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“Die Kunst in der Zeit der Arbeit“: Nietzsche on Acceleration and the Possibility of Cultural Transformation Through Art

Abstract: This chapter provides an examination of how Nietzsche relates the effects of the acceleration characteristic of modernity with an apparent impossibility of cultural transformation through art, in the wake of what he saw as the failure of the first *Festspiele* in Bayreuth. The Wagnerian idea of the public's profound need for art serves as the guiding thread of my analysis, as an idea that Nietzsche initially borrowed from the composer, but then revisits critically in the late 1870s. To evaluate the applicability of Nietzsche's critical analysis to today's context, I conclude with brief reflections on the effects of the technical developments in means of music distribution on how we now engage with art.

In the two volumes of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, when Nietzsche no longer believed in the regeneration of culture through the influence of the Wagnerian *Musikdrama*, he looked for reasons why his contemporaries had not been and seemingly could not be significantly transformed by art. An astute observer of his times, he singled out as a significant factor the general movement of acceleration characteristic of modernity. One of the main reasons that precluded his contemporaries from engaging with art in a way that would allow them to transform themselves, he suggested, was internalized demands of ever-increasing efficiency that clashed with the demands of “high” art. The work-oriented modern individual saw the demands of art as too high a cost of entry for the mere frivolity of distraction or play it received from it, as he sought to find in it a respite of sorts from his daily toiling. Most of the modern public, according to the Nietzsche of the late 1870s, knew only how to weigh art's value with the crude

scale of an aimless but tenacious preoccupation for efficiency and had become insensitive to what higher possibilities it could offer.

Nietzsche had long been acutely aware of the adverse effects of acceleration, but only now did they seem to him to entirely preclude the renewal of culture through art he had so strongly hoped for and tried to bring about in his Basel years. As he attempted, with his newly adopted historical method, to find the historical and psychological factors at play in this failure, he revisited a theme central to any theory of cultural transformation through art, namely, the existence of a certain receptivity for art in the members of the public. In his earlier texts, this receptivity took the form of a profound *need* for the art that would allow for this transformation. But for the Nietzsche of the late 1870s, who had earlier believed if not in the existence of this need, at least in the possibility of awakening it, it now seemed a mere historical phenomenon, the mark of a past stage of culture in which art could still play a significant role. Nietzsche's analysis, I would like to further argue, is still generally valid today, and can be of use to us if we wish to reflect on the effects of the cultural context of acceleration of modernity on our engagement with art and on the place that it may occupy in our lives.

In the following sections, I will first approach the theoretical groundings of Nietzsche's earlier hopes for art by mapping out the background of the idea of a need for art, starting with Wagner, with (and beyond) whom Nietzsche initially thought about the matter. I will then turn to the irremediable challenges posed by acceleration to the manifestation of a need for art, as Nietzsche describes them in *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* § 170. Finally, by looking at the case of music through the lens of the technical developments in its modes of diffusion since the late nineteenth century, I will offer some brief reflections on the applicability of Nietzsche's frame of analysis to the ways we relate or are made to relate to music in today's mediatic and artistic context.

1

Wagner's theoretical writings played a very important role in Nietzsche's thinking on art, even when he no longer supported the cause of Bayreuth. In the late 1870s, as he distanced himself from the composer and attempted to work out a new, more personal position on art as a cultural phenomenon, the questions that attracted his attention were still, for the most part, the very ones

that had dominated Wagner's reflections. After attempting to think with Wagner beyond Wagner in the fourth *Untimely Meditation* (Borchmeyer/Salaquarda 1994, p. 1211) and after the first Bayreuth festival had failed to live up to his ideal,¹ Nietzsche sought to understand the reasons for this failure, mostly by revisiting a number of central questions of Wagnerian aesthetics. In the fourth section of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, the critique of the (mostly) Schopenhauerian conception of genius served to recuse the metaphysical pretensions of artists—and were clearly directed towards the composer, who had explicitly appealed to this theory in his *Beethoven* (as had Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*). A parallel and equally important chain of thought in this section concerns the relation of artists to their public, and the capacity of their art to have a desirable effect on the public, this time contesting Wagner from the angle not of the representations surrounding his works and their creation, but of the very possibility of a practical efficiency of his art.

