
THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY, A NIETZSCHEAN AETIOLOGICAL MYTH

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Classicists, philosophers, literary critics and various other scholars have long been interested in the origin and nature of tragedy. In modern times in Germany, e.g. Herder, Lessing, Kant, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bertold Brecht, as well as numerous less well known individuals, devoted time, energy and talent to speculating about tragic drama.¹ Among English-speaking scholars A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, Sir William Ridgeway, Gilbert Murray, T.B.L. Webster and G.F. Else come to mind. Else has pointed out that what all these theorists, with the exception of himself, have in common is the assumption that tragedy evolved from "some pre-existing source" such as "dithyramb, *satyrikon*, vegetation rituals, initiation rites, hero-cult, lamentations for the dead" and so forth.² Following Else we can sort these speculators into three camps: (1) those who, following Aristotle, believe tragedy evolved from the dithyramb, a choral recitation in honor of Dionysus, (2) those who derive tragedy from "other orgiastic or mystery rituals" similar to the cult of Dionysus, and (3) those who see "the cult of the dead" i.e. hero-cults as the source of tragedy.³ Else himself is unique in thinking that tragedy did not evolve from any pre-tragic literary form or ritual. Rather, he contends, it was invented in two creative acts by Thespis and Aeschylus.⁴

The purpose of this paper is to place Nietzsche's first book *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (Hereafter BT)⁵ in the context of these speculations about the origin of tragedy and to assess its value. My modest contribution to the discussion is the result of a study of the general topic of the origin of tragedy, a careful reading of BT and a survey of the reactions to it that have appeared during the last thirty years or so. My research indicates that Nietzsche accepted *in toto* what Aristotle had said regarding the origin of tragedy and does not offer a novel theory. Thus BT is not a scholarly work in the ordinary sense at all. What I shall argue, then, is that it is best read as a myth.

Let me start by summarising the most important points made by Nietzsche in BT. There are four major ideas: 1.) the Apollonian/Dionysiac dichotomy. 2.) The notion that the Greeks

invented tragedy by synthesising the Apollonian and the Dionysiac. 3.) Socratism (i.e. rationalism) represented by Euripides and Socrates killed tragedy, but 4.) Wagner offers hope that there may be a rebirth of tragedy and a tragic view of life.⁶

According to Nietzsche, the Apollonian and the Dionysiac represent two opposed artistic tendencies or drives.⁷ Apollo is the god of civilization, of restraint, of form, of beauty, of illusion and of dreams. Dionysus is a god of nature, representing its chaos, contradictions, limitlessness, and its primordial oneness. He is the god of intoxication, of ecstasy, of fertility; he brings about the loss of individuation and a feeling of oneness with others and with nature. The Apollonian and the Dionysiac may "operate singly" or together. Sculpture is purely Apollonian; the highest form of music is purely Dionysiac, and it "...differs in character and origin from the other arts because they represent phenomena, while music represents metaphysical [ultimate] reality directly," (SS 79) the *Urgrund* in German. "...by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic will" (BT 33) the Greeks produced Attic tragedy which is equally Apollonian and Dionysiac.

Nietzsche contends that in the Homeric period Greek culture was Apollonian asserting that the pre-Greek, Titanic culture which was Dionysiac had been suppressed (BT 42). The Olympian religion was Apollonian; it was a "beautiful illusion" devised to conceal the terror, horror and absurdity of life and make it endurable. But the "dark side" of Greek mythology shows that the Greeks were aware of the terrible truth regarding human life summed up in the "wisdom of Silenus" uttered to King Midas who had asked Papposilenus, the tutor of Dionysus, what was best and most desirable for humans: "O, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is---to die soon" (BT 42). This is the Dionysiac wisdom that tragedy imparts.

Following Aristotle, Nietzsche asserts that tragedy evolved from the dithyramb in which the members of the chorus were dressed as satyrs. Therefore, Nietzsche tells us, we must examine the chorus as the "proto-drama" whence tragedy evolved.

