

Philosophical Sojourns in Aesthetics, Existence, and Education

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By

James M. Magrini

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

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

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-9197-2

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-9197-4

To Laura, of course.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to my philosophy students; they asked probing and insightful questions that inspired my thinking and rethinking on the issues highlighted in this book—*we learned together*. I am grateful to Dr. Nicole Bonino and Dr. Ian Copestake for their invaluable editorial contributions; their enlightened suggestions have greatly improved the flow and readability of these essays. I thank *Cambridge Scholars Publishers* for generously granting me the creative freedom and license to publish this collection of essays. I thank my good friend and fellow scholar Prof. Elias Schwieler (*Aporias of Translation: Literature, Philosophy, Education*) for his support and Prof. Richard Capobianco (*Heidegger and the Holy*), world-renowned Heidegger scholar, for his input and assistance.

INTRODUCTION

For the most part, this collection of recently penned essays deals with themes emerging from what might be generally, and perhaps cautiously, labeled “existentialism” or “existence philosophy” (*Existenzphilosophie*), along with issues related to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and New Platonic Studies. With reference to Platonic scholarship, I identify recent scholarly interpretations of Plato that are both hermeneutic and phenomenological, and collectively argue against the traditionally held view that Plato is a systematic or doctrinal philosopher. It is possible, without too much of a stretch, to envision Nietzsche as a proto-existentialist, while Jaspers, however, is a self-proclaimed philosopher of *Existenz*. Although Heidegger goes to great lengths in “Letter on Humanism”¹ to distance himself from Sartre’s understanding of existentialism, much like Camus, Marcel, Jaspers, and Sartre, Heidegger explores themes common to existentialism such as alienation, ontological forgetfulness, *Angst*, freedom, and ultimately human potential in light of the limits imposed by *facticity* and *finitude*. We also note that Jaspers credits Heidegger as the originator of *Existenzphilosophie*.

I was inspired to write these essays during my final year of teaching at the College of Dupage (Glen Ellyn, IL USA), where I was employed for over 15 years as an adjunct professor of Western philosophy and ethics. Motivated by classroom discussions, looking for ways to further my research, I sought to provide enlightened and extended rejoinders to the many informed and insightful questions posed by students, most particularly the questions and concerns raised by the adult students that I had the pleasure of teaching during the final years of my tenure.

If there is an underlying theme uniting these studies it is the view of philosophy that Jaspers, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Plato’s Socrates share, namely, philosophy as an active and ever-renewed practice, and beyond, a life-task or vocation. Concomitant with this vision of philosophy is the view of truth as something other than a possession or acquisition that stands at the culmination of the so-called philosophical method, and once

¹ M. Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in: ed., W. McNeill. *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 233-277.

truth is procured, the method can be jettisoned, for in this view the philosophical method, call it dialectic along with Plato or *philosophieren* (the “operation of philosophy”) as in Jaspers, becomes disposable.² Here, philosophy is wrongly conceived as producing definitive results, and beyond, there is a disingenuous sense of *instrumentality* bound up with philosophical activity. For according to the philosophers we encounter in this book, philosophy produces no explicit, tangible results. Jaspers is emphatic that philosophy intimates, gestures, and points, but does not give us anything definitive, instead it “moves with illuminating beams of light, but produces nothing.”³ Heidegger agrees with the great Bertrand Russell, who recognizes that philosophy “bakes no bread,”⁴ but as Heidegger opines, with a rare hint of optimism, “granted that *we* cannot do anything with philosophy, might not philosophy,” if we concern ourselves with it and dedicate ourselves to it in the manner of Socrates, “do something *with us*.”⁵

Jaspers assures us that philosophy “seeks but does not possess the meaning and substance of the one truth,”⁶ for it is the case that “truth is not static and unchanging, but endless movement into the infinite.”⁷ All the thinkers we explore envision truth as a living revelation and insight, albeit obscure and limited, into the ontological condition that serves as the origin or fundamental ground of our Being-in-the-world. This has crucial implications for the understanding of human subjectivity or self-hood, for self-hood as we describe it defies reduction to the mind, ego, or any *hypostatic substrate*, entity, or being, and is instead conceived, or better, enacted in the ontological mode of the *infinitival*. Speaking on philosophy

² F. Gonzalez. *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 9. This is an erroneous assumption that Gonzalez addresses in his critique of analytic interpretations of Plato's philosophy, namely, the assumption that “philosophical *method* is subordinate to, and terminates in, some final result...The process of questioning and investigating has a terminus that ultimately renders the process no longer necessary.”

³ K. Jaspers. *Philosophy of Existenz*, trans., R. F. Grabau (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 61.

⁴ B. Russell. *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 91.

⁵ M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans., G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 13.

⁶ K. Jaspers, *Philosophy Is For Everyman; A Short Course in Philosophical Thinking*, trans., R. F. C. Hull and G. Wels (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 118.

⁷ Ibid.

as the pursuit of self-knowledge, Michael Gelven recognizes that such inquiry seeks enlightenment that further deepens our understanding of what it means to be a self, but “does not seek to render a terminal and final answer to the question,”⁸ this is because such an achievement is unattainable, considering both the depth and complexity of the human being and the limitations restricting full-knowledge of philosophical issues. In all of these essays we encounter human subjectivity as representing a *self-in-transition*, where we freely work and struggle for a sense of self-hood, which is always in the process of *becoming other* in and through internal dialogue, or meditative *solitude*, and perhaps most importantly, within the context of the critical inter-personal dialogue or philosophical (*existential*) communication we engage in with others.

