2007

The Anatomy of Nietzsche's Transformation of Dionysus

Thomas Drew Philbeck
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

THE ANATOMY OF NIETZSCHE’S TRANSFORMATION OF DIONYSUS

By

THOMAS DREW PHILBECK

A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Interdisciplinary Humanities
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Summer Semester, 2007

Copyright © 2007
Thomas Drew Philbeck
All Rights Reserved
The members of the Committee approve this dissertation of Thomas Drew Philbeck defended on May 25th, 2007.

________________________________________
Mariarmen Martinez
Professor Directing Dissertation

________________________________________
John Marincola
Outside Committee Member

________________________________________
David Kangas
Committee Member

________________________________________
David Johnson
Committee Member

Approved:

________________________________________
David Johnson, Chair, Department of Interdisciplinary Humanities

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
To
Garland H. Allen
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: SCHOPENHAUER AND THE WILL</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: NIETZSCHE’S PHILOSOPHY OF BECOMING</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: ROMANTICISM, PHILOLOGY, AND CULTURE</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: NIETZSCHE’S “UNTIMELY” HISTORICAL MOVE</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

Nietzsche

Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>The Birth of Tragedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>Untimely Meditations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td>Human, All Too Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>The Gay Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BGE</td>
<td>Beyond Good and Evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Daybreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>On the Genealogy of Morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TI</td>
<td>Twilight of the Idols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>The Anti-Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EH</td>
<td>Ecce Homo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essays and Lectures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Attempt”</td>
<td>Attempt at Self-Criticism, Preface to BT 2nd publication, 1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW</td>
<td>The Dionysian Worldview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GrS</td>
<td>The Greek State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>Homer’s Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP</td>
<td>Homer and Classical Philology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>The Pre-Platonic Philosophers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTG</td>
<td>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>On Schopenhauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>On Teleology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPh</td>
<td>We Philologists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Critique of Pure Reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>System of Transcendental Idealism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schopenhauer

| WWR | World as Will and Representation Volume 1 |
| WWR 2 | World as Will and Representation Volume 2 |
| FR | Four-fold Root of Sufficient Reason |
| PP | Parerga and Paralipomena |

Anthologies

| NCT | Nietzsche and The Classical Tradition |
| NA | Nietzsche and Antiquity |

Others

| DK | *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* – Diels/Kranz |
| TM | *Truth and Method* – Hans Georg Gadamer |
| NPF | *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* – James Porter |
| MVD | “The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard” – Albert Henrichs |
| NR | *The Nietzsche Reader* – Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large |
| NT | *Nietzsche on Tragedy* – Silk and Stern |
ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the construction and conception of Dionysus in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, especially the components of his thought that present the god to the modern era. The structure of the dissertation provides four ‘genealogical moments’ in Nietzsche’s adoption and transformation of the deity. These moments are intended to distinguish Nietzsche’s Dionysus from earlier Romantic and Renaissance treatments of the god, and to demonstrate the interdisciplinary elements of his composition.

The first two chapters articulate the combination of philosophical and philological influences that seize Nietzsche’s attention and become part of the philosophical structure of Dionysus. They argue that Nietzsche’s Dionysus is a response to the tradition of German Idealism, especially the problematic of subjectivity. Arthur Schopenhauer’s influence is critical, though Nietzsche reaches back to Greek philosophy before Plato in order to find a suitable cosmological perspective in which to ground his figure of Dionysus. Employing and transforming Schopenhauerian notions of subjectivity, I argue that Nietzsche creates an image of Dionysus that he supports with Heraclitean Becoming and Democritean Atomism.

The final two chapters argue that Nietzsche’s transformation of Dionysus is complete once he reconfigures the purpose of the deity, making him a radical critique of nineteenth-century historical method. Nietzsche’s Dionysus also emerges out of a particular matrix of the nineteenth-century Zeitgeist, wherein Nietzsche is influenced by the historical methods of his colleague Jacob Burckhardt and attempts to evince the anthropological mechanisms of philology. Finally, I argue that Nietzsche’s reconstitution of history in terms of psychological modalities of being solidifies Dionysus in his modern form and represents Nietzsche’s overall response to the Idealist metaphysical problematic of subjectivity.
This project began with an inspiration that now seems quite distant from the final product. In Nietzsche’s writings, especially those that put forth his notion of Dionysus and the Dionysian, I noticed several structures of reasoning that appeared analogous to some Eastern philosophical principles, especially in Buddhism. Still, while it seemed that he espoused similar structures of thinking with Eastern philosophies, he certainly showed some contempt for Buddhism in explicit statements from his later writings. This encouraged me to look for Eastern influence in Nietzsche’s background to try and work out the contradictions.

Immediately, Schopenhauer’s influence on Nietzsche began to answer my questions concerning Nietzsche’s incomplete considerations of Eastern philosophies. Schopenhauer was certainly one of the most knowledgeable of his generation, in terms of the appreciation of Hinduism and Buddhism, and it is clear that Nietzsche did not reach this level of familiarity with them. Armed with Schopenhauer’s influence on Nietzsche’s philosophy and especially on the seemingly eastern contexts of Nietzsche’s Dionysus, I began to visualize how Dionysus, presented in the twentieth-century as a god of epiphany and violence by Karl Kerényi, Walter Otto, Marcel Detienne, and many more, may have had his origins in Nietzsche’s work. This, of course, appeared not just to be a consequence of Nietzsche’s work, but to be the extension of Schopenhauer’s easterly, if not Eastern, perspective.

My first instinct was to wonder whether or not Eastern philosophical principles were necessary for a relevant conception of Dionysus. After all, it is old hat that the ancient Greeks thought that Dionysus was a wandering god who had moved late into the Greek mainland. Never mind that recently archaeologists have placed Dionysus in Greece as early as the 12th century BCE. Apparently, the archaic and classical Greeks did not know this, or it stands to reason Herodotus would not have equated Dionysus with Osiris and exclaimed that the
Dionysian worship was directly attributable to Egyptian influence. At any rate, the project to see if the ancient Dionysus and modern Dionysus were both dependent upon Eastern ideals presented itself as unique and intriguing.

It is here that I would like to thank the members of my committee, who encouraged me to do research and especially to continue to focus on the tangible aspects of such a project. In working to find the correlations between the ancient and modern Dionysus, as well as the correlations between modern classical scholarship and Nietzsche’s Dionysus, I realized that, in order to begin the project I wanted, I would need to know exactly where Nietzsche’s Dionysus originated. Naturally, I went to the library, scoured the Internet, and thumbed multitudes of journal articles. Though I found synopses that were relevant, and some texts that devoted several pages to Dionysus, I found no text that was primarily devoted to delivering the intellectual composition of Dionysus and demonstrating how and where Nietzsche created his version of the deity. Since this step was missing from the beginning, I listened to my committee and pursued this area as the main focus of my dissertation.

Though the final product is very narrow and somewhat distant from the grand vista of my original thought, I have learned a great deal from this experience and from taking the opportunity to fill in a gap in the record about one of philosophy’s and mythology’s most interesting characters. I certainly could not have accomplished this on my own. I would especially like to thank Maricarmen Martinez for her steadfast encouragement and productively insightful criticisms. Without them, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank David Kangas for his invaluable guidance during the early stages of this project, when it was easiest to go astray. A special thank you to David Johnson and the Department of Interdisciplinary Humanities for the financial support and assistantships that have made my goals possible, and thank you to John Marincola for his always uplifting demeanor. Everyone should be so pleasant to work with. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support and their
patience. They never restricted me from following a path of my own, and that is a rarer gift than one would suppose.
INTRODUCTION

The goal of this dissertation is to establish the ideas and events in Nietzsche’s philosophy that are responsible for the genesis of the modern view of Dionysus. I will demonstrate that there are four main events, ‘genealogical moments’, that transform Dionysus from a Renaissance and Romantic symbol for the passions into a culturally significant representative of human ontological orientation, and that Nietzsche uses the new version of Dionysus to respond to the tradition of Idealism. The following chapters will describe the genealogical moments of the modern Dionysus in Nietzsche’s thought by dissecting the anatomy of Nietzsche’s transformation of the deity. The genealogical moments provide information in three areas: (1) They demonstrate where Nietzsche gained a conception of Dionysus, (2) They show how Nietzsche united his influences to produce his conception, and (3) They establish that Nietzsche, in fact, transforms Dionysus into his own original philosophical contribution. The four events chosen are considered the most significant in Nietzsche’s appropriation and revitalization of the god and establish Dionysus as a multifaceted response to both the philosophical tradition of Idealism and the standard historical methodology of nineteenth-century philology.

The significant and original contribution of this dissertation is the genealogical approach to the anatomy of Nietzsche’s Dionysus. To my knowledge, there is no treatise that attempts to discuss the conditions necessary for the interdisciplinary production of Nietzsche’s view of Dionysus, taking into account the fields of philosophy, philology, and history. There are an incredible number of texts about Nietzsche in any library, though most of them concern his philosophy or his relationship to the modern era. Very few consider his philological background other than to note that he was a professor of philology and that his tenure as such is, by all accounts, considered a failure. There are articles that discuss Nietzsche’s debt to Schopenhauer or to the Romantics and
there are texts that consider Nietzsche’s philological views of Dionysus as a foundation for his mature philosophy. However, none detail how it is that Nietzsche merged his philosophical demeanor with his philological interests in order to arrive at a conception of Dionysus that stands apart from earlier treatments, while simultaneously acting as a philosophical critique. The genealogical moments detailed in this dissertation speak directly to this lacuna in the study of the origins of Nietzsche’s Dionysus.

The most relevant approaches to this topic are found in the work of Max L. Baeumer, Albert Henrichs, and James Porter. All three consider areas close to the purpose of this dissertation, and for this reason are taken into account throughout the following chapters. Henrichs’ and Baeumer’s contributions to this study are significant because their works acknowledge the philological aspects of Dionysus and are primarily articulated toward the history of Dionysus, including the areas wherein Nietzsche plays a part. In their informative and illuminating articles, both concentrate particularly on Nietzsche’s indebtedness to major cultural figures, authors, and prior philologists. Their approach is quite different from the majority of research that tends to stay within the parameters of interpreting Nietzsche’s philosophical “system” (if one can be found to exist). Such efforts often include comments on the philosophical meaning of the Dionysian, but without the context of philology. Bauermer and Henrichs, on the other hand, aim directly for concrete evidence of appropriated perspectives from earlier thinkers. Remarkably, Baeumer’s work is primarily historical, the discipline that Nietzsche criticizes most, and yet he finds nothing new in Nietzsche’s portrayal of Dionysus. Meanwhile, Henrichs, a noted philologist, concludes that Nietzsche, who was unsuccessful as a philologist, has accomplished a highly original transformation of the deity. Both scholars, however, limit their approaches to the history of interpretations of Dionysus and include Nietzsche in the overall lineage. Neither attempts to detail the conditions necessary for the composition of the Dionysian or elaborate upon the inspirational construction of the idea in Nietzsche’s thought.
Other relevant scholarship was scarce and found primarily in the form of two anthologies, *Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition* (1979) and *Nietzsche and Antiquity* (2004). Outside of these collections of articles, only a few scholars had devoted time extensively to Nietzsche’s philology. James Porter’s scholarship is the most recent and prolific. He has made his career by examining Nietzsche’s philological interests as the underpinning of the content and history of many of Nietzsche’s mature philosophical ideas. His texts include *The Invention of Dionysus* (2000) and *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (2000), though it should be noted that the first title does not attempt what this dissertation does. Instead, Porter argues that Nietzsche’s philology is the grounding of his early philosophical forays and that *The Birth of Tragedy* is in line with his mature philosophical production. While I examine aspects of this in my dissertation, and agree with and use his positions for support of my own, the focus of my project is quite different.

The approach of this dissertation is to extract the threads of philosophical and philological thought that are evident in the body of Nietzsche’s work and to choose those which are responsible for attracting him to the Dionysian. These threads will lead to the philosophical and philological conditions that were necessary in order to construct the concept of Dionysus that he portrays throughout his career. An examination of the tributaries of influence on the modern Dionysus reveals the extent to which the modern Dionysus belongs to the portrayals prior to Nietzsche and what aspects of the modern Dionysus are Nietzsche’s original inventions. This dissertation will demonstrate in what ways Nietzsche changed the common understanding of Dionysus into a phenomenon that has since been taken up vigorously in history, literature, art, drama, dance, psychology, religion, and even thoroughly reconsidered within classical studies.

The dissertation relies heavily on primary sources during the first two chapters and specifically avoids involving a large amount of secondary literature that interprets either Schopenhauer’s or Nietzsche’s philosophy. This is a methodological choice that was made in order to demonstrate that Nietzsche’s
conceptions could be directly tied to primary sources without the need to first interpret them along the lines of any particular post-Nietzschean hermeneutic agenda. During the third and fourth chapter the dissertation includes interpretations and commentary on Nietzsche’s philosophical positions, though it still steers clear of post-Nietzsche textual exegeses of Dionysus. I make this choice to avoid using post-Nietzschean conceptions of Dionysus to justify Nietzsche’s treatment of the god. That form of support would only be an elaborate form of begging the question. By circumventing both of these potential issues, the desire is that the conclusions will have a greater impact and scholastic weight.

The dissertation is structured in four chapters. In the first chapter, I establish that Nietzsche is speaking to the tradition of Idealism and that the weighty influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche’s conception of Dionysus earmarks Dionysus as an extended product of Schopenhauer’s use of the Will as response to the discourse on the problematic divide between ‘subject’ and ‘object.’ In addition, I demonstrate that Nietzsche’s Dionysus relies upon Schopenhauer’s aesthetic position and the concept of kinesthetic knowledge, which provides a basis for direct knowledge of the Will and thus attempts to bridge the divide by employing existential experience rather than formulaic philosophy. In the second chapter, I show that Nietzsche relies heavily on whom he terms the “Pre-Platonic” philosophers in order to combat the problems of post-Platonic metaphysics by establishing Becoming in place of Being as a philosophical foundation. The consequences of that position are exhibited as constituents of Nietzsche’s Dionysus. I provide evidence that Nietzsche is especially indebted to the philosophy of Heraclitus. The ancient philosopher acts as a philosophical model for conceptualizing Becoming and lends support to Nietzsche’s conception of Dionysian heroic pessimism. Furthermore, materialism, especially Democritean materialism, enables the initial logic and coherence of Nietzsche’s Dionysian critique of values. In both chapters, I clearly show that the
ramifications of these influences are displayed in Nietzsche’s texts as attributes of Dionysus.

Chapter three begins with a change in perspective. I argue that Dionysus is not simply a philosophical idea. He is also a product of, and response to, nineteenth-century history. In this role, Dionysus characterizes history as a psychological phenomenon and not just an empirical exercise. I acknowledge Nietzsche’s debt to the prior treatments of Dionysus and demonstrate that the third genealogical moment takes place when he uses Dionysus for a new purpose, the philosophical restructuring of philology. I argue that Nietzsche’s use of Dionysus differs from earlier Romantic purposes and that while indebted to earlier conceptions of the deity, Nietzsche posits the god in a way that was not possible for Romantic thinkers. I also make sure to account for the historical and cultural influences that play a part in shaping the modern Dionysus based on the fact that, as part of Nietzsche’s philosophy, he is also an historical artifact. The fourth chapter illuminates the final genealogical moment that brings the modern Dionysus to life, the successful transformation of Dionysus from mythological symbol into a divinity commensurate with the psychological modalities of the human condition. This occurs in Nietzsche’s radical conceptualization of history. I recapitulate the other genealogical moments, showing how they play a part in the construction of Nietzsche’s historical move. I argue that, for Nietzsche, the modern Dionysus represents a circumvention of the metaphysical limitations of the intellect and that with Dionysus Nietzsche intends to enlighten historians with the critique that the true nature of history appears only when the metaphysically reflective mode of psychological consciousness is lost.

Before moving on to the main body of the dissertation it is important to take a moment to consider Nietzsche’s philosophy. Nietzsche’s philosophy is not systematic. In fact, he states his position best in *Twilight of the Idols* when he remarks, “I distrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a
lack of integrity.”¹ In addition, Nietzsche is extremely self-critical. He scrutinizes his own ideas and allows them to evolve throughout his career. Above all, he prizes an “intellectual conscience” that exhibits the fearlessness to acknowledge self-doubt and inconsistency in one’s own thoughts and convictions. Without this ability, in Nietzsche’s view, consistency reduces the human being into a fossil that no longer resembles nor reflects the real world wherein contradiction and conflict is rampant, from moral values to the physical cosmos. Like other major influences on the nineteenth-century, Nietzsche is attempting to create a peripety for philology and history and to reconsider the disciplines as anthropological predicates rather than avenues for ultimately revealing truth about the past. For Nietzsche, there is no truth in the past. Both the past and the present are cultural constructs along with their products. Instead, Nietzsche seeks to commune with the ancient Greek mindset by exploring the only condition of existence that moderns share with them, the physical human body and its location in society and in nature.

By beginning simplistically, Nietzsche attempts to construct a philosophy that does integrate anything superfluous that does not come forth self-evidently. Working in an unconventional manner, Nietzsche arrives at the conclusion that metaphysical thought, such as that presented by Plato, which lauds abstract ideal or non-material value judgment as the ‘real’ over and above the objective recognition of pain, justice, chaos, love, and injustice as equally necessary components of life, is a sickness that is symptomatic of the “progress” of Western, specifically German, civilization. To him, all distinction and prioritization are human-centered tasks, not cosmic ones. His inverted view claims that the

standard historical perspective, like the motility of a crab, walks backwards placing a teleological framework on a cosmos wherein there is none.\textsuperscript{2}

The complexity of Nietzsche’s perspective has inspired hundreds of texts and could not be covered adequately by any single project. He was even content to contradict himself in his writings and to hold multiple positions at once. He left many of his maxims subject to the fallacy of ambiguity simply because it made them more human, and more honest, in his eyes. This is an example of how Nietzsche shies from a system of any sort and why his version of Dionysus is so different. Dionysus represents Nietzsche’s attempt to demonstrate the method of overcoming the divide between self and the world. Accordingly, this is accomplished by embracing ‘the Dionysian,’ which represents a loss-of-self, a loss of subjecthood, and dissolution of ego. By doing so, Nietzsche claims that one loses the illusory distinction between mind and matter and recognizes that the self is the same non-valued materially tumultuous change as the rest of the universe. Nietzsche presents Dionysus as a trans-historical lesson that the human condition is the staring point for all inquiry and the ground of all history.

In addition to Nietzsche’s philosophy, the question concerning which Dionysus I am speaking of must be addressed. Those familiar with Nietzsche recognize that the Dionysus presented in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} is not the same Dionysus that is referenced in the \textit{Anti-Christ} or \textit{Ecce Homo}. One could argue that the two are separate and that they should be distinguished whenever possible in order to obviate confusion over when it is that the “modern” Dionysus actually appears. Nonetheless, this is not attempted in this dissertation. This dissertation takes the stance that the modern Dionysus is bequeathed from Nietzsche’s management of the deity throughout his philosophical career \textit{in toto}. While Nietzsche discards some of the attributes of his early Dionysus over the years, his early Dionysus already contains and exhibits flashes of what his later Dionysus will become. The form of the mature Dionysus is already contained in the presentation of Dionysus in \textit{The Dionysiac Worldview}, an unpublished

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid. § 24, p. 159
prelude to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Therefore, the Dionysus of this dissertation is a composite Dionysus that represents Nietzsche’s handling of the deity rather than the Dionysus of any particular text or time-period in Nietzsche’s career.

The Dionysus of antiquity is, for our purposes, almost irrelevant. It was, after all, Nietzsche’s interest in the discourse about tragedy as a form of art that focused him on the deity. From the beginning, it was an interest in the human production of art that fueled his interest, and the lack of the philological success or accuracy of *The Birth of Tragedy* testifies to this. I concede that, initially, Nietzsche is working with a picture of Dionysus that is as more a product of the Renaissance and Romanticism than philological research. Nietzsche presents him early on with the orgiastic rights and maenads to explain the origins of tragedy, but Dionysus, soon after *The Birth of Tragedy*, loses his accoutrements and becomes a personal god of revelation and insight into the human condition. Whether or not the ancient Greeks actually engaged Dionysus in the way that Nietzsche prescribes for the moderns is not only empirically indeterminable, but it is also not Nietzsche’s purpose in considering Dionysus. Dionysus is Nietzsche’s vehicle for critiquing modernism for its dependence upon metaphysical illusion. Such illusion is also not empirically determinable. Instead, Dionysus becomes the symbol for the method that Nietzsche advocates in alternative to the modern consciousness, a consciousness that he considers a vast degenerate copy of life rather than authentic life sprung from clear uncompromised observation of the non-moral cosmos.

In Nietzsche’s later years, Dionysus becomes almost synonymous with nihilism. Nihilism, here, is not considered to be nothing. Rather it is the ultimate ground of possibility since it can be shaped into any meaning. This nihilistic space is beyond the ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ beyond the values that stem from the interaction of reflective ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ and thus ‘beyond good and evil,’ as it were. Nietzsche’s Dionysus is the “modern” Dionysus so to speak, though the modern Dionysus has developed even more since Nietzsche. It is crucial to recognize that when we speak of the modern Dionysus we are referring to the
conception of a deity made possible by Nietzsche, and not necessarily only Nietzsche’s Dionysus. However, Nietzsche’s Dionysus is the focus of the dissertation because his philosophical and psychological transformations of the deity are the conditions necessary for the genesis of the modern view of Dionysus. The term ‘modern’ should be understood here in the same manner that Nietzsche intended. It is an ambiguous term. Modern signifies both the present era and the existential conception of the present, being here in the moment, in the ‘now.’ Dionysus functions both as an extension of previous research and as a force with a new purpose all at once. This ambiguity is precisely what makes Dionysus relevant to Nietzsche’s critique of historical consciousness, and perpetually relevant to individual encounters with the human condition.

Admittedly, it would be impossible to do a project like this one and not expect that there are places in Nietzsche’s philosophy that both contradict and support the conclusions reached by this research. Nevertheless, I have attempted to be faithful to what I feel is Nietzsche’s most defensible and most prevalent view of Dionysus as well as the human condition. To make this possible and to present the events that lead to the modern Dionysus it was necessary to restrict the scope of this project to the most concrete areas of influence and to the most visible accomplishments of Nietzsche’s philosophical and philological work. Nietzsche notoriously left little in the way of direct credit to prior thinkers, outside Schopenhauer and Wagner, for their influence upon his thought. Nevertheless, this project attempts to display Dionysus in a way that has not yet been done, by reconstructing the pillars of Nietzsche’s philosophical make-up so that the artifact of the modern Dionysus demonstrates a clear philosophical lineage with a substantial and comprehensible genesis.
CHAPTER I

SCHOPENHAUER AND THE WILL

“It is absolutely impossible for a subject to see or have insight into something while leaving itself out of the picture, so impossible that knowing and being are the most opposite of all spheres.”

– Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks

Dionysus, revived in the modern era by Friedrich Nietzsche, is a composite label for several simultaneous thematic responses to the traditions of philosophical Idealism and classical philology. Dionysus’s relationship to Nietzsche and to these traditions must be mentioned from the start and will be unpacked throughout this chapter and those following. The challenge of tracing the genealogical moments of the modern Dionysus is connected to the fact that there is no single Dionysus of which Nietzsche speaks. Instead, Dionysus is a piecemeal production, like all of Nietzsche’s philosophy, which arrives on the scene not yet fully formed and continues to be modified throughout Nietzsche’s life. Beyond Nietzsche, and well into the twentieth century, the deity takes on a significantly different set of attributes from those he possesses at his first appearance in The Birth of Tragedy in 1872. Since this dissertation addresses Dionysus’ modern genesis in Nietzsche’s thought rather than an evolution of the deity during Nietzsche’s life, most often we will be addressing a composite Dionysus rather than concentrating on any one conception from a singular stage of Nietzsche’s philosophy.

The most prominent thematic continuations of Idealist topics that constitute the significance of the modern Dionysus are the imbricated themes of primordial unity, the priority of aesthetics in terms of inquiry into reality, and causality. Under the first topic of primordial unity, Dionysus represents a
response to the subject-object dichotomy of transcendental idealism, as well as a point of common union for all human beings through the structure of the human condition. The second major theme concerns aesthetic inquiry for which, in Nietzsche’s view, Dionysus symbolizes a methodology that illuminates the process of engaging reality beyond Idealism’s metaphysical divide. In respect to causality, Dionysus is a metaphor for what Nietzsche takes to be the fundamental cosmic principle of *Becoming,* and is inherently tied to topics of justice, morality, and fate/free will. This chapter will address the first and second themes listed above, while the third theme will be expanded upon in chapter two of this dissertation. All of these themes are at least partly present upon Nietzsche’s initial presentation of Dionysus in his 1872 publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* and continue to be modified until his productivity is halted by his mental collapse in 1889. In order to identify the genealogical moments of Nietzsche’s Dionysus, these themes must be considered both in terms of his reception of them as well as his modification of them. By doing so, we will be able to reconstruct how Nietzsche arrived at the label “Dionysus” for these themes, and how he transforms Dionysus from a poetic metaphor and object of classical study into a phenomenological representative of his evolving philosophical positions.

The building blocks of Nietzsche’s early philosophical outlook owe much to Arthur Schopenhauer, as does the first appearance of Dionysus. For the primary genealogical moment of Nietzsche’s Dionysus, we will consider the themes of primordial unity and aesthetic methodology because both themes are reflections of Schopenhauer’s direct and significant influence on Nietzsche’s life and philosophy. Furthermore, Dionysus debuts in a text that is not only largely influenced by Schopenhauer but, as many have argued, is incomprehensible

---

3 *Becoming* signifies the constant fluctuation of the cosmos in every possible way. It represents the perpetual movement of the sun, moon, stars, and Earth, along with the flowing rivers, changing tides, shifting breeze, aging bodies, cyclical nature of life and death and all things in between. It is also representative of temporal shifting. Even the rise and fall of psychological modalities and the flutter and antagonism of thoughts are included by this term. The Heraclitean maxim that one does not step into the same river twice exemplifies this term.
without prior knowledge of his philosophy. Considering the sources from which a genealogical path can be clearly initiated and because Dionysus cannot be fully understood without a recognition of what Schopenhauer's philosophy provides to Nietzsche’s construction of the god, the primary genealogical moment in the modern genesis of Dionysus must be considered as the impact that Schopenhauer’s philosophical text *The World as Will and Representation* had on the young Nietzsche, with special emphasis upon Schopenhauer’s conceptions of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and the underlying *Will*.

In 1865, in a small bookstore, Nietzsche happened upon Schopenhauer’s text and was immediately engrossed. Writing later of his experience he states that he “was one of those readers of Schopenhauer who when they have read one page of him know for certain they will go on to read all the pages and will pay heed to every word he ever said.” Though Nietzsche never met Schopenhauer, he professed that the text presented itself to him as if it had been written personally for him. The strength of this encounter profoundly impacted Nietzsche’s philosophical development and helped forge a bond of friendship between Nietzsche and many of his developmental acquaintances. In his early academic years it was Schopenhauer’s philosophy that fueled conversations with many of his colleagues and mentors as well as pointed towards new horizons for academic and methodological inquiry.

Schopenhauer’s opposition toward the standard approach to the Idealist tradition was ignored for most of his life, and it was only late in life that

---

4 One need only consult nearly any account of Nietzsche’s philosophy to find this assertion. In particular one may consider Martha Nussbaum’s article “Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus” in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*. Nietzsche himself advances this position in his “Attempt at Self-Criticism” which prefaces his second publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1886.
6 Ibid.
7 Several of Nietzsche’s major influences were close followers of Schopenhauer’s philosophy. Among them were Richard Wagner, to whom a great deal of *The Birth of Tragedy* is devoted, Jacob Burckhardt, Nietzsche’s senior colleague at the University of Basle, and his lifelong friend and Vedantic scholar Paul Deussen.
Schopenhauer started to gain popularity as a legitimate counterproposal to the problematic German Idealist dialogue about the structure of subjectivity. The Idealist discourse mentioned here is that which began with Immanuel Kant and continued through the work of Karl Leonhard Reinhold, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the brothers Schlegel, the Romantic poets Hölderlin and Novalis, F.W. J. Schelling, and ultimately G.W.F. Hegel. In general scholarship these central figures of German Idealism, many of them from the Jena circle around the turn of nineteenth-century, are juxtaposed against alternative philosophical discourses that hover around the perimeter of the mostly post-Kantian dialogue of German Idealism. Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche are the favorites of this type of historical reconstruction of philosophy primarily because these three stood slightly outside of the tradition, responding with original and boundary-bending perspectives to the major problems of Idealism, which required an extended gestation period as the general level of academic and social reflection caught up with them.⁸

Nevertheless, while Kierkegaard and Nietzsche follow the tradition some decades later, Schopenhauer was a fellow faculty member at the University of Berlin with Hegel from 1820 to 1822 and again from 1825 to 1831. He saw himself as a contemporary, rather than the addendum to Idealism as he has often been considered. He gave lectures during the same daily class periods as Hegel, despised Hegel’s philosophy, and offered his own system as a contemporary alternative for the direction of post-Kantian studies. In the end, however, Hegel’s personal popularity won the day. Schopenhauer’s position against the mainstream and especially against the systematic Hegelian philosophy attracted Nietzsche’s antagonistic personality, especially since Nietzsche’s development took place in the light of anti-Hegelian rhetoric of the mid-nineteenth-century. Nietzsche was aware of the problematic of subjectivity within Idealist philosophy,

---

⁸ Günter Zöller places the responsibility for this standardized view on the influence of Richard Kroner’s major work From Kant to Hegel, which was highly influential in telling the history of German Idealism. See his article, “German Realism” in The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism. Karl Ameriks, ed. Cambridge University Press, 2000. pp. 200-218
and also looked for an adequate form of addressing these issues without succumbing to the same pitfalls as earlier philosophers. Fascinatingly, Nietzsche was involved with this type of thought and philosophical discourse, even though his education and academic career was part of a separate discipline altogether.

Philology was Nietzsche’s career choice, though he studied theology at the University of Bonn before he transferred to Leipzig where he registered as a philology student. Accompanying this transfer was the encounter with Schopenhauer’s text and the subsequent consideration of the world through a Schopenhauerian lens, which he quickly applied to his own discipline of philology. Subsequently, Nietzsche’s type of philology, based upon an awareness of the Idealist limitations of subjectivity, would never be the standard format of his contemporaries, nor would he be able to resign himself to the parameters of his field. This became apparent directly after his first publication, a text written partly in homage to Schopenhauer and a great deal to the detriment of his philological career. This same text, *The Birth of Tragedy*, introduced the world to Nietzsche’s Dionysus, and marked the beginning of the end of Nietzsche’s philological career. It also constituted the rebirth of a deity aptly known in antiquity as the “twice-born” god.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, an exposition on the meaning and profundity of ancient Greek tragic drama, Nietzsche ostensibly presents Dionysus as the concomitant creative aesthetic principle to Apollo. Apollo and Dionysus are at first two sides of the same coin. Apollo’s function is to give shape to the creative inspiration of the Dionysian. However, it is necessary for Dionysus to be present in order for inspiration to manifest. In Nietzsche’s portrayal of the two gods in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the descriptive language of this creative aesthetic phenomenon suggests priority for the unclear, shapeless Dionysian mode of *being.* The priority of the Dionysian is given by Nietzsche’s description of humanity’s

---

9 Lowercase *being* will be used throughout this dissertation to denote the modality of individual existence as separate from the conception of Uppercase *Being*, which denotes the understanding of existence as a plenitude, most commonly consistent with the Greek *ousia*.
common root of inspiration in the *Urgrund* and *Ur-Eine*, primordial ground and primordial unity from which emerges all metaphysical distinction.\(^{10}\) From this understanding of Dionysus, as the representation of an inroad to communal *Being*, Nietzsche articulates the lofty place of the tragic arts at the font of Greek culture and promotes the necessity and priority of aesthetics and art forms, especially music, as methods for engaging the world phenomenologically.\(^{11}\) For Nietzsche, it is only through aesthetic inspiration that the imageless impact of the Dionysian can be transformed into the concrete Apollonian spectacles of the arts and culture. Only via an aesthetic, i.e. non-empirical, engagement with existence can the poet or any other human beings engage and truly recognize their foundational selves.\(^{12}\) Nietzsche, in sum, places aesthetic inquiry into Dionysian phenomena as the key to communion with other human beings and, consequently, to effectively realizing that the shared ground of primordial *Being* is actually ceaselessly changing *Becoming*. After *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysus continues to develop, losing the Apollonian hemisphere, and becomes a holistic watchword for Nietzsche’s philosophy of life.

In order to gain a clearer picture of exactly how Schopenhauer’s philosophical influence can be considered a moment in the genealogy of Dionysus, one must take into account the purposes of Nietzsche’s appropriation as well as the tradition of Idealism to which he is speaking. Nietzsche’s early years are marked with an interest in a wide variety of subjects and a fascination with discovering a unifying substrate that could connect the purposes and


\(^{11}\) In Nietzsche’s case, phenomenological engagement can best be understood as engagement with what is apprehended through conscious experience. That which is presented to consciousness is different than what is experienced through conscious reflection in that it is not necessarily conceptualized. In his view, insight may be experienced without metaphysical conceptualization, especially if one considers Schopenhauer’s thoughts on direct bodily knowledge of the Will. This is applicable to Dionysus, since it is through experience rather than reflection that one encounters the Dionysian.

\(^{12}\) *BT* § 5, pp. 28-33
projects of multiple disciplines together with a single principle. In fact, many scholars have noted that despite Nietzsche’s professional position as a philologist at the University of Basle, his philosophizing began early and it was his allegiance to it that finally prompted him to leave Basle after ten years and pursue philosophical projects more openly. In addition, the landmark upheavals of the mid-nineteenth-century had inverted many disciplines, demonstrating that simply repositioning one’s psychological perspective could dissolve many of the distinctions and questions concerning knowledge about the human world. As Nietzsche relates in his third Untimely Meditation, titled “Schopenhauer as Educator,” real educators do not give you answers, they reveal your nature to you and “can only be your liberators.”