Nietzsche thought that the earliest tragedies had for their sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus, i.e. his dismemberment by the Titans and subsequent reintegration. This myth provides us with "the *mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as

the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness" (BT 74).⁸

By the end of the 6th century B.C.E. in Nietzsche's view Greek mythology was dying, but Dionysiac music rejuvenated it and revitalised it for a time. Then, however, tragedy came to a sudden end; in fact, it "died by suicide"---at the hands of Euripides. Euripides put spectators on the stage, i.e. he has heroes who are ordinary people who lack the traditional grandeur of demigods and their lofty language. This resulted in the rejection of the Dionysiac and made the "true tragic effect unattainable." Dionysiac wisdom had been replaced by the cleverness of slaves (BT 75-77).

Yet Euripides was merely a symptom of the real cause of the demise of tragedy, which was the rationalism of Socrates whom Nietzsche introduce as a demon (BT 82). Socratic rationalism is by nature untragic because it is optimistic and "it presupposes that [all the] essential problems of existence can be solved by the activities of the rational mind" (SS 76). Socrates was thus a type unheard of previously, "...truly a monstrosity *per defectum*," (BT 88) ---the "theoretical man" who believes unshakeably that "thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of correcting it" (BT 95). Thus "optimistic dialectic drives music out of tragedy [i.e. the chorus] with the scourge of its syllogisms, that is it destroys the essence of tragedy...." (BT 92). Socrates was the "turning point and vortex of so-called world history" (BT 96). Influenced by Socrates, Plato burned his poems, but "constrained by sheer artistic necessity" he created a new art form, the dialogue starring Socrates who understood only one kind of poetry, the Aesopian fable. From the Platonic dialogue came the novel, an "infinitely enhanced Aesopian fable" (BT 90-1).

But the most talented searchers after the truth inevitably realise the limits of science and its "powerlessness to solved the problems of existence" (SS 78). Then "tragic awareness" replaces optimism. Hence science inevitably leads to myth, which may even be science's purpose (BT 96).

BT might have ended here and in fact the original version which was entitled "Socrates and Greek Tragedy" did. In the opinion of Walter Kaufmann, "...the following celebration of the rebirth of tragedy [i.e. sections 16 through 22] weakens the book and was shortly regretted by Nietzsche himself" (BT 98 n.11). In these sections Nietzsche asks whether a rebirth of tragedy is possible

given that ancient tragedy was destroyed by the Socratic desire for knowledge and the optimism of science. Yes, it is possible because Socratic culture which has reigned supreme in Europe since the time of Socrates is suffering a failure of nerve because of threats from two sides. The "slave class" on which it depends will seek revenge, and secondly Kant and Schopenhauer have shown that science only deals with phenomena and cannot know the "thing-in-itself" (BT III-112). Because of this a tragic culture, one in which wisdom will replace the knowledge sought by science, is not only possible---it seems to be arising "from unfathomable depths." It is German music---" from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner" that points to the "gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit" in the modern world (BT II9). Precisely what is needed in Germany to bring about a rebirth of tragedy? And who will lead the way when Goethe, Schiller and Winckelmann failed? Certainly not classical philologists, the "corrector[s] of old texts" and "linguistic microscopist[s]" nor higher education since the "cultural power" of those institutions "has perhaps never been lower or feebler than at present" (K 122). Perhaps Nietzsche himself will do it (BT 124).

Nietzsche concludes with a cultural call to arms: "To ensure the regeneration of her spirit, Germany must recover her own mythic roots..." "We must restore German myth and make ourselves worthy of our great predecessors...." (SS 87). Indeed this is beginning to happen: "someday it [the German spirit] will find itself awake in all the morning freshness following a tremendous sleep; then it will slay dragons, destroy vicious dwarfs, wake Brunnhilde---and even Wotan's spear will not be able to stop its course!" (BT 142) My summary does not begin to convey the brilliance, the profundity, the power and, yes, the beauty of Nietzsche's own words although the passage just quoted is guaranteed to send shivers down the spine of anyone acquainted with the history of Germany in the twentieth century.