The engagement with the theme of the need for art in the supplements to *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* also belongs to this reevaluation of Wagner's grand promises of cultural and social transformation, seen from the vantage point of the disappointment that Bayreuth had been.² In *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, Wagner had used the idea of a natural need for art to ground his aesthetics of the Gesamtkunstwerk in fundamental human necessity.³ The ultimate form of art, Wagner's own *Musikdrama*, was born out of and answered to a primordial need for wholeness, both individual and communal. The work of art of the future was to accompany the social revolution, the return to a common life of simpler, "absichtlos[en]" and "unwillkürlich[en]" needs (Wagner 1983, p. 9), which did not lead to exploitation of the many by the few. Nietzsche, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, also viewed the existence of a deep need for art in the public as an essential condition of the transformative efficacy of tragedy in modern times.

¹ See the letter to Mathilde Maier, 06.08.1878, KGB II/5, Bf. 741 and NL 1878, KSA 8, 30[1].

² Nietzsche stresses (with insistent recourse to mountaineering metaphors) the importance of the *new perspective* gained from this experience in the notes of the summer of 1878 (mostly in the notes of the groups 27-30 in the Colli-Montinari edition), most notably in the tentative title of the book on Wagner he was then working on, "D e r n e u e U m b l i c k" (NL 1878, KSA 8, 29[31]). Goethe's poem "Harzreise im Winter", to which Nietzsche refers in NL 1878, KSA 8, 27[85], seems to have been a decisive inspiration (see also NL 1878, KSA 8, 30[117]).

³ On this idea, see the first section of *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, "Der Mensch und die Kunst im allgemeinen", and in particular p. 30: "Daß die *Kunst* aber nicht ein *künstliches* Produkt, – daß das Bedürfnis der Kunst nicht ein willkürlich hervorgebrachtes, sondern ein dem natürlichen, wirklichen und unentstellten Menschen ureigenes ist, – wer beweist dies schlagender, als eben jene Völker [*scil.* die Völker, die 'den normalen Menschen in sich begreifen, selbst der als rohst verschrien']?" For some helpful reflections on Wagner's complex idea of nature in the *Zürcher Schriften* and their justificatory role, see Stolzenberg 2018, especially p. 68.

The Greeks had needed the beauty of Apollonian art because of a vital need for the transfiguration of the painful knowledge born out of Dionysian experiences; similarly, the rebirth of tragic culture depended upon the return of such a need for art in modern, “alexandrine” culture. In fact, the transition between the two parts of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* hinges on this very idea: the historical analysis of tragedy of the first part and the speculations on its Wagnerian rebirth in the second are linked together by the figure of the “*musiktreibenden Sokrates*,” announcing the return of a “Kunstbedürftigkeit” in genius in a self-overcoming of sorts of Socratic optimism (GT 15-16; KSA 1, pp. 102-103).⁴

For both Nietzsche and Wagner, the satisfaction of this need for a higher art was the way towards the restoration of a lost unity on the model of attic Greek culture through a rebirth of tragedy. But differences in their anthropological perspectives ensured that this hope was more complicated for Nietzsche than it was for Wagner. In Wagner’s case, with the essentially human, natural need for art, a certain receptivity for his own works, the guarantee of their transformative effect and of their effectivity as a remedy for the diseases of modernity, was conveniently already there in the *Volk*, as if preserved from history. The young Nietzsche, as much as he believed in Wagner’s capacity to transform culture, never could adhere to this “idyllic” view of human nature, according to which humanity could be restored to a long-lost state of harmony, which it had somehow retained, intact, under the veneer of civilization.⁵ In the writings of the Basel period, Nietzsche made clear that the modern genius who wanted to have a transformative effect on culture through the effects of his art on the public also had to communicate the conditions of this need for art. No unchanged, essential need for works of art was already available in the public at large, as a lever for cultural change: it had, first, to be reawakened by Dionysian experiences. In the case of the modern public, who kept the problematic character of existence at bay with its comfortable confidence in its “Afterbildung” (HL 6; KSA 1, p. 295), the tragic work of art itself had to awaken this experience. And, as such, the *Kunstbedürftigkeit* of

⁴ Significantly, *Kunstbedürftigkeit* occurs both in GT 15, the last section of the first part, and in GT 16, the first section of the second, and nowhere else in the book.

