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ESSAYS

Edited by **Walter Hinderer**
and **Daniel O. Dahlstrom**

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leads knowledge out into the broad daylight of common sense, and transforms a monopoly of the schools into the common possession of human society as a whole. In the kingdom of taste even the mightiest genius must divest itself of its majesty, and stoop in all humility to the mind of a little child. Strength must allow itself to be bound by the Graces, and the lion have its defiance curbed by the bridle of a Cupid. In return, taste throws a veil of decorum over those physical desires that, in their naked form, affront the dignity of free beings; and, by a delightful illusion of freedom, conceals from us our degrading kinship with matter. On the wings of taste even that art that must cringe for payment can lift itself out of the dust; and, at the touch of her wand, the fetters of serfdom fall away from the lifeless and the living alike. In the aesthetic state everything—even the tool that serves—is a free citizen, having equal rights with the noblest; and the mind, which would force the patient mass beneath the yoke of its purposes, must here first obtain its assent. Here, therefore, in the realm of aesthetic semblance, we find that ideal of equality fulfilled that the enthusiast would fain see realized in substance. And if it is true that it is in the proximity of thrones that fine breeding comes most quickly and most perfectly to maturity, would one not have to recognize in this, as in much else, a kindly dispensation that often seems to be imposing limits upon man in the real world, only in order to spur him on to realization in an ideal world?

But does such a state of aesthetic semblance really exist? And if so, where is it to be found? As a need, it exists in every finely attuned soul; as a realized fact, we are likely to find it, like the pure church and the pure republic, only in some few chosen circles, where conduct is governed, not by some soulless imitation of the manners and morals of others, but by the aesthetic nature we have made our own; where men make their way, with undismayed simplicity and tranquil innocence, through even the most involved and complex situations, free alike of the compulsion to infringe the freedom of others in order to assert their own, as of the necessity to shed their dignity in order to manifest grace.

Translated by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson
and L. A. Willoughby

On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*

There are moments in our lives when we extend a kind of love and tender respect toward nature in plants, minerals, animals, and landscapes, as well as to human nature in children, in the customs of country folk and the primitive world. We do this, not because it makes us feel good and not even because it satisfies our intellect or taste (in both cases the reverse can often occur), but merely *because it is nature*. Every more refined human being not utterly devoid of feeling experiences this when he wanders about in the open, when he resides in the country or lingers at the monuments of ancient times, in short, whenever in the midst of man-made contexts and situations he is taken aback by the sight of nature in its simplicity. It is this interest, often elevated to a need, that lies at the bottom of our many fondnesses for flowers and animals, for simple gardens, for walks, for the land and its inhabitants, for many an artifact of remote antiquity, and the like (pro-

*On Naive and Sentimental Poetry first appeared as a complete text in the second part of *Kleinere prosaische Schriften* (Leipzig: Crusius, 1800, pp. 43–76). The text was originally published in three successive issues of *Die Horen*. The first part *Über das Naive* appeared on November 24, 1795 (*Die Horen*, 4, nr. 11, pp. 3–216); the second part *Die sentimentalischen Dichter* toward the end of December (*Die Horen*, 4, nr. 12); and the final part *Beschluß der Abhandlung über naive und sentimentalische Dichter nebst einigen Bemerkungen einer charakteristischen Unterschied unter den Menschen betreffend* on January 22, 1796 (*Die Horen*, 5, nr. 1).

vided that no predilection or any other serendipitous interest comes into play here). This sort of interest in nature takes place, however, only under two conditions. It is absolutely necessary, first, that the object instilling this interest in us be *natural* or at least be considered by us to be natural, and, second, that it be *naive* (in the widest sense of the term), that is to say, nature must contrast with art and put it to shame. The moment the latter condition is joined to the former, and not before, nature becomes something naive.

Regarded in this way, nature is for us nothing but the uncoerced existence, the subsistence of things on their own, being there according to their own immutable laws.

This image is absolutely necessary if we are to take an interest in the sorts of phenomena mentioned above. If somehow by means of the most perfect sort of deception one could give an artificial flower the look of being natural, [414] if one could press the imitation of the naive in culture to a point where the illusion was complete, then the discovery that it is an imitation would utterly destroy the feeling I have been talking about.* On the basis of these considerations it becomes clear that this manner of enjoying nature is not aesthetic, but moral, for it is communicated by an idea and not immediately produced by observation. It is also in no way directed at the beauty of the forms of things. What else is it about a humble flower, a brook, a mossy rock, the chirping of birds, the humming of bees, and the like, that by itself pleases us so much? What else could even give them a claim to our love? It is not these objects, it is an idea portrayed by them that we cherish in them. We treasure the silent creativity of life in them, the fact that they act serenely on their own, being there according to their own laws; we cherish that inner necessity, that eternal oneness with themselves.

They *are* what we *were*; they are what we *should become* once

*Kant, to my knowledge the first person to begin reflecting on this phenomenon, recalls that if we were to find the song of the nightingale perfectly imitated by a human and if, completely moved by it, we were to give ourselves up to this impression, all our pleasure would disappear with the destruction of this illusion. See the chapter "On The Intellectual Interest in the Beautiful" in the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Anyone who has learned to wonder at the author only as a great thinker will be delighted to find here a trace of his heart and on the basis of this discovery to convince himself of the high philosophical calling of this man (a calling absolutely requiring the combination of both properties).

more. We were nature like them, and our culture should lead us along the path of reason and freedom back to nature. Thus they depict at once our lost childhood, something that remains ever dearest to us, and for this reason they fill us with a certain melancholy. Because at the same time they portray our supreme perfection in an ideal sense, they transport us into a state of sublime emotion.

