

Nietzsche: experiencing the real

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Philosophy
And the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: 25 May 2012

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Date Approved: 2 June 2012

Abstract

My argument is about the centrality of the imageless in *The Birth of Tragedy*. I argue that the imageless is not just the absence of image, but that in *The Birth of Tragedy* the imageless is rather to be identified with nothing. All images and meaning, which we do express in words, feelings, and imagination, have their basis in nothing. It is the process described in creating a work of art that is most suited for capturing the coming into being of images and meaning. My argument starts by centralizing the notion of semblance and imitation, with dreams as an example of semblance and imitation. Dreams are an illusion insofar as they are not made up of the same stuff as the reality we live. Dreams are an imitation of our real life; the arrangement of the reality might be different, but we do not encounter anything beyond our experiences in our dreams. With the relationship between dreams and reality in place, I arrive at what should be an uncontroversial conclusion: semblance expresses in familiar terms what is other than the real, but that semblance is not the real. The semblance that is dream, I hope to show, depends on the reality of our daily life. But what if, as the second part of my argument suggests, our reality is also a semblance. The conclusion I hope to get to, as unexciting as the first, is that we do intelligibly talk about imitations of imitations. If this point is made, then dream reality and our reality, that started by being at two levels of existence, are shown to be on one level and that the level of semblance. This should just mean we are mistaken about our reality, and not the levels of reality: semblance and reality are at two different levels. But having eliminated our reality from reality by properly placing it in the level of semblance, the relationship that held between it and dream reality must be re-examined. But, since we know no other reality, we examine the relationship between reality and semblance, qua reality and semblance. In examining this, we realize that all we have is just more semblance? There is, then, no distinction between reality and semblance. If so, what is considered real provides basis for what is unreal arbitrarily, and not by any distinction between them. Meaning, therefore, is based on semblance, and not on anything real, if the real is considered distinct from semblance. That, I argue, is the point *The Birth of Tragedy*, wants to bring home to us its readers.

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Introduction

Music as an imageless art, I argue, is central in *The Birth Of Tragedy*. This essay is about the centrality of the imageless in *The Birth*. I will argue that the imageless is not the absence of image; it is rather nothing. The struggle to express in words what lies beyond the reach of words is evident throughout this essay. Yet, it is the struggle that terminates in nothing to say, see, feel and even imagine that constitutes the nothing I argue for. All images and meaning, which we do express in words, feelings, and imagination, have their basis in nothing. It is the process described in creating a work of art that is most suited for capturing the coming into being of images and meaning. I start the essay by centralizing the notion of semblance and imitation, with dreams as an example of semblance and imitation. Dreams are an illusion insofar as they are not made up of the same stuff as the reality we live. Dreams are an imitation of our real life; the arrangement of the dream reality might be different, but we do not encounter anything beyond our experiences in our dreams. But what if, as the second part of my argument suggests, our reality is also a semblance? The conclusion I hope to get to, as unexciting as the first, is that we do intelligibly talk about imitations of imitations. If this point is made, then our reality and dream reality, that started by being on two levels of existence, are shown to be on one level, the level of semblance. This should just mean we are mistaken about the object or entity 'our reality', and not the levels of reality: semblance and reality are at two different levels. Having eliminated one object, 'our reality', from reality by properly placing it in the level of semblance, the relationship that held between dream reality and our reality must be re-examined. Our reality, that provided a basis for the semblance that is dream reality, does not. If it does provide a basis it does so only partly since it, our reality, will also need support by being the imitation of something real. But

what if all we have is just more semblance? In such instances I will argue that what is expressed can be expressed because of prescription. The point *The Birth of Tragedy*, I argue, wants to bring home is that meaning is a prescription that rests on meaninglessness. Many times, as I have struggled to make the necessary connections for a point, I have longed for the same thing as Nietzsche: I “ought to have *sung*” this essay rather than use words for it. If the argument of *The Birth* is right, as I believe it is, then music does not have the same limitations as words and images. Music, then, would have enabled me to express directly the argument of *The Birth* without having to overcome the limitations imposed by language and images.

The relationship between the real and semblance.

A person with artistic sensibility”, *The Birth* tells us, “relates to the reality of dream in the same way as a philosopher relates to the reality of existence”(Nietzsche 15). We can immediately make a distinction between two artistic sensibilities. *The Birth* asks us to think of “the separate art-worlds of *dream* and *intoxication*”(14). The dream art world is the world of the ‘image maker or sculptor’, and the separate art world of intoxication is connected to the “imageless art of music” (14). The image-maker’s art “co-exist[s] in a state of perpetual conflict”(14), with the art of music. Because “Every human being is fully an artist when *creating* the world of dreams” (15 emphasis mine), the dream world seems to require activity on the part of the dreamer, and seems also to be most accessible. We could restrict ‘when creating’ to the act of dreaming, such that ‘every human’ is only a creator at the time of dreaming. Still, dreaming needs no special skill; all human beings can dream. Dreaming, even if only at the time of dreaming, is an art practiced by every human being.

Intoxication, on the other hand, is induced. Intoxication “awaken[s] either under the influence of strong drink...or at the approach of spring”(17). It might seem that the second inducement, the approach of spring, might be so pervasive that no man can escape it. But there are restrictions to becoming intoxicated. The most obvious restriction comes from the mention of narcotic drink; drunkenness does not just happen, it requires some input from the agent. The second restriction comes from the effects of drunkenness: an increase in intoxication “causes subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting” (17). It is in state of self-forgetting, this vanishing of the self, that people are in the art world of intoxication. Depending on the strength of the narcotic and the amount taken, people get drunk to various degrees. That one takes an intoxicant, either as drink or as season, does not automatically lead to the same, or the highest level of intoxication. Whereas dreaming happens, seemingly, just by being in a state of sleep, intoxication of various degrees happens by inducement.

“Philosophical natures”, *The Birth* tells us, “have a presentiment that hidden beneath the reality in which we live and have our being there also lies a second, quite different reality”(15). We can now go back to the relationship between dreams and reality, and try to understand it in light of the various distinctions we have made above.