⁵ This was in fact something for which he reproached modern opera: “Hier sehen wir in das innerlichste Werden dieser recht eigentlich modernen Kunstgattung, der Oper: ein mächtiges Bedürfniss erzwingt sich hier eine Kunst, aber ein Bedürfniss unaesthetischer Art: die Sehnsucht zum Idyll, der Glaube an eine urvorzeitliche Existenz des künstlerischen und guten Menschen.” (GT 19; KSA 1, p. 122) This “need of an unaesthetic sort” directed towards art is a moral one (cf. for example GT 22; KSA 1, pp. 143-144), which Nietzsche rejects as alien to authentic, Greek(-inspired) tragedy (see the introduction to the course “Einleitung in die Tragödie des Sophocles” from 1870, KGW II/3, pp. 7-10).

the public did not precede the experience of tragedy but was to be born out of (and satisfied by) the Wagnerian *Musikdrama*: “So ist mit der Wiedergeburt der Tragödie auch der ästhetische Zuhörer wieder geboren” (GT 22; KSA 1, p. 143), Nietzsche writes in a decisive passage. The need for tragedy would emerge as a *result* of the renewal of tragedy by Wagner. In this way, Nietzsche, it seems, hoped more of Wagner than Wagner itself; it was probably unavoidable that he would quickly be disappointed.

2

In both parts of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, the question of the need for art of the public becomes of signal importance to the description of practices of reception and to the critical engagement with Wagner’s theory of art. The existence of a need for a higher art in the modern world and even its future possibility are not a given anymore, and Nietzsche is looking for new ways in which art could still have elevating cultural effects, by considering the effects it has and can have in the present. In both volumes of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche approaches the need for art as a wholly historical datum, influenced by culture and highly dynamic. And, importantly, there does not seem to be any *one* fundamental human experience (such as that of the Dionysian) that could guarantee the reemergence of the need for a higher art capable of transforming culture. This shift, then, implies a radical change in how Nietzsche reflects on art in relation to culture. The hope for a higher, unitary culture cannot anymore be paired with a corresponding and more or less obscured need for higher art that persisted in humanity (at least *in potentia*) since art’s highest manifestation in classical Greece. It would be a grave “Mangel an historischem Sinn” to believe in such permanence in the character of human beings (MA 2; KSA 2, p. 24). Moreover, without the existence of this need so assured, Nietzsche cannot take his departure from works of art that should both awaken and satisfy it and *then* look for ways to bring the public to it, as he had attempted to do by supporting the enterprise of Bayreuth. The proof was in fact in Bayreuth’s proverbial pudding: the first *Festspiele*, the performance of the entire *Ring des Nibelungen*, had not had the promised effect on the festival’s public, and this posed grave problems for Nietzsche’s faith in the positive effects art’s powers could have. Wagner, while a great artist, did not hold the keys to a new culture anymore in his

eyes.⁶ This reconsideration of the appropriate, effective “*treatment*” for culture is, perhaps even more than the differing ideals for the *resulting culture*, the divergence that made further association with the composer impossible.⁷

Disillusioned with the capacity for great art to transform the public in order to make it receptive to its highest effects, Nietzsche’s interest turned to the public as it existed, with its needs and practices. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, Nietzsche’s view of the public is in some ways more generous than that of many other theorists of popular art. According to him, the public never receives art passively, but is always looking for something in it, engaging with works of art according to certain preexisting and mostly extra-artistic needs. Certain lived experiences create needs for specific types of effects, and art is used by the members of the public to satisfy these needs.⁸ Consequently, the public is selective, and does not merely absorb just anything that is graciously handed to it. Or, more precisely, it does not merely undergo the effect of a work of art but plays an active role in its reception. Whatever is handed to it, it uses for its own ends. And since engaging with art is a sort of self-medicating, Nietzsche, by showing his readers the diseases of which art is meant to alleviate the symptoms and by investigating their etiology, puts his readers face to face with their dependence upon art in order to encourage them to look elsewhere for solace.⁹

The main reason why we should renounce art, according to the Nietzsche of the late 1870s, is because it is mostly used as a “palliative”, in that it provides new interpretations meant to make

⁶ See again the letter to Mathilde Maier, 06.08.1878, KGB II/5, Bf. 741, where he writes that he remains a supporter of Wagner, but that he is now, rather than an “unbedingten”, a “bedingter” supporter.

⁷ As such, I would like to suggest that approaching the disagreement between Nietzsche and Wagner in the late 1870s as being about their diverging positions on the *effectivity of art as a means that may bring about a (positive) cultural change* in addition to being about *the role art would play in a higher culture* (as for example in Salaquarda 1999, p. 140) allows us to better understand Nietzsche’s persisting ambivalence towards Wagner, whose art he consistently sees both as a dangerous force working against culture *and* as an unsurpassed aesthetic achievement. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, art still has an important, if not dominant, role in Nietzsche’s portrait of a future “höheren vielsaitigeren Cultur” (MA 281; KSA 2, p. 230), but it is thoroughly rejected as the principal means of bringing about this higher culture in virtue of its lack of effectivity. “Hätten wir selbst die Kunst, — wo haben wir den Einfluss, i r g e n d e i n e n Einfluss der Kunst?”, he writes in MA 212 (KSA 2, p. 174). For Nietzsche, high art as *high art* exists in a sphere separated from world history in virtue of its lack of resonance in the public, but it is not “schuldlos und nicht blutbefleckt” as Schopenhauer would have it (Schopenhauer 1874, p. 80), and instead has a host of unintended and undesirable effects.

