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# Nietzsche, Plato and Aristotle on Mimesis

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<http://www.dogma.lu/txt/KwokKuiNietzschePlatoAristotle.htm>

## Introduction

An attempt to relate Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* to Plato's and Aristotle's theory of mimesis would inevitably bring out a series of questions: why Nietzsche? Why mimesis? What do they have to do with each other? For it is a fact that Nietzsche never set out for a confrontation with the Greek idea of mimesis by Plato and Aristotle in his first important work on Greek tragedy – a concept which is supposed to be a foundation of Greek theory of tragedy. Nietzsche has only mentioned mimesis four times in this book, among which only three times refer to Aristotle's alleged saying that "art is the mimesis of nature". All in all, he has not engaged in a serious confrontation with this idea, and seems then that any attempt to establish any relation between the two would end in vain.

The reason for Nietzsche's lack of interest in Plato's and Aristotle's mimesis theory lies probably in that he want to avoid this idea on purpose in order to strike a new direction in the interpretation of Greek aesthetics. His two art sponsoring deities, Apollo and Dionysus, are by no means "mimetic", i.e. they are not gods for a "imitation of reality", but are grounded on principles that must be understood as the opposite of "mundane reality" (*Tageswirklichkeit*). Nietzsche can even be understood as an opponent of Plato and Aristotle in terms of aesthetics, in that he discovers the "irrational" side of this art form vis-à-vis Plato's and Aristotle's "rational" understanding<sup>[1]</sup>. On the one hand, his aesthetics has placed strong emphasis on art as an "illusion", which is the reason for Plato's objection to it. On the other hand, his criticism against Aristotle's idea of mimesis are sometimes so vehement that one may draw the conclusion that his position was formulated exactly by means of direct opposition to Aristotle's understanding of tragedy<sup>[2]</sup>: first, he understands tragedy as a representation of pathos – which is for Aristotle something rather to be purged – rather than plot; second, in his fragments he has also something very critical to say about Aristotle's catharsis theory<sup>[3]</sup>. These all drive one to the conclusion that any study in the role of "mimesis" in Nietzsche's aesthetic thinking could only result in a series of critical remarks which can only serve as the negative starting point for his own thought.

However, a closer look into the matter will produce something different. There are three reasons to revise the above conclusion: first, though Nietzsche has not discussed mimesis in *The Birth of Tragedy*, his numerous fragments and notes which were written when he was preparing for this book show that he had not ignored this subject. He had, for example, thought of a writing project of a criticism of Aristotelian catharsis-theory<sup>[4]</sup>, although it is not clear what role would mimesis play in it. Apart from that, his utterance on the Aristotelian concepts like "unity"<sup>[5]</sup>, "plot"<sup>[6]</sup>, "stagecraft"<sup>[7]</sup>, and above all "catharsis"<sup>[8]</sup> in *Poetics* betray a consistent line of thought. One may

then speculate which role this confrontation with Aristotle could have played for the genesis of Nietzsche's thought, and such speculation is not unfounded: Nietzsche was the opinion that tragedy was developed as a representation of pathos of the characters instead of plot, and then developed his thesis that this art was born from music, an aspect of tragedy which is, in his opinion, neglected by Aristotle. On the other hand, given the interesting role played by pathos in *Poetics*, that catharsis is done by the means of the mimesis of pathos, the relation between Nietzsche, Aristotle, catharsis and mimesis would be an interesting topic. The second reason relates to the interpretations of "mimesis". The traditional interpretation as "imitation" has undergone radical revision in light of new philological studies. Since the work of Koller<sup>[9]</sup> and the discussions afterwards, new directions in the understanding of the meaning of this Greek word has been offered, or one may even say the "darker" side of mimesis is discovered which is closely related to Dionysian ecstasy. Philological studies have shown a cultural-historical relation between mimesis and Dionysus which the Nietzsche scholars cannot ignore. Even before Nietzsche, K.O. Müller has shown their interconnection and thus characterises the Aristotelian catharsis as an effect of the Dionysian liberation of human affects, which had probably influenced Nietzsche's view<sup>[10]</sup>. Since then there were a series of discussions which had thematised the relation between Dionysus and catharsis, above all Bernays, whom Nietzsche had read. Numerous other studies, from the earliest Cambridge Ritualist School's claim that the tragedy is a mimetic "re-enactment" of the Dionysian ritual to recent discussions, had tried to establish the religious and aesthetic relation between Dionysus and mimesis. Furthermore, the history and evolution of the word "mimesis" from pre-Platonic time to Aristotle has shown its inner contradictions, and this contradiction corresponds interestingly enough with the difference between the views Plato, Aristotle and Nietzsche, i.e. for the two Greek philosophers mimesis is more a literary poetry (*Lesedichtung*) and a copy of the origin where the artist keeps a distance from the imitated object, whereas for Nietzsche it means more a "performative", dramatic representation where the artist takes apart personally<sup>[11]</sup>.