BT was published in January of 1872 when Nietzsche was twenty-eight. Five months later it was the object of an attack, shocking in its ferocity, by a 24-year-old fellow alumnus of Schulpforte, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff who subsequently became the most famous classical philologist of his generation and one of the most famous of all time. Scholars have noted the "almost pathological tone of detestation, sometimes marked by personal abuse" of the attack (SS 104). Wilamowitz called Nietzsche a dishonest and "ignorant charlatan" (SS 96). He objected to everything in BT---its tone, style, logic and "above all, its lack of scholarship" (SS 96). It had neither footnotes nor bibliography nor

quotations in Greek from classical authors nor references to contemporary German scholars.

Nietzsche's friend Erwin Rohde who also became a famous scholar known for his book *Psyche* defended Nietzsche with an equally savage attack on Wilamowitz calling him "ill-informed," "a presumptuous nobody," "slandering, malevolent, critically incompetent and banally complacent" (SS 99). Wilamowitz replied with a second polemic, "less frenetic" than the first, perhaps because he realised that the philological establishment was on his side, and it wasn't worth wasting time, energy or ink on the likes of Nietzsche. Herman Usener, a well known Greek scholar who was teaching at Bonn, joined the fray calling BT "sheer nonsense" and "quite useless," opining that "anyone writing like that is professionally dead," (SS 105) and he was right. By the 1873/74 winter term Nietzsche had only two students, a law student and a student of German.⁹ Wilamowitz in his memoirs published in 1928 confessed that his attack on Nietzsche had been "boyish," but "stated that one good thing came of the controversy and that was the fact that Nietzsche had had the good sense to quit the field of classical philology."¹⁰ All in all it was one of the sorriest episodes in the history of *odium scholasticum*, the hatred that scholars have for one another.

The reactions of classicists of later generations to BT have been decidedly less vicious and less vitriolic. Let me begin with a work entitled *Nietzsche on Tragedy* by M.S. Silk, an English classicist who teaches at King's College, London and J.P. Stern, a professor of German at University College, London. This is a magisterial work, so comprehensive and so brilliant, in fact, that one could easily despair of adding anything to what they have said, and the influence of their book can be detected on every page of this paper. Their first charge is that BT is not a "work of classical scholarship" at all (132). It violates all the norms of scholarly prose accepted by 19th century German scholarship. "As a comment on Greek culture Nietzsche's book is an extraordinary composite of brilliant insight, expressed with unforgettable force, conventional wisdom, sloppiness, speciousness, distortion and (for lack of a better name) artistic construct" (132). Nietzsche's arguments, when he presents them, are "unsystematic and slovenly." He fails to present evidence even when it is available, and his use of "highly charged and coloured language" makes evaluation difficult (134).

Silk and Stern have attempted an assessment of BT in four areas---music, customs and religion, literary and intellectual history,

and the origin of tragedy. Nietzsche gets his highest marks for religion and his lowest for music where his goal was to give "the impression that Greek music was somehow like Wagner...." (SS 137). This is of course preposterous and is labelled by Silk and Stern "less than fully honest" (138). In implying that Greek music was similar to Wagner, Nietzsche had to ignore the fact that it lacked harmony in the modern sense, that it almost always accompanied poetry and was subservient to words, and that it was in no sense orchestral.

Nietzsche does not fare much better on the origin of tragedy. Else says in fact that BT "does not present any new theory of the origin; it simply visualizes...an outline of events suggested in Aristotle's *Poetics*."¹¹ The steps by which drama evolved from the chorus were pictured by Nietzsche as follows. At first there was only the chorus which imagined itself in the presence of Dionysus. Then "the attempt was made to show the god as real" and someone, perhaps a member of the chorus wearing a mask impersonated him. Thus drama was born. Dionysus was originally the sole hero. Later heroes, Prometheus, Oedipus *et al.*, are mere masks" of Dionysus (BT 73). This, of course, is pure speculation for which there is no evidence, and classicists who think Aristotle is wrong regarding the evolution of tragedy from a chorus of satyrs reciting dithyrambs will obviously also consider Nietzsche mistaken.