Thinking relating to Nietzsche arose in classroom discussions about the so-called *tragic sense of life* and the pressing concern that with the death of God, human meaning loses its objective, transcendental ground, and our nomological, systematic views of traditional objectivist morality evaporate. Questions of human self-hood emerge in connection with values, for with the condition of nihilism, as Nietzsche contends, values can no longer be uncovered or discovered, but rather must be created and sanctified by the autonomous human subject. Nietzsche’s response to the human subject stands in stark contrast to the postmodern idea of the socially constructed subject, which harbors an undeniable determinism and even fatalism in relation to human autonomy that is absent from Nietzsche’s philosophy. The students considered various philosophical responses to nihilism and found Nietzsche’s aesthetic-philosophical response, although not without problems, to be quite satisfying and potentially uplifting. The essay, “Nietzsche on Pessimism and Nihilism: The Tragic Greeks and the Persona of Dionysus” (Chapter 1), deals with many familiar themes and argues for a unique vision of “Dionysian Pessimism,” which in Nietzsche’s later philosophy represents a dynamic life modeled on an aesthetic understanding of composition, style, form, and content. The essay analyzes Nietzsche’s early treatment of Dionysus in relation to Greek tragedy and then moves from a metaphysical portrayal of the ancient god, as a primordial force of nature (*physis*), to consider Dionysus in Nietzsche’s later writings, in terms of an idealized persona. It is there argued, when stripped of metaphysical pretension, that Dionysus becomes an ideal that we emulate and from which we draw inspiration when adopting the “grand style” in an ascending life (*active*

⁸ M. Gelven. *Winter, Friendship, and Guilt: The Sources of Self-Inquiry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 9.

nihilism), a life that transcends nihilistic despair (*passive nihilism*) in the search for and establishment of new values. Ultimately, it responds in the affirmative to Nietzsche's pressing query regarding his life-task and legacy, appearing as the last entry in his strange and wonderful autobiography *Ecce Homo*, "Have I been understood? – *Dionysos against the Crucified...*"⁹

When exploring the philosophy of art or aesthetics, the class considered two issues: First, the crucial difference between the analytic focus on the artist and the philosophical concern with the work of art itself. We encounter the former concern in Nietzsche, with his focus on the psychology of the artist and her ability to efficaciously discharge the *will to power* in the creation of great works. The latter concern we find in Heidegger's view of art and the experience thereof; for Heidegger, great works of art hold the potential to *open and establish new worlds*, for art lives as a *founding and grounding* historical force or phenomenon. Second, we explored the issue of whether or not art, e.g., literature, poetry, or cinema holds the power to serve as a legitimate medium for *philosophizing*, and *not* merely an aesthetic vehicle for conveying or symbolizing potential philosophical themes. The essay, "Heidegger on the 'Futural' Poet Rilke: Poetizing the Essential Truth of Being?" (Chapter 2), is based on close readings of Heidegger's *Parmenides* lecture (1941-42) and the 1946 essay, "What Are Poet's For?" It poses and responds to the following questions: Does Rilke's poetry poetize the event of Being for Dasein? Does Rilke indicate that the human being can achieve this authentic mode of "historical" existence in relation to the Earth or the holy? Heidegger responds to the first query in the affirmative; Rilke does poetize this event, albeit through a "tempered" and somewhat traditional view of Western metaphysics. To the second query, Heidegger responds cryptically, and to clarify this response, I explore Heidegger's interpretation of Rilke's "Angel" as a prophetic figure of *futural* hope. I am concerned with what type of poets Heidegger believes, other than and in addition to Hölderlin, might be up to the supreme task of poetizing Dasein's historical transcendence beyond the *metaphysics of presence*. What Heidegger seeks is the poet for *destitute times* and what is necessary is the presence and intervention of those poets who "attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods,"¹⁰ those who poetize the truth of Being, which stands beyond *the*

⁹ F. Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans., R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 104.

¹⁰ M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 93.

metaphysics of presence, for the potential appropriation and enactment of the type of authentic historical dwelling Heidegger philosophizes.

I trace the inspiration for the exegetical essay, “Jaspers on Philosophy and Self-Being: The ‘Loving Struggle’ for Truth and *Existenz*” (Chapter 3) to classroom discussions focused on the essence, or more appropriately, the origin (*archē*) of the drive to philosophize. After exploring Aristotle’s claim in *Metaphysics*, that it is by way of nature (*physis*) that the human shelters the exigent drive to know self and world, we turned to Jaspers’ philosophy in order to consider the notion that humans are innate philosophers, and we discussed Jaspers’ observation, no doubt born of his vast psychological training, that the seemingly innocent questions children ask are already philosophical in nature, albeit in a non-systematic, incipient form. As Jaspers observes: “A marvelous indication of man’s innate disposition to philosophy, is to be found in the questions asked by children.”¹¹ Such questions, Jaspers stresses, are thus anything but the mere fanciful, naïve musings of youngsters that can be dismissed out of hand. This essay is focused on elucidating what Kurt Salamun terms Jaspers’ “period of existential philosophizing – from 1919 until 1936.”¹² It was during this period, in 1935, when Jaspers presented a series of five lectures on Reason and Existenz (*Vernunft und Existenz*), that he expanded his philosophy of 1931 by introducing the concept of the Encompassing (*das Umgreifende*) into his philosophy of *Existenz*, Transcendence, and World.¹³ The essay seeks to provide a coherent view of Jaspers’ thoughts where the Encompassing, as Being itself, permeates and pervades every aspect of the human being’s existence and makes human Transcendence a possibility, occurring only, however, in and through the practice of *existential* communication with others, the “loving struggle” for authentic self-Being and progressive ecumenical intellectual and spiritual growth.

When discussing Plato’s Socrates, the following question repeatedly arose: How is it possible to label Socrates a “teacher” when he is a radically different kind of philosophical thinker than professors teaching philosophy in institutions of higher learning? This led to a discussion regarding the manner in which education determines success or

¹¹ K. Jaspers. *The Way to Wisdom*, trans., R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 9.

¹² K. Salamun, “Karl Jaspers’ Conceptions of the Meaning of Life,” *Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts*, Vol. 1(2), 2006, 1.

¹³ A. E. Wildermuth, “Karl Jaspers and the Concept of Philosophical Faith,” *Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts*, Vol. 1(2), 2007, 11.

achievement in learning, and the fact that the type of knowledge or insight that Socrates appears to elicit is a form of enlightenment that can't necessarily be measured, especially when applying the typical quantitative standards of contemporary education. Indeed, one particularly insightful student proposed the analogy linking Socratic wisdom (*sophia*) with what we understand as "wherewithal," a general *affective* intuition that provided Socrates the insight to align his life with the virtues in a way that pushed him to philosophically question, interrogate, and examine them, all the while understanding the crucial role they play, and how they *should* be ordered within a life directed toward human flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Three essays focus directly on Plato's Socrates, "The Enigma of Socrates in Heidegger: A Pure Vision of Education" (Chapter 4), "Socrates is Not a Teacher: But Can We Learn From Him?" (Chapter 5) and "The 'Failure' of Alcibiades' Education: The Difficulty of Socratic Self-Cultivation" (Chapter 6), all deal, in one way or another, with the idea that Socrates is a unique and clever sort of educator, who, when claiming ignorance of the virtues and many other things, is not employing a philosophical trope for dramatic or ironic effect, and this claim is defended within the analysis of Plato's nuanced characterization of Socrates in the dialogues we explore.

