

## Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*

In order to gain a closer understanding of these two drives [Apollinian and Dionysian], let us think of them in the first place as the separate art-worlds of dream and intoxication (*Rausch*). Between these two physiological phenomena an opposition can be observed which corresponds to that between the Apollinian and the Dionysian. As Lucretius envisages it, it was in dream that the magnificent figures of the gods first appeared before the souls of men; in dream the great image-maker saw the delightfully proportioned bodies of super human beings; and the Hellenic poet, if asked about the secrets of poetic procreation, would likewise have reminded us of dream and would have given an account much like that given by Hans Sachs in the *Meistersinger*:

My friend, it is the poet's task  
To mark his dreams, their meaning ask.  
Trust me, the truest phantom man doth know  
Hath meaning only dreams may show:  
The arts of verse and poetry  
Tell nought but dreaming's prophecy.

Every human being is fully an artist when creating the worlds of dream, and the lovely semblance of dream is the precondition of all the arts of image-making, including, as we shall see, an important half of poetry. We take pleasure in dreaming, understanding its figures without mediation; all forms speak to us; nothing is indifferent or unnecessary. Yet even while this dream-reality is most alive, we nevertheless retain a pervasive sense that it is semblance; at least this is my experience, and I could adduce a good deal of evidence and the statements of poets to attest to the frequency, indeed normality, of my experience. Philosophical natures even have a presentiment that hidden beneath the reality in which we live and have our being there also lies a second, quite different reality; in other words, this reality too is a semblance. Indeed Schopenhauer actually states that the mark of a person's capacity for philosophy is the gift for feeling occasionally as if people and all things were mere phantoms or dream-images. A person with artistic sensibility relates to the reality of dream in the same way as a philosopher relates to the reality of existence: he attends to it closely and with pleasure, using these images to interpret life, and practising for life with the help of these events.

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The poem, “Die Meistersinger,” is from German poet and playwright Hans Sachs (1494–1576) and is quoted in Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*. A Meistersinger (“master singer”) was a member of a German guild for lyric poetry composition and unaccompanied art song of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. The Meistersingers carried on and developed the traditions of the medieval Minnesingers, who were the German counterparts of the medieval French “Troubadours.”