## Nietzsche on Mimesis and Individuum

Now let us first see what Nietzsche himself said above the subject. In a fragment which had been rarely discussed before, Nietzsche says:

*"Voraussetzung des mimischen Naturzustandes, daß man außer sich ist: dann wird man leicht auch in ein andres Wesen sich versetzt fühlen. Der Hauptunterschied ist, daß der mimische Darsteller für sich spielt: daß er an keinen Zuschauer u. Zuhörer denkt. Der Glaube an die Verwandlung von Mensch u. Thieren ist eine Vorahnung des dramatischen."*<sup>[12]</sup>

In another fragment Nietzsche makes explicit reference or even criticism to Plato's view on mimesis:

*„Es ist Unsinn von einer Vereinigung von Drama Lyrik und Epos im alten Heldenliede zu sprechen. Denn als das Dramatische wird hier genommen das Tragische: während das unterschiedliche Dramatische nur das Mimetische ist. Der erschütternde Ausgang, phobos und eleos haben gar nichts mit dem Drama zu thun: und*

*sind der Tragödie zu eigen, nicht indem sie Drama ist. Jede Geschichte kann sie haben: die musikalische Lyrik aber am meisten. Wenn das langsame aber ruhige Entfalten von Bild um Bild Sache des Epos ist, so steht es als Kunstwerk überhaupt höher. Alle Kunst verlangt ein 'außer sich sein', eine ekstasis; von hier aus geschieht der Schritt zum Drama, indem wir nicht in uns zurückkehren, sondern in fremdes Sein einkehren, in unserer ekstasis; indem wir uns als Verzauberte geberden. Daher das tiefe Erstaunen beim Anschauen des Dramas: der Boden wankt, der Glaube an die Unlöslichkeit des Individuums. Auch bei der Lyrik sind wir erstaunt, unser eigenstes Fühlen wieder zu empfinden, es zurückgeworfen zu bekommen aus anderen Individuen.“<sup>[1]</sup>*

Similar fragments relating to „mimesis“ can be found somewhere else, though the word „mimesis“ may not be used. There are two points in these two fragments we may pay attention to: first, Nietzsche distinguishes poems into different genres: lyric, epic, drama and tragedy, and the “mimetic” quality of each genre differs, from the lowest for lyric to the highest for tragedy. Similar view is also put forward, as we shall see soon, by Plato. Second, a certain kind of ecstasy or “getting-out-of-oneself” is a prerequisite for such mimesis, and therefore the level of “ecstasy” increases with the change of poetic genre, with drama and tragedy the highest. This is a point of great significance, and should provide a link between Nietzsche’s, Plato’s and Aristotle’s mimesis theory.

