

APOLLONIANISM AND DIONYSIANISM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Apollonianism and Dionysianism are from Nietzsche's First book The Birth of Tragedy. This book interprets certain aspects of the music of Richard Wagner. Wagner was the contemporary composer of the Ring Cycle of operas based on Celtic (Western European) mythology. Nietzsche regarded him as a true successor of Greek Tragedy. He eventually broke with Wagner on philosophical matters, but his regard for Wagner's music remained strong. This present work celebrates comparison and contrast between "Apollonian" and "Dionysian" values.

KEYWORDS: *Apollonianism, Dionysianism, Greek Tragedy, Dream, Intoxication, Artifact*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Friedrich Nietzsche and His Works

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was born in Germany. He was the man who ended the nineteenth century with the fear that the world is changing in attitudes toward religion and science which would result in loss of a sense of purpose in human life. It was Nietzsche's work "The Crucified" that brought postmodern mind ahead in the twentieth century. He was a classical scholar, philosopher and prominent writer. He was a brilliant classical student in his school and college life. Later, at the age of 24, he was appointed as a professor of classical philosophy at the University of Basel. His personal life was also a difficult one. He was up brought by family women. In some of his writings, he has written with antifemale tone. It is said that he was infected with syphilis (a disease by intercourse) from a prostitute in Leipzig. He had taken participation in a Franco-Prussian war, too. He died at the dawn of the twentieth century.

He has written several works and all of his works have been translated into English. *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) was his first work. It has critical comparison and contrast of the present text of Apollonian and Dionysian values. *Spake Zarathustra* argues that the greatest joy comes from self-understanding, self-domination, and self-control. It says that the resultant creativity springs from the "superman", who can create and impose his own laws. The 'superman' celebrated in this work can achieve such a state so overwhelming as to be godlike. For Nietzsche, it is necessary to attain this state to live. *Thoughts Out of Season* has religious argument The contemporary strong repudiation of religion, especially of Christian, is the central talk of this work. In *The Joyful Wisdom*, all the democratic ideals have been despised. In his other work called *Beyond good and Evil*, he makes his characteristic attack on religion arguing about the death of God. In *Genealogy of Morals*, he writes a philosophy of life affirming will to power. He has influenced very much of the twentieth century's postmodern thought, thought of existentialism and thought of psychoanalysis. He concerns much about

changes in attitudes toward religion and science because he thought that these changes would result in the loss of a sense of purpose in human life. There would be a loss of energy of direction and ultimately of civilization itself.

Critical Analysis: Apollonianism and Dionysianism

In the following figure, Apollonianism and Dionysianism are compared and contrasted with their values which have been referred and explained in his text.

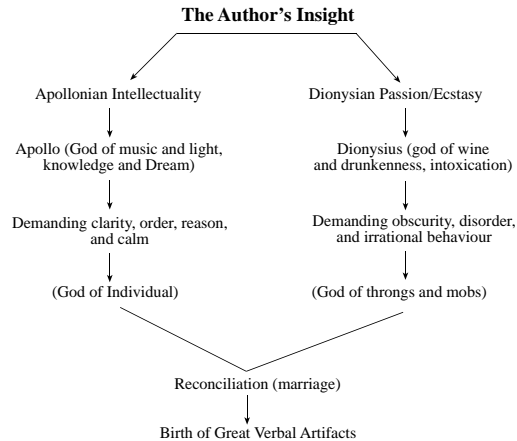


Figure 1

Apollonian–Dionysiac Duality (Greek Tragedy or Marriage)

Nietzsche starts his interpretation with the sense of aesthetics. The beauty of a work of art is for experiencing rather than merely knowing. The increment of the species depends on the duality of the sexes. Both sexes have constant conflicts and from time to time they have reconciliation. Thus, the analogy has been made to show a similarity between the increment of the species and continuous evolution of beautiful works of art. Apollo and Dionysus both are Greek gods and therefore it has been easier to borrow adjectives. The Greeks developed their mystical doctrines of art through plausible embodiments. Both are art-sponsoring deities. Each of them embodies some mystical doctrines of art in the perspectives of experience and of knowledge. In spite of tremendous split, regarding the origins and objectives between these two deities, the two creative tendencies developed alongside one another, by their reconciliation or marriage. Apollo creates plastic arts and Dionysus creates non-visual art of music.

