial assumptions. Clark follows the majority of commentators by interpreting Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian duality as a reproduction of Schopenhauer's metaphysical

distinction between representation and will.[1] Her argument depends on this interpretation because she believes that, according to Nietzsche, the key effect of tragedy is to provide spectators with a direct apprehension of reality-in-itself, which she believes is closely modeled on Schopenhauer's conception of the metaphysical will. As Clark says, "Dionysian art gives access to the ultimate truth, that is, to the world as it is in itself. . ."[2] In what follows, I shall reject this assumption and argue instead that by the time Nietzsche wrote the *Birth*, he had already recognized that human beings are incapable of possessing any such metaphysical truth. In fact, Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer's whole conception of the metaphysical will in a fragment he wrote five years before publishing the *Birth*. Nietzsche specifically argues that this conception of will cannot be consistently maintained because it inevitably collapses into a form of mere appearance. We therefore ought to be highly suspicious of Clark's attempt to attribute any view about tragedy's capacity to provide truth about ultimate reality to Nietzsche. Furthermore, the passages from the *Birth* which Clark uses to support her argument about the effect of Dionysian art actually contain qualifying phrases which indicate that the Schopenhauerian language should not be interpreted literally.

The *Birth's* Main Theses

What is *The Birth of Tragedy* about? The ostensible aim of the *Birth* is to offer an historical account of the emergence and demise of Attic tragedy and to call

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[1]For e.g., see Kathleen Higgins, *Nietzsche's "Zarathustra"* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 22-3; Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), passim; idem BT "Translator's Introduction," 9; M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 210. 222; Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 26.

[2]Clark, 78. All further references embedded.

for the rebirth of an analogous world view in modern Germany. In a series of rather complicated arguments, Nietzsche contends that tragedy arose from the spirit of music and eventually died when the Greek playwrights abandoned this musical element. Accordingly, Nietzsche entitled the first two editions of the book *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music.* Nietzsche attempts to place much of the blame for the demise of tragedy on Euripides, who was supposedly working under the harmful influence of Socrates. According to Nietzsche, Socrates emphasized rational understanding to the exclusion of all other modes of being. He says, for example, that in Socrates "the logical nature is developed as excessively as instinctive wisdom is in the mystic" (BT §13: 88). Euripides wrote his plays, on Nietzsche's view, in accordance with the general Socratic precept that art ought to be completely comprehensible. Finding no apparent reason for the predominance of music in the older plays, Euripides demoted the chorus to the role of mere musical accompaniment. In doing so, however, Nietzsche believes that Euripides removed the source of tragedy's key effect, "the pleasure of gazing into the Dionysian abysses" (BT §13: 89). This theoretical orientation toward the world which Socrates initiated continues to dominate Western culture to the present day, and Nietzsche therefore calls Socrates "the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history" (BT §15: 96). And in the second half of the book (§§16ff.), Nietzsche calls for a rebirth of tragedy by means of a return to the spirit of music. He further intimates that the potential for such a rebirth lies in the music dramas of Richard Wagner. In short, Wagner's music will promote a new culture which will correct what Nietzsche sees as the growing ills of modern Germany.

Obviously, this very brief sketch of the book's historical argument will require much fleshing out in the remaining pages of this thesis. However, it

should be noted that in addition to the historical argument just outlined, the *Birth* has an additional aim which is distinctly philosophical. More specifically, Nietzsche attempts to show that art is of greater value for life than science. This position is exemplified by the now-famous claim which is stated at least twice in the main text: that "it is *only* [my emphasis] as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*. . ." (BT § 5: 52; cf. BT § 24: 141). One way of understanding this second thesis is to consider its relation to what Nietzsche later refers to as the issue of pessimism. In an effort to emphasize this more philosophical theme of the book over the historical thesis about the development of tragedy, Nietzsche actually changed the title of the subsequent 1886 edition to *The Birth of Tragedy, Or: Hellenism and Pessimism.* Basically, he contends that the Greeks were aware of the horrifying and terrible character of individual existence and that they employed three "redemptive strategies" at different historical periods for overcoming this awareness.[3] In doing so, they avoided falling prey to a will-negating pessimism; and during the period of tragic drama, they had "a profound and pessimistic view of the world" (BT §10: 74).[4]

The first of these strategies is Apollonian. Nietzsche associates it with the Homeric period of epic poetry and Olympian mythology (§ § 3-4). The second strategy, which Nietzsche associates with the period of Attic tragedy, is

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[3]The term "redemptive strategies" comes from Robert E. McGinn, "Culture as Prophylactic: Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* as Culture Criticism," *Nietzsche-Studien* 4 (1975): 75-138.

[4]Nietzsche contrasts pessimism with optimism and argues that one can accept Schopenhauer's pessimistic description of life without following Schopenhauer's negative evaluation of life. In his so-called middle period, Nietzsche comes to distinguish "Romantic pessimism" from "Dionysian pessimism." See section 370 of *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). Whereas Romantic pessimism implicitly refers to Schopenhauer, Dionysian pessimism refers to the Greeks. Later, Nietzsche calls these two species of pessimism "religio-moral pessimism" and "artists' pessimism," respectively. See section 852 of *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

Dionysian (§ § 7-10). Finally, Nietzsche associates the third strategy, which he calls "Socratic," with the theoretical world view that first emerged with Socrates (§ § 11-15). Clark argues that Nietzsche prefers the Dionysian strategy found in tragedy to the other two strategies because it is the most truthful. This is, in essence, the more philosophical thesis of the *Birth*: that Dionysian art is superior to theory for life. Before examining each of these three strategies in any further detail, however, it will be useful to consider Nietzsche's description of individual existence in order to determine exactly why he believes that these strategies are required to redeem life in the first place.

The Nature of Individual Existence

The first part of Clark's thesis is that Nietzsche adopts Schopenhauer's basic description of human existence: "Nietzsche regards as the truth not simply Schopenhauer's metaphysical doctrine of the world as will but, more importantly, the conclusion that Schopenhauer drew from it, that life is not worth living" (Clark, 84).[5] Clark believes that this pessimistic view of life is clearly discernible in two of Nietzsche's ideas: "the terrible wisdom of Silenus" (see BT § 3: 42) and the "horrible truth" of Hamlet (see BT § 7: 60). And as we shall see, Clark argues that the contradictions in section 18 emerge because "Nietzsche is accepting this 'truth' but is attempting to avoid the conclusion Schopenhauer drew from it: that the ascetic life is the highest life, that only negation of the will brings redemption" (Clark, 84). A thumb-nail

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[5]In contrast to both Clark and Nietzsche, I am going to distinguish explicitly the descriptive part of pessimism from the evaluative component of pessimism. Clark conflates these when she claims that Nietzsche says life is not worth living. The problem with this statement is that it does not sufficiently emphasize the fact that Nietzsche is trying to accept Schopenhauer's pessimistic description of life while rejecting his recommendations.

sketch of Schopenhauer's arguments for pessimism will provide the grounds for a comparison with Nietzsche's own description of human existence. We will then be in a better position to evaluate Clark's claim.

In *The World as Will and Representation,* Schopenhauer argues that human life involves inescapable suffering and a general lack of satisfaction. These are not merely accidental features but are instead a necessary facet of any human life. In short, human suffering and dissatisfaction are built into the structure of reality. Schopenhauer offers at least two kinds of supporting argument. Both attempt to show that suffering and dissatisfaction result from the nature of the underlying metaphysical ground and its relation to individuals. First, then, consider Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Schopenhauer, following Kant, accepts that there is a metaphysical distinction between phenomena and reality-in-itself. Perceiving subjects contribute the forms of space, time, and causality to all phenomena. Therefore, subjects (normally) only know reality as phenomena: "The world is my representation" (WWR I: 3).[6] By contrast, reality-in-itself is independent of how things appears to subjects; it is not conditioned by the three forms of consciousness. Can we know anything about reality-in-itself? According to Schopenhauer, the forms of space and time distinguish objects as individuals and thus together constitute what he calls "the *principium individuationis.*" Since reality-in-itself is independent of this *principium,* it must follow that reality-in-itself "is free from all plurality, although its phenomena in time and space are innumerable" (WWR I: 113). Schopenhauer's general metaphysical position amounts to a version of neo-Kantian idealism. Reality consists of both a phenomenal world of individuated objects existing within

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[6]Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* trans. E.F.J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1969). All references embedded: (WWR I or II: page).

the framework of space, time, and causality; and an underlying metaphysical ground which is completely unindividuated.

Contrary to Kant, however, Schopenhauer argues that each of us has a special kind of access to reality-in-itself. This is possible, he believes, because each of us has a special experience of his own body. We know representations from the perspective of external perceivers, but we additionally know one of these representations from the inside as well. Schopenhauer contends that this special representation is our own body and that the feeling of our subjective willing constitutes such inner knowledge. He further claims that it gives us an access point to reality-in-itself. Schopenhauer's arguments in support of these claims are too involved to dwell on right now.[7] However, we can say that he goes on to claim that reality-in-itself, or the underlying metaphysical unity, is best thought of as a blind and incessant striving which he also chooses to call "will." This is the "world as will" in the title of his *magnum opus*. The world will is the essential kernel of all individuals. Individuals, in other words, are most fundamentally constituted by a meaningless and endless striving. Another way Schopenhauer describes the relation between the world will and individuals is that individuals are all different objectifications of this single metaphysical will. "By objectification, I understand self-presentation or self-exhibition in the real corporeal world" (WWR II: 245). In other words, an individual is merely one way in which the world will objectifies itself within the realm of representations.

Given this metaphysical position, we can now examine Schopenhauer's arguments in support of the idea that suffering is written into the very structure of reality. The first argument pertains to all living

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[7]I take up the details of his justification for this move in connection with Nietzsche's criticism of Schopenhauer's conception of will below.

things. First, Schopenhauer believes that the state of nature is a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, a war of all against all. He says, for example, that "everywhere in nature we see contest, struggle and the fluctuation of victory" (WWR I: 146). This is the case because the world will, which is a meaningless and incessant striving, manifests itself in all living individuals as an instinct for continued existence: "Every glance at the world . . . confirms and establishes that the will-to-live, far from being an arbitrary hypostasis or even an empty expression, is the only true description of the world's innermost nature. Everything presses and pushes towards *existence*. . ." (WWR II: 350). The main consequence of this universal will to live is that all living things most fundamentally direct their energies toward self-preservation. This underlying egoism, in turn, compels them to destroy one another in the ongoing fight for limited resources such as food and shelter. Therefore, as Schopenhauer says, "This world is the battle-ground of tormented and agonized beings who continue to exist only by devouring each other" (WWR II: 581).

In addition to this argument about the overall state of conflict in nature, there is a second argument which applies more specifically to human beings. Schopenhauer argues that human beings have an additional burden which stems from their consciousness and ability to direct their subjective wills at specific aims:

> We have . . . recognized this striving, that constitutes the kernel and in-itself of everything, as the same thing that in us, where it manifests itself most distinctly in the light of full consciousness, is called will. We call its hindrance through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary goal, suffering; its attainment satisfaction, well-being, happiness. [. . .] For all striving springs from want or deficiency, from dissatisfaction with one's own state or condition, and is therefore suffering so long as it is not satsified. No satisfaction, however, is lasting; on the contrary, it is always merely the starting-point of a fresh striving. We see

> striving everywhere impeded in many ways, everywhere struggling and fighting, and hence always as suffering. Thus that there is no ultimate aim of striving means that there is no measure or end of suffering. (WWR I: 309)

Dissatisfaction is built into the scheme of things precisely because there can never be an end to willing. On one hand, whenever we strive for something we are without the object we seek. We therefore feel dissatisfaction as a result of deficiency. On the other hand, when we finally achieve our goal, we almost immediately become bored and begin striving after some new goal. The upshot, according to this line of reasoning, is that willing has no permanent end; we can therefore have no true satisfaction.

Both of these arguments are open to objections.[8] Although we might be inclined to agree with Schopenhauer's insights in the first argument about the existence of struggle in nature and the way that life is cruel to many creatures, it seems to be the case that many of these war-like conditions have been either eliminated or minimized for a not insignificant number of human beings through improved social arrangements and technological innovations. However, even if this were true, Schopenhauer could point to the second of the two arguments to suggest that despite improvements to our material lives, suffering and dissatisfaction are nonetheless unavoidable. We might then object to his assumption in the second argument that only a permanent end to willing constitutes true satisfaction. We might say, for example, that true satisfaction need not be permanent. Furthermore, we could object to the implicit contention that all instances of striving constitute examples of suffering. Sometimes, that is, striving itself provides a certain

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[8]For an example of a more in-depth criticism of Schopenhauer's arguments for pessimism, see Ivan Soll, "Pessimism and the Tragic View of Life: Reconsiderations of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*," in *Reading Nietzsche*, ed. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 111-12.

satisfaction, especially when we recognize that this striving is taking us progressively closer to our end goal. Finally, we could attack Schopenhauer's notion that boredom occurs immediately after obtaining any goal. Although this may be the case with certain trivial goals, success at highly valued activities will likely have more lasting effects.

It is not my main purpose to criticize Schopenhauer's arguments for pessimism at length. Despite these and possibly other problems with these arguments for pessimism, Nietzsche seems to accept this general description of life at face value. Clark argues that Nietzsche's acceptance of the Schopenhauerian description of life is evident in two of the *Birth's* notions: "the terrible wisdom of Silenus" and "the horrible truth of Hamlet." First, consider "the wisdom of Silenus," which occurs within the account of epic poetry in section 3. Nietzsche contends that the Greeks literally created their mythology of the Olympian gods as a response to an awareness of the essential character of life. We need not concern ourselves with the details of this account right now. However, it *is* important to notice that Nietzsche does assert that the "Greek knew and felt the terror and horror of existence" (BT § 3: 42). This remark implies that Nietzsche takes life to be characterized by terror and horror. He does not say that the Greeks felt *that* existence was terrible and horrible. Instead, he claims that these Greeks actually knew about life's terror and horror. Nietzsche further calls this knowledge "folk wisdom" and suggests that it is best exemplified by the wise words of Silenus to King Midas: "What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is--to die soon" (BT § 3: 42). The terrible wisdom of Silenus does seem to support Clark's contention that Nietzsche accepts the Schopenhauerian description of life. Schopenhauer even quotes this very same passage in the original Greek in the second

volume of book 4 of *The World as Will and Representation* (see WWR II: 587). This further strengthens the claim that Nietzsche was influenced by and even adopts Schopenhauer's description of human existence.

Second, consider what Nietzsche calls Hamlet's "horrible truth." The discussion of this idea occurs in the context of Nietzsche's initial treatment of tragedy and its supposed effects in section 7. Nietzsche says that under the rapture of the Dionysian state, Dionysian man gains an insight into the true nature of things. "In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked *truly into the essence of things*, [my emphasis] they have gained *knowledge*. . ." (BT § 7: 60). The suggestion is that this knowledge is not merely knowledge of surface phenomena, but, instead, knowledge of something deeper and more fundamental. Nietzsche goes on: "Conscious of this truth he has once seen, man now sees everywhere only *the horror or absurdity of existence*; [my emphasis] now he understands the wisdom of the sylvan god, Silenus. . ." (BT § 7: 60). Once again, Nietzsche clearly implies that existence is horrible and that the Greeks, who were susceptible to the deepest suffering, were quite aware of this truth.

The wisdom of Silenus and the truth of Hamlet directly correspond to many of Schopenhauer's claims about individual existence. Consider, for example, that Schopenhauer says "the shortness of life, so often lamented, may perhaps be the best thing about it" (WWR I: 325). This general attitude toward life seems to be virtually identical to those words which Nietzsche takes from the mouth of Silenus. Schopenhauer further says, "If . . . we were to bring to the sight of everyone the terrible sufferings and afflictions to which his life is constantly exposed, he would be seized with horror" (WWR I: 325). Again, we find Schopenhauer employing the same terminology (i.e. "terrible" and "horror") in describing life that Nietzsche himself later adopts.

Although it seems clear that Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer's basic description of life, does it follow that Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, believes that suffering and a general lack of satisfaction are essential features, and not just contingent facts, of existence? We do get hints that Nietzsche thinks that these aspects of life are not contingent. For example, when he describes the acquisition of Silenus' folk wisdom, Nietzsche says, "Now it is as if the Olympic magic mountain had opened before us *and revealed its roots to us*" (BT § 3: 42, my emphasis). The suggestion is that the knowledge constituting Silenus' folk wisdom is knowledge of the essence of things. Similarly, with respect to Hamlet's horrible truth, Nietzsche says that like Hamlet, Dionysian man is gripped by nausea because of the realization that "action could not change anything *in the eternal nature of things. . .*" (BT § 7: 60, my emphasis). In both of these passages, then, Nietzsche suggests that the terrible and horrifying elements of life go right to the heart of things. There is at least one final indication that Nietzsche thinks human existence is essentially horrible and terrible. In his attack on the Socratic, or theoretical, view of the world in section 15, Nietzsche argues that Socratic optimism is based on a fundamental mistake, or illusion, and that this illusion is the idea that "thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of correcting it" (BT § 15: 95). The suggestion is that no amount of theoretical knowledge or technical ability will be able to alter the basic human condition.

