

many a cheering experience, forthcoming friends of a nobler fashion of our public art-life—to them we turn. For if, to supplement and bring to fruit the unique and generous efforts once begun in Munich for German Art and Learning, to crown the work through raising the German Theatre to the importance once assigned it by our great spirits, we now invoke the stirring example of the august heir of those two great benefactors of the German Spirit,—we plant a banner from whose shade the Vulgar has to hide its head in awe.

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## VII.

For the more searching inquiries which we now propose to address to the *German Theatre* we shall still retain the general heading of these articles: "German Art and German Policy." Our reason might well coincide with the very cause of many people's presumable surprise that this parasite of an irrational state of culture—as which the theatre appears—should be held to have aught to do with Politics, since it is hard enough to imagine what the theatre may have in common with Art itself. To such persons, whom the evil character of the German Theatre has plunged into the most total confusion as to the Theatre's significance in general, it is our desire to shew that precisely Plastic-art—which alone means "Art" for them, as one may read in all our books and journals—has been so strongly influenced by the Theatre that her present increasingly hideous mannerism, as also, wherever she has withdrawn from its influence with painful purpose, her dullest unproductiveness, are only explicable through this ill condition of the Theatre itself.

Two main and characteristic stages present themselves in European Art: its birth among the Greeks, its re-birth among the modern nations. The re-birth will never wholly round itself to an ideal, before it reaches once again the birth's departure-point. The Renaissance lived upon the

re-discovered, studied, imitated works of Grecian art, and this could only be the plastic art; to the true creative strength of antique art it can only come by pressing forward to the fountain whence that art derived this strength. Exactly as the symbolical conventions of the temple-ceremony compare with the performance of an Æschyleian drama, compares the older plastic art of the Greeks\* with the products of its prime: this prime so closely followed the perfecting of the Theatre, that Phidias was merely the younger contemporary of Æschylus. The plastic artist never overcame the tethers of symbolical convention, till Æschylus had shaped the priestly choral-dance into the living Drama. If it be possible that for modern Life, re-shaped through Art's renaissance, there shall arise a Theatre in equal answer to the inmost motive of its culture as the Grecian Theatre answered to the Greek Religion, then plastic art, and every other art, will at last have reached once more the quickening fountain whence it fed among the Greeks; if this be not possible, then reborn art itself has had its day.—The Italians, with whom this reborn art both took its rise and ripened to its highest modern bloom, found not the drama of the Christian Church; they did invent the Christian Music. This art, new as the Æschyleian Drama to the Greeks, bore the same relation to Italian plastic art (thus pre-eminently painting) as the Theatre to Greek plastic art (pre-eminently sculpture). The attempt to arrive through Music at a reconstruction of the antique Drama, led to Opera: an abortive attempt, drawing after it the downfall of both Italian music and Italian plastic art. From the genuine Folk-spirit, on the contrary, was Drama newly born. The same relation borne by Thespis and his car to the rites of Grecian temples, that relation bore the modern bands of merry-Andrews to the sublimely mournful ritual of the Holy Passion: had the Catholic clergy already clutched at a popular enlivenment of this earnest

\* One is forcibly reminded, by this passage, of the Æginetan marbles in the Munich Glyptothek—the marbles which were among the first King Ludwig's earliest acquisitions.—Tr.

Passion by aid of those performers; had the great Spaniards actually built the Modern Drama on the soil thereby prepared, and the wondrous Briton filled it with the contents of every form of human life : so in our great German poets there awoke the consciousness of this new creation's meaning, and across two-thousand years they stretched to Æschylus and Sophocles the hand of understanding. Thus arrived again at the fecund wellspring of all true, Folk-cultivating art, we ask : would ye foul this source anew, would ye let it turn into a ditch for breeding vermin? That it urged onward to this Theatre of our great poets, was the sole true progress in the evolutionary march of reborn art ; what held back, nay, altogether stemmed that progress with the Italians, the invention of Modern Music, has—thanks again to great German masters equally unique—become the last enabling element for the birth of a dramatic art of whose expression and effect the Greek could not have dreamed. Every possibility of attaining to the highest has now been won : there stands a platform in front whereof, throughout all Europe, the Folk each evening throngs as driven by an unconscious longing to learn, where it is merely lured to idle pastime, the answer to the riddle of existence,—and ye still can doubt that here indeed is the one thing wanting, the thing ye toil in vain to reach by every aimless byway?—