Three quotations will serve to sum up the current consensus on BT. The first comes from Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones who has written, "Yet with all its appalling blemishes it is a work of genius and began a new era in the understanding of Greek thought."¹² The second quotation comes from Albert Henrichs: "In undiluted form, Nietzsche has always been, and still is, unacceptable to most classical scholars..."¹³ The third is from W. Geoffrey Arnott who says, "...it is not the larger statements that ultimately make BT an important text..., but rather its numerous unargued asides about different aspects of Greek drama (not to mention other areas of Greek life, literature and belief.)"¹⁴

Let us consider each of these quotations briefly.

First, concerning the "appalling blemishes." On a number of points Nietzsche is just plain mistaken. For instance Nietzsche makes Dionysus a god of music and Apollo a god of sculpture when the fact is that Apollo was the only Greek god of music (SS 185) and there was no god of sculpture. Again Nietzsche makes Apollo a god of dreams, a god of appearance and illusion and a god of the visual arts, but as Silk and Stern put it, "there is no ancient authority" for

this; "he has invented them. They have, however, one feature in common with more moderate innovations: they sharpen the antithesis with Dionysus" (171). Also, if Dionysus had been a chthonic deity, as Nietzsche assumed, he should have some connection with death which he didn't, at least not in the "proto-tragic period" (SS 182).

Another of Nietzsche's inventions is the "wise, half-animal chorister" (SS 148). What he has done is conflate the satyrs with the Sileni. The satyrs of Greek myth were famous for "braggadocio, cowardice and lechery."¹⁵ and may have had something to do with proto-drama, but it was Papposilenus who had a reputation for wisdom and had educated Dionysus. By merging the two Nietzsche creates the chorus that utters Dionysiac wisdom.

Although Nietzsche's depiction of Dionysus is more in conformity with the picture of him we get from the ancient sources than is his characterisation of Apollo, it is still one-sided. For instance nothing is said of women--the famous maenads or bacchantes who, if we can believe Euripides *Bacchae*, constituted the majority of Dionysus' followers. Also, no-where does Nietzsche mention Arion or Thespis, two figures traditionally associated with the development of dithyramb and tragedy (SS 148). Arion is said to have "transformed the dithyramb"¹⁶ and Thespis was thought by both the Greeks and the Romans to have invented tragedy.¹⁷

Still, *vis-a-vis* the grandeur of the vision Nietzsche presents in the BT and the brilliant asides mentioned by Arnott, it would be petty to dwell too long on its errors and shortcomings. Hugh Lloyd-Jones credits Nietzsche with "unprecedented insights" into the religion of the Hellenes and calls the publication of BT "a turning point" in the study of Greek religion.¹⁸ Nietzsche's development of the Dionysiac and the demonic aspects of Greek religion, the dark underside, effectively demolished the then current notion that the Greeks were a "nation of serene, rational optimists" (SS 163). Among insights that have attracted attention and praise is Nietzsche's claim that violence is somehow associated with creativity, something Wilamowitz denied vehemently (SS 174). Nietzsche wrote that "the Dionysiac with its primordial joy experienced even in pain is the common source of music and tragic myth" (BT 141).