One of the intriguing notions underpinning the essays on Plato's Socrates is Heidegger's powerful claim that Socrates is the *purest thinker of the West*, and as Socrates is situated in the context of dialectic, he breaks open and then holds open the questioning by facilitating the *draft* or *essential sway of Being*, which is the dynamic counter-striving of lighting (un-concealment) and primordial concealing, and thus Socrates, according to Heidegger, did "nothing else than place himself into this draft, this current, and maintain himself in it."¹⁴ When reading Plato's dialogues, we are confronted over and over with Socrates' adamant insistence that he is a co-learner in dialectic (*elenchus*), because he also requires an education, for example, as evident in his discussion about politics with the young Alcibiades, where Socrates admits that he too is seeking the truth of the virtues, self-knowledge, and cultivation of the soul (*Alcibiades I*, 124c). This is also the case in the *Meno* (80d), when Socrates is interrogating the nature of virtue and inquiring into whether or not it can be taught like other subjects without disassembling, he asserts in a straightforward manner, "I do not know what virtue is," but nevertheless, "I want to examine and seek together with you what it may be."¹⁵ This constitutes the notion of

¹⁴ M. Heidegger. *What is Called Thinking?* trans., F. D. Wick and J. G. Gray (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954), 17.

¹⁵ Plato. *Plato: The Complete Works*, ed., J. M. Cooper (Bloomington: Indiana State University Press, 1997).

“seeking-together” (*synerchomai*) in Socratic dialectic. This crucial notion of Socrates as co-learner raises concerns about the effectiveness of Socratic philosophy, especially when considering the problem of the young Socratic upstarts highlighted in the *Apology*, who practice dialectic with little knowledge of the expertise required. Beyond these “imitators” of Socrates there are also the infamous “rouges,”¹⁶ who, for a time also practiced philosophy with Socrates, such as Charmides, Critias, Phaedrus, and perhaps the most well-known and infamous of the Socratic ne’er-do-wells, Alcibiades. We analyze Alcibiades’ philosophical education, the self-cultivation of his soul (*psychē*) or disposition (*hēxis*), offering a close reading of *Alcibiades I* and the *Symposium*, to determine whether or not Socrates is culpable and hence must assume responsibility for the abject failure of Alcibiades’ education. Ultimately this judgment hinges on whether or not we can truly identify, and further, classify Socrates as a “*didaskalos*,” that is to say, in terms of a traditional and formal educator.

The closing essay, “The Decline of the Humanities and Philosophical Argumentation: The Continuing Crisis on Contemporary Education” (Chapter 7), draws on elements of Mark Slouka’s, “De-Humanized: On the Selling (OUT) of American Education, and What it Costs Us” (published in the collection, *Essays From the Nick of Time*). Slouka offers one of the most compelling and powerful critical essays exposing the insidious influence of the rise of science, math, and engineering (STEM Programs) in institutions of higher learning, which often times comes at the expense of the humanities in the curriculum. Slouka makes the unsettling observation that the humanities have been marginalized for so long that educators have inadvertently “acceded to that marginalization,”¹⁷ and he argues strenuously for the necessity of defending and fighting for the retention of the humanities in the curriculum, for when *done right*, they are “the crucible in which our evolving notions of what it means to be fully human are put to the test; they teach us, incrementally, endlessly, not what to do, but how to be.”¹⁸ The marginalization of the humanities is a troubling and continuing trend in education, and buttressing this claim we consider the recent move to dissolve the classics department at Howard University (Washington, DC) in the US. My critical commentary includes the thoughts of many contemporary philosophers writing extensively on the moribund state of contemporary democratic education, such as Martha Nussbaum. The types

¹⁶ G. A. Scott. *Socrates as Educator* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 37.

¹⁷ M. Slouka, *Essays from the Nick of Time: Reflections and Refutations* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2010), 161.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

of issues addressed in this essay are all too familiar to me as a life-long educator, for in addition to teaching at institutions of higher learning, I taught for many years at both the primary and secondary level, when standardization first came to prominence amid the push to administer the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) to elementary students. Now, as a retired educator, having the time and distance to reflect on these issues, I feel it is necessary to include this critical *reflection* on and *refutation* of the continuing crisis in contemporary education.

It is my hope that *philosophical Sojourns* will contribute to the ongoing discussions in texts and academic journals by providing new insights into these thinkers as they are currently debated in philosophical circles. The collection is novel in that it offers these insights across broad but related fields of study, for although essentially a philosophy text, it provides scholarly inroads to the academic fields of literary critique, classical studies, psychology, and educational theory. For example, the essays described above, focused on Socratic philosophy, arguing for dialectic as a unique mode of teaching and learning (*paideia*), hold the potential to inspire re-conceptualized approaches to both the theory and practice of education that cuts hard against strains of contemporary standardization evident at all levels of pedagogy. The text could be employed in an effective manner as a secondary avenue of study for classrooms in institutions of higher learning, supplementing primary philosophical sources in the curriculum. In addition to programs offering advanced degrees, the book also serves as a challenging introductory text for students at the undergraduate level studying or even interested in philosophy.