As Nietzsche’s scholarly interest grew in favor of philology and theology he began to piece together his disciplines in a way that constantly kept a lookout for signs of this type of radical unification wherein philosophical and philological problems were not solved by new systems, but by new ways of thinking about the problems. It was in Nietzsche’s consideration of ancient tragedy as an art form, much as J.J. Wincklemann, Herder, Goethe, and the Romantics before him had done, that Nietzsche was struck by Dionysus as a sympathetic and pertinent approach to a distilled set of issues from several disciplines including theology, philology, psychology, and philosophy. Nietzsche would later consider this early insight as inspiration. He first receives Dionysus as a philological topic, which

14 Darwin changed the way we think about life by considering it a unity, instead of a multiplicity, and thereby decentralizing man’s position in the cosmos. Marx inverted standard nineteenth-century thinking about economics by reconsidering the effect of classes, Feuerbach upended Christianity by rendering it an anthropological discourse, and Friedrich Lange’s History of Materialism drew attention to the physical world instead of the intellect as a basis of philosophy—only to name a few.
15 UM III Schopenhauer as Educator § 1, p. 129-130
16 NT, pp. 15-30, 43-45
17 EH “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” § 4, pp. 126-127, in Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols: And Other Writings. Edited by Karl Ameriks, Desmond
he places at the dithyrambic and choral origins of Greek tragedy, and then modifies him by directing the transformative lens of Schopenhauer's philosophy at the origins of aesthetic production in ancient Greece. The result is *The Birth of Tragedy* that, if considered as philology, is a unique and rather startling work that discusses the unifying principles of orgiastic worship as the source of art and hints at accessing the primordial unity that underlies the subjective self of Idealism.

Nietzsche develops his conception of Dionysus by consolidating problematics of multiple disciplines and collapsing them under the explanatory power of one symbol derived in great part from Schopenhauer’s philosophical impact, which we will now consider. This impact and subsequent development is the genesis of Nietzsche’s multifaceted Dionysus, which he applies in his cross-disciplinary critique of history, philology, philosophy, religion, and culture. The expansive use of Dionysus in this way is possible if we believe, like Nietzsche, that what is at stake in this type of Dionysian philosophy is just possibly the resolution and nullification of the problems of Kantian metaphysics. Therefore we begin with an outline of the themes of Idealism presented by Kant and post-Kantian thinkers up until Schopenhauer.

**Themes of Idealism**

Immanuel Kant, since the publication of his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, has been standardized as a point of reference in philosophical history, and his works also stand as a point of reference for the first genealogical moment of

---

18 See Aristotle’s *Poetics*, for connection between dithyramb, dance, and early chorus. Imitation (mimesis) is a major concern for Aristotle as it was for Plato. Music as imitation of the flux of the universe is found in Schopenhauer’s philosophy and accentuates Nietzsche’s reading of Dionysus as a copy of the *Will*.

19 Martin Heidegger outlines this very position calling Nietzsche an end to metaphysics. See Heidegger’s four-volume commentary on Nietzsche’s handling of metaphysics, *Nietzsche* Translated by David Farrell Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979. Also see Chapter four of this dissertation for extra commentary.
the modern Dionysus. Nietzsche’s Dionysus addresses several themes that are typically Kantian. Kant’s treatment of the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ dichotomy is a theme that is at stake in the Dionysian. The Kantian idea of the ‘subject’ which is separate from the world and which exists as a single “transcendental unity of apperception”\(^\text{20}\) over and against the impenetrable world of ‘objects’ is confronted and rejected by Nietzsche’s Dionysian phenomenon. Secondly, the dualism of Kantian metaphysics, which suggests that historical perspectives limit our capabilities of knowing, is strongly challenged by Dionysian unity. Thirdly, the Kantian conception of morality and moral law is transformed by Nietzsche’s Dionysian revelation. The Kantian assessment of the moral imperative, which is a direct result of the metaphysical consequences of his philosophy, points out that human beings must be the architects of self-imposed norms to which they are morally subject, and thus firmly links aesthetics and morality.\(^\text{21}\) Dionysus represents a radical critique of this moral position, both affirming it and yet rewriting its meaning and its origin.

Kant’s major accomplishment in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is addressing multiple approaches to metaphysics and demonstrating the flaws of dogmatist arguments, while offering an alternative and systematic demonstration of what he considered a new *scientific* metaphysics, which he termed “transcendental.”\(^\text{22}\) Succinctly, the conclusions of Kant’s metaphysics, with which we are concerned here, establish that space and time are not properties of the world or of objects. Instead, they are forms of human sensibility, and therefore are part of the representations of objects, which we form in our cognition of them. Nevertheless,


\(^{22}\) *CPR*, p. 6
objects must exist because they remain a necessary condition for the production of concepts, which obviously are known to the intellect, and thus are “transcendentally” real, rather than empirically real. However, objects as they are in themselves, distinct from human representation of them, remain unequivocally separated from the possibility of knowledge in human form precisely because human knowledge requires the reflective intellect.

The reflective intellect is a given as a property of the conscious concept-constructing self, which Kant labels the ‘subject.’ Since humans encounter objects but cannot know them as they are in themselves, the human apprehends the objects transcendentally, and thus the subject is categorized by Kant as a “transcendental unity of apperception” wherein objects and the reflective, concept-driven, but not intuitive, intuition-driven, self find coherence as a single identity which post-Kantians consider anything but a real unity. In addition, the reflective intellect holds concepts in relation to one another and is predicated upon experience, yet Kant shows that some knowledge must precede experience, i.e. a priori knowledge. However, if the real world only corresponds to intellectual reflective knowledge and not ‘true’ knowledge, then relationships between cause and effect, which are predicated upon the reflected knowledge of experience, are in jeopardy. And lastly, Kant demonstrates that since humans are not privy to knowledge of things as they are in themselves and must subjectively render conceptions based upon the transcendental intuition of objects, then the objective world as it exists intellectually is ultimately constructed

---

23 The meaning of transcendental, that which does not have a physical representation and yet remains a concept, has remained difficult to understand. Consider “Time”. We have a concept but not a true picture. It affects us daily, yet we have no physical specimen. For clarity in Kant’s usage see Paul Guyer’s “The Transcendental Deduction of Categories” and Charles Parson’s “The Transcendental Aesthetic,” both in The Cambridge Companion to Kant, edited by Paul Guyer, 1992.

24 This is Schopenhauer’s argument based upon his dissertation, The Fourfold Root of Sufficient Reason. If cause and effect are unclear, then questions about freedom of the will and fate ensue. For Schopenhauer and Nietzsche this is a major concern, because the universe is ceaselessly changing for them and is thus simple spontaneity wherein reflection and intellectual structures produce the representation of causation.
by humans as individuated ‘subjects.’ This problematizes the place of the Absolute as well as holding values that are said to be objective.\textsuperscript{25}

The resultant link between the ‘subject’ and the production of values intertwines aesthetics with morality. Thus, some major problems stemming from Kant’s metaphysics, specific to the production of Nietzsche’s Dionysus via the idealist tradition, are (1) unity, tied to the irreconcilable division between ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ (2) causality, tied to the nature of intellectual reflection and fate, and (3) aesthetics, tied to the human construction of values. As stated earlier, this chapter focuses on unity and aesthetics, while causality will be handled with Nietzsche’s cosmological conceptions in chapter two.

In the decades following Kant’s \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} (1780s-1810s), many philosophers accepted the explanations that pertained to the categories of Kant’s transcendental metaphysics, but sought ways to resolve the problems associated with unity, causality, and aesthetic inquiry. Since Nietzsche’s Dionysus is an extension of the transcendental discourse concerning the realm of ‘subject’ and ‘object’, the two most important contributors to this area of the tradition after Kant and before Schopenhauer are Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling. The two accepted the basic premises of Kantian philosophy but sought to interrogate and clarify the elements which were clouded and paradoxical surrounding Kant’s consideration of the ‘subject’ as a discreet \textit{thing-in-itself} which could only be reflectively encountered by the metaphysically reflective intellect. They are pertinent here because they dealt specifically with critiques of the ‘subject’ and did not advocate leaps of faith as an alternative to further consideration of the issue, such as Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi had done.\textsuperscript{26}

Instead, both Fichte and Schelling dealt directly with the issues presented by Kant’s critiques while searching for a method to expose the ground of the

\textsuperscript{25} Kant faced some harsh criticism concerning his metaphysics. One in particular was that it supported atheism because of this very reason.

\textsuperscript{26} Jacobi’s solution was a return to faith. He considered Kant’s proof to be evidence that the world was beyond human capacities which for him meant evidence of God. See his \textit{David Hume, or Idealism and Realism, A dialogue}, published in 1787.
‘subject,’ which underlay, in Kant’s formulation, the intellectual cognition of the unknowable human individual’s thing-in-itself. Since Schopenhauer responds to Schelling, Fichte and Kant, Nietzsche’s Dionysus is ensured a certain philosophical dimension and applicability. As an extension of Schopenhauerian philosophy concerned with the ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ Nietzsche’s Dionysus presents us with an aspect lacking in previous considerations of the deity.

The first major issue that is inherited by the post-Kantians is the lesson of the ‘transcendental dialectic’ which limits “the scope of our cognition to the appearances given to our sensibility, while denying that we can have any cognition of things as they are in themselves.”27 This position radically shifts the locus of assessment from the outer world to the inner psychological ‘subject’ which apprehends the world as a conglomerate of ‘objects’ separated from itself. In the 1790s and beyond, Fichte and Schelling attempt to clarify and to modify this particular issue. The postulation that subjechhood was only a reflective cognizance tantalizingly offered them the prospect that there was an unknown, yet possibly retrievable, level of existence to the human ‘subject’ apart from reflective intellect.

The Critique of Pure Reason provides several starting points for a conception of the ‘subject’ as something over the horizon from the reflective ego. Philosophically speaking, however, these starting points lead to dead ends, primarily because, in his exposition of concepts and intuitions, Kant demonstrates that prior to their conjunction there can be no self-reflective consciousness as intellect.28 Nevertheless, this conclusion opens the door to several critiques which seek to clarify the production of the ‘subject’ based on an irretrievable substratum of existence. Naturally, questions arise as to how it is that the ‘subject’ comes to understand itself separated qua ‘subject’ over and against ‘objects’ in the world. What is more, it is logically inferred from this

---

27 CPR, Introduction, p. 8
28 CPR, B130 “On the Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Understanding of Concepts”, pp. 245-266
unknown entity of the *thing-in-itself* that there must also be a rather ambiguous relationship between the self and the intellectual ‘subject.’

Fichte’s response to this issue is to categorize the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ as the ‘I’ and ‘Not-I,’ respectively, and to determine how they emerge. In short, Fichte follows Kant’s division of the noumenal and phenomenal worlds and recognizes that the ‘subject,’ or ‘I’ suggests its own priority as self-evident, just like other representational values. Since the ‘I’ understands itself as separate and is foundational, in his view, he follows Kant’s reasoning that the objective world requires intellectual distinction from the *thing-in-itself*, and asserts that the foundational ‘I’ must posit the ‘Not-I’ as part of the condition for the ability to engage in self-reflective behavior which constructs itself *qua* ‘subject.’ Therefore, the dichotomy of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ is itself a subjective judgment, a decision made by the ‘I’ in its own region of apperception. The key point here is that Fichte holds the ‘I’ to be the fundamental unity, the unknowable *thing-in-itself*, rather than the undescribed conditional ground below the surface of the ‘I’. In plain language, at some point of unknown origin people decide that they are separate from objects in the world and the process of individuation occurs. Nietzsche’s Dionysus, as a product of his materialistic interests, will challenge and clarify this assessment at a very deep level. Fichte’s treatment of the ‘subject’ as an ‘I’ has a certain resonance with Nietzsche’s later consideration of the ‘subject’ as an ‘I’ when he discusses Dionysus and the shifting center of negotiated foundational existence.

Nietzsche, like Fichte, concludes that the origin of the ‘subject’ is grasped intuitively and cannot be profitably intellectually interrogated. Another similarity is the focus on the problem of aesthetic justification wherein humans

---

29 See *The Science of Knowing: J.G. Fichte's 1804 lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre*. J.G. Fichte; translated by Walter E. Wright. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005. The first line of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* states that the ‘I’ posits itself. Logically, the ‘Non-I’ must therefore be derived from the foundation of the ‘I’ which is equated with the Kantian ‘subject.’ Schelling is critical as is Schopenhauer later on. Hegel also sides with Schelling’s critique against Fichte.


31 Consider Nietzsche’s conception not of the ‘subject’ but of the primordial ‘I’, the *Ur-Ich*, when discussing Dionysian poetic inspiration in *BT* § 5, pp. 28-33
construct their own values and make themselves bound to them. While Fichte identifies this process in his *System of Ethics*, Nietzsche explodes his Dionysian take on this notion into a full-out attack on valuation in general.\(^{32}\) Nietzsche agrees that humans author their own values, but counts them ignorant and cowardly for falling subject to them rather than standing as the knowing architects of these values. Moreover, Fichte’s ‘I’ is always striving toward the resolution of the ‘I’ and ‘Not-I’,\(^{33}\) which is a theme that Schopenhauer, who attended Fichte’s lectures at the University of Berlin, considers strongly in his own philosophy, though they have significantly different conceptions of what this means.

The ‘subject,’ also referred to here loosely as the ‘I,’ is the vehicle for a what Günter Zöller calls a “radical” critique of idealism from a “realist” perspective wherein the post-Kantians consistently amend conceptions of idealism in an effort to more fruitfully consider the foundations of reality as it is experienced.\(^{34}\) As he relates it, Fichte and Schelling both consider monism the only profitable answer to Kant’s dualism. Underlying unity is proposed in each of their philosophies as a way of circumventing Kant’s disconnection between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ though there still is no proposed methodology to knowingly address the non-intellectual substratum of the ‘I.’\(^{35}\) Schelling was also interested in this arena and offered an alternative which handled the issue in a more popularly acceptable fashion. In Schelling’s view, presented mainly in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, the primary unity is a non-mediated absolute that, like Fichte’s ‘I,’ can only be known through intuition rather than intellect. However, neither distinction, ‘subject’ nor ‘object’, is produced from the other, thus giving

\(^{32}\) Nietzsche’s “Attempt at Self-Criticism” states this plainly in his reflection on *The Birth of Tragedy*. Undoubtedly it would also apply to his earlier unpublished work *The Dionysiac Worldview*, which can be found as an addition to the 1999 Cambridge edition of *BT*, edited by Raymond Geuss.

\(^{33}\) Zöller, Gunter. “German Realism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 204. The theme is considered differently in each philosopher’s work but the general parallel of striving toward unity by overcoming the dichotomy is fundamental to each perspective.

\(^{34}\) Zöller, p. 202

\(^{35}\) Schelling is a strong proponent of aesthetics as a disclosive arena, but he does not demonstrate a method for access or a methodological basis separate from the problematic realms supplied by Kant.
neither one side nor the other existential priority. Instead, both ‘subject’ and ‘object’ co-dependently emerge in the process of self-conscious reflection. Outside this reflection, the two distinctions do not exist and resolve themselves into a unity. Since this unity is only apprehensible via intuition but is divided into ‘subject’ and ‘object’ upon intellectual reflection, he regards it as a pre-reflective unity. The consideration of this unity as pre-reflective profoundly changes the notion of the ‘I’, or ego, into a secondary feature of the self. The self, in this postulation, becomes something that exists either prior to or apart from reflection, and its presence emphasizes a temporal shift in the psychological state of intellectual projection. Nietzsche will later capitalize upon a similar psychological understanding of the ‘subject’ in his consideration of the limitations of historical methodologies.

It is important to point out that while no direct correspondence is available to show that Nietzsche, in fact, looked to Schelling or Fichte as part of his basis for considering his own position, the status of both figures in standard philosophical education in Germany at the time would require that Nietzsche was aware of their positions. In addition, with similar veins of thought and philosophical interest, it is highly unlikely that Nietzsche would have ignored the fertile ground of either of their positions. Beyond this, they are related to each other via Schopenhauer’s critique of their positions which were undoubtedly known to Nietzsche. It is obvious by his allegiance to Schopenhauer that his consideration of the issues is quite different. However, there are noticeable common threads of concern with subjectivity, nature, and the absolute that bind Nietzsche’s Dionysus to this idealistic discourse and display an inheritance from the former philosophers, even if he did not consciously choose to take up their

---

37 *STI*, pp. 117-119, 134-136
38 Specifically, this pre-reflective unity will be presented to philologists as an alternative approach to accessing and encountering antiquity. The consequences of this temporal understanding in Nietzsche’s philosophy is evident in his second untimely meditation *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, his unpublished and unfinished fifth untimely meditation “We Philologists”, and in his unpublished essay *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. 
positions on certain themes. This is most applicable to Schelling, whose work foreshadows many themes in both Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s.

Other than his move to make the emergence of the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ a co-dependent event, Schelling adds to the philosophical tradition to which Dionysus responds, by arguing that the primordial unity of existence can only be known aesthetically. For Schelling, aesthetics is the key and singularly most important way in which humans engage existence. This position prefigures Dionysian engagement with existence by elevating art, like the Romantics, to the highest point of human achievement. Schelling describes the primordial unity out of which artistic creation occurs in his famous Naturphilosophie. Art is elevated as an aesthetic medium by which the human being is able to intuit the world outside the intellect. This use of art for the aesthetic justification of a method of engaging reality wherein the human being is able to intuit the primordial essence (Urwesen in Schelling’s terms) is hauntingly similar to Nietzsche’s idea that Dionysus, in the mode of an aesthetic method of communion with the primal ground of being, reveals the poet’s true identity to himself in the act of inspired performance. Ultimately, as it relates to the comparable positions of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the prefiguring move that Schelling makes in his consideration of the human subject is to categorize humans as primarily aesthetic creatures who fundamentally rest on aesthetic judgment as a foundation, while empirical judgment is constructed afterwards in reflection. This stance, along with his introduction of the temporal nature of reflective consciousness, is found in both Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s later considerations of the aesthetic subject, and specifically in the presentation of Dionysus.

In addition, he prefigures Schopenhauer’s Will with a conception of absolute will which is the unity of absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity.

---

Pinkard, p. 192
Pinkard, p. 191
STI, pp. 186-196 Absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity are both concepts that logically have no possible conscious precipitation since there is no possible “other.” Put together, however, they account for the Kantian dichotomy and attempt to erase the boundaries so that the
This absolute will stands outside of time, and is radically non-ethical since it is not bound to human conceptions of freedom of action. It is a spontaneous and necessary system of change that is outside the purview of human moral judgment. Schelling’s late philosophy also posited the “primordial essence” (Urwesen) that divides itself into temporal and eternal as the basis for the process of creation out of primordial unity. Understandably, Schopenhauer’s conception of Will is comparable here, as is Nietzsche’s conception of innocent Becoming. Nietzsche’s conception of Becoming is “innocent” because it is synonymous with fundamental necessity. It therefore cannot have judgment passed upon it since necessity involves a lack of choice or motivation. Schelling considers willing to be both absolutely free and also incapable of freedom depending upon different modalities of being. Considered as primordial unities outside of time that are the fundamental nature/identity of all objectified existence, Schopenhauer’s Will and Nietzsche’s Becoming have recognizable similarities with Schelling’s absolute. However, the ground of these comparisons becomes murky because the basis of this metaphysical issue concerning ‘subject’ and ‘object’ has far-reaching implications for the associated parts of their philosophies. An underlying unity that is amoral and yet which is responsible for the manifestation of individuals elicits questions concerning the freedom of human actions. After all, how can humans who are determined by the spontaneity of the cosmos be held accountable for acting, which is always ethical and always necessary? How can humans construct their own values, and yet act wrongly in accord with them? How can one be responsible for an act, if the act cosmos is considered a holistic absolute rather than either a solipsistic absolute or the projected absolute form of some human predicate.

42 STI, p. 190  The absolute will is “absolutely free” and “proceeds form the necessity of its own nature” rather than from direction by the derivative ‘subject.’

43 Terry Pinkard describes this process in Schelling’s philosophy (See German Idealism, p. 322-323), but for us it can only be of interest in comparison between Schelling and Schopenhauer because Schelling’s Ages of the World was not a published work and thus would not likely have been influential on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Pinkard makes no such argument anyway since he is not considering the same topic as this chapter.

44 STI, pp. 186-191
takes place and is yet only reflectively known to the intellect afterward? Who is responsible?

Such questions are intimately intertwined with the concept of the ‘subject’, the self, and time. Since one’s character cannot determine itself (it would not make temporal sense) Schelling concludes that one’s essence precedes one’s self.\textsuperscript{45} It is recognizable to see this form of pre-determination leading toward Schelling’s late embrace of Christianity. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, attacks this problem from a different perspective altogether wherein the foundation for this type of human appraisal of responsibility is displayed as confused and therefore meaningless.\textsuperscript{46} Schopenhauer’s alternative provides an escape from this circularity, albeit a contestable one, and establishes a step in between the Idealist need to somehow include a form of recognizable divinity and Nietzsche’s willingness to consider fate and freewill from an overt atheism and outright reproach of Christianity. Nevertheless, Schelling’s work on subjectivity, especially his thorough grasp of the psychological relationships involved with the attempt to reach beyond the barrier of ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ is familiar in Nietzsche’s thematic preoccupations and, even if it is hard to pin down, has drawn comparisons between the two.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} This is the opposite of Nietzsche’s later materialistic view based on Schopenhauer. Nietzsche’s advance toward existentialism is summed up by the opposite stance, that existence precedes essence. However, it would be more accurate to question whether Nietzsche considered essence to be truly anything at all other than illusion.

\textsuperscript{46} Like all ethical systems, Schelling’s is necessarily dependent upon the concept of causality since humans must choose to do a thing, either good or bad. However, Schopenhauer’s \textit{Fourfold Root of Sufficient Reason} demonstrates the fact that causality is dependent upon relationships of concepts and not necessarily upon the actual changes that take place in the physical world which humans place conceptions of causality upon. Thus the \textit{Will} cannot be judged because it is pure necessity. If causality can simply be considered a conception that is produced by the reflective processes of thinking, it would be very difficult indeed to consider humans responsible, in the standard conception, for their actions if their actions were also the product of physical or cosmological necessity. Therefore, the idea that humans should somehow pay for the guilt of existence, or their “flawed” nature, or original sin would be suspect to say the least.

The post-Kantian philosophers attacked the problem of intellectual dislocation from the objective world in search of a way to bridge the gap. Fichte and Schelling both propose intuition, non-methodological inspirational personal insight, as a method of resolution, and provide the philosophical basis for the necessity of a world wherein the intellect finds itself separated from the objective world. In addition, they forthrightly posit descriptions of a world of primordial unity that necessarily results in the world of antithetical and dualistic tensions, which affect conceptions of ethics and freedom. They never satisfactorily construct a bridge across the divide, and unfortunately, they never successfully delimit a method for achieving the necessary intuition.

In the history of German Idealism, most recognize the next progressive step in the philosophy of Hegel. And even though Hegel made part of his reputation by describing the difference between Schelling’s and Fichte’s systems, so far as the Kantian philosophy applies to Nietzsche’s Dionysus, this study must take a different turn. Many of Nietzsche’s main influences such as Richard Wagner, Friedrich Lange, and Jacob Burckhardt were part of the anti-Hegelian movement and thus Nietzsche’s philosophy finds succor from predecessors whose philosophies opposed Hegelian conclusions about the priority of the intellect. In comparison, Schopenhauer’s philosophy is, in fact, not post- or particularly anti-Hegelian, but rather contemporary with Hegel. As Zöller points out, Schopenhauer’s text, published in 1818 is the first complete philosophical response to Kantian Idealism, while Hegel continued to add to his own system with *The Science of Logic* the same year and beyond. Effectively, the road splits between Schopenhauer and Hegel. Schopenhauer offers a different path, a phenomenological method, based upon that which is experienced by consciousness, rather than what is reflectively considered by the intellect. This new method was based upon Schopenhauer’s inclusion of

---


49 Zöller, p. 201
kinesthetic possibilities of knowing, which attempted to resolve Kantian issues by offering an innovative method for comprehending them as well as interrogating the world. Nietzsche and Dionysus followed from Schopenhauer’s lead.

**Subjectivity and the Will**

Schopenhauer’s highly original response to Kantian philosophy provided a completely different way of negotiating the terrain of idealism. The publication of *The World as Will and Representation* in 1818 was not highly anticipated by other scholars, given Schopenhauer’s reputation as an outsider, but it did place on exhibit a physical, non-intellectual method of engaging the subject that some fifty years later impressed Nietzsche and became foundational in his critiques of history, philology, and metaphysical values. Schopenhauer focused on a separate aspect of Kantian philosophy, which the post-Kantians had missed by the narrowest of margins. Though Fichte and Schelling had considered intuition as an inroad to the unity of the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and, while the Romantics considered feeling and emotion as disclosive, both groups missed transferring the *experience* of knowing these ambiguous phenomena from the intellect to the body. In other words, feeling and intuition remained bound by considerations of the self solely from the perspective of mental activity to the exclusion of examining one’s corporeal self. By considering the body as the basis for a method of knowing separate from the intellect, Schopenhauer offers an avenue of consideration that Kant had overlooked in his *Critique*, and the other post-Kantians had hinted at without successfully articulating.

Schopenhauer presents his resolution to the idealist problematic of subjectivity by promoting his own conception of *Will*. As Nietzsche notes immediately, “it is a clumsily coined, very encompassing word,”\(^5^0\) that has remained out of the reach of a clearly discernable definition. The delineation between individual willing and cosmic *Will*, as well as whether or not the term *Will*

\(^5^0\) *OS*, in *NR*. p. 25
presupposes some form of directional or purposeful action are legitimate areas of concern. The shortest cleanest definition, though not without drawbacks seems to be that the *Will* is the oneness of the entire cosmic mechanism, the *cosmos-in-itself*, if you will. Nevertheless, it is not a unity as opposed to a plurality nor can it be divided into individual parts. While Schopenhauer claims all objectivity is the *Will* made manifest, the *Will* itself is not divisible into ‘subject’ and ‘object.’ The two distinctions remain only representation.

The *thing-in-itself*, as such, is free from all forms of knowledge, even the most universal, namely that of being object for the subject; in other words, it is something entirely different from representation.⁵¹

Intuition cannot discover the *Will* as if it were a scientific formula, since it is beyond this horizon. For Schopenhauer, it cannot be discerned through feeling, because feeling and intuition are still forms of representation. He separates the *Will* from human sensibilities for recognizing these phenomena mentally. For him, the *Will* is considered:

...apart from its phenomenon, it lies outside time and space, and accordingly knows no plurality, and consequently is one...it is not one as an individual or a concept is, but as something to which the condition of the possibility of plurality, that is, the *principium individuationis*, is foreign. Therefore the plurality of things in space and time that together are the *objectivity* of the will, does not concern the will, which, in spite of such plurality, remains indivisible.⁵²

---

⁵¹ *WWR* § 25, p. 128  
⁵² *WWR* § 25, p. 128 *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation) stands as a monumental problem for both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The question is “What cause the either/or effect?” In other words, there is a parallax inherent in the two modes of being, whole or individual. Why is there no continuum? And what causes the shift between the modalities?
Instead, the objects that we are disclose the Will. The Will is not quantifiable with language and stands as a non-discursive entity for epistemology’s sake. Nevertheless, for Schopenhauer, intellectual description is not the only form of internal dialogue. Humans know the Will in an immediate sense, because the human body is part of the cosmos as are all individuated objects of representation. The body is, therefore, the “objectivity” of the Will. The human being is already an individual and so all knowledge is determined by the fact that one is an ‘object’ and not simply a “purely knowing subject.”

There is no gradation of Will, only individuation wherein representations of the Will are manifest. Since humans have immediate knowledge of the motivation within their own bodies, they know both forms of the Will, manifest representation and immediate action, change, movement, motiv.

While Schopenhauer does not overtly prioritize materialism as a philosophy, stating early in World as Will and Representation that it commits the error of beginning with the object just as idealism begins with the subject, his position betrays that he starts his effort from what is ostensible, namely the unity that is material self and world. In other words, the cosmos as one thing. His response to Kant demonstrates that he attempts to begin from the immediate rather than from the reflective. It is no surprise then that his thoughts about the nature of reason contain a materialist theory of mind. In his doctoral dissertation, The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, he asserts that the mind is identical with the brain, and his overall corpus of work concludes that the world in its manifest plurality is in fact the singular Will. The Will, to put it as Zöller does, “is always already embodied action.”

---

53 WWR § 18, p. 99
54 WWR § 24, p. 125
55 This starting point is crucial for Nietzsche. He lauds this insight into unity as the starting point for philosophy in antiquity as well as his own. See PTAG, p. 39
57 Zöller, p. 214 On a side note, if one did not already know that Schopenhauer was an atheist, one would suspect pantheism.
Schopenhauer arrives here by accepting some of Kant’s transcendental arguments.

His position that one may encounter the *Will* via kinesthetic knowledge attempts to clarify and offer rationale to the Kantian articulation of intuition as a non-intellectual form of apperception. Fichte and Schelling had also argued that the fundamental unity is only accessible via intuition, but only Schopenhauer offers a methodological reason why, i.e. the physical existence of the body. Kant states in the “Transcendental Logic” section of his *Critique of Pure Reason* that:

> It comes along with our nature that intuition can never be other than sensible, i.e. that it contains only the way in which we are affected by objects. The faculty for thinking of objects of sensible intuition, on the contrary, is the understanding.\(^{58}\)

Schopenhauer agrees with the notion that intuition is sensible and thus explores the sensible as part of the human’s fundamental existence, equal to that of the intellectual subject. Since intuition is sensible and is known immediately, Schopenhauer’s assessment fit the conclusions of Karl Reinhold who suggested that Kantianism needed a foundation that was known directly without mediation or as “the ground of cognitive matter.”\(^{59}\) According to Terry Pinkard’s analysis of Reinhold, “the key to this foundational principle was to realize that the most fundamental element in all consciousness is the notion of *representation*.”\(^{60}\) Thus, Kant, and post-Kantians, categorize the two major delineations of human experience as the sensible objective world and representation, otherwise understood as the fundamental notion of reflective consciousness. Schopenhauer’s text picks up on these two themes and addresses both directly; the world as sensible *will* and intellectual *representation*.

\(^{58}\) *CPR*, B75.  
\(^{60}\) Pinkard, p. 99 my italics.
Schopenhauer develops his position starting in the *World as Will and Representation*, stating in the third section that, “The main difference between all our representations is that between the intuitive and abstract.”⁶¹ All representation, according to him, is either one or the other. Agreeing with Kant, he considers intuitive knowledge primary because it precedes reflection, though Kant articulates intuition without a concept to be nothing at all. The foundation of Schopenhauer’s corporeal and intuition based critique of Kant stems from his *Fourfold Root*, which establishes four different forms of knowing that are based upon the necessitated relationships between a change and its cause, a truth and its ground, mathematic results and other mathematics, and physical action and motivation.⁶² The most important for Schopenhauer’s departure from Kant is the relationship between actions and motivation, because the conception of motivation plays a critical role in the structure and disclosure of the *Will*. In effect, Schopenhauer reasons that the actions of humans and the *Will* are one; that “they do not stand in the relation of cause and effect, but are one and the same thing.”⁶³ He considers human awareness of the changes in the body as a reflective abstract understanding of the movement of the body. As for any purposive movement that humans think they are initiating mentally, he considers it an abstraction that is not the *Will*. The *Will* is only what acts. Thinking about acting is not acting and therefore not the *Will*.

The result of this consideration is a radical collapse of acting/doing/knowing that is not abstracted by reflection, but is only considered by the intellect through reflection. For Schopenhauer, the immediacy of the non-reflective non-causally related acting is the primary way in which humans are in the world, which explains how knowledge of the world can be discerned through

---

⁶¹ WWR § 3, p. 6 - the “intuitive” form of representation is that which is known via the corpus and experience, while the “abstract” is the intellectually reflected concept of a thing.

⁶² White, F.C. *Schopenhauer’s Early Fourfold Root*. Translation and Commentary. Averbury Series in Philosophy. Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1997. These forms of knowing are not to be confused with his classes of objects. Instead they describe the process by which we justify knowledge of the classes of objects that we use to determine our world. They are described in § 23 (becoming), § 31 (knowing), § 37 (being), and § 45 (motivation).

⁶³ WWR § 18, p. 100
the immediacy of the body. Here we come to his famous comparison of his methods with Kant's.

An essential difference between Kant's method and that which I follow is to be found in the fact that he starts from indirect, reflected knowledge, whereas I start from direct and intuitive knowledge. He is comparable to a person who measures the height of a tower from its shadow; but I am like one who applies the measuring-rod directly to the tower itself. Philosophy, therefore, is for him a science of concepts, but for me a science in concepts, drawn from the knowledge of perception, the only source of all evidence, and set down and fixed in universal concepts.  

The effect of this critique on the young Nietzsche is dramatic because the obvious extension of it is the eradication of metaphysics altogether as simply an errant approach to the fundamental truth of existence. Reflective knowledge is reduced to an inferior form of knowing or at least one that is misleading at best. The only way that metaphysical knowledge is not rendered absurd is for there to be some form of direct knowledge from which the process of representation begins, otherwise the circularity of reasoning about the world is meaningless. Thus, Schopenhauer wants to begin with direct action and the concomitant material of the world wherein action takes place, namely the material relationship of the human body to itself. This position appears to be completely his own insight. In fact, he is so given to its certainty that after his dissertation in 1813, and the publication of *World as Will and Representation* in 1818, his philosophy changes little over the rest of his life except for the ongoing inclusion of and affiliation with agreeable Eastern philosophical ideas from Vedantic and Buddhist traditions. How he arrived at this unique position is unknown, though some scholars have suggested that it was Schopenhauer's early education in England.