According to Lloyd-Jones, it was Nietzsche and not Freud who invented the concept of sublimation.¹⁹ According to Allan Bloom both Freud and Weber were "profoundly influenced by Nietzsche," Freud concentrating on the id and Weber on "the problem of values, the role of religion in their formation, and community."²⁰ Also Nietzsche

was the first to call attention to the importance of competition and contests to the ancient Greeks.²¹ This insight has been developed by others such as Moses Finley who wrote, "Nothing defines the quality of Greek culture more neatly than the way in which competition was extended from physical prowess to the realm of the intellect, to feats of poetry and dramatic composition," and Huizinga remarks that "The Greeks used to stage contests in anything that offered the bare possibility of a fight," e.g. beauty (male, of course), singing, riddle-solving, drinking, staying awake.²³

Careful readers of BT have often commented on the brilliance of Nietzsche's intuitions and on his "divinatory sense" (SS 160). An especially vivid example of this concerns Nietzsche's claim that a Dionysiac period preceded the Apollonian, Homeric period with its Olympic deities. This was something that Nietzsche's theory demanded, but classical scholars had always considered Dionysus a late-comer to the Greek pantheon, an invader, so to speak, from Thrace or the near East. In 1952, however, when the Linear B tablets were deciphered, Dionysus' name was found inscribed therein, much to the surprise of the scholarly community. These tablets were seven centuries older than Homer and three centuries older than the traditional date of the Trojan War.²⁴ This was an event that would have brought much needed joy to the pessimist's heart if it had happened during his lifetime.

Let me simply refer to one other subject about which Nietzsche expresses very perceptive and very provocative ideas, that is the effect of tragedy on audiences. The problem put simply is "Why do audiences enjoy seeing monumental suffering dramatized on the stage? Why "instead of being depressed," as F. R. Leavis put it, do "we enjoy a sense of enhanced vitality?" (SS 275) Nietzsche rejected Aristotle's notion of *katharsis* because it "fails to do justice to tragedy's life-enhancing force" (SS 226). Time does not allow us, however, to attempt even a summary of his exceedingly complex treatment of this subject. Suffice it to say that Nietzsche's views have shaped all subsequent discussions of this issue (SS 272).

Albert Henrichs, to repeat the quotation given above, has written that "In undiluted form, Nietzsche has always been and still is, unacceptable to most classical scholars..."²⁵ But Henrichs goes on to argue that when "passed through the filter of more scrupulous and accredited intermediaries" such as Erwin Rohde, Jane Harrison, E.R. Dodds and Walter Otto, Nietzsche's ideas and "conceptual categories" are used by almost all students of Greek religion, tragedy and Dionysus today. Jane Harrison, by the way, called

herself a disciple of Nietzsche (SS 144) and F.M. Cornford called BT "a work of profound imaginative insight which left the scholarship of a generation toiling in the rear" (SS 126). In other words there can be no doubt about the massive influence exerted by BT on twentieth century scholarship in these areas to which one might add aesthetics.

BT is not easy to categorise, and there has been a good deal of controversy among scholars as to what exactly it is. For Nietzsche it was the first of the "centaurs" he expected to produce.²⁶ For his friend Rohde it was a "didactic poem" and belonged to the same genre as the works of Xenophanes and Empedocles (SS 193). Nietzsche agreed with this in his repudiation of BT published in 1886. He even said it should have been *sung*---he should have composed it as a poet (quoted in SS 188). Perhaps we should call it a prose poem. He also called it a manifesto (SS 91), and the style is definitely oracular. Wilamowitz objected to the introduction of the "evangelical style of the pulpit" into scholarship.²⁷ He later admitted that his mistake had been to treat the "work of a poet, of a prophet" as "the work of a scholar."²⁸ For Hazel Barnes BT is literary criticism.²⁹ For Silk and Stern the BT is a hybrid, a mixture of literature and science, of art and thought, (188) a kind of "art-thought invented *ad hoc*." (191?) I will argue that BT should be read as a myth, a philosophical myth, in fact. This is a possibility raised by Silk and Stern but immediately rejected because of the schemata Nietzsche sets forth (SS 191). Schematicization is not, however, incompatible with myth. Many myths have implicit schemata, as structural interpretations have shown. Mythopoeic man can think rationally and analytically; his reason and analysis are simply not differentiated from his emotions and intuitions. Thus myth, a synthesis of *mythos* and *logos*, is itself a centaur.

