

Nietzsche, F. (1956[1870]) *The Birth of Tragedy*. F. Golffing, Trans. Doubleday Anchor Books.

Preface (F. Golffing)

N uses style to create delight in the reader viii

he exhorts, rather than argues viii

N is a forerunner of psychoanalysis ix

The Birth of Tragedy (1870)

A Critical Backward Glance (Nietzsche, 1886)

I

This work is personal, and not perfect 3

the Dionysian spirit fights against Socratic ethics -- dialectics, temperance, reason 4

these are not sources of strength, they are symptoms of illness 4

in this “Greek serenity” we see the glow of a sun about to set 4

did Socrates exist entirely in irony? 5

II

this is the work of a young man; courageous, careless 5

the goal was to view scholarship from the vantage of the artist 6

III

the author is so sure of his message that he dispenses with proof 6

the idea is rather to enlist fellow revelers, to tempt them into dancing on mysterious grounds 6

Dionysos is an unrecognized god 7

the message must be sung, not spoken [against *logos*] 7

IV

what role does tragedy play in the Greek mind? it offers frenzy, which we should learn to see as a strength 8

pessimism is a sign of strength, optimism (ala Socrates) is a sign of decline 8

optimism, rationalism, democracy, utilitarianism...all signs of decline, of senility and “somatic exhaustion” 9

V

we should not focus on ethics, but on art as our essential activity 9

at any rate it is wrong to think of ethics as the search for eternal, absolute Truth [cf. Euthyphro or Gorgias]; this is hatred of life 10

cursing affective urges, beauty, sensuality -- in short, cursing and denying *life* 11

N’s book is a counterdoctrine to Socrates, which he named “Dionysos” 11

VI

using Kant and Schopenhauer’s terms to articulate Dionysos 12

mediocrity = democracy = modern ideas 13
against Romanticism as well 13

VII

not nihilism; but a “rising...undaunted” 14
Zarathustra was a Dionysian monster; one who knew how to laugh 15

START OF ORIGINAL BOOK

Preface to Richard Wagner (1871)

book was composed during the recent war [Franco-Prussian?] 16
N is convinced that art is the highest human task 17

The Birth of Tragedy and the Spirit of Music

I

art evolves via the Apollonian-Dionysian duality 19
 Apollo: plastic/visual arts; Dionysian: music 19
 they are locked in an *agon*, a discordant concord; they need each other 19
art: dream; philosophy: existence 20
 dreams are the source of deep delight; they are perfect, our waking reality is not; they have a
 soothsaying role 21
we are in an immense, raging sea sitting calmly in a little rowboat, which is Apollo's *principium
individuationis* (this image is from Schopenhauer) 22
 the Dionysian brings rapture, intoxication, but it is not something we can live in entirely 22
 it is also a connection with nature; connection to each other 23
 we feel a primordial productive power, like a God 24

II

the Dionysian ecstatic reality seems to dissolve the individual and connect him to a deeper collective
power [i.e. to die and be born again in the swarm] 24
 art not as an imitation of nature, but a connection to the essence of the universe 25
the possible excesses of this path are kept in check by Apollo 26
the aesthetic triumph is this overcoming the individual 26
 nature bemoans the fact that its whole was decomposed into individuals 27
 we have a desire to sink back into the original oneness of nature 27
 Apollo throws a veil over this desire 28

III

Olympians as model: triumphant, overflowing life 29
Greeks distrusted the forces of nature; used the fantasy of the gods to hide those forces 30
 remaining on earth, as a living individual, becomes what it means to exist 31
 Apollonian illusions, appearances, hide the forces of nature 31

IV

an original Oneness, ground of being, full of suffering 32

 an original pain is the sole ground of being 33

this is covered over with the illusion of the individual [I think] 33-4

 and mastering and controlling this individual [through reason/temperance] becomes the key to the good life 34

 Dionysos is barbaric to the Socratic; but the former's spirit penetrates the Apollonian illusion 34-5

 the Apollonian artist tries with his monotonous harp to drown out “the demoniac chant of the multitude” 35

 the individual forgets himself in the Dionysian vortex 35

 [of course the Dionysian is the Id, the desiring element churning away inside the Platonic soul, the beast to be tamed by right reason, the beast utterly to be feared because it is the largest and strongest part of the soul – this is all there in *The Republic*]