Both are in fierce opposition, with constant conflicts and periodic acts of reconciliation. Both are in a *discordant concord*. The phrase signifies that though they are in hostile camps, they do have still agreeing with qualities. Art feebly denominates them.

Apollo = Dionysus

Art

By the magical effect of a Hellenic act of will, the pair married and begot the Attic tragedy. During 6th – 4th century B.C. Greek tragedy was performed in Athens. Attica was a Greek region in Athens. Nietzsche refers to the Classical Greek tragedy that has honor still now. The Greek tragedy is considered as a great art that exhibits the salient features of both parents- Apollo and Dionysus. This is the marriage of the pair and their characteristic features in the child, art, that have been emphasized in the last paragraph, too:

"Up to this point, I have developed at some length a theme which was sounded at the beginning of this essay how the Dionysiac and Apollonian elements, in a continuous chain of creations, each enhancing the other, dominated the Hellenic mind....."

Nietzsche ends his essay with the same interpretation of the theme –

"And our eyes will come to rest on the sublime and much lauded and Attic tragedy, as the common goal of both urges: whose mysterious marriage, after long discord, ennobled itself with such a child, at once Antigone and Cassandra."

Antigone and Cassandra both are legendary characters in Greek tragedies. Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, defied the authorities in the tragedy *Antigone* by Sophocles and so she suffered. Cassandra, daughter of Priam, King of Troy, is a character in Homer's *Iliad* and also in several tragedies by Aeschylus and Euripides. She had the gift of prophecy but was doomed never to be believed. She foresaw the destruction of Troy and later she was captivated.

The term "Hellenic" has been used several times in the text. The term has been borrowed like others from Greek mythology. Helen was the most beautiful wife of Menelaus, a Greek king. Her abduction by Paris, prince of Troy, led to the Trojan war for ten years. The adjective has been borrowed to associate with the meaning of "aesthetics". To sum up, the text has a theme of "aesthetics" in the great art by a combination of Apollonian and Dionysian values.

Two Physiological Phenomena: Dream & Intoxication

Dream

Apollonian and Dionysiac values can be viewed as two art realms—dream and intoxication. The dream is more important for an artist because it is a dream that inspires him for literary creation. Nietzsche refers to Roman Philosopher Lucretius who said that the marvelous images of gods and goddesses first came into the minds of men. In medieval time, too, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote *The Legend of Good Women* because two goddesses inspired him in a dream to write something about good women. Similarly, William Langland wrote *The Vision of Piers the Ploughman* being inspired by gods. Before that, in ancient Greek culture, the dream was supposed to be the base of all kinds of artworks. The great Greek sculptor Phidias beheld in a dream the entrancing bodies of more-than-human beings. The Greek poets would reply about the mystery of poetic creation referring to dreams. The legendary singer-hero of Richard Wagner's opera, *The Master Singer*, Hans Sachs instructs that the poet interprets dreams—

My friend, it is the poet's work

Dreams to interpret and to mark

Believe me that man's true conceit

In a dream becomes complete

All poetry we ever read

In but true dreams interpreted.

All poetry is only interpretation of dreams and it is a dream in which a man's true conceit, reasoning, and interpretation become complete.

Illusion and Dream

The illusion is literally delusion, but Nietzsche uses this word to signify art. An illusion is an image or a vision which is formed in the dream. It is the illusion which is a precondition of all plastic art as well as the wide range of poetry. The beautiful image or vision formed in a dream is a base of accomplishment or success of an artist.

Plastic art refers to all the products of visible art. Making idols are plastic art. In spite of the above realities of the dream, we still have sensation that they are only illusions. From a poetic point of view, all shapes of dream speak to us directly. All the normal things are realities of normal, ordinary men, but isn't it wonderful that philosophers see illusion even in these normal realities? Everyday reality is also an illusion for them. It was a German philosopher Schopenhauer who considered the ability to view at certain times all men and things as mere phantoms or dream images to be the true mark of philosophic talent. It is universally true that "all men and things" are merely phantoms or dream images (or rather illusions) for philosophers.