Yet their perfection is not something they have deserved, since it is not the result of a decision on their part. Hence they afford us the utterly [415] distinctive pleasure of being models for us without putting us to shame. They surround us with a constant theophany, though one that is more exhilarating than blinding. What constitutes their character is exactly what ours lacks to be perfect. What distinguishes us from them is exactly what they lack to be divineline. We are free and what they are is necessary; we alter, they remain one. Yet only if both are combined with one another—only if the will freely adheres to the law of necessity and reason maintains its rule in the face of every change in the imagination, only then does the divine or the ideal emerge. Hence in *them* we forever see what eludes us, something we must struggle for and can hope to approach in an endless progress, even though we never attain it. In *ourselves* we see an advantage that they lack, something that they either could never participate in at all, as in the case of beings devoid of reason, or can participate in only inasmuch as they proceed down the same path that *we* did, as in the case of children. Accordingly they afford us the sweetest sort of delight in the idea of our humanity, although they necessarily humble us as far as any *specific state* of our humanity is concerned.

Since this interest in nature is founded upon an idea, it is able to reveal itself only to minds receptive to ideas, that is to say, moral minds. Most people by far only affect that interest, and the universality of this sentimental taste in our times, expressing itself (especially since the appearance of certain writings) in maudlin journeys, gardens, strolls, and other penchants of this sort, is in no way a proof of the universality of this way of feeling. Still, nature will always have something of this effect even on the most callous individual. For the *potential* for morality, common to all people, is all that is needed to produce this effect and we all, without distinction, are driven to the contemplation of *this idea*, despite

the tremendous distance between our *deeds* and nature's simplicity and truth. This sensitivity to nature expresses itself in the most universal manner and in a particularly powerful fashion when it is occasioned by those objects, for example, children and primitive peoples, that are more closely connected to us, [416] placing in sharper relief for us a retrospective of ourselves and what is *unnatural* in us. People err if they believe that it is merely the image of helplessness that at certain moments makes us dwell on children with so much tenderness. That may perhaps be the case for those who would never feel anything but their own superiority in the face of weakness. However, the feeling I am talking about (that takes place only in quite distinctive moral moods and is not to be confused with the feeling stirred in us by the joyful activity of children) humbles more than it promotes self-love. Indeed, if along the way any advantage comes up for consideration, it is at least not on our side. We are moved with such emotion, not because we look down on the child from the heights of our power and perfection, but rather because we *look up* from our own *limitedness*, inseparable as it is from the *determination* we acquired at some point in time, to the boundless *determinability* in the child and to its pure innocence, and our feelings at such a moment are too visibly mixed with a certain melancholy for this source to be mistaken. In the child are exhibited the *potential* and the *calling*, in us their *fulfillment*, and the latter always remains infinitely behind that potential and that calling. The child is thus for us a realization of the ideal, not, of course, the fulfilled ideal, but the projected one. So it is in no way the representation of its neediness and limitations that moves us; completely to the contrary, it is the representation of its pure and free power, its integrity, its infiniteness, that does so. Consequently, for a person of moral substance and sensitivity a child will be a *holy* object, an object, namely, that by virtue of the magnificence of an idea overwhelms anything magnificent in experience. Whatever this object may lose in the judgment of the understanding [*Verstand*], it gains in rich measure in the judgment of reason [*Vernunft*].

Out of precisely this contradiction between the judgment of reason and that of the understanding there emerges the quite unique phenomenon of those mixed feelings awakened in us by the *naive* manner of thinking. [417] It combines *childlike* with *childish* sim-

pleness [*Einfalt*]. Through childish simpleness a weakness is exposed to the understanding, producing that smile by which we let our (*theoretical*) superiority be known. However, as soon as we have reason to believe that this childish simpleness is at the same time childlike, and that as a consequence it is not a lack of understanding or ability but rather a loftier (*practical*) strength, a heart full of innocence and truth that leads it, on the basis of an inner grandeur, to forsake the assistance art can provide, then that triumph of the understanding is superseded, and that belittling of the child's simplemindedness turns into wonder at its simplicity [*Einfachheit*]. We feel ourselves compelled to respect the object that we smiled about earlier and, since we cast a glance back at ourselves at the same time, we also cannot avoid feeling the need to complain that we are not like that. In this way there emerges the quite unique phenomenon of a feeling in which cheerful patronizing, respect, and melancholy flow together.* For naïveté it is neces-

*In his "Remarks on the Analytic of the Sublime" (*Critique of Judgment*, page 228 [of the second, 1793 edition]) Kant also distinguishes these three sorts of ingredients in the feeling of the naive, but he gives a different explanation of them. "Something from both (the animal feeling of pleasure and the spiritual feeling of respect) are found together in naïveté that is the outbreak of the uprightness originally natural to humanity over against the art of dissembling that has become second nature. People laugh at the simplicity that does not yet understand how to pretend and still they also delight in the simplicity of nature that thwarts art in this respect. People would expect the commonplace custom of the artificial expression, carefully composed for show, and lo and behold it is the uncorrupted, innocent nature that they did not at all expect to find and that is revealed by someone who did not have the slightest intention of doing so. This sudden transformation of that beautiful, but false show (that usually means so very much in our judgment) into nothing, the exposure, as it were, of the rogue in us for what it is—this puts the mind in motion in two opposite directions that give a therapeutic jolt to the body. The fact, however, that something infinitely better than all the customs that people have taken on, that is to say, the fact that the purity of the manner of thinking (or at least the potential for that purity) has not been utterly extinguished in human nature, mixes seriousness and esteem into this play of the power of judgment. Yet, because the phenomenon lasts only a short time and the veil of the art of dissembling is quickly drawn again, there is also in it a mixture of pity, a tender emotion, that can be playfully combined quite well with such a good-hearted laughter and in fact usually is. At the same time this pity usually compensates for the embarrassment on the part of the individual who provides the material for the embarrassment by not yet being wise in the ways of men." I confess that this manner of explanation does not completely satisfy me and especially for this reason, that it maintains something about the naive in general that is at most true of one species of it, namely, the naïveté of surprise, of which I will speak later. Of course, it makes us *laugh* if someone in his naïveté *exposes himself*, and in many cases this laughter flows from

sary that nature be victorious over [418] art,* whether this happens against the person's knowledge and will or with full consciousness of it. In the former case it is the amusing naïveté of *surprise*, in the latter case the moving naïveté of *character*.