If, then, we wish to find a prosperous channel for this Theatre, as to whose mission both intelligent and unintelligent persons nurse the utmost doubts, we first must take a closer glance at the special idiosyncrasy of histrionic art, and its relation to those art-varieties which now are held alone for Art.

What is revealed so plainly by a practical survey of the Theatre's historical bearings on the evolution of the arts in general, is explained convincingly and surely, from the theoretic side, by a consideration of the precise nature of those artistic faculties of man which enter here into play.—Clearly, each artistic impulse springs in the first instance from the bent-to-*imitation*, from which there then evolves

the bent-to-*interpretation*.\* By an ever more complex use of media, the plastic artist, and finally the literature-poet, 'interprets' what the mime directly copies in his own person and with the most deceptive likeness. Through many an intermediation the literature-poet arrives at his material, of abstractions (*der Begriffe*), out of which he constructs his imitation of life, the plastic artist at his material of æsthetic forms: here the intended illusion, without which no kind of effect is compassed in any of these arts, can therefore only prosper through means of an agreement based upon the laws of technique, on the artist's side, on the public's upon a certain grade of acquired artistic culture, enabling it to willingly accept those laws of technique. Now it is to be noted that in the conveyance of the idea (*Vorstellung*) presented by the plastic artist, as also by the literary poet, the weightiest link is not the direct incident of life, but, in the former's case the incident as brought before his own æsthetic judgment through a lifelike imitation, in the latter's case the incident as brought him through report: thus, in neither case the natural, immediate act or incident of life. But what the model is to the plastic artist, the reported incident to the literary poet, to the Folk are the Mime and the theatric Action: from these it receives directly what those could only offer through the laws of technique to the more abstract art-intelligence. To the plastic artist the question of prime moment will therefore be, the quality of his model; to the poet the bringing of the incident of life, that hovers before his mental vision, to direct portrayal through this model: but to us, for the object of our present inquiry, it is of moment to prove from the nature of the Mime himself what *he* requires, for all his uncommonly

\* "*Nachahmungstrieb*" and "*Nachbildungstrieb*." The first of these terms is easy enough to render, but we have no satisfactory English equivalent for the second; its meaning is "to form, or model, *after*," i.e. to follow the essential lines of Nature, without a slavish adherence to her so-called accidentals. In this sense I propose, in general, to employ the word 'interpret'; to mark its specific use, I shall place it between single inverted commas.—TR.

potent artistic aptitudes, to first become in truth—a man and not a monkey.

What ranks the art of the Mime so low in the eyes of other artists, is the very thing that makes his doings and effects so universal. Everyone has a feeling of kinship with the actor: each person is liable to some 'trick' or other, in which he unwittingly copies the mien, the gestures, the bearing and language of others: the art simply consists in doing this without 'trick,' and of set purpose. In this sense dissimulation serves the ordinary man in lying; only, to imitate another human being deliberately, without 'trick,' and so illusively as to make us believe that other being stands before us—the sight of *this* sets the crowd in an astonishment all the more agreeable, as each man detects the germs of such an art-dexterity within himself, and merely finds them here developed to a pitch of high effectiveness. It is for this reason, also, that everyone holds himself qualified to judge the doings of an actor.—Now let us figure to ourselves the painter's and sculptor's model passing into continuous movement and action, representing at each moment the very model of the situation, and at last possessing itself [or "himself"] of the words and accents of the real incident—that life-incident which the poet labours to relate and, through a process of crystallising his abstractions, to bring home to his reader's Phantasy\*; further, let us figure this model as finally turning itself into a corporation of such, and reproducing its local surroundings with as realistic an illusion as its gestures and its speech,—and we may easily conclude that this will suffice in itself to carry away the mass, no