---

64 *WWR, I Appendix, “Criticism of Kantian Philosophy”* p. 452
65 White, *Schopenhauer's Early Fourfold Root*, pp. 84-85
and mastery of the English language and connection to the British tradition of philosophy that helped him consider German philosophy from this unique angle.\textsuperscript{66}

In relation to Fichte’s and Schelling’s philosophy, Schopenhauer considers the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in several ways that are distinctly different. There is no separation of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in the literal sense, no ‘subject’ set apart from the ‘object.’ One way of putting it would be to say that if one understands ‘objects’ as things that exist separately from a ‘subject’, one has radically misunderstood the concept of what an ‘object’ is.\textsuperscript{67} There is no \textit{in-itself} solely for an ‘object,’ there is only the joint correlation of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ as manifestation of one underlying principle, namely the \textit{Will}. Rather, Schopenhauer is arguing that the intertwined nature of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ is materially manifest and thus, relationally, ‘objects’ as they are apprehended are only extant as such in so far as there is presence of a ‘subject.’ For him, empirical reality is a unity, one cannot exist without the other; an insight he may have drawn from George Berkeley.\textsuperscript{68}

What is significant about this position, the presentation of bodily knowledge as a method of connecting with the physical world of which the body constitutes part, is that it makes Schopenhauer’s embrace of a new form of materialism that is not set a apart from representation obvious. He ignores the divide between the objective world and the metaphysical intellect and in effect begins from a position that declares we are also the objective world by virtue of our corporeal existence. Our intellect is simply a function of the development of our material selves, i.e. the brain.\textsuperscript{69} For Nietzsche, this position is extremely important, because Nietzsche also bases his understanding of the cosmos in a similar materialism, which he draws from Democritus, and that resonates with Schopenhauer’s

\textsuperscript{66} Guyer, Paul. “Schopenhauer, Kant, and Philosophy” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer}, edited by C. Jananway. p. 94
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. p. 105. See \textit{WWR} § 8 Schopenhauer relates Kant’s move to that of the English tradition rather than the German.
\textsuperscript{69} For a full breakdown of Schopenhauer’s physiological theory see F.C. White, \textit{On Schopenhauer’s Fourfold Root}, 1992. pp. 41-45
position. Put together, they are in great part responsible for his conception of Dionysus.\textsuperscript{70}

Schopenhauer’s response to Fichte is predicated upon this materialist position. He is rather dismissive of Fichte’s philosophy, but he does provide some rationale for excluding it based on its priority of the ‘I.’

The philosophy of Fichte, not otherwise worth mention, is therefore of interest to us only as the real opposite of the old and original materialism...Fichte overlooked the fact that with the subject (let him give it whatever title he likes) he posited the object, since no subject is thinkable without object...Therefore, generally speaking starting from the subject...generally assumes in advance what is professes to deduce...\textsuperscript{71}

In other words, the material world, the “other,” the ‘Non-I’ of Fichte’s postulation, is already a necessary condition for thinking about the positing of the ‘I.’ Thus, based on the consequences of the principle of sufficient reason which founds his critique and demonstrates that all events must have a sufficient reason for their cause, and that said reason is necessarily presupposed in the relationship of the question, Schopenhauer argues that the ‘I’ cannot therefore posit that which it is also dependent upon.\textsuperscript{72} In essence, the material world is a necessary condition for the individuation of the ‘subject.’ The resolution of the primordial unity cannot therefore lie in the realm of the ‘I.’ Schopenhauer also saw that materialism erred insofar as it posited the ‘object’ first. Therefore, resolution also could not rest in the ‘Non-I’ but must be considered in the interdependent correlation of the two.

Schelling’s position which considers the monistic unity of both ‘subject’ and ‘object’ is closer to this position but still lacks some of Schopenhauer’s

\textsuperscript{70} See chapter 2 of this dissertation for the materialistic influence of Democritus on Nietzsche. Also in conjunction with this point is Friedrich Lange’s History of Materialism which is often cited as the second most influential text on Nietzsche’s development.

\textsuperscript{71} WWR § 7, pp. 33-34

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. In Schopenhauer’s words, paraphrasing the lesson of his own FR, he states the necessity of the ‘I’ positing the ‘Non-I’ is ludicrous because his FR shows that “to be necessary and to follow from a given ground are convertible terms.” See FR § 49.
distinctions. Looking at Schelling’s work, Schopenhauer critiques it without offering Schelling’s name. He simply states that the “philosophy of nature”, recognizably Schelling’s Naturphilosophie, falls subject also to critique from the argument of sufficient reason. In his view there is no possible unification of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and, after demonstrating that the two distinctions are representations fundamentally reliant upon one another, he offers his own conclusion concerning the next step of this philosophical investigation.

…the inseparable and reciprocal dependence of subject and object together with the antithesis between them…leads us to seek the inner nature of the world, the thing-in-itself, no longer in either of those two elements of the representation, but rather in something entirely different from the representation, in something that is not encumbered with such an original, essential and therefore insoluble antithesis.

On the basis of searching for something other than the unity of ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ Schopenhauer advocates seeking something that is already itself One and which lies outside the divisible realm of ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ outside time and intellectual reflection. He replies to Schelling’s Naturphilosophie, which “represents the subject as gradually coming out of the object,” by considering it “deep wisdom” which strikes him as “nothing but atrocious and what is more extremely wearisome humbug.” One can only suspect that perhaps this vehemence was in part misdirection from Schopenhauer because, as Nietzsche noted in one of his early essays, the point of individuation wherein the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ manifest from the Will is never satisfactorily articulated by Schopenhauer either. While Schelling was concerned with this arena in his Of the I as a principle of Philosophy, Schopenhauer is unimpressed with any

---

73 WWR § 7, p. 26
74 Ibid., p. 31
75 Ibid., p. 26
76 OS, in NR, pg. 26
arrangement that attempts to draw out one principle from the other, even though this is the very ground of the *principium individuationis* where Schopenhauer himself laments not having solved the riddle. At best, one could say that in Schopenhauer’s view the self is neither one nor the other *per se* but rather a negotiation between the two as manifestations of the *Will*. Both belong to the *Will* but are not reconcilable with each other, since they belong to the world of representation. It is exactly this negotiated existence that is the *Will*, always manifest as either ‘subject’ or ‘object’ but in itself timeless and One, that most deeply impacts Nietzsche’s consideration of Dionysus and bleeds out into the rest of Nietzsche’s mature philosophy.

**Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Dionysus**

Nietzsche embraces Schopenhauer’s response to Kant and to the other post-Kantians and ties his own consideration of *Will*, and these Idealist themes, to his own developing philosophy, which he uses in *The Birth of Tragedy* to attempt to illuminate Greek pessimism and tragic drama as representative of the ancient Greek cultural stance. Dionysus, as Nietzsche presents him, is a conglomerate of themes recognizable in the post-Kantian extenuation of the Idealist tradition. Profoundly, at first, Dionysus appears in the semblance of Schopenhauer’s *Will*, as part of the negotiated state of being that discloses ultimate harmony and oneness as the basis of existence and artistic upsurge. He also continues as an example of the priority of aesthetic sensibility in the human engagement with the world found in Schelling’s and Schopenhauer’s philosophy. Once again, he is also a representative of a materialist perspective that resonates with Schopenhauer’s positions, especially regarding conceptions of causality, justice, and fate.

---

77 Interestingly, though not part of this project, Schelling’s Absolute Identity appears remarkably similar to the *Will*, though it would require a tangential discussion to fully compare in what ways the two are fundamentally alike and different.
In his early reflection on Schopenhauer’s conception of the *Will*, Nietzsche identifies a concept of wholeness that characterizes his Dionysian experience, to which he remains faithful for the extent of his philosophical career. In it, Schopenhauer’s debt to Kant is also acknowledged.

The unity of that will…in which we have recognized the inner being of the phenomenal world, is a metaphysical unity. Consequently, knowledge of it is transcendent; that is to say, it does not rest on the functions of our intellect, and is therefore not to be really grasped with them.\footnote{WWR 2, Chapter XXV, “Transcendent Considerations on the Will as Thing-in-Itself,” p. 323}

The obvious difference between Schopenhauer and Kant, of course, is that for Schopenhauer this source of transcendent knowledge is the *Will*, and is therefore known immediately to itself, a part of which is the human being. For Kant, the source, i.e. *thing-in-itself* is always unknowable. Nietzsche never deviates from this conception that the *Will*, or groundless nature, of existence is immediately knowable holistically in a way that does not prioritize intellect.

In a short essay from his notebooks in 1868, entitled “On Schopenhauer,” Nietzsche deliberates upon Schopenhauer’s philosophy and critiques his system as it relates to the problems of Idealism. His tone is sympathetic, but the critique is fair. He begins with short impressionistic sentences revealing his understanding of Schopenhauer and Kant’s relationship.

An attempt to explain the world by an accepted factor.
The thing in itself becomes one of its possible forms.
The attempt fails.
Schopenhauer did not consider it an attempt.
His thing in itself was opened up by him.\footnote{OS in NR, p. 24}
Nietzsche’s first notes reveal that he views Schopenhauer’s *thing-in-itself*, his *Will*, as “opened up,” i.e. personally experienced, in his approach to the foundational ground of the ‘subject’ which Kant’s philosophy held as inaccessible. Nietzsche goes on to compare Schopenhauer with Kant, placing them both upon equal footing as great thinkers to whom the world owes much. Nevertheless, Nietzsche displays his conclusions from the start stating that Schopenhauer’s *Will* goes “well beyond Kant.”\(^80\) He regards the two favorably but considers Kant’s achievement a product of an “old-fashioned table of categories” whereas “Schopenhauer at all times thanks the inspired thoughtfulness and power of clarity of his intellect for his supposed find.”\(^81\) This type of go-it-alone inspirational clarity is later prized in his own consideration of Dionysian experience. The majority of the short essay is concerned with standard critiques of Schopenhauer’s *Will* and the difficulty he had in resolving the problem of individuation. Nietzsche identifies the problems that Schopenhauer’s *Will* raises concerning the appearance of the intellect and especially how it relates to the “three predicates of unity, eternity (that means timelessness), [and] freedom (that means causelessness)”\(^82\), all issues which are part of Nietzsche’s central formulation of his Dionysian principle. Both Kant and Schopenhauer agree that these interwoven predicates are part of the transcendental realm of the *thing-in-itself* and subject-object dislocation wherein intellect and self are cognizantly apprehended.\(^83\)

For Dionysus to appear as he does at the outset in *The Birth of Tragedy*, clothed in Schopenhauerian language, we require a philosophy for the dissolution of individual subjecthood in the face of a primordial unity that is itself the foundation of existence. This is the fundamental nature of Dionysus in his earliest Nietzschean skin. Nietzsche presents Dionysus as a counter symbol to Apollo in

\(^80\) Ibid. p. 25  
\(^81\) Ibid.  
\(^82\) Ibid. pp. 26-28  
\(^83\) *WWR*, Chapter XXV, p. 323. Also *WWR* §26, p. 134
the either/or struggle of individuation and the non-individuated unity of pure Will.\textsuperscript{84} In relation to the conception of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ Nietzsche makes clear that he is favoring Schopenhauer’s interpretation, because not only does subjecthood dissolve, but so does objecthood, revealing that they are in fact illusory. They do not unify. Instead, they simply cease to exist, disclosing the unity of things that are individuated by representation. The Dionysian artist “gives up his subjectivity in the Dionysian process” and thus, for Nietzsche, the ‘I’ or ‘subject’ of the lyric poet “as this concept is used by modern aestheticians, is imaginary.”\textsuperscript{85} Dionysian excitement transmits to a group of individuals that they are inherently one with the cosmos. Characterizing the power of Dionysian music and orgiastic worship Nietzsche states:

Now, hearing this gospel of universal harmony, each person feels himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbor, but quite literally one with him, as if the veil of maya had been torn apart, so that mere shreds of it flutter before the mysterious primordial unity.\textsuperscript{86}

Logically speaking, unification or reconciliation can only take place if there is first separation, and it can only be a problem if consolidation is a difficulty. It is in this respect that Dionysus represents a Schopenhauerian response to Kantian metaphysics. Dionysus is the negotiation of ‘subject’ and ‘object’; one either is individuated or not. For Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, most spend their entire lives under the spell of metaphysical individuation and thus never experience the loss of individuation and thus are not able to know the Will directly. Dionysus is Nietzsche’s way of symbolizing the process by losing oneself in music and

\textsuperscript{84} BT § 5, p. 32...Nietzsche quotes Schopenhauer’s presentation of the Will...BT § 16, p. 76 Nietzsche details exactly what he means by their juxtaposition...“Apollo stands for me as the transfiguring genius of the principium individuationis...whereas under the mystical, jubilant shout of Dionysus the spell of individuation is broken, and the path to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost core of things, is laid open.”

\textsuperscript{85} BT § 5, p. 30
\textsuperscript{86} BT § 1, p. 18
orgiastic rites and providing a methodological example of non-intellectual knowing.

Wherever this breakdown of the *principium individuationis* occurs, we catch a glimpse of the essence of the Dionysiac.  

Materialistically, the followers of Dionysus find dissolution of their egos through physical, orgiastic rites. As it responds to Schelling’s philosophy, these orgiastic rites are bound up in an aesthetic mode of *being* and thus have lost any reflective form of intellection thereby synchronizing with the force of the absolute unity that *is* existence. This force, however, for Nietzsche is not a universal form of identity, as it would have been for Schelling, because “Will” is considered more than simply *Geist*. The *Will* is a force of Nature, to be sure, but a physical one that is a unity in-itself as opposed to *Geist*, which we often translate simply as “mind” or “spirit”, and in either case belongs to a non-physical realm. The *Will* is unified non-extractable blind striving that, in Nietzsche’s view, is revealed by the mode of existence one enters into in Dionysian revelry. Explicitly, as Martha Nussbaum insists, “qua will, the human being is not intelligent.” In other words, the human in the mode of existing as *Will* is a non-intellectually reflective creature that rides the rhythms of the cosmos like all other matter or material. As an expression of the *Will*, the symbol of Dionysus is a mirror for or rather a channeling of the non-intellectual, non-purposive striving of the cosmos.

---

87 *BT* § 1, p. 17
88 This point is of particular importance. The *Will* is existence manifest, not a “ground” or “foundation” in a real sense. The *Will*, for Schopenhauer is groundless, because it is neither ‘subject’ nor ‘object’ but outside the distinction and outside of time (*WWR* § 7 p. 31). It is the causeless non-directional changing of *Being*. Nietzsche will later convert this into his own understanding of *Becoming*.
89 See *STI*, pp. 74, 128, 169, 210 for a handling of “spirit” or “Geist” as related directly to the fundamental ‘subject’ and its freedom.
The sculptor…and the Epic poet are lost in the contemplation of images.
The Dionysiac Musician with no image at all, is nothing but the primal pain and primal echo of the [primordial unity].

Through the art of lyric poetry, the chorus, and drama, the “echo” of the primal unity is displayed in metaphysical form. However, this metaphysical form is not absolute because the primal unity is never static, and all individuation is representation and thus at some level illusory. Nevertheless, the Dionysian is only reflectively experienced via the art of the Apollonian representation of the Will in tragic drama. In this vein, Nietzsche echoes the primacy of aesthetic inquiry by asserting that art is part of the fundamental way in which people physically and ritually access the transcendent. They participate through the echo of the primordial unity, leaving Nietzsche to declare that “art is the highest task and true metaphysical activity of this life.” This task, via Dionysus, reveals the primordial unity in so far as “the prime demand we make of every kind and level of art is the conquest of subjectivity.” For Nietzsche, music is the most applicable art form for revealing the Will. Therefore, Nietzsche associates the musical illumination of the Will with the attributes of Dionysus that place him at the choral beginnings of dramatic tragedy.

Nietzsche’s use of music as a tool for exploring aesthetic inquiry also follows Schopenhauer’s opinions on the applicability of music as direct correlation to the fundamental nature of the world and thus the Will. Nietzsche directly stipulates that Dionysian lyric poetry, the “literary effulguration” of music, appears as Will “understood in Schopenhauer’s sense.” This “sense” is expressed in section fifty-two of World as Will and Representation after Schopenhauer meticulously discusses the nature of other forms of art such as sculpture and painting:

---

91 BT § 5, p. 30  
92 BT § 1, p. 14  
93 BT § 5, p. 29  
94 See note 18.  
95 BT § 6, p. 35
After this, we find that there is yet another fine art that remains excluded...Yet it is such a great and exceedingly fine art, its effect on man's innermost nature is so powerful, and it is so completely and profoundly understood by him, in his innermost being as an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the world of perception itself...Therefore, from our standpoint, where the aesthetic effect is the thing we have in mind, we must attribute to music a far more serious and profound significance that refers to the innermost being of the world and of our own self...That in some sense music must be related to the world as the depiction of the thing to the thing depicted, as the copy to the original, we can infer from the analogy to the remaining arts, to all of which this character is peculiar; from their effect on us, it can be inferred that that of music is on the whole of the same nature, only stronger, more rapid, more necessary and infallible.\textsuperscript{96}

In his discussion of Dionysian music, Nietzsche relates that unlike painting and the plastic arts which produce and rely on images and are thus statically representational, music is “a direct copy of the Will itself.”\textsuperscript{97} He applies Schopenhauer’s argument to the Dionysian physical and orgiastic rites and contends that Dionysian music, his origin of tragic drama, “represents the metaphysical in relation to all that is physical in the world, the thing-in-itself to all representation.”\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{96} WWR § 52, p. 256
\textsuperscript{97} BT § 16, p.77
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid. Unspoken, until this point, is Richard Wagner’s influence on Nietzsche. Notably, the early title of The Birth of Tragedy includes Out of the Spirit of Music and much of the text is heavy homage to Wagner. However, the influence of Wagner on Nietzsche is not what we are concerned with so much as the influence on Nietzsche which places music as that pinnacle of aesthetic portals to the unity which he seeks. This philosophical rationalization comes from Schopenhauer, who also heavily influenced Wagner. Nietzsche continues to consider the possibilities of Dionysian music in Germany in his “ Attempt at Self-Criticism” which prefaced his 1886 republication of BT, but later, in 1888, he makes a special point to retract his consideration of Wagner’s music as representative of the type of Dionysianism he envisions. See “Nietzsche Contra Wagner” in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings, edited by Judith Norman and Aaron Ridley, Cambridge Edition, 2005. pp. 265-282
For Schopenhauer, aesthetics serves a specific function as a vehicle for encountering the *Will*. In his own words they “deliver knowledge from the service of the will” so that non-reflective knowing may occur in order to evince “the forgetting of oneself as individual, and the enhancement of consciousness to the pure, will-less, timeless subject of knowing that is independent of all relations.” Schopenhauer’s “artistic disposition,” especially through music, dissolves the boundaries of the *principium individuationis* taking with it every reflective distinction that is part of the intellectual consciousness of the world. In an aesthetic disposition, “all individuality disappears” and humans become consolidated with “that one eye of the world which looks out from all knowing creatures.” By considering Schopenhauer’s “sense” of the *Will* compounded with Nietzsche’s consideration of choral music and aesthetics as form of imitation of the “innermost being of the world and our own self,” the construction of Dionysus as mediator of this innerworldy insight is comprehensible. From here, we understand the destruction of individuality via aesthetic revelation as part of what Nietzsche intends when, quoted earlier, he refers to being “literally one” with one’s neighbor in the orgiastic and musical revelry of Dionysus.

Via Schopenhauer’s response, Nietzsche adds to the Idealist tradition by considering tragedy as an interdisciplinary object of study for both philosophy and philology. He uses the *Will* as a way to support Schopenhauer’s divergence from the other post-Kantians and also to illuminate his own reading of ancient tragic drama. Art, considered as the “highest task,” with Dionysian art as the most pure, finds a way of sublimating the horror of existing in a world with no firm foundation for the ‘subject’ and makes the *Will* apparent in a way that affirms the human place in the eternal transfiguration of the material cosmos. As a work that seeks to expose the pessimism of the ancient Greeks as anything but literally ‘pessimistic’ in the common understanding of the term, he exhausts Schopenhauer. Even in a work constructed out of Schopenhauer’s philosophical

---

99 *WWR* § 38, p. 199  
100 *WWR* § 38, p. 198
ingredients, Nietzsche soon realizes that the Dionysian goes much further than only a symbol for artistic production in ancient Greece, and a large part of The Birth of Tragedy addresses Schopenhauer’s position in a preliminarily subversive way.

Rebelling against Schopenhauer

Dionysus is more than just Schopenhauerian philosophy revisited. He is also a modification of, and a deviation from, Schopenhauer’s understanding of pessimism, which Nietzsche took to cause Schopenhauer, in the end, to misunderstand everything.\(^{101}\) Dionysus evolves throughout Nietzsche’s philosophical career but is already, at the stage of his first appearance, serving as an unresolved exhibition of Schopenhauerian philosophy, which is itself subverted by Nietzsche’s embracement of his own Dionysian principle. Thus, ironically, it is Schopenhauer that structures Nietzsche’s Dionysus and yet it is Dionysus, as Nietzsche comes to understand him, who leads to a disavowal of Schopenhauerian philosophy through Nietzsche’s famous “Yes-saying” embracement of the irrationality of existence.\(^{102}\)

While much of The Birth of Tragedy depends on an understanding of Schopenhauer, the message of Dionysus presents Nietzsche with a different experiential lesson about the value of life than what Schopenhauer demonstrates in his conclusion that the only path to a life not plagued by desire is the ultimate negation of the Will. The shift takes place in the exposition of Greek pessimism, wherein Nietzsche attempts to explain why it is that the Greeks, as a symbol of their culture, could celebrate and enjoy performances that demonstrated the inescapable and often seemingly unjust destruction of other human beings. His short answer is that it is through the spirit of music that humans recognize the

---

\(^{101}\) *EH*, “The Birth of Tragedy” § 1, p. 108. Nietzsche’s words: “Tragedy in particular proves that the Greeks were *not* pessimists: Schopenhauer was wrong about this as he was about everything.”

\(^{102}\) *UM III Schopenhauer as Educator*, p. 146
eternal nature of destruction as part of the cycle of impersonal cosmic change. In other words, through tragedy, the spectators see the eternal life of the cosmos, of which humans are a part, as the backdrop of ultimately inconsequential human centered fate. The opening of Nietzsche’s *On Truth and Lying in a non-Moral Sense* captures this sentiment when he says “how pitiful, how insubstantial and transitory, how purposeless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature; there were eternities during which it did not exist; and when it has disappeared again, nothing will have happened.” While Schopenhauer understands this to some degree and seeks a way out of the pessimism by negation of the *Will*, Nietzsche finds in it the very reason to embrace and celebrate existence. While tragedy, as well as other forms of Greek art, can be seen as pessimistic because they relay the Greek sentiment that humans are ultimately subject to the will of the gods and unable to escape their inevitable demise, Nietzsche accords Greek pessimism an affirmative status wherein the Dionysian relays the eternal flux of the cosmos, demonstrating that humans, as individuated expressions of that ceaseless cycle of coming-to-be and destruction, also have eternal life insofar as each human is as much the *Will* as any other individuated form, sun, moon, plant or animal in the cosmos. In his words, “Tragedy calls out: We believe in eternal life.”

As Nietzsche fleshes out his Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the deity shifts positions from the representation of one half of a dichotomy wherein both sides, Apollo and Dionysus, are equally necessitated as part of the production of art and becomes the primary mirror of the negotiated state of existence which is represented by the term *Will*. The effect marginalizes Apollo as an extraneous illusion. Nietzsche’s tone and language build throughout the text, and his drive to see metaphysics upended by the Dionysian is accompanied by the reduction of

---

103 *BT* § 16, p. 80
105 *BT* § 16, p. 80
the Apollonian into not only empirical illusion, but into “deception,” which necessarily carries with it some moral weight.\textsuperscript{106} The Apolline is rendered “deception” by the Dionysian “truth,” which would be too heavy and raw a burden to carry without the civilizing illusions of Apollo. The recognition of the unity of existence becomes the “good” while individuation under Apollo becomes “the source of all evil.”\textsuperscript{107} He credits the ancient Greek mysteries with teaching that Dionysian art provided the only “joyous hope that the spell of individuation can be broken” in order to restore unity.\textsuperscript{108}

The phenomenon of metaphysical representation, the very method of thinking and foundation of philosophical discourse for the Idealist tradition is represented as a “persistent veiling.” Tragedy compels this hidden realm to speak the revealing and ultimately disclosive language of Dionysus, showing that human constructions of meaning are aesthetic at their core, based on the conceptions we grant the imageless Will.\textsuperscript{109} He repeats this lesson of aesthetic justification to demonstrate that human values, even the “ugly” and “disharmonious” are part of the churning of the Will, which is beyond human scope. The cosmos, in his view, is simply not about humans at all, but only about its own non-moral striving. While Dionysus is dependent upon Schopenhauer and the earlier Idealist tradition for the development of its relation to Will and aesthetic priority, it is in the shift from the pessimistic ‘No’ of Schopenhauer to the Greek pessimistic ‘Yes’ of Dionysus where Nietzsche makes his major departure. Accompanying this new way of embracing the underlying eternity of the Will is a new way of considering fate, freedom, and causality.\textsuperscript{110}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{106} BT § 21, p. 103
\textsuperscript{107} BT § 10, pp. 52-53
\textsuperscript{109} BT § 21, p. 103-104
\textsuperscript{110} [Thus Dionysus stands at the beginning of Nietzsche’s\textemdash amor fati.]
\end{flushright}
Schopenhauer’s influence makes the Dionysian possible, but stops short of positing the embracing of irrationality as a resolution to the suffering experienced in individuation. For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer can only be a leader to the “heights of tragic contemplation”¹¹¹ and the first person to not only to turn the locus of assessment inward, as did Kant, but to follow the inward path of motivation to reveal the nature of suffering as connected directly to the striving of the one Will. In Schopenhauer’s perspective, “the true sense of tragedy is the deeper insight that what the hero atones for is his own particular sins, but his original sin—the guilt of existence itself.”¹¹² Nietzsche, on the other hand, separates morality from the material universe. He sees no guilt and reconfigures tragedy wherein the tragic hero is simply a victim of chance, the blind and necessary striving of the cosmos. All tragedy other than this form is derivative in his view. The tragic is not punishment. It is justice, cosmic justice, pure necessity. The justification comes from the nature of what is and not from what the human perspective feels ought to be from the perspective of individuated illusory existence. The cosmos is not legitimately subject to human critique for the nature of its existence, and thus the human values placed upon misfortune are simply the rewriting of an event in a subjectively biased way.

While both philosophers feel that tragedy is the spawn of chance, only Nietzsche feels that the irrationality behind it should be embraced. Nietzsche hopes that tragedy can be appreciated after stripping the world of its overcoat of human values, leaving what he considers an honest, non-distorted ancient Greek view of life. The ancients, for him, did not confuse the desires for things, related to morality, and the search for truth. Instead, they used philosophy as a way to expose the workings of the cosmos. The question about life’s value was

¹¹¹ UM III Schopenhauer as Educator, p. 141
¹¹² WWR § 51, p. 254 All things that exist must pass away...this is the price they pay for existing. Nietzsche will associate this lesson with Heraclitean Becoming. Also reconsider Schelling’s treatment of the ever preceding human character for which humans are constantly in debt, see note 41. Compare with Nietzsche’s “innocent” Becoming.
separated from the human desire for valuable things to be found in life.\textsuperscript{113} And so it is that Nietzsche diverges from Schopenhauer by his decision to value life, to say Yes to life, rather than to negate the \textit{Will}. The penetrating questions of ancient philosophy and tragedy, for Nietzsche, are “what is existence worth as such?” and “Do you affirm this existence in the depths of your heart?” His response is a “single heartfelt Yes.”\textsuperscript{114} This ‘Yes’ is predicated upon art and aesthetic methodology and direct knowledge of the \textit{Will} via the physical and orgiastic rites that accompany Dionysian revelry. Were it not for poetry and the aesthetic drive, the answer may have been considered differently. Nevertheless, it is only the creative ability of human beings to generate meaning in a non-moral non-purposive cosmos that makes life worth living, valuable as such, and worthy of embracing the justice of what seems to be irrational.\textsuperscript{115} In effect, embracement of this ‘tragic’ life is a stance that recognizes that the cosmos is not concerned with humanity. The joy to be found in it, however, rests in the fact that each human, as individuated \textit{Will}, also possesses the creative capacity as objectifications of the \textit{Will} with which to tap into the living, changing, and striving universe. The aesthetic ability to create via the churning of the \textit{Will} reveals the unity of the life that roots human individuality within cosmic eternal life. Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche cannot attempt to still the strivings of the \textit{Will} by negating it. Instead he rides the lightning of cosmic flux and accepts his lack of priority in the universe in exchange for seeing a universe of real justice, beyond the scope of human values and morals, beyond metaphysical representation. For Nietzsche, Dionysian festivals are the opposite of resignation. As Martha Nussbaum surmises, “the cruelty and arbitrariness of life are seen as inseparable from its mysterious richness.”\textsuperscript{116}

Nietzsche identifies the issue that guides humans toward the orientation that demands life take on moralistic value in his opening to \textit{Schopenhauer as

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{113} UM III \textit{Schopenhauer as Educator} § 3, p. 145
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 145-46
\textsuperscript{115} Nussbaum, p. 363
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 357
\end{flushleft}
Educator. His view is that humans seek to be able to exert control upon their surroundings and thus are trapped by the need to identify purpose and meaning even where none exists.

We are responsible to ourselves for our own existence; consequently we want to be the true helmsman of this existence and refuse to allow our existence to resemble a mindless act of chance.\textsuperscript{117}

But a non-purposive act of chance is exactly what Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and even Kant to a certain extent, consider the flux of coming-into-being and passing-away for everything that exists.\textsuperscript{118} In Nietzsche’s view, the real lesson of freedom and fate, for the ‘subject’ or ‘I’, is found in the embracement of the justice of cosmic necessity which presents coming-into-being and passing-away as one holistic process, rather than disconnected phenomena. Dionysus, in his symbolism as a representative of the dissolution of the principum individuationis, is meant to illuminate that the process of individuation is exactly what divides the holistic nature of the Will into representation, à la Schopenhauer’s account. Only by ridding oneself of the illusion of division does freedom emerge as possible, since humans are then understood as not being subject to the illusion of individuality and all the consequences of objectivity, in its strict sense, which do not consider the impact of necessity upon concepts of justice and freedom. The holistic understanding of the universal process of coming-into-being and passing-away is regarded by Nietzsche as Becoming rather than Being.

\textit{Becoming} is radically justified as the necessity of coming-to-be and passing-away. In relation to the Dionysian, Martha Nussbaum argues the position that Nietzsche’s subversion of Schopenhauer in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} produces “an account of the tragic universe and tragic spectatorship that might with real

\textsuperscript{117} UM III \textit{Schopenhauer as Educator} § 1, p. 128
In fact, Nussbaum articulates the new direction in which Dionysus takes Nietzsche by summarizing Nietzsche’s perspective on Tragedy which ultimately divides him from Schopenhauer via his antithetical response to pessimism.

Tragedy shows that the world is chancy and arbitrary. But then by showing how life beautifully asserts itself in the face of a meaningless universe, by showing the joy and splendor of making in a world of becoming – and by being itself an example of joyful making – it gives its spectator a way of confronting not only the painful events of the drama, but also the pains and uncertainties of life, both personal and communal – a way that involves human self-respect and self-reliance, rather than guilt or resignation.\(^\text{120}\)

The “joyful making” in *Becoming*, of which Nussbaum speaks, is not itself an arbitrary take on Nietzsche’s perspective. For Nietzsche, it is the joyful play of *Becoming* that exemplifies the *Will*, and is the foundational and necessary, ceaseless striving of the *Will* which is revealed and hidden again and again in the process of individuation and then the dissolution of it. In Nietzsche’s words:

\[\ldots\text{we are to recognize a Dionysiac phenomenon, one which reveals to us the playful construction and demolition of the world of individuality as an outpouring of primal pleasure and delight, a process quite similar to Heraclitus the Obscure’s comparison of the force that shapes the world to a playing child who sets down stones here, there, and the next place, and who builds up piles of sand only to knock them down again.}\(\text{121}\)

Ultimately, the nature of the ‘subject’ and the consequences of aesthetic inquiry led Nietzsche to a conception of causality that relies upon necessity and changes

\(^{119}\) Nussbaum, p. 358
\(^{120}\) Ibid., p. 368
\(^{121}\) *BT* §24, p. 114
his conception of justice to fit his understanding of *Becoming*, which he models, after Heraclitus, as a foundation of the Universe and *Will*.

**Conclusion**

Nussbaum’s interpretation of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer’s relationship supports the notion that Nietzsche’s Dionysus is reliant upon Schopenhauer’s theory of the *Will*. It also demonstrates that Nietzsche was not simply a blind follower of Schopenhauerian principles. Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is willing to face the unknown with an acceptance of fate, embracing the irresolute manner in which humans exist contra the *Will*. Nietzsche makes the choice, a Dionysian choice, to commit himself to the logical outcomes of his insights rather than change his psychological orientation to fit the vision that he may want to be true. At least, we may certainly say that this is the way he saw his choice, even if the results are not empirically verifiable.