While there is no agreed upon definition of myth, most scholars would accept the following description which I have adapted from William Doty: Myths are "culturally important stories conveying by means of metaphoric and symbolic diction, graphic imagery and emotional conviction and participation the foundational accounts of the world and humankind's roles and status within it. Myths convey the values of a culture and often involve the intervention of suprahuman entities."³⁰

BT is clearly a story about birth, death and rebirth, a common type of myth. The birth, death, rebirth sequence is itself a so-called archetypal pattern. The Dionysiac gives birth to the Apollonian as Mother Earth produced Father Sky. The origins of the Dionysiac and

of Earth are not explained. They are simply there, presumably eternally there. The union of the Dionysiac and the Apollonian results in the birth of tragedy just as the incestuous union of Mother Earth and Father Sky resulted in the race of the Titans. Thus far we have theogony. Next tragedy is murdered and dismembered by Socratism in the persons of Euripides and Socrates. Here we are to think of tragedy as feminine (Melpomene is the muse of tragedy); hence this is not an Oedipal myth but an Oresteian one. Finally the myth raises the hope of a rebirth of tragedy, thanks to Wagner.

The very idea of seeking the origin or birth of a thing is characteristic of mythic thinking. Mircea Eliade, one of the greatest contemporary students of myth puts it this way: "knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant, and so on is equivalent to acquiring a magical power over them by which they can be controlled, multiplied or reproduced at will."³¹ BT is in fact an etiological myth, and thus Nietzsche having discovered the origin of tragedy, has the power, with the help of Wagner, to effect its rebirth.

In BT as in myth, the personages are not historical figures but archetypes. The Dionysiac and Apollonian are archetypes as are Homer and Archilochus and Euripides and Socrates (SS 153). By archetype I mean, in the words of Silk and Stern "a single, symbolic figure who sums up the whole drift of a movement, a whole constellation of forms and ideas; a figure capable of symbolizing its origin and its essence alike" (151).

It is the archetypes which give BT its special visual quality which is, according to some scholars, a characteristic of myths as it is of dreams.³² I have already quoted Else who said that "the BT does not present any new theory of the origin [of tragedy]; it simply visualizes, *visionalizes*, an outline of events suggested by Aristotle's *Poetics*."³³ It is also not difficult to see BT as a "golden age" myth; this type of myth also underlies the whole nineteenth century German infatuation with ancient Greece. Alternatively, taking a Freudian approach, BT could be seen as wish fulfilment on Nietzsche's part expressing his longing for wholeness and lost unity. According to Silk & Stern the most serious defect of BT is that Nietzsche "treats Greece as a single entity defined by its leading representatives, not as a multifarious collection of small states, each with its own propensities and peculiarities." (186) Again, this is typical of myth. Finally, since the Dionysiac and the Apollonian are not only artistic impulses but also psychological powers and cosmic forces, BT has different levels of meaning, another feature of myth.

It is, then, these mythic characteristics that give BT the peculiar power which so many readers have commented upon.

If my contention that BT is best viewed as a myth is correct, then it should function as a myth, and indeed it does, at least if one thinks Claude Levy-Strauss is right. According to Levy-Strauss the human mind has "a tendency to polarize experience, to divide it for purposes of understanding into sets of opposites, much as a binary computer does."³⁴ Examples would be life and death, good and evil, youth and old age, nature and culture and on and on. But as soon as these dichotomies are created, they cause anxiety. The purpose of myth then is to "mediate contradictions."³⁵ Mediate would appear to mean, at least etymologically, to find some middle ground between the opposites, perhaps by proposing a third alternative or perhaps by attempting a synthesis. This makes the contradiction bearable by "setting up pseudo-logical models by which the contradictions are resolved or rather palliated."³⁶ We humans are indeed perverse creatures. We first create dichotomies and then, because they make us anxious, we seek to overcome the oppositions and explain away the contradictions with made-up stories.

Turning to the BT with these ideas in mind, we see opposites and attempts to mediate them everywhere.