In the case of the naïveté of surprise, the person must be *morally* capable of denying nature. In the case of the naïveté of character, the person is not permitted to be morally capable of doing so, though we may not think the person *physically* incapable, if he is to strike us as naive. Thus the actions and prattle of children provide us with an unadulterated impression of naïveté, only as long [419] as we are not reminded of their incapacity for art and in general only take notice of the contrast between their naturalness and the artificiality in us. Naïveté is a *childlikeness, where it is no longer expected*, and precisely for that reason it cannot be attributed to actual childhood in the strictest sense.

However, in both cases, that of the naïveté of surprise as well as that of the naïveté of character, nature must be right and art wrong.

Only by virtue of this latter feature is the concept of the naive rendered complete. Passion is also natural, and the rule of propriety is something artificial, yet the victory of passion over propriety is anything but naive. On the other hand, if the same passion wins the day over affectation, over a false sort of propriety, over deception, then we have no misgivings about calling it naive.† Thus it

a foregoing expectation that fails to materialize. But even the naïveté of the noblest sort, naïveté of character, always arouses a *smile* that is hardly based on some expectation that has come to nothing. Instead it is only to be explained generally by the contrast between some specific behavior and the forms of conduct that are assumed and expected. I also doubt whether the pity intermingling in our feelings when confronted with naïveté of the latter sort is meant for the naive person and not rather for ourselves or rather for humanity at large, on whose demise we are reminded on such an occasion. It is all too obvious that, in the ordinary course of the world, uprightness is threatened less by physical evil than by a moral grief that necessarily has some more noble object. This object can be indeed none other than the loss of truth and simplicity in humanity.

*Perhaps I should have said with utter brevity "*the truth over deception*." However, the concept of the naive seems to me still to include something more, since a similar feeling is stirred in us by the simplicity in general that wins out over affectation, and the natural freedom that wins out over stiffness and constraint.

†A child is naughty if, due to craving, thoughtlessness, impetuosity, it violates the dictates of a good upbringing. But it is naive if, due to a free and healthy nature,

is necessary that nature triumph over art, not through the blind force of its *dynamic magnitude*, but rather through the form of its *moral magnitude*. In short, it is necessary that it carry the day not as a matter of *neediness*, but as a matter of *inner necessity*. Not the insufficiency but rather the *illegitimacy* of art must have given nature its victory. For the insufficiency is a lack, and nothing that springs from a lack can engender respect. To be sure, in the case of the naïveté of surprise nature is always made known by the superior force of the passion and a *lack* of reflection. [420] But this lack and that superior force are by no means what constitutes the naïveté. Instead, they merely provide the occasion for nature to *follow unencumbered its own moral constitution*, namely, the law of *harmony*.

The naïveté of surprise can only occur in a human being and only insofar as the human being at that moment no longer is part of nature in its purity and innocence. It presupposes a will that is not in accord with what nature does on its own. Such an [unknowingly naive] person will be alarmed at himself if this is brought to his attention, while the naive *character*, by contrast, will wonder at people and their astonishment. In the case of the naïveté of surprise, therefore, since it is not the personal and moral character, but simply the natural character, set free by passion, that acknowledges the truth, we do not reckon this uprightness to the person's credit and our laughter is warranted mockery, uninhibited by any personal esteem for him or her. However, since here it is still a matter of the uprightness of nature breaking through the veil of falsehood, a loftier sort of satisfaction is combined with the malicious delight at having caught someone by surprise. For nature, in contrast to affectation, and truth, in contrast to deceit, must always stir respect. Thus, too, we feel an actually moral pleasure in regard

it dispenses with the overly affected manners characteristic of a fatuous upbringing, the stiff posturing of the dance-master, and so on. The very same thing takes place in the case of the naive when things human are transposed onto things devoid of reason (though this is in no way the proper use of the term). No one will find the sight naive, if weeds get the upper hand in a poorly attended garden. But there is certainly something naive at hand if the painstaking work of the shears in a French garden is destroyed by the wild growth of outstretching branches. Thus it is not at all naive if a trained horse, because of a natural clumsiness, performs its lesson badly; yet there is something naive about its forgetting the lesson because of a natural freedom.

to the naïveté of surprise, although it is not about a moral character.* [421]

In the case of naïveté of surprise we, of course, always have respect for *nature*, because we must respect the truth. In the case of naïveté of character, on the other hand, we respect the *person* and for that reason we do not merely enjoy a moral pleasure, but also experience this pleasure in regard to a moral object. In the former as in the latter case nature is *right* in that it speaks the truth. However, in the latter case it is not merely that nature is right, but also that the person is *honorable*. In the first case the uprightness of nature always embarrasses the person because the person acts involuntarily; in the second case it always brings credit to the person, provided that what the person expresses would have disgraced him or her.

We consider someone to have a naive character if in making judgments about things he overlooks their artificial and affected relations and fixes only on the simple nature of them. We expect of him everything that a wholesome nature can ascertain about things, and we completely excuse him only from what presupposes a departure from nature, whether in thinking or in feeling, or at least what presupposes an acquaintance with such a departure.