The great impact of Schopenhauer is evident if we attempt to predict what Nietzsche’s philosophy, especially his conception of Dionysus, would have looked like without his influence. The idea of Nietzsche’s perspectives, without Schopenhauer, are almost unimaginable. The effect on Dionysus, and whether or not Dionysus would have been concerned with Idealism, is also unanswerable. Schopenhauer’s influence is the link that makes Nietzsche applicable to the Idealist tradition in his first ventures into the philosophic realm. He stands as an intermediary between Nietzsche and Schelling’s conception of the relationship between essence and existence. Furthermore, the impact of Schopenhauer and the *Will* is evident in that through him Nietzsche handles the prospect of subjectivity in a manner contrary to Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, while adopting Schopenhauer’s views on aesthetics to reinforce his views of music as illustrative of the *Will*. Nietzsche’s Dionysus inherits each of these effects of Schopenhauer’s influence.
The consequences of Schopenhauer’s views, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, extend to the problems of unity, aesthetics and causality. These themes co-evolved in Nietzsche’s thoughts and thus are not linearly dependent upon one another. Nietzsche’s reliance upon Schopenhauer’s augmentation of the conception of the ‘subject’ and the aesthetic disclosiveness of the Will have been demonstrated in this chapter. Causality presents a more complicated issue in terms of the nature of its consequential relationship to Nietzsche’s Dionysus. For this Nietzsche relied upon other philosophers. He looked back toward those who offered an alternative to Platonic Being and found harmony between his ideas and the ramifications of Becoming as a cosmological foundation. Therefore, an explanation of Becoming as it relates to the “Dionysiac phenomenon” is also necessary to this genealogical presentation of Dionysus.
CHAPTER II

NIETZSCHE’S PHILOSOPHY OF BECOMING

“I don’t concede that the ‘I’ is what thinks. Instead, I take the
I itself to be a construction of thinking, of the rank as ‘matter’,
‘thing’, ‘substance’, ‘individual’, ‘purpose’, ‘number’: in other
words, to be only a regulative fiction with the help of which a
kind of constancy and thus ‘knowability’ is inserted into,
invented into, a world of becoming.”

– Notebook 35 [35] May-July 1885

In chapter one, I provided a general account of the themes of unity and
aesthetics as they relate to the Idealist tradition’s conceptions of ‘subject’ and
‘object’ and their influence on Nietzsche’s Dionysus. Nietzsche’s transformation
of Dionysus, as a response to his inheritance from Schopenhauer and the Idealist
tradition, also engages the theme of causality. Both Schelling and Schopenhauer
had unresolved concerns with the process of individuation and with a satisfactory
answer for why the unified cosmos divided itself into particulars. Nietzsche
remarked in his early essay On Schopenhauer, that Schopenhauer was also
unsuccessful in resolving this issue, and thereby accepted the burden, the
mystery, and opportunity of solving the riddle of individuation, placing it squarely
in the teeth of insistent philosophical drive.

The investigation of the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and the consequences of
their relation exposed the path toward an underlying unity and an aesthetic
method of disclosing that unity, which intimated an intriguing result. The result
was a collapse of acting/doing/knowing as a singular way of being which
removed reflective intellection to a secondary tier of consciousness, one that was

122 Zöller, pp. 208-209
123 OS in NR, pp. 24-29
not synchronized with the present, the now, of passing time.\textsuperscript{124} Nietzsche’s astute philosophical disposition understood that a non-reflective acting/doing/knowing meant a shift in fundamental responsibility for acting, since one is not reflectively aware of one’s action until it has come to pass. Therefore, the shift in responsibility also applied to the conception of causality, which, as Schopenhauer had demonstrated, is fundamentally reliant upon the principle of sufficient reason.\textsuperscript{125} The issue of causality, as we saw at the end of chapter one, was being considered in a non-teleological chaotic fashion, which portended many unwelcome ramifications for the common psychological orientation of the human experience. Partly, this is due to the fact that human experience tells us that there must be a cause or a reason for some action to take place, which could not be empirically justified if the temporal dislocation of doing and thinking were to be removed from the equation. Without a satisfactory response to how something manifests itself without a “prime mover,” so to speak, is an age-old philosophical problem. Nietzsche attempts to answer this conundrum with a simple principle: necessity, the blind product of force. For Nietzsche, individuation and the resultant concept of fate are like the inevitable product of a chemical reaction. Nevertheless, he believes in an overcoming of the perceived pessimism of such a position.

For Nietzsche, the concept of necessity supplants the idea of some spiritual upsurge that brings about the manifestation of ‘subjects’ and ‘objects.’ It also has a powerful effect on his conceptions of the associated issues of fate and free will. In order to provide a foundation for this new intertwined worldview wherein (1) ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ are illusory conceptions dislocated from fundamental unity, (2) aesthetic justification instead of empirical justification is the true form of human engagement with reality, and (3) fate and free will are collapsed into spontaneous and necessitated action by the revelation that humans are unable to synthesize reflection with ever changing \textit{Being}, Nietzsche

\textsuperscript{124} See Chapter 1 of this dissertation, pp. 15-16
\textsuperscript{125} See White, \textit{Schopenhauer’s Early Fourfold Root}. For his views on causality as derivative from the root of sufficient reasoning see sections 16, 25, 53-55.
required nothing less than a new cosmological foundation. For Nietzsche, *Becoming* is this foundation. Nietzsche did not invent the concept, but he did recognize its applicability to the Kantian conceptions of time and space, which challenged standard religious perspectives. In addition, he realized that *Becoming* fell in line with the radical consequences of considering the world from an ontological perspective, which was more amenable to a consistent holistic philosophy. With these consequences in view, his new cosmological response was to exchange the plenitude and eternity of *Being* for the ceaselessly generative and self-destructive concept of *Becoming*.

“A world of *Becoming*” is the foundation of Nietzsche’s perception of reality. *Becoming* represents the process of onrushing persistent change to the cosmos and to the human beings who inhabit it. While true *Becoming* can only be experienced, an approximate mental image of *Becoming* defined as ubiquitous and persistent change is possible if one considers that at any ‘moment’ one’s own bodily cells are dying and replicating, while the air is circulating, while stars are being born and exploding, while light is shifting, while the waters of the rivers are flowing, while all people all over the world are walking, talking, and changing relationships with their surroundings, which are also transforming in each and every ‘moment’ that we consider the ‘present.’ One could go on and on exemplifying the process this way, though even the concept of moment is somewhat disconcerting from this perspective. There can truly be no real ‘moment,’ i.e. a frozen point of time, the ‘now’, so to speak. There can only be the threshold of the wave of change, the crest of *Becoming*, which one may ride through the experience of losing oneself to it. To reflect on *Becoming*, as we have just done, is to separate from it in order to apprehend it as an image, and this metaphysical process extinguishes the experience by freezing *Becoming* into an image that is persistent, which we call *Being*. But, for Nietzsche, this new frozen image is, in very important ways, untrue.

Beginning, at least, during his teenage years, this insight permeates his philosophy, and remains for the rest of his life. Each of the well-known aspects
of Nietzsche’s philosophy rests on this perception. The Revaluation of all Values, Eternal Return of the Same, the Will to Power, his prophet Zarathustra, and his portrayal of Dionysus form a set of interwoven philosophical perspectives which share this basic starting point and structural support. This philosophical predisposition is perhaps one of the most enigmatic attributes of Nietzsche’s intellectual makeup. While his philosophy has internal consistency and logical progression, the starting point of *Becoming* is outside his time period’s traditional philosophical boundaries, and the consequences of this move have not become less poignant over time. Dionysus, for Nietzsche, is more than a metaphor or a character from antiquity. He is *the* symbol of an aesthetic methodology for engaging this world of *Becoming* in the present.

Therefore, the second genealogical moment in the modern resurrection of Dionysus presented here is Nietzsche’s unique position concerning metaphysics wherein he advocates a philosophy that embraces *Becoming*, in opposition to *Being*, as a primary philosophical stance. The sophistication of his position has been studied and illuminated for over a hundred years, and it began as a special concern of his from an early age. During his teenage years, Nietzsche identified *Becoming* as a major topic in his thoughts about history, fate, and freedom of the will.\(^{126}\) Jumping ahead to his last productive year, some 26 years later, Nietzsche concludes his career still occupied and struggling with the inability of his contemporaries to appreciate a philosophy that embraces *Becoming* as the fundamental reality of existence in opposition to the common fossilizing perceptual framework of *Being*. For Nietzsche, *Being* was simply inadequate because it turned all *living* ideas, concepts, and structures into vestiges of themselves.

---

\(^{126}\) "Fate and History: Thoughts" and "Freedom of the Will and Fate," 1862, pp. 12-17 from *NR.*
when they dehistoricize it, *sub specie aeterni*, - when they have turned it into a mummy.\textsuperscript{127}

During Easter vacation of 1862, in a short essay entitled “Fate and History: Thoughts”, Nietzsche diaries his ponderings on the major philosophical attempts throughout the millennia of human civilization. Upon reading it, one immediately recognizes the simplicity and directness of young insight which has not yet unlearned its honesty and begun not to trust in itself. Keenly, he notes the oddity that humans still attempt to solve holistic philosophical problems by repeating the similarly grounded approaches and systems of previous generations, along with their shortcomings. All of this they did, according to him, without the fullness of knowledge required to sufficiently undertake such tasks. In his essay, Nietzsche depicts humans not as an end-product of biology but as a transitional phase of cosmic development with an open-ended sense of history. Already, at seventeen, he repudiates the teleology of a Christian worldview and lays opens his imagination to the resounding pariah that accompanies his own question, “Has this eternal becoming no end?”\textsuperscript{128}

Nietzsche does not provide his own biographical evidence for what inspired him to consider *Becoming* as a problem to begin with, but it is evident that *Becoming* weighed heavily on his mind early on. The early works of his career demonstrate a constant awareness of the permeating consequences of *Becoming* on his own sense of history, his culture’s sense of history, identity, and his conceptions of fate and free will. In his last year at Schulpforta, Nietzsche clearly articulates in his essay “My Life” that he has emotionally and intuitively accepted the world as a transitional matrix wherein *Becoming* is the fundament of existence and wherein even he must relinquish his own psychological attempts at control in order to be open to the future.\textsuperscript{129} By his own admission, this insight was a factor in his decision whether or not to continue the study of philosophy and

\textsuperscript{127} *TI* ‘Reason’ in Philosophy” § 1, pp. 166-7
\textsuperscript{128} *NR* “Fate and History: Thoughts”, p. 13
\textsuperscript{129} *NR* “Freedom of Will and Fate”, p. 20
theology after his "classical" education at Schulpforta. Remarkably, he reaches this complex position seemingly on his own prior to his catalytic encounter with Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation*. The importance of Schopenhauer’s influence is the addition of a philosophical foundation that, in tandem with his established disposition, allows Nietzsche to back up his intuition with methods and discourse from within the German philosophical tradition.\(^{130}\)

Nietzsche’s multi-disciplinary and holistic philosophical interests spur his decision toward philology and theology. Like the Enlightenment visionaries of the century before him, Nietzsche looks to the ancient world in order to reach for something outside the bounds of Christianity in his search for philosophical authority. During his teenage years, he had already moved beyond recognizing God and the Church as an authority for truth and had begun his own search with a diversity of interests. Among them, culture [*Bildung*] as an object of study and the ancient Greek consciousness fascinated him.\(^{131}\) Looking toward the ancients for guidance, Nietzsche witnessed the notion of *Becoming* disappear from Western philosophical dialogue, shrouded by the veil of metaphysics of Plato’s "ideal" world. The notion of an “ideal” world, for Nietzsche, is the axiomatic opposite of an earlier less illusory Hellenic mentality.\(^{132}\) Meanwhile, he equates the earlier Hellenic mentality with that of the natural philosophers who engineered the philosophical drive in ancient Greece.

The “Pre-Platonic” philosophers, as Nietzsche refers to them, especially intrigue him for several reasons. First of all, he traces the lineage of the Christian worldview, which he opposes, to the introduction of Platonic metaphysics, which establishes ‘The Good’ as the central and highest ideal of existence. These

---

\(^{130}\) Admittedly, Nietzsche does little to explicitly render his conceptual leaps in epistemological language. Instead, he sometimes names his influences or recognizably alludes to them in his critical writings and one is left to reconstruct these influences based on Nietzsche’s response to tradition.

\(^{131}\) See *NT*, chapter two: “Nietzsche and his Early Interests”.

\(^{132}\) The example of anti-Platonic mentality that Nietzsche provides is Thucydides, who Nietzsche believes exemplifies a holdover of the straightforward, non-illusory, and “realistic” mentality of earlier Greek culture. See *TI*, “What I Owe the Ancients,” § 2. Thucydides is a contemporary of Plato, though older, and, to Nietzsche, Thucydides represents a previous mindset, not a previous historical time period.
Archaic age philosophers belonged to the world prior to Plato, which Nietzsche seeks to examine. Secondly, metaphysics is epistemologically inconsistent with the consequences of *Becoming*, and contrary to the Idealist philosophers, Pre-Platonic philosophers wrestle with the dynamic that includes acknowledgment of the possible priority of *Becoming* over *Being*. And finally, their open attitude toward *Becoming* as a legitimate foundational principle catches his attention, primarily because it supports his view of value neutrality as an end result of the considerations of strict materialism. For Nietzsche, this final consequence of *Becoming* is of major importance, since materialism is reconcilable with *Becoming* in a way that the metaphysical stasis of *Being* fundamentally is not. The more he studied and the more synaptic connections manifested themselves, the more serious became his demeanor.

**The Gaze into Antiquity**

The first major questions that Nietzsche asks concerning the philosophers of antiquity are: how did they find themselves driven to philosophize? In what way and to what end did philosophy help germinate their culture? From this standpoint, Nietzsche is already demonstrating his interest in the cultural underpinnings that make possible the production of artifacts such as literature, art, political systems, and philosophy. Nietzsche does not attempt to answer these questions by the standard procedure of looking into the products of the culture, but by attempting to engage the mindset that spawned the products. In Nietzsche’s view, philosophical and psychological outlooks can only be glimpsed

---

133 A prime example is Democritus’ “Nothing but atoms and the void”. Atoms and the void stand in as the material manifestation of the psychological conceptions of *Being* and Non-*Being*.  
135 Once again, this is part of the critical tradition and the influence of Kant and Schopenhauer, both of whom sought pre-conditions for the possibility of phenomena in their philosophies. This represented a new and productive method for Cultural exploration. Jakob Burckhardt transfers this approach directly to Greek culture and it is picked up and applied by Nietzsche. See Burckhardt’s *The Greeks and Greek Culture*, trans. O. Murray, 1998. This methodology is discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, section on Cultural Methodology.
in communion with representatives of ancient cultures by “an invisible bridge from genius to genius.” As it relates to the Pre-Platonics, Nietzsche intuits connections spanning the ages by orienting himself with an unmetaphysical outlook. An unmetaphysical outlook is one that does not presuppose or rely upon the basic ability to use metaphysical categories to explain the world in an epistemological sense. ‘Unmetaphysical’ is different from ‘non-metaphysical’ in that non-metaphysical is strictly an impossibility in terms of reflective thought and empirical justification. Instead, Nietzsche engages the world and represents his positions by using language to indirectly point toward his meanings rather than represent his meanings directly. This is reflected in his sometimes purposefully obscure or clouded language, use of ambiguous terms, and in his appreciation of Heraclitus who employs a similarly enigmatic style, presumably for similar purposes. In Nietzsche’s view, the keystone to understanding the Greeks, prior to Plato, is possible only for those who have the ears to let them hear, so to speak. This is one of the most pregnant of Nietzsche’s philosophical positions. Here, one encounters both the precarious and problematic limitations of Becoming and metaphysical Being. He must manage and communicate his position by using metaphysical language to evince meaning without directly relying upon unqualified representation.

One of the primary limitations of a philosophy of Becoming is the inability to metaphysically secure an explanation for the experience of it. Since communing with the mindset of an ancient culture requires synchronicity with an ancient mindset, and this communion is broken upon reflection and thereby relegated to the world of representation, Becoming is problematic in terms of empirical justification. For this reason, Nietzsche’s justifications are non-empirical

---

136 PPP, Introduction by Whitlock, p. 3. See Whitlock’s first editorial citation and comment. This is consistent with Nietzsche’s views of Heraclitus.
137 Synchronicity here refers to a temporal psychological harmony in terms of a mode of being. To engage another culture directly one must experience their mindset, in a manner of speaking, which is done by experiencing the limits of the human condition through loss of self. For Nietzsche, this is harmony with Becoming, and thus necessarily temporal because awareness of it requires a dissolution of the temporally reflective subject. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation and the explanation of unhistorical consciousness.
and he relies upon the intuition of his readers to grasp his justification in claims such as the previous “invisible bridge.” Consistent with his method of philosophical reflection, his experience of *Becoming* finds resonance with his study of Heraclitus of Ephesus who, in the surviving fragments of his philosophy, professes the possibility for a penetrating form of communication that leapfrogs vast periods of time and culture.

The Sybil, with raving mouth uttering mirthless and unadorned and unperfumed phrases, reaches a thousand years in her voice on account of the god.\(^{138}\)

The association with Dionysus is immediate. Nietzsche seizes upon the relationship of Dionysus to the temple of Apollo wherein the Delphic Sybil gave her prophecies. The connection to antiquity is, for Nietzsche, found in unlocking and registering the meaning of such phrases. These enigmatic statements point to a major methodological issue that handicaps a philosophy of *Becoming* in an academic environment. Methodologically, *Becoming* must be engaged non-intellectually via ritual; however this does not rule out the lightning strike of epiphany.

*Becoming*, for Nietzsche, is an unmetaphysical response to the critical limitations of metaphysical constructions of history and identity. His conviction and commitment to it as a productive method of experiencing the world is testament to the potency of his early insight, and he employs it for the rest of his career. Unfortunately for Nietzsche, it is a vast understatement to say that unmetaphysical orientations toward existence were not prevalent in nineteenth-century Germany. Without a reflective metaphysical methodology to justify his philological conclusions, he quickly realizes he will find himself alone

---

\(^{138}\) McKirahan, Richard D. *Philosophy before Socrates*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994. p. 126 Heraclitus fragment 10.101, or (92) DK. McKirahan notes that the wording is probably inauthentic to Heraclitus – though it is unclear whether this caveat was or could have been known to Nietzsche. Knowledge of the probability is never mentioned in his writings.
scholastically and philosophically. His answer is to employ aesthetic practice as a pre-condition to experiencing *Becoming* and thus act as a window into the justifications for his conclusions.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche uses music as his aesthetic marker because the language and experience of music fits nicely with the ontological conception of *Being/Becoming* as a temporal psychological distinction. Looking back at Hellenic culture, he recognized one product that was well-known enough to act as a symbol for the methodological prerequisites needed to understand him and that coincided with his developing philosophical perspective. This symbol was Dionysus. Dionysus was known to earlier scholars, and even treated as the artistic creative impulse that we see in Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, but none had revealed a living Dionysus out of the foundation of *Becoming*, which he saw as typically Greek, and certainly not modern. Dionysus provides a *living* alternative to the transcendental and intellectual impasse of Kantian metaphysics. He is a window on *Becoming* by which one may engage the ancients. He is the *unmetaphysical* avenue that leads to true insight and communion. For Nietzsche, one communes with Dionysus. One participates in his epiphanic celebrations and orgiastic rites. For Nietzsche, this method of entering into an *unmetaphysical* orientation through loss of self reveals the world as it is, in constant flux, rather than as we would like it to be, ideally permanent. Nietzsche’s Dionysus is rooted in this philosophical intuition that requires a shifting cognition of temporal relationships with both the objective and subjective experience of the world. The requirement of the god that he be experienced by communion and loss-of-subjecthood resonated with Schopenhauerian negation

---

139 With music one must be present. The music, unlike text, does not exist, *per se*, after it is performed. One must find it in the moment and *be* present. Loosely, this is the method that Nietzsche sees as the authentic way to engage everyday life.

of the Will. The combination of Schopenhauer’s appreciation of the Pre-Platonics and Art with Nietzsche’s appreciation for an aesthetic methodology of education results in making Dionysus Nietzsche’s primary symbol for the aesthetic engagement with reality. Specifically, it impacts Nietzsche’s view that Dionysus reveals truth by disclosing the non-metaphysical Urgrund, or primordial ground of existence. Nietzsche states this position explicitly in The Birth of Tragedy, saying “for only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified.”

Following the inspiration of early Hellenic philosophers, Nietzsche connects the influential concepts of his idealist predecessors to the philosophical positions of his preferred ancient philosophers in an effort to produce a holistic view of the world that results in and can only be upheld by the foundation of Becoming. Schopenhauerian subjecthood is visible to Nietzsche in the world of both the ancients and moderns, acting as bridge of the human condition. For this reason, Nietzsche feels that he sees the origins of Dionysus in this negotiation of the ‘subject’ with existence. In his view, the artifacts that are produced out of the ground of this negotiation tell us something about a culture, so long as one has the ability to harmonize with its ground. The lightning “embryonic” inspiration that all is One acts as this ground for himself and, in his view, also for the ancient Hellenes. It is out of this that he feels the ancients were driven to philosophy, and Dionysus stands as an example of the way that this intuitive method of living gave shape to their culture. As he states in Ecce Homo at the end of his career, tying his own methodological choices and philosophical productiveness to a Pre-Platonic world:

---

141 BT § 5, p.33.
This is my experience of inspiration; I do not doubt that one has to go back thousands of years in order to find anyone that could say to me, “it is mine as well.”

Pre-Platonic Philosophy

Since the failure of The Birth of Tragedy as a philological text, Nietzsche’s philological perspective and contribution has not been systematically scrutinized until recently. Given his commitment to an aesthetic methodology, he was not a meticulously responsible philologist by the standards of his contemporaries’ empirical expectations. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, who was a junior philologist at the time, but became by all accounts the pre-eminent philologist of the late nineteenth-century, is probably more responsible than any other person for pushing Nietzsche out of the philological mainstream. Nietzsche’s The Birth of Tragedy was disgraced as a work of scholarship after Wilamowitz’s scathing critique of it entitled Philology of the Future (a title which satirizes Nietzsche’s obvious indebtedness to Schopenhauer and Wagner) pointed out that The Birth of Tragedy had many academic shortcomings. Nevertheless, Dionysus weathered the storm, not as a philological specimen, but as harbinger of Nietzsche’s philosophical method and cultural critique.

For most modern publications on Nietzsche, which are primarily interested in Nietzsche’s philosophy, The Birth of Tragedy represents Nietzsche’s failed philological attempt. The rest of Nietzsche’s perspective on antiquity is generally taken from his major philosophical texts. Unfortunately, this omits many of his smaller essays, unpublished works, and the lecture series he gave while teaching at Basle. These other texts are extremely helpful in illuminating Nietzsche’s

143 EH, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None” § 3, p. 127
outlook on antiquity, which is responsible for the impact of his presentation of Dionysus. Nietzsche’s Dionysus is not drawn solely from the reading of ancient literature or the influence of Romantic and Renaissance predecessors, who had also treated Dionysus, but from a particularly new way of considering the divisions of culture in antiquity based upon distinctions in ancient philosophy and mindset. Most importantly, it requires a division between Greek philosophy before Plato and after, as well as sensitivity to the fate and place of *Becoming* as a philosophical principle.

Nietzsche’s philosophy of *Becoming* can be recognized in several of his writings that precede and closely follow the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. This time period, which he spent at Basle, accounts for most of his philologically directed philosophical inquiry. Prior to *The Birth of Tragedy*, published in 1872, Nietzsche had written an essay entitled *The Greek State*, which was originally intended as a part of *The Birth of Tragedy*. He probably excluded it because its focus is political rather than artistic and it would not have added to his aesthetic message. In 1870, he also composed a short essay, not published in his lifetime, entitled “The Dionysiac Worldview” wherein the buds of his Dionysian considerations are straightforwardly proposed. In his notes Nietzsche left an unfinished and unpublished manuscript from generally the same time period as *The Birth of Tragedy*, entitled *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. This text specifically provides evidence for his commitment to a philosophy of *Becoming* based upon Greek philosophical debate on the topic prior to Plato. Another extensive resource for Nietzsche’s consideration of ancient philosophy and his own adoption of *Becoming* as the central principle in his philosophical outlook comes from his lecture series entitled *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, which he used for the courses he gave at Basle during his early tenure. A closer look at these texts and Nietzsche’s treatment of the philosophers from this period will provide a clearer view of, and a greater appreciation for, the function

\[\text{145} \quad \text{BT, p. xvi}\]
\[\text{146} \quad \text{These courses are found in manuscript form, but there is debate as to the year(s) of their formation. See Whitlock’s Introduction to PPP, p. xxii}\]
of *Becoming* in the appearance of Dionysus’ modern form in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Dionysiac Worldview*.

Nietzsche’s digestion of ancient philosophy, especially Pre-Platonic philosophy, was accentuated by his position on subjectivity found in Schopenhauer’s response to Kantian metaphysics. Nietzsche’s reconsideration of the ‘subject,’ as an unsolidifiable *thing-in-itself*, heavily influenced his reading of ancient philosophy that dealt specifically with issues of *Becoming* and *Being*. The inspiration he received while reading the work of Schopenhauer transformed his understanding of the ancients, and allowed him to comprehend them in a manner distinct from his contemporaries. Illumination of Dionysus in the aura of *Becoming* marks the differentiation between Nietzsche’s Dionysus and the treatment that Dionysus received prior to him. Dionysus is transformed in the light of a new understanding of the ancient philosophers and their grappling with the conditions of human existence. This differentiation is the springboard for Nietzsche’s claim:

> I was the first to take seriously that wonderful phenomenon that bears the name ‘Dionysus’ and use it to understand the older, still rich, and even overflowing Hellenic instinct.

A serious consideration of Dionysus, for Nietzsche, is one that is based on the consequences of *Becoming* and takes seriously the ground of the culture that produced him.

One of the necessary consequences in the conception of the human condition, when approached from a Schopenhauerian position, is the change in the understanding of *Being*. Focus on the subjectivity of the psychological engagement with reality forces the recognition that *Being* can be considered not

---

147 *PTAG* § 7, pp. 64-65 “Such dissatisfied people are also responsible for the numerous complaints about the obscurity of Heraclitus’ style. The fact is that hardly anyone has ever written with as lucid and luminous a quality.”

148 *TI* “What I Owe the Ancients” § 4, p. 227
only as material existence in a void, but as psychological presence which shifts back and forth between individuated consciousness that is reflectively apprehended and the immediate presence of the Will. Such fluctuation is presented as part of the shaping of the human meaning of the material world. It is always in a state of negotiation, and is necessarily, as Kant demonstrated, separated transcendentally from reflective communion with the physical world. For Nietzsche, this ceaseless psychological churning is Becoming. He discovered that the existential inspiration he found in his reading of Schopenhauer coincided with the psychological perspective he recognized in the ancient Greek philosophers prior to Plato. For Nietzsche, this signified a bridge to the source of ancient thought via a common gestalt shift in the consideration of Being. In his eyes, both he and the ancients, with an unmetaphysical worldview in common, stood as bookends to a tradition begun with Plato and ending with Schopenhauer. Being ceases to be the totality of existence and instead becomes the dichotomy of Being/Non-Being which constantly nihilate each other as representation of the process of coming-to-be and passing-away, referred to simply as Becoming. From this viewpoint, Nietzsche perceives the applicability of Being/Non-Being to the temporal nature of conscious presence. In other words, he reflects upon Being and Non-Being as representative modes of being.\footnote{For Nietzsche, Being and Non-Being are related to our psychological state much in the way Kant’s space and time are related to the way we apprehend the world. They are ways that we exist, which we project upon existence. They are also inherently temporal. See Chapter four for a more complete handling of this philosophical move and its relationship to the Dionysian. The temporal relationship between consciousness and Being are fundamental parts of Nietzsche’s conception of History.} The necessary result of this perspective is that the ontological shift of Idealism’s ‘subject’ transfers the locus of assessment for Being/Non-Being from the exterior world to the inner self. Therefore, in Nietzsche’s view, Becoming is not only about cosmological development. It is also consistent with the human psychological state of existence, adding to his sense of a unifying principle in the Dionysian.

Nietzsche presents his argumentation for, and elucidation of, this perspective in his lecture series The Pre-Platonic Philosophers and in his essay
Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks. While the lecture series has often been overlooked by scholars in their considerations of Nietzsche’s philosophical positions, the name alone is enough to catch the ear of most students of classical studies. The term “pre-Socratic” is used in classics departments regularly and is a well-known term for the ancient philosophers before Plato. Many scholars missed Nietzsche’s distinction and inadvertently continued to refer to his series substituting the Pre-Platonic title with “pre-Socratic.”

This may seem a minor event in some ways, but the distinction is an important philosophical one for Nietzsche. He is drawing a line in the sand of ancient philosophy. He places Socrates on the side of earlier philosophers, instead of with Plato. Plato stands as the first “mixed” philosopher who integrates a multiplicity of earlier ideas and elements and is responsible for the turning point of ancient philosophy.

Instead of representing a beginning, as he does for traditional Western philosophy, Plato represents the end of productive philosophy in Nietzsche’s eyes.

With Plato something entirely new has its beginning. Or...from Plato on there is something essentially amiss with philosophers when one compares them to the “republic of creative minds” from Thales to Socrates.

For Nietzsche, the treasure of philosophy for humanity is to be found prior to Plato. Everything since Plato is illusion. Most demonstrably, in opposition to Platonic metaphysics, Nietzsche finds concord with the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus who acts as a model for the embracement of Becoming.

The point of concord between Nietzsche’s philosophy of Becoming and the ancient philosophers begins with the problem of the One; an insight into the

---

150 An astounding number of scholars miss this distinction. Silk & Stern miss it, as do J. Danhaueser, Richard Oehler. Albert Henrichs and others. Understandably this could be seen as a minor issue, but it speaks to a recognition of Nietzsche’s interwoven conception of philosophical mindset and philological perspective.

151 PPP, p.5

152 PTAG § 2, p. 34
unity of all things. As a young man, interested in a holistic philosophy, Nietzsche migrated toward philosophers who engage this topic, and they were influential in the formative years of his philosophical outlook. Therefore, it is no surprise that in his *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* series, he begins his layout of their philosophy and relation to one another by addressing the early Greek predilection for wholeness and unity. Thales receives credit for the first wrestling with this intuition. Afterwards, Anaximander introduces the divisive tension of *Being/Becoming* by following the logical development that stems from asking “How is the Many possible, if there is a One?” This philosophical exposition acts as a foil for Nietzsche. Mainly, he is interested in demonstrating that the dichotomy of *Being/Becoming* was seriously considered along with its logical consequences. These logical consequences result in Nietzsche’s acceptance of the world as *Becoming* rather than *Being*, and were, in his view, not treated adequately in the Western tradition since Plato’s impact shifted the direction of focus. In antiquity, philosophers treated both conceptions as phenomenal explanations of existence until *Becoming* disappeared in the haze of Platonic metaphysics, leaving behind only ideal *Being* and all the logical conflicts that go with it.

Nietzsche observes that the Eleatics understood that the metaphysical world was inferred out of the inability of the human consciousness to grasp *Becoming*. In other words, the inability of the human reflective intellect to synchronize with *Becoming* demanded that the world be arrested in *Being* in order to be practically encountered. Through Parmenides, Nietzsche patiently describes the shift in early philosophy from engaging both *Being* and *Becoming* to the consideration of *Becoming* as a ‘problem’ whereby *Being* was given

---

153 See Lloyd Jones, “Nietzsche and the Study of the Ancient World,” in *NCT*, and *NT* “Nietzsche’s Early Interests.”
154 *PTAG* § 4, p. 49
155 I would argue that one could make some minor exceptions for the mystical philosophers, and one major exception in the case of Spinoza, though it is obvious that Nietzsche’s concern is drawing attention to the need for change rather than promoting an accurate philosophical history.
156 *PPP*, p. 6
primacy. Parmenides’ solution to the problem of human inability to grasp *Becoming* was to strike it out and declare that there was only *Being*.\(^{157}\) The consequences of such a move are disastrous from Nietzsche’s perspective. The consequences of *Being* logically entail that truth is eternally present and that we can only conceive of *Being*. Both results lead to metaphysical traps that Nietzsche regards as the first dialectic of idealism. To him, they constitute a dangerous path that leads away from intuition, insight, and truth. Parmenides, in Nietzsche’s view, can only see the world as representation.\(^ {158}\) *Being*, understood this way, is the projection and imposition of the human sense of life onto the material world. Parmenides separates, orders, and qualifies reality. According to Nietzsche, this capacity for distinction, “especially since Plato, lies on philosophy like a curse.”\(^ {159}\)

Nevertheless, Nietzsche respects Parmenides’ thought, even though he disagrees with his conclusions, because he struggles with the problem of *Becoming*. In the lecture series, as well as *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Parmenides serves nicely as an opposition to Nietzsche’s favored philosophical perspective of Heraclitus. Both are monists and thus fit with Nietzsche’s lifelong striving for wholeness in his philosophy.\(^ {160}\) Acting as symbols of the processes of Nietzsche’s own thoughts, Parmenides and Heraclitus reveal his harmony with their philosophy, since all start with the “embryonic” thought “that all things are one.”\(^ {161}\) Nietzsche can freely draw upon them to provide examples of the process of his own thinking. He directly juxtaposes Parmenides with Heraclitus, though Heraclitus is visibly preferred in the lectures, as he is obviously the bedrock of Nietzsche’s philosophical position. Judging Parmenides, Nietzsche proclaims: “through words and concepts we shall never reach beyond the wall of relations, to some sort of primal ground of things.”\(^ {162}\) As part of the

\(^{157}\) Ibid., p. 88
\(^{158}\) Ibid., pp. 85-86
\(^{159}\) *PTAG* § 10, p. 79
\(^{160}\) *PPP*, p. 87
\(^{161}\) *PTAG* § 3, p. 39
\(^{162}\) *PTAG* § 11, p. 83
discourse of philosophical beginnings in Western culture, Parmenides represents an errant path; one that Plato succeeds in convincing Western humanity to follow, much to Nietzsche’s disappointment. Heraclitus is presented as the more fruitful, but forgotten, path.