Nietzsche explains that the person who is responsive to the stimuli of art behaves toward the reality of dream much the way the philosopher behaves toward the reality of existence: he (the person) observes exactly and enjoys his observations, for it is by these images that he interprets life, by these processes that he rehearses it. A man finds much delight and tranquility in the stimuli of art. He behaves toward the reality of the dream as if he was in the other world, the world of all kinds of pleasures. However, all the time of consciousness, a philosopher, too, believes that the reality of existence is also only an illusion. For the interpretation of life and application of the interpretation of life, these images are more significant. The whole divine comedy of life and also its somber aspects move through these scenes, pleasant images. When people are at the stage of losing the dream, they often call out, "it is a dream! I want it to go on." Why do people cry for that? Nietzsche has given a beautiful explanation for what.

"Our innermost being, the common substratum of humanity experiences, dreams with deep delight and a sense of real necessity. This deep and happy sense of the necessity of dream experiences was expressed by the Greeks in the image of Apollo. Apollo is at once the god of all plastic powers and the soothsaying God, he who is etymologically the Lucent one, the god of light, reigns also over the fair illusion of our inner world of fantasy."

Nietzsche gives a beautiful and bright image of Apollo, as a marvelous divine image of the principal individuation is, with the reference to Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*. Man is caught in the veil of Maya. This Hindu term refers to the philosophy that man has been an illusion of material values. Schopenhauer an idea is that "even as on an immense, raging sea, attached by huge waves, a man sits in a little rowboat trusting his weak craft (skill boat!), so among the furious torments of this world, the individual sits in tranquility, supported by the principal individuation is and relying on it." Indeed a man is alone throughout the life and he goes under all kinds of sufferings. Still, the man's wisdom, his intellect and his self - consciousness all keeps him moving and doing all kinds of things in life. Apollo stands for radiation of individual delight, wisdom, and beauty of "illusion."

Shifting to Dionysiac Pole/Intoxication

Nietzsche gives again the reference to Schopenhauer for shifting from Apollonian pole to Dionysiac pole. In the course of knowledge or experience, a man gains tremendous fear, too. Because of the fear, the principal individuation is shattered and then he is in a position to apprehend the essence of Dionysiac rapture. This Dionysiac change is similar to physical intoxication. To avoid the fear, a man is under the influence of narcotic potions. He sings hymns with others.

Nature becomes rich and exciting for him. He is totally in Dionysiac power. He is in a crowd singing and dancing from place to place. Individual sanity is in their eyes stupid or a person who has the regular attack of diseases. Every intoxicated person is in the intense Dionysiac throng.

It is a Dionysiac change which brings much change in human relation, too. The bond between man and man becomes stronger. Nature reconciles with man. The earth offers its gifts voluntarily and wild beasts walk together in peace. Beauty and violence conjoin and create a beautiful image of the Dionysiac world—

The chariot of Dionysos in bedecked with flowers and garland; panthers and tigers stride beneath his yoke.

Schiller's poem "Paeon to Joy" was converted into a song by Beethoven. Naturally, the beautiful poem turned into the beautiful song. If one were to convert the song into a painting, the Dionysiac ritual could be experienced a great deal. By this experience, the slave emerges as a freeman. The individual (Apollonian) rigidity is shattered. The veil of Maya is torn apart, and there remain broken parts of mystical Oneness (individuality). Man is entirely intoxicated. He now expresses himself through song and dance as the member of a higher community, i.e. community of intoxicated ones. In this time of unconsciousness, he forgets how to walk, how to speak and he dances as though he had wings in the place of arms. Nietzsche writes how a man is in the wonderful world of Dionysus—

"Each of his gestures betokens enchantment; through him sounds a supernatural power, the same power which makes the animals speak and the earth render up milk and honey. He feels himself to be godlike and strides with the same elation and ecstasy as the gods he has seen in his dreams. No longer the artist, he has himself become a work of art."

Man is the finest clay. He is the most precious marble. He is twisted and given a certain shape with the Dionysiac virtues. The artist loses own individual identity and he becomes himself a work of art. His manner and behavior, his words and sounds, his gestures and features all become something very wonderful just like a work of art. He is further inspired by the cry of the *Eleusinian mystagogues* that say it is men who define their own creator. It is men who make all beautiful world. In the time of unconsciousness or in the tranquility of narcotic potions, he becomes himself a creator, and in turn, a creation.