### **Plato on Mimesis and Subjectivity**

First we may see a similar view on mimesis and subjectivity in Plato’s *Ion*, that a certain overcoming of subjectivity of individual is necessary for the rhapsodic performance of heroic epic poetry, which Nietzsche regards, in the fragment cited above, as not yet combined with drama. However, even for this form of performance it is necessary that his *nous* is no longer with him (*Ion* 534b5-6) in order for Ion to be able to recite Homer. Without this process such rhapsodic performance is not possible, but with this process, where Ion is deprived of his reason, he may be able to feel what Hector or Hecuba or Priam feels, and therefore has tears in his eyes or his heart trembles when he recites the relevant lines. Suddenly he seems to have access to the inward feelings of each character, and imitates those whom the divine power touches. Here Plato explains Ion’s enthusiasm by comparing it to a magnetic field, where the muses stand in the centre so that they can inspire every poet to write and represent all kinds of characters and figures. Thus, the process of mimesis set off by the muses must not be limited to particular affects, but must have an access to a certain kind of universal emotion. The world seems to be linked up by one stroke. The muse should then have immediate access to a whole wealth of affects, while Ion, who is not a god, must first be robbed of his own reason or *nous* in order to have access to it. This is also the reason for Plato’s criticism of Ion, who can only recite Homer but has no knowledge about the practical contents of Homer’s epics. Moreover, Ion can only recite and judge Homer’s epic, but has nothing to say about other epic poets. Plato explains this in that though Ion’s reason is robbed, he is only touched by certain muse who is related to Homer.

Now in another dialogue a similar opinion is expressed, and more importantly, we can see also the progression of the degree of ecstasy as the poetic genre or form of performance changes from

mere narrative to those with more mimetic elements. In the third book of *Republic* Plato distinguishes two kinds of poem: *diegesis* and *mîmesis*. In comparison with *diegesis*, by which the poet himself narrates and speaks, by *mîmesis* the poet speaks in a way that as if he were the represented character (*Republic* 392e1-395c5). Plato takes an example from *Iliad*, where Chryses the priest leaves Agamemnon and goes to Apollo. Plato says that if one erases the lines between Chryses' speech where Homer himself speaks, the speech would be a "mimesis", a dramatic representation like tragedy and comedy. However, it is not about "what" or which kind of poems is allowed in the city-state, but "in what way" is the poem represented which should be forbidden (*Republic* 394c7-8). If the guard, Plato says, may not be engaged in many business but only one, as he would otherwise not be able to do well, he should also not be allowed to "mime" many persons, as he cannot represent so many as well than only one (*Republic* 394e8-9). Thus the same man may not be an actor of tragedy, comedy and rhapsody at the same time. The reason for that is what Plato calls "the splitting up of the human nature" (*katakekermatisthai he toû anthropou physis*.) (*Republic* 395b3-6). The permitted form of representation must therefore be a mixture of *diegesis* and *mîmesis*, so that when the undesired contents appear (e.g. woman, slaves, evil and mad man), the guard may keep a distance from them by means of objective narration. On the contrary, if noble characters appear they are welcome to be represented by mimesis.

The ethically undesired effect, that such ignoble characters could be imitated, is not the only reason why mimesis is not allowed in Plato's city. The key lies more in the nature of mimesis itself. One asks why Plato fears the effect mimesis more than objective narration. In the next passage Plato mentions the idea of "human nature" (*physin*) again in relation of the effect of mimesis for the education of the noble quality of man, that the mimesis of their outlook will: "settle down into habits and second nature in the body, the speech, and the thought." (*"eis te kai physin kathistantai kai kata sôma kai phonas kai kata ten dianoian."*) (*Republic* 395d1-3) Schleiermacher has translated the word "*kata*" with accusative as "*im Verhältnis zu*" (in relation to), while Paul Shorey renders it as "second nature". So Plato seems to mean that mimesis can go through to habit and to human nature, also "in relation to" body and tone and disposition. It seems that no causal relation between human nature and body is expressed here. However, the next passage points to something else: Plato draws the conclusion that the guards may not imitate the behaviour of women like scolding, screaming, sacrilege of gods, or be ill or in love, or the behaviour of evil men or cowards like insulting, mocking or be drunk. It is obvious that Plato worries that the imitation of these behaviours may influence the habits and nature of the guards. The relation between human nature, body and tone must therefore not only be that of "as well as in relation to". Mimesis or the dramatic representation, which begins with the imitation of the external gestures and movements, has stronger effect to the soul than narration does, for the latter always keeps a distance from its object. The idea of "nature", *physis*, means originally "to grow". It acquires the meaning of human nature in terms of qualities acquired through growth which is not to be transplanted from outside, but, in relation to external behaviour, springs from the inside through "natural" habits. In Book II of *Republic*, as Plato is talking about the education of the guards, he argues that they should have the appropriate "nature" for the duty, and he compares this with that of a dog, which should be suitable for his job both in physical terms and inwardly: loyal to the master, fierce to the enemy (*Republic*, 374e4). The union of body and soul, of outward behaviour with inner disposition, is the main subject of Book III, and it is also the reason why the distinction between mimesis and narrative is made.