**Nietzsche and Heraclitus**

Much of Nietzsche’s mature philosophy sounds as an echo of Heraclitean thought and dictum. Nietzsche’s solution to the problem of *Becoming*, like Heraclitus’, is not to do away with it, but to embrace it and to do away with *Being* instead. The result is a philosophy that is unlike anything that systematic metaphysical idealism puts forth, and is recognizably in line with his philosophical position after his encounter with the writings of Schopenhauer. Admiringly, Nietzsche calls Heraclitus one of the “monoliths” who produced “the archetypes of ancient thought.” To Nietzsche, at this time still under the partial impress of Schopenhauer, Heraclitus is one among the ancient philosophers that “form what Schopenhauer has called the republic of creative minds: each giant calling to his brother through the desolate intervals of time.” Once again, the idea of communion across the ages is supported. Nietzsche conceives *Being/Becoming* as modes of psychological and temporal existence, as does Schopenhauer. The real world is not a dichotomy but a whole, which the human intellect carves and apportions based upon the temporal fragility of the subject’s reflective awareness. Nietzsche supports his and Schopenhauer’s admiration by demonstrating Heraclitus’ advanced conception of space and time which shares much with Kantian notions of subjective relativity:

Aristotle accused him of the highest crime before the tribunal of reason: to have sinned against the law of contradiction. But intuitive thinking

---

163 *PTAG* § 1, pp. 31-32
164 Ibid.
embraces two things:...time and space. As Heraclitus sees time so does Schopenhauer....Space is just like time, and everything which coexists in space and time has but a relative existence....whoever finds himself directly looking at it must at once move on to the Heraclitean conclusion and say that the whole nature of reality lies simply in its acts and that for it there is no other sort of being.\textsuperscript{165}

Nietzsche goes on to directly compare Schopenhauer’s \textit{World as Will and Representation} in order to pair the philosophies of both and also to defend the charges of self-contradiction aimed at both.

Like other German philosophers since Kant, Nietzsche was interested in demonstrating the preconditions of knowledge. Nietzsche, however, attempts to expose these preconditions via an aesthetic methodology. Heraclitus again finds resonance and relevance when compared with this trend of nineteenth-century German idealism. Like Nietzsche, Heraclitus seeks wisdom, i.e. non-intellectual or non-epistemological proof. His aphorisms can appear particularly prescient in their application to idealist issues. For instance:

\begin{quote}
Wisdom is one – to know the intelligence by which all things are steered through all things.\textsuperscript{166}
\end{quote}

Nietzsche’s acuity does not miss this reference to the structure of intelligence and its original unity. In respect to Nietzsche’s response to Idealism, both Kant and Schopenhauer also seek to illuminate the “intelligence by which” the rest of knowledge production takes place. It is Heraclitus’ intuitive grasp of the existence of these principles that impresses Nietzsche, since Nietzsche continues to advance this project. The structure of intelligence is recognized via insight in Heraclitus, and also in Schopenhauer, while Kant’s epistemological effort cannot make this leap. Thus, resounding in many of Nietzsche’s major published texts is

\textsuperscript{165} \textit{PTAG} § 5, p. 53
\textsuperscript{166} \textit{PPP}, p. 70
the Heraclitean admonishment, “Much learning does not teach insight!”167 Beyond this, Nietzsche admires his steady observations which radically counter later Platonist ideas and which he deems products of living without succumbing to the illusion of consciousness. For both, intuitive intelligence is not simply a defense against the metaphysical illusion of knowledge, but a way through it to the world of Becoming.168

Nietzsche also makes use of Heraclitus in his exposition of Anaxagoras’ philosophy. Anaxagoras’ struggle with his concepts of ‘the definite’ and ‘the indefinite’ resonates with Kant’s dualism. Through Nietzsche’s reading, in connection with the phenomenon of the ‘subject,’ one is reminded of both Kant and Schopenhauer.

Sensory experience, specifically, is caused not by what is related to it but rather by what is opposed to it – after the Heraclitean course of events.169

The lesson Nietzsche details to his philology students at Basle is the justification for seeing the intellect as a phenomenon out of harmony with existence. In other words, the things that comprise intellect are noticed by their ontological opposition to Becoming. The mind in harmony with Becoming is not reflectively encountered. The intellect not in harmony with Becoming is recognized by the senses as consciousness, and produces the permanence of Being. Therefore, for Nietzsche, Being is illusion. As it relates to Kant, one may consider that the ‘subject’ is always separated from the world by intellect.170 This also is in line with Schopenhauer’s Will, which must be nihilated in order to find harmony and resonance with the world.

167 McKirihan, p. 117 fragment 9.2 or (40) DK. Also UM II On the Uses and Disadvatages of History for Life, is a large exposition of this principle with History as the subject of the exposition.
168 PPP, p. 71
169 ibid., p. 104
170 In this case, the “intellect” would be illusion or at least metaphysical representation of the “real”.

75
The agreement between Nietzsche’s and Heraclitus’ viewpoints, as Nietzsche considers them in his philological interpretations, assist in the development of the modern Dionysus by stressing the psychological shift that must take place in order to encounter him. Most importantly, the differences between Being and Becoming and the consequences of the subjective harmony with Becoming are apparent in the distinction between ‘contemplative knowing’ and ‘dynamic knowing,” especially as they relate to Dionysus. Like Schopenhauer’s answer of the Will to the Kantian problem of the “transcendental aesthetic,” which describes how we represent objects to ourselves, Heraclitus provides a separate way of knowing the world via non-contemplative knowing that is not caught in the trap of Being and moves in step with Becoming. Only an individual who knows dynamically can know Dionysus. Contemplative knowing is unable to reach the root because it cannot synchronize with Becoming. Heraclitus provides support for Nietzsche’s stance that the western philosophical tradition had taken a wrong turn in Plato and in submission to the limitations of a metaphysical reality. This twist on separation between intellect and the ding-an-sich in Kant’s Critique simply reinforces Nietzsche’s perspective that “the ‘apparent world’ is the only world: the ‘true world’ is just a lie added on to it...”

Many other components of Heraclitean philosophy are also recognizable in Nietzsche’s overall philosophy. These parts are set as the logical consequences of experiencing Becoming via dynamic insight. For instance, since Becoming is the natural state of cosmic flux, and the natural state of human psychology in Heraclitean philosophy, Being is illusion. Thus, its divisions are also illusion. This is the basic insight for the Revaluation of All Values. The common human values derived from Being are the predicates of our illusory

171 PPP, p. 71 Whitlock notes the influence of Bernay’s article from 1852.
172 Schopenhauer’s Will is derived from his conception of human motivation, a phenomenon rather than an intellectual projection, grounded in the human body, the material existence of Being/Becoming. He argues that it can therefore expose information about the world in a way the intellect cannot when it encounters the transcendental.
173 TI “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” § 2, p. 168
intellectual state, not the exterior world. This does not mean they are practically invalid, but instead that they are not eternally valid. They are not absolute. The absolute does not exist except as intellectual illusion. This is the basis of difference between Nietzsche and Plato; between Nietzsche and the Church.

Heraclitus also, according to Nietzsche, presents “cosmodicy”\(^\text{174}\) to the ancient world. Heraclitus sees the many as One which reinforces Nietzsche’s Schopenhauerian influence.\(^\text{175}\) The multitude is the appearance of the One. The fact that things change, divide, and usurp one another is the natural state of \textit{Becoming} and is its own justification by itself. The attraction for Nietzsche is that cosmodicy is a consistent element of an \textit{un}metaphysical outlook that combats the problem of theodicy which pits the values assigned to God against the values humans assign to the world. With cosmodicy, there is no ethical criticism of the functionality of the universe. In other words, gravity is not inherently ethical. It is simply a blind force. To pass judgment on it does not make sense because its existence is outside of human design or authority. And, for Nietzsche and Heraclitus, neither are the other manifold actions of the necessity of the cosmos. It is only humans who discuss them in terms of justice and injustice, good and bad.\(^\text{176}\) All predicates of existence that appear dualistically are no more than the appearance of \textit{Becoming}.\(^\text{177}\) Nietzsche goes on to elaborate this position in both \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} and in \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}. In addition, Nietzsche identifies and connects Heraclitus’ conception of the permanently moving cosmos with the concept of motivation and the \textit{Will}.\(^\text{178}\) Schopenhauer and Heraclitus, once again, dynamically support one another.

---

\(^{174}\) \textit{PPP}, p. 6 This term represents a contrast to Theodicy which presupposes a God, and shifts the search for reconciliation of the principles of good and evil in a cosmos that is unqualified by an absolute precipitator. Nietzsche takes this word from his long time friend Erwin Rohde.

\(^{175}\) See \textit{WWR} § 3, p. 7 Schopenhauer notes that Heraclitus also recognizes time as the fundamental problem of causal relationships as he has considered it in his \textit{Fourfold Root of Sufficient Reason}.

\(^{176}\) \textit{PPP}, pp. 63-69

\(^{177}\) ibid.

\(^{178}\) ibid., p. 70
In his article, “An Impossible Virtue”, Simon Gillham elaborates on Heraclitus’ influence upon Nietzsche’s conception of justice. Nietzsche believes that Heraclitus provides a model for a “non-teleologically determined cosmos which can be known or, rather, experienced, only by the artist or by the child at play.”

Heraclitus’ position that the cosmos does not act with intention and creates out of its own necessity connects to two major parts of Nietzsche’s philosophical demeanor, his impression of aesthetic inspiration and his consideration of fate. Both span his entire philosophical career. Take for instance a remark from his adolescent years:

If it became possible completely to demolish the entire past through a strong will...world history would be nothing for us but a dreamy self-deception: the curtain falls, and man finds himself like a child playing with worlds.

Compare with Heraclitus:

Eternity is a child playing

And Nietzsche’s The Pre-Platonic Philosophers lecture series takes the two in reference to the concept of cosmic necessity:

Heraclitus possessed a sublime metaphor for just this purpose: only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and a Passing Away without any moralistic calculations.
Out of this sense of cosmic necessity, Nietzsche develops his own sense of the impress of creativity and the cosmic imperative of aesthetic inspiration. Even at the end of his career, Nietzsche describes inspiration as fully unavoidable and without choice.\textsuperscript{184} For Nietzsche, art is sprung from the head of cosmic necessity like Athena from the head of Zeus. Aesthetic eruptions are as necessary as geological forces. Inspiration of this kind is a factor in the Dionysian eruption of tragedy as an art form out of the culture of ancient Greece as Nietzsche describes it in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}.

We are to recognize a Dionysiac phenomenon, one which reveals to us the playful construction and demolition of the world of individuality as an outpouring of primal pleasure and delight, a process quite similar to Heraclitus the Obscure’s comparison of force that shapes the world to a playing child…\textsuperscript{185}

\textit{Becoming} also upholds one of Nietzsche’s favorite positions of ancient Greek culture, the \textit{agon}. ‘Strife is justice’ is probably the most quotable of Heraclitean maxims. That all things that exist are derived out of opposition is a useful counter for Nietzsche against modern moral values. Dionysus’ Greek followers who embraced the destructive nature of the god and of the human being, in Nietzsche’s mind, did so out of a worldview that held this principle without question. He feels that Greek culture was uniquely honest in its ability to face this facet of nature without retreating behind the curtain of metaphysics; the curtain of self-deception. At least they were successful until a “coward” named Plato convinced them to “escape into the ideal.”\textsuperscript{186} For Nietzsche, courage allows one to see the world without the safety net of “The Good”, or a Christian afterlife.

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{EH} “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” § 3  
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{BT} § 3, p. 24  
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{TI} “What I Owe the Ancients” § 2, p. 226
Strife as justice, in his judgment, is “one of the most magnificent notions…produced from the deepest fundament of Greek being.”

In Heraclitus, Nietzsche saw a kindred spirit who had trod the same philosophical path that he was following. It is obvious to any reader of the two that Nietzsche and Heraclitus share many similarities, though it is impossible to say that he purposefully emulated Heraclitus, though Heraclitus is a role model for his attempt to wrestle with the communication of his aesthetic methodology. Nietzsche, like Heraclitus, denounces others for misunderstanding his often self-contradictory and slightly obscured observations. He also uses an aphoristic style similar to Heraclitus’ unique ancient style, in order to transmit his own philosophy. Both are primarily concerned with holistic consistency rather than individual consistency and thus both are known for their criticism of the Many; which they conceive as reality split into intellectual distinctions. As Nietzsche’s student Ludwig von Scheffler reports in a memoir account of Nietzsche’s lecture on Heraclitus, the professor trembled with awe at the reading of Heraclitus’ words and ended the lecture with the declaration, “I sought myself!”

**Materialism and Dionysus**

Dionysus is more than simply a character reframed by a Heraclitean foundation. He is also a response to the morals and values produced by a metaphysical Christian worldview.

---

187 *PPP*, p. 64

188 This would be a chicken and egg question. Did Nietzsche consider the idea on his own prior to his encounter with Heraclitus and thus attached himself to Heraclitus’ approach or did he adopt Heraclitus because Heraclitus provided him with the inspiration? Note that Nietzsche does not support a withdrawal from practical existence as the followers of Heraclitus did...See UMII, p. 62

189 *PPP*, Introduction by Whilock, p. xli, excerpt. The double entendre comes form Heraclitus’ fragment 10.33 McKirahan or (101) DK. Nietzsche finds both himself and Heraclitus in his self searching and ends with the echo of Heraclitus’ own statement which is very much near the Socratic “Know Thyself.”
Here for perhaps the first time, a pessimism ‘beyond good and evil’ announces itself, … a philosophy which dares to situate morality itself within the phenomenal world, to degrade it and to place it not merely amongst the phenomena (Erscheinungen) (in the sense of the idealist terminus technicus) but even amongst the ‘deceptions’ (Täuschungen), as semblance, delusion, error, interpretation, manipulation, art. Perhaps the best indication of the depth of the anti-moral tendency in [The Birth of Tragedy] is its consistently cautious and hostile silence about Christianity...  

Separation between spirit and matter, the material and non-material world, echoes the Kantian separation of the thing-in-itself from human reflective knowledge, to which Nietzsche objects, following a Schopenhauerian lead. Becoming rests as the foundation of his sense of the cosmos, and the claim of a non-material world proves logically inconsistent with this foundation. Simply put, Becoming, like the Will, is One. There are no separations. Opposition between body and spirit are derived by intellect in its dissection of the cosmos as something separate from itself. The intellect, as a metaphysical illusion, undercuts its own authority here since the separation of the non-material world is based on its own illusory conception of itself. Nevertheless, thinking about the world without distinctions is a difficult task indeed. Scientific thought, with an epistemological method, remains for Nietzsche a somewhat tainted enterprise. The structure of approaching the cosmos metaphysically with continued conceptions of teleology, and a direction that reflectively searches for “truth” as an object to be appropriated for use, falls victim to the same critiques as Christianity. Therefore, in order to be consistent with Becoming, another conception of the cosmos that demonstrates a unity of physical existence without

---

190 “Attempt” in BT, § 5, p. 8
the consequence of moral values already interjected into it is required. Nietzsche finds his corroborating philosophy in both antiquity and in the modern world.

Just one year after Nietzsche was deeply impressed by Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation*, the direction of his philosophical development was amplified by Friedrich Albert Lange’s *History of Materialism*. Nietzsche was impressed with Lange’s treatment of both Kant and the ancient counter to Pre-Platonic and Platonic metaphysics, Democritean atomism. The effect of these major forces at work on Nietzsche seemingly brought him closer to his goal of developing a unifying and holistic philosophy.192 The Greek world, bathed in the light of Schopenhauer and Lange, transformed itself before his eyes into a much more significant event in human history. Through them he hoped to critique modernity and provide a way out of the metaphysical isolation by demonstrating that the Dionysian illuminated the core unity of the cosmos, and therefore humans to one another as well as the world around them. The development of his skeptical philology and methodology begins in earnest with his embrace of Democritus’ philosophy and the concept of skeptical critique that Lange offers.193

For Nietzsche, Democritus’ materialism “is of the greatest consequence.”194 Nietzsche compares him to a pentathlete of philosophy, noting the reaches of his system into areas of ethics, art, music, physics, and mathematics. At least three of these areas are noticeably relevant to Nietzsche’s presentation of Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Through Democritus as a flashpoint, Dionysus is able to emerge as a product of Nietzsche’s convergent philosophy and philology. Lange’s methodological skepticism bolsters Nietzsche’s conception of *Becoming* as it is supported by Democritus.195

---

194 *PPP*, p. 125
195 *NPF*, p. 53
Nietzsche details the reasoning behind this for us in his lecture series on the Pre-Platonics.

At the time of the Pre-Platonic lecture series, Nietzsche’s main philosophical interests and inspirations focus on unity or wholeness as central theme. Becoming catches his imagination, and the continuous flux of the cosmos with its decentralizing effect and prohibition to metaphysical engagement is an enticing avenue for exploration in the face of the problematic of Idealism and its consequences. Democritus provides a corroborative physical perspective on the world that Nietzsche sees as holding a consistent understanding of Heraclitean Becoming. With a focus on holistic philosophy, Nietzsche concludes that “opposition between spirit and matter simply does not exist” in “proto-Hellenistic” philosophy.\(^{196}\) In a move that counters the consequences of the Kantian transcendental aesthetic, Nietzsche merges his own philosophical starting point with that of Democritus and Heraclitus, in the “reality of motion.”\(^{197}\) From this starting point, Nietzsche envisions a unifying philosophy that he incorporates into his mature work, and makes Dionysus, an unmetaphysical response to Christian moral values possible. As Nietzsche explains:

Democritus proceeds directly only from the reality of motion because, to be precise, thought is motion.\(^{198}\)

Once again, the reflective, yet temporal, nature of the intellect is established as the struggle of Becoming, the push and pull of human condition of cognition.\(^{199}\) In Democritean logic, Nietzsche relates the necessity of motion, showing that neither Being nor Non-Being could be “fully” extant or the result would entail no

\(^{196}\) *PPP*, p. 72
\(^{197}\) Kant’s transcendental aesthetic concludes that change and motion are not a priori intuitions and thus not starting points for philosophy. See Parsons, Charles, “The Transcendental Aesthetic”, *Cambridge Companion to Kant*. 1992. Pp. 62-100
\(^{198}\) *PPP*, p. 123
\(^{199}\) Ibid., p. 86...See Nietzsche’s treatment of Parmenides who retains Becoming and passing-away in the exposition of his thoughts.
manner in which motion could take place since there would either be nothing or complete fullness, neither of which allows the possibility of change.\textsuperscript{200}

\textit{Becoming}, the constant struggle between \textit{Being} and Non-\textit{Being}, is corroborated by this Democritean system in that both \textit{Being} and Non-\textit{Being} are necessarily dependent upon one another and operate as \textit{One}. The unity of the two is inseparable into solely one or the other except by the reflective intellect, in which case the distinction can only be the description of a moment, a qualitative assessment, not an absolute one. Thus Nietzsche’s perspective on metaphysical valuation is reinforced by Democritean atomism:

\begin{quote}
By convention sweet[...] by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention color; but in reality atoms and the void...None of these appears according to truth but only according to opinion; the truth in real things is that there are atoms and the void.\textsuperscript{201}
\end{quote}

The capacity to construct a cosmos without hidden forces or violations of our natural observations, and yet which allows for the production of “a blind mechanical result, which [only] appears to be the outline of a highest wisdom,” is too logical and holistically significant for Nietzsche to set aside.\textsuperscript{202} This unmetaphysical position amplifies his striving for wholeness and at the same time provides a stable ground for attacking the subjective nature of valuation in Idealism. To stamp this move as part of the continuing dialogue of Idealism, Nietzsche employs Kant in order to echo his own desire to construct a unified modern worldview out of ancient Greek foundations.

I will therefore not deny that the theory of Lucretius, or his predecessors, Epicurus, Leucippus, and Democritus, has much resemblance with

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., pp. 123-124
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., p. 124
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., p. 126 [only] added as clarification. Nietzsche is pointing out that the cosmos, including humanity, can logically be a product of natural processes if we take away teleology, leaving only necessity.
\end{footnotes}
mine...It seems to me that we can here say with intelligent certainty and without audacity: “Give me matter, and I will construct a world out of it!”

Directly after this declaration, Nietzsche recommends F.A. Lange’s History of Materialism to his students as a text for the consideration of both Democritus and the productive methodology of materialism. From Nietzsche’s combined perspective of Democritean atomism and Heraclitean Becoming, the concept of a universe derived from chance is not only possible, it is a position that more correctly meets the phenomena of our observations about the universe and thus stands as a more authoritative version of reality. This relationship to Democritus is related throughout the course of Nietzsche’s career from before his appointment at Basle through his last productive year.

The priority for Nietzsche, however, is not to detail a cosmology, or to present a scientific theory. Above all things, Nietzsche sees the necessary logical steps for establishing Becoming as a legitimate perspective contra metaphysics. Nietzsche notes the circularity involved in all materialist arguments which to a certain extent beg the question by assuming the existence of matter which is only an effect of consciousness and which do not exist without a ‘subject.’ The catch here is that if one makes such an argument against materialism, one has already ceded the argument that the world is dependent upon subjective experience. Thus Nietzsche concludes that materialism is “a worthwhile hypothesis of relativity in truth,” and that the truths we discover or create are only “truth for us, albeit not absolute. It is precisely our world, in whose production we are always engaged.” The Heraclitean ability to consider love and strife as forces rather than values prefigures Nietzsche’s view of all metaphysical values as a natural, mechanical, and impersonal phenomena of the intellect and human

203 Ibid. – Nietzsche takes this quote from Kant’s Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens. See Whitlock’s commentary.
204 NPF, p. 25
205 PPP, p. 130
206 Ibid.
condition. His stance against metaphysics is that these values are spontaneous distinctions derived from the strife of *Becoming* and are not absolute. The absolute in-itself cannot exist in a worldview that is consistent with *Becoming*. Dionysus is the messenger of this lesson in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

**Becoming and The Birth of Tragedy**

The subjective relativity of metaphysical concepts, especially moral values, is the direct motivation behind Nietzsche’s first application of Dionysus. At this early stage of his career, the major influences of Schopenhauer, Lange, Heraclitus and Democritus directly impressed upon him a non-absolutist perspective which translated into the demand to critique metaphysics. In his “Attempt at Self-Criticism”, the 1886 preface to the republication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes the genesis of Dionysus based on his reaction to metaphysics which dared “to situate morality itself within the phenomenal world” and thus “to degrade it.” More concretely he discloses that his “instinct turned against morality” when he was writing *The Birth of Tragedy*.

…as an advocate of life my instinct invented for itself a fundamentally opposed doctrine and counter-evaluation of life, a purely artistic one, an *anti-Christian* one. What was it to be called? As a philologist and a man of words I baptized it, and not without a certain liberty— ..by the name of a Greek god: I called it the Dionysiac.

Dionysus as the catch all symbol for *Becoming*, a critique of metaphysics and the cultural production of art via cosmic necessity, is visible throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*. As a representative of Nietzsche’s new doctrine, he stands in as a composite symbol of primordial unity and *Becoming*. Dionysus sits directly at the

---

207 Ibid., p. 118
208 “Attempt” § 5, p. 8
209 Ibid., § 5, p. 9
fulcrum of the struggle between Being and Non-Being, as the foundation for a relativistic theory of values.

The calling cards of Becoming surround Dionysus. The god is associated with the phenomena of primordial unity, harmony, and the struggle of the metaphysical intellect. In addition, Dionysus represents the aesthetic approach of Heraclitus and is a revealer of the emptiness of the void outside the metaphysical production of the intellect. On the surface, Dionysus appears as only half of the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy, though Nietzsche’s treatment of the Dionysian is far more extensive than his handling of the Apollonian. While Apollo gives form to artistic inspiration, much in the same manner as earlier writers had characterized him in the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy, Nietzsche’s presentation of the Dionysian reflects the raw layers of influence that had been accumulating in his philosophical development.\textsuperscript{210}

Dionysus, at this early point in Nietzsche’s understanding of the deity, if we take away the conception of Becoming, is somewhat comparable to Romantic characterizations. The major difference is the shift in philosophical and methodological ground, which Nietzsche had constructed as the foundation of this Dionysian exposition. Even if his description of Dionysus in The Birth of Tragedy was a premature one, which he felt to be true,\textsuperscript{211} the god is treated newly by virtue of Nietzsche’s Pre-Platonic underpinnings. Dionysus, in The Birth of Tragedy, is a god of artistic inspiration and the creative impulse, a view that was also held by earlier poets and philologists. This older view, however, is based on ancient literature and art and a historical view of Dionysus. In contrast, Nietzsche’s grounding of Dionysus in Becoming manifests an entirely different set of consequences for the deity that even Nietzsche had not worked out upon completion of his first major text. It is soon apparent that Dionysus is more than just a symbol for the creative impulse. He is an answer not only to metaphysical

\textsuperscript{210} See Bauemer, “Nietzsche and the Tradition of the Dionysian” Especially his notes on Creuzer’s Symbolik und mythologie der alten völker, besonders der Griechen. In NCT.
\textsuperscript{211} “Attempt” § 3, Nietzsche’s self-critique is one that points to the lack of finishing of his first publication, even though he considers its subject matter perpetually relevant.
values, but to the pre-supposed metaphysical mindset that Nietzsche holds to be the major limiting factor on the human condition.

The first chapter of *The Birth of Tragedy* introduces Dionysus as an “equal measure” to Apollo in the development of Attic tragedy. However, the character of Apollo, unlike Dionysus’, remains of singular use. He represents the solidification of amorphous inspiration into art and symbol. His presentation is clear and conceptually consistent, while on the other side of the dichotomy, the meaning of Dionysus grows more and more mysterious as Nietzsche searches for ways to characterize his role in inspiration. On the surface, this uneven development appears as a concomitant of their metaphysical positions. Apollo represents solidification and symbol, which relates to the normal operational mechanisms of the human mind. As such, his character is quickly understood as a symbol for this process. Dionysus, however, is presented as a distinct and active force separated from the individuated ‘I’ and is therefore shrouded in darkness. Precisely because his character is symbolic and yet resides in a position prior to or outside of metaphysical reflection, his meaning is unable to be grasped as securely as that of Apollo. This factor makes Dionysus an investigative tool for illuminating the metaphysical predicament of the human condition, and thus a more fruitful and versatile subject for Nietzsche’s interests. While Apollo shines as a symbol of light and clear vision, Dionysus brings with him the shadowy realm of the unconscious. Dionysus stands in for the creative impulse of *Becoming*. Out of the strife of *Being* and *Non-Being*, the emergence of art from necessity characterizes Dionysian inspiration. The ground of this inspiration, however, remains outside of the Apollonian spotlight, and Nietzsche equates Dionysus with all of the recognizable marks of *Becoming*: unity, strife, and fatalistic necessity.

*Becoming* is holistic in principle, and for Nietzsche, like Heraclitus, it is existence itself. All human values are subjective qualitative distinctions made by arresting and reflecting upon *Becoming*. Reflection, *a la* Schopenhauer’s
conception, is the foundation for the principle of individuation.\textsuperscript{212} While Apollo inspires form and symbol, Dionysus erases them through intoxication of the spirit and orgiastic rites. As one who erases the principle of individuation and returns one to the whole, Dionysus not only represents unity, but also represents the method for achieving unity through ‘loss-of-self’, dissolution of the reflective ego. As Nietzsche reports of Dionysian revelers, “Dionysian drunkenness and...self abandon” reveal “oneness with the innermost ground of the world.”\textsuperscript{213} The primordial unity, \textit{das Ur-Eine}, is reached by becoming one with the rest of the cosmos, and is presented as a gospel of “universal harmony”.\textsuperscript{214} The use of musical vocabulary not only reflects the overt influence of Richard Wagner, but echoes the Heraclitean use of harmony to characterize psychological synchronization with the flux of \textit{Becoming}.

Nietzsche employs musical vocabulary as a methodological choice in the exposition of Dionysus precisely because music best demonstrates the phenomenon of his insight. Most importantly, it is imageless. Dionysian music is an “imageless art,”\textsuperscript{215} while Apollonian sculptors are “lost in the pure contemplation of images.”\textsuperscript{216} The dichotomy of the plastic arts, which are able to be reflected upon at leisure by the constancy of their image, and the musical arts, which must be experienced in time by the attention of imageless sense, emphasizes the distinction between metaphysical symbols which may be arrested and absolutized as values, and the non-reflective reality wherein one experiences reality without holding experiences still in image-like fashion. Speaking of the dithyrambs of Dionysian drama, Nietzsche states:

\begin{quote}
The Dionysian musician, with no image at all, is nothing but the primal pain and primal echo...The lyric genius \textit{feels} a world of images and
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{212} BT §1, p. 17
\textsuperscript{213} ibid., §2, p. 19
\textsuperscript{214} ibid., §1, p. 18
\textsuperscript{215} ibid., §1, p. 14
\textsuperscript{216} ibid., §5, p. 30
\end{flushright}
symbols growing out of the mystical state of self-abandon and one-

The phrase ‘spirit of music’, often regarded as homage to Wagner, is more than just hero worship. It represents Nietzsche’s attempt to demonstrate the differences in the human condition’s ability to engage in methodological inquiry. The fact that the genius ‘feels’ the world out of a ‘mystical state’ does not mean Nietzsche had reverted to Romantic equations. Instead, his intention is to acknowledge that interpreting the world through metaphysical reflection is one form of aesthetic inquiry, while experience, rather than reflection on experience, is also legitimate. For his Dionysian exposition and rally against metaphysical values, Nietzsche regards experience more highly than intellect for revealing human subjectivity and the underlying unity. Music and dance form extemporaneous language, unknown to a simple onlooker, but felt by those invested in the rhythm and harmony of the Dionysian. In a phrase that echoes later in his life, Nietzsche states, “the servant of Dionysus can only be understood by his own kind.” Here, Heraclitean influence is once again apparent.

According to Nietzsche, only those who experience the primordial unity can understand Dionysus. Heraclitus claimed special knowledge about the *Logos*, stating emphatically that humans are inexperienced with it and prove unable to understand it, though they assume that they have understood. Nietzsche claims this special knowing throughout his career, especially in connection with the Dionysian. As a representative of *Becoming*, Dionysus is enigmatic, sometimes paradoxical and difficult to understand. He brings destruction and rebirth, madness and enlightenment, manifesting both halves of

217 Ibid.
218 See “Attempt,” § 6 Nietzsche’s states that the Dionysian question as it applies to music is one of the lasting relevant themes of the text.
219 BT §2, p. 21 Compare with *EH* where Nietzsche begins the text with the statement that he is a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus and *TI* where he ends the text with the same claim.
220 McKirahan, p. 116 fragment 10.1 or (1) DK
221 One famous example is where Nietzsche concludes *EH* with the quote “Have I made myself understood? – Dionysus versus the Crucified.”
opposition out of a ground of unity. Nevertheless, the language needed to transfer the impact of Dionysus always falls short of delivering its full meaning, and the nature of the god is not straightforwardly grasped by the intellect, prompting criticism from his many philological contemporaries. Therefore, in defense of his own view, Nietzsche rebuts those who have put forth a similar critique of Heraclitus, in the hope that a defense of Heraclitean authority will in part legitimate his own stance.

Such dissatisfied people are also responsible for the numerous complaints about the obscurity of Heraclitus’ style. The fact is that hardly anyone has ever written with as lucid and luminous a quality.

To Nietzsche, who advocates the unity of Becoming, the words of Heraclitus, such as “Changing, it is at rest,” are not only clear, they are the foundation of his attack on metaphysics. Nietzsche also employs this “lucid and luminous” method in his own writings. In his view, the surface of Dionysian ambiguity is clear to the initiates of his mysteries, and Heraclitus presents a world “in a contemplative well-being known to all the enlightened.” Becoming removes the solidity and permanence from terms of standardized values and, as a result, the words of sages are easily misunderstood. Likewise, the confusion caused by the attributes of Dionysus and the words of Heraclitus is not due to their imprecision, but to the inability of others to attain the proper experience and not misuse their value-making intellects. Nietzsche concludes that many, because of their lack of

---

222 Compare Nietzsche’s identification of this phenomenon with the Dionysian and his opening philosophical salvo in BGE § 2 where he derides the lapse into the eternal and objective for a foundation of separate and opposite truths.

223 PTAG §7, pp. 64-5 Nietzsche quotes “Jean Paul,” Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, for support of his view that Heraclitus is clear to those who have knowledge saying “it is quite right if great things – things of much sense for men of rare sense – are expressed but briefly and (hence) darkly, so that barren minds will declare it to be nonsense, rather than translate it into nonsense that they can comprehend.”

224 McKirahan, p. 124 fragment 10.78 or (84a) DK – Also read as “By changing, it is at rest.”

225 PPP, p. 74
understanding *Becoming* as the nature of existence, have muddled and confused Heraclitean transparency.

Only those unsatisfied by his description of human nature will find him dark, grave, gloomy, or pessimistic. At his core, *he is the opposite of a pessimist* because he does not deny away sorrows and irrationality.\(^{226}\)

Embracing the irrational as a part of life is noticeably the realm of Dionysus. In addition, Nietzsche’s statement that Heraclitus is ‘the opposite of a pessimist’ can be illuminated by his own account of his experience with the Dionysian.