Although Clark is correct in claiming that Nietzsche adopts the basic Schopenhauerian pessimistic description of life, it remains unclear that he does so as a consequence of accepting Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Whereas Schopenhauer provides relatively detailed arguments in support of his pessimism, Nietzsche merely assumes that life is terrible and horrible. It is quite surprising, in fact, that when one turns to the text of *The Birth of*

Tragedy, one finds no discussion which tries to justify this pessimism. This may be one indication of the enormous influence Schopenhauer's writings exercised on Nietzsche. Whatever may be the case in this regard, it is clear that Nietzsche simply treats the pessimistic description of life as axiomatic.

Responses to the Condition of Life

The second part of Clark's thesis is that Nietzsche tries to avoid Schopenhauer's response to this truth about life. In fact, much of Nietzsche's motivation for investigating the history and effects of Greek art is to show how the Greeks avoided the kind of conclusion which Schopenhauer drew from his pessimistic starting point. Faced with the description of life outlined above, Schopenhauer advocates a denial of the will. He claims, for example, that such resignation is "the road to salvation" (WWR II: 634). The basic idea is that if willing is the root cause of suffering, then suffering can be alleviated only by minimizing such willing.[9] Schopenhauer's preferred response to the terrible truth of life is thus a version of asceticism, which he calls "quietism," or "the giving up of all willing. . ." (WWR II: 613). And with respect to tragic drama more specifically, Schopenhauer argues that all true tragedies concretely illustrate how human striving is inevitably futile. Spectators see that striving leads only to increased pain. Therefore, according to Schopenhauer, the function of tragedy is to foster an attitude of resignation in the spectator:

> The peculiar effect of tragedy rests ultimately on the fact that it shakes that inborn error [i.e. the notion that we exist in order to be happy], since it furnishes a vivid illustration of the frustration of human effort and of the vanity of this whole existence in a

[9]This logic is virtually identical to that in the Buddhist doctrine of "The Four Noble Truths."

> great and striking example, and thereby reveals life's deepest meaning; for this reason, tragedy is recognized as the sublimest form of poetry (WWR II: 635).

Nietzsche rejects this view of tragedy and Schopenhauer's thesis that life can be redeemed only by withdrawing from it. In fact, Nietzsche attempts to show that human existence can be affirmed even while one is acutely aware of the horrifying condition of individual life. The Greeks are the counterexample to Schopenhauer; they created a supremely vibrant culture despite their awareness of the unavoidable pain of existence.

Nietzsche discusses what Clark calls three "redemptive strategies" the Greeks purportedly employed at different periods of their history to overcome their terror and horror: the Dionysian, the Apollonian, and the Socratic. He implicitly ranks these strategies, preferring the Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetic strategies to the theoretical one found in the Socratic strategy. He further values the Dionysian over the Apollonian. As Clark says, "When we ask for the basis of Nietzsche's apparent value hierarchy . . . the answer seems to lie in the comparative truthfulness of the strategies" (Clark, 77).

The Socratic strategy, which Nietzsche associates with theoretical inquiry and rational discourse, is historically the last of the three strategies to appear in ancient Greece. It makes life seem worth living by assuming that existence is thoroughly comprehensible and that the problems of life are thus correctable. In short, it rests on "the faith in the explicability of nature and in knowledge as a panacea" (BT § 17: 106). Nietzsche calls this attitude "optimism": "the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of correcting it" (BT § 15: 95). The problem with the Socratic strategy is that its optimism is completely based on an illusion. Science and theory cannot comprehend the true nature of reality

because, following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche believes that ultimate reality is totally beyond the reach of normal knowledge. This explains why Nietzsche praises Kant and Schopenhauer for revealing the limits of reason: "The extraordinary courage and wisdom of Kant and Schopenhauer have succeeded in gaining the most difficult victory, the victory over the optimism concealed in the essence of logic. . ." (BT § 18: 112). Both demonstrated that we can never have theoretical knowledge of the ultimate truth about things because we are restricted to knowledge of how the mind perceives things.

The Apollonian strategy is actually the first of the three strategies to appear in ancient Greece. Nietzsche associates it with the Homeric period and claims that its dominant art was epic poetry and its accompanying Olympian mythology. The so-called cheerfulness of the Greeks of this period was not actually "naïve," as the conventional scholarly view of the day had assumed: "The Homeric 'naiveté' can be understood only as the complete victory of Apollonian illusion. . ." (BT § 3: 44). Nietzsche argues that the Greeks literally created their Olympian gods as a response to knowledge of the true nature of life: "The Greek knew and felt the horror of existence. That he might endure this terror at all, he had to interpose between himself and life the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians" (BT § 3: 42). These gods acted as the illusion in the Apollonian strategy.

How did mythology allow the Greeks to live affirmatively? Nietzsche suggests that Olympian mythology acts as a "transfiguring mirror" which transforms human life by glorifying individual existence. The mirror shows human beings participating in the same reality as the gods:

> Thus do the gods justify the life of man: they themselves live it--the only satisfactory theodicy! Existence under the bright sunshine of such gods is regarded as desirable in itself, and the real pain of Homeric men is caused by parting from it, especially

> by early parting: so that now, reversing the wisdom of Silenus, we might say of the Greeks that "to die soon is the worst of all for them, the next worst--to die at all." (BT §3: 43)

All aspects of existence, even the painful or otherwise ugly ones, are glorified and made to be supremely valuable by their participation in this higher truth. Put differently, the gods act as an Apollonian veil of beauty which is thrown over the empirical world.

Unlike the Socratic strategy, the Apollonian is not completely based on an illusion about reality. In other words, it incorporates illusion, but it also involves an awareness that the empirical world is only an appearance world. Nietzsche explains this idea by means of an analogy with dreams. We intensely enjoy our dreams and delight in contemplating the beautiful forms found in these dreams. This is the case even though we often are aware that we are dreaming. The fact that the dream figures are illusions does not detract from the pleasure we take in them. In fact, Nietzsche goes so far as to claim that the dream image, in a sense, is more real than empirical life because it is the "mere appearance of mere appearance" and is thus the "higher appeasement of the primordial desire for mere appearance" (BT § 4: 45).[10]

Finally, consider the Dionysian strategy. Although Nietzsche claims that tragedy is "an equally Apollonian and Dionysian form of art" (e.g. see BT §1: 33). According to Clark, the term "Dionysian" is an appropriate label for tragedy because the Dionysian element provides tragedy with its key effect. The Apollonian component merely supplies the dialogue and drama on the stage. How, then, does tragedy redeem? The experience of tragedy provides individuals with what Nietzsche calls "metaphysical comfort," and which Clark interprets as follows: "Redemption is gained through identification

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[10]The basis for this idea probably comes from Schopenhauer, who claims that it is in the nature of the world will to objectify itself in the world of representations.

with something that is more important than individuals, something that remains powerful while the individual is destroyed" (Clark, 76-77). This interpretation is supported by other claims scattered throughout the text, such as the following: "metaphysical comfort . . . [is the feeling] that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable. . ." (BT §7: 59).

According to Clark, Nietzsche prefers the Dionysian strategy found in tragedy to the other two strategies because it redeems in the full light of the truth about reality. Whereas the Socratic and Apollonian involve illusions, the Dionysian strategy is based solely on truth. Clark attempts to support this interpretation by focusing on three passages in which she thinks Nietzsche claims that tragedy gives human beings direct access to reality-in-itself. In the first passage, Nietzsche contrasts Apollo and Dionysus:

> Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the eternity of phenomenon; here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by lies from the features of nature. In Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism the same nature cries to us in its true, undissembled voice: "Be as I am! Amid the ceaseless flux of phenomena, the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally finding satisfaction in this change of phenomena!" (Clark, 78, quoting BT §16: 104)

The second passage appears even more explicitly to support Clark's view that Dionysian art provides access to reality-in-itself:

> Dionysian art, too, wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence; only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them. We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of individual existence--yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the hustle of the changing figures. We are really for a moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire of existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena now appear necessary to us in view of the excess of countless forms of

> existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will. (Clark, 79, quoting BT §17: 104)

At first glance, these claims appear to confirm Clark's view that Dionysian art puts us in touch with what Schopenhauer calls "will." As Clark says, tragedy gives metaphysical comfort by allowing its spectators to transcend the subject-object relation: "And this is precisely how Nietzsche describes Dionysian experience: we become one with reality in itself, which following Schopenhauer, he calls 'will.' There is no longer any separation of subject and object to distort the truth" (Clark, 79). Finally, Clark points to a third passage from Nietzsche's discussion of lyric poetry in section 5 to support this idea. Nietzsche says that

> all our knowledge of art is basically quite illusory, because as knowing beings we are not one and identical with that being which, as the sole author and spectator of this comedy of art, prepares a perpetual entertainment for itself. Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world [Nietzsche's reinterpretation of Schopenhauer's will], does he know anything of the eternal essence of art; for in that state he is . . . at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator. (Clark, 79, quoting BT §5: 52)

Given this interpretation of the Dionysian effect, we are now in a better position to see exactly how Clark believes that the contradictions in section 18 emerge. She argues that Dionysus cannot represent both the truth about life *and* the affirmation of existence at the same time. In fact, she believes that Nietzsche's whole conception of Dionysus is infected from the outset with an ambivalence regarding truth and affirmation. On one hand, Clark believes that the "truth revealed in tragedy--the horror of individual existence and the underlying oneness of all being--is identified solely with Dionysus" (Clark, 80). On the other hand, however, she thinks that Nietzsche tries to endow this experience with a quality of "metaphysical comfort" in order to make it

life-affirming.

This ambivalence of the Dionysian is finally highlighted in section 18, when Nietzsche is forced to admit that tragedy's metaphysical comfort "is just another illusion" (Clark, 80). As Clark says,

> What surfaces in section 18 is the conflict between his acceptance of Schopenhauer's values and his desire to reject them (in terms of the *Genealogy*, between the ascetic ideal, which is responsible for both indictments of existence and metaphysics, and the life-affirming ethic that Nietzsche would later develop. The book's major contradictions are an expression of, and an unsuccessful attempt to resolve, this ambivalence. (Clark, 85)

Whenever Nietzsche associates Dionysus with the affirmation of life, it follows that Dionysus must then be considered an illusion. And Nietzsche does this in the first part of the section 18 passage when puts the Apollonian, Dionysian, and Socratic on a par as "three stages of illusion." On the other hand, however, when Nietzsche associates Dionysus with truth, it follows that Dionysus must represent negation of the will. Clark thinks that Nietzsche does this in the last part of the passage from section 18 where he claims that tragic culture is a Buddhistic culture. Clark concludes that the text is incoherent and suggests that this is why Nietzsche spent so much of his later career rejecting it. Her assessment places the *Birth* firmly within Nietzsche's juvenilia. This idea even appears to find some support in Nietzsche's subsequent criticisms of the book. In "The Attempt at Self-criticism," for example, Nietzsche describes the *Birth* as a youthful work and criticizes many of its features. He calls it "an impossible book" and says that it "is marked by every defect of youth" (BT ASC§ 2: 18).

Nietzsche's Criticisms of Schopenhauer

Clark's whole explanation relies on the assumption that Dionysian art

provides spectators with metaphysical truth. She not only assumes this to be the case, but she quotes those three passages where Nietzsche appears to say this explicitly. One way to begin to undermine Clark's account is to question the whole idea that tragedy provides any such metaphysical truth. In an early text entitled *"Fragment einer Kritik der Schopenhauerischen Philosophie"* (c. 1867), Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer's metaphysical distinction between representation and will .[11] He offers four arguments which try to establish that Schopenhauer's conception of the will must collapse into a form of appearance. If Nietzsche really believed the arguments found in this fragment, then we minimally ought to be suspicious of Clark's assumption that Nietzsche incorporates this very view of metaphysics into the *Birth*. It would seem that, by implication, Nietzsche should have been inclined to reject the idea that we can ever have access to reality-in-itself.

In the first argument, Nietzsche claims that Schopenhauer's whole notion of reality-in-itself is "merely a concealed category."[12] Schopenhauer's starting point, as noted above, is a version of Kantian idealism. He assumes the truth of the distinction between phenomena and reality-in-itself. Nietzsche, however, questions this division, claiming that reality-in-itself is not really something mind-independent. Instead, Nietzsche claims that reality-in-itself is merely a theoretical postulate.

The second criticism focuses on Schopenhauer's arguments for equating reality-in-itself with will. Nietzsche argues that what Schopenhauer "puts in the place of the Kantian x, namely, the will, is engendered only with

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[11]*Gesammelte Werke, Mausarionausgabe,* vol. 1, *"Fragment einer Kritik der Schopenhauer-ischen Philosophie"* (Munich: Mausarion Verlag, 1920-29), 392-401. I have relied upon translations of several passages by John Sallis, *Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 63-66.

[12]Sallis, 64. Cf. Mausarion 1: 394.

the help of an intuition."[13] Consider Schopenhauer's arguments for the notion that reality-in-itself is will which I passed over without much comment above. Schopenhauer contends that human beings have a special access to reality-in-itself through the experience they have of their own bodies. Each of us experiences his body in two distinct ways:

> It is given in intelligent perception as representation, as an object among objects, liable to the laws of these objects. But it is also given in quite a different way, namely as what is known immediately to everyone, and is denoted by the word will. (WWR I: 100)

My willing to do something and my body's actually doing it are not two causally related events. Instead, Schopenhauer believes that they are two descriptions of a single event: "The action of the body is nothing but the act of will objectified, i.e., translated into perception" (WWR I: 100). Body is the will objectified in the realm of representations. Given the experience of one's own subjective will, Schopenhauer thinks it follows that will should be extended to all representations. The argument appears to be a rejection of solipsism: "But whether the objects known to the individual only as representations are yet, like his own body, phenomena of will is . . . the proper meaning of the question of the external world. To deny this is the meaning of theoretical egoism. . ." (WWR I: 104). While other human beings are representations for me, it is only reasonable for me to believe that these representations also possess subjective wills just like the representation called "my body." To do otherwise would be to endorse solipsism, and solipsism would "be found only in a madhouse" (WWR I: 104). Schopenhauer concludes that it is most reasonable to believe that all representations have will and that every representation is a different objectification of the single world will.

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[13]Ibid.

Nietzsche, in his criticism of these arguments, claims that there is no logical justification for equating will with reality-in-itself. In fact, he calls it a mere "poetic intuition."[14] This criticism can be supported in at least two ways. First, we can criticize Schopenhauer's claim about the experience of one's body providing a special access to reality-in-itself. At first glance, it is very difficult to imagine an *experience* as anything but phenomenal and thus conditioned by the forms of consciousness. Nietzsche articulates this criticism in a note written much later in his career, probably around 1885-6: "But even supposing there were an in-itself, an unconditioned thing, it would for that very reason be unknowable! Something unconditioned cannot be known; otherwise it would not be unconditioned!"[15]

Schopenhauer seems to have been vaguely aware of this difficulty. In the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, in fact, he takes up the following defence:

> But the inner knowledge [of my will] is free from two forms belonging to outer knowledge, the form of space, and the form of causality which brings about all sense-perception. On the other hand, there still remains the form of time, as well as that of being known and of knowing in general. Accordingly, in this inner knowledge the thing-in-itself has indeed to a great extent cast off its veils, but still does not appear quite naked. (WWR II: 197)

Surely, however, this defence is not satisfactory. In fact, the passage seems to amount to an admission of failure. Schopenhauer admits that our experience of will is conditioned by the form of time. However, even this single form of consciousness is sufficient to distort the supposedly pure nature of reality-in-itself.

Some scholars dispute this interpretation of Schopenhauer's position.

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §555, 301.

Bryan Magee, for example, argues that Schopenhauer never claims that we have access to reality-in-itself.[16] Instead, Magee believes that for Schopenhauer our experience of will is phenomenal. According to Magee, Schopenhauer is actually "contrasting two different kinds of phenomenal knowledge."[17] On one hand, there is the knowledge of material objects "outside" of ourselves. On the other hand, there is a direct phenomenal knowledge we have of ourselves from within. The mistake is to think that Schopenhauer is claiming that the second of these two forms of phenomenal knowledge constitutes knowledge of reality-in-itself. The phenomenal will is merely a *manifestation* of the metaphysical will. We have access to our phenomenal will, but not to any metaphysical will. Although we cannot know reality-in-itself directly, we can know some things *about* it. Amongst other things, for example, Schopenhauer claims that the metaphysical will must be one and undifferentiated. Magee argues that all of "this confusion would have been avoided if Schopenhauer had spelt out the distinction . . . between 'knowing' and 'knowing about.'"[18]

Although this debate about Schopenhauer's use of the term "will" is an important issue, I suggest that it is beside the point in this particular context. If Magee is correct about Schopenhauer's use of "will," then Nietzsche's own interpretation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics is incorrect. However, what is at issue right now is whether Nietzsche incorporated his own (possibly incorrect) interpretation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics into the *Birth*. In other words, even if Nietzsche misinterpreted Schopenhauer's position, the more pressing question is whether he advocated this "misinterpreted"

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[16]Bryan Magee, *Misunderstanding Schopenhauer*, The 1989 Bithell Memorial Lecture (University of London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1990).