The philosopher relates to reality as a person with artistic sensibility relates to a dream. From the position of ‘the reality in which we live’ the philosophic nature is aware of a preceding reality. This preceding reality is also ‘hidden beneath’ our reality. In relating the ‘same way’ to a world, the philosopher and the dream artist do not relate to the same world. Introduced here is not only

what is being related to, but also a perch from which dream artists and philosophic natures relate. While philosophic natures relate to the 'reality of existence', dream artists relate to the reality of dream. But the common factor between the dream artist and the philosopher, the factor that makes comparison between the relations possible and accounts for their being 'the same' is our reality. And so what grounds the comparison is our reality, otherwise the scope of comparison is too big, since any two relations can be compared and be found to be 'the same' in some way. The dream world is an artistic world, and therefore an imitating world: art as imitation. Since dream artists relate to the dream world from the perspective of our world, dream artists relate to the dream world as if it imitates our world. If, as *The Birth* holds about humanity in general, for us "There is no doubt that, of the two halves of our lives, the waking and the dreaming half, the former strikes us as being the more privileged, important, dignified, and worthy of being lived, *indeed the only half that is truly lived*" (25 emphasis mine), my contention above gains traction, dream reality imitates waking reality. But more to the point here, if waking life strikes us as the half that is 'truly lived', then the dream is the shadow half that has no being of its own. It has reality only as the reflection of the more important and dignified half.

Philosophic natures, on the other hand, are aware of a 'second, quite different reality' from the one "in which we live and have our being" (15). We now have three layers of existences: one 'hidden beneath', the second a reality in which we 'live and have our being', and the third the dream world. Philosophers, being human, are capable of dreaming and are, therefore, dream-artists. It must be, then, that they are also capable of relating to dream reality as dream artistic sensibilities do. When *The Birth* asks us to

ignore for a moment our own 'reality' and if we take our empirical existence, and indeed that of the world in general, to be a representation generated at each moment by the primordial unity, we must now regard dream as *semblance of the semblance* (26 emphasis in text)

we know that philosophic natures can ignore our reality as we ignore dream reality.

'Philosophers' can ignore our reality because it "too is a semblance"(15), and just like dream reality, it too has no reality of its own.

Can we assume the same breadth of awareness for the dream artistic sensibility? We must for a moment put aside philosophic nature here; however they come to have a presentiment of a hidden reality must be left for another time. But in the conflict-ridden relation between dream artistic sensibility and intoxication artistic sensibility, it is intoxication that is the first and best candidate for awareness of a 'quite different' reality. Music is an imageless art. A more visible distinction than image and imageless would be hard to find. The truly lived half of life has no images; it has truly existent beings. It is the shadow half of life that has images. Because it has no being of its own, dream reality imitates the truly existent that is our reality. But seen from the philosopher's perspective, dream reality is a 'semblance of a semblance' because it imitates the semblance that is our reality. I arrive at this conclusion because philosophers have the same relationship to semblance that image-makers have to semblance. If dream reality is a semblance of a semblance, but its images are of our world, then our reality is the original semblance from the philosopher's perspective. But what is our reality a semblance of? It is a semblance of the second, hidden reality. If, then, our life is the truly lived half for the image-maker, then the hidden reality is the truly lived half for the philosopher. The hidden reality is therefore the reality that ultimately grounds the semblance that is our reality and the semblance that is dream reality.

If music “co-exist[s] in a state of perpetual conflict”(14) with images, and those images are ultimately of the hidden reality, then what imageless art shows us is not immediately apparent.

We can start answering this question by asking this question: if image-making is making images of reality, then what is music as imageless art showing us? We are justified in assuming, at least, that imageless art will show us something different from what images show. Otherwise why make the distinction between image-making art and imageless art?

We can start by making clearer the differences between music and images. Images “must also contain that delicate line which the dream-image may not overstep if its effect is not to become pathological”(16). The line between our reality and dream reality marks such a boundary. The dream-image must be distinct from the thing it imitates, otherwise its effect is problematic; a person who cannot distinguish between a dream and reality will struggle in both the dream world and the real world. A person must be able to differentiate between the experiences of the dream world, and the experiences of the real world. We know that Lady Macbeth has lost her grip on sanity because she reaches, time and again, for an illusory dagger. But intoxication, on the other hand, is about crossing lines. Intoxication leads to ‘the breakdown’ of this delicate line. *The Birth*, in giving us a sense of intoxicated sensibilities, talks about festivals where is found an “excess of sexual indiscipline [and where] the very wildest of nature’s beasts were unleashed, up to and including that repulsive mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always struck me as the true ‘witches’ brew” (20). The Greeks, we are told, “appear, for a time to have been completely protected and insulated from their feverish stirrings by the figure of Apollo, who reared up in all his pride, there being no more dangerous power for him to confront...than this

crude, grotesque manifestation of the Dionysiac” (20). In other words, the Greek was insulated from crossing the line between dream reality and other realities by opposing intoxicated reality.

Can we, then, assume the same breadth of awareness for dream sensibility that we assume for philosophic natures, insofar as philosophic natures are aware of a different reality? No, we cannot. The only line dream sensibility can cross is the line between our reality and dream reality, and then only as it is aware of imitating our reality. Crossing a second line can be considered excessive for the image-making sensibility. Excess is the enemy of “that measured limitation” (16) characteristic of image making. We must, therefore, consider measuring lines a necessary part of image making and images.

Can we assume the same breadth of awareness for an intoxicated artistic sensibility as a philosophic nature? Intoxication, as we have pointed out above already, causes the disappearance of the subjective self. With the disappearance of the subjective self we become aware of “all the rigid, hostile barriers, which necessity, caprice, or ‘impudent fashion’ have established between human beings, *break[ing] asunder*”, and all that is left of the line is ‘mere shreds” (18). With the barriers gone we have the “sense of belonging to a higher community”. In it man “has forgotten how to walk and talk and is on the brink of flying and dancing, up and away into the air above”(18). But most importantly, with the ‘rigid barriers’ broken into fluttering pieces, “each person feels himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbour, but *quite literally one with him*” (18, all emphasis mine). All of this is quite different from what is shown us by images. The major difference concerns barriers. Imageless art is here presented as art without barriers between subjects. It is not just that the subjective self disappears; it is that the

disappearance of the subjective self makes possible the merging of neighbors. I appreciate the difficulty of each person feeling ‘literally one’ with a neighbor. I cannot understand feeling literally one with a neighbor without keeping in mind that the self must have disappeared. And so, at the same time *The Birth* appeals to us as individuals, “each person”, it points us to a state beyond that, “quite literally” one with a neighbor. But it is as individuals that we can appreciate the strangeness of literally becoming one, beyond uniting or even merging, with a neighbor. If we were watching a progressive process, we would perhaps see the disappearance of the self becoming a merger of neighbors being followed by neighbors becoming literally one. If we imagine that this process, “a continual Becoming in time” (26), is never still long enough to be captured as a state of being, then we can suppose that it is all that is meant by imageless.