Imitation of Nature

Apollonian and Dionysiac conditions are products of nature. At the stage of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac products, artistic urges are satisfied directly, on the one hand through the imagery of dreams, whose perfection is quite independent of the intellectual rank, the artistic development of the individual; on the other hand, through an ecstatic reality which once again takes no account of the individual and may even destroy him, or else *redeem* (free) him through a mystical experience of the collective. In short, artistic urges are satisfied through the imagery of dreams, i.e. Apollonian virtue, or through an ecstatic reality, i.e. Dionysiac virtue. In relation to these immediate creative conditions of nature every artist must appear as "imitator," either as the Apollonian dream artist or the Dionysiac ecstatic artist or finally (as the Greek tragedy, for example) as a dream and ecstatic artist in one. In the case of dream and ecstatic artist in one, one can experience complete oneness with the essence of the universe. True Aristotle's expression, the imitation of nature, can be seen established in the art of the Greeks. These people had an incredible accuracy in their eyes and keen and unabashed delight in colors. The perfection of these dream scenes by the Greeks might almost tempt us to consider the dreaming Greek as a Homer and Homer as a dreaming Greek; which would be as though the modern man were to compare

himself in his dreaming to Shakespeare. Nietzsche sees Homer as a typical ancient Greek for imitation of nature through dream images. Shakespeare has been considered as a typical modern artist for imitation of nature through dream images along with ecstatic reality.

Dionysiac Greeks and the Dionysiac Barbarians

Throughout the ancient civilization, the Greek Dionysiac celebrations were barbarism. Tribal law, lust, cruelty, barbarism relation with tribal god like the bearded satyr, savage urges of mind were all bases of Greek ancient civilization. It was the proud, imposing image of Apollo, who subdued all those brutal and grotesque Dionysiac forces. Doric art is known for clear, intellectual rather than sensual art and art of purity and uprightness. The doric phase of art is a phase of clear, calm, beautiful works exemplified by the Parthenon in Athens. A license is an irresponsible to use of freedom. Self was controlled by the effort of Apollo's art. The function of the Delphic god, the bearded satyr that also stands for the god Dionysus, developed into something quite different and much more limited. The Greek god Dionysus was pacified. The destructive weapon was seized from his hand. Greek ritual turned into better civilization. Nietzsche writes changes in Greek civilization in the following way-

"That act of pacification represents the most important event in the history of Greek ritual; every department of life now shows symptoms of a revolutionary change. The two great antagonists (Apollo and Dionysus) have been reconciled."

After the reconciliation of these gods, it came to be possible to speak of nature's celebrating an aesthetic triumph; only now the cancellation of the *principal individuation* is came to be an aesthetic event. The chants and gestures of these revelers (both gods) so ambiguous in their motivation, represented an absolute genuine novelty in the world of the Homeric Greeks. Dionysiac music and Apollo's music, both developed equally. Being originally one with nature, they could express the very essence of nature symbolically. Thus an entirely new set of symbols sprang into being. First, all the symbols connected with physical features - mouth face, the spoken word, the dance movement all coordinated the limbs and bent them to its rhythm. Then suddenly all the rest of the symbolic forces - music and rhythm as such, dynamics, harmony – asserted themselves with great energy. There was an emancipation of all the symbolic powers along with the inner freedom. Both gods lived in such harmony that the Greek Apollonian consciousness was found to be a thin veil hiding from him the whole Dionysiac realm.

What do the Olympian gods Say?

There are innumerable gods standing in fine light and art in Olympia and among them is the Apollo, the father of the world of the Olympian gods. This is Apollo, who has generated the whole Olympian world. Whoever approaches the Olympians with a different religion in his heart, seeking moral elevation, sanctity, spirituality, lovingkindness, will presently be forced to turn away from them in ill-humored disappointment. There is not any self-discipline, high intellect, or duty in these gods. There is rather luxuriant, triumphant existence. Anyone can be dismayed in the presence of such overflowing life. Helen, an image of beauty, is seen laughing back at people. Beauty is the beguiling image of their own existence. Nevertheless, the Greeks themselves have much to say about this life.