CHAPTER ONE

NIETZSCHE ON PESSIMISM AND NIHILISM

THE TRAGIC GREEKS AND THE DIONYSIAN ARTIST-PHILOSOPHER

This essay explores nihilism and pessimism in Nietzsche while developing an understanding of the self-in-transition (*becoming who you are*), a view to self-hood that stands opposed to the traditional nucleated metaphysical self as indelible, hypostatized, or transcendental mind or soul. Moving from *The Birth of Tragedy* through the later writings, such as *The Gay Science* and *Twilight of the Idols*, we analyze the evolving view of Dionysus - from primordial metaphysical principle to idealized persona. It is argued that in Nietzsche's later writings Dionysus is brought down from the soaring metaphysical heights to serve as an inspirational symbolization of the Hellenic-inspired view of an ascending life, which is enacted through the *artist-philosopher's* attuned discharge of will to power. In working toward the interpretive end of elucidating the dangers of hope and philosophical optimism, we turn to the compilation of his voluminous notes ultimately published as *The Will to Power*, to offer a detailed reading of Nietzsche's understanding of *Passive Nihilism/Pessimism of Decline* and *Active Nihilism/Pessimism of Strength*. The latter, it is shown, manifests in what Nietzsche calls "*Dionysian Pessimism*" and it is linked with the persona of Dionysus and the type of aesthetic response to nihilism this idealized persona inspires. For in his later corpus, Dionysus assumes something of an all-encompassing, all-consuming presence, now in the foreground of Nietzsche's thought, while the *Apollonian* form of aesthetic attunement (*Rausch*) appears to recede into the background, playing a distant secondary role in Nietzsche's view of aesthetics. In writing this essay, our thoughts were guided by the ever-present question of what it is that Nietzsche might be able to teach us with all of his inspired poetic thinking on the tragic Greeks and the god of wine and tragedy. In the end, we entertain the following possibility: despite inhabiting a world devoid of intrinsic meanings and established values, it is not an existence without

imminent potential for inspiring human self-overcoming and secular transcendence. Therefore, by emulating Nietzsche's Dionysus, it is certainly possible to live in a productive and rewarding manner.

Nietzsche and Hesiod Hope and Optimism as Harbingers of *Pessimism*

In *Works and Days* Hesiod introduces the now-familiar story of Pandora and the jar (*pitkos*) full of evils and, in doing so, establishes a view of the human condition - a non-systematic *metaphysics* and *ontology* - that is bleak, depressive, and consistent with a *pessimistic* view in which all things bend toward destruction and all humans are continually and relentlessly exposed to seemingly senseless, profuse, and unending instances of suffering. Pandora's story is set within the overarching narrative of Zeus's anger at the wily Prometheus who smuggled fire in the tube of a fennel and delivered it as a *gift* to humanity. As Hesiod tells us, Zeus, devising *grim care for mankind*, vows to make human life miserable, and so intends to deliver to them, and in an important sense, infect them with, an "affliction in which they will all delight as they embrace their own misfortune."¹ Thus, to carry out his nefarious scheme, Zeus tasks Hephaestus with crafting a beautiful maiden assuming the outward form of a goddess in stature and beauty, to which other denizens of Olympia contribute various and sundry "gifts" to the maiden made from water and earth, named Pandora - "all gifts" (*pan-dōron*). Athena teaches Pandora the skill to craft and dresses and adorns her in a flowing white gown. Aphrodite bestows the gift of charm and the insidious power to arouse painful and obsessive yearnings in men. The Graces and lady Temptation supply Pandora with her shining golden necklaces. This notion of "gift" assumes a duplicitous meaning as, in one sense, Pandora is a gift from all of the Olympians to humans, while, in another far more ominous and nefarious sense, Pandora is a gift given with the explicit purpose of doing harm and inflicting pain on the recipients. We are perhaps most familiar with the ominous connotation of gift from Homer's telling of how the Greeks gained entrance to Troy by hiding inside the Trojan Horse—a gift bringing destruction and death. We note that it is Hermes, the "dog-

¹ Hesiod, *Theogony/Works and Days*, trans., M. L. West. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 38.

killer,” who gives Pandora “a bitch’s mind and knavish nature,”² so that she has the skill to fashion deceptive and malevolent lies.

When Pandora is sent to earth, she carries with her a sealed jar - the gift that bears the *gift* - she presents herself to Epimetheus, who has been explicitly instructed by his brother Prometheus to flatly refuse any offerings from Zeus and the Olympians. Epimetheus, of course, ignores his brother’s sound advice and foolishly accepts Zeus’s gift; Epimetheus welcomes Pandora who, thereafter, unseals the lid of the earthenware jar to release evil, malevolent forces, or, as Hesiod contends, *afflictions* upon the human condition. However, unbeknownst to Pandora, one of the “evils” remained - *Hope* did not fly out, for it was clinging to the inside of the jar’s rim. As Hesiod recounts, Pandora quickly “put the lid back in time [trapping *hope* inside] by the providence of Zeus.”³ So, just as Zeus had cleverly planned, Pandora trapped *hope* within the jar after releasing all the other evils. Thus, because of Pandora, humanity has no escape from the conditions of suffering and death, nor is it possible to transcend the vicious cycle of desire, which always ends in disappointment and, in the extreme, destruction.⁴ Indeed, this is how, after the brief but crucial mention of *hope* inside Pandora’s jar, Hesiod abruptly ends the myth prior to moving on to present another myth concerned with Humanity’s downfall, that of the descending chronological stages or epochs of metal. Readers are left with an undeniably *pessimistic* vision of life; a dark and gloomy vision of the human condition, where all things eventually end in disaster and destruction. Readers are well aware of the role that the issue of *illness* and its subsequent overcoming play in Nietzsche’s philosophy, so it is interesting to note that Hesiod describes the “evils” released by Pandora in terms of *afflictions*, *diseases*, and *illnesses*, a topic that we discuss later.

² Hesiod, *Theogony/Works and Days*, 38. When reading Hesiod, we must put out of our mind the innocent and naïve portrayal of Pandora that we encounter in certain retellings of the myth, where she is depicted as a sympathetic character, a young maiden who simply falls victim to her obsessive curiosity (See reference to Guerber’s text: *The Myths of Greece and Rome*). Rather, we should imagine Pandora in terms consistent with the way the cursed prophetess Cassandra describes the cunning and wicked Clytemnestra, wife of the ill-fated Agamemnon. Aeschylus portrays Clytemnestra as the incarnate of a “female dog,” a stark and derisive characterization indicating that she is less than human, namely, an evil and *inhuman* aberration. See: W. Jennings Oates. *The Complete Greek Drama*. (New York: Random House, 1938).