There is therefore a deeper reason why Plato forbids poets in his state, which has much to do with the essence of mimesis: in the mimesis of many characters one forgets his own role or duty in the state, for if a guard always mimes foreign characters, his soul would be split up between these untrue lives. Mimesis, in summary, leads to the splitting up of the soul of the guards. Gadamer has also discussed the question why Plato forbids poets in his earlier essay "Plato und die Dichter". Imitation, Gadamer says, the action of miming the other, is at the same time an act of self-forgetting. "*Nachahmung bedeutet also denn eine Selbstentzweiung.*" Here is the core of Plato's critic of poetry: „*der Reiz des Nachahmens und die Freude an der Nachahmung sind eine Form der Selbstvergessenheit, die sich am stärksten erfüllt, wo auch das Dargestellte Selbstvergessenheit, das ist Leidenschaft, ist.*“ The spoiling of the soul is the essence of mimesis itself. „*Die Erlebniswelt der trughaften Nachahmung ist schon selbst das Verderben der Seele. Denn an der vertieften Erkenntnis der ‚inneren Verfassung‘ der Seele zeigt sich: die ästhetische Selbstvergessenheit gewährt der Sophistik der Leidenschaft Einlass in das menschliche Herz.*“<sup>[13]</sup> Further, mimesis works, in comparison with enthusiasm in *Ion*, even deeper in the human soul. Plato fears that the different natures of the guards would be brought out by the imitation of the different people and characters. While in the case of enthusiasm for *Ion* the receptive ability is suddenly confronted with an abundance of affects, while the real nature remains a distance from it, in the case of mimesis is the human nature, which stays deep in the soul, is, together with the reception, challenged and brought to movement, so that an "entrance in another being" is accomplished. It is no longer that one does not know what one speaks, but that what he does becomes "natural". This happens in the dramatic art first through the imitation of the physical gestures, which penetrates in the human soul, so that the dramatic action comes forth from the interior "naturally".

In the division of the soul into three parts, i.e. rational, lustful and courageous, Plato acknowledges that the human soul is full of contradictions, that the desires are like horses of a chariot which need to be controlled and steered by reason. These desires in themselves always contradict each other and go to different directions. (*Republic*, 603d6-7) Dramatic performance has the effect of bringing out these contradictions, for a reasonable man hides in his emotion when he is alone, but will succumb to such different expressions of the multitude of emotions in a public assembly like in performance of a play (*Republic* 604a-e). It is not the splitting up of the human soul of audience which is feared, but that of the guards, who turns from this controlling reason and opens up his own inner contradiction in the process of mimesis, which is otherwise held up in normal condition. For the man is a multi-faceted being, something which Plato has recognized too well, and he therefore regards every occasion which may break this hold to be dangerous. Therefore, as far as the relevance of Plato's opinion to Nietzsche is concerned, we may conclude that both regard the splitting up of the soul and the absence of reason or consciousness of individuality as the prerequisite and effect of mimesis.