If a father tells his child that some man is languishing in poverty and the child goes over to the poor man and hands his father's wallet over to him, the action is naive: for the wholesomeness of nature acted from out of the child. In a world where the wholesomeness of nature reigned, the child would have been absolutely right to act in that way. The child looks simply at the need and at the means closest at hand for satisfying it. An extension of the right to property, such that a part of humanity perishes, is not grounded in mere nature. The action of the child thus puts the

*Since the naive rests solely on the form in which something is done or said, this property disappears from view as soon as the matter itself, either through its causes or through its effects, makes an overwhelming or even contradictory impression. Through a naïveté of this sort a crime can also be detected, but then we have neither the detachment nor the time to direct our attention to the form of the discovery; the sense of repugnance for the personal character swallows up any enjoyment of the natural character. Just as enraged feelings rob us of the moral delight with nature's uprightness as soon as we experience a crime, due to naïveté [on the part of the criminal], so our malicious joy is strangled by the compassion aroused as soon as we see someone put in danger by his naïveté.

actual world to shame, and we also acknowledge as much in our hearts by the delight we feel about that action.

If someone acquainted with the world but otherwise possessing a fair understanding of things [*gutem Verstand*] confesses his secrets to someone else who deceives him but knows how to conceal this deception cleverly, if his very forthrightness lends that person the means to do him harm, we find it naive. We laugh at him, but by the same token we still cannot [422] help admiring him. For his trust in that other person springs from the honesty of his own sensibilities. At any rate, he is naive only to the extent that this is the case.

The naive manner of thinking can thus never be a property of a degenerate human being; it can only be an attribute of children and people with a childlike disposition. The latter act and think naively, often right in the middle of sophisticated contexts of the larger world. Because of their own beautiful humanness they forget that they have to deal with a depraved world and they behave in the courts of kings with an ingenuousness and innocence such as one finds only in a pastoral world.

It is, moreover, not at all easy, always correctly to distinguish childish from childlike innocence. There are actions that hover at the outermost extreme between the two forms of innocence, and in those instances we are left completely in doubt as to whether we should laugh at the simplemindedness or revere the nobleness of that simplicity. One finds a quite remarkable instance of this in the history of the reign of *Pope Adrian the Sixth*, described for us by Mr. Schröckh with his typical thoroughness and pragmatic sort of truthfulness. This pope, a Dutchman by birth, administered the papacy at one of the most critical moments for the hierarchy, when an embittered faction unsparingly exposed the weaknesses of the Roman Church while an opposing faction had every interest in covering them up. There is no question what a genuinely naive character would have done in this case, if ever one had mistakenly ascended a chair of St. Peter. But there is indeed a question as to what extent such naïveté of character might be compatible with the role of a pope. Moreover, it was this that caused Adrian's predecessors and successors the greatest embarrassment. They uniformly adhered to the then accepted Roman system of putting nothing in order anywhere. But Adrian actually possessed the hon-

est character of his nation and the innocence of his earlier standing. He had ascended to his lofty post from the narrow confines of a scholar, and even at the pinnacle of his new [423] dignity he did not become unfaithful to that simple character. The abuses in the Church moved him, and he was much too honest to dissimulate in public what he admitted to himself in private. In conformity with this way of thinking, he allowed himself, in the *Instruction* he dispatched with his legation to Germany, to be misled into making admissions previously unheard-of from any pope and running directly counter to the principles of this court. Among other things it says: "It is well known to us that for several years now much has transpired on this holy chair that is abhorrent. It is no wonder if this sick condition has passed from the head to the limbs, from the pope to the prelates. All of us have strayed, and for some time now there has been no one among us, not a single one, who has done something worthwhile." Again, in another place he commands his legation to declare in his name, "that he, Adrian, may not be censured for what was done by the popes prior to him and that such excesses would always have met with his disapproval, since at the time they happened he still occupied a minor position, and so on." One can easily think how such naïveté coming from the pope may have been received by the Roman clergy. The very least that people reproached him for was that he betrayed the Church to heretics. This supremely obtuse step taken by the pope would be worthy meanwhile of all our respect and admiration, if we could only convince ourselves that he had actually been naive, that is, that he had been forced simply by the natural genuineness of his character without any regard for the possible consequences, and that he would not have hesitated any less to take that step were he to have seen the full extent of the indiscretion committed. However, we have some reason to believe that he considered this step not at all so impolitic, and in his innocence went so far as to hope to have gained some very important advantage for the Church by obliging its opponents. He imagined not only that he had to take this step as an honest man, but also that he had to be able to answer for it as pope. Because he forgot that the most spurious of all structures could only be preserved by continually denying the truth, he made [424] the unforgivable mistake of following rules of conduct, that might well have obtained in the context of natural

relationships, in a setting diametrically opposed to a natural one. This, of course, changes our judgment considerably. Although we cannot deny our respect for the honesty of heart from which that action flowed, this respect is not a little diminished by consideration of the fact that art here was no more a match for nature than his head was for his heart.

Every true genius must be naive or he is no genius. Naïveté alone makes someone a genius, and what someone is in the intellectual and aesthetic realm can hardly be disavowed in the moral realm. Unacquainted with the rules, those crutches of feebleness and disciplinarians of perversion, and guided solely by nature or instinct, his guardian angel, genius passes calmly and securely through all the snares of bad taste that inevitably entangle someone not a genius, if he is not clever enough to avoid them from afar. It is a gift of genius alone, always to be at home even beyond the confines of what is familiar, and to *expand* nature without *going outside* it. Occasionally, of course, even among the greatest geniuses, one comes across a case of going beyond nature, but only because even they have their moments of fantasy when they take leave of the safety of nature, either because they are carried away by the power of an example or because the degenerate taste of their age misleads them.

A genius must resolve the most complicated tasks with unassuming simplicity and ease. The egg of Columbus is the emblem for every decision of genius. Someone establishes himself as genius solely by the fact that he prevails over the entangled enterprise with simplicity. Genius proceeds not according to recognized principles but rather according to insights and feelings. But its ideas are inspirations of a god (everything wholesome nature does is divine); its feelings are laws for all times and for all races of men.