[17]Ibid., 10.

[18]Ibid., 15.

position at any time. It would seem that he did not.

Another way to support Nietzsche's second criticism is to question Schopenhauer's argument for extending will to all representations. While we might be inclined to admit that it is reasonable to extend will to other human beings, the inference to all other representations seems rationally unjustifiable. Whereas other human beings behave in very similar ways to me and thus must possess a will, I have no grounds for believing that rocks, for example, possess a will anything like mine. Admittedly, Schopenhauer thinks that this extension of will can be used to explain phenomena like iron being drawn to magnets or water running downhill. Yet this extrapolation from living to non-living nature is highly problematic; it is merely "a poetic intuition."

In the third criticism of the fragment, Nietzsche charges Schopenhauer with inconsistently attributing predicates to the world will which should be restricted to phenomena:

> We must protest against the predicates that Schopenhauer attributes to his will, which, for something utterly unthinkable, sound much too determinate and are derived from the opposition to the world of representation; whereas between the thing-in-itself and the appearance the concept of opposition does not have any meaning.[19]

This criticism can be supported by considering the claim that the will is outside of space and time. Schopenhauer draws the conclusion that the will cannot be susceptible to the *principium individuation* and therefore must be "free from all plurality." He also claims that it "lacks individuation." Each of these predicates is the result of mere oppositional thinking, however. Schopenhauer begins with a set of predicates that apply to phenomena, and

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[19]Sallis, 65. Cf. Mausarion 1: 394.

then he merely inverts them to deduce the supposed predicates of the will.

Nietzsche's fourth criticism is similar to the third: "All predicates of the will are taken from the world of appearance."[20] Nietzsche specifically refers to the supposed predicates of the will such as eternity and unity. However, these predicates could have no meaning outside the domain of human knowledge, which is, of course, confined to the world of appearances. To take one other example, Schopenhauer says that "variance with itself [is] essential to the will" (WWR I: 146). Variance, however, is clearly a phenomenal quality. We thus find that Schopenhauer's conception of the will is thoroughly infected with the sorts of predicates that should be restricted to the domain of phenomena.

The upshot of these four criticisms is that Schopenhauer's attempt to maintain the distinction between appearance and will fails. In fact, John Sallis goes so far as to conclude the following from this fragment: "Borrowing a title from *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), one may say that already in this very early text, already well in advance of *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is announced that the 'true world' has finally become a fable."[21] Sallis makes reference here to the passage in *Twilight* in which Nietzsche adduces five stages in the history of metaphysics, the last of which dispenses with the very notion of a metaphysical true world. Sallis suggests that Nietzsche had achieved this stage by the time he wrote the *Birth*. Although I cannot hope to argue for this here, it seems to me that Sallis overshoots the mark in drawing this conclusion. Nevertheless, it ought to be clear from the fragment of Schopenhauer that the standard interpretation, which relies on the view that

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[20]Sallis., 66. Cf. Mausarion 1: 397.

[21]Sallis, 66. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable," *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin, 1954), 485-86.

Nietzsche accepted Schopenhauer's metaphysics, should be regarded with a good deal of suspicion.

By merely listing and expanding on some of Nietzsche's early criticisms of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, I have not defeated Clark's interpretation. It is possible, for example, that Nietzsche changed his mind about Schopenhauer's position after he wrote the 1867 fragment and that he reverted back to that position by 1871. Another possibility is that Nietzsche did not publish what he really thought. We could speculate, for example, that he was afraid of offending Wagner, who was himself a self-proclaimed Schopenhauerian and to whom the *Birth* was originally dedicated. I shall not pursue these suggestions here any further. Instead, I want to continue to build a case against Clark's reading by suggesting that there are indications in the published text that the Schopenhauerian metaphysical language in the *Birth* should not be taken literally. In other words, I suggest that Nietzsche's description of the experience of tragedy as one of unification with primordial being, which Clark equates with Dionysus or will, is merely metaphorical.

First, consider the initial passage which Clark quotes (see Clark, 79; cf. BT §16: 104). This is the passage in which Nietzsche contrasts the effects of Apollonian and Dionysian art. Immediately preceding this passage, Nietzsche discusses the metaphysical comfort which tragedy provides. He says that "in particular examples of such annihilation [i.e. of the individual tragic hero] we see clearly the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art, which gives expression to the will in its omnipotence, as it were [*gleichsam*], behind the *principium individuationis*, the eternal life beyond all phenomena, and despite all annihilation" (BT §16: 104; KGW III 1: §16: 105). Clark does not mention this sentence, which occurs only two short sentences before the passage she quotes. The qualifying phrase, "*gleichsam*" in this context is significant. The

German means "as it were," "so to speak," or "as if," and it therefore seems to indicate that Nietzsche is not speaking literally.[22] Notice also that Nietzsche says in Clark's quotation that the effect of Dionysian art is conveyed by "its tragic symbolism." In other words, he seems to say that tragedy does not literally return us to an underlying reality, but that it only symbolizes such a return.

This same qualifying phrase (i.e. *gleichsam*) occurs immediately prior to the second passage Clark quotes from section 17 (see Clark, 79; cf. BT §17: 104). The omitted sentence is as follows: "We are pierced by the maddening sting of these pains just when we have become, as it were [*gleichsam*], one with the infinite primordial joy in existence, and we anticipate, in Dionysian ecstacy, the indestructibility and eternity of this joy" (BT §17: 104-5; KGW III 1 §17: 105). The subsequent sentences which Clark does quote describe metaphysical comfort in terms of the spectator being "for a moment primordial being itself." However, the term "*gleichsam*" before this claim qualifies the description of metaphysical comfort. The German indicates that this description should not be interpreted as a literal unification with primordial being.

Finally, the third passage Clark cites is also preceded by the term "g*leichsam*." The passage comes from section 5, where Nietzsche discusses lyric poetry (see Clark, 79; cf. BT §5: 52). He says that the lyric poet becomes one with the "primordial artist of the world," which Clark interprets as Nietzsche's modified conception of the Schopenhauerian will. Only three sentences before this conclusion, however, Nietzsche says: "Insofar as the subject is the artist, however, he has been released from his individual will,

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[22]*Langenscheidt New College German Dictionary* (1990), s.v. "*Gleichsam*."

and has become, as it were [*gleichsam*], the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance" (BT §5: 52; KGW III 1 §5: 43). As in the other two passages considered above, the qualifying phrase, "*gleichsam*," once again indicates that Nietzsche's use of Schopenhauerian jargon is merely a metaphorical description intended to assist the reader in understanding the effect of Dionysian art.

This interpretation of the Schopenhauerian language as metaphorical is also suggested by statements elsewhere in the text. When Nietzsche introduces the Apollonian and Dionysian principles, for example, he describes the Dionysian thus: "Now, with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if [*als ob*] the veil of maya had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity" (BT §1: 37; cf. KGW III 1 §1: 25). Notice that Nietzsche does not say the veil of maya really *is* torn aside; he only claims that it feels *as if* it were torn aside. Additionally, Nietzsche's language in the early sections of the book is full of metaphors. For example, he says that under "the charm of the Dionysian," "earth proffers her gifts, and peacefully the beasts of prey of the rocks and desert approach. The chariot of Dionysus is covered with flowers and garlands; panthers and tigers walk under its yolk" (BT § 1: 37). Surely readers are not expected to take these sentences literally. Instead, Nietzsche uses such metaphors to give us a sense of what Dionysian rapture must be like.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have taken a decisive step toward rejecting Clark's standard interpretation. I attempted to cast doubt on her explanation of the section 18

contradictions by questioning her assumption that tragedy provides its spectators with metaphysical truth. Although there do seem to be *prima facie* reasons for interpreting the Apollonian and Dionysian duality as reinscribing Schopenhauer's distinction between representation and will, there is also evidence from outside the *Birth* which clearly illustrates Nietzsche's early dissatisfaction with Schopenhauer's metaphysics. I have further attempted to show that, upon closer examination, the Schopenhauerian terminology in the *Birth* used to explain the experience of tragedy should not be interpreted literally. Admittedly, I have not yet established this view with certainty, nor have I defeated Clark's position. However, I suggest that there is sufficient evidence against her version of the standard interpretation to warrant consideration of an alternate account which does attempt to square the Schopenhauerian claims in the *Birth* with the unpublished criticisms of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

CHAPTER 2
THE POSTMODERNIST READING

Paul de Man offers an alternative to the standard interpretation which purports to reconcile the Schopenhauerian claims in the *Birth* with the existence of the unpublished criticisms of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. De Man argues that Nietzsche does not really believe those Schopenhauerian doctrines about the metaphysical will which appear at crucial places in the *Birth*. He believes that Nietzsche, instead, asserts these claims about the will in an ironic fashion in order to show the contradictory results which follow from any attempt to hold them. On this view, the section 18 contradictions exist in order to illustrate these negative consequences. I call de Man's reading "the postmodernist reading" because it attributes to Nietzsche a postmodernist thesis about the nature of language: that all language is figural and thus incapable of expressing any literal truths whatsoever. I do not wish to suggest that de Man's interpretation is the only postmodernist reading which could be formulated. In fact, other readings of the *Birth* which perhaps deserve the label "postmodern" do exist.[1] However, at this point in my discussion it seems logical to move from Clark's standard reading, which fails to account for Nietzsche's early criticisms of Schopenhauer, to de Man's postmodernist interpretation, which attempts to be consistent with these

[1]For other interpretations which might be considered postmodernist see: Sallis, *Crossings*; Wayne Klein, "Truth and Illusion in *The Birth of Tragedy*." *International Studies in Philosophy* 26(3) (1994) : 137-144; idem, "Tragic Figures: Music and Image in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*." *International Studies in Philosophy* 28(3) (1996) : 17-31.

criticisms.

The purpose of this chapter is to undermine de Man's reading by showing how it fails to correctly interpret some of Nietzsche's terminology. Foremost, de Man fails to recognize that Nietzsche has shifted his meaning of the term "will" away from Schopenhauer's sense. Specifically, I shall argue that Nietzsche's will should be interpreted as the most general form of appearance and not as reality-in-itself. Contrary to de Man, then, the claims about the will in the *Birth* need not be interpreted as ironic assertions. Instead, Nietzsche can assert *and* believe all of those claims about the will which appear throughout the *Birth*. In addition to this mistaken interpretation of Nietzsche's conception of the will, de Man fails to distinguish several important senses of the term "Dionysian." Like Clark, de Man assumes without argument that Nietzsche uses "Dionysus," "Dionysian," "will," and "reality-in-itself" all as synonyms. However, I shall argue that "Dionysus" is not the name which Nietzsche uses for either reality-in-itself or will. Instead, Dionysus is an individuated figure who stands for, or *represents*, reality-in-itself. The key effect of tragedy is to allow spectators to see this figure but not ultimate reality.

The Ironic Reading and Logocentricism

De Man begins by noting that *The Birth of Tragedy* seems to be a theoretical treatise whose primary subject matter is the nature of art: "*The Birth of Tragedy* seems to defend a well-rounded thesis, supported by relevant argument and illustration" (de Man, 83).[2] The thesis in question is that art is of greater value for life than science. This is the thesis with which Clark deals.

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[2]All further references to de Man embedded.

As we have seen, she maintains that Dionysian art is superior to science because Dionysian art provides its spectators with access to reality-in-itself. Science, by contrast, only gives knowledge of appearances. And in accordance with this view, de Man observes that Nietzsche associates truth with Dionysus: "Truth, Presence, Being are all on Dionysos's side" (de Man, 83). De Man further claims that the criterion for valuing art over science has to do with its relative distance from Dionysus: "Sophocles is glorified, Plato and Euripides cast as near-villains because of their greater or lesser proximity to Dionysos. The same criteria apply in the modern period, in the criticism of Florentine opera, of imitative music, and of the modern drama, or reversely, in the extravagant claims made for Wagnarian opera" (de Man, 84).

At the outset, one serious problem that emerges for this project is that Nietzsche seems to employ the very theoretical discourse which he claims to be deficient. In other words, in criticizing the Socratic strategy with theoretical arguments, Nietzsche seems to be involved in arguing against the power of argument. Or put differently, Nietzsche claims to possess the truth even though he says quite explicitly throughout the *Birth* that truth is accessible only through Dionysian art. Nietzsche therefore appears to be caught in a paradox. De Man frames this predicament in the terminology of deconstruction and says that, in fact, Nietzsche's main purpose in the *Birth* is to show the deficiency of logocentricism (de Man, 88). As it has been used by Derrida and other writers, "logocentricism" refers to a set of value commitments which thinkers throughout the history of Western philosophy have typically, and usually uncritically, adopted. Such value commitments include the privileging of truth over illusion, science over art, logic over rhetoric, literal over figurative language, and the spoken over the written

word.[3] Each of these values characterizes what Nietzsche calls the Socratic, or theoretical, view of the world. However, as I already intimated, Nietzsche's problem is that any theoretical argument he might offer against logocentricism would be self-defeating on the grounds that it adopts those logocentric values which it is supposed to criticize.

Whereas Clark might argue that this paradox exhibits the incoherence of the text, de Man maintains that Nietzsche is not really involved in a straight-forward contradiction. In fact, de Man argues that "Nietzsche advocates the use of epistemologically rigorous methods as the only possible means to reflect on the limitations of these methods" (de Man, 86). He believes that rather than directly arguing against logocentric values, Nietzsche attempts to undermine logocentricism more indirectly: "One cannot hold against him the apparent contradiction of using a rational mode of discourse--which he, in fact, never abandoned--in order to prove the inadequacy of this discourse. At the time of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche is entirely in control of this problem and can state it with full thematic clarity..." (de Man, 86). According to de Man, Nietzsche questions the text's logocentricism through a conflict which emerges between the text's explicit theory and its rhetorical praxis. On the side of theory, we have seen that Nietzsche presents the thesis that truth is made present to spectators only in Dionysian art. On the side of rhetorical praxis, he attempts to convey this truth to reader by using the non-Dionysian discourse which he supposedly rejects. However, de Man thinks that this conflict between theory and praxis actually "leaves a residue of meaning that can, in its turn, be translated into . .

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[3]For a definition of "logocentricism," see Clark, 81, citing John Searle, "The Word Turned Upside Down," review of Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, *New York Review of Books*, October 27, 1983, p. 74.

. a statement about the limits of textual authority" (de Man, 99).

Before looking in any further detail at this supposed residue of meaning, it is important to note that de Man's reading shifts the whole emphasis in the *Birth* from the explicit theories about art and tragedy to the purportedly more implicit question (according to de Man) of just what constitutes a philosophical text: "By the very choice of its literary theme, *The Birth of Tragedy* seems concerned, of its own volition, with what a text is or ought to be" (de Man, 87). Consequently, de Man's reading minimizes the importance of Nietzsche's explicit treatment of the problem of pessimism and the three redemptive strategies which form such an integral part of Clark's more standard reading. Instead, de Man suggests that the most fundamental issue in the *Birth* is actually the problem of representation. More specifically, he thinks that Nietzsche attempts to show that assertions in philosophical texts are never really able to represent what they claim to represent. In short, any claim to possess the truth inevitably leads one into self-contradiction.

What evidence does de Man provide for attributing this deconstructive program to Nietzsche? De Man claims that underlying Nietzsche's project is a postmodern assumption about language: "A great deal of evidence points to the likelihood that Nietzsche might be in the grip of a powerful assumption about the nature of language, bound to control his conceptual and rhetorical discourse regardless of whether the author is aware of it or not" (de Man, 87). This insight, according to de Man, is the thesis that all language is figural and thus incapable of stating any literal truths.[4] De Man points to the essay entitled "Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense," written only one year after publication of the *Birth*, as an example of a more explicit statement of

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[4]I do not wish to suggest that this is a necessary condition for an interpretation to be postmodern, only that it seems to be a sufficient one.

this view of language. In this later essay, Nietzsche asks the question "What is truth?" and he responds as follows:

> A moving army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms, in short a summa of human relationships that are being poetically and rhetorically sublimated, transposed, and beautified until, after a long and repeated use, a people considers them as solid, canonical, and unavoidable. Truths are illusions whose illusionary nature has been forgotten, metaphors that have been used up and have lost their imprint and that now operate as mere metal, no longer as coins. (quoted in de Man, 110-11, de Man's translation)

This conception of language, which de Man both endorses and attributes to Nietzsche in the *Birth*, is the idea that "the paradigmatic structure of language is rhetorical rather than representational or expressive of referential, proper meaning. . ." (de Man, 106). Although de Man does not spell out exactly why he believes that this picture of language is plausible, it is presumably because he thinks that language could be literal only if the truth values of sentences were determined by extralinguistic objects. In other words, it appears that de Man thinks language could be literal only if representational realism obtains. He rejects representational realism and believes that Nietzsche also rejects it. De Man concludes that all language must therefore be rhetorical.