⁸ As a condition of access to a given work of art’s import, this is to be distinguished from the competence of the public as a condition of “adequate” reception, which is more often discussed in the philosophy of art. The two questions are complementary for Nietzsche, as he considers artistic competence to be a condition of the development of a need for art.

⁹ This (relative) confidence in the freeing power of knowledge is typical of the “enlightened” Nietzsche of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* – and is short-lived.

difficult experiences easier to bear, but in doing so impedes us from tackling the underlying problematic situations (NL 1876, KSA 8, 23[148]). An important goal of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is to encourage the readers to abandon all passing means of relief, so that dissatisfaction may lead them to confront the causes of their ills (MA 148; KSA 2, p. 143 and NL 1876, KSA 8, 16[7]). One such “disease” that led those who suffered from it to turn to art for relief is the disease that was brought about by the acceleration characteristic of modernity. It is first worth noting that Nietzsche was not wholly critical of acceleration. While he was acutely aware of both the technical and lived acceleration in his times, his attitude was one of relative ambivalence; and as with most cultural phenomena, he did not want to reject it wholesale, but hoped to harness its power in his struggle for higher culture.

With this out of the way, let me now turn to § 170 of *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, titled “Die Kunst in der Zeit der Arbeit.” The text begins thus:

Wir haben das Gewissen eines arbeitsamen Zeitalters: diess erlaubt uns nicht, die besten Stunden und Vormittage der Kunst zu geben, und wenn diese Kunst selber die grösste und würdigste wäre. Sie gilt uns als Sache der Musse, der Erholung: wir weihen ihr die R e s t e unserer Zeit, unserer Kräfte. (WS 170; KSA 2, p. 623)

Nietzsche argues here that the modern individual has incorporated an all-consuming concern with temporal efficiency, which leaves no place for activities that do not produce fast and tangible results. In the context of the “ungeheur[en] Beschleunigung des Lebens” (MA 282; KSA 2, p. 231) born out of the ever-increasing demands for speed of the “Maschinen-Zeitalters” (WS 278; KSA 2, p. 674), no time should be wasted anymore on an art that demands great effort and promises seemingly little in return. The hard workers, be they artisans, scholars (MA 284; KSA 2, p. 284), or else, instead feel the need for an art that is in the service of their concern for efficiency, an art which would allow them to rest and to temporarily divert their attention from the object of their daily toiling, so as to more readily return to it afterwards. To fulfill this demand of the public for distraction, the artist must have recourse to the “gewaltsamsten Erregungsmittel[n]” of what Nietzsche calls “kleine Kunst”: “Betäubungen, Berausungen, Erschütterungen, Thränenkrämpfe” (WS 170; KSA 2, p. 624). And the artists, even the great ones, provide these, because they must: if they did not adapt their

art to the public's needs, however trivial, art would not find a place in contemporary culture and would be in danger of disappearing. By disguising their art as an object of distraction, they are able to preserve their relationship with their public and are in a position to (eventually) contribute to its artistic education. Other sorts of needs for art also persist for those who are not under the spell of this "consciousness of an industrious time". The "feineren Unzufriedenen" (VM 169; KSA 2, p. 447), unburdened by work, engage with art more readily, but do not have a need for what great art has to offer either. These "Gewissenlosen und Lässigen" (WS 170; KSA 2, p. 623) turn to art to forget themselves, and in hopes of a pessimistic transfiguration, which would offer them a reinterpretation of their faults as those of the world, in order to soothe their dissatisfaction. Art "soll ihnen für Stunden und Augenblicke das Unbehagen, die Langeweile, das halbschlechte Gewissen verscheuchen und womöglich den Fehler ihres Lebens und Charakters als Fehler des Welten-Schicksals in's Grosse umdeuten" (VM 169; KSA 2, p. 447). As for the actual need for art of the *Volk*, upon which Wagner's artistic-revolutionary hopes rested, Nietzsche insists that it is nothing to write home about, seeing as it is merely a need for "bad" art. "Nur bei A u s n a h m e - M e n s c h e n giebt es jetzt ein Kunstbedürfniss in h o h e m S t i l e" (VM 169; KSA 2, p. 446), he suggests, but it seems dubious that this statement concerns anyone that is not a "genius." As such, the capacity of art to effect any sort of cultural transformation by affecting the public seems blocked in all of its possible directions. It is instrumentalized by different tendencies, none of which aspire to use it as a springboard towards something higher, and it merely helps the public avert its gaze from the situations that are at the root of its discomfort. It is in the service of the status quo, and as such, according to Nietzsche, a danger for humanity's development in his times.