The effect of Schopenhauer’s *Will* on Nietzsche’s personal philosophy is well documented. Nevertheless, it does not take long before Nietzsche begins to question and disagree with some of the conclusions that Schopenhauer advocated about life and art. Not long after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche moves away from him and takes up a position in direct opposition to Schopenhauer’s conclusions about the negation of the *Will*. His opinion that Schopenhauer had rejected life and thus failed to accomplish his philosophical tasks would remain for the rest of Nietzsche’s life. Nietzsche presents Dionysus as the opposite of Schopenhauer’s negation, much in the same manner that he characterizes Heraclitus as an optimist. He represents Nietzsche’s success and embracement of the ‘will to life.’ Nietzsche balks in response to Schopenhauer’s description of the tragic spirit, which concludes “knowledge that the world and life can afford us no true satisfaction and are therefore *not worth* our attachment to them” leads to “resignation.”\(^{227}\) In Nietzsche’s words, “How differently Dionysus spoke to me!”\(^{228}\) In fact, Dionysian experience, for Nietzsche, is concerned with accepting the chaotic and the

\(^{226}\) Ibid., my italics
\(^{227}\) “Attempt,” § 6, p. 10
\(^{228}\) Ibid.
irrational, embracing the anti-intellectual origins of existence in *Becoming*.\(^{229}\)

Against resignation of the *Will*, Nietzsche praises Dionysus:

> I do not know of any higher symbolism than this Greek symbolism of the Dionysian. It gives religious expression to this most profound instinct for life, directed towards the future of life, the eternity of life.\(^{230}\)

Like Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus, Dionysus is *pro*-life in that he embraces the whole of life. The pain in life arises in *Becoming* as a dependent counter principle to joy. Embracing the pain allows one to embrace the joy. Values made absolute, which Dionysus opposes, only create despair in the sense of Schopenhauer’s message that humans cannot achieve true satisfaction. So long as part of the whole is shielded from view, dissatisfaction remains an insurmountable obstacle. Dionysus is the opposite of a pessimist because the god teaches one need not resign and that knowledge about life is, in fact, available. Insight, however, comes at the price of losing the ego’s ‘I’ and experiencing the unity which dispels any myth of an anthropocentric cosmos. Nietzsche’s Dionysian lesson is a humbly Heraclitean one. “The one *is* the many.”\(^{231}\)

Nietzsche describes tragic drama as an upsurge out of the collective spirit of the Greeks which he views as existentially humble and honest.\(^ {232}\) Unity, once again, cannot belong to *Being* or Non-*Being*. It is only holistic when both are considered in the strife of *Becoming*. Collectively, the shared sense of unity gives birth to drama out of the orgiastic rites and expresses a Hellenic “will to life” that is “fundamentally” Dionysian.\(^{233}\) As Nietzsche explains, what makes tragic drama

\(^{229}\) It should be noted that anti-intellectual origins does not necessarily mean “irrational.” Anti-intellectual simply means that the origins of existence are not encountered in reflection. It cannot make comment on the organized or disorganized structure of *Becoming* if such a structure can be determined.

\(^{230}\) *TI* “What I owe the Ancients,” § 4 p. 228

\(^{231}\) *PTAG* § 6, p. 58

\(^{232}\) *BT* § 8, p. 43

\(^{233}\) *TI* “What I Owe the Ancients,” § 4, p. 227
an especially poignant production is that it is “the objectification of the Dionysian state” that is characterized by “the breaking asunder of the individual and its becoming one with the primal being itself.” Unity and strife are one and the same for Nietzsche: both evidence of *Becoming*. This characterizes his view toward life and toward his view of the honesty of Greek culture. Only *Becoming* can be the source of real art. In Democritean terms, reflecting conceptions of motion, *Being* is a plenitude and so it does not move and cannot make anything, while *Non-Being* does not exist and thus also cannot move to produce anything. Both *Being* and *Non-Being* are satiety, producing nothing. Nothingness must be osmotically filled with creation. Only *Becoming*, the strife between *Being* and *Non-Being*, creates motion wherein the eruption of art may take place without any necessity of teleology. Such strife is an impersonal, cosmic phenomenon wherein humans find themselves part of the blind mechanical movement of the universe. There is no special value put on human existence. For Nietzsche, this epitomizes the worldview of the Greeks before Plato. The “crucial innovation” of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in his own words, is that the text “gives the first psychology” to the Dionysian and “sees it as the single root of the whole of Greek art.” His summation states that “tragedy in particular concludes that the Greeks were not pessimists.”

In this Heraclitean parallel, Nietzsche looks at the misfortunes of all the tragic heroes and concludes, “All famous figures of the Greek stage… are merely masks of the original hero, Dionysus.” Such a statement reflects his own experience in the unity of *Becoming* that he applies to all tragic figures. This perspective originated within him, spoken in the “stammers of strange tongue.” Considering his own insight into pessimism, tragedy, and the subjectivity of values, Nietzsche reflects:

---

234 *BT* §8, p. 44
235 *PTAG* §7, p. 62
236 *EH* “The Birth of Tragedy,” § 1, p. 108
237 Ibid.
238 *BT* § 10, p. 51
239 “Attempt” § 3, p. 6
For Nietzsche, Dionysus warrants his place at the initiation of dramatic tragedy because the “breaking asunder” of the individual is not considered destruction of the “Good,” but a vehicle for the experience of *Becoming*. One learns that the individual is valueless, cosmically speaking, but the lesson is liberating rather than isolating precisely because it evinces the bond of the human condition that human beings share, even across leaps of time and culture. Dionysus acts as the mediator of this insight through the effect of group unity. One is no longer a slave to ideals and is able to live without the permanent and unrealized illusions of metaphysics, which, Schopenhauer taught, necessarily lead to resignation of the *Will*.

The empowerment of this position lies in the fact that the individual then has the freedom to give meaning to life, rather than have it provided by the illusion of metaphysical “objectivity.” Through Dionysus, one seizes the power to hold responsibility for one’s own life, as well as liberation from being bound by metaphysical values. In this way, liberation in *Becoming* is made possible by an aesthetic form of justification rather than metaphysical absolutes. Promoting this perspective, Nietzsche reasons that Aeschylean justice, as exemplified by his protagonist Prometheus, demonstrates that “all that exists is equally just and unjust and is equally justified in both aspects.” The world does not belong to the absolute. Quoting Goethe, Nietzsche exclaims “This is your world.”

According to Nietzsche, who rests his conviction upon that of Aristotle’s, the Pre-Platonic philosophers were not actually interested in the “good of

---

240 *EH* “The Birth of Tragedy,” § 1, p. 107
241 *BT* § 9, p. 5 Nietzsche takes this form of justice to be a component of ancient tragic drama and identifies it with Heraclitus. See Gillham’s “An impossible Virtue” in *NA*
242 Nietzsche takes from Goethe’s *Faust*, I, 409
Instead, they were concerned with seeking out those aspects of knowledge which reflected an open consideration of possibility. They did not prioritize an agenda which would keep human beings somehow at the center. The destruction of useful philosophy for Nietzsche occurs in the combination of morals and philosophy that are combined by the imperative of Plato’s characterization of Socrates. Socrates conscripts philosophy in order to seek virtue and to follow ‘the Good.’ Thus Nietzsche calls Socrates “the first philosopher of life” wherein “knowledge and morality conjoin.”

In this respect, Socratic philosophy served to produce a virtuous life, and “the proper life appears as a purpose.” Teleology is thereby connected to values. On the other hand, according to Nietzsche, in prior philosophic inquiry teleology is not necessary because life served as a basis for gathering knowledge rather than making absolutist value distinctions. This is not to say other philosophies were non-moralistic. Nietzsche does take note of Pythagoreanism and Orphism, though they do not meet his Heraclitean standard for an agonistic, amoral, chaotic universe. For Nietzsche, they are anti-Dionysian in that they seek to assuage pain and suffering through doctrinal practice. Like Stoicism, later on, they misjudge the value of pain as an agonistic principle that leads to new life. Instead, Nietzsche upholds the Heraclitean idea of strife, the agon, as the generative principle of non-teleological movement that is exemplary of the Hellenic instinct’s Dionysian will to life. Thus, in Nietzsche’s eyes, the alleviation of pain through doctrine, practice, and philosophy represents a bastardization of

---

243 _PTAG_ § 3, p. 43 Nietzsche is pointing out that ancient, pre-platonic, philosophy was more concerned with the physical observation and description of the world than it was with the moral attitudes, though this point is contestable. Regardless of the veracity of the statement, this statement reflects Nietzsche’s attitude toward ancient philosophers before Plato.

244 _PPP_, p. 145

245 Ibid.

246 See Benjamin Biebuyck, Danny Praet, and Isabelle Vanden Poel’s “Cults and Migrations” in _NA_, p. 166 Interestingly, we now know that Dionysianism and Orphism were intimately connected in antiquity.

96
the original intention of philosophy which was “to stay on the scent of those things that are most worth knowing.”

Morality, while part of the human practical world, only destroys the usefulness of philosophy by conflating, and indeed, replacing the material cosmos with a necessarily limited and inconsistent human centered one. In the new human centered cosmos, the virtuous life seeks a way to dispose of necessary opposites of the Good, such as pain and suffering. Thus, with this introduction of the virtuous life with Plato’s characterization of Socrates, Nietzsche labels him the “new Orpheus,” a metaphysical proponent and destroyer of the earlier Dionysian holistic instinct. In order to have virtue, Socratic example teaches that one must have knowledge, even if that knowledge is knowing that one does not know. For Nietzsche, the logical effect of seeking virtue through knowledge is that such seeking makes virtue a reflective, metaphysical, and thus “historical enterprise.” On the other hand, “Heraclitean wisdom”, like that of Dionysian experience, “is self-sufficient, and despised all history,” because intellectual justification is only illusion. It would not be overstepping to say that Socrates vs. Heraclitean Becoming is a real theme underlying The Birth of Tragedy, resulting in the production of Dionysus.

Conclusion

Becoming marks Nietzsche’s response to the Idealist tradition’s struggle with the concept of causality. The pressure applied by a conception of subjectivity that is spontaneous and prior to reflective intellection left many questions about the nature of action and the source of action. The most obvious question is: if one’s intellect is only the reflection upon acts and one is not in control of oneself, then what is causing the movement of the universe if it is not some primary

247 *PTAG* §3, p. 43  
248 *BT* §12, p. 64 See “Cults and Migrations,” NA, pp. 164-5  
249 *PTAG*, p. 147  
250 Ibid.
force? Even Kant, in his consideration of teleological judgment conceded that the cosmic unfolding of the universe resembled chaos more than it resembled organization.

The first thing that must be designedly prepared in an arrangement for a purposive complex of natural beings on the earth would be their place of habitation, the soil and the element on and in which they are to thrive. But a more exact knowledge of the constitution of this basis of all organic production indicates no other causes than those working quite undesignedly, causes which rather destroy than favour production, order, and purposes. Land and sea not only contain in themselves memorials of ancient mighty desolations which have confounded them and all creatures that are in them; but their whole structure, the strata of the one and the boundaries of the other, have quite the appearance of being the product of the wild and violent forces of a nature working in a state of chaos.²⁵¹

Kant, however, was unable to follow through with the atheistic and anthropocentric critiques that Nietzsche later employed because he continued to enforce a distinction between ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’. Both Schelling and Schopenhauer considered some form of force to be the direct impetus of movement, either by self-causation or by the striving Will of which humans are representative parts.

Nietzsche continues with the notion of the Will as a starting point for his conception of Dionysus, but soon removes, at least in his own mind, any form of teleological drive for the blind striving of the Will. It becomes simply the force of Nature, except that Nature, as we have seen in his understanding of Becoming, is not ruled by causality but by the necessity of Becoming. Therefore, moralistic value is relegated to social preferences and state objectives. Additionally, moralistic value is not all that is affected by this move. All valuation in and of itself is subject to this rendering of the fundamental cosmic principle. He therefore

²⁵¹ Kant, Critique of Judgment, Part II, § 82.
looks to all metaphysical practice concerning valuative judgments made by human societal practices. He begins his critiques by revaluing that which is closest to him, his own field of philology. Nietzsche’s sense of poetic justice immediately apprehends his Dionysus, based in a sense of Becoming, as the proper method of critique for the standard philological use of historical methodology, which is strictly reflective and metaphysical. Nietzsche began writing this critique of philology directly after The Birth of Tragedy, presenting much of it in his Untimely Meditations, as well as continuing the criticisms in his aphoristic style throughout his career. Nietzsche’s attempt to restructure philology according to his, as of then, undeveloped Dionysian methodology will be discussed further in chapter three, but needless to say his position was highly controversial and did not help his philological reputation.

While Becoming remained a critical part of Nietzsche’s philosophy, his attempt to place philology under critique based on this combination of philology and philosophy was short lived among the academic community. Becoming did not impress his peers as a viable academic foundation for philological purposes that were entrenched in a historical methodology. The sophistication of Nietzsche’s critique, regardless of whether it was fully developed or produced “truth” per se, was several steps beyond the internal historical criticism that philology had just begun to deal with at the time. Dionysus, and his lack of empirical justification, simply did not make the philological impact he had hoped for. Nonetheless, convinced of correctness of his initial instincts, measured by a life of reflection, Nietzsche laments not having had the audacity to push his critique even further outside the bounds of regular methods of academic discourse.\textsuperscript{252} Dionysus remained at this early stage, as a representative of his insight and philosophical intuition, “yet another question mark”\textsuperscript{253} of the growing development of and understanding of the deep-rooted consequences of Becoming. In Nietzsche’s words, he had not yet learned to fully listen to the

\textsuperscript{252} “Attempt” § 3, p. 6
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.
Later, as Nietzsche’s foundation of *Becoming* matures, so does Dionysus. It is fitting that Nietzsche ends his “Attempt at Self-Criticism” with words from his more mature philosophical perspective given by his Zarathustra:

Zarathustra who speaks the truth, who laughs the truth, not impatient, not unconditional, one who loves leaps and deviations: I myself set this crown upon my head.  

Perhaps he could say the same of Zarathustra, his self-acknowledged “Dionysian monster,” as he states of Heraclitus. He saw “the teaching of law in *Becoming* and of play in necessity.”

---

254 Ibid.
255 Ibid., § 7, p. 12
256 *PTAG* § 7, p. 67
CHAPTER III

ROMANTICISM, PHILOLOGY, AND CULTURE

“When the past speaks, it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it.”

- On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life

In the first two chapters we accounted for the foundations of Nietzsche’s philosophical perspective that made the modern conception of Dionysus possible. Inner and outer space, representational ‘subject’ and the ever-changing cosmos, echo the Kantian impetus of Idealism and are constituents of Nietzsche’s revitalization of Dionysus as a relevant phenomenon. Nevertheless, these two themes could not have produced the modern Dionysus by themselves. The modern reception of the god is also a product of other factors. Specifically, Dionysus is also a product of Nietzsche’s historical and environmental influences. Since Dionysus stands a philosophical method of exposure for reflective metaphysics, he is also necessarily concerned with presence, the action of Becoming, and thus Nietzsche recognizes, in the spirit of consistency, that he must be applicable to the process of doing philology and history (in addition to thinking about them) if he is to be applicable at all. Nietzsche’s combination of philosophy with these influences results in the disciplinary contribution of a new methodology that, in his view, delivers the ‘how-to’ knowledge for engaging ancient culture. To have only postulated Dionysus as one who symbolizes the characteristics of immediate knowledge of the Will and communion with the flowing river of Becoming, without demonstrating the

257 Kant’s famous words at beginning of The Critique of Practical Reason are applicable to Nietzsche’s broad employment of Dionysian attitude: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe the more often and more enduringly reflection is occupied with them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”
concrete effectiveness of the deity, would have been no more consequential than any other description or redefinition. Instead, Nietzsche was well aware that if his philosophical insights were to have any lasting effect, they had to remain in harmony with the reality that surrounds the production of ideas, and not just the ideas themselves. Therefore, in order to properly exhibit Dionysus as a living method, applicable to the ancients and revealing of their psychology, nothing less than a new way of engaging existence, especially the metaphysically constituted activities of life, was required.

Nietzsche provided a controversial but deeply serious and revealing critique of historical methodology as his answer to this challenge. The foundations for this response, however, must be considered prior to engaging this new conception of history, in the next chapter. The modern Dionysus required both Nietzsche’s philosophical perspective, drawn from Idealism, and his perspective on modern philology, which he forms in part from Romantic and philological predecessors, in addition to contemporary colleagues. Once we have discussed the debt that his conception of Dionysus owes to them, we will be able to continue to expand upon how he applied these influences in conjunction with his own philosophical position to arrive at a conception of Dionysus that exploded the processes of nineteenth-century historical methodology. In this way, Nietzsche draws Dionysus out of his texts and presents him as more than a literary figure. Dionysus becomes a living practice, exposed by subjectivity and *Becoming*, applicable to the mode in which humans consider their own sense of presence in the world.

Nietzsche drew his notions of philology and philosophy from the major traditions of German culture and academics. His interest in the arts, especially music, was intertwined in his life’s body of work. In addition, his preference for poetry over academic writing is evident from his early notebooks, and continues to the end of his career.258 Beyond this, his aesthetic interests and predilection for

---

258 “Attempt” § 3, p. 6 “What a pity it is that I did not dare to say what I had to say at that time as a poet; perhaps I could have done it!”
unifying themes exhibits deep correlations with the highly influential German Romantic tradition. In Romantic fashion, Dionysus discloses unity while strengthening the place of aesthetics, making it the foundation of justice and values. Thus, Nietzsche’s conception of Dionysus has often elicited questions concerning its originality in the face of an ostensible Romantic influence. This debt will be explored in tandem with Nietzsche’s philological influence, so that both the Romantic influence and the philological influence are clearly recognized for their contribution to his thought. Nevertheless, the position of this chapter is that Nietzsche’s Dionysus is incommensurable in toto with prior examinations of Dionysian character, though benefiting from their expositions. The third genealogical moment in the production of the modern Dionysus is presented here as Nietzsche’s philological and Romantic inheritance, especially the way he restructures this inheritance to conform to his philosophical perspective.

Relying upon Nietzsche’s philology as a necessary component of the modern Dionysus may seem a bit shaky considering many scholars do not consider Nietzsche’s philological contribution to be noteworthy. However, it must remain clear that the verifiable conclusions about antiquity are not the important parts of his presentation of Dionysus. Rather, it is Nietzsche’s philosophical interpretation of antiquity and his vision for new philological methods that recuperates the Dionysus we know in the modern era. In short, Dionysus could be considered Nietzsche’s “wake up call” for what he viewed as modern cultural shortcomings. Dionysus is a tool used to expose the self-imposed illusions he saw present in nineteenth-century Germany Christianity, and in academic pursuits, most notably his own field, philology. His philological perspective can be understood in two parts: (1) as a self-awareness of the limitations present in the conceptualizations of ancient culture and (2) a bent against metaphysical constructions of history, which he deems the destroyer of a more insightful and

259 Nietzsche’s aesthetic interests are often compared with earlier Romantic views such as those of Holderlin, Novalis, Byron, Schelling and Schlegel. His belief in intuition as disclosive furthers this road of comparison. However, Nietzsche’s materialism reverses his view of essence and existence, placing existence prior to essence. This solidly dislocates him from the Romantics.
less illusory worldview. From this critical stance, he produced a notion of Dionysus that fit his views by acting as a gateway to *Becoming*, illuminating the nature of the human condition.

Furthermore, Dionysus resounds as Nietzsche’s repudiation of Platonic metaphysics, with *Being* as his target. In his words, “anyone who does not just understand the word ‘Dionysian’ but understands *himself* in the word ‘Dionysian’ does not need to refute Plato or Christianity…he smells the decay.” Nietzsche’s philosophy shapes his philology in this way by turning away from the stasis of *Being* toward the chaos of *Becoming*. However, Nietzsche’s relationship with Dionysus is different than his relationship with philology. In fact, they are often in opposition. Nietzsche uses Dionysus against the *status quo* ‘historical’ discipline in order to expose its methodological deficiencies. These deficiencies are put on display by his critiques of philology, and philologists in particular. It is Nietzsche’s aim early in his career to rewrite the methodology of philology, which can be seen in his unfinished “Encyclopedia of Classical Philology”.

He patterns his revisions on the insight he recognizes in the philosophy of Heraclitus which despises the ‘historical’ (*Becoming* that has been frozen into *Being*) and promotes an “inward turning wisdom.” The result of this paradigm shift, which he advocates for philology, is the ability to find communion with the ancients by truly understanding what it means to be thoroughly modern.

In this chapter, we will explore what Nietzsche inherited from his philological and Romantic predecessors, as well as the methods he appropriated from his contemporaries, and we will pay special attention to how Nietzsche’s appropriation of early readings of Dionysus affect his contribution in terms of his

---

260 *EH* § 2, p. 109
261 This “encyclopedia” was begun by Nietzsche as a project and used in his lectures. As many of Nietzsche’s other projects, it remains unfinished and is available in his notebooks. It is not translated into English, to my knowledge, and may be found in the Kritische Gesamtausgabe: *Werke* (KGW 2.3)
262 *PPP*, pp. 55-56
263 He says this in many places – try *WPh* for starters. *UM* II *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* is the exposition of this principle. Modern means “present”…be clear about definitions. Porter discusses “healthy doses” of Winckelmann, kant, etc
claim to be the pioneer of Dionysian insight and understanding. There are three major areas from which Nietzsche draws a disciplinary basis for his presentation of Dionysus. First, we will discuss Nietzsche’s debt to the Romantics and how it applies to the production of the modern Dionysus. Though Nietzsche’s kinship to Romanticism is palpable, the distinction between them is unequivocal. Secondly, Dionysus is part of a philological tradition that had deep roots in German scholarship. We will consider the history of German philology that began in earnest with J.J. Winckelmann and promoted Grecophile culture in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Germany. This lineage includes many of the important names of German scholarship and the arts, including Wilhelm von Humboldt, Goethe, F.A. Wolf, Friedrich Schlegel, Georg Friedrich Creuzer, Friedrich Schelling, Philip August Boeckh, J.J. Bachofen and more. Lastly, the development of scholarship, and progressive specialization of university life in the nineteenth-century, provided its own influence by producing scholars who were critiquing specific areas and methods of study, which would become instrumental in coordination with Nietzsche’s philosophical orientation. Beyond these three primary avenues of influence, the nineteenth-century was rapidly shifting on many fronts due to the effects of Darwinism, Marxism, science, technology, and industry. Nietzsche was attempting to keep up with them, if not go beyond them, as best he could.

**Romanticism**

Dionysus owes a major debt to the Romantic era. The influence is apparent and yet, like much of Romanticism, difficult to isolate and communicate empirically. The real question is what kind of debt is it? Did Nietzsche slyly plagiarize and reissue an already developed mythological symbol, making popular what was already decided upon by a previous generation? Or did he produce something original? One of the immediate challenges in the search for genealogical pre-conditions for Dionysus’ recovery is discerning the difference
between Nietzsche’s philosophical perspective and that of the Romantics. Nietzsche’s previously mentioned predilection for wholeness and his appropriation of the concept of the Will have interesting parallels with Romantic notions of aesthetics and spirit, and even sound similar at times. Indeed, Nietzsche was educated in a university system which Romantics like Schiller and the Schlegel brothers helped shape. Several authors note that the closest conception of Dionysus to that of Nietzsche’s before him belonged to the Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin. The ease with which a surface reader of Nietzsche’s Dionysian phenomenon could mistake and assess Nietzsche as an out-of-place Romantic is understandable, but it would be errant. The evidence against a charge of Romanticism lies in the philosophical bedrock that made Nietzsche’s work possible.

Nietzsche’s philosophizing had reached a marked level of sophistication, in his early writings that dealt with fate, free will, and Becoming. Dionysus springs from this early creative and fertile period of Nietzsche’s thinking and, while having what is certainly a Romantic-esque appearance, demonstrates a debt to the Romantics without itself reverting to Romantic presentation. The debt and the difference between himself and the Romantics is addressed directly by Nietzsche in his “Attempt at Self-Criticism” which opened his 1886 reprint of The Birth of Tragedy. The resemblance, on first sight, of Nietzsche’s Dionysus brought criticism by those who were as of yet unequipped to recognize Nietzsche’s new sense of philology, and he felt compelled to defend the earlier 1872 version of The Birth of Tragedy against these charges. The “Attempt” re-introduces the text and responds to the criticism, taking a great deal of the tension out of it, by admitting that the text is “badly written,” “clumsy,” and “embarrassing.” He nevertheless describes the Dionysian as that which is in direct opposition to Romanticism, and tells us that Romanticism is “the most un-Greek” form of


265 “Attempt” §3, p. 5
artistic production. He even wonders “if the reader understands which task [he] was already daring to undertake with this book?” Nietzsche squarely takes on the question meant to denigrate his Dionysian project into a Romantic contrivance:

Sir, if your book is not Romanticism, what on earth is? …are you telling us that this is not the genuine, true Romantic’s confession of 1830 beneath the mask of pessimism of 1850, behind which one can hear the opening bars of the usual Romantic finale…is not your pessimist’s book itself a piece of anti-Graecism and Romanticism, something which itself ‘both intoxicates and befogs the mind’…?

Nietzsche’s answer is a firm ‘No.’ He advocates the proper understanding of the Dionysian and “this world” as methods of recognizing the difference. Admittedly, this is more complicated than it sounds. After all, Nietzsche is steeped in Romantic philosophy, and draws upon them in his work. The reasons for his ‘No’ are not necessarily as obvious as he thinks. Despite this, however, it is his personal view that his position is not only not Romantic, but that it is the opposite of Romanticism. Therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate where Nietzsche owes the Romantics credit for Dionysus and where it is that Dionysus actually becomes his own if we are to believe his claim: “I have the right to understand myself as the first tragic philosopher…nobody had ever turned the Dionysian into a philosophical pathos before.”

There is very little scholarship concerned directly with the conditions necessary for Nietzsche’s production of Dionysus. Most of it concerns his philosophy and tangentially discusses Dionysus. Other essays and works delve

---

266 Ibid., §6, p. 10
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid., §7, p. 11
269 Ibid. p. 12–“this world” is a reference to the non-metaphysical non-value-laden world, the opposite of the concept of ‘this world’ which would be an artificial intellectual creation.
270 EH §3, p. 10 - Nietzsche also says he is the first to understand the psychology of the Dionysian
into Nietzsche philosophical take on Dionysus, but leave out the philology and background that prepared the way for such a dynamic reconstruction of the deity. In fact, there are only two scholars who deal directly with Nietzsche’s philology and Nietzsche’s development of Dionysus from his earlier influences, both philological and philosophical. Max. L. Baeumer’s dense and thorough research on the history of Dionysus is the precedent for this direction of study. In addition, Albert Henrichs delivers the verdict of twentieth century classical studies on Nietzsche’s Dionysus, taking into account those who influenced this new paradigm, as well as the result of the shift in Nietzsche’s understanding for modern scholarship.

In his dissection of Nietzsche’s Dionysus, Baeumer presents a good case showing that nearly every part of the deity’s composition was already in place by the time Nietzsche claims to have been the first to “discover” the Dionysian. In sum, Baeumer suggests Dionysus had already been discovered, though it is apparent that he had been discovered in parts rather than as the composite Nietzsche presents. Baeumer even goes so far as to say that Nietzsche’s success in convincing people of his achievement is the product of his talent for propaganda.271 Friedrich Schlegel had already considered Dionysus as the source of dithyrambic poetry.272 Friedrich Schiller had discussed in detail the use of the chorus in tragedy in the prologue of his play, The Bride of Messina, and it is difficult to ignore the seeming affinity between some of his statements and Nietzsche’s later ones.

The chorus leaves the narrow arena of the action, in order to make statements about the past and future, about distant times and peoples, about what is human in general, to draw the grand results of life and to

---

272 Ibid., p. 177 see note 17
express the teachings of wisdom....The chorus thus *purifies* the tragic poem by segregating reflection from the action.\(^{273}\)

Nietzsche’s view that the chorus is simply the echo of the *Will*, unified and set apart from human construction of meaning for the action, and representative of the wisdom of Heraclitus as well as representative of the human condition, is not far behind. While Schiller does not mention Dionysus here, it is his view on tragedy that is so influential upon Nietzsche and helps prepare the way for Dionysus.\(^{274}\)

Nietzsche mentions Schiller multiple times in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and Schiller’s “Hymn to Joy” is presented as a prime example of the Dionysian experience. In fact, Nietzsche quotes the “Hymn to Joy” in his explanation of the Dionysian and even refers to Beethoven’s symphony which employs Schiller’s hymn for the chorale.\(^{275}\) Beyond Schiller and Schlegel, Hölderlin’s poetry was well known to Nietzsche and often portrayed imagery of a “living” Dionysus that represented a deep awareness of the god.\(^{276}\) Like Hölderlin, Nietzsche later equates inspired poets with Dionysus himself. The lyric poet is a “Dionysiac artist,” and a “Dionysiac musician” who produces a “primal echo” of the primordial unity.\(^{277}\) This Dionysian unity is what, in Nietzsche’s eyes, separates him from the epic poets and plastic artists.

Nonetheless, Hölderlin’s work may have been the most effective employment of Dionysus until Nietzsche’s approach and, even though Nietzsche did not detail it for his readers, it has been the subject of several inquiries.\(^{278}\) Silk and Stern also discuss the influence of Hölderlin on the young Nietzsche in their

---


\(^{274}\) See *NT*.

\(^{275}\) *BT* §1, p. 18, see notes 29, 30

\(^{276}\) Baeumer, p. 177

\(^{277}\) *BT* § 5, p. 30

\(^{278}\) See also Brobjør, note 264.
major text, and his poetic influence is echoed by Henrichs as well. Both Baeumer and Henrichs provide detailed information about the re-emergence of Dionysus in post-Renaissance European literature and art, and Henrichs credits Hölderlin, in part, with the post-Renaissance revival of the deity. This definitely casts doubt upon Nietzsche’s originality and claim to be the first to truly understand or transform Dionysus.

Secondary sources that argue that Schiller, Schlegel, and Hölderlin contributed to Nietzsche’s views are sufficiently convincing. The problem is that they are not as clearly defined as one would like as to the nature of that influence. Nietzsche did not leave clear notes for his sources, though the correspondence between his ideas and earlier ones is certainly noticeable. Rarely, however, is the correspondence a direct copy or quotation. Not to mention, his purpose for Dionysus remains quite different than that of the Romantics. The latter is the key to truly understanding the difference between Nietzsche and his Romantic predecessors. Hölderlin used Dionysian imagery for his poetry, Schelling had his ‘Dionysiology,’ and Schlegel marked the dithyrambic with his qualities. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s delivery, while touching on these points, is aimed at something beyond the artistic product of tragic drama. Even *The Birth of Tragedy*, which *is* directed at tragic drama, flirts with the more serious philosophical consequences of the human condition.

Baeumer’s research is difficult to gainsay, precisely because he has gone to great lengths to classify the many different aspects of Dionysus that can be argued to be intellectual property from many earlier thinkers. He even takes note that the concept of Dionysus vs. the Crucified, which is usually unreflectively identified with Nietzsche, has significant parallels with Heinrich Heine’s Dionysian-Christian opposition.\(^{280}\) Adding to the genealogical discussion, Albert

\(^{279}\) Silk and Stern, *NT*, p. 22 Their critique on the Dionysian is superficial in that it misses very prominent themes such as the Zagreus myth and the fact that Nietzsche spoke of pre-platonics, not pre-socratics in his philological positions…missing a key anti-metaphysical designation. Henrichs, *MVD* 216, see note 23, Baeumer, “Dionysus und das Dionysische bei Hölderlin” Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 18 (1973-74) pp. 97-118.

\(^{280}\) Baeumer, p. 175
Henrichs weighs in with Shelley’s portrayal of Dionysus as a projection of his “divided and suffering self,” which prefigures Nietzsche’s Dionysian psychological dualism. The most compelling evidence, however, that Nietzsche’s presentation of Dionysus may not have been entirely his own is the ledger from the library at Basle which shows Nietzsche checked out Georg Friedrich Creuzer’s 1819 text Symbolism and Mythology of Ancient Peoples, especially the Greeks which dealt specifically with the antithesis of Apollonian and Dionysian symbolism while he was in the process of writing The Birth of Tragedy.

To be sure, there are many precursors to the characteristics with which Nietzsche constructed his view of Dionysus, but his claim to be the first to understand the psychology of the Dionysian and to transform it into a philosophical pathos remains undetermined by these notable influences, even that of Creuzer. After all, none of Nietzsche’s work, nor the scholars who have traced this lineage, have found incontestable proof that Nietzsche was simply re-propagandizing the Dionysian from the Romantic perspective for his own glory. Bauemer even notes that while there are many direct quotes of Schlegel in his early notebooks, none deals directly with Dionysus. And while this seems to vindicate Nietzsche from certain charges, lack of proof is also not clear evidence that he did not strip the Romantics of their views for his own agenda.

It is clear that Nietzsche was influenced by the Romantics, but let us a take a moment to explore this connection more deeply. In defense of Nietzsche, let us consider Shelley’s “divided and suffering self,” mentioned previously. While Shelley’s portrayal may seem to fit well with Nietzsche’s description of the god as one who brings dualistic and egoistic destruction to the self, one must take into account the differences between a Romantic conception of self, which was individually and internally realizable, and the post-Schopenhauerian influence of Nietzsche’s conception of self, which was not existent as a thing-in-itself and stood as a nihilistic negotiated space of production. To make direct

---

281 Henrichs, MVD, p. 219
282 Baeumer, p. 180
283 Ibid., p. 177-78
comparisons between Nietzsche and the Romantics misses this key difference in philosophical foundations, though it is an understandable mistake when such presentations of Dionysus as an internal spirit or psychological projection of the self are first considered. Henrichs provides a point of contention against Baeumer’s conclusions by picking up on Nietzsche’s antithetical relationship to Hegel, who augmented the Romantic conception of spirit. This alone is enough to consider Nietzsche’s fundamental philosophical opposition to Romanticism. Henrichs, however, draws connections between Schelling’s “Dionysiology” and the Romantic revision of mythological systems to coincide with a system that placed man in relation to absolute spirit, which further clouds the distinctions. Despite such haziness, and even though he does consider Dionysus to be a portal to the Urgrund of existence, Nietzsche does not advocate a system nor follow along with any conception of “progress” implied by Schelling’s or Hegel’s relation of spirit and man. The key to discerning the difference is set in Nietzsche’s foundations of materialism. In fact, as we discussed in chapter two, Nietzsche is staunchly against teleological frameworks since they conflict with the consequences of Becoming. His materialist views, based on Democritean and Heraclitean notions of cosmology forbid him from making a distinction between matter and spirit, while remaining true to Becoming, which is his first and foundational philosophical priority.