³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

Hesiod does not provide a detailed narrative concerning the role of *hope* in the Pandora myth, and hence does not consider the issue of *hope*'s role as a potential value, and beyond, salvific force, as it is often the case within retellings of the myth. For example, M. L. Lewis offers an interpretation of *hope*'s role in the Pandora myth stating that "although Hesiod has not given his jar a consistent symbolic meaning, he *means* that Hope remains among men as the one *antidote* to suffering."⁵ Here, based on Hesiod's explicit description of the "evils" emerging from the jar - sicknesses infecting the human condition - Lewis suggests that *hope* might be said to play the role of *pharmakon*, a drug or remedy to counteract the injurious effects of one or another poison.⁶ To continue and deepen this understanding of *hope* as a potential salvific force, if we turn to H. A. Guerber's retelling of the myth, we encounter a reading that in no uncertain terms lauds the saving power of *hope*, its potential to deliver humanity from the thralls of a dark, bleak, and even fatalistic existence. Guerber, extending Hesiod's original version of the myth, provides an epilogue missing from the original telling, and informs us that, prior to sending off Pandora and the jar, the "gods, with a sudden impulse of compassion, concealed among the evil spirits one kindly creature, Hope, whose mission was to heal the wounds inflicted by her fellow prisoners."⁷ *Hope*, in this optimistic reinterpretation of Hesiod's myth, acts as a palliative against the pain and suffering of existence, and Guerber goes on to add that in the ancient Greek culture it was believed that "evil entered into the world, bringing untold misery; but *Hope* followed closely in its footsteps, to aid struggling humanity, and point to a happier future."⁸ This reading offers an understanding of the ancient Greeks, most specifically the pre-Socratic and Tragic Greeks, at odds with Nietzsche's Dionysian and "tragic" vision of the Hellenic culture, which Nietzsche views as a superior culture that heroically and aesthetically confronted and transformed a decidedly pessimistic view and experience of life, without succumbing to the temptation of optimism.

⁵ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 75.

⁶ R. Scholes. *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 7. This duplicitous understanding and function of "gift" is related to Derrida's notion of the *pharmakon*, e.g., in Scholes' reading of deconstruction he defines *pharmakon* as follows: A *Pharmakon* can be both a "healing medicine and a dangerous drug, depending on the amount of it that we imbibe and what other agents we mix with it."

⁷ H. A. Guerber. *The Myths of the Greeks and Romans*. (New York: Dover Press, 1995), 21.

⁸ *Ibid.*

However, if we remain true to the myth as presented by Hesiod and consider Pandora's jar and the evils unleashed (vice, jealousy, avarice, labor, old age, insanity, sickness, suffering, and death), it is clear that Hesiod holds a far more bleak and destitute view of the human condition, where chance and happenstance rule since humans can never predict what fate might befall them. The strong, he tells us, can at any moment be rendered impotent, the rich can easily lose their fortunes and become destitute in the flash of an eye, while the healthy can suddenly be stricken with a fatal, terminal illness. In short, one's life can be turned upside down in an instant for no justifiable or even understandable reason; life unfolds, as it were, on a shifting, dangerous, and unpredictably treacherous foundation.⁹ Unlike Guerber, Nietzsche remains true to the tone and timbre of Hesiod's original telling of the myth, expressing what is intimated in *Works and Days*, namely, that the appearance of *hope* in the myth is slightly more complex and far more ominous than typically interpreted. For as we see, in relation to what was originally stated about the duplicitous nature of *dōron* for the Greeks, *hope* must be rethought and re-conceptualized in light of its double meaning as introduced above. Nietzsche, in *Human, All Too Human* provides a unique reading that, in line with what Hesiod might be said to intimate, reveals the sinister as opposed to the salvific nature of *hope*, the last of the gifts to humankind trapped forever in the Jar of Pandora. Nietzsche's reading of the myth helps us to understand the terrible metaphysical and ontological *truism* that lies behind Zeus's nefarious plan and inspires, as we explore in the next section, the Greeks of the tragic age to transform their existence in and through the participation in the uplifting aesthetic experience of tragedy.

Nietzsche labels *hope*, and here we link hope with optimism, "the most evil of evils because it prolongs man's torment,"¹⁰ it is the "actual *malignant* evil"¹¹ that gives us the false illusion that, through it, we are able to fully transcend and hence outstrip the *ontological* condition of suffering and torment, e.g., as related to eschatological religions, where there is faith, belief, and *hope* that a better world beyond *this one* exists; there is *hope* for a morally just universe that is "value-laden" because it is "given" by God. *Hope*, in this instance, Nietzsche would say, facilitates a false consciousness, "a definite false psychology, a certain kind of

⁹ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 27.

¹⁰ F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans., M. Faber (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1996), 58.

¹¹ F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans., R. J. Hollingdale. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 145.

fantasy,”¹² regarding our cold and valueless existence. Nietzsche extends the line of thought intimated within Hesiod’s original telling of the myth, accepting that Zeus, in order to exact revenge against humanity, intends to make the punishment unending, for he views this as the most effective manner of torture. This is an idea and motif we encounter in various myths, as in Prometheus on the rock secured in chains of adamantine, or Sisyphus ceaselessly rolling and re-rolling the boulder to the top of the *mineral flaked* mountain. The gift of *hope* is inherently nefarious and malevolent, but is misinterpreted, per Zeus’s plan, as a salvific force of redemption, i.e., humans mistake “the remaining evil for the greatest worldly good, [and] man has the lucky jar in his house forever and thinks the world of this treasure, [and it is always] at his service; he reaches for it when he fancies it.”¹³

This is a gift, as Nietzsche recognizes, that keeps on giving, since Zeus wanted humanity blind to *hope*’s acutely malevolent nature in order to employ this gift in the mistaken assumption that it is a trusted and effective palliative for the ills of existence. Although *hope* temporarily assuages the pain of wounds inflicted by the many other evils unleashed by Pandora, according to Nietzsche, it eventually traps and secures us within the ever-renewed vicious cycle of recurring torment. This is because Zeus “did not want man to throw his life away, no matter how much the other evils might torment him, but rather to go on letting himself be tormented anew,” and, as stated, “to that end, [Zeus] gives man hope.”¹⁴ We will see, that, depending on the form *hope* assumes, based on the way in which it manifests, it holds the malevolent potential to blind us to Hesiod’s extremely bleak metaphysical view of human existence, which in Nietzsche’s later thought is related to the condition or state of *nihilism* within his sustained discussion and critique of modernity. *Hope*, we might say, distracts from Nietzsche’s overall philosophical pursuit that obsessively consumed his life, namely, his ongoing and ever-renewed endeavor to find secular justification for human existence by providing a legitimate “philosophical” and “aesthetic” response to the following question: Once we reveal and grasp the oppressive, radically abysmal metaphysical constitution of the universe, how might life be made bearable, and more so, transformed into an ascending and flourishing heroic endeavor?