3

Do Nietzsche's reflections on the kinds of needs that motivate us to engage with art bear on the present day, especially after the changes brought about by the "digital revolution"? How far along can Nietzsche accompany us in our understanding of our relation to art, given the massive technological and social differences between our times and his? For the rest of this paper, I would like to take a look at a few representative examples, relating to music in particular, to attempt a modest answer.

The movement of acceleration that Nietzsche witnessed in his times is still in full swing today; this much is not too controversial. With the “digital revolution”, a great leap in speed has been accomplished, the experience of which has perhaps made us feel with greater acuity effects of acceleration to which we had become accustomed (Rosa 2013, p. 44). But fundamentally, this conscience of the hard worker of which Nietzsche spoke, one of the driving forces of this movement of acceleration, is still *our* conscience. In this sense, it seems Nietzsche’s diagnosis of his times should still be applicable to ours, at least in part. To question this applicability of his analyses to contemporary experience, I suggest we take a brief look at effective practices of engagement with music in the present day as made possible by developments in the means of music distribution.

Ways of relating to art are largely influenced by the technical means that allow us access to it. Nietzsche’s own musical education, for instance, had much to do with the technological developments of his times regarding the speed of production and distribution of sheet music. The *Klavierauszüge* (i.e., in this case, vocal scores) with the help of which he initially familiarized himself with the works of Wagner¹⁰ were part of a wide commercialization of music meant for a growing middle class, which was made possible by important developments in musical typography.¹¹ At the time, piano reductions were often the only way for the public (or even sometimes for musician) to get to know a wider repertoire (Loos 1983, p. 25) and they sold many more copies than full scores.¹² Developments in music distribution continued with impressive haste in the late 19th and in the mid-20th century, with the apparition of means of distributing recorded music, from wax cylinders to vinyl discs, and the parallel development of electrical broadcast apparatus (Sheridan et al. 2003). By dispensing with the need for the presence of performing musicians, whether in the concert hall or in the private sphere, recorded music could integrate daily life with much more ease. This opened new avenues for the use of music as a tool

¹⁰ See EH, “Klug”, 6: “Von dem Augenblick an, wo es einen Klavierauszug des Tristan gab – mein Compliment, Herr von Bülow! –, war ich Wagnerianer.” (KSA 6, p. 289) Nietzsche played the reduction (for two hands) of *Tristan und Isolde* with Gustav Krug in early 1862 (Janz 1978, pp. 90-92). He also wrote a short (critical) review of the piano reduction of the *Walküre* in 1866 (KGW I/4, 43[1]).

¹¹ Namely, the development of mosaic types from the second half of the 18th century. See Boorman et al. 2001, esp. pp. 337-339.

¹² Cf. Loos 1983, pp. 12-13 for the numbers for most of Wagner’s operas. Nietzsche’s own music library gives us a glimpse of the practices of the time: of all the sheet music inventoried in *Nietzsches persönliche Bibliothek* (pp. 700-713), there is only seven volumes of pieces for the piano; apart from a few full scores (six in total), most of the music Nietzsche owned was made up of vocal music with piano accompaniment (44 items) and of piano reductions of a variety of orchestral and vocal works (23 items).

in the service of efficiency. Recorded music could now be broadcast in a variety of prosaic context with the aim of harnessing its notorious powers of influence, with limited interest – or, in some case, without interest – for its artistic import. One of the best-known attempts at producing music with exclusive concern for its effect is perhaps that of the makers of “Muzak”, music meant to make the most of the possibilities offered by music broadcast to support and boost productivity in the workplace. With an approach that strived to be “scientific”, the makers of this mood-enhancing music worked in conjunction with psychologists to create what they called the “Stimulus Progression Curve”, a pattern of composition meant to stimulate the workers just enough, so that they were neither bored nor made too excited by the music (Anderson 2015, p. 822).