Both Henrichs and Baeumer detail the influences on Nietzsche, though they come to separate conclusions about Nietzsche’s Dionysian product. While Henrichs identifies Nietzsche’s borrowing of certain aspects from the Romantics, such as the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, he also acknowledges that the Romantic shift of the Dionysian from the “outer” space of the Renaissance to the “inner” space of the Romantic psyche is not enough to account for Nietzsche’s contribution to the god’s status. Unlike Baumer, Henrichs notes that the Renaissance and the Romantics only emphasized the personal side of the deity,

---

284 Henrichs, MVD p. 218
285 Ibid., pp. 214-218
while Nietzsche finally emphasized the necessity of both sides of the god, personal and political.\textsuperscript{286} While Baeumer claims that Nietzsche’s perspective stands on the side of the Romantics over and against the classicists,\textsuperscript{287} going so far as to call it Nietzsche’s “alleged discovery” and to say that this perspective is in place already with Nietzsche’s philological colleague J.J. Bachofen, Henrichs understands that “Romantics” is a general term and that they were not a singular group, nor did they speak with one voice. In other words, to speak of a Romantic notion of Dionysus is only to make an approximation or, at best, an amalgamation of concepts which were not unified by the Romantics. In the end, Henrichs finds the transformation of the Dionysian to be “highly original” and places the responsibility for our modern view of Dionysus squarely in the hands of Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{288} As for the Romantics, their Dionysus remained in the world of mythology, and at most became a symbol of passions in the individual.\textsuperscript{289}

Nietzsche delivers a Dionysus that is much more than a symbol or a character borrowed from the Romantics and rewrapped. Nietzsche transforms the deity into an interdisciplinary response to modern culture, and he first aims his new vision at his own philological circle. He places the god at the fulcrum between the practice of philology and the philosophical view that suggests we should practice philology to begin with. Through Nietzsche, Dionysus functions as a critique of nineteenth-century historical method based on Nietzsche’s understanding of subjectivity as well as a critique of metaphysics and moral valuation. None of the Romantic expressions of the Dionysian come anywhere near suggesting Dionysus had been or could be used for these purposes. Nietzsche’s consideration of Dionysus is more than philosophical, more than philological. It is religious in nature as well, aimed as a critique of Christianity, and at the fundamental conditions of what it means to be human. As Henrichs

\textsuperscript{287} Baumer, p. 181
\textsuperscript{288} Henrichs, MVD p. 205
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., p. 216
remarks, the Dionysian stands as part of road Nietzsche opens toward existentialism, which is the context in which most modern scholars consider him.\textsuperscript{290}

To be fair, Nietzsche owes a great debt to many earlier thinkers that he did not publicly acknowledge, even if he did propose a markedly different use for the god. Nietzsche borrowed grand concepts like Apollonian and Dionysian dualism, but it was precisely his willingness, unlike the Romantics, to employ a methodology that set his production apart from those who preceded him.\textsuperscript{291} Part of this methodology was philosophical, which we have considered in chapters one and two, and part of his methodology is historical, though it involves a new definition of history. His philosophical views constitute a basis for this method because he goes to great lengths to make sure they are internally consistent and founded in the logic of a continued Idealist project. In the end, Romantic influences can be acknowledged without detracting at all from Nietzsche’s shift in orientation toward Dionysus. After all, Nietzsche never claimed to be the first to examine or describe Dionysus. He only claimed to be the first to understand and transform him.

### Philology

The second major component of Nietzsche’s reconstruction of philology is his relation to his philological predecessors. In his article “Full of Gods”, Albert Henrichs asks an extended version of this very question. “Can one understand Nietzsche without acknowledging that he started as a classicist?...Does it matter that Nietzsche was once a classicist? Could Nietzsche have become the thinker he was without classicism?”\textsuperscript{292} Henrichs’ question as to whether it is necessary to understand Nietzsche as a classicist is answered here in the affirmative. Nietzsche’s philological discipline, especially in his early career, frames his

\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., p. 223.
\textsuperscript{291} Uffers and Cohen argue this position in “Nietzsche’s Ontological Roots” in \textit{NA}, pp. 425-440
\textsuperscript{292} Henrichs, Albert. “Full of Gods” in \textit{NA}, p.119
philosophical interests, and is apparent in his attempt to explain the Dionysian nature of tragedy. Most attractive for Nietzsche is the way that his predecessors provide him material with which to vault his own perspective on cultural criticism so that he makes use of philology as a vehicle for contemplating the modern. In addition, some philologists prior to Nietzsche seem to share, or perhaps to have influenced his conviction for a more empathetic connection to antiquity; one that is based on the natural ability of humans to feel their way through the proper interpretation of ancient source material in order to find its legitimate meaning.

Nietzsche’s philological background prepares him for the possibility of this Dionysian leap. The Heraclitean influence has already declared that the oracle speaks across vast distances of time because of the god in her voice. Dionysus, as he is known today, could not have been constructed without Nietzsche’s adoption of a new culture-centric philological method and most certainly would be unrecognizable without the depth of work of Nietzsche’s philosophical and philological predecessors. What results with Nietzsche’s original integration of these tributaries of influence is a presentation of Dionysus that undermines the common historical understanding of philologists as well as the philosophically taken for granted metaphysics of the German Idealist tradition. Nietzsche’s Dionysus is not unique simply because he is a novel twist, but because he represents the confluence of Nietzsche’s philosophical positions as well as provides a next step and methodological critique of his very own professional discipline.

The modern Dionysus is also a product of the evolving scholarly perspective on antiquity and represents the shifting nineteenth-century position in an ongoing debate about what exactly constituted antiquity and the “classical”

---

293 NPF, p. 180 – Wolf, Bernhardy, Boeckh, and Hermann all consider feeling and intuition to be highly effective in navigating the “barricades of the hermeneutical circle.” None of these scholars, however, used the terms in a Nietzschean manner. Their consideration of ‘feelings’ or ‘intuition’ is more in line with standard concepts, whereas Nietzsche’s use of them is predicated upon Schopenhauer’s understanding of temporality and presence. Nietzsche seeks to be modern, i.e. present in the now, while the prior scholars sought to find antiquity through imitation rather than being originally one’s modern self.
The ground of philology, up for revaluation, provided Nietzsche with an open door to reconstruct philology in a way that he saw as most beneficial to human culture. As Herman Siemens puts it in his analysis of Nietzsche’s understanding of the “classical”:

Against the superficial and ineffective picture of Greece propagated by classical-Hellenic-philology…Nietzsche contends that a “hidden entrance” is needed – the Dionysian Untergrund. With his concept of the Dionysian, Nietzsche concentrates all those aspects previously denied or marginalized in the reception of Greek culture: the ugliness, the contradictions, the pessimism, excess, and so on.

The Greeks are, in Nietzsche’s view, a full culture that includes the spectrum of human events, emotions, attitudes, and dispositions toward existence. Once again, Nietzsche is proposing unity. While he considers the Greeks ideal, he does so because they embraced the “wholeness” of existence, including the ugly and the brutal, without turning away to hide from their own existence. Simply put, he sees them as ideal for their honesty, their willingness to accept the disorder of non-moral Becoming. The unifying principle of the Dionysian is his rebuttal to Weimar classicism, which considered the ancient world to be one of ideal purity and spiritual harmony. As Nietzsche admonishes:

Whoever conceives of [the Greeks] as clear, sober, harmonious practical people will be unable to explain how they arrived at philosophy.

---

294 The term “Classical” has a history all its own and has been contested for its multiple and often ambiguous uses. For an excellent perspective on Nietzsche’s usage of “classical” see Emden’s “The Invention of Antiquity: Nietzsche on Classicism, Classicality, and the Classical Tradition” and Siemens’ “Nietzsche and the ‘Classical’: Traditional and Innovative Features of Nietzsche’s Usage, with Special Reference to Goethe”, both in NA.

295 Siemens, Herman. Siemens’ “Nietzsche and the ‘Classical’: Traditional and Innovative Features of Nietzsche’s Usage, with Special Reference to Goethe”, NA, p. 395

296 PPP, p. 3
For Nietzsche, the philological perspective that had been the predominant view of the Greeks, provided no clear insight into how or why they produced their cultural artifacts. Perhaps we may understand this better if we take Silk and Stern’s argument that *The Birth of Tragedy*, along with its Dionysian dualism, is part of the German tradition of inquiry into the nature of tragedy as a genre. They consider Nietzsche as simply another voice in line with the likes of Herder, Lessing, Schelling, and Hegel.297 Even in his inaugural address at Basle, Nietzsche points out that the Greeks had preceded F.A. Wolf and the modern discipline of historico-cultural criticism by focusing on the Homeric question.298 The pursuit of a cultural understanding of tragedy naturally fit within Nietzsche’s critical purview and the philosophical side of Nietzsche grandly praises Wolf for his understanding that Homer was a cultural construction, both in ancient Greece as well as in nineteenth-century Germany. From his predecessors, Nietzsche formulated a perspective on antiquity as a culturally constructed “idea” and his philosophical acumen went directly to work.

James Porter’s argument in *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* spends ample time delivering evidence that demonstrates how Nietzsche reveals the problems of modernity through his philological lens.299 The conclusion to his detailed analysis is that Nietzsche’s “earliest writings contain the most compelling critique to date of the role of antiquity in the modern world.”300 This statement is not intended to frame only Nietzsche’s time period, but is aimed directly at our present. While other philosophers have discussed history, language, and historicism, Nietzsche’s works are still some of the very few that employ antiquity as a phenomenological critique of the present (the “now”). With his philosophical priorities at work, Nietzsche demonstrates that metaphysical illusions, especially the illusions of *Being*, are not limited to a lack of precise empirical data or to a past wherein such data may have existed. For him, an illusory worldview is

297 *NT*, p. 1
299 *NPF*, p. 58
300 Ibid., p. 5
symptomatic of modernity. Part of his message is that both modern and ancient worldviews are caught up in the illusion of metaphysics. Like F.A. Wolf’s consideration of the Homeric problem, Nietzsche concludes that both the ancient and modern worlds are cultural products rather than things-in-themselves.

As part of his new understanding of philology’s purpose, Nietzsche chose to lecture on the Pre-Platonic philosophers in order to reveal to his students the importance of their task as philologists, hoping to shape a new generation of scholars, pushing them toward a self-critical approach in their responsibilities as knowledge makers. In this series, Nietzsche reveals his own perspective that prioritizes these early philosophical thinkers. Greg Whitlock notes in the introduction of his translation of Nietzsche’s lecture series on the Pre-Platonics that they convey “hidden beginnings of Nietzsche’s philosophizing.” This conclusion is supported by Porter’s research into Nietzsche’s works as far back as his school days at Schulpforta. As Nietzsche matured and began work on his Encyclopedia of Classical Philology, his recommendations to aspiring philologists about the importance of studying philosophy for their vocation stand as further testament to the philosophical attitude that Nietzsche deemed a priority of any scholar of quality. Indeed, Nietzsche’s official admonishment to his fellow scholars of the ancient world, known as “We Philologists”, was unfortunately never finished nor published in his lifetime. In Porter’s words, “Nietzsche’s thought does not evolve; it is ceaselessly restless.” He is no Hegel, no systematic thinker. Instead, his life’s work is simply the clarification of an early insight into the illusory nature of metaphysical awareness that he found amplified the point of an epiphanic singularity when he read Schopenhauer’s World as Will and Representation. The name he later gives this insight, clarified by his philological encounters with Pre-Platonic philosophy, is Dionysus.

---

301 Ibid., p. 195 – i.e. both modern culture and being present
302 PPP, p. xviii
303 NPF, p. 28
304 Ibid., p. 21
305 The impact is religious in nature, thus Dionysus, but the explanation of the impact is required for conveyance and pedagogy. As a result, Nietzsche struggles with the pedagogical
Two of Porter’s texts, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* and *The Invention of Dionysus*, detail the early philosophical disposition that brought Nietzsche to the inevitable break with academic philology in favor of straight philosophy.\(^{306}\) Nietzsche demands that philologists look to the present, to their own sense of *being* in the present, in order to understand modernity. Modernity, here, is not intended as the cultural epoch, but rather as an example of full temporal presence in the living moment that imprints the awareness of historical philology’s concomitant methodological limitations. The success of his critique, for the twentieth century, was to expose the limitations on human inquiry, especially temporality as it concerns perceptions of both personal and cultural history. For Nietzsche, psychological and temporal presence are intertwined with each other. Both are in a constant state of *Becoming*. The psychological presence, however, seeks to and needs to retain practical and static knowledge in order to reflectively function, and thus *Being* (fossilized *Becoming*) is postulated and deceptively appears as truth. His hope is to make this revelation of the modern subject known, especially to philologists, so that they may see antiquity as a modern construction rather than a reality testified to by “objective” facts. Nietzsche’s philosophical priority is evident in the fact that from his hire at Basle he considers the object of philology *not* to be antiquity but, *instead*, to be the philologists themselves as modern subjects.\(^{307}\) Nietzsche, in fact strikes a parallel between Dionysus and Philology by calling them both “phenomena.”\(^{308}\) It is in this early phase of his career that he ties these subjects together in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The academic response to this more philosophical than philological work did not help him among his contemporaries, but it did once and

---

\(^{306}\) *The Invention of Dionysus* does not actually speak to Dionysus as a mythological character. The title is figurative and speaks to Nietzsche’s philology as a major component of his philosophical demeanor that is consistent from *The Birth of Tragedy* throughout his later works.

\(^{307}\) *NPF*, p. 58

\(^{308}\) Ibid., p. 175
for all provide the joint foundation for the modern conception of Dionysus, one that would evolve along with Nietzsche’s career and life.

The modern Dionysus brought about by Nietzsche’s reconstruction of philology is evident in his dismissal of philologists for their shortsightedness and narrow specialization.\textsuperscript{309} Silk and Stern testify in \textit{Nietzsche on Tragedy}, that Nietzsche’s multidisciplinary interests played a part in this process. In addition it has been noted that Nietzsche postulated a direct relationship between life and scholarship (Leben und Wissenschaft), which was unpopular with his contemporary classicists.\textsuperscript{310} From Nietzsche’s perspective, multiple disciplines facilitated the critical awareness that knowledge is an aesthetic practice as much as it is factual and objective. According to him, without this realization, classicists with unaesthetic minds conduct “bad philology.”\textsuperscript{311} It is a foundational philosophical perspective on knowledge making that allows Nietzsche to claim that he sees “deeper into the abysses of that idealistic view of life” and that his “philosophical, moral, and scientific endeavors strive toward a single goal.” This perspective allows him to hope to become “the first philologist ever to achieve wholeness.”\textsuperscript{312} As Henrichs’ explains, it is precisely this unifying principle, loss of individuation into the whole, that attracts Nietzsche to Dionysus, especially the Zagrean version of Dionysian birth and rebirth.\textsuperscript{313} Oneness is evidently Nietzsche’s desire from his school days at Schulpforta. He acknowledges even as a fourteen year old that he is reluctant to specialize, promotes multidisciplinary study, and craves ‘universal culture.’\textsuperscript{314} Nearly twenty years later when writing \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, he is still discussing “the whole” as the principle that can “redeem the world”.\textsuperscript{315} Nevertheless, the young Nietzsche does specialize. He

\textsuperscript{309} \textit{NT}, p. 23  
\textsuperscript{310} Henrichs, “Full of Gods”, p. 119  
\textsuperscript{311} \textit{NPF}, p. 176  
\textsuperscript{312} Letter to Deussen Feb 1870. Taken from Middleton,Christopher. \textit{Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche}. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996. p. 64  
\textsuperscript{313} Henrichs, \textit{MVD} p. 221  
\textsuperscript{314} \textit{NT}, p. 21  
\textsuperscript{315} \textit{TI} § 8 p. 182
chooses philology and theology, both disciplines, which undergird his first professorial publication, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Nietzsche’s primary scholarly interests within philology and theology are ancient philosophy, culture, and metaphysics. One may ask, in light of Nietzsche’s later career whether these were in fact secondary to his sublimated drive of ‘truthseeking,’ which he saw as virtuous? Both metaphysics and philosophy engage the larger questions about life and identity that strict academic cataloguing do not attempt to answer. It is not important for this study to conclusively answer this underlying question here, but it is helpful to acknowledge his ‘truthseeking’ drive in order to appreciate just why he chooses the Pre-Platonic philosophers and the Greek gods as illuminators of his modern cultural critique. Intellectual conscience drives him toward the source of metaphysics and toward any possible alternatives to modern cultural approaches to ontology. Philology aids him in this search by providing the only refuge that Enlightenment thinkers (or modern ones) have found against the problems of Platonic *Being*. This refuge is pre-Platonic *Becoming*. Silk and Stern articulate his attraction to ancient philosophy and theology as an unstated principle that the various aspects of the Greek gods are ultimately related and that all we need is the key to decipher the common link. For Nietzsche, seeing these connections is found by embracing *Becoming* as a method of engagement with the world. By doing so, proper understanding will unlock the meaning of these ancient characters, the thoughts of ancient philosophers, and the problems of the modern era all at once. Employing Dionysus as a method of revelation in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche proclaims that the key is psychological, connected to conceptions of identity and individuation, but not to data that exists “out there” in the world past or future. The usefulness of the Dionysian is evident for Nietzsche’s purposes due to its relation to *mania*, *enthusiasmos*, and loss-of-self. These ancient phenomena work by analogy to show that insight does not come

\[316 \text{ TI§ 18 p. 200}\]
\[317 \text{ NT, p. 167}\]
from empirical process, but directly from insight and the non-rational world. This prompts Henrichs to say that Nietzsche’s work on Dionysus, while demonstrably imaginative, is “almost more revealing than the real thing.”

Nietzsche’s hyper-realistic treatment of Dionysus reveals several important qualities of the deity that demonstrate that Nietzsche’s philological views are emboldened by his philosophical perspective. First of all, Dionysus is not simply a personal deity, representative of passions. He is a psychological deity, representative of the structure of *Becoming* and the opposite of the Enlightenment notion that humans are fundamentally rational creatures. Secondly, Dionysus is fitted with the trappings of philological study in order to show that they have no clear origin without the consideration of irrational Dionysian psychology. Philology functions solely to elucidate cultural products, many attributed to Dionysus, such as tragedy and orgiastic rites. For Nietzsche, these cultural products do not belong to the mythological character Dionysus, as philology treats him, but to the psychology of Dionysus, which does not lie within the bounds of philology or any particular discipline or culture. The psychology of Dionysus is commensurate with the dissolution of individuation that shows humans to be rooted in shared conditions of experience. Lastly, the hyperrealism demonstrates that, in conjunction with the previous attributes, Nietzsche’s purpose in using Dionysus is not philological, but philosophical just as Porter contends. Nevertheless, Nietzsche presents *The Birth of Tragedy* as a work of philology and attempts to capitalize on an image of Dionysus that is, at least, recognizable to a general readership. Ultimately, the failure of Nietzsche’s philological facts has been matched only by the popularity of Dionysus’ psychological portrayal.

For Silk and Stern, Nietzsche’s Dionysus is part of the answer to the question of tragedy in German culture. They place him in line to Winklemann as another with an alternate approach to understanding “the intimate relationship between classical scholarship, on the one hand, and living culture on the

---

318 Henrichs, “Full of Gods”, p. 126
other." Nevertheless, they make a larger overarching claim that this general type of inquiry is a revival of Renaissance tradition. Nietzsche, however, appears to see himself as part of the critical tradition of *Altertumswissenschaft*, a term coined by F.A. Wolf, who Nietzsche recognized as the first “philologist.” Nietzsche admired Wolf’s position. Because he sides with Wolf’s methodology he also employs Wolf’s cultural criticism to open the door to his own explosion of criticism toward a philological community that had not observed the insight in Wolf’s handling of the Homeric problem. This position would place him in a useful antagonism to Goethe and early nineteenth-century philology.

In Nietzsche’s agenda to display the illusion of metaphysical values, the attack on philology was supplemented by the Dionysian, which embraces a seeming lack of “modern” morality. Nietzsche promotes the exposure of the underbelly of Greek culture through the vehicle of tragic drama to shine light on what ‘modern’ values look like. Unlike Pythagorean converts, Dionysian followers accepted cruelty and savagery as part of the world and did not turn away from this harsh reality. They embraced the chaos of *Becoming*. This lesson, from Nietzsche’s perspective, does not endorse social violence, as some have thought, but simply promotes a method for revealing that moral values are social constructs, or in other words, metaphysics. Nietzsche required the philological background, however, in order to deliver this view of the Dionysian and make it relevant to philologists who were the intended target of his historical critiques. The effect, for historians, is that Nietzsche simply replays an earlier version of Dionysus and claims innovation. For a philosopher, the innovative use of the figure makes all the difference in justifying the claim.

In 1807, Creuzer published a Latin text specifically on Dionysian mysteries which analyzed the origins of the Dionysian aspect of Greek religion. Creuzer,

---

319 *NT*, p. 9
321 Benjamin Biebuyck, Danny Praet, and Isabelle Vanden Poel’s “Cults and Migrations” in *NA*, p. 159
Schelling, and even Nietzsche’s colleague at Basle, J.J. Bachofen, in their works on ancient religion, preceded Nietzsche in their discussions of Dionysus as the creative artistic principle.\footnote{Ibid., p. 166} Baeumer’s historiography can best sum up his position on the state of Nietzsche’s philological Dionysus:

Nietzsche’s assertions that he was “the first to comprehend,” “discover,” and “take seriously” the Dionysian, and that he was the first to describe it in its “psychological” significance and to have “transformed” it into a philosophical system, are intentional rhetorical exaggerations….One can grant Nietzsche the primacy he asserts for himself only with the relation to his “transformation” of the Dionysian into a “philosophical pathos,” that is, into a rhetorical cliché.\footnote{Ibid.}

Baeumer’s research is exhaustive, yet there are several problems with his representation of Nietzsche’s appropriation of Dionysus. First of all, Nietzsche does not at any time in his career assert a “system” of any kind. As a matter of fact, he is anti-systematic as a result of his anti-Hegelian mentors. Beyond this, it is true that Dionysus had been researched extensively, but Nietzsche’s claim to be the first to “comprehend” the Dionysian is a claim related to a composite view of Dionysus that none of the previous scholars had had the privilege of witnessing, precisely because it required the composite distillation of the selfsame scholars’ works. Baeumer is correct in stating that the Dionysian had a significant history prior to Nietzsche, but it is too simple a conclusion to suggest that we associate Dionysus with Nietzsche only because he was a brilliant self-promoter and propagandist.\footnote{Ibid.} Nietzsche benefited from having access to multifold interpretations of Dionysus presented by these earlier scholars, in addition to the Romantics, and he capitalized by fusing and assimilating these parts with his own experiences and perspective. The “transformation” that

\footnote{Ibid.}
Nietzsche accomplishes is more than superficial, and this has been born out by a century’s worth of influence.

Even in the historical disciplines, Nietzsche’s unique orientation has had long lasting repercussions. His focus on Greek culture and the mindset that underpinned Dionysian productions has remained the exemplary part of his philological work. This historical attitude was not solely Nietzsche’s own contribution. As with Dionysus, he perceives the new historical methodological trends and expands upon them. The new method of engaging culture was part of the attempt at a fresh historical approach, and is exemplified by Nietzsche’s older colleague at Basle, Jacob Burckhardt. Nietzsche employs it in order to gain insight into what the Dionysian meant to the Greeks, and then uses his new understanding of Dionysus to propel his own notion of history.

Burckhardt’s influence on Nietzsche is evident in each of Nietzsche’s critiques. Burckhardt was one of the few individuals with whom he did not feel the need to rebel. Even late in life Nietzsche refers to him as “the most profound student of Hellenism alive today.” Most visible is the way that Burckhardt uses ‘cultural history’ to change the focus of history from products and events to human beings and their unconsciously exposed attitudes and beliefs. Nietzsche simply takes this method one step further and exposes that this method cannot only be used for history, but can be applied directly to the present and to historians themselves. This, however, was not the only impact that Burckhardt had on Nietzsche. Both were admirers of Schopenhauer. Both were in agreement in their estimation of Schopenhauer’s insights and together called him “Our philosopher.” Moreover, Nietzsche’s position on cultural values can be seen in Burckhardt’s lectures on Greek and Roman religion wherein Burckhardt determines them to have been secular, while the State benefited from

325 T/ “What I owe the ancients” § 4, p. 227
institutional religions and prescribed values and formalities. Nietzsche’s critiques of German culture and Christianity immediately come to mind. It has also been postulated that Burckhardt’s lecture series on “Great Men of History”, which professed great men could break through cultural boundaries, could be responsible for resonantly supporting Nietzsche’s Heraclitean and Dionysian conviction that great minds can speak to one another across the abyss of time. In fact, Nietzsche prefaces his *Philosophy in the tragic Age of the Greeks*, with a sentiment that could only have come from Burckhardt:

> The [historical] task is to bring to light what we must ever love and honor and what no subsequent enlightenment can take away; great individual human beings.

Nietzsche values Burckhardt in the way that he values Plutarch. Only those historians that bring the past to life through identification with character and the nature of other human lives are of value to him. As Nietzsche instructs, modern historians should “satiate [their] souls with Plutarch,” and if there were “a hundred such men…the whole noisy sham-culture of our age could be over.” In his own telling of the Pre-Platonic philosophers, he even indicates his own method to be one that “constitutes a slice of personality and hence belongs to that incontrovertible, non-debatable evidence which it is the task of history to preserve.”

Burckhardt’s historical and personal influence on Nietzsche includes not only a reinforcement of Schopenhauerian attentiveness to one’s own psychology, but also includes other anti-Hegelians, like Kierkegaard. Interestingly enough, the first explication of this historical method used by Burckhardt is found in none

---

327 Ibid., p. xxxvii
328 Ibid., p. xxiv
329 PTAG, preface. p. 24
330 UM II *Schopenhauer as Educator* §6, p. 95
331 PTAG, preface, p. 24 Compare with Plutarch’s claim that an anecdote tells you more than a list of dates and events ever could about a human being.
other than Kierkegaard’s notes on academic method that he took from lectures
given by Schelling in Berlin in 1841.\textsuperscript{332} Burckhardt, like Kierkegaard, was present
in Berlin during this time, having arrived to study history in 1839. The notes
display a three-fold historical approach focusing on the tripartite powers of the
State, Religion, and Culture. Fascinatingly, M.L. Baeumer’s research shows that
Nietzsche’s Dionysus was preceded by Schellings “three-fold” Dionysus some
sixty years earlier.\textsuperscript{333} The difference, however, between Nietzsche and Schelling’s
Dionysus is a post-Marx, post-Darwin, post-Hegelian world where materialism
sans spiritual embodiment had found an audience. Burckhardt comments, in a
phrase that reminds of Marx, that “culture is the sum of all that has
spontaneously arisen for the advancement of \textit{material} life and as an \textit{expression}
of spiritual and moral life.”\textsuperscript{334} For Nietzsche, the lesson was clear that culture was
the backdrop for the expression of each civilization and the producing force
behind government, religion, and art.

\section*{Culture}

The components that produce a culture have always been debatable.
Nietzsche, however, felt that he had confronted the foundational experiences that
culminate to produce a shared worldview within a group of people. To be specific,
he felt that he had encountered the foundations of what it meant to be a human,
and therefore to produce a culture of any type. This particular vantage point, in
his view, is what allowed him to criticize German culture and Christianity for their
reliance upon and devotion to a cosmology and a sense of identity predicated
upon, what were to him, metaphysical illusions. Contemplating culture in his

\textsuperscript{332} Burckhardt, p. xxiii
\textsuperscript{333} Baeumer, p. 166 Schelling’s three-fold Dionysus consisted of “a contrast with the Apollonian
as a power of creation in the artist and poetic genius.”
\textsuperscript{334} Burckhardt, p. xxiii Italics mine. Another reinforcement of materialism. The only thing
substantial is the material. The expression is predicated upon it providing primacy to material.
essay *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche expresses his distaste with modern culture.

Our modern culture is not a living thing…it is not a real culture at all but only a kind of knowledge of culture….we moderns have nothing of our own; only by replenishing and cramming ourselves with the ages, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, discoveries of others do we become anything worthy of notice…

Nietzsche sought to emphasize the inferiority of a culture that was a product of state and religious institutional values. He reprimanded the Church, a pseudo state, and Germany itself for promoting culture as some form of historical education or artistic training. For Nietzsche, based on Burckhardt’s new form of historical method, true culture was only apparent as the underpinning of cultural products and historical knowledge. The “knowledge of culture” represented in the common reflective historical understanding, became a thing of the past and useless in serving the psychological present.

This change in historical method benefited Nietzsche by providing him with a discipline that already had pioneers who had shifted its focus away from literature and artifacts and toward the hidden procedures of everyday culture. The nebulous nature of “cultural study” fit Nietzsche’s predilection for ‘wholeness’ well. As it concerns his view of Dionysus, this method made the deity accessible in the same way that Plutarch’s heroes were. Dionysus was reflected in the arts as well as the overlooked cultural residues of the ancient Greeks. He could be explicated via well-known ancient tragedy, while also representing a particular method of cultural engagement with existence that he saw lacking in modern German culture. Of course, this was his interpretation based upon his existing knowledge of Dionysus, Greek culture, and the post-Kantian theological debate.

---

335 *UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* § 4, pp. 78-79
Nietzsche combined the Dionysian concepts with which he was familiar and in them saw the substratum that connected them and allowed for their spontaneous eruption, and not just as metaphorical symbol. This new Dionysus, a philologically questionable Dionysus, emerged as Nietzsche’s encounter with what he considered true culture; unapologetic and unmediated awareness of the present without a comfortable metaphysical cushioning. Those who have studied Nietzsche’s Dionysus have often noted that his philological portrayal of Dionysus both omits reference to helpful evidence and is incorrect in some of the empirical evidence it does employ. Nietzsche, however, was not interested in presenting Dionysus as a fossil of antiquity. The Dionysus Nietzsche sought to convey was one that connected physically and psychologically with the emotions and drives of the human condition, not a Dionysus that was simply representative of a “knowledge of culture” wherein Dionysus was a symbol.

Nietzsche’s target for change is the attitude of classical scholarship that, in his view, uses a faulty historical methodology to esteem the Greeks as a moral and artistic ideal. While the Greeks were not ideal in the sense of a purely virtuous civilization from Nietzsche’s point of view, they are ideal to him as a template for what he designates as a true form of culture. What made their culture ‘true’ or, rather, honest is to be understood as an approach to existence that is based on observation that is not itself sabotaged by self-deception. In other words, observation not prematurely labeled with “objective” values. Nietzsche detested the simple-minded view that antiquity was some sort of playground for purity. He ranted against this notion throughout his career, and set himself up as a destroyer of this yet-one-more historical illusion. The well-known German history of classical study beginning with J.J. Winckelmann’s *A History of Ancient Art*, and the Weimar-Jena circle that promoted this idealistic conception, influenced heavily by Humboldt, was the obvious target. Yet, as Porter demonstrates conclusively in his texts, nineteenth-century German classicism was already becoming a “clear-eyed” illusion wherein the scholars knew that they
were not privy to a real or true picture of antiquity.336 Extraordinary pupil that he was, Nietzsche was well aware of this. Critiquing the vision of an ideal Greece set the stage perfectly for his criticism of the modern era and allowed him to use Dionysus as a recognized symbol for combating his philosophical arch-enemy, the metaphysical world. Later, after The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche would turn this same stratagem, vociferous animosity, toward his assault on the authority of Christian morals.337

The critique of culture based on Dionysian principles mandated that Nietzsche be somewhat responsible to his philological heritage. To speak from outside the discipline would have brought little impact on the conception of Dionysus within philology, and perhaps would have kept Dionysus from achieving the prominence he has reached in modern culture. He certainly developed his concept of Dionysus out of a cultural understanding that he at first kept ‘in house,’ so to speak. The challenge for Nietzsche was to make this critique strong enough to pull in the attention of the philologists he was critiquing. To successfully position himself within the philological circles, Nietzsche makes use of the biggest names in German culture at the time. Nietzsche postures himself contra Goethe and contra Winckelmann as well as others who were part of the tradition of German classical study. Karl Schlecta voices the observation that Winckelmann and Goethe are probably the most important contributors to the nineteenth-century German concept of “ideal antiquity,” which Nietzsche repudiates.338 Employing his bombastic style of philosophy, Nietzsche uses them as foils for his own end of presenting the Dionysian. Baeumer’s research, however, demonstrates that Winckelmann, Hamann, and Herder had “already discovered, comprehended, and formulated the concept of the Dionysian long before [Nietzsche].”339 This highlights the question as to whether there ever truly

336 NPF, p. 193
337 Nietzsche continued in a direction that focused on the question of moral values which he critiques in BGE and GM.
339 Baeumer, p. 166
was an idea of a purified ancient culture to which Nietzsche could object, or whether it was all a façade used to prop up his criticisms and get himself noticed. The answer is a little of both.

Indeed, there existed a concept of “ideal” beauty and culture, and Winckelmann played a leading part in its production, while the Weimar circle extended its influence. Nevertheless, educated philologists recognized that there was more to antiquity than these “ideal” claims about Greek civilization and that the concepts of ideality were generally directed at art, literature, or cultural products, not necessarily the culture, i.e. popular or common society. Nietzsche, in fact, is different from his predecessors in that he did not derive his conception of Greek ideality from their art or literature, but instead from the Greek view of life as anything but “ideal”. This view of the Greeks is visible in his early writings, though it is quite impossible to ignore Burckhardt’s weighty influence in turning cultural history into a methodologically useful pursuit.

In confrontation with Winckelmann, Nietzsche’s position is quite clear. He rejects the concept of classical comprehension presented by Winckelmann, but does so in a way that draws attention to his own alternative position. Realistically, the two positions were not opposites. Rather, they dealt with antiquity as two quite different subjects. Therefore, it is more difficult to say that Nietzsche’s criticism, on the surface, had much more than an attention-drawing bite to it. Nietzsche’s most obvious criticism of Winckelmann, and later promoters of the “ideal” Greek world, was conducted by an assertion of irrationality in the Greeks that did not sit well with many. He also criticized ideal beauty as a metaphysical production. He derived this criticism from a cultural perspective and methodology that Winckelmann did not use and did not even attempt. Therefore, while the two men were obviously in separate camps in terms of their conclusions, their conclusions were reached via different avenues of exploration; Winckelmann’s through the quality of Greek art, Nietzsche’s through the courage of Greek ‘pessimism.’ Nietzsche, in his well known quote from *Twilight of the Idols*, tells us that we can learn nothing from the Greeks, unmistakably because they stand as
“other” to a modern sensibility of history and values.  

