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*Christian Morality is utterly opposed to the aesthetic; it is the antipathy to life itself and, therefore, to art; for all of life is based on semblance, art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error: The artful life is beyond good and evil.
(Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* & *The Genealogy of Morals*)*

SHACKLE THUMPING MORALITY & THE PRIMORDIAL FREEDOM OF JOYFUL SUBMISSION

*To *submit* here means to lay down the myth of self-sufficiency and to fuse with those people or things that one is dependent upon, leaving behind rigid illusions of judging one's surroundings from a pedestal of superiority.

CONFLICT - DANCING FREEDOM IN DIONYSIAN ANTAGONISM



spinning metaphors

Life is based on ephemeral principles blurred as in spinning by our presuppositions. These principles are played out as metaphors for reality, deceptions, and frail structures masquerading as solid truths. This assumption is followed by the foundational idea that man's invincible urge is to prefer deception to the frightening energy of creating or choosing the most empowering metaphors. To enter this spinning energy is to invoke Dionysus, who is used as a metaphor aware of its own moving changeability. Apollo is rendered in opposition, representing the clear, plastic order of dreams. The whirling motion of metaphorical structures is embedded in poetry, music, and a Dionysian frenzy for heartfelt intoxication with the aesthetic. The figure in motion is dancing with joyously drunken steps on a rope pulled tight between a well-ordered Apollonian structure and a Dionysian rebellion. This tight-pulled duality is analogous to the duality between the sexes- always in tension but moving towards one another for brief moments of resolution from which spring offspring whose names are collectively the artful life.

There is no hierarchy between Apollo and Dionysus; Their polarity is one of forceful procreation. In their sway, we are always in conflict, and this conflict is the spark behind Art. Deeper inside of itself, this duality is the basis of life. Its forcefully polarized movement, fertile ground for errors and perspectives, is necessary.

WHY IS CONFLICT NECESSARY? MOVING MULTIPLICITY VS. RIGID INDIVIDUALITY

Tension between opposites makes rigid individuality impossible because it must engage multiple participants. It is collaborative and kinetic. The Dionysian pulls the plastic stability of the Apollonian structure headlong in to the frenzied realm of the heart. The result is a seesaw instability in which the individual forgets him or her self. As the Dionysian emotions *awake* and *grow*

in intensity, everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness. (Pg.164, *The Birth of Tragedy*). The isolated individual can bask comfortably in the illusion of Apollonian order.

Its nature is that of dreams; it renders all things clear and illuminated by its own deity.

It is painfully and arrogantly self-assured by plastic clarity.

It needs to be challenged by the reckless frenzy of the Dionysian so that its illusory island can move. In the end, Nietzsche projects this movement to lead towards immersion – merging with Dionysus. The paradox here is that merging is never final, for this would mean a loss of the tense duality that is the basis for life and art.

SUBMISSION IN WELDING TOGETHER

Nietzsche praises the momentary merging of one human with another and of mankind with nature. This action requires the submission of *bowing down*. This bowing is not the same thing as a loss of identity. It is an annihilation of the principle of individuation- the illusory stability of isolation. In sprinting words evoking Dionysian fervor, Nietzsche describes the connection between multiplicity, movement, and unity.

Transform Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy" in to a painting; let your imagination conceive the multitudes bowing to the dust, awestruck- then you will approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid, hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or "impudent convention" have fixed between man and man are broken. Now, with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of maya had been torn aside and were not fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity. (Pg. 165, *The Birth of Tragedy*)

JUBILEE: UNITY THROUGH MUTUAL SUBMISSION

The annihilation (imagine the brute force of that word!) of the *principium individuationis*, the principle of individuation, is both a vital prerequisite to and a result of immersion in the world. Nietzsche calls this annihilation an *artistic phenomenon* and an *artistic jubilee* for nature itself. (Pg. 167, *The Birth of Tragedy*). As an expression of unity between man and nature, a fusing of neighbors, and a spell of motion, this jubilee has a great deal of communion with submission.

There are three main types of submission that can be found in Nietzsche's descriptions of destroying the *principium individuationis*. The first regards the

* All references to page number in this essay reference the appearance of *The Birth of Tragedy* in the anthology *Art and Its Significance*, Third Edition, SUNY Press, Albany, New York, 1994

environment and materials, the second regards what Nietzsche calls artistic jubilee, and the third regards art itself.