Muzak has little to do with any need for art in the public, seeing as it is instead an influence exerted from the outside on the working individual. It might not even have much to do with art, since it tries to pass unnoticed as part of the work environment.¹³ Conscious engagement with it is not desirable, as it would distract from the task at hand; instead of striving to imitate nature and suggest a reconfiguration of its elements, Muzak strives to be seen *as* nature, to make inapparent its artificial, artifactual character. As such, it does not present the “public” (if we may call it so) with vital virtualities in its reorganization of appearance,¹⁴ but adds to the inert weight of the present. Nevertheless, it is representative of certain important developments made possible by new technologies of music distribution: music could now be used in very close proximity or even simultaneously with the experiences it is meant to “support”, and it could be more closely adapted to the listener’s circumstances. As means of distributing music developed through the 20th century and up to now, available recorded music progressively became much more varied¹⁵ and, importantly, useable in the privacy of one’s own home or through one’s portable device. Individuals who turned to music as something to numb their discomfort could now use it with increased efficiency: it was possible to obtain almost instantly and required overall less time to “consume.” With music listening no longer obeying concert schedules, it could be used before work, in order to prime one’s mood for upcoming affectively demanding work situations

¹³ “Music is Art, Muzak is science”, touted an advertising slogan (quoted in Anderson 2015, p. 823).

¹⁴ See Reschke 2020, p. 91, who suggests that, for the Nietzsche of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* and of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, “[die Kunst kann] immer in verstörender Weise imaginieren und (be-)schreiben [...], wie es anders sein könnte.”

¹⁵ Most recently, through the “long tail effect” made possible by new modes of online distribution. On some effects of this development on contemporary music, see Lehmann 2012, pp. 66-69.

(DeNora 1999). Similarly, music streaming platforms now have a large offering of mood-themed playlists, some of which are explicitly tailored to the needs of workers (Anderson 2015). More recently, as spiritual successors of sorts to Muzak but marketed towards individuals, many applications are offering mood-conducive, AI-generated “wellness music”. One of the most well-known among them promises among other possible benefits a “7x increase in focus, maintained 95% of listening time” with the help of its “personalized soundscapes”, which use the “[major] pentatonic scale and pure intonation to create simple sounds that are both pleasant and physiologically natural”, and are supposed to adapt to the weather and to the user’s heart rate and motion.¹⁶

These few examples show how music as a form of self-medicating in the service of work, with the developments of the technologies used to broadcast (or narrowcast) it and even to “create” it, has transformed into something quite different from what Nietzsche had in mind or could envision. But his main point seemingly still stands: one of the most widespread ways of engaging with art, perhaps even more now than then, is in the service of our attempt at satisfying the demands of a culture of ever-increasing speed and efficiency. This has only been made more efficient and more obvious with developing technologies. We are now able to expose ourselves simultaneously to the poison and to the remedy, to the unpleasant or painful experience of relentless work and to the soothing power of the music of our choosing. This, in a way, calls to mind the descriptions of the dual tragic artwork of *Der Geburt der Tragödie*. But work, unlike the Dionysian, is not in itself an experience that brings meaning despite its unpleasant side: the suffering it can cause is not necessarily accompanied by a joyous transfiguration of our view of ourselves or of our relationship to the world. Here, what receives compensation does not possess any intrinsic value for life; instead of opening new existential avenues, the above-described uses of music tend to hinder the apparition of new possibilities of life, in favor of a drive to activity within the confines of preexisting norms.¹⁷ The end result is more akin to that “philistine” engagement with art Nietzsche criticizes in the first of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, where the public uses art to attain homogeneity without true unity and strives for functionality alone

¹⁶ See “Endel: The Science of Endel”. The slip from the “purity” of the untempered scale, made up of pitches naturally occurring together as part of a harmonic series, to the “physiologically natural” character of the sounds and of their effects is typical of the often crude naturalism of these “scientific” approaches aiming to instrumentalize music in the service of productivity.

¹⁷ Compare Nietzsche’s comment on the “t h ä t i g e n M e n s c h e n” in MA 283, who are only “als Gattungswesen tätig, aber nicht als ganz bestimmte einzelne und einzige Menschen” (KSA 2, p. 231).

without following the arts' guiding thread towards something greater. Art, or at least music, is still mostly perceived through the lens of our "Wahnsinn der Bewegung" (NL 1876, KSA 8, 17[54]), and this tendency to use it in the service of efficiency is ours as much if not more as it was the public's of Nietzsche's time.

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