¹² Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, 135.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

One hopes, in an optimistic manner, that things will be better, life will be rendered understandable, pain and suffering will be alleviated or at the very least justified. This view stands antithetical to pessimism, for as Joshua Foa Dienstag reveals, “the pessimist is particularly opposed to...the optimistic view that suffering is to be eliminated by ‘history,’ ‘nature,’ or ‘reason’.”¹⁵ Dienstag clarifies the view of optimism that Nietzsche vehemently rejects, stating, “The optimistic account of the human condition is both linear and progressive” – but can also be, as we later show, *vertical* (religious) or *horizontal* (historical) – it is grounded in the notion that when reason is applied to faltering or troubled political or social structures, this “will ultimately result in the melioration of these conditions,”¹⁶ and for Nietzsche, such optimism manifests in many forms, e.g., the *declining* form of optimism expressed through religion, morality, and philosophy.¹⁷ Hence, we are in error and indeed devalue our higher potential when we are optimistic about establishing an ideal and finalized state of worldly affairs through teleological projection. For example, when believing that we might arrive at a perfected and utopian state, which is achieved through the trajectory of ever-developing modes of scientific and technological progress, which is what Nietzsche identifies as the misguided faith in science or *scientism*.¹⁸

We note, along with Aaron Ridley, that as “Western culture becomes more secular...it doesn’t thereby become less transcendentalized: For God is simultaneously abolished and replaced by reason (for its own sake), by truth (for its own sake).”¹⁹ The optimism linked to Socratic reason (*theoretical man*) manifests in the belief in human progress that we encounter in contemporary secular humanism. Here, as Nietzsche contends, similar to Christianity, the drive for rational and complete explanations inspires and perpetuates decadent and life-negating modes of comportment that devalue the terrestrial, embodied world of becoming. An example of this is the world as it appears to us, as we are immersed in all of its flux and flow, and upon which the notion of a *real* world, a superior

¹⁵ J. Foa Dienstag. *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2006), 186.

¹⁶ Ibid. 18.

¹⁷ F. Nietzsche. *Will to Power*, trans., W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 794.

¹⁸ F. Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*, trans., R. J. Hollingdale (UK: Penguin Books, 1992), 4.

¹⁹ A. Ridley. *Nietzsche’s Conscience: Six Character Studies from the “Genealogy.”* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1998), 9.

world, has been erroneously imposed; whether in the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant, this is a symptom of “*decadence*,” a sign of “*declining* life.”²⁰ Nietzsche warns us that optimism is “just as *décadent* as pessimism, and perhaps more harmful,”²¹ and here Nietzsche is referencing the one form of pessimism we later link with a worldview expressed through *passive nihilism*, which leads to the negation of and retreat from life, which is devoid of intrinsic meaning and values, it is a “weary nihilism that no longer attacks, [it is] a sign of weakness.”²² Optimistic men, Nietzsche observes, those men who are also welded to the good, “never tell the truth [and they teach] you false shores and false securities...Everything [is] distorted and twisted down to its very bottom through [optimism].”²³

The Dangerous Temptation of Hope and Optimism The Inauthentic Response to *Pessimism* in Christianity and Socratic Optimism

As we develop the view of pessimism and the *pessimism of strength* as related to an understanding of *Dionysian Pessimism*, we consider two ways in which optimism manifests in a nefarious and malevolent form, of both of which Nietzsche is exceedingly critical: Christianity and “Socratic optimism” in the superior power of human *reason*. Here, we examine two questionable and problematic forms of human transcendence: one religious in nature, and the other a secular view harboring a religiously inspired *onto-theological* view of metaphysics. In this section, we relate these issues to our forthcoming discussion of art in *The Birth of Tragedy*. So, let us return to the notion of *hope* and optimism as invoked in our reading of the Pandora myth and Hesiod and recall that *hope* is the most heinous of the evils sent to punish humans because it prolongs human pain and torment, in that it is an inauthentic palliative to suffering, and when embraced in certain forms, as Nietzsche indicates, it actually prolongs human suffering. Hope blinds humans to the undeniable impossibility of ever fully grasping and mastering the world in knowledge, and hence establishing human superiority and dominance over nature.²⁴ This for Nietzsche would require the impossible, namely, that human existence has

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 49.

²¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 98.

²² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 23.

²³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 99.

²⁴ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 58.

a goal and that beneath or behind all *becoming* there is a grand unity; the world, in this view, is fully explainable and it would be possible to discover and reveal authentic values.²⁵

However, we are certainly not indicating that adopting a philosophy embracing the *pessimism of strength/active* nihilism precludes holding out hope for a better and more improved existence. For indeed, the ancient Greeks' active pursuit of a better life, which instantiates the *pessimism of strength*, is grounded in the hope that, through the creation and participation in art, the dark, malevolent forces and manifold ills and evils oppressing their ephemeral existence could be transformed and sublimated. Tragedy, for Nietzsche, represents the inspiration for pursuing the supreme activity of engendering an ascending life, which is always in the process of developing, changing, and evolving. What Nietzsche is critical of, however, is the type and form of hopeful optimism bound up with delusion, blindness, and weakness, all signs of decadence and decline, leading to the pursuit of various philosophical and theological endeavors that serve as ineffective exercises in escapism, which amount to ignoring and fleeing in the face of the human's responsibility to acknowledge and respond to the pessimistic conditions we have laid out and related to the ancient Greek's experience. According to Nietzsche, such escapism, through hope and optimism, only serves to compound the problems plaguing the human's terrestrial existence, e.g., when *hope*, the supposed cure for the sickness associated with a *pessimistic* worldview, manifests its true nature as the deadliest of illnesses.