There are some assumptions in de Man's reasoning about the nature of language that could be criticized. In fact, the largest section of Clark's essay is devoted to showing the untenability of the thesis that all language is figurative (see Clark, 85-90). Clark attempts to establish that we can reject representational realism and yet retain truth and literal meaning in language. In other words, she believes that de Man countenances a false dilemma: that either representational realism is correct *or* all language is figurative. Clark argues that there is a third option, and she goes explores some recent work by Donald Davidson in an effort to spell out the intricacies of this option. These

details are not important for my purpose here. If Clark is correct about the untenability of the thesis that all language is figurative, then she has only shown that Nietzsche would have been mistaken to hold this view of language (if he ever did indeed hold it). However, she has clearly not established that Nietzsche never, in fact, endorsed this position at the time he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*. When I criticize de Man's interpretation later in this chapter, I shall avoid making any sweeping statements about whether Nietzsche actually believed that *all* language is figurative.

With these reflections about the alleged nature of language in the background, we are now in a position to consider the residue of meaning which de Man believes is generated by the conflict between theory and praxis in Nietzsche's text. This is perhaps best approached by examining one of those Schopenhauerian theses in the *Birth* which supposedly incorporates the dubious view of representation. In section 16, Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer in claiming that "music . . . is not a copy of phenomena, but an immediate copy of the will itself. . ." (BT §16: 100). This statement comes from Schopenhauer's discussion of music in the third book of *The World as Will and Representation* (see WWR I: 257). The curious thing about the appearance of this claim in the *Birth* is that Nietzsche ought to have regarded the whole notion of the metaphysical will with a great deal of suspicion. This is clearly the case, given his critical statements about the will in the 1867 fragment on Schopenhauer.

De Man responds to the existence of this Schopenhauerian claim by saying that Nietzsche asserts it for the purpose of criticizing it: "Given the way the *Birth of Tragedy* is rhetorically organized, Schopenhauer's dictum could only be 'truly contested' by undermining the authority of the narrator from within the dynamics of the text" (de Man, 96-7). De Man suggests that the

authority of the narrator who states this Schopenhauerian position is not undercut by any logical refutation, but rather by showing the reader the contradictions which must follow from attempting to hold the thesis. Thus, Nietzsche's critique of the text's logocentricism does not take place between the text's overt statements in the form of an argument; it actually "happens instead between, on the one hand, metalinguistic statements about the rhetorical nature of language and, on the other hand, a rhetorical praxis that puts these statements into question" (de Man, 98). As de Man says, "Certain formulations in *The Birth of Tragedy* remain enigmatic and cannot be integrated within the value pattern of the main argument" (de Man, 99). One such formulation is the passage from section 18 where Nietzsche says the Dionysian effect is an illusion and that tragic culture is Buddhistic. On de Man's deconstructive reading, these admissions disclose the contradictions which follow from any attempt to hold the metaphysical thesis about music copying the will.

Why should we believe de Man's rhetorical reading? First, de Man dismisses the whole notion that music could be an immediate copy of the will (or, as de Man translates, "an unmediated image of the will [*unmittelbares Abbild des Willens*]) as "a logical absurdity" (de Man, 96; cf. KGW III 1 §16: 102). He then claims that Nietzsche must have rejected it. De Man provides textual evidence in support of this view by excavating the "true rebuttal" of Schopenhauer from the unpublished manuscript material of the *Birth*. Although he makes no mention of the earlier 1867 fragment on Schopenhauer, de Man does cite two other passages from the preparatory outlines of the *Birth* which date from approximately 1870-71.

Both passages from the manuscript material indicate that Nietzsche had moved beyond Schopenhauer's conception of metaphysics by the time he

wrote the *Birth*. In the first passage, Nietzsche says,

> Intelligence is justified in a world of aims. But if it is true that our aims are only a sort of rumination of experiences in which the actual agent remains hidden, then we are not entitled to transfer purposeful systems of action into the nature of things. This means that there is no need to imagine intelligence as capable of representation. Intelligence can only exist in a world of consciousness. In the realm of nature and of necessity, all teleological hypotheses are absurd. Necessity means that there can only be one possibility. Why then do we have to assume the presence of an intellect in the realm of things?--And if the will cannot be conceived without implying its representation, the "will" is not an adequate expression for the core of nature either (de Man, 100; cf. Musarion 3: 239).[5]

For the present purpose, the most relevant point comes in the final sentence of these claims. There, Nietzsche says that it makes no sense to talk about the will as reality-in-itself because anything conceived of by human beings would have to be a phenomenal representation.

In the second of the two passages from the manuscript notes, Nietzsche implicitly criticizes Schopenhauer by clarifying his own revised conception of the relation between music and the will:

> One could object that I myself have declared the 'Will' receives an increasingly adequate symbolic expression in music. To this I reply, in a sentence that summarizes a basic principle of aesthetics: *the Will is the object of music, but not its origin* (de Man, 101; cf. Musarion 3: 344).

Since Nietzsche claims that the will is not the origin of music, de Man concludes that music could never be the immediate copy of the will either. De Man thus believes that, taken together, these two passages illustrate that Nietzsche did not really believe the section 16 claim that music is an immediate copy of the will. De Man further thinks that neither of these manuscript passages could have appeared in the published text, otherwise the

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[5]*Gesammelte Werke, Mausarionausgabe*, vol. 3 (Munich: Mausarion Verlag, 1920-29).

fallacy (that any claim to possess truth will undermine itself and lead to contradiction) could never have been allowed to unfold. In other words, had these overt criticisms appeared in the published text, Nietzsche's own text would merely have become one more attempt to say what, on this view, ought to be unsayable. With respect to the criticism of Schopenhauer in the unpublished notes, then, De Man concludes: "It is hermeneutically satisfying ... that the statement forced upon us by the deconstruction of the main text would reach us, formulated by the same author who also produced this text" (de Man, 101).

One of the primary advantages of de Man's interpretation over Clark's is that it is consistent with these unpublished criticisms of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. In addition, de Man's reading has the merit of interpreting the inconsistencies in section 18 as benign; they are not merely blunders or logical contradictions but a crucial part of the rhetorical machinery of the text. The *Birth* should not be thought of as a regular philosophical work which presumes to state the truth. Instead, de Man's position entails that *The Birth of Tragedy* is a work of art which *shows* what cannot otherwise be stated in direct, theoretical language.

Who is Dionysus?

Before attempting to assess one of de Man's leading assumptions, it will be useful to clarify some of Nietzsche's terminology. In the passages cited near the beginning of the previous section, de Man refers to ultimate reality as "Dionysus." When he first summarizes the text's stated theory of art, for example, he says that "Truth, Presence, Being, are all on Dionysos's side. . ." (de Man, 83). This reference to "Being" indicates that de Man thinks Dionysus *is* ultimate reality. Even more to the point, de Man claims that "Sophocles is

glorified, Plato and Euripides cast as near villains because of their proximity to Dionysos" (de Man, 84). That is, art and science are evaluated according to how close they come to describing ultimate reality. This interpretation should be obvious, given Nietzsche's claim, which de Man concedes, that science is concerned with appearances only. Finally, de Man explicitly pairs Dionysus with the antithesis of appearance: "There is little difficulty in matching the two mythological poles, Dionysos and Apollo, with the categories of appearance and its antithesis. . ." (de Man, 91). The antithesis of appearance, we can safely assume, must be reality-in-itself.

Clark also equates Dionysus with reality-in-itself. For example, consider her description of Nietzsche's purpose in the two lengthy passages which she quotes from sections 16 and 17. In those two passages, Nietzsche discusses the purported effects of both Apollonian and Dionysian art. Clark says that in these passages, "Nietzsche contrasts Apollo with *Dionysus*" (Clark, 78, my emphasis). Recall, however, that Clark believes that the key effect of Dionysian art is to give its spectators an apprehension of reality-in-itself. When this assumption is read in conjunction with the sentence just quoted , it follows that Clark must believe Dionysus is reality-in-itself. Furthermore, Clark goes on to claim the following: "The truth revealed in tragedy--the horror of individual existence and the underlying oneness of all being--is identified solely with *Dionysus*" (Clark, 80, my emphasis). Once again, since she thinks that tragedy gives an insight into the true nature of reality, it would appear that she must believe "Dionysus" is a synonym for reality-in-itself. In both quotations, then, Clark takes for granted that Nietzsche uses the name "Dionysus" to refer to ultimate reality.

Some of the confusion about Nietzsche's name for ultimate reality rests with Nietzsche himself. At first glance, he appears to use the terms

"Dionysus" and "Dionysian" interchangeably, and he makes no serious effort to call attention to any possible differences in their usage. By scrutinizing the way Nietzsche actually employs these terms, however, we will find that "Dionysus" and "Dionysian" need to be distinguished in order to make sense of several key claims. First, consider Nietzsche's use of the term "Dionysian." Sometimes he uses the term as a noun, as simply "the Dionysian." Whenever he does so, he tends to characterize it as a "tendency," "energy," or even an "impulse."[6] Additionally, this impulse or energy has two distinct modes of expression: one in the world of art and one in nature herself. Within the world of art, the artist harnesses the natural Dionysian impulse and transforms it into a particular kind of cultural artifact. The essence of this view of artistic creation is that the artist acts like a conduit, or vehicle, for the raw Dionysian energy. Nietzsche's explanation of this process involves a whole theory of artistic genius which he came to reject soon after publishing the *Birth*. In *Human all too Human*, the next complete published book after the *Birth*, Nietzsche refers pejoratively to the *Birth's* theory of artistic genius as "romantic" and attacks the idea that "a work of art, a poem, the basic proposition of a philosophy flash[es] down from heaven like a ray of divine grace" (HH I §155: 83).[7] Instead, he says that "the imagination of a good artist or thinker is productive continually, of good, mediocre and bad things, but his *power of judgment*, sharpened and practiced to the highest degree, rejects, selects, knots together; as we now know from Beethoven's notebooks how the most glorious melodies were put together gradually and as it were culled out of many beginnings" (HH I §155: 83).

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[6]See, e.g., BT §1: 33; §2: 38; §3: 43.

[7]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). All references embedded.

Before looking at elements of the *Birth's* conception of artistic genius in any more detail, it will be useful to turn very briefly to the Dionysian's second mode of expression. In addition to finding expression in the world of art, in other words, Nietzsche claims that the Dionysian impulse "burst[s] forth from nature herself, *without the mediation of the human artist. . .*" (BT §2: 38). This is one of the main topics of section 1, where Nietzsche introduces the Apollonian and Dionysian duality. He contends that these two principles manifest themselves in different aspects of reality. The Apollonian impulse gives rise to Apollonian reality, while the Dionysian manifests itself in Dionysian reality. Nietzsche's discussion of the main characteristics of these two kinds, or facets, of reality is surprisingly confusing. This is partly due to the fact that he relies heavily on analogy and metaphor to convey his meaning. For example, Nietzsche uses an analogy with dreams to bring out the most salient features of Apollonian reality. Like dreams, Apollonian reality is an appearance world populated by a plurality of individuated objects (see BT §1: 34-36). By contrast, Nietzsche uses Schopenhauer's description of the breakdown of the *principium individuationis* in order to characterize Dionysian reality: "Now, with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of *maya* had been torn aside and were now fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity" (BT §1: 37). The reference to "the mysterious primordial unity" here indicates that Nietzsche thinks Dionysian reality is a realm of reality beyond the Apollonian world of appearances. In short, Dionysian reality *is* reality-in-itself.

We have seen from this very brief consideration of the Dionysian impulse's two modes of expression that Nietzsche uses the term "Dionysian" not only as a noun, but that he also uses it as an adjective to modify a variety

of phenomena. We have seen that reality can be Dionysian, and that Nietzsche equates Dionysian reality with "the primordial unity." Additionally, Nietzsche claims that art can be Dionysian. Such art is Dionysian for at least two reasons. First, Dionysian art is created by an artist while in a Dionysian physiological state of *Rausch*. Nietzsche takes up this topic in the context of his discussion of lyric poetry (see §§5 and 6). Secondly, Nietzsche contends that Dionysian art reproduces this same physiological state in its spectators.

Consider, then, the alleged effect of tragedy on its viewers. In section 7, Nietzsche begins his discussion of tragedy proper. He first mentions and then dismisses some earlier theories which attempt to account for the origins of Greek tragedy. Common to each of these theories is the thesis "that tragedy arose from the tragic chorus, and was originally only the chorus and nothing but chorus" (BT §7: 56). Nietzsche agrees with this general view, asserting that tragic drama originated with the Dionysian Dithyramb. In the Dithyramb, all individuals were active participants in a religious festival dedicated to the god, Dionysus. It is important, however, to recognize that Nietzsche distinguishes the Dionysian Dithyramb from analogous festivals of Dionysian barbarians. In his overview of the history of Greek culture in section 2, for example, he states that the barbarian festivals "centred in sexual licentiousness . . . the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real 'witches' brew'" (BT §2: 39). He further contends that the Greeks were aware of these barbarian festivals, but only at a later time did "similar impulses burst forth from the deepest roots of the Hellenic nature. . ." (BT §2: 39).

In contrast to the barbarian festivals, the Dionysian power of the Greeks

revealed itself in a special way: "It is with them that nature for the first time attains her artistic jubilee; it is with them that the destruction of the *principium individuationis* for the first time becomes an artistic phenomenon" (BT §2: 40). The first thing to notice about this passage is that Nietzsche clearly implies that the subject of *all* the Dionysian festivals was the destruction of the *principium individuationis*. The Dionysian barbarian festivals and the Dithyramb centred around the breakdown of this *principium*, which, in turn, provided participants with "metaphysical comfort," the feeling "that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable . . ." (BT §7: 59). Whereas the barbarians gained such metaphysical comfort through Bacchanalian orgies, which gave them a feeling that their individuated existence had broken down, so to speak, the Greeks managed to represent this breakdown of individuation aesthetically. In other words, the destruction of the *principium individuationis* took on symbolic form for the Greeks: "In the Dionysian Dithyramb man is incited to the greatest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced struggles for utterance--the annihilation of the veil of *maya*, oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself. The essence of nature now expresses itself symbolically. . ." (BT §2: 40).

Nietzsche contends that the participants of the early Dithyramb reached a physiological state of *Rausch* through their singing and dancing. In this state, they literally saw themselves as satyrs: "The reveling throng, the votaries of Dionysus jubilate under the spell of such moods and insights whose power transforms them before their own eyes till they imagine that they are beholding themselves as restored geniuses of nature, as satyrs" (BT §8: 62). According to Nietzsche, the figure of the satyr possessed an immediate

symbolic significance for the Greeks. He says that the satyr is "Nature, as yet unchanged by knowledge, with the bolts of culture still unbroken. . ." (BT §8: 61). With reference to the vividness of this symbolic vision , Nietzsche says, "The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world as a fantastic impossibility spawned by a poet's brain: it desires to be just the opposite, *the unvarnished expression of the truth*, and must precisely for that reason discard the mendacious finery of that alleged reality of the man of culture" (BT §8: 61, my emphasis).

Later, the participants of the Dithyramb were divided into spectators and chorus. The chorus became "the artistic imitation" of this earlier vision of Dionysian man, and Nietzsche thus calls the chorus "the mirror image in which Dionysian man contemplates himself." More specifically, this chorus is "a vision of the Dionysian mass of spectators, just as the world of the stage, in turn, is a vision of this satyr chorus. . ." (BT §8: 63). The suggestion is that the Dionysian spectator first sees the chorus as satyrs. Then, he sees a second vision on the stage which appears to be conjured by this chorus. In the next sentence, Nietzsche mentions the content of this second vision: "the image of Dionysus is revealed to them" (BT §8: 63). Notice that Nietzsche clearly states that this second vision is of Dionysus. Of course, we cannot yet conclude that "Dionysus" does not refer to the Dionysian reality. I suggest, however, that it does *seem* significant that Nietzsche chooses not to call the vision "Dionysian reality" or "the primordial unity."

Five paragraphs later, Nietzsche reiterates and then expands somewhat on the nature of this vision: "In this magic transformation the Dionysian reveler sees himself as a satyr, *and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god*, which means that in his metamorphosis he beholds another vision outside himself, as the Apollonian complement of his own state" (BT §8: 64). The first thing to

notice is that the italicized reference to "the god" is almost certainly to Dionysus. This is clear from the previous page I quoted which does mention Dionysus by name. It is also important to notice that Nietzsche says this vision is an Apollonian complement to the spectator's Dionysian physiological state. In other words, the spectators project their Dionysian state of *Rausch* outward in the form of an individuated Apollonian image. This interpretation is supported by the first sentence of the very next paragraph: "In the light of this insight we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus which ever anew *discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images*" (BT §8: 65, my emphasis). Dionysus is an Apollonian image.