V

the point of the book is to understand the spirit that is imbued with both Apollo and Dionysos 36

 Homer is Apollo’s artist 36

 the lyrical poet is Dionysian, connected to the original Oneness 38

 he can help us abrogate our subjectivity and become one with the heart of the world, with original pain 38

 he helps with the process of “unselving” 39

 getting away from the subjectively willing and desiring human being 40

 Schopenhauer: released willing is joy; inhibited willing is sadness 40

 our personal objectives distract us from contemplation 41

an artist cannot be an individual subject; he must lose this to be an artist 41

 knowing [via reason, I assume] is not art; it cannot be creation 42

VI

epic poetry: Apollo; folk song: Dionysos 42

 former is even, calm, and mathematical; latter is irregular, uneven 43

 the latter rouses men to wild enthusiasm 44

 the latter can manifest itself as will 45

Apollonian uses images to represent music 45

nature is the source of volition, desire, appetite [i.e. not the individual] 45

 N uses the stormy sea as image for Dionysos; calm shore for Apollo [which is stolen from A’s urging us to “hold the ship out beyond the surf and sea...”] 45

 we can turn into the pure eye of the sun, utterly detached from the will 46

 what is primordial is contradiction and pain 46

VII

he wants to dig around in Greek history to find where tragedy came from 46

 the chorus was important 47

 the birth of tragedy is not about a reverence for the moral intelligence of the multitude, or about the idea of a spectator without drama 49

tragedy is *not supposed to copy reality* 50

the chorus helps us see beyond state and society, beyond all that *separates* us, back into the heart of nature, where we are One 50

there we learn that life is joyful and powerful 50

the quotidian experience of the individual is drowned 51

we see into the true nature of things, and we understand that we can do nothing to change this true nature 51

we are like Hamlet: understanding kills action; and so we need a veil of illusion to live, to act 51

understanding creates a supreme jeopardy of the will, and art heals us, turns our nausea into imaginations that allow us to live 52

VIII

the satyr is our true prototype 52, authentic, connected to god, expressing the truth of nature, things as they really are, plugged into our highest power 53

the tragic chorus is an aesthetic imitation of [or attempt to capture] that dynamic 53

the satyr chorus is a vision of the Dionysian multitude 54

for the poet, image and metaphor are not *copies* of the real, but the real itself 53

the chorus of those who have forgotten their civic life and social mores 56

enchantment is a precondition to dramatic art 56

again, the Dionysian condition is one in which the individual is shattered, and we are returned to the original Oneness 56

the chorus attends their god, Dionysos; it is the highest expression of nature 57

the chorus is a spectator that is connected to Dionysos and is alive in that connection 58

IX

we cannot look directly into the horror of nature; Apollo helps soothe the experience 60

Greek serenity (ala Socrates) is a dampening of life; it is passive endurance of life 60

we must aim at the joy of knowing nature; to do so, we must shed the *principium individuationis* that Apollo/society has given us 61

we must aim at action, become Titans, regain the power to *do*, regain our creative joy 63

Prometheus as model(?), who did not wait to receive the gift of fire, but took it and used it as he willed 63-4

Apollo tranquilizes the individual by drawing boundaries, enjoining self-knowledge, norms 65

the Dionysian destroys the limits Apollo places on us 65

X

individuation is a kind of dismemberment of the One that we are originally; it is the source of all suffering 66

the Dionysian is a beam of joy on a fragmented world; reintegration is a goal 67

we need a philosophy of naked nature, with the bold face of truth 67

a religion is dead when it becomes dogmatic; when certainty replaces myth, the latter of which unsettles certainty and begins again the process of becoming 68

XI

Euripides: art as replica of reality, a way for the common man to see himself on the stage; this is utterly different from the original Greek dramatists 70

His is a formulaic drama in which all could learn the rules and participate on the same (rational) basis 71

this was art appropriate to the democratic *polis* 71

the retreat to serenity and easy pleasure, instead of seriousness and awe 72

democracy's power is a strength merely in numbers, not the strength of people who are superior in talent and perception, just lots of people with some amount of talent and perception 73

in his predecessors' plays [Aeschylus and Sophocles, the older tragedies, which N. favors] Euripides perceived a frightening depth, an infinite background, and so he rationalized drama so as to make that infinity finite and understandable [to everyone] 75