To further clarify these points, Nietzsche is critical of the type of optimism common to philosophies and world-views seeking permanent transcendence of either a *vertical* or *horizontal* nature, born of sickness and illness, as encountered in Schopenhauer's pessimism, Wagner's Romanticism, Socratic Rationalism, Christianity, and the religious metaphysics found in Platonism. Nietzsche launched countless vitriolic attacks against religion - particularly Christianity - as a theological *Weltanschauung* and lifestyle grounded in the faith, the belief, and the *hope* for another superior, spiritual (*supra-sensual*) world that transcends

²⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 13. For example, although Kant stresses the limits of human reason, his deontological system, related to reason and the categorical imperative, depends on an overarching and inherent sense of justice in the universe. This is because, since the moral knowledge we have comes by means of rational intuition, we glean a sense of universal justice anytime we behave morally or perform our duty to the categorical imperative. See: Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans., H. J. Paton. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

the so-called terrestrial world as expressed through *vertical transcendence*. Because of Christianity, it is possible for us to speak of the illness of existence, for as Nietzsche contends, Christianity is responsible for initially espousing and perpetuating the idea of a truly diseased world. Christianity, he contends, “first brought sin into the world,” and although Christianity as a systematic religion has been “shaken to its deepest roots,” its shadow, so to speak, or the “*belief in the sickness* which it taught and propagated continues to exist”.²⁶ Christianity has its origins in the insidious and festering resentment (*ressentiment*) that passes “sentence on this whole world of becoming as a deception and [seeks] to invent a world beyond it, a *true* world.”²⁷ The exigency to posit God as the apex of a given and universal truth, demonstrates a weakness of will that requires values given “from the *outside* - by some *superhuman* authority.”²⁸

The belief that Christianity harbors hope for a new and better world, within a promised transcendent realm of Heaven, requiring the belief in another life, the afterlife, is for Nietzsche one of the greatest dangers - in the form of a hopeful promise - that Christianity sells to its converts and adherents. Christianity perpetuates the harmful belief that our terrestrial existence is of little or no value, and worse, it serves as the training ground, reducible to a dress rehearsal in preparation for the main production that is the next true and eternal life, which is promised to be better. This view devalues the only world we know and inhabit, and it does so by measuring and judging it against categories and standards that have been established in relation to a non-existent world.²⁹ Instead of cherishing and living life to the fullest in the pursuit of making and remaking the world for ourselves, we squander and so defile *this* world in hopes that another world will be superior. In addition, by denigrating the material world in advantage of a transcendent and immaterial one, Christianity also devalues the body.³⁰ Nietzsche contends that Christianity is perhaps the most harmful form of *escapism in hope*, providing an ineffective palliative against the real and true dangers of existence, the frightful uncertainty that confronts us when inhabiting a valueless world, which requires the heroic activity of creating as opposed to discovering or uncovering values. But, as Nietzsche stresses, and here we are reminded of the ancient Greeks,

²⁶ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 78.

²⁷ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 13.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 143. For a detailed phenomenological analysis of the “body” in Nietzsche’s philosophy, see: D. Vallega-Neu. *The Bodily Dimension in Thinking* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 21-37.

“the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is - to *live dangerously*! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas.”³¹

Christianity is the paradigmatic instantiation of *vertical* transcendence, but Nietzsche also makes reference to and is critical of *horizontal* forms of transcendence, for Nietzsche observes that when we attempt to resist against succumbing to *pessimism/nihilism*, more often than not, we erroneously choose that “which hastens exhaustion; Christianity is an example (to name the greatest example of such an aberration of the instincts); [and the unfettered believe in] ‘progress’ is another.”³² Thus, we now address the second form of transcendence labeled *horizontal* transcendence, an idea that is found in philosophers such as Hegel and Marx, where we encounter prophesizing on the perfected, utopian end to the processes of history, the former through philosophical *idealism*, the latter through *dialectic materialism*.³³ This form of transcendence, as stated, is also prevalent within contemporary secular humanism, which Nietzsche would deem analogous to “Socratic Optimism,” where it is possible to state without much exaggeration that human reason is elevated to the point of deification and optimism thrives. Here, to reiterate, through the superior faculty of human reason, the world in-itself will eventually be known and mastered to serve humanity’s

³¹ F. Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*, trans., Walter Kaufmann (Vintage Books: New York, 1974), 228.

³² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 27.

³³ A. Camus. *The Rebel*, trans., A. Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 140-142. Readers are encouraged to seek out Camus’s reading and critique what he terms failed instances of “metaphysical rebellion” - failed philosophies of “hope” - to which Nietzsche’s philosophy is included. On Hegel, Camus states the following: “Hegel’s undeniable originality lies in his definitive destruction of all vertical transcendence,” identifying the rational with the Real. “Values are thus only to be found at the end of history,” and just as Christianity denigrates the “here and now” in favor of a perceived and hoped for *future world*, Hegel claims that we “must act and live in terms of the future,” in terms of the divination of history with a promised salvation in its prophesized culmination. On Marx, Camus observes that Marx’s philosophy of the dialectic development and culmination of history “materializes” religion and Hegel’s *idealism*, however, “Marx’s atheism is absolute. Nevertheless, it does reinstate the supreme being at the level of humanity,” and so Marx’s thought is an “enterprise for the deification of man” in a way that holds on the *hope* of a utopian end to human history that is akin to “traditional religions.”