There is an old legend in which king Midas hunted a long time in the woods for the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus. When he had finally caught him, the king asked him what he (Silenus) considered man's greatest best. Silenus responded with anger that it would be his greatest boon not to hear that, and what would be best for him was quite

beyond his reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. The second best for him was to die soon. But the Olympian gods stand against this popular wisdom. They stand for all kinds of pleasures, comforts and overflow of life, preferring to all the sufferings that a man has. The Greeks were keenly aware of the terrors and horrors of existence. In order to be able to live at all they had to place, before them, the shining fantasy of the Olympians. To escape from all gloomy aspects of life, all that have been shown in mythology, the Greeks constructed the deities. They brought art into being as a completion and consummation of existence. Because of the art, it became possible to stand the wisdom of Silenus on the sun's head and proclaim that it was the worst evil for man to die soon, and second worst for him to die at all. A man's desire is to remain on earth, to identify with existence and even his lament turns to a song of praise.

Naive Art and Naive Artist

Naive, the term, has been used to refer to a kind of classical purity and temper. It means also to be 'natural', and 'naivety' or 'naivete' is for naturalness. Schiller has used this term in his work "On the Naive and the Sentimental in Poetry." He has contrasted the *classic* (naive) with the *Romantic* (sentimental) in art. Similar reference has been given in this text too. The critic of classics, Nietzsche, emphasizes on naivety in art and naivety in the artist. Harmony with nature is a fundamental requirement for every culture to be a kind of paradise. Nietzsche believes that Rousseau's Emile was an artist and the Greek poet Homer was also an artist. Both of them were nurtured in the bosom of nature. Wherever we encounter naivety in art, we are face to face with the ripest fruit of Apollonian culture - which must always triumph first over titans, kill monsters, and overcome contemplation of actuality, the intense susceptibility to suffering, by means of illusions energetically and enthusiastically entertained. It was in the sphere of beauty created by a transcendental genius that the Greeks saw the Olympian gods as their mirror images. It was by means of the aesthetic mirror that the Greek *will* oppose suffering and the *somber* wisdom of suffering which always accompanies an artistic talent. This artistic talent was seen in naive artist Homer.

Dream and Naive Artist & Two halves of Life

The naive artist has been analogous with a dreamer. A naive artist also dreams like a dreamer who exclaims. "This is a dream, and I want to go on dreaming." He takes deep delight in the contemplation of his dream, and he must have also forgotten the day, with its horrible irritating, so to enjoy his dream. There are two aspects, or halves, of life - the waking and the dreaming, or day and night. Day waking is bitter reality, but night dreaming is a pleasant illusion. It is the illusion in which every person has original Oneness, the ground of Being. The delightful illusion has been for a dreamer, a naive artist, just to redeem himself from the suffering, the day waking.

Nietzsche has gone further to differentiate empiric existence or "empirical reality", the reality that can be tested by experience, from the existence of the world, the world of daily experience (or the reality which has been already established). If the idea of the original *Oneness* (being one with nature) produces a new vision, then our dreams will appear to us as illusions of illusions. By this we will have a still higher form of satisfaction of the original desire for illusion. It is for this reason that the very center or heart of nature takes such a deep delight in the naive artist and the naive work of art, which likewise is merely the illusion of an illusion. Nietzsche presents the Renaissance artist Raphael as a best example of immortal naive artists. Raphael has illustrated in a symbolic canvas that reduction of illusion to further illusion is the original act of the naive artist and at the same time of all Apollonian culture.

A great symbol of art has both the fair world of Apollo and its substratum, the terrible wisdom of Silenus. They essentially mutually require one another. With a majestic gesture the god Apollo shows us how there is a need for a

whole world of torment for an individual to produce the redemptive vision and to sit quietly in his rocking rowboat in mid-sea, absorbed in contemplation.

Limits of Individual

The individual is the basic norm of Apollonian value. Individual wisdom and self-control are required by the moral deity Apollo. To self-control, knowledge of self is necessary. For the aesthetic necessity of beauty the imperatives - "know thyself" and "Nothing too much" – are regarded as the hostile spirits of the non-Apollonian sphere. i.e. the Dionysiac values. Everything excess turns to the barbaristic spirit. It was excess love for man that Titanic god Prometheus was devoured by vultures. It was extravagant wisdom that Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx; who waited outside Thebes for years, killing people only because they were unable to answer his questions. Oedipus answered, but this excess, wisdom casts him into a whirlpool of crime. Therefore, limit of the individual is favored by Apollo, and if that is excess. Dionysus is ready to show barbaristic actions.