XII

previous Greek tragedy tied the Apollonian and the Dionysian together, but Euripides tries to eliminate the Dionysian 76

his prologue tells the audience what is going to happen and thus kills the suspense, the drama, the tension 79

Socrates follows in Euripides' wake 77

cool reason, knowledge 79

Euripides' spectator was supposed to be in on it, so he could participate 80

the conscious, not the subconscious 81

drama as: making sense and order of chaos 81

instead of the artist who must abandon reason and conscience in order to create, Euripides/Plato wanted to imagine the rational artist who works in the conscious realm 81

they killed Dionysian tragedy 82

sent Dionysos into the sea, to be head of a secret cult 82

[N. sought and found the Dionysian that is there, as minority, in Plato]

XIII

Socrates emerges as the great villain, champion of (rational) knowledge, conscious, intellect, reason...83

he works stridently against the still-alive Dionysian in his day [e.g. Thrasymachus the wolf] 83

there is a sureness to Socrates' affect, almost a smugness, that is hard to miss 85

he was calm in death as well 85, and essentially became a martyr for the cause 86

XIV

Socrates could not connect us with the Abyss, with the irrational 86

to him drama was beguiling, not useful for knowing the good 86

since art was seen as imitation of the sensible world, it was a copy of a copy and thus horribly misleading 87

(and yet the dialogues were a kind of drama) 87

for him art must be subordinate to the dialectic 88

the Socratic element "overgrew" the Dionysian elements and stifled them with its success 88

Aristotle endorsed the chorus, but it was lost 89

Socrates, “the despotic logician,” had his regrets, knew he had killed something good in dramatic art 90

XV

we have taken Socrates to be our martyr as well, and taken Greek society as it was, under his sway, to be a lost Atlantis [so to speak] 91-2

the unveiling of truth through reason shows off “theoretical man’s” power – hence the reverence for science 92

the illusion that thought, through chains of causation, could understand all of being is integral to our way of thinking even now 93

freed from the fear of death, by means of reason 93

the wholesale slaughter we have seen in Western Civilization [this is before the 2 WW] is the result of not having art as the antidote to barbarism 94

for S. knowledge is the true panacea and error is the true evil 94

the purpose of man is to increasingly separate knowledge from illusion/error 94

[but what is this other than S putting onto the species in general his own personal project (as N. will say in BGE (or OGM))]

but there is a whole realm we don’t yet “know”, where it may be that illogic reigns – S. saw this as a frontier to be colonized and tamed by reason, rather than a realm whose power we can draw strength from through art 95

XVI

tension between the thirst for knowledge and our need for art 96

Schopenhauer: music does not represent appearance, but is a direct copy of the will [which for him is the blind, irresistible urge] 97

connect to the possible events of life through music 99

music gives us access to the inmost kernel which precedes all forms 100

music is expressive when the composer has been able to express the heart of an event 100

expression must precede from a direct knowledge of nature, without reason 100

music can give birth to myth; it can cause the delight felt at the annihilation of the individual 101

Apollo glosses over and hides the pain of existence 102

Dionysos connects us to the eternal mother who is constantly creating 102

XVII

Dionysian art shows us the eternal delight of existence, and the horror of individual existence 102

in the former, we are becoming the primal being 102

we are amidst the many forms that are constantly pushing into life 102

[i.e. these forms are not Forms, they are constantly being born, growing and changing, and dying]

amidst the life force of procreative lust 103

Socrates killed this art, forced it to become a secret cult; and helped render music no more than a lame attempt to imitate the empirical world 105

Dionysian music is a mirror to the world-will 105

it was not eradicated by Socrates, but it was forced to flee, and it was replaced by Greek serenity [Socrates’ temperance] 107

it believes it can entirely paper over the Abyss with Apollonian appearances 108

XVIII

Socratic idea that appearances cover over Truth 108

the man of theory who seeks this Truth with intellect is our current ideal 109

we are beginning to see, though, that we cannot find the Forms, that it is a futile effort 109

we no longer see ourselves as omnipotent 110

nothing worse than the slave class that sees its existence as unjust and wants vengeance 110

we have only begun to think what we will do in the absence of the Socratic search for Truth 110

some have rejected the idea that science will find universal truths 111

Kant and Schopenhauer have shown that logic cannot achieve full knowledge of the universe 111

it just gives appearance to the name 'reality' 111

when we turn our backs on the Socratic delusion, we prepare to dwell in the fullness of being 111