### **Nietzsche, Aristotle and Bernays on Catharsis**

Nietzsche and Aristotle on mimesis and catharsis can be related through Jacob Bernays, a contemporary of Nietzsche, who had written an interesting commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*, titled *Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über die Wirkung der Tragödie* (Hildesheim 1970), which Nietzsche had borrowed twice from the Basel University library when

he was writing *The Birth of Tragedy*<sup>[14]</sup>, and was influenced by him. He has mentioned Bernays' name many times in his notes, and had once even considered using Bernays' argument when he was preparing for *The Birth of Tragedy* as the book was still at the formulating stage<sup>[15]</sup>. It is however controversial how big his influence on Nietzsche was<sup>[16]</sup>. Nevertheless, obvious agreements between the two can still be found. The most conspicuous seems to be their attention on the Dionysian ecstasy as the origin of tragedy. But the question of exactly how they relate to each other has until now been insufficiently discussed<sup>[17]</sup>. Yet an important hint is provided by Reibnitz, who draws attention to Nietzsche's understanding of catharsis as process where the contradiction between pain and lust is essential. Nietzsche, Bernays and Yorck von Wartenburg<sup>[18]</sup> find agreement in that the tragic *hedone* is a sublime form of orgiastic lust, which is instigated by the acceleration and the "reversal" (*Umschlag*) of affects, especially from negative to positive ones<sup>[19]</sup>. Here we may quote a similar saying by Nietzsche in *BT*, where he interprets the alleged Aristotelian understanding of art as the "mimesis of nature": "Yet the peculiar blending of emotions in the heart of the Dionysian reveler - his ambiguity if you will – seems still to hark back (...) to the days when the infliction of pain was experienced as joy while a sense of supreme triumph elicited cries of anguish from the heart. For now in every exuberant joy there is heard an undertone of terror, or else a wistful lament over an irrecoverable loss. It is as though in these Greek festivals a sentimental trait of nature were coming to the fore, as though nature were bemoaning the fact of her fragmentation, her decomposition into separate individuals."<sup>[20]</sup>

This process of reversal is accompanied by the destruction of individual, a point of primal significance to our argument. According to Bernays' interpretation, catharsis is an ecstatic-enthusiastic process by which the oppressive affects in a sick man are instigated, brought out, and then channeled out and relieved. However, in order to bring out these affects in the first place, the patient must first be brought to a certain state of movement in his emotional disposition. Bernays' reference to Aristotle's *Politics* has reconstructed a hint to the lost second part of *Poetics*, where he had supposedly discussed catharsis in greater detail. In *Politics* the different effects of music as medium of emotional movement are described. Aristotle calls the kind of melody, which should effect catharsis, the "enthusiastic" (*enthousiastike*), and is frequently associated with religious rituals. Bernays explains the frequency of such appearance of enthusiastic behaviour, especially in oriental and archaic Greek world, in terms of the psychological constitution of these archaic people, namely the irritability of their emotional capacity because their "self-consciousness" is still not firmly established, so that they could be easily led to a "*selbstentäusserten Verückung*". "*Wo aber der Menschgeist noch nicht in sich selber eingewohnt hat, da wird das Ausser-sich-sein für heilig und göttlich gehalten.*"<sup>[21]</sup> Enthusiasm, Bernays implies, is essentially human spirit getting out of itself, in which "*das ekstatische Element von dem Zug der Gewalt des Gesanges hingerissen und hervorragt, sich der Lust hingiebt, aller Fugen und Bande des Selbst ledig zu sein, um dann jedoch, nach dem diese Lust gebüsst worden, wieder in Ruhe und Fassung des geregelten Gemütszustandes sich einzuordnen.*"<sup>[22]</sup>

The keyword in the previous passage, where Bernays explains the process of catharsis step by step, is the so-called "ecstatic elements". It is what Bernays calls "*welches wider die Fessel des Bewußtseins anschäumt, ohne sie aus eigener Kraft sprengen zu können; in unablässigen Wühlen würde es die Grundvesten des Gemüths untergraben.*" They are affects which are suppressed in normal condition, but are always ready for outbreak. However, they cannot free