The childlike character imprinted by genius upon its works also shows up in its private life and morals. It is *chaste* because nature always is, but it is not *proper* since only what is profane is proper. It is *judicious* because nature can never be anything else, [425] but it is not *cunning*, since only art can be that. It is *faithful* to its character and inclinations, but not so much because it has principles as because nature, for all its wavering, again and again returns to its original state, always reviving the old need. It is *humble*, even shy, because genius always remains a mystery to itself, but it

is not fearful since it knows nothing of the dangers on the path it treads. We know little of the private lives of the greatest geniuses, but this contention is confirmed even by the little that has been preserved for us, for example, about Sophocles, Archimedes, Hippocrates and in more recent times about Ariosto, Dante, and Tasso, about Raphael, about Albrecht Dürer, Cervantes, Shakespeare, about Fielding, Sterne, and others.

Indeed, what appears far more difficult, even a great statesman and general will exhibit a naive character if his greatness is due to his genius. Among the ancients I would call to mind here only Epaminondas and Julius Caesar, among the moderns only France's Henry the Fourth, Sweden's Gustavus Adolphus, and the czar Peter the Great. The dukes of Marlborough, Turenne, and Vendome all show us this character. Nature has assigned to the opposite sex its highest perfection as far as the naive character is concerned. The feminine addiction to being pleasing strives after nothing so much as the *illusion of being naive*; proof enough, if one had no other evidence, that the greatest power of the sex rests upon this characteristic. However, because the reigning principles of women's education are in constant conflict with this character, it is as difficult for the woman in the moral sphere as it is for the man in the intellectual sphere with the advantages of a good education to keep that splendid gift of nature from being lost. The *woman*, who for the larger world joins this moral naïveté with adroitness in her behavior, is as worthy of esteem as the scholar who combines an ingenious freedom of thought with the complete rigor of the schools.

From the naive way of thinking there flows of necessity a naive expression, as much in words as in movements, and it is the most important element of grace. With this naive [426] grace genius expresses its sublimest and profoundest thoughts, divine decrees from the mouth of a child. If the scholastic understanding, always in fear of error, hammers its words like its concepts on to the cross of grammar and logic, if it is rigid and intractable in order not to be indefinite, if it is verbose in order not to say too much, and takes the force and edge out of its thoughts so that they do not sound imprudent, then by contrast, with a single propitious stroke of the pen, genius gives its own thoughts an eternally definite, fixed, and yet completely free form [*Umriß*]. While the sign always

remains different from and alien to what is signified in the case of scholastic understanding, the language of genius springs from thought as by an inner necessity and is so one with it that even concealed by the body the spirit appears as though exposed. This manner of expression, where the sign completely disappears in what is signified, and where the language, as it were, leaves naked the thought it expresses while someone else can never present that thought without at the same time concealing it, this above all is what people call ingeniousness and esprit in the style of writing.

Like the genius's self-expression in its works of spirit, innocence of heart expresses itself freely and naturally in the life of society. It is well known that people in social life deviate from the simplicity and strict genuineness of expression to the same degree that their attitudes become affected. The easily injured sense of guilt, just like the easily seduced imagination, necessarily produces a nervous condition. Without being false people often say something other than what they are thinking; people feel that it is necessary to beat about the bush in order to say things that could prove to be painful only to a sick sort of self-love, or that could prove to be dangerous only to a perverted fantasy. An ignorance of these conventional laws, together with a natural uprightness that considers every sort of crookedness and appearance of mendacity repulsive (not crudity, which it sets aside as an annoyance), produces a naïveté of expression in society, consisting in naming things by their right name and in the most straightforward manner, things that people are permitted to identify either not at all or only in some artificial way. [427] The ordinary expressions of children are of this sort. They produce laughter because of their contrast with accepted manners, yet people will always in their hearts admit to themselves that the child is right.

Taken in the proper sense, naïveté of character [*Gesinnung*] can, of course, only be ascribed to the human being as an entity not utterly subordinated to nature, although only insofar as pure nature still really acts out of him. Yet, through an effect of the poetizing imagination, it is often transferred from rational things to things devoid of reason. Thus we often say that an animal, a landscape, a building—indeed, nature generally—possesses a naive character [*Charakter*] in contrast to human beings' arbitrariness and fantastic conceptions. In each case, however, this also demands

that in our thoughts we lend a will to what lacks a will, while noting how rigorously it adheres to the law of necessity in its orientation. Dissatisfaction with our own poor use of our moral freedom and with the lack of ethical harmony in our actions easily induces the sort of mood in which we address what is devoid of reason as a person, applauding its endless uniformity and envying its calm composure as though it had actually had to struggle with a temptation to be otherwise. At such a moment we are ready to consider the prerogatives of our reason a curse and an evil and, with a vivid feeling of the imperfection of what we actually are accomplishing, we lose sight of the merits of our own potential and calling.

We then see in nonrational nature only a more fortunate sister who remained at home with her mother, while we stormed out into an alien world, arrogantly confident of our freedom. With painful urgency we long to be back where we began as soon as we experience the misery of culture and hear our mother's tender voice in the distant, foreign country of art. As long as we were mere children of nature we were happy and complete; we became free and lost both happiness and completeness. Out of this situation there spring two quite different kinds of longing for nature, a longing for its *happiness* and a longing [428] for its *completeness*. Only a sensual individual complains about the loss of the happiness that nature alone can provide; only a moral individual can mourn the loss of nature's completeness.