We can return to an earlier observation, “A person with artistic sensibility relates to the reality of dream in the same way as a philosopher relates to the reality of existence”, and apply some of the insights gleaned above. There are two conflicting artistic sensibilities: musical sensibility and image-making sensibility. The artistic sensibilities are comparable to a philosophic nature through their respective relationships to our reality. Philosophic nature and image-making sensibility have dream reality and our reality in common. Image-making sensibility, like philosophic nature, can move between our reality and dream reality. For, says *The Birth*, “even while this dream-reality is most alive, we nevertheless retain a pervasive sense that it is *semblance*” (15 emphasis in text). But image-making sensibility does not follow philosophic nature when it crosses from our reality into the second, hidden reality. To image-making sensibility our reality is ultimate reality, and it therefore considers the relationship between our

reality and dream reality the relationship between the real and semblance. But this is the same way that the philosopher understands the relationship between the hidden reality and our reality.

Intoxicated sensibility happens when the self disappears. In this state of intoxication all erected barriers vanish. And so music sensibility does not necessarily relate reality to semblance, or reality to reality. Music sensibility captures a process through which all barriers are disappearing.

Music, dreams and philosophy

Although the philosophic nature I allude to above occurs in *The Birth*, the prominent role I give this nature in an essay about artistic sensibilities might require explanation. It is, as we have said, philosophers who are aware of the second reality. The philosophical nature referenced here is, of course, a particular tradition within Western philosophy, namely idealism. There is not one defining strand of idealism. But we have good reason to take the particular philosophical nature referenced here as, first, Arthur Schopenhauer. The second person we wish to identify, later, as a philosopher is Socrates. There are better known, if not greater, figures associated with idealism. But, as Nussbaum points out, “Nietzsche was a philologist by training, not a philosopher. His knowledge of the important works of his own philosophical tradition—including the works of Kant and Hegel— is demonstrably thin and uneven”(38). I am careful, therefore, not to go beyond the philosophy of Schopenhauer in describing *The Birth's* philosophy and philosophy in general. I will, for the purposes of this essay, not make the distinctions that must be made between philosophical natures in that school in particular on the one hand, and philosophical natures in general on the other. And so, the awareness of a hidden reality is here treated as Schopenhauer's

awareness. Nietzsche, says Nussbaum, “perceived whatever he perceived through the lens of Schopenhauerian distinctions and categories”, and so “it is hard to make sense of...many other insufficiently explained aspects of Nietzsche’s arguments in that cryptic work” (38). I need, in particular, to get to the concepts of form and formlessness. And so the idea that *The Birth* “incorporates without modification Schopenhauer’s metaphysics”(Young 26), is important in thinking about how much I can use Schopenhauer as background. In many parts of this essay, “that Nietzsche considers Schopenhauer important because he was able to learn from his teacher’s mistake...rather than because of anything Schopenhauer got right”(Clark 37). I aim, therefore, for Nietzsche as he is “engaging in a struggle” (37) with Schopenhauer, and not simply as he incorporates Schopenhauer’s metaphysics. I proceed, therefore, as if Nietzsche and Schopenhauer can draw different conclusions from the same premises.

Now, we have suggested two things in the previous section we wish to follow up on with the help of Schopenhauer. Image-making sensibility does not go beyond the reality of our existence. We qualified this by suggesting that it does not go beyond the line of our existence *qua* image-making sensibility. We want to explore the possibility of its going beyond our reality as philosophic nature. Schopenhauer held that “all the other arts objectify the will only indirectly” (Schopenhauer 257). “All the other arts” are here contrasted to the art of music. Image-making art is therefore also captured. Image-making art manages the indirect imitation “by means of the Ideas” (257). The role of images is to “stimulate the knowledge of [Ideas] by depicting individual things” (257). So, when Ideas are described as “forms...the stripped-off outer shell of things” (256), we get the connection between Ideas and individual things. And so, for example, Young’s point that “To perceive or represent an object as Idea is, as we may put it, to *idealize* it; to bring

out its “significant form”” (15 emphasis in text). The Idea of any individual tree is not this tree or that tree, but what makes this or that tree a tree. The Idea of a tree is tree-ness in general. The significant question to ask, in thinking about Idea and form, is what is the common thing that makes all these particular individuals members of the same general? The various distinctions between many kinds of trees, we quickly learn, is not reason enough for us to exclude the various objects from tree-hood. But if we have so many disparate objects we consider trees, then whatever it is that makes them trees is not confined to this individual tree. So, whatever tree-ness is must be found in all members of the tree club for them to be trees, all at the same time. Still, any tree will also be made up of other individuals that can be generalized. At the same time that all those other individuals are generalized, we do want to generalize this tree in isolation from those other generalities. So, tree-ness is not roundness, or hardness or any number of – nesses. The generality of this tree must, even as it includes all other trees, exclude these other generalities. For, if tree-ness is not hardness or softness, we must exclude hardness or softness from tree-ness, otherwise we might not be able to include soft trees with hard trees in the general membership of tree-ness. The generality that is tree-ness must, as it includes all trees, exclude the various differences between the trees. The problem with individuals, at any level, is that they may occur elsewhere also and make discrimination difficult. Some people might, because this individual is round, and another completely different individual is round, take that common roundness as ground for serious similarity between these individuals. That a tree is tall and a building is tall is, in this thought pattern, no reason to include tree-ness into building-ness membership. And so the stripped-off outer shell has the function of generalizing tree-ness, but also separating it from any number of nesses in the world. To pin down the thing that grants this individual tree inclusion in general tree-ness, but excludes it from ground-ness, we strip this tree

of all that is not essential to tree-ness, while keeping that essence applicable to all trees. And so, we are taught by this higher general individuality of tree-ness, that there must be a higher generality that will ignore the difference between tree-ness and groundness, while including both in the same higher membership. We can, for now, stop at the generality that is reality. We speak of realities only under the strict understanding that there is, literally, only one reality. Reality is one of the most general of generalities, under which we can subsume not only individuals, but Ideas. Ideas are real insofar as they point to real entities. They are not real insofar as they point to the unreal or illusions. Successive generalizations of this or that individual terminate, ultimately, in the generality that is reality. Still, the point here is not generalizations, it is to show how individuals stimulate knowledge of the generalities. It makes sense to speak of tree-ness into which we put all individual trees, otherwise we have no reason to view disparate objects as essentially the same thing.