XIX

two dogmas: man is essentially good; man is essentially evil 115

opera is Euripidean 116

imagines a primitive period (state of nature) in which we were at the heart of nature 117

Socratic optimism 117

the task of art is to be the Dionysian mirror of the universe, not the slave of appearance, as opera has become 118

Kant and Schopenhauer destroyed intellectual Socratism, so we could engage a more profound consideration of ethics and art 120

the Greek example is instructive, because they were predominantly Dionysian, and were 'Socratified' 120

are the Germans effecting a rebirth of tragedy? 121

[it would be just like a German (N) to think so]

XX

we should learn from the Greeks, learn how to recapture the Dionysian 121-2

Schopenhauer is the great German hope in this project 124

XXI

Apollo is the founder of States 124

both Commonwealth and patriotism need the affirmation of individuality 125

the Greeks, at some point, discovered how to not exhaust themselves in ecstatic brooding nor in a bid for power and glory 125

tragedy was the key, myth shields us from music's pure-natural connection, but also connects us to nature, to "the womb of things" 126

we feel "the very heartbeat of the world-will" and "the unruly lust for life" 127

problem: when we are connected to nature and life through the intervention of music, we will want to flee our individuality, and return "home" 127

Apollo helps avoid a headlong flight into oblivion, cares for our individuality, keeps up the illusion of this world 128

myth can be this shield, that keeps us from a too-direct contact with the "cosmic idea" 128

because the Dionysian can bring self-destruction [echoes of D&G's suicidal line of flight] 129
music addresses us from the center of reality [it is the snowstorm calling to us from the center of Rothko's Tate paintings] 130

tragedy can make us aware of the illusory nature of the Apollonian, not destroy it, just remind us that "I" is but an illusion, a way to cope in the world, not something that actually exists in the world 131

it is when the Dionysian and the Apollonian are intermingled, in what seems like about equal measure, that tragedy (and art) is at its best 131

XXII

musical tragedy creates affects, one feels it, one does not think it 131

it is not accessible to the understanding 132

the tragic myth is Dionysian and Apollonian at the same time, nature made concrete 132

a sublime aesthetic joy at the connection to original Oneness 133

pathos as a form of aesthetic play 134

a poetic justice [rather than a rational one] 134

we should be connected to all when we experience this justice, in the midst of a common pool of feeling 136

XXIII

there is a miracle on stage, what emotion do we feel? do we intellectualize it? 136

Socrates [Euripides] would do the latter, and ruin it 137

we need to connect with the "marvelous ancient power" 138

the pre-Socratic Greeks understood their experience through their myth 138

[I think a lot of what N is doing here is observe Socrates struggling to argue for his way of seeing the world, and the practices he rails against, that he wants to fix with his Socratism, and then N imagines what that culture must have been like, that S was having to struggle so hard against...Thrasymachus, Callicles, etc. are just those who give voice to it all]

a nation must connect its experience to the eternal, the metaphysical meaning of life 139

we are still in the grip of Socratism's feverish search for knowledge, which will not fulfill us 139

we should try to return to the pre-Socratic Greeks, to Dionysius 140

XXIV

Apollo saves us from direct contact with the Dionysian 140

their union is the artistic pinnacle, N seems to say 140

this union is the tragic myth; a higher delight 142

art is *not* an imitation of nature; it is raised up beside nature in order to overcome it 142

we feel delight in art, aesthetic and moral 142

Dionysius is that spirit that shatters and rebuilds the world of individuals, like a child with a sandcastle 143-4

in Socratic art, art is mere amusement 144

in the Dionysian we are privy to extravagant hopes and bitterest pain 144

XXV

we need both the Apollonian and the Dionysian: the latter gives us life and energy, the former protects us; it gives us only as much as we can deal with 145

suffering and beauty are both needed for the fullest life 146