IMMERSION IS SUBMISSION OF THE SELF TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes a person so enchanted with Dionysian frenzy that they have replaced the forgotten habits of speech and walking with dancing and flying through the air. In this person, given over to their environment, there is a merging of body and nature rich with textured passion. (Pg.165, *The Birth of Tragedy*)

Tea bowls created for the Japanese Tea Ceremony provide an interesting illustration of the connection between this kind of abandon and submission. In a long and rich tradition deeply influenced by a man named Sen no Rikyu in the 16th century, the craft of making tea bowls embodies a connection to materials that steps boldly into submission to their properties. Clay being turned in to a bowl is allowed to keep its irregularities, which develop in to flowing inconsistencies in wall thickness and texture. The final glaze firing is given over to a pit or a cave, and bits of ash, wood with high tannic acid content, and a symphony of organic debris is encouraged to fall on the bowl, creating rough, flowing, randomly influenced textures and colors that could never be created by the will of a craftsman. The artist creating the bowl willingly relinquishes some of his own aesthetic control, submitting to the elements of his environment in an eloquent collaboration. This rings in wonderful harmony with Nietzsche's idea of immersion in and merging with the environment.

DIONYSIAN INTOXICATED ECSTASY IS THE SUBMISSION OF APOLLONIAN INDIVIDUALISM TO ARTISTIC JUBILEE.

Nietzsche also sketches an artist so given over to the ecstasy of the artful life and the creative act that their individualism, their need to define themselves and work in their own interest, disintegrates. This release is the *artistic phenomenon* mentioned earlier. (Pg. 167, *The Birth of Tragedy*) The legendary musician and performer Jimi Hendrix entered in to this type of frenzied intoxication in many ways, but with particularly vivid quality at the '67 Monterey Pop Festival, smashing his guitar on stage, lighting it on fire, and then passionately performing *felatio* on its burning body. Pete Townsend similarly wrecked one instrument after another, even when he could not afford it – Even, in fact, when the instruments had been borrowed on the sole condition that they not be destroyed. These performances have become legendary because they so deeply embody Nietzsche's irrational, impassioned Dionysian vibrancy. True to his idea, they annihilate the *principium individuationis*, overwhelming the self-interest and self-consciousness of the artists involved.

THE ARTFUL LIFE INVOLVES A SUBMISSION TO ART.

Deeper in the sway of creative ecstasy, Nietzsche pushes for an image of an artist so given over to their joy that they *become* a work of art. Far beyond a single artist submitting themselves to the service of unity between fellow humans or between humanity and the earth, Nietzsche describes this depth as penetrating through *the paroxysms of intoxication* (so that) *the artistic power of all nature reveals itself to the highest gratification of the primordial unity.* (Pg. 165, *The Birth of Tragedy*) This forceful dynamic seems almost unfathomable. Perhaps Chris Burden's 1971 piece *Shoot*, in which he was inspired to have a friend put a bullet through his arm against a white gallery wall, comes close to this sort of abandon. In whatever case, it seems fitting to relate Nietzsche's description to a submission to art. It certainly involves the dissolving of the artist's need for self-interest and a chiseled identity.

JOY INVOLVES A LEAP OF ABANDON.

At the very climax of joy, Nietzsche writes that *there resounds a cry of horror or a yearning lamentation for an irretrievable loss.* (Pg. 167, *The Birth of Tragedy*) Giving one over to joy in this ecstatic way forces a person to lose any stark individualism lurking in their perspective. One who is overcome by joy with abandon ceases to care about defining their own identity for themselves. It follows naturally that such a person would not have a need to rigidly define right from wrong, judging the people around them as morally upright or degenerate. A morally judgmental worldview seeks to nervously separate the self from others along moral lines. In Nietzsche's terms, this is the *antithesis of life itself*. This could be extended to the idea that judging another person is a way a parasitically sucking life from them, as the one judging is built up by cutting their neighbor down below their own constructed moral level. This is a nervous need to define oneself in contrast to *other people* of a less developed moral stature. Nietzsche judges these judges to be *poor wretches.* (Pg. 165, *The Birth of Tragedy*) The opposite of this posture might be identified as the freedom of joyful abandon. The following section will describe these opposites in further detail.

THE ROLE OF ART IN KINETIC INSTABILITY

As the kinetic offspring of the tense relationship between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, art expresses the energy of instability and uncertainty whose excitement is in direct opposition to what Nietzsche brands the poor, wretched pity of morality that is sure of its own judgments. Regarding this type of moralist, he takes on a denigrating tone.

There are some who, from obtuseness or lack of experience, turn away from such phenomena as from "folk diseases," with the contempt or pity born of the consciousness of their own "healthy-mindedness." But of course such poor wretches have no idea how corpse-like and ghostly their so-called "healthy-mindedness" looks when the glowing life of the Dionysian revelers roars past them. (Pg. 165, The Birth of Tragedy)

This way of looking at the world, for Nietzsche, is deeply grounded in Apollonian structural illusions. It chains a person to a nervous need to define right from wrong, and to judge others in order to derive life from their own moral self righteousness.