That Dionysus is an Apollonian image or figure indicates that "Dionysus" is not a synonym for "Dionysian reality." Nietzsche claims that "being an objectification of a Dionysian state, it [i.e. the vision of Dionysus] *represents* not Apollonian redemption through mere appearance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being" (BT §8: 65, my emphasis). Notice that Nietzsche claims Dionysus *represents* the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being. In other words, Dionysus is a figure who can somehow symbolize the return of individuals to Dionysian reality. According to Nietzsche, "Dionysus, the real stage hero and center of the vision, was . . . not actually present at first. . . he was merely imagined as present. . ." (BT §8: 66). At a later period, an actor was eventually added to the stage. The chorus then excited its listeners "to such a Dionysian degree" that when the hero appeared, they actually saw "a visionary figure, born as it were from their own rapture" (BT §8: 66). When Nietzsche finally turns in section 10 to the demise of tragedy as a consequence of the influence of Socratic optimism, he claims, "The tradition is undisputed that Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of

Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself" (BT §10: 73).

As mentioned above, Nietzsche explains the symbolic effect of tragedy in what he calls the "mystery doctrine of tragedy." This doctrine involves "the fundamental knowledge of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of restored oneness" (BT §10: 74). To my knowledge, how this mystery doctrine is actually exemplified by the destruction of Dionysus on the stage has not been adequately discussed in the literature on the *Birth*. Many readers merely assume that the destruction of the tragic hero straightforwardly represents the breakdown of individuation. In other words, the hero returns to the primal unity when he is destroyed, and this, in turn, represents a breakdown of the *principium individuationis*. When we attend to Nietzsche's words, however, we find that his position cannot be quite so simplistic. Consider that if Dionysus represents Dionysian reality, as Nietzsche claims, then the painful destruction of the figure of Dionysus ought to symbolize a fracturing of the primal unity into individuals. The significance of this transformation would presumably be that spectators gain an awareness of the alleged fact that individuation is the fundamental cause of suffering. In short, to become an individual is to be susceptible to pain. This ambiguity seems to go to the heart of Nietzsche's conception of Dionysus. Setting aside this complexity for the moment, we can nevertheless conclude that tragedy does not literally fuse its spectators with primal being. Admittedly, I have not explained why Nietzsche thinks the mythical figure Dionysus has the ability to represent Dionysian reality. However, it should now be obvious that Clark misinterprets Nietzsche's position when she argues that tragedy offers its spectators an apprehension of

reality-in-itself. The effect which Clark ascribes to Nietzsche's view of tragedy could obtain only if tragedy were an exclusively Dionysian art. However, Nietzsche quite clearly claims that the vision tragedy provides is Apollonian.

Furthermore, as I tried to indicate in the previous chapter, the three passages which Clark uses to support her reading all have qualifying phrases that suggest Nietzsche's claims about reality-in-itself are not literal. However, there is one additional passage which appears, at first glance, to lend support to Clark's standard reading. In section 8, Nietzsche takes up the idea that the satyr chorus represents existence more truthfully than the man of culture. He says,

> The contrast between this real truth of nature and the lie of culture that poses as if it were the only reality is *similar* [my emphasis] to that between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the whole world of appearances: just as tragedy, with its metaphysical comfort, points to the eternal life of this core of existence which abides through the perpetual destruction of appearances, the symbolism of the satyr chorus proclaims in an allegory [*in einem Gleichniss*] this primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance. (BT §8: 62; cf. KGW III 1 §8: 54-55)

One reason that commentators may be inclined to read this passage as support for the thesis that tragedy gives metaphysical truth is that Kaufmann's English translation omits the qualifying phrase "in an allegory."[8] By leaving out this phrase, however, Kaufmann distorts Nietzsche's meaning. In fact, Kaufmann has Nietzsche say that the chorus reveals the metaphysical truth about reality-in-itself, whereas what Nietzsche really claims is that the satyr chorus reveals the truth about reality-in-itself in an allegory. Consistent with his criticisms of Schopenhauer's conception of will, then, Nietzsche thinks that any talk about reality-in-itself can only be allegorical, not literal. I suggest

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[8]I take this suggestion from Klein (1994), 140.

that the three passages Clark relies upon should also be read as allegorical statements about reality-in-itself. This is precisely what Nietzsche's insertion of the qualifying phrase "*Gleichsam*" in all three passages is supposed to indicate.[9]

One other possible reason that commentators may be inclined to confuse Dionysus with Dionysian reality has to do with Nietzsche's personification of Dionysian reality. He sometimes calls Dionysian reality "the Dionysian world-artist" (see BT §5: 52) or even the "world genius" (BT §5: 50). However, it is clear from the context of these phrases that both terms are supposed to refer (figuratively) to reality-in-itself. Both occur within Nietzsche's discussion of lyric poetry. First, he says that during the creative process the poet must first associate himself with "the primal unity, its pain and contradiction" (BT §5: 49). In doing so, the poet "has become, as it were, the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance" (BT §5: 52).[10] Nietzsche subsequently says that "the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with the primordial artist of the world." And earlier in the same section, he claims that during the composition of his lyrics Archilochus was the "world-genius expressing his primordial pain symbolically in the symbol of the man Archilochus" (BT §5: 50). It is clear that Nietzsche takes this "world-genius" and the "primordial artist" to be reality-in-itself.

We have now seen that the tragic chorus induces its spectators into a physiological state which is Dionysian. Nietzsche calls the state "Dionysian," not because it permits an apprehension of Dionysian reality, but because it

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[9]I shall take up the details of this whole notion of allegorical representation in the next section of this chapter and in the final chapter.

[10]Notice that Nietzsche says this identification is not literal; he again uses the phrase, "as it were."

allows them to see a vision of Dionysus. Furthermore, we have seen that Dionysian reality is Dionysian because it is the reality which the mythical figure of Dionysus symbolically represents. Although I shall take up a more thorough treatment of Nietzsche's defence of these claims in the following chapter, it should now be reasonably clear that when de Man and Clark merely assume that "Dionysus" is interchangeable with "Dionysian," they simplify and even distort Nietzsche's meaning. That the terms need to be distinguished is especially evident from the confusion created when de Man mistakenly says with some puzzlement that "Dionysos can enter into a world of appearances and still somehow remain Dionysos" (de Man, 101). This confusion would disappear if de Man were to say, more accurately, that "Dionysian reality enters the world of appearances as Dionysus."

Nietzsche's Reinterpretation of "Will"

Clearing up the above terminological difficulty has proven fatal for Clark's view that tragedy gives access to reality-in-itself. Yet de Man's reading might be salvageable. In other words, despite de Man's mistaken interpretation of what Nietzsche means by "Dionysus," my criticism only pertains to Nietzsche's stated theory. And since de Man's rhetorical interpretation greatly minimizes the importance of the text's stated theories, his reading *may* remain largely unaffected by my criticisms. A fruitful way to strike at the foundations of de Man's reading, then, is to ask if the unpublished manuscript notes support the conclusions which he attempts to draw from them. From the notes, de Man recognizes that Nietzsche rejected Schopenhauer's conception of the will. Yet, in the published text of the *Birth* Nietzsche retains a number of theses about the will. Foremost amongst these theses is the claim that music is the immediate image of the will. De Man

rejects this thesis as implausible and concludes that Nietzsche asserts it ironically. Notice one of de Man's assumptions, however. His ironic reading depends on the supposition that Nietzsche continues to use "will" in the published text as though it were supposed to refer to reality-in-itself. In what follows, I attempt to establish that this assumption ought to be rejected.[11]

First, it is interesting to note that Nietzsche does not use the term "will" in the metaphysical sense until section 16. In fact, whenever he refers to reality-in-itself prior to section 16, Nietzsche prefers terms such as "primal unity" or "ground of being." In section 1, for example, he says that for an individual in a state of Dionysian *Rausch* "all nature reveals itself to the highest gratification of the *primordial unity*" (BT § 1: 37, my emphasis). In section 4, Nietzsche similarly says that all individuals are phenomena of "that mysterious *primal ground*" (BT §4: 44, my emphasis.[12] By contrast, the metaphysical will appears by name several times after section 15. In section 16, Nietzsche quotes a lengthy passage from *The World as Will and Representation* in which the metaphysical will figures centrally. He subsequently mentions the "universal will" at least twice in section 17.[13] The metaphysical will also appears in sections 18, 19, and 21. Why does Nietzsche hold off mentioning the will until section 16? One possible reason has to do with the fact that whereas sections 1 to 15 treat the emergence and demise of tragedy in Greece, in section 16 Nietzsche turns his attention toward "the analogous phenomena of our own time" (BT § 16: 99). The last ten sections of the book take up various issues relating to the contemporary cultural situation in Europe. Amongst other things, Nietzsche discusses modern

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[11]My argument follows Staten's discussion closely.

[12]A number of other passages in the first fifteen sections could be cited in further support of this claim. See BT § 4: 45; § 5: 49; § 6: 55.

[13]See BT §17: 104 and 107.

opera, the state of European education and scholarship, and he makes a variety of claims about the need for myth. He also intimates that the rebirth of Germanic mythology may be possible through the music dramas of Richard Wagner. It appears, then, that Nietzsche was unable to make the connection between ancient Greece and the modern world without invoking Schopenhauer's discussion of the will.

In section 16, Nietzsche turns his attention toward the analogous phenomena of the contemporary world. He applauds Schopenhauer as the only other philosopher to have recognized that there are "*two* worlds of art differing in their intrinsic essence and their highest aims" (BT §16: 99). These two worlds are the worlds of plastic art and music; they correspond to what Nietzsche calls the worlds of Apollonian and Dionysian art. Nietzsche then quotes the long passage in which Schopenhauer makes at two important claims. First, Schopenhauer claims that music is "an immediate copy of the will itself" (BT §16: 100), and second, he says that music "is related to image and concept" as universal form is related to determinate example (BT §16: 101). Nietzsche clearly wants to use these two insights in his own discussion: "According to the doctrine of Schopenhauer . . . we understand music as the immediate language of the will.... On the other hand, image and concept, under the influence of a truly corresponding music, acquire a higher significance" (BT §16: 103). Yet, by incorporating these insights, Nietzsche appears to be forced to make use of the one idea that he ought to reject: Schopenhauer's conception of the metaphysical will. That Nietzsche appears to write the metaphysical will out of the first fifteen sections of the text reinforces the idea that he was likely apprehensive about using the will. Notice, however, that Nietzsche immediately goes on to say that both of these Schopenhauerian facts are "intelligible in themselves *and not inaccessible to*

a more penetrating examination. . ." (BT §16: 103, my emphasis). He then proceeds to discuss the will at length. Staten shows that the more penetrating examination can be extracted from the manuscript remarks which Nietzsche left out of the published text. When Nietzsche refers to theses about the will in the published text, he does not construe them in the same sense as Schopenhauer.

Consider what de Man legitimately establishes with the use of the manuscript notes. First, de Man shows that Nietzsche believes the will cannot be reality-in-itself. This is clear from the passage where Nietzsche claims that "the will is not an adequate expression for the core of nature. . ." (de Man, 100, quoting Musarion 3: 239). Additionally, de Man establishes that Nietzsche thinks the will cannot be the *origin* of music. In another passage, Nietzsche openly states that "the Will is the object of music, but not its origin" (de Man, 101, quoting Musarion 3: 344). However, neither of these two claims forecloses the possibility that will could still be the *object* of music. In fact, Nietzsche explicitly says as much in the passage just mentioned: "the Will is the object of music" (de Man, 101, quoting Musarion 3: 344).

What could Nietzsche mean when he says that the will is the object of music but not its origin? In a claim from the manuscript material which de Man does not mention, Nietzsche offers a more positive conception of the will. He says that the will is "the most universal form of appearance of something that is for us otherwise completely undecipherable" (de Man, 196, quoting Musarion 3: 341). The phrase, "something that is . . . undecipherable," seems to refer to Dionysian reality. If this interpretation is correct, then it follows that Nietzsche thinks the will is the most universal form of appearance of Dionysian reality. Then in another note, Nietzsche indicates that this revised will *can* be the object of music: "The 'will' as most

primordial form of appearance is the object of music: in which sense it can be called the imitation of nature, but of the most universal form of nature" (Staten, 198, quoting Musarion 3: 346). If the will is not the origin of music, then we must determine what Nietzsche thinks this origin is. In another manuscript passage, Nietzsche claims that the will is not the origin of music because music "rests in the womb of that power which under the form of the 'will' generates a universe of vision out of itself: the origin of music lies beyond all individuation, a proposition that after our discussion of the Dionysian is self-evident" (Staten, 198, quoting Musarion 3: 345). Given the phrase "beyond all individuation," the origin of music must presumably be Dionysian reality. Nietzsche's suggestion is that music does not represent Dionysian reality as a copy represents an original, but that music is somehow rooted in Dionysian reality. In fact, Nietzsche explicitly says as much in the published text: "The Dionysian . . . is the source of music" (BT §24: 141).

The "more penetrating examination" of the Schopenhauerian theses Nietzsche mentions in section 16 is the one lifted here from the manuscript notes. Nietzsche does not uncritically adopt Schopenhauer's conception of the metaphysical will. Instead, he revises the Schopenhauerian terminology such that "ultimate reality" and "will" are no longer synonyms. The will is, instead, the most general form of appearance of ultimate reality, and ultimate reality is the origin of music. It is thus nothing to de Man's credit that Nietzsche should now reject the claim that will is the origin of music.

De Man assumes that the fundamental problem for Nietzsche in the *Birth* is the problem of representation. He further claims that the whole idea that music could be an "unmediated representation" of the will is a logical absurdity (de Man, 96). This assumption, however, relies on a mistaken view of what Nietzsche means by representation in this context. De Man assumes

that the music-will relation should be interpreted along the lines, strictly speaking, of a copy and an original. When Schopenhauer says music is the "unmediated representation" of the will in the passage Nietzsche quotes, de Man thus seems to think this could only mean a representation which makes immediately present that which it is supposed to represent. In other words, de Man thinks that an "unmediated representation" could only be, paradoxically, a non-representational representation. Since Nietzsche takes over this notion from Schopenhauer, it will be useful to consider what Schopenhauer actually means by "unmediated representation" in this context.

Unlike all the other arts, Schopenhauer contends that music is not at two removes from ultimate reality: "music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself, the objectivity of which are the [Platonic] Ideas" (WWR I: 257). The phrase "unmediated representation" here simply emphasizes the alleged fact that there is nothing between music and ultimate reality. What is it about music, according to Schopenhauer, that gives it this special capacity to be such a representation? He claims that music is an immediate representation of the world will because music possesses universal form: "Music . . . if regarded as an expression of the world, is in the highest degree a universal language, which is related indeed to the universality of concepts, much as they are related to the particular things" (BT §16: 101; cf. WWR I: 262). This comparison with concepts is supposed to emphasize that music is general and not particular. Unlike concepts, however, music is "by no means an empty universality or abstraction." Music is not something which one arrives at by induction or through conscious generalization; it is definite and distinct. Schopenhauer thus compares music to geometrical figures because he thinks such figures

"are the universal forms of all possible objects of experience. . ." (ibid.). Just as these geometrical figures are the universal forms of all objects, Schopenhauer thinks that "all that goes on in the heart of man . . . may be expressed by the infinite number of possible melodies, but always in the universal, in the mere form, without the material, always according to the thing-in-itself, not the phenomenon" (ibid.). Therefore, he says, "Music . . . gives the innermost kernel preceding all form, or the heart of things" (WWR I: 263). This also explains why "suitable music played to any scene, action, event, or surrounding seems to disclose to us its most secret meaning. . ." (BT §16: 103) In short, music captures or expresses the very essence of the particular event in question.

In examining this distinction between the generality of music and the particularity of objects, the following problem with de Man's reading is worth mentioning. De Man fails to do justice to the way that Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, alters the more traditional conception of reality-in-itself. Throughout the history of Western philosophy, that is, philosophers have typically conceived ultimate reality to be a substance. Schopenhauer, by contrast, conceives of ultimate reality as a totally general force or an incessant striving which is completely outside the domain of space and time. This universal force constitutes the innermost heart of all particular things. Thus, the key distinction to grasp behind Schopenhauer's whole conception of the music-will relation is actually the distinction between universal form and particular things. Nietzsche's argument about the relation between music and ultimate reality relies on a similar kind of distinction. This is especially evident in the technical language which Nietzsche employs when referring to the respective modes of signification for music and image.

Throughout the text, Nietzsche distinguishes symbolic and allegorical

modes of signification.[14] On one hand, he uses the term *Gleichnis*, which means allegory or parable, to describe the way images signify. For example, Nietzsche says that "the myth expresses Dionysian knowledge in allegories [*gleichnissen*]" (BT §16: 103; KGW III 1 §16: 103)[15] Nietzsche never uses this term *Gleichnis* for music. Instead, music is always *Symbol*. In the discussion of lyric poetry, for example, Nietzsche says that "music stands in symbolic [*symbolisch*] relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primal unity, and therefore symbolizes [*symbolisirt*] a sphere which is beyond and prior to all phenomena" (BT §6: 55; KGW III 1 §6: 47). Look at what Nietzsche then says in the next sentence about phenomena: "Rather, all phenomena compared with it, are merely allegories [*Gleichniss*]: hence language, as the organ and symbol of phenomena, can never by any means disclose the innermost heart of music. . ." (ibid.).[16] Music is thus a symbol of ultimate reality whereas image is a copy of something which is outside the realm of ultimate reality. Image is an allegory of ultimate reality.