themselves from the constraint of self-consciousness by itself, but can only be brought out by external stimulants. They are ecstatic, first because they always drive to go out from the self; second, and more interestingly, because they do not belong to the self. So Bernays says: “*Denn alle Arten von Pathos sind wesentlich ekstatisch.*” What he means by this can be explained with reference to Aristotle’s *Politics*: “*ho gar peri enias symbainei pathos psychas ischyrôs, toûto en pasais hyparchei, tô de hêttôn diapherei kai tô mallon, hôion eleos kai phobos, eti d’ enthousiasmos...*” (*Politics* 1342a, 4-7) Bernays’ translation reads thus: „Nämlich, der Affekt, welcher in einigen Gemüthern heftig auftritt, ist in allen vorhanden, der Unterschied besteht nur in dem Mehr oder Minder, z.B. Mitleid und Frucht (treten in dem Mitleidigen und Fruchtsamen heftig auf, eingeringerem Masse sind alle Menschen derselben unterworfen), es giebt aber Leute, die häufigen Anfällen dieser Gemüthsbewegung ausgesetzt sind.“<sup>[23]</sup> There seems therefore to be a general theory of human disposition where there is a contradiction between affects and self-consciousness<sup>[24]</sup>. Aristotle himself has not expressly pointed out such a opposition, and it is only Bernays who sharpens it. This opposition finds its ground in the readiness of these affects to break out. The question is: why do they want to break out? Why is the human “self” their constraint? Does it mean that they do not originally belong to the “self”, and is only held up by it for some reason?

Bernays talks about the “universality” of affects in the explanation of the ecstatic character of these affects. Those affects, which are present in all human beings and are ready to break out, are “generalisable” (“*Verallgemeinerung fähig*”), and thus calls them “universal affects”, “*durch sie alle wird der Mensch ausser sich gesetzt*”. They are originally universal, and therefore may be brought up by dramatic representation of the similar affects. The religious enthusiasm, after its transformation into tragedy, has thus become a cathartically effective purgation of affects. The medium of such instigation, instead of melody, is now pity or *eleos*. Thus Bernays compares *eleos* to a gateway to the human disposition which is otherwise closed: „*Denn da er [Aristoteles] Selbstgenügen und Selbstgenuss (autarkeia) für die höchste Vollkommenheit ansieht, die allein Gott besitzt, der Mensch immer nur erstrebt, so musste er vor allen andern Affekten in dem Mitleid und der Furcht die zwei weit geöffneten Thore erkennen, durch welche die Aussenwelt auf die menschliche Persönlichkeit eindringt und der unvertilgbare, gegen die ebenmässige Geschlossenheit anstürmende Zug des pathetischen Gemüthselements sich hervorstürzt, um mit gleichempfindenden Menschen zu leiden und vor dem Wirbel der drohend fremden Dinge zu beben.*“<sup>[25]</sup> This „suffering together“ (*Mitleid*) with other people guarantees their universality. The human disposition has given a narrower definition of these affects by projecting them to the immediately surrounding space, time and causality situation and are therefore conceived by the consciousness in a narrower perspective, without the person knowing that these affects have universal validity. *Eleos* restores its universality by means that the person, as in the ecstasy of music, is driven out of himself and all his affects are now liberated from this spatial-temporal projection and submits to the openness of the world as if they had a divine or cosmological significance, and are in turn contemplated by the person himself as something like the schopenhaurian universal Will. “*Denn wenn das Mitleid so universalisiert worden, dass der Zuschauer mit dem tragischen Helden zusammenfließt; so verschwindet vor der Wonne, welche dieses Heraustreten aus dem eigenen Selbst begleitet.*“ „*Die das Mitleid erregende Person muss, wie scharf auch ihre Individualität ausgeprägt sei, doch der Urform des allgemein menschlichen Charakters nahe genug bleiben.*“<sup>[26]</sup> Drama brings him closer to this general human character, and, like a mirror held up against the audience, this universality is represented before their eyes

and therefore their pity will be brought up, „*damit der Zuschauer im Spiegel eines Wesens, das ihm gleichartig ist (ho homoios), sich selber erblicken und das Mitleid, welches er für das dargestellte Leid fühlt, den Reflex der Furcht in sein eignes Innere zurückwerfen könne.*”

This „*sich selber erblicken*“, which is the moment when catharsis is effective, is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s „*die Augen drehen*“ in the Dionysiac revel where one sees the inside of oneself as the universal Will, the “One”<sup>[27]</sup>. The reversal from fear to lust is a process of “universalisation of affects”, where through the liberation of suppressed affects one also frees himself from the yoke of his subjectivity. Then when one contemplates his own affects inside from a higher plane, one regards them as actually not only his own, but that of the world, it follows then an aesthetic joy where one experiences a kind of aesthetic sublimation. Bernays describes this process of the working together between *eleos* and *phobos* in the following manner:

„nur wenn die sachliche Freude durch das persönliche Mitleid vermittelt ist, kann der rein kathartische Vorgang im Gemüthe des Zuschauer so erfolgen, dass, nachdem, im Mitleid das eigene Selbst der ganzen Menschheit erweitert worden, es sich den fruchtbar erhabenen Gesetzen des Alls und ihrer die Menschheit umfassende unbegreiflichen Macht von Angesicht zu Angesicht gegenüberstelle, und sich von demjenigen Art der Furcht durchdringen lasse, welche als ekstatische Schauder vor dem All zugleich in höchster und ungetrübter Weise hedonisch ist.“<sup>[28]</sup>

The transformation from fear and pain to joy is therefore parallel with this extension of one’s own “self” to the “self” of the whole humanity, a splitting up of the individual, the destruction of *principium individuationis*. For Aristotle and Bernays this is a receiving, healing process, from which a sublimated joy follows. For Nietzsche this destruction of individual and the transformation of personal affects to universal schopenhauerian Will is a creative process, the product of which, namely tragedy, should effect a sublimation of the affects of the audiences who receive it.

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<sup>[1]</sup> His most expressed opposition against Plato’s criticism of poets can be found in his notes: KSA 7, 1 [7], [43], [65].

<sup>[2]</sup> On Aristotle: KSA 7, 3 [53], [66], [65].

<sup>[3]</sup> *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, [80] KSA 3, p.435-437; *Götzen-Dämmerung* [5], KSA 6, p.106. His opinion on Aristotle’s catharsis can be found in *Menschliches, All-zu-Menschliches* 1, which, interestingly enough, agrees somehow to Plato’s opinion, KSA 2, [212], p.173-174.

<sup>[4]</sup> HKG III, p. 319. (October 1867-April 1868)

<sup>[5]</sup> KSA 7, 1 [53] [66], KSA 7, 3 [1], [53].

<sup>[6]</sup> KSA 7, 3 [2].

<sup>[7]</sup> KSA 7, 3 [66].

<sup>[8]</sup> KSA 7, 1 [65].

<sup>[9]</sup> Koller, H. *Mimesis in the Antike: Nachahmung, Darstellung, Ausdruck* (Bern, 1954)

<sup>[10]</sup> Müller, K.O. *Aeschylus Eumenides: Griechisch und Deutsch, mit erläuternden Abhandlungen über die äussere Darstellung, und über den Inhalt und die Composition dieser Tragödie* (Göttingen, 1833), p. 191. For Müller’s influence on Nietzsche, see Barbara von Reibnitz: *Ein Kommentar zu Nietzsches Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (Stuttgart, 1992), p.121.

<sup>[11]</sup> In ancient Greece the origin of mimesis, according to Koller, was a kind of cultic orgiastic dance. Koller’s thesis is that the Greek word *mimesthai* came from *mîmos*, which means



“Akteur”, or in English “participant in an event as protagonist”, from which the meaning of “dramatic actor” is derived. “Mimesis” was not limited only to music and dance, but implies the power of expression of *mousike* in its original unity. The meaning of “imitation” was a later development, a watered-down application of the word in the areas like painting and plastic art or the general meaning of “imitation”, to which this word originally did not belong. „*Zugleich bemüht sich Koller zu zeigen, daß Platon und sein Nachfolger Aristoteles den Begriff in folgenschwerer Weise auf 'Nachahmung' im ästhetischen Bereich einengen und daß Platon im zehnten Buch der Politeia den Begriff bewußt in diesem Sinne 'verfälscht'*.“ Notwithstanding whether Koller’s etymological explanation for the origin of mimesis from dance is true or not, the history of the watering-down of meaning is itself interesting. So Koller: „*Μῖμος wäre erst mit dem Dionysos-kult nach Griechenland gekommen. Das dem Griechischen fremde Grundwort kann nicht etymologisiert werden. Fast sämtliche von uns genannten Zeugnisse führen in die Sphäre des bacchantischen, orgiastischen, geheimen Kultes[....] Wir erinnern uns aber, daß Platon offensichtlich die wichtige orgiastische Seite der Mimesis aus erzieherischen Gründen unterschlagen hat.*“ Koller (1954), p.48-49. Of course such a suppression has an ethical reason. But the watering-down itself goes hand in hand with the extension of the usage of this word in other areas, and the wider it is used, the less the possibility to relate it with ecstasy. Parallel to this development is the distance between the miming person and the object: not only in the sense of physical distance as in painting, but more importantly that the miming person no longer takes part “personally” in the mimesis, but through a third medium, be it pictures, statues or writing. So has mimesis become “mediate” vis-à-vis the immediacy between the god and the participants in the bacchaic cult.