Ask yourself well, my sensitive friend of nature, whether your sensitivity toward nature is a matter of your torpidity yearning for rest or your offended moral sensibility yearning for harmony. If you find art repulsive and if the abuses in society drive you to the solitude of lifeless nature, ask yourself whether what disgusts you are society's exploitations, burdens, and troubles or its moral anarchy, its arbitrariness, its disorders. Your courage should [*muß*] joyfully throw itself into the former ills and replace them with the freedom that is the source of that joy. You may indeed set up nature's serene happiness as a distant goal, but only as the reward of your worthiness. Let us, therefore, hear no complaints about life's aggravations, about the inequality of conditions, about the pressure of relations, about the insecurity of possessions, about ingratitude, oppression, persecution. Freely resigned to all culture's ills [*Übeln*], you must submit to them and respect them as the

natural condition of what alone is good. You must complain only about the evil [*Böse*] of those conditions, but not merely with feeble tears. Rather you must take care to act purely amidst those adulterations, freely amidst that bondage, steadfastly amidst the caprice of mood, lawfully amidst that anarchy. Do not be afraid of the confusion outside you, but rather of the confusion within you. Strive for unity, but do not look for it in uniformity; strive for composure, but through equanimity, not through suspension of your activity. That nature you envy in things devoid of reason is not worthy of your respect or your longing. That nature lies behind you, it must forever lie behind you. Abandoned by the guide that deceived you, you have no other choice remaining than to take hold of the law with a free consciousness and will, or fall irretrievably into a bottomless abyss.

But if you can take consolation in the loss of natural *happiness*, then let its *completeness* serve as the model for your heart. If you step out of your artificial circle toward the completeness of nature, then it stands before you in its magnificent stillness, in its naive beauty, [429] in its childlike innocence and simplicity. Dwell at that moment on this image, cultivate this feeling; it is worthy of what is most splendid in your human nature. Do not let it occur to you any longer to want to *change places* with nature. Instead, take nature up into yourself and strive to wed its unlimited advantages to your own endless prerogatives, and from the marriage of both strive to give birth to something divine. Let nature surround you like a lovely *idyll*, in which again and again you find the way back to yourself from the aberrations of art and gather the courage and new confidence about the course of life, so that the flame of the *ideal*, so easily extinguished in life's storms, is rekindled in your heart.

Recall the beauty of nature surrounding the ancient *Greeks*. Consider how confidently this people was able, under its serendipitous sky, to live with nature in the wild; consider how very much nearer to the simplicity of nature lay its manner of thinking, its way of feeling, its mores, and what a faithful copy of this is provided by the works of its poets. If one reflects upon these things, then the observation must appear strange that one encounters there so few traces of the *sentimental* interest we moderns attach to nature's settings and characteristics. There is, of course, no depiction of

those scenes more exact, faithful, and detailed than that of the Greek. However, the depiction is not more exact, faithful, and detailed, and contains no more special involvement of the heart, than the depiction of a dress, a shield, a weapon, a household tool or some sort of mechanical product. He seems, in his love for the object, to make no distinction between what it is of itself and what it is through art and human will. Nature seems of more interest to his intellect and thirst for knowledge than to his moral feeling. He does not cling to nature with the fervor, sensitivity, and sweet melancholy that we moderns do. Indeed, by personifying and deifying it in its individual appearances, and by presenting its effects as actions of beings endowed with freedom, the Greek overcomes the serene necessity in it, precisely what makes it so attractive to us. His impatient fantasy leads him past it to the drama of human life. Only what is alive and free, only characters, [430] actions, and mores satisfy him. If in certain moral frames of mind *we* might wish to exchange our freedom of will (that exposes us to so much struggling with ourselves and to so many aggravations and aberrations) for the predestined but serene necessity of things devoid of reason, the fantasy of the Greeks is always busy working in precisely the opposite direction, setting up human nature already within the inanimate world and ascribing to the will influence where a blind necessity reigns.

Whence, indeed, comes this different spirit? How is it that we are so infinitely surpassed by the ancients in everything that is natural, and yet at precisely this point we are able to revere nature to a higher degree, to cling to it more intimately, and to embrace even the inanimate world with the tenderest of feelings? This is so because nature has disappeared from our humanity, and we reencounter it in its genuineness only outside of humanity in the inanimate world. Not our greater *naturalness* [*Naturmäßigkeit*], but the very opposite, the *unnaturalness* [*Naturwidrigkeit*] of our relationships, conditions, and mores forces us to fashion a satisfaction in the physical world that is not to be hoped for in the moral world. This is the satisfaction of that awakening urge for truth and simplicity that lies, like the moral predisposition from which it flows, in all human hearts as something indestructible and ineradicable. It is for this reason that the feeling with which we cling to nature is so intimately related to the feeling we have when we

protest the passing of childhood and childish innocence. Our childhood is the only unmutated nature that we still encounter in the cultivated part of humanity. Thus it is no wonder, if each footstep of nature outside us leads us back to our childhood.

In the case of the ancient Greeks it was very much different.* For them the culture had not degenerated to such a degree that nature was left behind [431] in the process. The entire edifice of their social life was erected on feelings, not on some clumsy work of art. Their theology itself was the inspiration of a naive feeling, born of a joyful imagination and not of brooding reason as is the belief of the churches of modern nations. Hence, since the Greek had not lost the nature in humanity, he also could not be surprised by nature outside humanity, and for that reason could have no pressing need for objects in which he rediscovered nature. One with himself and content in the feeling of his humanity, the Greek had to stand quietly by this humanity as his ultimate and to concern himself with bringing everything else closer to it. *We*, on the other hand, neither one with ourselves nor happy in our experiences of humanity, have no more pressing interest than to take flight from it and to remove from sight so miscarried a form.

The feeling spoken of here is thus not something that the ancients had. It is rather the same as the sort of feeling we *have for the ancients*. They felt naturally, while we feel the natural. Undoubtedly, what filled Homer's soul, as he had his divine swineherd entertain Ulysses, was a completely different feeling from what moved the soul of the young Werther when he read this song following an evening in some irritating company. Our feeling for nature is like the sick person's feeling for health.