The term "*Symbol*" conveys the idea that music is organically connected to ultimate reality. In short, we could say that music has a synecdochic connection with ultimate reality because there is a unity between the medium (music) and the object (ultimate reality) of representation. Music can be a such symbol precisely because it is a form without content. According to Nietzsche, this universal form is not a harmonious one, it is instead a striving, suffering, and contradiction. In contrast to music as *Symbol*, the term *Gleichnis* emphasizes the way the Apollonian dream image is at an

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[14]This point is made by both Staten, 201-202 and Klein (1996), 20-22.

[15]Kaufmann obscures the distinction by translating *Gleichnis* and *Symbol* both as "symbol." I have modified Kaufmann's translation by changing "symbols" to "allegories" in order to bring out this distinction.

[16]Kaufmann's translation modified.

unbridgable distance from its origin. Any given image is a particular manifestation of reality-in-itself. Yet as *Gleichnis*, it is deficient because it is at two removes from this ultimate reality. In other words, *Gleichnis* copies phenomena, which are themselves manifestations of ultimate reality. Recall that I tried to indicate that all talk of Dionysian reality is, for Nietzsche, merely allegorical. Despite the inadequacy of words in comparison to music, however, Nietzsche does believe that words can refer figuratively to ultimate reality: "The poems of the lyrist can express nothing that did not already lie hidden in that vast universality and absoluteness in the music that compelled him to *figurative speech*" (BT §6: 55, my emphasis). The suggestion is that the Apollonian images supplied by the words in lyric poetry allegorically represent what the music symbolizes.

We now need to return to the question of what Nietzsche means when he says that will is the most universal form of appearance of Dionysian reality. Staten suggests that we think of this conception of will as Nietzsche's own transcendental-phenomenological reduction. The will is, accordingly, a way of bracketing the question of being-in-itself and, instead, asking how such being appears to individual beings. According to Staten's suggestion, the will is "the name of the receptiveness to the world of an embodied being, the name of the way in general in which the world registers on a being capable of sensation."[17] This interpretation finds support in the published text. Consider, for example, that Nietzsche says once the lyric poet has "surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process, " he is able to associate with "the primal unity, its pain and contradiction" (BT §5: 49). Notice how Nietzsche says this Dionysian reality appears to the artist: Dionysian reality

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[17]Staten, 208.

"*appears* [to the lyric poet] as will" (BT §6: 55). The lyric poet therefore "conceives of all nature, and himself in it, as willing, as desiring, as eternal longing" (BT §6:55).

Most generally, this receptiveness of the individual to the world registers as pleasure and pain. And in another manuscript note, Nietzsche claims that "the strivings of the Will express themselves as pleasure and unpleasure and in this exhibit only quantitative differentiation" (Staten, 208 quoting Musarion 3: 341-42). However, Dionysian reality must be completely off this pleasure-pain scale simply because it is inaccessible to beings capable of sensation. Although such beings can never know Dionysian reality directly, they can nevertheless know at least one thing about it. That is, Dionysian reality represents the limit of individuation from which individuals come and to which they subsequently must return. And this limit corresponds phenomenologically to the moment when pain and pleasure can no longer be distinguished. This is how Nietzsche characterizes the so-called excess of nature or Dionysian *Rausch*: "The individual, with all his restraint and proportion, succumbed to the self-oblivion of the Dionysian states. . . . *Excess* revealed itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out of the very heart of nature" (BT §4: 46-47).

Nietzsche says that Dionysian *Rausch* expresses itself most generally in "forces, merely felt, and not condensed into images" (BT §8: 66-67). These forces manifest themselves in different ways. With reference to the early Dithyramb, for example, Nietzsche says that the forces express themselves as tremors in the body: "the entire symbolism of the body is called into play, not merely as the mere symbolism of the lips, face, and speech but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement" (BT §3: 40). In lyric poetry, by contrast, these general forces are manifest in what

Nietzsche calls the "musical mood" which the lyric poet copies into the poem (BT §5: 49). The lyricist, in short, transcribes his mood into the form of an Apollonian dream image. Notice how Nietzsche describes this process: "Our whole discussion insists that lyric poetry is dependent on the *spirit of* music. . ." (BT §6: 55, my emphasis). When Nietzsche says that the poet copies music, then, strictly speaking he does not mean sonic music.[18] Instead, he appears to intend "music" in this context to mean what the sonic music symbolizes: the moment when an individual being feels his individuated existence is ruptured.

Music, as song, thus expresses the same thing that the Dionysian cry expresses: the excess of nature. This is part of the reason that Nietzsche finds dissonance to be the essence of music, despite his earlier attempts in the text to associate it with harmony. Earlier in the text, he says, "The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music . . . [is] the emotional power of the tone, the uniform flow of the melody, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony" (BT §2: 40). In section 24, by contrast, he says: "But this primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art is difficult to grasp, and there is only one direct way to make it intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of *musical dissonance*" (BT §24: 141).

Whereas Dionysian music expresses this dissonance directly, however, tragedy expresses it indirectly through Apollonian images. Nietzsche contends that any direct apprehension of the underlying contradiction and pain at the centre of the world would literally cause the individual to expire: "Suppose the human being has thus put his ear, as it were, to the heart chamber of the world will and felt the roaring desire for existence pouring

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[18]Nietzsche says that "as Apollonian genius [the lyricist] *interprets music* through the image of the will. . ." (BT §6: 55, my emphasis).

from there into all veins of the world. . . How could he not fail to break suddenly?" (BT §21: 127). De Man says that this claim "has all the trappings of the statement made in bad faith. . ." (de Man, 97). We have seen, however, that Nietzsche has every reason to believe this claim, given his conception of music and its purported relation to the image. Nietzsche therefore says, "Here the tragic myth and the tragic hero intervenes between our highest musical emotion and the music--at bottom only as symbols [*Gleichniss*] of the most universal facts, of which only music can speak directly" (BT §21: 127; cf. KGW III 1 §21: 132). The image acts as a "healing balm of blissful illusion" against the destructive Dionysian music. Rather than directly conveying the terrible truth at the heart of the world, tragedy instead gives this knowledge allegorically; it turns the horror of individual existence into sublime "notions with which one can live" (BT §7: 60).

Conclusion

I have attempted to show that de Man's reading is mistaken on the grounds that there is no need to interpret Nietzsche's claims about the will ironically. For Nietzsche, the will is not ultimate reality; it is instead the most general form of appearance of Dionysian reality. Interpreted phenomenologically, this notion can be thought of as the limit of individuation where, pleasure and pain for individual beings become indistinguishable. This is consistent with Nietzsche's criticisms of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and the upshot of this interpretation is that Nietzsche, contrary to de Man's contention, can assert and believe the claim that music is the immediate copy of the will. Furthermore, de Man and Clark both oversimplify Nietzsche's conception of the Dionysian. I have argued that tragedy gives spectators an apprehension of Dionysus, not Dionysian reality. Dionysus is an individuated Apollonian

figure who thus allegorically represents Dionysian reality. The tearing apart of Dionysus represents a breakdown of the *principium individuationis;* but it also seems to represent the pain accompanying the fragmentation of Dionysian reality into individuals. Despite Nietzsche's ambivalence regarding the details of what the destruction of Dionysus represents, it is clear that Clark's interpretation that tragedy gives metaphysical truth must be mistaken.

CHAPTER 3
RECONSTRUCTING SECTION 18

The standard interpretation and the postmodernist interpretation both offer explanations for the existence of the problematic passage in section 18. Both assume that the passage contradicts some of the text's main claims. I have tried to show in the previous two chapters that each of these readings relies upon mistaken assumptions about Nietzsche's terminology. In this chapter, I turn to a more positive explication of the section 18 passage. I begin with the first part of the passage where Nietzsche states that the effect of tragedy is an illusion. As I argued above, Nietzsche thinks early tragedy allowed its spectators to have a vision of the mythological figure Dionysus and not reality-in-itself. Since this figure can be thought of as a kind of illusion, it follows that the first part of the section 18 claim is consistent with the rest of the text. I shall attempt to give this interpretation more plausibility by fleshing out Nietzsche's conception of Dionysus. I examine some of Nietzsche's explicit statements about mythology, with particular attention to his view that the tragic hero, a mask of Dionysus, allegorically represents Dionysian reality. Commentators have perhaps been inclined to overlook this sort of reading because they fail to distinguish two different versions of the Dionysian: an aesthetic Dionysian and a non-aesthetic Dionysian. The problem arises when readers attribute features of the non-aesthetic Dionysian to tragic drama.

Additionally, I shall argue that when Nietzsche equates tragic culture

with Buddhism in the second part of the section 18 passage, the term "tragic culture" does not refer to a culture which embraces tragic drama. Instead, a tragic culture in this particular context is an Alexandrian culture which has realized that its Socratic optimism is an illusion. This reading is supported by many of Nietzsche's claims in the latter part of the text which express concern about the danger of such a tragic insight. A tragic culture thus stands in great need of art. Once the passage is read in this way, the comparison with Buddhism in section 18 makes complete sense. By failing to embrace art, a tragic culture inevitably falls prey to a will-negating attitude toward life.

Tragedy and Illusion

Recall Nietzsche's statement about the illusory nature of the Dionysian in the first few sentences of the section 18 passage:

> It is an eternal phenomenon: the insatiable will always finds a way to detain its creatures in life and compel them to live on, by means of an illusion spread over things. One is chained by the Socratic love of knowledge and the delusion of being able thereby to heal the eternal wound of existence; another is ensnared by art's seductive veil of beauty fluttering before his eyes; still another by the metaphysical comfort that beneath the whirl of phenomena eternal life flows on indestructibly--to say nothing of the more vulgar and almost more powerful illusions which the will always has at hand. These three stages of illusions are actually designed only for the more nobly formed natures, who actually feel profoundly the weight and burden of existence, and must be deluded by exquisite stimulants into forgetfulness of their displeasure. (BT §18: 110)

Clark and de Man both assume that these claims about the illusory nature of the Dionysian come rather unexpectedly at this point in Nietzsche's argument and that they cannot be assimilated with claims made elsewhere in the text. There *are* at least a couple of other places in the *Birth,* however, where Nietzsche quite plainly suggests that the key effect of tragedy is an

illusion.

First, Nietzsche argues in section 7 that any direct apprehension of "the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history" and "the cruelty of nature" would fill the Dionysian man with nausea (BT §7: 59-60). This sort of nauseating knowledge is a consequence of having "looked truly into the nature of things." Nietzsche then goes on to say that such knowledge "kills action," and "action requires *the veils of illusion. . .*" (BT §7: 60, my emphasis). Notice Nietzsche's use of the word "illusion" [*die Illusion*] to describe what is needed for human beings to live affirmatively with their Dionysian wisdom (KGW III 1 §7: 53). This is significant because Nietzsche immediately goes on to discuss tragic drama as a solution to this nausea: "Here, when the danger of his will is the greatest, *art approaches as a saving sorceress*, expert at healing. She alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live. . ." (BT §7: 60, my emphasis). If action requires the veils of illusion, and tragedy is the supreme art which allowed the Greeks to live affirmatively, then tragedy must provide some kind of veil of illusion. Contrary to Clark and de Man, then, Nietzsche, quite early in the text, implies that the Dionysian effect in tragedy is a kind of illusion.

Secondly, when Nietzsche sums up his conclusions about tragedy in the second to last section of the main text, he repeats what he takes to be the nature of the tragic effect:

> Among the peculiar effects of musical tragedy we had to emphasize an Apollonian *illusion* by means of which we were supposed to be saved from the immediate unity with Dionysian music, while our musical excitement could discharge itself in an Apollonian field and in relation to a visible intermediary world that had been interposed. (BT §24: 139, my emphasis)

Notice Nietzsche's use of the word "illusion" [*Täuschung*] here (KGW III 1

§24: 145). Admittedly, he explicitly refers to the Apollonian component of tragedy in this passage. However, as I argued above, the Apollonian component in tragedy is actually an image of the spectator's Dionysian physiological state, and thus the Dionysian insight is conveyed in Apollonian form. Recall, also, that Nietzsche says this vision, "being the objectification [in an Apollonian image] of a Dionysian state . . . represents [*darstellt*] not Apollonian redemption through mere appearance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being" (BT §8: 65; cf. KGW III 1 §8: 58). In other words, the image *represents* the shattering of individuality. Tragedy gives the spectator an artistic representation of the destruction of an individual hero who, in turn, stands for, or *represents,* individual existence generally. Although the details of how this is possible are complex, the important point to grasp for the moment is that Nietzsche once again admits that the tragic effect is a kind of illusion. It should also be noted what Nietzsche *does not* mean by "illusion" in this context. As an illusion, the Dionysian vision is not false. It is not, in other words, a mere non-veridical image. In fact, according to Nietzsche, such artistic "illusions" are supposed to be even more truthful than concepts. He says, for example, that such an illusion is "a pure unvarnished version of the truth."

Before looking at the nature of this illusion in more detail, we must ask why Nietzsche thinks tragic drama possesses the special ability to provide such life-affirming "illusions." First, the subject of tragedy is the tragic hero who artistically represents Dionysian reality. The hero can do this because he is really "the suffering Dionysus of the mysteries" (BT §10: 73). And Dionysus, in turn, represents the breakdown of the *principium individuationis* because he is a special kind of figure; he is a mythological figure.

Nietzsche's treatment of mythology in the *Birth* is surprisingly

neglected in the secondary literature. This may be at least partly due to the fact that his claims about mythology are often so cursory. He asserts, for example, that cultures lacking mythology exhibit symptoms of decline, but he never explains exactly *how* belief in myth is supposed to ward against such cultural problems. Despite difficulties in the account, it should be obvious that mythology *does* play a central role in Nietzsche's discussion. He claims, for example, that mythology formed the basis of the Greeks' entire world view in the earlier Homeric period and in the subsequent classical period of tragic drama: "Until [the demise of tragedy] the Greeks had felt involuntarily impelled to relate all their experiences immediately to their myths, indeed to understand them *only* in this relation" (BT §23: 137, my emphasis). Nietzsche even goes so far as to remark that "*only* a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement" (BT §23: 135, my emphasis).

Additionally, Nietzsche claims that tragedy rescued myth from what would have been an otherwise premature demise. He first describes the role of myth in the earlier Apollonian strategy in terms of its illusions:

> Where we encounter the "naïve" in art, we should recognize the highest effect of Apollonian culture--which always must first overthrow an empire of Titans and slay monsters, and which must have triumphed over an abysmal and terrifying view of the world and the keenest susceptibility to suffering through recourse to the most forceful and pleasurable *illusions*. (BT §3: 43, my emphasis)

These illusions, of course, are the beautiful myths of the Olympian gods which glorify individual existence. At the end of the Homeric period, these Olympic myths were questioned on the basis of historical accuracy: "the Greeks were already fairly on the way toward restamping the whole of their mythical juvenile dream sagaciously and arbitrarily into a historico-

pragmatical *juvenile history*" (BT §10: 75). The consequence is that "the mythical premises of a religion are systematized as a sum total of historical events" (BT §10: 75). Belief in the myths subsequently waned. However, Nietzsche says, "Under the predominating influence of tragic poetry, these Homeric myths are now born anew" (BT §10: 74). The basic idea is that in the period of tragedy, myth is transformed and comes to convey Dionysian wisdom. In other words, myth now imparts an awareness that individuation is the cause of suffering. In doing so, it offers a "more profound view of the world" than Olympic mythology: "In Aeschylus we recognize how the terrible Zeus, fearful of his end, allies himself with the Titan [Prometheus]. Thus the former age of the Titans is once more recovered from Tartarus and brought to light" (BT §10: 74). Nietzsche concludes that tragedy can once more give birth once more to myth: "Through tragedy the myth attains its most profound content, its most expressive form; it rises once more like a wounded hero, and its whole excess of strength, together with the philosophic calm of the dying, burns in its eyes with a last powerful gleam" (BT §10: 75).

What, for Nietzsche, is myth? At one point quite late in the text, he says that "myth" can be thought of as "a concentrated image of the world that [is] a condensation of phenomena" (BT §23: 135). We have already seen that all images signify allegorically. The mythic image qua image must therefore be allegorical. Yet notice that Nietzsche says the mythic image is "concentrated"; it is a special kind of image. This conception appears to come from Schopenhauer, who claims the image is universal, but concrete and not abstract. Recall that music possesses universal form and that the image is, by contrast, definite and particular. Yet Nietzsche appears to want to attribute elements of image *and* music to myth. On one hand, that is, the tragic figure on the stage is clearly an individual: "the one truly real Dionysus [who]

appears in a variety of forms, in the mask of a fighting hero, and entangled, as it were, in the net of the individual will. The god who appears talks and acts so as to resemble an erring, striving, suffering individual" (BT §10: 73). On the other hand, Dionysus qua mythic figure is something more than a mere individual. In short, he represents transcendental life. The suggestion therefore appears to be that Dionysus qua stage hero is a determinate and particular image, but this image is pushed as far as any image can possibly go toward universality. Further, the Dionysian fate of Prometheus exemplifies this tension between particularity and universality: "In the heroic effort of the individual to attain universality, in the attempt to transcend the curse of individuation and to become the one world being, he suffers in his own person the primordial contradiction that is concealed in things" (BT §9: 71). Myth thus lies part-way between the determinate image of the hero and the universal form of music. How is this possible?