AGAIN, WITH MORE FORCE

Any attempt to identify concrete truths or laws is the haughty calculation of ignorance. Nietzsche adds to this in Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense the idea that the drive to identify truth and to define right and wrong is fueled by self-interest.

*He (the self-appointed judge of truth) is indifferent toward pure knowledge that has no consequences; toward those truths which are possibly harmful and destructive he is even hostilely inclined.
(-Pg. *, 3 On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense)*

This self-interest could be interpreted as the will to derive life from judging others less morally fit than oneself described in an earlier section. Compare this posture to that of the artist who is so submitted to serving unity in their work that they dissolve to become the art themselves. Here are two polar opposites, embodied in part by Apollo and Dionysus.

The search for true morality, reduced to laws and rules, is an illusion that has forgotten it is an illusion. In Nietzsche's view, God is the invention of poetry, like Dionysus and Apollo, but the flaw of the Christian God is that He, through the voices of *poor* religious *wretches*, resists being the invention of poetry; He claims to be absolute, and by extension His morals are propped up on crutches masquerading as stable derivatives of an unchanging deity.

Creativity can be authentic because it acknowledges that it is an illusion. The very will to identify truth is to deny both the aesthetic and Art. In Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, Nietzsche assails the will to know truth with certainty.

*The pride connected with knowing and Sensing, lies like a blinding fog over the eyes and senses of men, thus deceiving them concerning the value of existence.
(-Pg. 1, On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense)*

* The page reference here refers to an online version of On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense by the American Nihilist Underground Society

Creativity, on the other hand, revels in its own myth making practices. It is fueled by the ambiguities, inconsistencies, and whirling distortions that different perspectives weave through the world. With Dionysian glee and laughter, the artful life takes joy in not rigidly defining right from wrong. Realizing these to be myths constructed by the herd.

DISTILLING

In Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, Nietzsche sets up a dynamic describing the distillation of truth through the various faculties of a person. In his model, truth trickles down from a nerve stimulus to become an image, which is then filtered through a complex of bias-encrusted language, before finally being distilled in to a concept. Nietzsche likens a grouping of concepts to a complexly constructed dome floating on running water. (-Pg. 6, On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense)

Assuming, for a moment, the existence of a God who somehow embodies truth, we can extend this distilling model to rigid morality. If the thrust of Nietzsche's model for the distillation of truth is applied to a possibly existent God, the resulting distortions become compiled and compacted to an outrageous point.

GOD

- filtered through some sort of nerve stimulus
- distilled in to an image, however abstract and sophisticated
- distilled in to words
- distilled in to a concept of:

GOD'S NATURE

- compacted in to an image, however abstract and sophisticated
- translated in to words
- distilled in to a concept of:

TRUTHS DESCRIBED BY GOD'S NATURE

- pinned down as a list of rights and wrongs.
- translated in to words which must then be interpreted by the listener through the veils of their presuppositions

All of this, furthermore, takes place over the course of history.

How can we know God's nature or the 'truths' that his nature might describe if his very existence is unclear to our feeble, warped senses? The religion of Christian morality is opposed to the aesthetic. Its dogma is rigid and unwilling to be stretched by a tension with the Dionysian poetry, and it turns its face in fear from the dance that is possible when it realizes its own mythological nature.

Perhaps, though, the problem in Christianity's rigidity is not to be identified in the unknowable nature of God (whose certain existence alone is veiled to

our perception) but rather in the idea that a human being, through whose self-interested perspective all things are hopelessly and deceptively warped, could ever hold within itself even a thread of a truth, *if* it could even reliably perceive such a thing.

Nietzsche defines in sharp tones the posture of Judgmental Christian morality, linking it to an Apollonian lust for unmoving, precise plastic ethics. This type of judgment creates poor wretches enslaved by a nervous insecurity whose only rest is found in deeming themselves better than others. As a wall-constructing habit, this is the opposite of unity with nature and neighbor. In tension with Apollo, he sketches the outline of a Dionysian freedom unhindered by a need to define itself in contrast to others along moral lines. This posture joyfully revels in the imperfections and fluidity of anything that would call itself an absolute. It is free to define itself, but also free from the need to do so in contrast to others (as in a posture of judgmental morality). The Dionysian does not need to define its own identity because its identity is partially defined in a profound unity with other people, with nature, and with materials.