*But also only in the case of the Greeks. For in order to extend life to the inanimate and to pursue the image of humanity with this zeal it is necessary to have precisely the sort of animated movement and rich fullness of human life that surrounded the Greeks. The human world of *Ossian*, for example, was shabby and uniform, while the inanimate world around him was magnificent, colossal, mighty, and thus forced itself on him, asserting its rights over human beings. Accordingly, in the songs of this poet the inanimate nature far more (than the human beings) emerges as an object of feeling. Meanwhile, even *Ossian* himself complains about a decline of humanity. As inconsiderable as culture's scope and depravities were among his people, the experience of it was still sufficiently vivid and intrusive to make the singer, full of high-minded feelings as he was, turn back in fear to the inanimate and pour out over his songs that elegiac sound that makes them so touching and endearing to us.

Just as nature eventually begins to disappear from human life as an *experience* and as the (acting and feeling) *subject*, we see it ascend in the world of poets as an *idea* and *object*. The very [432] nation that had gone to the greatest extremes in regard to what is unnatural and in reflection upon it must have been first affected by the phenomenon of the *naive* in the strongest way and given a name to it. This nation was, as far as I know, the *French*. Yet the naive feeling and the interest in it are naturally much older, dating from the very outset of the moral and aesthetic degeneracy. This change in the manner of feeling is, for example, already extremely evident in the case of Euripides, if he is compared with his predecessors, especially Aeschylus, even though Euripides was the favorite of his time. The same revolution can also be demonstrated among the ancient *historians*. Horace, the poet of a cultured and degenerate era, praises the serenity and joy of his Tibur and he could be named the genuine founder of this sentimental kind of poetry, since he provides a model of it that is still unsurpassed. One finds traces of this manner of feeling in Propertius and Virgil as well, among others, but less so in the case of Ovid who lacked the fullness of heart for it and who, in his exile to Tomi, painfully misses the urban delights that Horace so gladly dispensed with in his Tibur.

By virtue of the very notion of a poet, poets are everywhere the *guardians* of nature. Where they can no longer completely be this, and where they have already experienced within themselves the destructive influence of arbitrary and artificial forms or have had to contend with them, they will appear as nature's *witnesses* and *avengers*. They will either *be* nature or *seek* the lost nature. Two completely different manners of poetry spring from this fact, exhausting and demarcating the entire realm of poesy [*Poesie*]. Depending on the character of the age in which they flourish or on the impact that contingent circumstances have on their general formation and their passing states of mind, all poets who really are such will be either *naive* or *sentimental*.

The poet of the world in its youth, naive and inspired, just like the sort of person who comes closest to him in ages of artificial culture, is austere and shy. Distrustful, like the virgin [433] Diana in her forest, he flees the heart that seeks him, the need that would embrace him. The arid truthfulness with which he treats his subject matter often appears as insensitivity. The subject matter takes com-

plete possession of him; his heart does not lie like some cheap metal right beneath the surface, but rather wants to be sought, like gold, in the depths. Like the divinity behind the structure of the world, he stands behind his work. The *naive poet* is the work and the work is the *naive poet*. You have to be unworthy of the work or not up to it or have already had your fill of it, to ask only about *the poet*.

Thus, for example, Homer among the ancients and Shakespeare among the moderns, despite being two extremely different natures separated by the immeasurable distance between epochs, reveal themselves to be completely the same, as far as this feature is concerned. When, at a very early age, I first became acquainted with Shakespeare, I was infuriated by the coldness and insensitivity that allowed him to joke at a point of the greatest pathos, and to let some buffoon disrupt the heartrending scenes in *Hamlet*, in *King Lear*, in *Macbeth*, and so forth. That same insensitivity restrained him where my feelings carried me away, it tore him cold-bloodedly away from the place where my heart would have so much preferred to have lingered. I was misled by my acquaintance with more modern poets into first looking for the poet in the work, encountering *his* heart and reflecting in common with *him* on his subject matter [*Gegenstand*]. In short, I was misled into looking at the object [*Objekt*] in the subject. As a result I could not bear the fact that the poet in Shakespeare's case nowhere let himself be grasped and nowhere sought to give an account of himself. He commanded all my respect and I studied him for several years before I learned to appreciate him as an individual. I was still not capable of understanding nature firsthand. I could only endure the image of it, as reflected by the intellect and set down correctly according to a rule, and for this the French and also the German sentimental poets, from the years 1750 until about 1780, were precisely the right subjects. Incidentally, I am not ashamed of this childhood judgment, since mature criticism passed a similar judgment and was naive enough to set it down for the world.

I encountered the same phenomenon with Homer, whom I learned to know at a much later period. I remember [434] now the remarkable passage in the sixth book of the *Iliad* where Glaucus and Diomedes thrust at one another in battle and, after recognizing each other as a former guest and friend, exchange gifts. Next

to this moving portrait of piety, where the laws of *hospitality* were observed even in war, Ariosto's depiction of the *noble courage of chivalry* can be placed. In that story two knights and rivals, Ferrau and Rinald, the former a Christian, the latter a Saracen, both covered with wounds after a mighty battle, make peace and mount the same horse to retrieve the fleeing Angelica. As diverse as these two examples might otherwise be, they have an almost identical effect on our hearts because both portray the beautiful victory of custom over passion, and both touch us through the naïveté of their sentiments. Yet how completely differently the poets behave in the course of describing this similar action. As the citizen of a world that had fallen away from the simplicity of customs of an earlier age, Ariosto cannot conceal his own amazement and emotion while relating this incident. The sense of the distance between those customs and the customs characteristic of his age overwhelms him. All at once he stops portraying the subject matter and appears in his own person. The beautiful stanza is well-known and has always been especially admired:

O the noble courage of the ancient rites of knights!
Rivals they were, divided in their faiths,
Still suffering from head to toe
The bitter pain of the wild struggle of enemies;
Suspicion set aside, they rode together
Through the darkness of the crooked path;
The horse, driven on by four spurs, galloped
Until the way divided in two.*

And now the old Homer! Scarcely does Diomedes learn from Glaucus the story of his enemy's being a guest and friend of his people from the time of his forefathers than he plunges his lance into the ground, speaks with him as a friend, and agrees with him that in the future they will keep out of each other's way in battle. Yet, let us hear Homer himself: [435]

And so from now on I am your guest in Argos
As you are mine in Lycia when I visit that land.