With reference to the end of the Apollonian strategy and the beginning of the Dionysian, Nietzsche says that the "dying myth was . . . seized by the new-born genius of Dionysian music" (BT §10: 75). Understanding how this happens is what Nietzsche calls "the fundamental problem" of tragedy. He restates the terms of this problem as follows: "[W]hat aesthetic effect results when the essentially separate art forces, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, enter into simultaneous activity? Or more briefly: how is music related to image and concepts?" (BT §16: 101) Nietzsche comes at this question with the assistance of Schopenhauer. He quotes that lengthy passage from *The World as Will and Representation* before remarking that "Dionysian art . . . is wont to exercise two kinds of influence on the Apollonian art faculty; music incites to the *allegorical intuition* [*gleichnissartigen Anschauen*]of Dionysian universality, and music allows the allegorical image [*gleichnissartige Bild*] to

emerge *in its highest significance*" (BT §16:103; cf. KGW III 1 §16: 103).[1] Both kinds of influence depend upon the appropriate mood being created in the listener by music.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that in at least some instances when Nietzsche speaks of "music," he does not strictly mean music as a sonic phenomenon. In such instances, he equates "music" with "musical mood." The idea is that music as song excites the listener to this musical mood. In other words, it puts the listener into a special physiological state which, in turn, allows him to intuit the mythic significance of mythological images. And in section 24, for example, Nietzsche describes the relation between music and myth as a kind of illumination, as though music is required for one to see the image in all its significance: "the Apollonian projection [of the myth]. . . is illuminated from inside by music. . ." (BT §24: 139). In short, music, as this prerequisite, has the capacity to give birth to the tragic myth, or "the myth which expresses Dionysian knowledge in allegories [*Gleichnissen*]" (BT §16: 103; cf. KGW III 1 §16: 103).[2]

As Nietzsche says, "it is only through the *spirit of music* that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual" (BT §16: 104, my emphasis). What does this mean? The destruction of the tragic hero is the destruction of an individual, yet as an allegory of Dionysian reality, this destruction more generally symbolizes a breakdown of the *principium individuationis*. As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, Nietzsche believes that tragedy turns Dionysian wisdom into a sublime allegory. He thus asks, "How can the ugly and the disharmonic, the content of the tragic myth, stimulate aesthetic pleasure?" (BT §24: 141). He replies thus:

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[1]Kaufmann's translation modified.
[2]Kaufmann's translation modified.

> Quite generally, only music, placed beside the world, can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous sensation of dissonance in music. The Dionysian, with its primordial joy experienced even in pain, is the common source of music and tragic myth. (BT §24: 141)

In other words, tragedy turns the horrible truth of existence into something sublime: "She [i.e. art] alone knows how to turn the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the sublime as the artistic taming of the horrible, and the comic as the artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity" (BT §7: 60). The Apollonian image provides "the bright image projections of the Sophoclean hero [which] are the necessary effects of a glance inside the terrors of nature; as it were, luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night" (BT §9: 67).

One possible reason that commentators have had trouble interpreting this claim about the so-called "illusion" in tragedy stems from Nietzsche's own failure clearly to distinguish two different versions of the Dionysian.[3] On one hand, there is a non-aesthetic Dionysian which Nietzsche mentions primarily in the section 7 discussion of the need for art. Nietzsche says, "For the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a *lethargic* element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed" (BT §7: 59). This experience, of course, provides one with metaphysical comfort. "But as soon as . . . everyday reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such, with

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[3]Although I do not wish to venture too far into biographical explanations, I shall very briefly mention one possible reason Nietzsche fails to clarify this issue as well as we should expect. It has to do with the nature of the composition of the book. Silk and Stern, 31-62, provide an excellent account of the way in which Nietzsche cobbled the *Birth* together from several sources, including lecture notes, sketches, and earlier essays. I would suggest that possibly part of the confusion here derives from the fact that Nietzsche welded several diverse fragments together to form the book.

nausea: an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of these states" (BT §7: 59-60).[4] The result is a "practical pessimism," which Nietzsche claims can only lead to cultures of suicide and genocide, which he believes is instantiated on the Fijian islands (see BT §15: 96). The suggestion is that a culture failing to embrace art and mythology can only achieve a sense of metaphysical comfort momentarily through orgiastic festivals which, in turn, yield a negative attitude to life while the individuals are not actually engaged in such festivals.

On the other hand, the bulk of Nietzsche's discussion of the Dionysian from the end of section 7 on treats the aesthetic version. This is the species of the Dionysian which is found in tragic drama. According to Nietzsche, it arises once the Dionysian impulse has become Hellenized. In fact, Nietzsche lauds the Greeks for harnessing this Dionysian power which can often give rise to such destructive effects in other cultures. The Greeks turned this Dionysian impulse into artistic "illusions" by combining it with the Apollonian impulse. In doing so, they were able to acknowledge the ultimate truth about existence, but because this truth was conveyed to them in a sublime allegory, it allowed them to avoid the nausea which accompanies the non-aesthetic Dionysian. In tragedy, the truth about reality is transmitted in a form which is palatable and enjoyable to watch.

This sort of aesthetic Dionysian exemplified in Greek tragedy is distinct from the non-aesthetic Dionysian of the barbarians. I take Nietzsche to be referring to the non-aesthetic Dionysian of the barbarians when he says in section 7 that "the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have gained knowledge, and nausea

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[4]Notice Nietzsche's use of the term "mood" here. This will-negating mood contrasts with the musical mood mentioned above.

inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things. . ." (BT 7: 60). "Dionysian man" in this context is the Dionysian barbarian who is without the healing balm of art. This is also clear from the alleged consequence of such non-aesthetic Dionysian knowledge: "Now no comfort avails any more; longing transcends a world after death, even the gods; existence is negated along with its glittering reflection in the gods or in an immortal beyond. Conscious of the truth he has once seen, man now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence. . ." (BT §7: 60). This clearly does not characterize the culture of the Greeks; it is precisely this consequence which they managed to avoid with their art.

What is Artistic Culture?

We have just seen that the first part of the section 18 passage which states that the Dionysian is an illusion is consistent with the rest of the text. The key effect of tragedy is an illusion in the sense that it provides an image which, in turn, represents the breakdown of the *principium individuationis*. I must now turn to the second part of the section 18 passage where Nietzsche associates tragic culture with Buddhism:

> All that we call culture is made up of these stimulants; and, according to the proportion of the ingredients, we have either a dominantly Socratic or artistic or tragic culture; or, if historical exemplifications are permitted, there is either an Alexandrian or a Hellenic or a Buddhistic culture (BT §18: 110).

I shall assume that the Socratic culture is primarily composed of that illusion which Nietzsche describes as "the Socratic love of knowledge and the delusion of thereby being able to heal the wound of existence." Nietzsche calls such a culture "Alexandrian" because it has a theoretical view of the world. He says, for example, that such a theoretical orientation appears "where

scientific knowledge is valued more highly than the artistic reflection of a universal law" (BT §17: 108). In what follows, however, I challenge the idea that "artistic culture" in section 18 refers only to a culture which employs the Apollonian illusion found in epic poetry. Admittedly, at first glance, the phrase "artistic culture" appears to denote the Homeric culture with its Olympian mythology, given the phrase, "art's seductive veil of beauty." Nevertheless, I would suggest that this description about the veil of beauty also applies to the later classical culture which embraces tragic drama. If the key effect of tragic drama is an illusion, i.e. an Apollonian image which represents the breakdown of the *principium individuationis,* then the category "artistic culture" encompasses the Apollonian culture of the epic *and* the later culture of tragic drama. Both are Hellenic and involve artistic representations, or illusions, which are Apollonian in form.

First, Nietzsche's contention that tragic drama kept mythology alive seems to promote the idea that a culture which embraces tragic drama is an artistic culture. One of the main contrasts between artistic culture and Socratic culture, on this view, would pertain to their respective attitudes toward myth. An artistic culture embraces myth, whereas a Socratic, or Alexandrian, culture rejects myth. In fact, Nietzsche says that the cultural decline experienced by all Alexandrian cultures results from its complete lack of myth. He calls modern Germany an Alexandrian culture, for example, and says that "the abstract man, untutored by myth" possesses "abstract education; abstract morality; abstract law; the abstract state" (BT §23: 135). This mythless and theoretical man is "eternally hungry":

> The tremendous historical need of our unsatisfied modern culture, the assembling around one of countless other cultures, the consuming desire for knowledge--what does all this point to, if not to the loss of myth, the loss of the mythical home, the

mythical maternal womb? (BT §23: 136).

While Alexandrian culture rejects myth, it obviously does not follow that it incorporates no illusions. That is, we have seen that Nietzsche regards the optimism of the Socratic strategy as an illusion. What distinguishes the Socratic solution from artistic solutions, then, is not that the latter simply employs illusions *per se*. Instead, they are distinguished by their respective attitudes, positive or negative, toward a particular kind of illusion: myth.

Until this point, I have merely sketched out my view of what Nietzsche means by "artistic culture" rather dogmatically. I require at least one additional piece of evidence to establish that "artistic culture" refers to the Homeric culture of Olympian mythology *and* the later Dionysian culture of tragic drama. In short, I must provide an alternate account of what Nietzsche means by "tragic culture." I need to show that "tragic culture" corresponds to something other than the sort of culture which embraces tragic drama.

Tragic Culture and Buddhism

In some of the later sections of the *Birth*, Nietzsche is actually quite explicit about what he means by "tragic culture." In fact, he claims that at least one kind of tragic culture is characterized by an insight into the illusory nature of its own underpinnings. More specifically, in some contexts Nietzsche uses "tragic culture" to refer to a Socratic culture which has eventually recognized that the basis of its optimism is merely an illusion. This recognition involves two separate components. The first is an awareness of the contradiction between the culture's optimism and its necessity for a slave class. Although Nietzsche's discussion of this idea is sparse at best, he goes on to conclude that "the Alexandrian culture, to be able to exist permanently, requires a slave

class, but with its optimistic view of life it denies the necessity of such a class. . ." (BT §18: 111).[5] The consequence is that "when its beautifully seductive and tranquilizing utterances about the 'dignity of man' and the 'dignity of labour' are no longer effective, it [i.e. Socratic culture] gradually drifts toward a dreadful destruction" (BT §18: 111). Presumably, Nietzsche thinks that a culture with a strong belief in myths would be able to justify the existence of such a class of slaves.

The second part of the tragic insight involves a recognition of "the limits and the relativity of knowledge generally. . ." (BT §18: 112). The consequence of this part of the insight is that the culture comes to deny "the claim of science to universal validity and universal aims" (BT §18: 112). And Nietzsche mentions Kant and Schopenhauer as two of the first philosophers to show convincingly that all knowledge is relative. Kant showed that objects of perception conform to the mind and not vice-versa. The problem with this critical awareness, of course, is that the claim of science to universal validity is actually the cornerstone of all Alexandrian culture.

Look at what Nietzsche says happens to an Alexandrian culture once it has gained this double insight:

> With this insight a culture is inaugurated that I venture to call a *tragic culture*. Its most important characteristic is that wisdom takes the place of science as the highest end--wisdom that, uninfluenced by the seductive distractions of the sciences, turns with unmoved eyes to a comprehensive view of the world, and seeks to grasp, with sympathetic feelings of love, the eternal suffering as its own. (BT § 18: 112, my emphasis)

First, it should be obvious from the context that Nietzsche is talking about an

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[5]Nietzsche's discussion of this issue in the *Birth* is exceedingly vague. However, he goes into greater depth about slavery and the Greeks in an essay entitled "The Greek State," trans. Maximilian A. Mügge, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, vol. 2, *Early Greek Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 1-18.

Alexandrian culture for which Socratic optimism has run its course. Therefore, "tragic culture," at least in this particular context, does *not* refer to the sort of culture which embraces tragic drama. In fact, Nietzsche argues that such a tragic culture stands in great need of art: "science, spurred on by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly toward its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck" (BT §15: 97). He then goes on to describe the consequence: "When they see to their horror how logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tail--suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, tragic insight which, merely to be endured, *needs art as a protection and remedy*" (BT §15: 98, my emphasis).

I do not wish to suggest that "tragic culture" refers only to a post-Alexandrian culture. Instead, any culture without art which has a tragic insight into the nature of human existence is a tragic culture. Post-Alexandrian culture is one version of tragic culture which occupies much of Nietzsche's discussion. What, then, does Nietzsche mean when he says that such a tragic culture needs art? With implicit reference to modern Europe, Nietzsche poses the following question at the end of section 15: "Will the net of art, even if it is called religion or science, that is spread over existence be woven even more tightly and delicately, or is it destined to be torn to shreds in the restless, barbarous, chaotic whirl that now calls itself 'the present'?" (BT §15: 98). What Nietzsche calls "art" here is not necessarily fine art; it appears to encompass religion and science as well.[6] All of these "arts" provide human beings with illusions which make it possible to live without falling prey to a negative attitude toward life. Also notice Nietzsche's reference to "the

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[6]This claim would appear to contradict my claims in the previous section, where I argued that "art" in this context refers to myth. I would suggest that Nietzsche could further distinguish between good and bad art: myth being good art and science being bad art. Sometimes, however, he seems to think that only "good art" is art.

present," which he appears to associate with barbarism. As we have seen, Nietzsche believes that a strong culture needs myth (see e.g. BT §23: 135). And with respect to the Greeks, he says, "Thus even the immediate present had to appear to them right away *sub specie aeterni* and in a certain sense as timeless" (BT §23: 137). Mythology puts what Nietzsche calls the "stamp of the eternal" on all experience: "And any people--just as, incidentally, also any individual--is worth only as much as it is able to press upon its experiences the stamp of the eternal. . ." (BT §23: 137).

In a collapsed Alexandrian culture, by contrast, all human experiences can only be interpreted in relation to the present age. Nietzsche says, for example, that Alexandrian culture shows "a frivolous deification of the present," and that individuals thus view their experiences *sub specie saeculi* (BT §23: 138). Admittedly, the Socratic solution does have an illusion which gives a sense of the eternal and thus shares a certain feature with myth: "so we find Plato endeavoring to transcend reality and to represent the idea which underlies this pseudo-reality. . ." (BT §14: 90). Yet when this view is no longer believable, individuals in the culture can only get glimpses of some eternal significance through orgiastic festivals and the like. This attempt to deify the present can, over the long-term, only lead to a form of resignation. It is also interesting to note that the whole notion of giving eternal significance to human experience is a theme which continued, in a different form, throughout Nietzsche's later works.[7]

The choice which Nietzsche poses at the end of section 15 for Germany is between an aesthetic culture and a non-aesthetic culture. An aesthetic

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[7]For, e.g., in Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence. See *The Gay Science* §341, 273-74; *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), §56, 68.

culture would provide a new illusion--more specifically, myth--which would allow human beings to give eternal significance to their experiences. By contrast, Nietzsche says that any culture failing to make such a leap into art falls prey to a will-negating attitude to life: "But from orgies a people can take one path only, the path to Indian Buddhism. . . ." Such a culture is characterized by "ecstatic brooding," which appears to be similar to the kind of attitude Schopenhauer calls "quietism." It is precisely the negative attitude toward life which Nietzsche tries to reject in the *Birth.*

The path to Buddhism is only one option for a tragic culture. Another possibility which Nietzsche mentions manifests itself in increasing militarism, which is exemplified historically by ancient Rome: "Where the political drives are taken to be absolutely valid, it is just as necessary that a people should go the path toward the most extreme secularization whose most magnificent but also most terrifying expression may be found in the Roman *imperium*" (BT §21: 125). The kind of tragic culture in the Roman example comes about when the Apollonian impulse supersedes the Dionysian. By contrast, Indian Buddhism with its brooding and orgies results when the Dionysian overcomes the Apollonian. Thus, India and Rome are examples of the two most dangerous possibilities for a non-aesthetic tragic culture. Both possess an excess of either one impulse or the other, either an excess of Dionysian or an excess of the Apollonian.

The Future of Germany

There is a third possibility for tragic culture, which Nietzsche argues the Greeks invented: "Placed between India and Rome, and pushed toward a seductive choice, the Greeks succeeded in inventing a third form. . ." (BT §21: 125). Of course, this third possibility is that culture which embraces tragic

drama. In contrast to the two species of tragic culture mentioned above, this third culture involves a harmonization of the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses:

> But let us ask by means of what remedy it was possible for the Greeks during their great period, in spite of the extraordinary strength of their Dionysian and political instincts, not to exhaust themselves either in ecstatic brooding or in a consuming chase after worldly power and worldly honor, but rather to attain that splendid mixture which resembles a noble wine in making one feel fiery and contemplative at the same time. Here we must clearly think of the tremendous power that stimulated, purified, and discharged the whole life of a people: *tragedy*. (BT §21: 125)

According to Nietzsche, the Greeks faced a choice at the end of the Persian war between all three of these possibilities for their future. Whereas Dionysian cults flourished, the threat of increasing militarization also remained a dangerous possibility. It was the genius of the Greeks, according to Nietzsche, which allowed them to combine these two forces in their tragedies and thus not to lapse into either excess.