Interdependence of Dionysiac Spirit & Apollonian Spirit

The Apollonian Greeks found that the temperate beauty of a whole existence rested upon a base of suffering and knowledge which had been hidden from them until the reinstatement of Dionysus uncovered it once more. When it was uncovered, Apollo, too, found it impossible to live without Dionysus. The individual forgets himself in the Dionysiac *Vortex* and became oblivious to the laws of Apollo. Indiscreet extravagance revealed itself as truth, and contradiction, a delight born out of pain, spoke out of the bosom of nature. Wherever the Dionysiac voice was heard, the Apollonian norm seemed suspended or destroyed. Nevertheless, in those places, the prestige and majesty of the Delphic god Apollo also appeared more rigid and threatening than before just for Doric art and the Doric state, just to keep peace and order, purity and beauty. In spite of hostility, both live being interdependent on each other for each other's value.

Nietzsche's Rhetoric

Nietzsche's rhetoric has two major approaches – comparison and contrast. He defines both different polarities, and extends his essay with explanation, especially with a survey of past time. His essay concentrates in Greek society and Greek culture. Though this essay is a criticism of the Ring Cycle of Wagner, he has made references to many other writers and composers of different times. Homer, Shakespeare, Schiller. Beethoven, Rousseau and some others are some of them. His comparison and contrast is between the Apollonian and the Dionysian values; the Greek and the barbarian cultures; the dream and the illusion; the Olympian gods and the Greek people; the individual and the group; and life and death.

Most of the part of the text has been dedicated to the parts of the topic- Apollonianism and Dionysianism. Historical background of the Greek civilization, society and culture, has been described in detail, just as supporting detail, for his argument. It is also remarkable that he has worked as historian to write origin, development and assimilation of the Apollonian and the Dionysian cultures. He is also romantic when he sees more reality and delight in dream preferring to the day or waking reality. The talk of the classic importance is itself very intelligent and rather it is itself Apollonian. When he illustrates some aspects of the Dionysian nature, he himself becomes intoxicated. He is in ecstatic and poetic mode. These aspects of the passage are based on feeling. From poetry one does not have necessarily understanding, but a feeling or an impression. In the passages of the Dionysian diversion, we are a bit thrown off. His point that verbal artifacts can combine both the Apollonian and the Dionysian forces is very persuasive. He focuses on the significance of the Greek tragedies, on unification with nature. His belief is remarkably critical when he says that the two forces must be unified in

the highest cultures. Diversity is everywhere in nature, but yet diversity has one deep longing; to be One with the One. His philosophy is that the eternal goal of the original Oneness is its redemption through illusion. Illusion is an art, not just a dream. It is a dream and illusion that are projections of mental states which give access to the inner nature of humankind. All the psychological theories of the 20th century are based on this philosophy. Through this essay Nietzsche has established a new trend in the study of art.

CONCLUSIONS

The author attempts with his insight to clarify the two basic psychological forces in humankind Apollonian intellectuality and Dionysian passion. These both forces were present in ancient Greek society for which Nietzsche had a high regard. He regards Greek civilization and especially he has appreciated it for its Doric phase for clear, calm, and beautiful works. The Apollonian value as opposed to the Dionysian value, but still he argues that the Greek discovered both forces present together in a culture. The Greek tragedy is the best example in which both these values have worked together. In his own time, he believes that the Apollonian and the Dionysian values meet in the music of Richard Wagner. His belief has been profound in *The Birth of Tragedy*. His psychological types have been represented by the Greek gods – Apollo and Dionysius. Apollo stands for intellectuality. He is the god of the individual. He demands clarity, order, reason and calm. He has been visualized with "Dream". Quite differently, Dionysius has been visualized with "intoxication". He stands for ecstasy and passion. He inspires obscurity, disorder, irrational behavior and hysteria. He is known as the god of throngs and mobs. However, when both reconciled and meet at a point in a work of art, it becomes a natural art. The Dionysiac and Apollonian elements, in a continuous chain of creations, each enhancing the other, have dominated the Hellenic mind.

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