For this reason let us avoid each other's lances in the heat of battle.
Indeed, there are enough of the Trojans and their famous allies
For me to slay, if God permits it, and to cut down;
And there are also enough Achaians for you to kill what you can.
But let us both exchange our armor so that even others
See how we take pride in being guests from the times of our fathers."
Thus those two warriors spoke with one another, and
swinging down from their chariots,
They shook hands and extended friendship to one another.

A *modern* poet (at least one who is a modern in the moral sense of this term) would hardly have waited until then to testify to his delight at this action. We would forgive him all the more easily, since we also pause in our hearts while reading and eagerly distance ourselves from the subject matter in order to look at ourselves. But there is not a trace of any of this in Homer. As though he were reporting something commonplace, indeed, as though he himself had no heart in his breast, he continues in his dry, matter-of-fact way:

Still, Zeus so excited Glaucon, that he, unthinkingly,
Traded his gold armor for the bronze armor of Diomedes,
Armor worth a hundred young steers for armor worth nine.*

In an artificial age poets of this naive sort are rather out of place. In such an epoch they are also scarcely possible any more, or at least they are possible only by *running wild* in their age and being protected from its mutilating influence by some benign fortune. They can never emerge from society itself, but outside it such poets still occasionally appear, though more as strange individuals whom people stare at and uncultivated nature boys who offend them. As valuable as their appearances are for the artist who studies them and for the authentic connoisseur who appreciates them, on the whole these poets are not very fortunate in their century. On their foreheads they bear the mark of someone who is in control and in

*Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, canto 1, stanza 22.

**Iliad*, Book VI, v. 224–36.

command; [436] but we would rather be rocked in the cradle by the Muses, we want the muses to carry us. The critics, the real border patrol of taste, detest these naive poets for *disrupting the boundaries* and would rather see them suppressed. That even Homer is granted some validity by these judges of taste might be traced simply to the force of more than a thousand years of testimony. It becomes a disagreeable enough matter for them to affirm rules contrary to his example, and to assert his reknown, contrary to their rules.

The poet, I say, either *is* nature or he will *seek* it. The former makes for the naive poet, the latter for the sentimental poet.

The poetic spirit is immortal and humanity cannot lose it. It can disappear only when humanity and the predisposition for poetry disappear. For if the human being by the freedom of his fantasy and intellect puts some distance between himself and the simplicity, truth, and necessity of nature, then not only does the path to it still stand forever open to him, but a mightier and more indestructible instinct, the moral instinct, drives him ceaselessly back to it. The capacity for poetry stands, moreover, in the most intimate relation to this instinct. This capacity, in other words, does not vanish with the natural simplicity, but only works in another direction.

Even now nature is still the only flame that nourishes the poetic spirit. The poetic spirit generates all its power from nature alone, and even in the case of an artificial human being, that is to say, the human being conceived in culture, it speaks to nature alone. Any other manner of working is alien to the poetic spirit. Thus it may be said in passing that the practice of labeling all so-called works of wit "poetic" is completely unjustified, although for a long time, misled by respect for French literature, we have confused such works with poetic works. Even today, in the artificial condition of the culture, it is nature, I say, that gives the poetic spirit its power. Only now it stands in a completely different relation to nature.

As long as the human being is still part of nature that is pure (which, of course, is not to say "unrefined"), he operates as an undivided sensuous unity and as a harmonizing whole. Sense and reason, receptive and spontaneous faculties, have not yet divided the tasks between them; [437] still less do they contradict one another. His feelings are not the formless play of chance; his thoughts are not the empty play of imagination. The former pro-

ceed from the law of *necessity*, the latter from the law of *actuality*. Once the human being has entered into the condition characteristic of culture and art has laid its hands on him, that *sensuous* harmony within him is overcome and he can only express himself as a *moral* unity, that is to say, as someone striving for unity. The agreement between his feeling and thinking, something that *actually* took place in the original condition, now exists only *ideally*. It is no longer in him but rather outside him, as a thought that must first be realized, and no longer as a fact of his life. Suppose now that the concept of poesy [*Poesie*], understood as nothing other than the concept of *giving humanity its most complete possible expression*, is applied to both these conditions. In the original condition of natural simplicity, where the human being still acts as a harmonious unity with all his powers at once, and where consequently his entire nature fully expresses itself in actuality, the most complete possible *imitation of the actual* is *what necessarily makes someone a poet*. On the other hand, here in the condition of culture, where that harmonious cooperation of the human being's entire nature is merely an idea, the elevation of actuality to the ideal or, what comes to the same, *the portrayal of the ideal* is *what necessarily makes the poet*. And, in general, these two are the only possible ways the poetic genius can express itself. They are, as one sees, completely different from one another. Yet there is a higher concept that encompasses them both, and it should not strike anyone as strange that this concept coincides with the idea of humanity.

This is not the place to pursue this thought further; it can only be cast in its full light by a separate elaboration devoted to it alone. However, anyone who is capable of setting up a comparison between ancient and modern poets* in terms of the spirit of their poetry, and not simply the forms their poetry happens to take, will easily [438] be able to convince himself of the truth of this notion. The ancient poets touch us through nature, through sensuous truth, through living presence; the modern poets touch us through ideas.

*It is perhaps not superfluous to recall that, if the modern poets are contrasted here with the ancient poets, it is not so much the difference in the age as the difference in the manner that is to be understood. In modern times, indeed, even in the most recent times we also have naive poetry in all classes even if no longer of a completely pure sort. Among the ancient Latin poets and in fact even among the ancient Greek poets there is no shortage of sentimental poets. Not only in the same poet, even in