In the first place, the primary reason for the extraordinary admiration for and fascination with ancient Greece displayed by German scholars already in the 18th century was their conviction that the Greeks had an "integrity of experience" (SS) and life that was missing in the modern world where humans are alienated from God, from nature, and from one another. These various forms of alienation can be expressed as dichotomies such as man/God, man/nature, self/other. As a school boy in 1859 Nietzsche confessed that he had "an extraordinary craving for knowledge and universal culture" ---a kind of "instinct for wholeness" (SS 35). In BT, too, Nietzsche is clearly troubled (made anxious) by the gap between life and art, between the Dionysiac and the Apollonian which only tragedy can mediate. Nietzsche apparently believed that Germany could overcome the alienation and superficiality of modern life if she relearned "tragic cognition" from the Greeks (SS 52). Hence the need to study ancient Greece, and hence BT. Other dichotomies Nietzsche works with are logic vs. intuition, science vs. art, reality vs. illusion, unity vs. individuation, Homer and epic vs. Archilochus and lyric, Olympian vs chthonic, a pessimistic and therefore realistic view of life vs. an optimist, naive and rationalistic view.

In conclusion, then, looking upon BT as a myth, we should not ask if it is true or false---that is a question asked of theories. We should ask if it is alive or dead,³⁷ and it seems to me that it is alive and functioning. BT continues to be read and studied, and its readers continue to find new meaning. It triggers insights which, in my experience, is a characteristic of myths. As we attempt to evaluate it, therefore, we should keep in mind the words of Silk & Stern who said, "...BT is to be judged as much by quasi-artistic criteria as by those appropriate to classical scholarship and 'science'" (223) which is exactly what Nietzsche wanted.

Notes

1. M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche and Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), Chapter 1. See p. 403 n. 27 for bibliography.
2. G.F. Else, *The Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), p. 2.
3. *ibid.*, p. 12.
4. *ibid.*, p. 51 ff.
5. trans. by W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).
6. The first three come from W.G. Arnott, "Nietzsche's View of Greek Tragedy," *Arethusa*, 17 (1984), 135-149. I have added the fourth.
7. This summary follows both BT and Silk and Stern, (hereafter SS.) References to BT and SS will be given in the text henceforth.
8. Of course to say that individuation is the cause of evil and of suffering is simply to say that being born was the cause of our troubles, a trivial truth if ever there was one. Also, the "joyous hope" of "restored oneness" sounds like Freud's "death wish."
9. Wm. Calder, "The Wilamowitz-Nietzsche Struggle: New Documents and a Reappraisal," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 12 (1983), p. 233.
10. Quoted in J. H. Groth, "Wilamowitz-Moellendorf on Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, (1950), p. 188.
11. *op. cit.*, p. 10.
12. "Nietzsche and the Study of the Ancient World," in J.C. O'Flaherty *et al.*, *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1976), p. 9.
13. "Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: the Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), p. 224.
14. *op. cit.*, p. 146.
15. Else, p. 15.
16. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, ed., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), p. 158 s.v. Arion.
17. *ibid.*, p. 1510 s.v. Thespis.
18. O'Flaherty, pp. 9 ff.
19. *ibid.*, p. 9.
20. *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 148.

21. Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche, A Critical Life* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980s), p. 87. Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- 22 Philip Slater, *The Glory of Hera* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 36.
23. *ibid*.
24. John Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 99-100.
25. See note 13 *supra*.
26. Letter to his sister Elizabeth quoted in Hayman pp. 139-140.
27. Arnott, p. 136.
28. Calder, p. 251.
29. "Apotheosis and Deification," *Philosophy and Literature*, 1 (1976), p. 3.
30. *Mythography* (Univ. of Alabama Press, 1986), p. 11.
31. Quoted in Doty, p. 64.
32. This is contested by G.S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myth* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 283.
33. p.10.
34. Kirk, p. 81.
35. *ibid* p. 82.
36. *ibid*.
37. A. MacIntyre, "Myth," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*