purposes, and this appears as the fulfillment of a futural secular prophecy.³⁴

As stated, we might relate this view to “Socratic Optimism,” or *Socratic rationalism*, as discussed by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Twilight of the Idols*, which characterizes Socrates as the *archetype of theoretical optimism*, who believes the world is explainable and attributes the power of omniscience to human knowledge and judges errors to be the equivalent of evil. Nietzsche is highly critical of the Socratic drive to link theoretical knowledge with virtue and morality, which is expressed in the Socratic dictum that Nietzsche never tires of lampooning: Knowledge = Virtue. This illusion, idealized in Socrates, not only demonstrates the “unshakable belief that rational thought, guided by causality, can penetrate to the depths of being, [it also holds the erroneous belief that reason is] capable not only of knowing but even *correcting* being.”³⁵ Thus human reason not only knows the world, beyond this, it extends itself to render a binding moral adjudication against it. Nietzsche claims that the *theoretical optimism* of Socrates gives rise to modernity’s unbounded faith and hope in the healing, and indeed saving, power of democracy, systematic ethics, and science. What we take from Nietzsche’s reading of *Socratic optimism*, related to Nietzsche’s theory regarding Socrates ushering in the death of tragedy,³⁶ is the philosophical thought that “outgrows art and forces it to cling tightly to the bough of the dialectic.”³⁷ Nietzsche insists that we must remain highly suspect of claims to know the world in its entirety, skeptical of clinging in a desperate manner to the irrational optimism in the power, depth, and breadth of human understanding, believing in the unbounded reach and superiority of the human intellect, which might one day exhibit the power to solve and eradicate life’s problems and explain away its

³⁴ J. Gray. *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans., S. Whiteside. Penguin Books: UK, 1993, 71.

³⁶ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 75. Socrates, as Nietzsche claims, caused the degeneration of the Greeks’ instinct and emotion through his rationalism, and this infected tragedy, specifically Euripides, who “became the poet of aesthetic Socratism...the phenomenon of *aesthetic Socratism*, the chief law of which is, more or less: ‘to be beautiful everything must first be intelligible – a parallel to the Socratic dictum: only one who knows is virtuous.” Nietzsche’s radical argument attempts to establish that after Sophocles, the “Euripidean *prologue* may serve as an example of the productivity of this [Socratic] rationalist method,” an offshoot of the Socratic need to work things out purely through the use of reason and the dialectic, therefore through explanation.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 69

inherent and most perplexing mysteries. For Nietzsche, the world can never be brought under the control of knowledge, for it is a violent and powerful monster of energy, a tumultuous chaotic maelstrom, i.e., the *will to power* and nothing besides. It defies and is recalcitrant to all human efforts to fully understand it and permanently bring it to stand in our fragile and ephemeral works of art, which includes our social, governmental, political, and educational systems and institutions.

Heroic and Tragic *Pessimism* **The Art of the Homeric and Tragic Greeks**

We now turn our focus to the manner in which the Homeric Greeks and Tragic Greeks responded to the bleak and oppressive conditions of existence as expressed through both Nietzsche's reading of Hesiod's Pandora myth and the so-called "wisdom of Silenus." In his sustained analysis of Greek tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche reveals how the ancient Greeks demonstrated heroism in mounting an aesthetic cultural response to the condition of existence because they displayed the "intellectual predilection for what is hard, terrible, evil, problematic in existence, [and because of their superior psychological] well-being, overflowing health, and *abundance* of existence."³⁸ In the penultimate instance of art as a transformative, life-enhancing force, Nietzsche references the expression of what he identifies as *Apolline art*, which he links to the Homeric Greeks' aesthetic, poetic, and mythological creation of the Olympian pantheon and the many heroes that populated their stories and religion. As related directly to what we have introduced above regarding the counter-striving movement between illness-recovery in relation to the manifestation of our recognition and acceptance of the *pessimistic* condition of the universe, which for later Nietzsche includes nihilism, Nietzsche traces the origins underlying the aesthetic creation of the great Olympian gods and goddesses. Ultimately, he observes that the Homeric Greeks overcame the horrors of existence that had previously caused the historical downfall of the Etruscans. Based on Nietzsche's analysis we might imagine the Homeric Greeks' motivation for creating and populating the poetic-mythological realm of Olympus as follows: "The *Apolline* impulse to beauty led, in gradual stages, from the original Titanic order of the gods of fear [*illness*] to the Olympian order of the gods of joy, just as roses sprout on thorn bushes [*recovery*]."³⁹ *Apolline art*,

³⁸ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

instantiates a drive for clarity in presentation with a penchant for appearances in the form of fictional illusions, without the dissembling effect that would broach the realm of complete delusion, which would instantiate a form of escapism and produce the unhealthy condition of the soul's narcotization.

The portrayal of the Olympians served an aesthetic idealization of the Greeks' battle-torn lives, an oppressive, and at times, unbearable existence, however, their aesthetic idealization did not blind the Greeks to the oppressive and terrible truths of existence, from which they drew aesthetic inspiration. Hence their art never sought to achieve the complete detachment from the *pessimistic* conditions they experienced, idealized, and ultimately glorified in art, and indeed, as Nietzsche observes, the reality of their *pessimistic* conditions inspired and, in many ways, served as the content of their aesthetic creativity.⁴⁰ Thus, they created an aesthetic illusion wherein the participant is fully aware that the experience is illusory. The Homeric Greeks fully knew and experienced the horrors and fears of living, but in order to pursue a flourishing life, drawing inspiration for their continued growth and development, "they had to interpose the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians between themselves and these horrors,"⁴¹ which allowed them to portray and live a "rich and triumphant existence, in which everything [was] deified, whether it be good or evil."⁴² It was this *Apolline* drive for illusory appearances, fictitious visions of the gods and heroes, that allowed the *Apolline* culture to "overthrow a realm of Titans and slay monsters [and emerge] triumphant over a terrible abyss in its contemplation of the world and its most intense capacity for suffering, by resorting to the most powerful and pleasurable illusions."⁴³ Their art transformed and transfigured the suffering they endured, and through employing art as a clarifying and perfecting mirror to their existence, they were able to contemplate, raise, amplify, and transform themselves to a degree that allowed them to arrive at an exalted state of aesthetic self-glorification. And to assure them that the re-creation of their lives in *Apolline* art was "worthy of glorification," they had to "see

⁴⁰ Nietzsche will again speak of *idealizing* in aesthetics in *Twilight of the Idol*, but will now relate it to *Dionysian* art and temper the talk of its relation to *Apollonian* aesthetics. For in the later writings, the technique of *idealizing* is a tool employed by the tragic artist-philosopher, the *Dionysian pessimist*, and we explore this notion later in the essay within our discussion of aesthetic self-overcoming and the *Dionysian* man's active response to nihilism.

⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy* 23.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24.