Here we see the coming together of the Apollonian measurement with the stripped outer shell that is Ideas in two ways. At the most basic level, which is also the most general, reality must be distinguished from the unreal. Beyond the line of the real lies illusion because it is unreal. The unreal could be in the sense of, for example, a unicorn. Even though we can imagine and even present a horse with a horn sticking out of its face, we know this to be an illusion because there simply is no individual animal that corresponds to that Idea. The unreal is also in the sense of Lady Macbeth's dagger. Though we interact with such individual objects as daggers all the time, we subject these to laws. Daggers are typically concrete, and therefore can be grasped, and should fall to earth if unsupported, etc. We might, in the case of the unicorn, argue that we have not yet seen it, or that we came late to the world and so missed such individuals, or any number

of such arguments from localized positions. But we might not be willing to stake our lives on finding such an animal, ever. From the evidence of the individuals we have, we will have learnt that it is better to conduct ourselves as if there were no such individuals. We do not, if sane, go beyond the line that separates illusion from the real. We can now, in an ‘eccentric sense’ apply to Ideas what is applied to the images that imitate Ideas: Ideas represent the line that should not be crossed if meaning is to be preserved. So, we can generalize from this particular tree to trees in general, from trees in general to some other generality, until we come to the most basic of generalities. But we can also start from the highest generality and move ever inwards until we come to the individual. The first move, from the individual to the general, is a lesson in knowledge; movement that way is coming to know about the real. The second move, from the general to the individual, is objectification, as the real shows itself through illusion. The second move is what *The Birth* talks about when it says philosophic natures and the image-making sensibility “can attend[...] to it closely and with pleasure, using [illusion] to interpret life, and practicing for life with the help of [illusion]”(15).

Music “on the other hand gives the innermost kernel preceding all form, or the heart of things” (263). If we suppose that music shows us an imageless process, we can now also add that music show us a formless process. If what we are shown is also “brutish, unformed, undisciplined” (Nussbaum 43-44), it is still consistent with the notion of a process. Processes might not be tangible, and they might resist capture in images, but they are still something. And here we run into a possible objection to an imageless and formless heart of things. If we take the notion of preceding form seriously, and take that to mean that at that stage there is no outer shell, then how

do we not also say the heart of things is the opposite of processes? Here we take seriously not the opposite of processes, but processes as they precede form. If processes are to be that, and not something that is not process, then they must be distinct from whatever is not a process. Process cannot do so without an outer shell. So, if we were in a music state, and parading in front of us was process and non-process, how would we tell the difference? We could not capture non-process in images; images are already tied to Ideas. But because non-process is the opposite of the real, it would not be the same kind of semblance as our reality or dream reality. We would have to indicate that non-process is a semblance that indicates a state other than basic reality. In that case reality would have a line that it must not cross if it is to remain the real. But is that not what the outer shell of things do, indicate a line which must not be crossed if things are to be distinct from each other? What does it mean for the real to be something if it is not also distinguishable from what it is not? Reality as process can be understood as imageless, but makes no sense as *imageless* and *formless*.

Consider Schopenhauer's understanding that "The essential nature of life is suffering (Hannan 24). It is the "ever wanting nature" of reality "which makes fulfillment and thus happiness impossible" (Han-Pile 374). "Because the blind, striving Will can never be satisfied," (Hannan 25) "the only salvation possible for an individual lies in quieting his will, in ceasing to desire anything at all"(25). But, reality being fundamentally what is, and therefore the fundamentally existent, beyond which our linguistic descriptions cannot go, the removal of the blind striving amounts to removing reality itself. So now we are expected to arrive at the conclusion that Will "[i]s the metaphysical essence of the physical world, and its fundamental affect is pain" (Han-Pile 374). But pain, like process, is something. We can imagine pain. We can, in image and

language, express our pain. When we do so, we express our pain in recognizable ways, ways that distinguish it from pleasure, for example. An essence that *is* pain is an essence that is *not* pleasure. But if so, we can look past this point through music. It should be true that music can, and does, express pain. But it should also be true that music can express a point beyond pain. If pain is the fundamental affect of reality, music goes past it. What, we can ask, is music making us experience that is past pain? And so we must take a closer look at the Schopenhauerian position on pain to see how far the commitment to pain can be taken.

So, Will is ever wanting. Because it is ever wanting, Will is never fulfilled. This is puzzling if Will is what fundamentally exists. I can see Nussbaum's point that, "Schopenhauer cannot precisely say that willing itself is painful, or involves a painful form of awareness, since he denies to will all perceptual awareness" (43-44). I would add that the awareness denied Will must include self-awareness. If Will is aware, should we not characterize reality as awareness then, and not pain? Pain can be subsumed under awareness such that more fundamental than pain Will would be aware. Since aware, we can make the further argument that to experience Will would be to experience a vast awareness of a pained self. But that would bring us back to the question of why, and we would end up with want. Will is pain because Will is an endless striving. Endless striving comes apart from pain. Since Will precedes all and any, it either is just the process of eternally wanting, or it wants what is not i.e. something other than itself. In either case, pain is not obviously the only correct response. If Will is just the process of wanting, there is no reason that wanting is its own end. But the basis for non-fulfillment vanishes without a *telos*, for it must be true that the process of wanting owes its character to itself, and not to a hankering *for*. I agree with Young, then, when he says that Schopenhauer is capable of

“misunderstanding...his own general theory” (Young 18). That misunderstanding is to continue understanding Will in formed ways. Perhaps this is the basis for Nietzsche’s argument that he learned from his teacher’s mistakes for, argues Young,

Nietzsche saw that Schopenhauer had misapplied his own theory and... Accordingly, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, he sets out to correct what Schopenhauer actually says, “in his spirit and to his honour” (18).

Part of that correction is to remove pain as a necessary part of reality’s existence. In *The Birth*, Will is a formless and imageless unity. Pain has boundaries beyond which it is no longer pain, and these boundaries, I argue, impose form. It is not just realizing that Will is formless and imageless that is important, it is also paying attention to how formless and imageless reality must be apprehended.

Music and the art of image making

Philosophic nature and artistic sensibilities relate to three levels of realities. I have argued that the philosophic nature and artistic sensibilities range over different levels. If the three levels of realities are, starting from a second reality and ending with dreams, progressively less fundamental, then not both artistic sensibilities have access to all three levels. Though both artistic sensibilities and philosophic nature are directly aware of our reality and dream reality, image-making sensibility is not directly aware of the hidden reality. Though both music sensibility and philosophic nature directly apprehend the hidden reality, music sensibility goes beyond form into formlessness i.e. music gives us a more fundamental reality than philosophic nature does. Here we can, as *The Birth* suggests, “distinguish as sharply as possible between the

concepts of essence and appearance, since music, by its essence, cannot possibly *be* Will” (35 emphasis in text). I think the distinction important because, caught up in the intoxication that is music, we might not make the necessary distinction between what music makes us see, and the state music puts us in so that we might see. Music, *The Birth* tells us, only “*appears* as Will” (35 emphasis in text). But as appearance, music is like any image-making semblance. Unless we make the distinction between the essence of music, which like all images has form, and the essence of reality, which is formless and imageless, we cannot truly appreciate what it is music shows us. The legend of Silenus, I argue, describes best a formless and imageless reality.