[12] KGA. III 5/1, p.111.□

[13] Gadamer, H.G. *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990) vol. 5, p.205.

[14] But later Gründer remarks thus: „*ob er sie gelesen hat, weiß niemand.*“ p.522 in „Jacob Bernays und der Streit um die Katharsis“ in: *Epirrhosis. Festgabe für Carl Schmitt*, Vol. 2, ed. Hans Barion and others. (Berlin: 1968) p.495-528.

[15] KG III, 3, 71, II 6-9.

[16] Gründer and Momigliano agree that there is a serious affinity in the thought between Bernays and Nietzsche. Karlfried Gründer’s “Einleitung” in Bernays *Grundzüge*, p. VIII-IX. At one point Bernays says even that Nietzsche’s opinion was also “*seine [Bernays’] Anschauung, nur stark übertrieben.*“ Momigliano, *Arnaldo Jacob Bernays*. (Amsterdam: 1969), p.17. On the other hand, Silk and Stern however warn against an over-emphasis on Bernays’ influence, pointing out that BT has little to do with catharsis, and that although Nietzsche had borrowed Bernays’ book when he was preparing BT, his thought then had already been firmly formulated. Silk, M.S. & Stern, J.P. *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: 1981), p. 415, n97.

[17] Gründer, for example, has only given an account on the objective condition of both of their writings, without going into the content comparison.

[18] Reibnitz refers to Yorck’s writing “Die Katharsis des Aristoteles und der Oedipus Coloneus des Sophokles”, which Nietzsche had borrowed from the Basel University library twice. Here Yorck agrees with Bernays’ thesis that catharsis happens through such reversal, and has even further developed this thesis, arguing that ecstasy is a “*sich Verlieren an die Herrschaft der Macht der Natur*”, an occasion in which the affects are brought out and overcome, and pain and lust were channeled off.

[19] Reibnitz, Barbara von *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche „Die Geburt der Tragödie aus*

*dem Geiste der Musik*“ (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992), p.112.

[20] *The Birth of Tragedy*, tr. F. Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956).

[21] Bernays, p.43.

[22] Bernays, p.44.

[23] Bernays, p.7.

[24] cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. J. Weinsheimer & D.G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989) p.130.

[25] Bernays, p.48-49.

[26] Bernays, p.49

[27] c.f. Shaftesbury, A.: „A Letter on Enthusiasm“, in: *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times with a Collection of Letters*, vol. I. (Basil, 1711) p.1-46. „There is a melancholy which accompanies all enthusiasm.“ „There are certain humours in mankind, which, of necessity, must have vent. The human mind and body are both of them naturally subject to commotions, and as there are strange ferments in the blood, which in many bodies occasion an extraordinary discharge.“ p.10-11. ”To understand ourselves, 'and know what spirit we are of.' Afterwards we may judge the spirit in others, consider what their personal merit is, and prove the validity of their testimony by the solidity of their brain. By this means we may prepare ourselves with some antidote against Enthusiasm.“ p.46. „We can never be fit to contemplate any thing above us, when we are in no condition to look into ourselves, and calmly examine the temper of our own mind and passions.“ p.27.

[28] Bernays, p.50.