Nietzsche also believes that Germany in the late nineteenth century faced a similar choice; Germany was in danger of becoming a non-aesthetic tragic culture. In fact, the analogy between the Greeks and the Germans guides much of Nietzsche's discussion in the *Birth*. He refers to the Greeks as "our luminous guides" (BT §23: 137), and in the "Preface to Richard Wagner," he says the major problem with which the book grapples is a "seriously German problem" (BT Preface: 31). And in the opening passage of the "Attempt at Self-Criticism," Nietzsche mentions the fact that "the time in which [the *Birth*] was written . . . [was] the exciting time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71" (BT ASC §1: 17). Nietzsche thus compares Germany after the Franco-Prussian war to the Greeks after the war with the Persians. The spread of Dionysian cults in Greece corresponds to the spread of revolutionary sentiment in

Germany, and the threat of militarization in Greece corresponds to the same in Germany. If these parallels form one of the guiding features of the text, they are also what Nietzsche later came to dislike most intensely about the book. After offering a number of stylistic criticisms "The Attempt at Self-Criticism," for example, Nietzsche says,

> But there is something far worse in this book, something I now regret still more than that I obscured and spoiled Dionysian premonitions with Schopenhauerian formulations: namely that I spoiled the grandiose Greek problem, as it had arisen before my eyes, by introducing the most modern of problems! That I appended hopes where there was no ground for hope, where everything pointed all too plainly to an end! (BT ASC §6: 24)

The substance of the comparison between Germany and Greece centers around the destruction of myth. The Greeks rescued themselves with their art, and Nietzsche believes that Germany must do the same. Nietzsche says that the superiority of France to Germany derives from the "identity of people and culture" (BT §23: 136). From this observation, he sees a possibility to unite the people and culture of Germany: "[A]ll our hopes stretch out longingly toward the perception that beneath this restlessly palpitating cultural life and convulsion there is concealed a glorious, intrinsically healthy, primordial power. . ." (BT §23: 136). This power, of course, is German music, "to whom we are indebted for the rebirth of German myth" (BT §23: 137). Nietzsche thus compares the Socratic period in ancient Greece to the theoretical culture of nineteenth century Germany: "Since the reawakening of Alexandrian-Roman antiquity in the fifteenth century we have approximated this state in the most evident manner, after a long interlude that is difficult to describe" (BT §23: 138). The specific symptoms of the Socratic world view in Greece which manifest themselves in Germany include the tendency toward an "overabundant lust for knowledge," an "unsatisfied delight in discovery,"

"secularization," "a homeless roving," "a greedy crowding around foreign tables," "a frivolous deification of the present" (BT §23: 138). Nietzsche claims that all of "these same symptoms allow us to infer the same lack at the heart of this culture, the destruction of myth" (BT §23: 138). The solution, according to Nietzsche, lies in the rebirth of myth, and such myth, as we have seen, can purportedly be reborn through the spirit of music.

Nietzsche claims, however, that when compared to the historical stages through which the Greeks passed, we find that Germany actually passed in the opposite direction. In other words, Germany was moving in reverse from an Alexandrian culture to a culture which embraces tragic drama:

> For to us who stand on the boundary line between two different forms of existence, the Hellenic prototype retains this immeasurable value, that all these transitions and struggles are imprinted upon it in a classically instructive form; except that we, as it were, pass through the chief epochs of the Hellenic genius, analogically in reverse order, and seem now, for instance, to be passing backward from the Alexandrian age to the period of tragedy. (BT §19: 121)

Nietzsche appears to believe that the Greeks passed through the following stages: (1) the (non-aesthetic) dark Titanic period prior to Homer; (2) the Homeric period with its Olympian mythology; (3) the subsequent Hellenic period of tragic drama; and finally (4) the Socratic period which Nietzsche also calls "Alexandrian" (see BT §2: 38-40) By contrast, Nietzsche appears to think that Germany is passing through the following historical periods: (1) an early pre-Christian stage, which is analogous to the Homeric; (2) an Alexandrian stage beginning in the fifteenth century, which is analogous to the Socratic. Nietzsche thinks that the choice Germany faces in the last half of the nineteenth century is between (3) a non-aesthetic culture analogous to India, Rome, or the earliest period in ancient Greece dominated by Silenus and the Titans, and (4) an aesthetic culture which embraces Wagners new tragic

dramas. This final culture would be analogous to the Hellenic period of Attic tragedy, and Wagner would be the modern Aeschylus who will supposedly initiate a new aesthetic culture.

Part of the problem involved in interpreting exactly what Nietzsche means by "tragic culture" throughout the text of the *Birth* is that he seems to use the term "tragic" in two senses which he never distinguishes. First, he uses "tragic" to refer to the aesthetic culture of the ancient Greeks in the fifth century. For example, he challenges us to be like these Greeks: "Only dare to be *tragic men*; for you will be redeemed" (BT §20: 124, my emphasis). Further, he says the following with respect to a reawakening of "tragedy and the *tragic* [my emphasis] world view": "If ancient tragedy was diverted from its course by the dialectical desire for knowledge and the optimism of science, this fact might lead us to believe that there is an eternal conflict between *the theoretic* and *the tragic world view*. . ." (BT §17: 106). It might appear from Nietzsche's use of "tragic" in these few passages that "tragic culture" in section 18 ought to be interpreted as a culture which embraces tragedy. However, we have also seen that Nietzsche sometimes uses "tragic culture" to refer to a culture which has passed through the Socratic stage by carrying the theoretical view of the world to its logical limits and that such a tragic culture subsequently falls prey to Buddhism or militarism.

We can understand this whole confusion about the term "tragic culture" in the following way. Nietzsche wants to say that tragic culture results from an awareness of the horrors of individual existence. However, the possible options for such a tragic culture can be further divided into aesthetic or non-aesthetic species. In contrast to India and Rome, the Greeks created an aesthetic culture when they breathed new life into their myths with tragic drama. Tragedy thus allowed the Greeks to have an allegorical

insight into the nature of individual existence, but it protected them and allowed them to live affirmatively. In this sense, the Hellenic culture of tragedy deserves the label "artistic culture," and Nietzsche, in fact, uses this phrase in section 18. However, there is also a sense in which this culture deserves the label "tragic culture"--at least insofar as the Greeks had an awareness of the fundamental nature of human existence. In other words, the contrast Nietzsche wants to emphasize is between the pessimism of the Greeks and the superficial optimism of theoretical culture. Nietzsche even sometimes calls the third option created by the Greeks, "tragic culture" in order to emphasize its rejection of optimism. Nietzsche never draws explicit attention to this terminological ambiguity. Within the context of the section 18 passage, however, he calls the period of tragic drama "artistic culture" for the purpose of emphasizing its differences from a culture exemplified by India and Rome. The term "tragic culture" in the section 18 passage, then, refers only to non-aesthetic cultures. If I am correct, then it would appear that Nietzsche could have avoided much of this confusion had he chosen to employ more refined terminological distinctions such as "aesthetic tragic culture" for the Greeks and "non-aesthetic tragic culture" for India and Rome.

There is at least one alternative to my interpretation of Nietzsche's claim in section 18 about tragic culture. Wayne Klein interprets these claims about tragic culture as ironic.[8] Klein believes that Nietzsche did not really pin his hopes for the future of Germany on a rebirth of tragedy. Instead, he argues that "the genetic movement described by Nietzsche from an Alexandrian to a tragic culture must be seen as a rhetorical ruse of sorts--reflected in the equivocal manner in which Nietzsche describes this process--whose function

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[8]Klein (1994).

is to hide the fact that the equation of the tragic and the Buddhistic ironically undermines the call for a rebirth of tragedy. Nietzsche's text does what he himself was prevented from doing, namely, it laughs at 'all the hasty hopes and faulty applications to the present' expressed in this book."[9] Klein's suggestion is that when Nietzsche says modern Germany is passing backwards into the period of tragedy, what Nietzsche really means is that Germany is entering a phase analogous to the Titanic period of ancient Greece. In short, Nietzsche thinks that Germany is entering a period of barbarism due to the fact that it fails to embrace art. The passage about Buddhism is supposed to be the clue to reading the text as an ironic statement.

The problem with Klein's reading, however, is that it deprives Nietzsche of a target for his own subsequent self-criticism. Recall that it is precisely the analogy between Greece and Germany that Nietzsche later detested most about the book. Additionally, in a section entitled "What is Romanticism" from *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche says, "It may perhaps be recalled, at least among my friends, that initially I approached the modern world with a few crude errors and overestimations and, in any case, hopefully" (GS §370: 327). With implicit reference to *The Birth of Tragedy*, he then says,

> I reinterpreted German music for myself as if it signified a Dionysian power of the German soul: I believed that I heard in it the earthquake through which some primeval force that had been damned up for ages finally liberated itself--indifferent whether everything else that one calls culture might begin to tremble. You see, what I failed to recognize at that time both in philosophical pessimism and in German music was what is really their distinctive character--their *romanticism*. (ibid.)

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[9]Ibid., 143.

The important point is that Nietzsche of the *Birth* believed a new artistic culture was about to be born in Germany. Additionally, despite increasing tensions between Nietzsche and Wagner at the time of the *Birth*, it was still a few years before Nietzsche actually broke with Wagner.[10] It is therefore more reasonable to believe that Nietzsche took these claims about the rebirth of tragedy seriously, and not as a ruse directed at Wagner and the hopes of Germany. In short, the kind of ironic reading countenanced by Klein is an over-interpretation. The advantage of my interpretation is two-fold. First, it saves Nietzsche's target for his subsequent self-criticisms, and it thus dispenses with the need to read Nietzsche's claims about the rebirth of tragedy ironically. Secondly, it explains interpretive difficulties as a consequence of Nietzsche's confusing terminology and criticizes him accordingly.

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[10]See Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: The Free Press, 1991). Pletsch claims, "Wagner kept Nietzsche in thrall for another four years after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche remained in the role of disciple and even permitted Wagner to dictate what he should write and publish" (Pletsch, 13).

CONCLUSION

According to Nietzsche, the key effect of tragedy is an illusion insofar as tragedy provides its spectators with an image of the tragic hero's destruction which, in turn, allegorically represents the breakdown of the *principium individuationis*. This is possible, according to Nietzsche, because the hero is a mask of the mythological figure Dionysus. And Dionysus qua mythological figure stands half-way between the determinate image of the stage and the underlying universality of the primordial unity expressed by music. Tragedy does not yield metaphysical truth, but, instead, provides allegorical truth. The passage from section 18 about the illusory effect of tragedy is consistent with the main claims of the text.

Additionally, the second part of the section 18 passage which equates tragic culture with Buddhism makes sense once we realize that "tragic culture" in this context does not refer to an aesthetic culture which embraces tragic drama. Instead, at least one kind of tragic culture Nietzsche discusses at length is a culture which has reached the logical end point of its Socratic, or theoretical, view of the world and realized that its foundations are illusions. The important feature of such a tragic culture is the acute awareness of its members that individual existence is horrible, terrifying, and that nothing an individual can do will change the state of affairs in nature. Contrary to Kaufmann and others, the claim about tragic culture and Buddhism in section 18 does not depend upon some misconception. Instead, it expresses the alleged fact that a culture which rejects artistic illusions falls prey to a will-

negating attitude to life. By contrast, the Greeks, according to Nietzsche, faced up to this pessimistic description of life and nevertheless lived affirmatively.

With respect to both of these parts of the section 18 passage, I also argued that Nietzsche ought to be criticized for a lack of clarity. This lack of clarity has contributed to problems with previous attempts to interpret this passage. With respect to the claim about tragedy and illusion, for example, Nietzsche fails to make sufficiently explicit the fact that there are actually two kinds of Dionysian at work in the text: one aesthetic and the other non-aesthetic. In the non-aesthetic Dionysian, individuals interpret the destruction of the *principium individuationis* literally. Through its Bacchanalian orgies, the non-aesthetic Dionysian offers a mere fleeting "metaphysical comfort." The result, however, is that after the Dionysian festival is complete, the individual returns to his normal consciousness and falls prey to a will-negating attitude toward life because he now realizes that he is merely an impotent individual facing up to the destructive and Titanic powers of nature. Additionally, with respect to the second part of the section 18 passage where Nietzsche equates tragic culture with Buddhism, we found that interpretative problems for his readers stem from the fact that Nietzsche uses "tragic culture" in two distinct senses. By distinguishing them as an "aesthetic tragic culture" and "non-aesthetic tragic culture," Nietzsche's position would become less ambiguous.

It should be noted that my interpretation of the section 18 passage shares features with the standard interpretation and the postmodernist interpretation. First, it shares with Clark's standard reading the view that the text *really is* about the birth and rebirth of tragedy. Contrary to de Man, then, Nietzsche does not attempt to show the supposed fact that logocentricism always undermines itself. Once Nietzsche's terminology is clarified, there are,

in fact, no good grounds to suppose Nietzsche states his theories ironically. However, my interpretation also shares with de Man's reading the view that Nietzsche recognized human beings could never have metaphysical knowledge of ultimate reality. Contrary to Clark, tragedy does not provide metaphysical truth. Instead, it provides what might be better called allegorical truth. In the form of an allegory, the terrible knowledge which tragedy imparts is palatable. In short, the message conveyed by the myth is terrible, but the spectator enjoys watching the destruction of the hero; human existence is thus interpreted as sublime.

Recall that Clark argues Nietzsche's preference for the Dionysian strategy found in tragedy is based on the alleged fact that it is the most truthful. In short, Nietzsche's ranking of the three strategies is based on how much truth each permits one to apprehend. It is clear that Nietzsche prefers the two artistic strategies to the Socratic. We have seen that he prefers these cultures to theoretical culture because of their adherence to myth. I would further suggest that Nietzsche's preference for tragedy over the epic is, at least partly, pragmatic. This finds support in a note excluded from the published text:

> The lack of symbols in our modern world. Understanding the world in "symbols" is the presupposition of a great art. For us music has become myth, a world of symbols. We relate to music, as the Greek related to his symbolic myths.[1]

Whereas the Greeks interpreted all of their experiences symbolically, Nietzsche claims that in the modern period we have completely lost this ability. This is, presumably, because we are all now "theoretical men" who

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[1]Klein (1996), 27, quoting Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Tauschenbuch Verlag/de Gryter, 1980), Vol. 7, 9.88.

think exclusively in concepts rather than images. Klein, in his commentary on this passage, says that Nietzsche's emphasis on music "is the expression of Nietzsche's desire for a new symbolic view of the world."[2] The image has become nothing more than a concept for modern people, and music is the means to a new symbolic view of the world. This seems to be at least partly why Nietzsche invokes the Schopenhauerian passage in section 16. Music, he hopes, will create the requisite music mood in us which will permit an intuitive understanding of mythical images. These images, are in a sense, more "truthful" than concepts because they are universal and concrete.

Nietzsche, at this time, was not the straightforward Kantian that Clark makes him out to be. The *Birth is* immature, but not as immature as Clark thinks. Nietzsche has moved some degree beyond Schopenhauer in the *Birth.* Yet, this position is not as "mature" as de Man claims. De Man's position implies that there is little development throughout Nietzsche's career. In short, his corpus represents different attempts to come to terms with logocentricism and subvert philosophical discourse to the model of literature. However, it is clear that Nietzsche subsequently had many substantial things to criticize about this text.[3] He also appears to have gotten beyond some of these language problems in his later philosophical career with what might possibly be a more pragmatic conception of truth. (I cannot pursue these ideas further here.)

One of the merits of my interpretation is that it preserves elements of the developmental reading of the Nietzschean corpus. Nietzsche later comes to reject his "solution" to the problem of human existence in tragedy as a

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[2]Klein, 28.

[3]See also: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), §§1-4.

mere romantic escape. In this respect, for example, I mentioned a passage from *Human all too Human* in which Nietzsche criticizes the *Birth's* theory of genius and artistic inspiration. In later works, he claims that the need for such an escape from the harsh truths of lie is a pessimism of weakness, and he thus associates it with both "romanticism" and Schopenhauer. In these works, Nietzsche comes to focus much more of his interest on the act of creation. He possibly came to think that life could never be affirmed if pain were the criterion for evaluating life. He therefore shifts the problematic from pleasure and pain to the issue of power, and, at times, he even appears to regard pain as a requirement for the proper exercise of power, as a precondition for creation.

Although *The Birth of Tragedy* is not a "mature" work, it should not be merely considered a piece of Nietzsche's juvenilia either. It is transitional, but it contains a host of fascinating ideas relevant to scholars interested in Nietzsche's development and aesthetics generally. Future scholars may devise arguments to support the thesis that the *Birth* is, at bottom, incoherent. However, it seems unlikely that such arguments will be based on the claims of this particular passage from section 18.

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