An ancient legend recounts how King Midas hunted long in the forest for the wise *Silenus*... but failed to catch him. When Silenus has finally fallen into [king Midas’] hands, the king asks what is the best and most excellent thing for human beings...the daemon... finally breaks out in shrill laughter and says: ‘Wretched, ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation, why do you force me to tell you the very thing it would be most profitable for you *not* to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. However the second best thing for you is: to die soon’ (Nietzsche 22-3 emphasis in text).

What should strike us first is how the ‘very best thing’ seamlessly changes from ‘to not have been born’ into ‘nothing’. Should we conclude from this that not to have been born is identical to not to be? If we see not to have been born, and not to be as essentially a negation of being, then they are the same insofar as they both try to point to nothingness before being. Yet the notion of negation is problematic insofar as it first assumes being. In this thought pattern, we must start by assuming being first, then negate it. But to indicate a state before being, *The Birth* equates ‘not to be’ with ‘nothing’. It is why, I argue, the daemon not only thinks the best thing is beyond us, but also why it is not profitable for us to hear it: born already, the state of never having been born is incomprehensible to us, for it points to something we cannot experience. Though all of us who have been born must have not been born at some point, it is not a point in our existences we have experienced. To have experience of not being born requires that we had never been born. We

can, in our imagination, construct such a scenario, but it must necessarily be from the experience of being born. The second best thing, dying soon, is easier to understand as just negation. Dying, whether soon or delayed, is the opposite of living. In relation to dying, I can now ask *The Birth's* question:

How does the world of the Olympian gods relate to this piece of popular wisdom...In order to be able to live, the Greeks were obliged, by the most profound compulsion, to *create* these gods (23).

After hearing the daemon out, “the real *pain* of Homeric man refers to his departure from this existence” (24 emphasis in text). It cannot escape our attention that between the best thing and the second best thing the Greeks respond to the second best thing, i.e. departure from this life. But the second best thing is not the reason they sought the wise Silenus; they sought the daemon to ask about the very best thing. Indeed, the second best thing is not the best thing. We can understand the shift from asking about the best thing to responding to the second best thing better if we take the Greeks as simply not able to make sense of the very concept of non-being the daemon talks about. We can make sense of the Greeks’ inability to comprehend the concept of non-being if, “Given the incredibly definite and assured ability of their eye to see things in a plastic way”, we must describe the “dreaming Greeks as Homers and Homer as a dreaming Greek” (20). Given the inability of image-making sensibility to go beyond our reality, a reality that precedes it is also beyond the Homeric Greeks. We realize even more their misunderstanding of the daemon’s wisdom in their reversal of it. Instead of opposing non-being, the Greeks’ response is to think “the very worst thing...was to die soon, the second worst to die at all” (24). That they create their gods to affirm that this “existence is...worth attaining”(24), does not count as the reversal of non-being. The creation of their gods is, rather, an example of

what *The Birth* talks about when it tells us, “I have even heard of people who were capable of continuing the causality of one and the same dream through three or more successive nights”(16). It cannot escape our attention that the problem and the solution to which the gods are a response are cast in terms of Homeric epics. Homer “who... as an individual stands in the same relation to that Apolline popular culture as the individual dream-artist does to the people’s capacity for dreaming” (25). To make sense of what is happening to them so as to express it meaningfully, the Greek of the Apolline culture turns to Homeric imagination and images. It is the reversal by imagination that should be seen as, ultimately, the “complete victory of Apolline illusion”(25). Still, to read this naïve response as a response to the very best thing is a mistake. Rather, we see here how semblance turns to semblance for meaning. This turn to the ready and pervasive images of the Homeric epic, this analysis that circularly looks to itself to understand itself, is naïve. Circularity is a fallacy. To keep this fallacy going, the Greek “entertains the illusion that...Homer [is] reared at the heart of nature” (24). Reared at the heart of nature, Homer and his epics are held as a point of departure and integrated in lived life even though his epics are a semblance. But our reality is a semblance too. And just as the naïve Greek takes semblance as a starting point, so does the philosopher take semblance as a starting point.

Consider, Han-Pile asks of us, “the metaphysical essence of the physical world, and its fundamental affect...pain” (374). There is only one reality and so, it is supposed, its content must also at the same time be its Idea. The metaphysical essence of the world is not supposed to be at this most fundamental level distinct from pain. We have seen how Schopenhauer argues that Will is pain because it is striving. Yet as Nussbaum has correctly pointed out, he cannot say Will exists painfully. He should not be able, therefore, to say that pain is any essential part of reality.

On this basis I have argued that pain is not the fundamental make up of Will. As Schopenhauer must be properly understood Ideas must be distinct from the formless inner heart of things. If imageless music gives us the formless inner heart, then the suggestion is that music must show us imageless pain, since pain is, as fundamental affect, the inner heart of reality. But pain cannot be imageless and formless, otherwise we would not distinguish it from anything else. If we cannot distinguish pain from pleasure, we cannot know that we are experiencing pain rather than pleasure. Pain, like pleasure, is best understood as the formed outer-shell of reality, since outer shell must be some determinable Idea, as evinced by the fact that it can be given to us in images. As such, though pain does characterize reality, it cannot characterize reality as the inner heart that precedes form. We cannot, therefore, take the fact that the Greeks “knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence”, as evidence that *The Birth* takes that to mean that imageless music must also give us pain.

But then what do I make of passages from *The Birth* such as this one: “that which truly exists [is an] eternally suffering and contradictory, primordial unity” (26).