\* "Welchen der Dichter zu erzählen und durch Fixirung seines Begriffsvermögens der Phantasie seines Lesers vorzuführen sich bemüht." Literally, this would be: "which the poet labours to relate and, through a fixing of his powers of ideation (or abstract thought), to lead before his reader's phantasy;" but, like all terms imported into Germany from France, there is some ambiguity about the word "*Fixirung*," as the French themselves employ "*fixer*" in two or three different shades of meaning; and as our author has never used the word before, we can only interpret it by the general light of the context.

matter what the subject chosen: the mere charm of the machinery for duping, with its imitation of some living incident, sets everybody in that agreeable amazement which takes the forefront of our pleasure at the theatre. Viewed from this natural base, one might liken the Theatre to the result of a successful mutiny of slaves, a reversal of the relations between master and servant. And in fact the theatre of nowadays shews a very similar result: it needs neither the poet nor the potter\*; or rather, it presses both poet and potter into its service. They do exactly as it bids them; the critic signs its warrant, which in slave-States may be bought by niggers, and in power whereof a black may call himself a white; the no less easily appeased authorities lend their sanction to the trick; Majesty throws its mantle over it, a shelter and a pomp—and lo! you have the “Court-theatre” of our German days.

Before it stand, again, the painter, sculptor and literature-poet, and can't think what they have to do with it. Do they suspect, perhaps, that they now must thresh their brains without a model, and work by sheer abstraction from older, once vital styles of art; or, should they still require a model, that they must take it from this curious university-school of the revolted slaves, where it has become another being, and learnt to bear itself quite otherwise, than can prove of any service to their art? What is left for them, but, precisely through their own continued makings, to visibly expose the enormous influence of the Theatre? For, either their talent will run dry, without its genuine source of renovation; or, if artistic effect be made for, it will take the shape of that mannered aiming at Effect which nowadays, and in an evil sense, is rightly called “theatrical.” And what do we signify, in every sphere, in the bearing of the private person, in the unlovely cut of clothes, in the talk, nay, the behaviour of the student alike with the statesman, and finally in art and literature, when we brand it as “theatrical”? We signify a weaken-

\* “Bildner”—literally the “former, modeller, or moulder,” i.e. the so-called “plastic artist”; but perhaps I may here be allowed the figurative term.—TR.

ing, a perversion and derangement of general taste, proceeding from the present Theatre; but, seeing that the Theatre's unbounded popularity gives it also an irresistible influence upon manners, through its influence on taste, we signify withal a profound decline of public morality, to rescue whence appears an earnest and a noble task. But only through taking the Theatre itself most earnestly in eye, can success be promised to such a toil.

So much, at present, for the Theatre's power. How to get at that power, we cannot learn before we have rightly grasped its mainspring; and this we shall only do when, without unmerited disdain, we acknowledge it to be Mimetic-art itself.

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#### VIII.

When we described the relation of the merely imitative Mime to the truly poetic 'interpretative' artist as resembling that of the monkey to the man, nothing was farther from our mind than an actual belittlement of his qualities. However easily comparisons of this kind may lend themselves to such a construction, especially in the heat of argument, we here were moved by quite another motive—namely to draw from one of Nature's methods, falling well within the popular comprehension, the most striking analogy for the relation we were about to discuss. Were the poetising artist ashamed to recognise himself as an originally merely-imitative mime developed into an 'interpreter' of Nature, then Man himself must be no less ashamed at finding himself again in Nature as a reasoning ape: but it would be very foolish of him, and simply prove that he had not got very far with the thing which distinguishes him from an un-reasoning ape.—The analogy adduced, however, will prove most luminous if, granting our descent from monkeys, we ask why Nature did not take her last step from Animal to Man from the elephant