Consider first the kind of reading Han-Pile gives this passage. She argues that, instead of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, *The Birth* has a different metaphysics. Based on this metaphysics, “the fundamental contradiction of the will...on Nietzsche’s second metaphysics is both painful and pleasurable”(384). So, the fundamental affect of Will is not only pain, but also pleasure. If Will is suffering and contradictory, then what accounts for Will being a contradiction? Han-Pile then shows the point we have been arguing: if Will has any determinate feature, then its opposite cannot form part of reality, otherwise it is a contradiction. It seems, then, that Will being a

contradiction must mean that Will's other fundamental affect is pleasure, if pain is already Will's fundamental affect. We can now appreciate why Han-Pile argues for a Nietzschean metaphysics distinct from Schopenhauer's: in Schopenhauer's metaphysics Will's fundamental affect is only pain. *The Birth's* addition of contradiction is, for Han-Pile, an attempt to move away from the metaphysics of pain. So, though 'Schopenhauer cannot precisely say that willing itself is painful, or involves a painful form of awareness', pain, and not pleasure, is the affect Will is identified by. There can be no Will without there being pain. In experiencing pain, we must assume, we experience something of the nature of Will. But Will is also contradictory. If Will is a primordial unity, and Willing is pain, then Will is a unity of pain. But if we take Nussbaum serious when she suggests that Nietzsche uses "Schopenhauer's very terms to undermine his distinctions and arguments, borrowing the surface of his language to subvert the core of his thought" (39), we can see the term 'contradictory' opening up space for subversion. Since Will is also contradictory, Will must be painful and pleasurable. Indeed, since Will is pain and a contradiction, only pleasure is left to make the notion of being contradictory intelligible. So, we can read the passage, 'that which truly exists [is an] eternally suffering and contradictory, primordial unity' as Han-Pile reads it: that which truly exists is a primordial unity of eternal pain and pleasure.

But pain and pleasure cannot be at the same time. Further, pain and pleasure cannot be a unity. Both can, though, be reconciled in the higher Idea of sensation if stripped of the mutually exclusive sensation of being individually pain and pleasure. Idealized, pain and pleasure belong to a higher Idea, i.e. sensation or feeling. But I find this reading ignoring the description of the best thing as not to be or nothing, and to be trapped in determinate Idea.

To take nothing seriously, we need to understand contradiction as a state and not as an application. So, we need to think of contradiction not as two opposites cancelling each other out, but contradiction as non-meaning. A contradiction is, before we see it as application, the impossibility of oppositional meanings at the same time. If, for example, an object is green and blue all over at the same time, it is a contradiction. Why is it a contradiction though? It is a contradiction because a blue and green object, all over at the same time, has no meaning. An object is either blue or green, and not both. So, even though we can paint an object blue and green, we will do so at successive times. We, of course, assume a number of other restrictions here to carry through the thought. We assume, for example, that the same time is down to the smallest split second. Contradiction, in that case, gives us nothing because we cannot make any sense of what it gives us, not because we can make sense of distinct opposites. This is the sense in which reality is 'a mysterious primordial unity', because reality is beyond our experience not simply because we have not yet experienced it, but because even as we experience it we cannot. So, reality is not pain and pleasure at the same time, sensations we can make sense of should we experience them individually. Reality is rather a contradiction, a sensation we cannot make sense of even as we are experiencing it. Hence the wisdom of Silenus, the best thing is not to be, to never have been born, to be nothing, because only nothing is, even as we experience it, incomprehensible.

Language, image, concept cannot help us with the experience of nothing because language, image, concept is, ultimately, an expression of something. In other words, language, concept and image is always an expression of something we have already experienced. Ideas, as much as they are in direct contact with Will, terminate at a less basic point of reality because they are about

something we have experienced in semblance. Indeed, to truly understand reality as it is expressed by Ideas we must strip reality of the images that teach us about Ideas. If we start with an individual dream tree, we know it vanishes in the face of Ideas. The vanished dream tree presents us with no problem; all of us had always retained the sense that the dream tree was semblance in our reality. But the individual apple tree, or gum tree, or any other sort of tree we encounter in our waking lives does not similarly disappear, nor do many of us expect it to in our reality as we experience it.

Philosophers, though, understand that there is a different reality hidden beneath our reality. So, the individual tree of our reality disappears just like the dream tree for the philosopher. They are able to ignore and treat our reality as most of us treat dream, in other words as semblance. This or that tree is replaced by the reality of the tree we experience in our reality. But, even more generally this, the tree in our reality, is replaced by the tree in the second reality i.e. by the Idea of tree. At the most general level, beyond which we cannot go and still speak of what we are experiencing, language ends at what we can form. Here we need to make a decision: if to arrive at the most general Idea, we have been stripping it of content, we have been progressively approaching the point at which we no longer have semblance. What has been replacing the vanishing individual semblance trees? Nothing, we do not feel the need to replace our dream experiences, we simply wake up to our real lives and ignore the reality of dream experience. At the most basic level, where we can scoop out no more content we come up against the last line; the form of reality. If we arrive at a point where all we have is form without content, and to arrive at form we have been eliminating the illusory individual content, the form must be the line that separates the real from illusion. It seems, then, that at this point what is beyond the line is

just like that which is inside the line. Had there been no successive levels of illusion inside this last line, there would have been no content inside it. We continue to be able to approach the last line because we have been able to cut through various levels of semblances. But we cut through the various illusory existences by different sensibilities. For each semblance, there is a sensibility that corresponds to that semblance as reality. For each sensibility that corresponds to a semblance there is a sharper sensibility that realizes a more fundamental existence. Scooped out of every illusory existence, the real is left with no content.

We can return to where we started: the artistic sensibility relates to reality the same way a philosophic nature relates to reality. But we find only semblance relating to semblance and, ultimately, to nothing. Everything is dependent on nothing, and should, to be a true imitation, imitate nothing. Behind the idea of imitation is the idea of something to be imitated. But if there is nothing to be imitated, then can we have imitation? We cannot. Imitations require something to imitate. And so we must look neither to the imitator nor the imitated, but to the agent capable of imitating. And so Young's position, "As aesthetic phenomenon, then, the world is an object of pleasure; beautiful, "justified", affirmable. But to whom is it justified? Not, clearly, to individual human beings, but rather to the world creator" (52). How does this position relate to the one in this essay?

In my reading of *The Birth* the world can be imitated in two ways. It can be imitated as a created illusion, or it can be imitated as it really is. To imitate the world as it really is, is to imitate a formless and imageless something. We run into trouble when we pin down the thing that is formless and imageless. For, I argue, any thing formless and imageless must, in the final

analysis, have either form or image, otherwise how do we know to distinguish it from something else? Ideas cannot help us since Ideas are also form. If we make a distinction between the outer shell of reality and the inner heart of reality, we are making a distinction between reality as form and reality as formless. Image-making sensibilities and a philosophic nature can only show and express reality as form. Music, as an imageless art, shows us reality before it is formed. As such, music cannot make the distinctions made by image-making and Ideas. Ideas vanish in the face of the heart of reality, and they must be subjected to the heart of things. In the face of reality as nothing, the Idea tree is justified by reference to the individual tree in the world. But the individual tree is a semblance. Ideas are, therefore, really given meaning by individuals. So, since both imitated world and imitating world justify each other, we have to look for a basis for that justification elsewhere.

If the philosopher and the two kinds of artists “attend[...] to [semblance] closely and with pleasure, using these images to interpret life, and practicing for life”(15), and the reality of existence is, in the final analysis, a nothing, we must shift our expectation of what he is learning about. It is easier to assume that, because they use semblance as a learning tool, they must be learning about the real. So, because the dream artist uses dream-reality as a tool of learning, the ‘life’ he is learning about is his real life in real existence. This is an acceptable assumption. But if dream-semblance is such a tool, our reality-semblance can also work as such a tool. And once we start the regress from dream-semblance to our reality-semblance, we cannot arbitrarily stop at Idea when there is another reality more fundamental than it. So, we are ultimately using all the secondary realities to learn about ultimate reality. It is a nothing, and we learn that it has to be made to mean something. Since one semblance does not give any lasting meaning to another

semblance, since any semblance would have been given meaning by the thing it imitates, we turn to the one who relates the semblances.

The philosopher takes precedence over the dream artist because the philosopher knows what the dream artist does not: the dream artists' reality is semblance. Intoxicated artistic-sensibility must take precedence over the philosopher's nature, for the intoxicated sensibility goes where the philosopher cannot, to the meaninglessness of reality. But perhaps we can go even further than intoxicated sensibility to the world creator. So Young's question about justification. If we keep in mind that, with the introduction of the world creator, it is now true that

We very well assume we are already images and artistic projections for the true creator of art, and that our highest dignity lies in our significance as works of art...although, of course, our awareness of our significance in this respect hardly differs from the awareness which painted soldiers have of the battle depicted on the same canvas (Nietzsche 32-3).

No one expects the Mona Lisa to change herself. Truth be told, no one expects the Mona Lisa to have an opinion such that she could change herself. In starker terms, no one expects the painted soldier to move away from the dagger aimed straight at his heart. Painted soldiers should not have (1) awareness of danger to themselves, or (2) if by some miracle we grant them such an awareness, painted soldiers should not be able to do anything about the danger. The painted soldier is doomed, and insofar as he has any awareness of that doom, it is helpless to do anything about it. We expect no more from our painted soldiers. Unless, then, the creator of art decides otherwise we, as 'images and artistic projections', are equally helpless to do anything about our plight. It is up to the creator of the painted scene that is our lives to change a scene involving us.

But, perhaps, we should expect more from ourselves. We withhold from painted soldiers the awareness we do not withhold from ourselves. Indeed, from dream artistic sensibility to intoxicated artistic sensibility, we give ourselves awareness that is progressively sharper. We know something the painted soldier does not: the very canvas we find ourselves in is semblance. Thought about correctly, there is no canvas. It, the canvas, is like a dream. Perhaps we err when we assume the painted soldier has no awareness of danger, and perhaps we therefore mistakenly assume that the painted soldier is not doing anything about it. Perhaps the painted scene is unchanging because of the efforts of the painted soldier. Whatever the condition of the painted soldier, we are aware that our reality, just like dream reality, is a semblance. What we can do to and in dream, we can do to and in our reality. We are capable of crying, in the middle of a dream, “It is a dream! I will dream on!”(16). If we are capable, in dream-reality, ‘of continuing the causality’ of the same dream through successive nights, we are capable of ‘continuing the causality’ of our world. Perhaps, then, this is what we have been doing all along in our reality, continuing the causality of semblance. Up till *The Birth* we have simply not been aware of the fact that we are continuing no causality essential to the world we find ourselves in. We know this instinctively about dream. Philosophers know this instinctively about our reality. Intoxicated sensibility knows this about ultimate reality: we are continuing a causality of semblance. And should that not satisfy us, we are continuing the causality of nothing, which means no more than continuing no causality found in the thing itself. This leads us to something else in connection with the artist creator. He cannot be working with a reality different from ours. There are not too many realities out there. The point of dream, and the subsequent infinite regression to nothing, is that we are capable of creating our reality. We can understand the inherent opposition between music and images as an opposition between what they show us, but also as an opposition that

starts with music and images as mediums of expression. If music is imageless, it is also because music needs no images to be an art. Even abstract paintings cannot hope to follow music that far. Abstract painting, in showing us nothing will image it for us in color, in frame, in some unfocused image. Always, with images, we come up against the border of meaning, the border of the frame, beyond which we are no longer looking at the image. With music, of the kind Nietzsche talks about, we are able to lose ourselves in nothing tangible, to fall into pure experience of music. Here, “something he has never felt before urgently demands to be expressed” (21). And in that moment, as we are transported beyond our usual experience into a never-felt-before experience, we grope for words, for images, for something. Stumped, we exercise our “meagre wit”, calling the experience “ ‘pastoral’”, or “a ‘scene by a stream’ and another “a merry gathering of country folk” (35). But, should we be aware of it, we realize that we can “say nothing that was not already contained, in a condition of the most enormous generality and universal validity”(36) in our experiences. But what we are experiencing through the power of music is beyond our experience. And so we realize two things simultaneously: that image, word, concept finds it impossible to “exhaust the meaning of music’s world symbolism”, and that music “thus symbolizes a sphere which lies above and beyond all appearance” (36). Ideas, by the same distinction, cannot be Will. We “who consist of and are completely trapped in semblance”, cannot be Will too, and not even our experiences, of ourselves and what is beyond us, give us a basis for judging the reality of anything. But in music we experience what it would be like to do so; what it would be like to have a basis to judge the reality of anything: it would be like a sustained vanishing into the never experienced.

Knowledge and music

I return, for the last time, to my starting point: “A person with artistic sensibility relates to the reality of dream in the same way as a philosopher relates to the reality of existence” (15).

Depending on the sensibility being invoked, relating to reality is no different from relating to dream, both are semblance. But awareness itself is semblance, so that it does not provide a point of reality from which we derive a measure of reality. But unless semblance relates to semblance through a semblance, there is no relating, only an eternal vanishing into the nothing that is reality.

And so, we need to think differently about art. Art imitates, but art is also creative. More specifically, music imitates, and images create. We can start by looking at the legend above. The response to the daemon is “reversing [its] wisdom”(24). But where before that reversal had meant imitating the gods to make them live our lives, we take seriously that “In order to be able to live, the Greeks were obliged...to create these gods.”(23). Not simply to cope with living a painful life, but to live. Now, we have also taken seriously the fact that “The Greeks knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence” (23). Because the Greeks knew and felt existence in this way, existence can be mistaken to be this way. When the Greeks, through their gods, “constantly and repeatedly overcome...or at least [veil] and [withdraw] from view, by means of the artistic *middle* world of the Olympians” (23), it seemed natural that the middle world was between the semblance that is the ‘Olympian magic mountain’ and the “Titanic forces of nature” (23). But, as we now know, a semblance can support another semblance, and some sensibilities simply will

not go further than the one semblance they know, dream. Imageless music, as it goes past the semblance, keeps us aware of this fact insofar as it appears as the imageless Will. It gives us nothing and continues to contribute nothing to our constant struggle for meaning. It keeps us aware of the reality that, in the final analysis, there is nothing out there. All meaning, whether suffering or pleasure, must come from us, and what images we find most suitable for branding our experiences. And so, to look at our reality through music is to

Perceive something incommensurable in every feature, every line, a certain deceiving definiteness, and at the same time a puzzling depth, *indeed infinity, in the background*. Even the clearest figure still trailed a comet's tail after it which seemed to point into the unknown, into that which cannot be *illuminated* (58 all emphasis mine).

In this sense all knowledge is built on infinitely regressive nothing. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that the opponent to a clearly fore-grounded figure that vanishes into infinite nothingness is an “altogether newborn daemon called Socrates” (60). In opposition to Silenus, who gives us a knowledge that comes from imageless music, the Socratic tendency is “neither in the planning nor in the execution” (61) purely artistic. This pure non-artistic Socratic tendency “measured every single element – language, characters, dramatic construction, choral music – and *rectified* it in accordance to this principle [Everything must be conscious in order to be beautiful]” (62 emphasis mine).

The resemblance between the Socratic principle, everything must be conscious, and the Apollonian dictum, “ ‘Know thyself’ and ‘Not too much’ ” (27), is striking. Both have the same outcome, measurement. Measurements, to be accurate, depend on lines, a point that must not be crossed. We can, of course, imagine measurements that lead us to the conclusion of infinity. These lines of infinity are rather useless when it comes to observing the dictum ‘not too much’,

and even more so when it comes to rectifying a wrong. To measure and rectify or “measure from all...so that they may respect that measure, knowledge of themselves” (27), requires an existing line. The Apollonian line, as we saw above, cannot be maintained in the face of what Apollo stands for, an artistic drive. Always we ask about the art but what are you an imitation of? With continued pressure, the Apollonian drive first answered Idea, but in the face of a more fundamental reality, it is shown to imitate semblance. Socrates, as the personification of the new principle, though, claims the same thing as music: Socrates “confessed to *knowing nothing*”(65). As such knowledge itself is entered as a tool of experiencing reality, rivaling art. Making a distinction between Socrates, Euripides and Sophocles, *The Birth* tells us that “Clearly what distinguishes these three men, taken together...is the degree of clarity of this *knowledge*”(65). Armed with this tool, Socrates sees “a lack of insight and the power of delusion, and...concludes from this lack that what exists is inwardly wrong and objectionable”(66). So, does Socrates really know *nothing*? Read within the pages of *The Birth*, and this essay, Socrates the philosopher stops at the very edge of meaninglessness. He goes no further. However, he is not unaware of the further since, *The Birth* tells us, “Yet even while this dream-reality is most alive, we nevertheless retain the pervasive sense that it is *semblance*” (15 emphasis in text). We see here another reason for insisting on consciousness. So, the claim that he knows nothing must be seen in the context of measurement, lines, and resistance to going too far beyond those prescribed lines. In arguing with his opponents, Socrates is capable of proceeding as if he knows nothing. But he must keep the line of conscious knowing in mind: he knows nothing in relation to what others claim they know. But, and very quickly, others will be shown to know “ ‘only by instinct’ ” (66). Pretty soon this ‘only by instinct’ is proven to be no basis for any knowledge, let alone the greatest clarity for knowledge.

So, aware of the nothing beyond his measured line, Socrates can start there and quickly show that going further than the nothing is impossible. Nothing, even if it truly is, must be rectified, otherwise, as he shows his opponents many times, there is no basis for why this and not that. As *The Birth* observes, “the logical drive which appeared in Socrates was completely incapable of turning against itself” (67). And so I come to see the same portrayal as Havas: “As Nietzsche portrays him, Socrates demanded of his interlocutors that they justify their application of moral concepts. He asked, in other words, that they give reasons for interpreting their concepts in *this* way rather than that” (100). And here we see the departure from music. Music, a true appearance of the nothing, invites us to lose ourselves in infinite nothingness, to vanish into it. Socrates, equally clear sighted, sees the nothing as, in itself, objectionable. Nothing’s infinite regression, its lack of boundaries, its lack of distinction is something to be rectified. Measured, nothing is too huge. Measured by language, the man who speaks from nothing says too much and too little. Measured by character, the man who is led by nothing does all and nothing. Measured by dramatic construction, tragedy trails a comet’s tail. Measured, one way can go too far, and another can lack the proper appreciation of the magnitude of the problem. Indeed some ways just go so far that they mean nothing. It is enough for Socrates, taking his cue from his opponents who want to actually show that this way and not that is proper, to show that in one direction there is not the meaning people seek. But reality, not concerned with these all too human pursuits, cannot be equally cowed, convinced, or shocked into accepting the measured line. For music, and the intoxicated by music sensibility, going too far has the merit of being true to reality.

We can imagine, then, the total meaninglessness of a musical culture. I cannot, in good conscience, see how such a culture can be allowed to thrive. Left unchecked, the danger of dragging us all into meaninglessness increases. Such a culture would further, by doing nothing, not be subject to measurement and rectification. Music, which opens up the possibility for a defense of such nothingness, would have to be restricted, and then constantly monitored lest it get out of hand.

Conclusion

I started this essay with the notion of reality and semblance. Because the reality I started with is formed, and contains formed individuals, images of it are also formed. I depend on the distinction between reality and semblance to develop my argument; because reality is different from semblance in every way except in how they appear, I assume that when something is shown to be a semblance, it is also shown to be not real. But if all we have is semblance, then what is real must be thought of in different ways than the ways in which we assumed at the start of this essay. *The Birth's* description of reality as formless and imageless does just that. But in describing reality so, *The Birth* also does away with the notion of something in relation to reality. Reality, we are led to conclude, has non-being; it is nothing. Art helps us to understand the nature of reality not only by imitating it, but also by creating semblance. In music, as imageless art, reality appears as formless and imageless the impossibility of ever experiencing it as formed or in imagination. In image making, our experience of semblance, even as we ourselves are semblance, is placed in front of reality as a counter measure to the non-being of reality. Perhaps, then, my longing to sing this text is in the final analysis misplaced. I have no guarantee that

singing *The Birth* would not have been mangling meaning, rather than the meaninglessness it aims for.

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