Should this conclusion have been so, it only stands to reason that Winckelmann could not have known their values simply by their art forms. It is only because Nietzsche claimed to have intuited and communed with the Greek perspective, which lacks a metaphysical justification of life, that he can offer us a new reading of their art and their cultural products. Nevertheless, on the surface, Nietzsche’s attack on the concept of ideality, that was associated with the Greeks because of Winckelmann, cast the signal to all that a new way of perceiving antiquity had arrived in full.

In Nietzsche’s mind the Greeks were not in love with life and spirit, at least in the manner Winckelmann and Goethe had perceived, though the conclusions of Winckelmann and Goethe were reached by a separate methodology. Instead, the Greeks were the only honest people he could see; the only people willing to look back at nature in the same manner nature apprehends humanity, as things. Dionysus, in Nietzsche’s estimation fit this realization and exposed the insight into life that Nietzsche felt all of Germany lacking. The insight was that the lack of a metaphysical shield from the existential pain of life combined with the realization of values as ambiguous state instituted concepts would free Germany to produce a unique and original culture and not simply an extended copy of previous inferior ones. Once over the edge, there is no going back, all of modern society crumbles in the face of the Greek “other”. Ultimately, Nietzsche considers Goethe and Winckelmann, symbols of Germany as they were, as well as their idealistic position on ancient Greece, laughable.  

As previously stated, however, this opposition is, in fact, less direct than it may appear. Nietzsche rebelled against the continued popular conception of Greece based upon the works of Goethe and Wicklemann. Philology, however, had changed a great deal in the

---

340 Tl “What I owe the Ancients” p. 224 The Greeks were courageous in his opinion because they lived daily in the face of nothingness except this moment. Ideal culture came not from a spirit captured, like a Platonic form, but out of the understanding that work must take place in an attempt to surmount the predicament of meaninglessness. We must make this moment count, this art count, etc, because it is all that exists to justify this moment.

341 Schlecta, p. 154
nineteenth-century and by the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is mainly the historical culture of German classicists with which Nietzsche was upset.

While Nietzsche was not the first to discuss the difficult to categorize actions of the underbelly of the Greeks, he was the first to flip the reception of them from one of marginalization to one that considered them an essential exploratory theme for understanding Greek culture. Scholars have remained on both sides of the debate as to whether Nietzsche really understood the Greeks via this method. Karl Löwith, for example, praises Goethe’s circumspect position as one that is both wise and properly weighted, while he presents Nietzsche as a philosopher gone mad, who has taken the perspective of the Greeks over the edge with him.\footnote{Lowith, Karl. *From Hegel to Nietzsche The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought*. Translated by David E. Green. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. pp. 175-200}  Meanwhile, Hugh Lloyd-Jones voices the opposite position stating directly that “Goethe would not have understood the mysteries” and thus reinforces Nietzsche’s perspective on Goethe’s comprehension of Greek culture.\footnote{Lloyd-Jones, p. 14} Nietzsche’s intention was obviously not to disparage the name of Goethe or to consider him second-rate. Rather, Nietzsche’s capitalization on Goethe greatness, as a yardstick by which to measure the significance of his own accomplishment in surpassing him, seems much more in line with Nietzsche’s tone. Nietzsche recognized that Goethe was interested in and had a conception of Greek culture, but what Goethe did not have was the developed methodology of Jacob Burckhardt with which to explore it.\footnote{Burckhardt ties his notion of history to particular attitudes and attributes that characterize time periods as “Ages”. For example, the Agonal Age, the Heroic Age, etc. Each era displays the culture as acting in accordance with the prescriptive underlying theme. The production of the culture is tied to posture of the culture rather than to its reflective ideal of itself.} Goethe’s mistake from the Nietzschean point of view was to take the cultural products, i.e. literature, art, etc. and to use them as representation of Greek culture. Nietzsche, on the other hand, benefited from Burckhardt’s teaching and methodology which focused on the events normally left out; the mundane and the unvoiced attitudes present that
must have been pre-conditions for the production of much of the previously referred to marginalized Greek cultural artifacts. According to Karl Schlecta, Burckhardt is not the only reason Nietzsche splits from Goethe. He also includes the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner, both of whom were less “romantic” and exhibited “hardness” and “manliness” that Nietzsche identified with the courage of a non-metaphysically justified Greek outlook.\textsuperscript{345} Nietzsche, in fact, categorizes Goethe’s perspective as “too weak and unmanly” in his \textit{Schopenhauer as Educator}, even though by that time Nietzsche had started to split also with Schopenhauer. Nietzsche recognized quite astutely the hardness of ancient life and with it assumed a colder more dissociative perspective on behalf of the Greeks. Consequently, his conception of Dionysus fit well with this more distant and less ethical outlook.\textsuperscript{346} Dionysus is the embodiment of an amorality that harmonizes with nature’s indiscriminant force. The attractiveness of this position from Nietzsche’s perspective, as one sees in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, is that the literature and art of the Greeks does not contradict this position but can be interpreted in line with it quite easily. The empirical justification for this interpretation is the element lacking in Nietzsche’s work and in all works that assume a psychological disposition that is not expressly attested.

Nietzsche was also influenced by the conception of the Greeks as secular, and had found an affinity for Heraclitus’ observations of the world as a world of \textit{Becoming}. The re-emergence of materialism heavily influenced Nietzsche both in terms of culture and philosophy. Greg Whitlock evinces the influence on Nietzsche of F.A. Lange’s \textit{History of Materialism}, which Nietzsche recommends first hand, and R.J. Boscovich’s \textit{Theory of Natural Philosophy} in his commentary.

\textsuperscript{345} Schlecta, p. 150

\textsuperscript{346} Such an outlook is less ethical precisely because of the power with which we are confronted. Take for example the Eastern conception of the Dharma, or Simone Weil’s conception of Force in \textit{The Iliad or Poem of Force}. The mechanism of Nature is not ethical in its action upon us, but indifferent. Nietzsche passes this on to humans as they are extensions of the natural unfolding of the universe. Ethics in antiquity for Nietzsche are state constructed practicalities and values. He makes this comparison with his modern Germany in other works.
on Nietzsche’s “Pre-Platonic Philosophers” lecture series. As he notes, Nietzsche, under the influence of the prior scholars, saw the Greeks as materialists. From this perspective, Nietzsche focuses on philosophy before Plato’s introduction of metaphysics, and holds the Greeks as an ideal culture in contrast to his contemporary German one. Nietzsche seeks to de-center the notions of humanity, especially “modern” humanity, as the product of progress. Like Darwin, Nietzsche does not find humans to be the center of Nature as is evident in his critique of Max Heinze’s impression of Heraclitus. But unlike Darwin, Nietzsche does not present humanity, even the Greeks, as having any momentum. In other words, there is no progress, only change, only Becoming to which we later add value. For Nietzsche, the Greeks had a more advanced perspective in terms of its value for seeing the reality of the world, and it was lost. He called this loss The Birth of Tragedy. This loss is definitely, in his view, the opposite of progress. The loss of this worldview after Socrates, i.e. after Plato, which he covers in The Birth of Tragedy, is the double entendre of the title.

Nietzsche’s perspective was shaped by a host of other progressive thinkers. The scandal that F. A. Wolf raised some seventy years earlier impacted Nietzsche by exposing philology’s methods and revealing the “the ways in which classicism went about constructing its ideals.” Such acuity was appreciated by Nietzsche and advocated in opposition to Goethe’s untimely continuance in presenting a singular Homer. For Nietzsche, the real influence of Wolf was his recognition that classical antiquity was as much of a product of a cultural perspective as it was about legitimate data. Understanding Homer, like understanding Dionysus, for Nietzsche was about being aware of one’s own environment and the perspective one chose in order to constitute him as a subject.

The combination of F.A. Lange’s materialist influence, Nietzsche’s views on Democritus, and the resonance that they both had with Schopenhauer’s

---

347 **PPP**, p. 73
348 **NPF**, p. 69
philosophy helped shape Nietzsche's philosophical conscience. In addition, Lange's conception of critique stayed with Nietzsche throughout his career, and Nietzsche's critiques held a "radical and bracing methodological skepticism"\textsuperscript{349} which served him in his quest for a philosophical foothold. James Porter includes Valentin Rose, and Rose's work on Aristotle as part of the direct influence and encouragement of Nietzsche's rebelliousness, though he notes that Nietzsche's skepticism surpasses Rose's in terms of its self-critical nature. In all, there is a long list of personalities and influences upon Nietzsche's thought, but the few discussed here had direct impacts upon his methodology and critical stance. Most directly, Burckhardt's teachings, supported by Nietzsche's interests in like-minded exploratory thinkers, had the greatest impact upon his physical production of works and the critical methods he employed. In antiquity, Democritean materialism lost out to Platonic metaphysics and, in the modern era, Nietzsche sought to bring back a Democritean methodological stance toward Philology.\textsuperscript{350}

Another avenue of change that affected Nietzsche's Dionysus was the anthropological focus of the mid-nineteenth-century. As it concerns Nietzsche, the influence of the anthropological tendencies of the age can be traced from Nietzsche through Burckhardt to Schleiermacher and through Wagner to Feuerbach. A heavy influence on Burckhardt's childhood, Schleiermacher's views were ingrained in him as a young man.\textsuperscript{351} Though never happy with the charge against him of natural philosophy, Schleiermacher's most famous text, \textit{On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers}, exhibits the beginning of this anthropological self-awareness in his descriptions of the human need to orient the world in relation to oneself and the psychological processes of internalization and projection. Interestingly, there is also an affinity between Schleiermacher's and Schopenhauer's understanding of unity and wholeness, and it is no great

\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., p. 54
\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., pp. 82-126
\textsuperscript{351} Burckhardt, p. xii
surprise that Burckhardt also found himself drawn to Schopenhauer as did the young Nietzsche.

Most famous for displaying theology as an anthropological subject was Ludwig Feuerbach, whose influence on Nietzsche’s close friend and mentor Richard Wagner is well known. Wagner even plays off of Feuerbach’s *The Philosophy of the Future* with his own *The Artwork of the Future*, the title of which was sarcastically used against Nietzsche by Wilamowitz in his derision of *The Birth of Tragedy* with his own pamphlet, *The Philology of the Future*. In much the same way that Karl Marx, another large influence on Wagner and fan of Feuerbach, turned the understanding of economics on its head, Feuerbach too succeeded in re-conceptualizing the predicates of deity as extensions of human predicates, turning the belief of things immortal and spiritual into constructions of human psyche and culture.

With such close mentors as Wagner and Burckhardt, both of whom were heavily influenced by this shift toward understanding the human role in the production of cultural values, ideals, and beliefs, Nietzsche’s intellect and critical self-awareness could not miss the obvious application of this method to his own field of study. As it affects Nietzsche’s relation to Dionysus, this turn helped establish a precedent for Nietzsche wherein he recognizes the anthropological nature of theology and tries on the idea of the nature of the human condition speaking across time to itself. Such revelation fit well with the underlying Dionysian theme that beyond the *principium individuationis*, all humans are one. Subsequently, philosophically speaking, Nietzsche proclaimed nearly all grandiose fields of study to be metaphysical delusions. He found them to be constructions that were used to make sense of the world, but that did not penetrate it or evince any significant truths about the problem of *Being/Becoming*. After this insight early in his career, it is obvious that philology

---


353 Interestingly enough, philosophy itself is also attacked by Nietzsche for its continuation in this delusion; however, he never comes fully to grips with the fact that we must participate in the
could not be a final stop for Nietzsche. He was bitten by the philosophical task of seeking, and the evangelical task of preaching and prophesying. Like all self-proclaimed prophets, he was not always appreciated, especially among his contemporaries. Nevertheless, he continued to prophesy with the addendum of only one qualification - that he was the disciple of Dionysus.\footnote{EH §1, p. 71}

\section*{Conclusion}

Nietzsche’s Dionysus owes a great deal to a shift in historical methodology that the Romantics did not possess. While Nietzsche was, in some ways and by his own proclamation, prophetic, he was also a man of his time, and his time was one that was given to exploring new methods of deciphering cultural history. It is no surprise that the champion of this method was Nietzsche’s own teacher and confidant Jacob Burckhardt with whom he passed time both in class lectures and in recreation.\footnote{Burckhardt, p. xxv-xxxii} Burckhardt is still well known for both his treatment of the Renaissance and Greek civilization and the sensitivity he demonstrated for the mindset of cultures, taking special care to emphasize the implicit attitudes that were necessary for the production of art, architecture and various literary texts. In a concrete way, Burckhardt helped transform the study of literature and art into an anthropological task, bringing to light by inference both the culture studied and the culture employing the methodology. Nietzsche’s insight was to simply apply the same rigor to his own contemporaries when asking the philosophically based question, “What do we learn from the history of their philosophy \textit{on behalf of the Greeks}? Not, what do we learn on behalf of philosophy?"\footnote{PPP, p. 3}

Nietzsche answers the question with “seek Dionysus and you will know.” The answer is living, not found in texts. The answer is not accessible by critique of our metaphysical delusions from within a metaphysical discipline and through the use of metaphysical tools. Nihilism is his answer later on, but his condition deteriorates prior to any cohesive statement addressing a posture toward our metaphysical obstacles.
metaphysical, empirical studies. Nietzsche proceeded in line with his mentors and continued the trend of inversion until he found nearly all of his subjects boiled down to a similar phenomenon that could be reversed and understood as a product of human psychological manifestation. Very loosely, it was the lesson he learned from Schopenhauer’s understanding of the Will as a thing-in-itself, and the world as representation. The main difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is that later Nietzsche even turns the Will inside out exposing it as nothing “in-itself”, leading to what Heidegger calls “the end of metaphysics.”

The complete inversion of the world can only happen through being in the present, within the world of Becoming, not through a metaphysical projection, because complete inversion includes the reconstitution of one’s present self. For Nietzsche, it is a change in cognitive apprehension, not simply theory. Thus, Nietzsche advances Dionysus as the method of apprehending the nature of what we do as both individuals and as groups in order to construct a world.

In this chapter, we have seen that Nietzsche inherited a great deal but transformed it to no minor degree. The major import of Nietzsche’s appropriation of Dionysus is found in his overall purpose to address the human condition. As a philosopher at heart, Nietzsche places understanding what it means to be human before the meaning of the products which humans create. His production of Dionysus fits this prioritization at every turn. In the face of the Romantics, Dionysus looks back as a deity with real subjects with which to interact, rather than simply as a metaphor of passion or suffering. When confronted by history and the lack of philological evidence, the new Dionysus responds by showing that deity is not concerned with literature or the plastic arts of representation. Instead, deity is concerned with the cosmos of which humans are a part. Deity is only found in the living and not in the dead. Thus Dionysus antagonizes the historians, asking them to seek themselves before attempting to ‘know’ the past or the conceptual world outside of themselves that lives grammatically in the

---

past. Nietzsche followed Burckhardt’s lead that culture is a product of the preconditions for a particular worldview, and decided that ‘true’ culture is the one that is closest to and most honest about the chaos of *Becoming*. These factors wrenched the conception of ideal Greece from the earlier scholars and stood it on its head, showing that the Greeks preferred their fatalism because, to them, it felt a more compelling view of the actual world in which they were engaged. The veracity of this verdict is never the point for Nietzsche, which is exactly what separates him from his contemporary historian colleagues. Since, by his measure, both past and present are constructed products of their cultures, the ‘real’ past only speaks in riddles, which can be comprehended only by those who have reached the knowledge of human nihilistic foundations.

Dionysus, the expositor of the nihilistic productivity of the human condition, is non-existent in the Romantic era. Dionysus, a deity who reconstructs the purpose of history by demanding one be present in the modern, is unthinkable in philological circles before Nietzsche. In these two most distinguished ways, Nietzsche finds the confidence to proclaim that no one had turned Dionysus into a philosophical pathos, nor understood the psychology of the deity, nor demonstrated that it is exactly in this pathos that affirmation is born. Against the standard historical model used in philology and against the Romantic notion of feeling, which stems from an inherent if not coherent soul or spirit, Dionysus proclaims that the individual is nothing more than a manifestation of *Becoming* that can be destroyed if one is lucky enough, and that the conception of the past is only our construction, just as is our present. Dionysus is in the living, not the dead. Historians and Christians, beware.
CHAPTER IV

NIETZSCHE’S “UNTIMELY” HISTORICAL MOVE

“-that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I understood as the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not in order to escape fear and pity,…but instead, over and above all fear and pity, in order for you yourself to be the eternal joy in becoming”

-Ecce Homo

Dionysus is a god that requires one’s presence, that one be there with the god ‘face to face’. Such a meeting is exactly what Nietzsche’s philosophical quest purported to have accomplished while claiming to reveal communal deific ground that belonged to an ancient and irrecoverable era. In Nietzsche’s view, it took a suitable god to stand on the other side of the abyss of time if there were to be any hope of recovery of an honest modern culture. In this chapter, I will discuss the necessary historiographical issues that surround Nietzsche’s production of Dionysus. Whether or not he was ‘truly’ successful in meeting Dionysus, whatever that would mean, is not so much the issue here as how it is that he conceived that he was able to have accomplished this task. The Romantic and philological influences upon Nietzsche unarguably shaped the path of his philosophical development, though his own insight provided the form that that development acquired. The combination of Becoming and Schopenhauerian Will formed a new concept of historical consciousness in Nietzsche that surpassed the parameters of earlier historical methods precisely because it

---

Pentheus asks the disguised Dionysus about the initiation rites to the Dionysian fold: How did you see [the god]? In a dream or face to face? Dionysus responds plainly: Face to face. If one considers Nietzsche’s reversal of metaphysics wherein the ideal world is not the true world but is in fact the ‘dream world’, then the significance of this phrase demands that one have direct experience with the god and not have only glimpsed the metaphysical, ‘dream’ image of the god. Euripides, The Bacchae. Lines 544-550. See Lattimore trans., 1959. p. 213 Also see the final section of Ecce Homo for his understanding of the real world versus the metaphysical world.
sought to break free from metaphysical/empirical justification. Nietzsche recognized the application of his Schopenhauerian aesthetic inquiry to his discipline of philology and held other philologists and himself accountable to it. His notion of the Dionysian was not, in his mind, a metaphysical task. Instead it was a practiced and living methodology. Nietzsche’s insight was to see the similarity between the living production of history and the production of tragedy out of the upsurge of cultural inspiration. Therefore, the fourth genealogical moment for the modern Dionysus is his notion of an *untimely* historical awareness wherein the culture of antiquity is accessible via the communion and commensuration of the psychology of the human condition.

In unpacking the following statement from “We Philologists”, it is hoped that the key to apprehending the monumentality of the Dionysian return can be grasped:

Die Philologie als Wissenschaft um das Alterthum hat natürlich keine ewige Dauer, ihr Stoff ist zu erschöpfen. Nicht zu erschöpfen ist die immer neue Accommodation jeder Zeit an das Alterthum, das sich daran Messen. Stellt man dem Philologen die Aufgabe, seine Zeit vermittelst des Alterthums besser zu verstehen, so ist seine Aufgabe eine ewige. – Dies ist die Antinomie der Philologie: man hat das Alterthum thatsächlich immer nur aus der Gegenwart verstanden – und soll nun die Gegenwart aus dem Alterthum verstehen?

Philology as a science of antiquity has no eternal duration naturally, its material is exhaustible. [What] is not exhaustible is the ever new accommodation of each age to antiquity, its own measure against it. If one offers to the philologist the task to better understand his age in connection with antiquity, then his task is an eternal one. – This is the antinomy of philology: realistically, one always only understands antiquity
This fragment from his unpublished notebooks of 1875 demonstrates that Nietzsche has an evident purpose for philology: to make the past ever present, ever relevant. Not only is it clear that he recognizes that history as a discipline is tied to contemporary understanding and values, but he suggests this task be offered to the philologist, revealing his critique of philology as doing exhaustible work. Nietzsche’s hope, as is evident in the overall corpus of his work and especially his writings on history, was to make philology relevant because of its ability to provide a productive self-critical approach to existence like the one he valued and promoted throughout his career. Dionysus can be understood as part of Nietzsche’s effort to make philology relevant. If Dionysus can be regarded as antiquity made ‘inexhaustible’, then the god represents not only the relevant recapitulation of a Greek cultural artifact, but also a surmounting of the ‘historical’ problem he sees facing philologists in his own time.

Genealogically, the modern Dionysus is fashioned to the same philosophical structure which Nietzsche uses for his own philological experiment. This ‘structure’ is Nietzsche’s historical philosophy, a philosophy which was undoubtedly in place when Nietzsche wrote the Untimely Meditations and, according to James Porter as we saw in chapter three, in place even earlier on in his life.\textsuperscript{360} Through his philosophy of history Nietzsche attempts to render Dionysus, like antiquity, ‘eternally’ relevant. Dionysus, therefore, can be viewed not only as the previously mentioned overcoming of classical philology but also, by apparent default, the introduction of a principle of ontological communication, communion through the experience of \textit{Becoming}, that possibly circumvents the


\textsuperscript{360} NPF, The entire premise of Porter’s text is that classical philology was not abandoned by Nietzsche but served as his foundation and as a thread of continuity in his philosophical career. He contends that Nietzsche’s early philological work displays his insights into the problems he would flesh out later in his philosophical career.
hermeneutical problems of historicism which kept these philologists from truly encountering the past.

Let us consider this thesis more closely. Nietzsche’s philosophy as it applies to ontology has been characterized by Martin Heidegger as highly important to the history of metaphysical contemplation. Its scope is wide-ranging and highly interdependent, making it difficult to comment on any one part without affecting the overall equilibrium. The result is that one can spend so much time concerned with the philosophical ripple effect that it is difficult to manage a singular examination on any particular area of his thought. It seems no coincidence that most of the texts on Nietzsche are broken up into helpful subsections such as nihilism, eternal recurrence, morality, etc. in order not to fall short of academic responsibility. Therefore, let us follow suit and separate Nietzsche’s position into manageable parts so that we may understand how Dionysus’ revitalized significance is tied to the notions of history and ontology.

**Philosophy of History**

Much of Nietzsche’s overall mature philosophy is reflected in the illuminating statement above from his unpublished fifth *Untimely Meditation* “We Philologists.” The two portions with which we are concerned here are (1) his philosophy of history, related to how it is that he conceives of the philologist’s purpose, and (2) the dependent ontological space that would be necessary for any justifiable access to antiquity. It is also important that any access to history achieved be legitimate in the sense that it cannot fall prey to charges of historical relativism. Though Nietzsche does not have a specifically defined system of historical inquiry, a consistent overall attitude and treatment of history is discernable, and his second Untimely Meditation, *On the Uses and

---

Disadvantages of History for Life, goes a long way toward establishing his mature perspective.

Both Martin Heidegger and Carl Pletsch believe that Nietzsche did indeed have a philosophy of history even if it was not systematically developed. Like any ‘system’ attributed to Nietzsche, it must be constructed from his aphoristic style as well as an assortment of works from various years and stages of his career. More convolutedly, the connection between history and ontology is dependent upon Nietzsche’s conception of metaphysics, for which we owe Heidegger a great deal for his illuminating four-volume commentary. Heidegger painstakingly explores his own understanding of Nietzsche’s philosophy and attempts a conceptually accurate project, carefully unweaving the imbricated relationship between the metaphysical and the ontological. For our purposes at this time, we need not explore the question of these metaphysics. Adequate consideration will be given to them when Nietzsche’s conception of Dionysus is brought to bear on his conception of history. For now, the type of historical philosophy Nietzsche expounded will be enough to occupy our attention.

Nietzsche’s invigorating method of approaching history has been labeled “antagonistic” and has even been called into question concerning its applicability in regard to productive historical practice. It is no secret that Hegel’s philosophy of history, with its teleology and dialectic, left as bad a taste in Nietzsche’s mouth as it did in Schopenhauer’s. In fact, it can be said that a theory of history would be “bad philosophy” from Nietzsche’s point of view. Perhaps this is why he produced short aphoristic insights into the workings, purpose, and nature of history instead of systematic programs for interpreting

\[\text{363 Pletsch, p. 36}
\[\text{364 Ausmus, Harry J. “Schopenhauer’s View of History: A Note” in History and Theory, Vol. 15, No. 2 (May, 1976), 141-145. Ausmus makes special remark concerning Schopenhauer’s attitude toward teleology in his statement that “if the idea of progress were true, it is a pity the human race did not start sooner – we would already have arrived!” Nietzsche relates his distaste for teleology in \textit{UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life. § 1 where he criticizes ‘historical’ men for their faith in progress toward some end.}
\[\text{365 Pletsch, p. 36}\\

145
history. These aphorisms allowed him to comment on the multifarious modes of historical conception. Resoundingly, the most well known of these statements from Nietzsche’s corpus of work concerning history comes from On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life. In it he declares first and foremost, “We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life.” This service to life is at once both experientially simple to grasp and philosophically difficult to defend. History should be of service to the present, or else it is nothing more than trivia, i.e. useless knowledge. However, it is the concept of ‘present’ that mystifies and determines ‘history’ as a metaphysical problem. It is not important here to diverge into the explanation for the formation of a historical consciousness in Germany during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What is important is that the historical task was in part tied to a passionate German interest in antiquity, especially Greek culture. And so it was that theories of historical interpretation in Germany began side by side with classical philology, which has been identified as a prelude to Nietzsche’s critical approach toward modern culture.

At its core, philology is a theory or practice of historiographical hermeneutics. Consequently, James Porter argues that Nietzsche developed a self-critical attitude by internalizing the tenets of philological study that demanded that the extant impediments to understanding the limited material from antiquity be discovered and removed in order to create a better picture of antiquity. Philology, concerned with a finite set of texts, turned its eye inward toward its own interpretive method in order to accomplish this task. In this light, Nietzsche’s

366 On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, p. 59
367 In this chapter it will be important to distinguish between two modes of understanding the term “history”. Nietzsche’s reconfiguration of history as a discipline is connected to his radicalization of the term as a symbol of metaphysical projection by the human psyche. Therefore, the term history will be used without singular quotation marks when it refers simply to history as a discipline of study. Singular quotation marks will be added to the term when the term refers to history with the added meaning of metaphysical projection that is tied to a temporal understanding of the self and psyche.
368 See Gadamer, Hans Georg. TM § 1.
369 NPF, p. 8
370 Ibid., p. 11
371 Ibid., p. 8
commentary on the task of the Philologist points to the heart of the hermeneutical problem: the past is always only understood in the face of the present. To be ‘present’ [Gegenwart] is to be over against [gegen] the viewpoint [Warte] of the other, which in this case is antiquity itself. In the presence of antiquity, the philologist’s task is to determine what clouds his vision. In other words, he must develop a critical methodology that sifts out the preconceived notions and the taken-for-granted attitudes in the hope of finding a telescopic vision of the past with as little atmospheric distortion as possible. In this case, the principle occlusion that frustrates the philologist’s task is the inability to see human understanding of modes of being.

Nietzsche presents his awareness of this problem in the second of his Untimely Meditations, where he discusses his conceptions of the ‘historical’, ‘unhistorical’, and ‘suprahistorical’ human being. These categories can be examined as part of Nietzsche’s hermeneutical system, so long as we conceive of hermeneutics as both an interpretive technique and a description and critique of the process of understanding. This critique, precisely because it is a critique of the process of understanding, requires demonstrating “conditions necessary for the possibility” of understanding, which each amateur philosopher recognizes as the domain of Kant and thus as the inroad to metaphysical dependence. For Nietzsche, the discipline of history is paralyzed by a metaphysical dependence which he hopes to sever, though he admits it to be a difficult task. As Heidegger demonstrates in his discussion of the ‘guiding question of Western philosophy’, Nietzsche seeks to escape metaphysical dependence as method of engaging being, i.e. as a method of symbolizing one’s own life and consciousness. Metaphysically understood, ‘history’ is necessarily about time

372 “Attempt”, pp. 3-12. EH and Z also make this point by acknowledging that the common person, those he places far below himself, are mostly unable to sever their own ties to metaphysical thinking and thus cannot be enlightened. Zarathustra says that he has come at the wrong time when men cannot understand him, while Nietzsche ends his final publication with the ambiguous begging question “Have I been understood?”

373 The guiding question of philosophy for Heidegger is a penetrating metaphysical question “What is the nature of Being?” However, Heidegger recognizes that this question cannot be
and the problem of *Becoming*. As representatives of a hermeneutical approach to *Becoming*, the ‘historical’, ‘unhistorical’, and ‘suprahistorical’ tell us something about the way we posture our *being*. Therefore, Nietzsche begins his explanation by discussing how one encounters history in the phenomenon of ‘forgetfulness.\(^\text{374}\)

**History as Metaphysics**

In order to be happy, Nietzsche says, one must be able to forget. He does not mean that one must erase one’s memories in order to find contentment. Rather, he is striving to communicate to the reader the phenomenon that will disclose a sense of what it means to be truly present in the moment of life as it is occurring. When we are happy, he argues, we exist in a manner that could be described as non-reflective. His example is a cow grazing without reflection upon its own activity.\(^\text{375}\) He says, “the animal lives *unhistorically.*” The human being, like the animal, when happy is not immediately in the process of considering himself as a link in the chain of the past and future, but instead is in a state of enjoyment by *being* present. In addition, he tells us “forgetting is essential to action of any kind.”\(^\text{376}\) Thus it is impossible to go about the daily business of living without ‘forgetfulness’ playing a major role. The ‘unhistorical’ *being* is fully “contained in the present, like a number without any fraction left over.”\(^\text{377}\) If we understand Nietzsche to mean that when one does not have any part of the intellect committed to activity other than the moment that there is no ‘objective’

handled metaphysically if it is to succeed. It cannot be answered from within itself. He uses two terms which I have adopted in this chapter: *Italicized being* and *Being*. The term *being* refers to individual existence that is associated with the subject or the individual self. The term *Being* refers to the Oneness or plenitude of existence wherein the principle of individuation is lost in complete Unity. Later in the paper, I will employ the standard usage of *Becoming* as in its philosophical problem of change that must be accounted for in *Being*.

\(^{374}\) UM II *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, § 1 p. 62

\(^{375}\) Ibid., p. 61

\(^{376}\) Ibid., p. 62

\(^{377}\) Pletsch makes the argument that Nietzsche uses the term unhistorical in more than one way and can be charged with ambiguous usage. See “History and Friedrich Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Time” p. 33
conception of oneself, then we see that his simile points directly to the dissolution of the active representation of ‘subject’ as the basis for understanding oneself as fully present, i.e. ‘unhistorical’.

The key is the dependence upon the activity of the mind. When one is reflectively aware of oneself, one exists in a ‘historical’ sense, but is not actually ‘present’. For an extreme example, we might consider driving a car and thinking of a shopping list only to arrive at the grocery store and not remember how we got there. The reflective activity of focusing on the list supplants the presence of being in the car during the drive. A more common example is reading a book and after a few pages realizing one has not been reading but thinking of something else. One may be ‘thinking’ but it is not reflective until one recognizes that one has been doing it, at which time the last two or three pages need to be reread, in a ‘historical’ manner. Either way, we are not present, i.e. aware in the actual moment of what is taking place. The ‘historical’ and ‘unhistorical’ are ways of describing one’s inner mode of being. Both modes of being, the way in which we are psychologically oriented and engaged in the world at any one moment, ultimately point to what Nietzsche considers necessary for his conception of presence – the Schopenhauerian ‘subject.’

Since the publication of Descartes’ Meditations on First Philosophy, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that in modernity no single philosophical topic has been more scrutinized than the idea of ‘the subject’. Descartes’ cogito, Kant’s ‘Vernunft’, and Schopenhauer’s ‘Will’ are predecessors to Nietzsche’s conception of the ‘subject,’ and after Nietzsche the concept becomes even more contested. In large part, this is due to Nietzsche’s contribution. His continuation of Schopenhauer’s notion of ‘Will’ as a certain ‘ground’ beneath the ‘subject’ that is the blindly driving force of nature shifts the location of the ‘subject’ from the ‘I’

---

378 Pletsch also makes the astute observation that, from Nietzsche’s description, the ‘historical’ and ‘unhistorical’ escape awareness of Becoming in different directions. By this he means that the ‘historical’ evades Becoming by recognizing it as fossilized Being, while the ‘unhistorical’ has no awareness outside of its moment and therefore cannot distinguish change in its recognized form. The objection that can be derived here is that neither modality successfully confronts Becoming as a phenomenon on its own ground.
to a speculative and unsubstantiated ontological space.\textsuperscript{379} The true ‘subject’ becomes, as with Schopenhauer, part of the well from which it is individuated. It shares in the nature of the Will. Nietzsche picks up on this distinction immediately and, in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, is quick to make this \textit{Ur-Ich} the eternal “moving center of the world.”\textsuperscript{380} This “moving center” is the space of ontological negotiation and upsurge from the Will. Descartes’ \textit{cogito} and Kant’s ‘Vernunft’ are, in this way, viewed as representations of the ‘subject’ and no longer as ‘subjects’ in-and-of-themselves. Most importantly, this means that they are no longer considered foundations of reality, not even of the self. In Nietzsche’s view, the ‘self’, the ‘I’, and whatever else is used for the concept of individuation is then regarded as a metaphysical projection.

In other words, Nietzsche’s conception of metaphysics is different from previous versions precisely because he understands metaphysics as a projection of the actual subject which is not a stable ‘I’ at all, but what Heidegger calls “a decision between the predominance of \textit{beings} and the rule of \textit{Being}.”\textsuperscript{381} The ‘subject’ is not a thing, i.e. a representation, but a negotiation between \textit{Being} and \textit{Becoming}. In this way, all that is consciously, reflectively produced by the knowing ‘subject’ is inherently metaphysical in nature because it clings to the ‘I.’ The negotiated ground that produces the metaphysical knowing ‘subject’ is not to be penetrated by its own projection and thus is incapable of being “known” in the way the intellect is able to be scrutinized. In other words, the ‘unhistorical’ cannot be penetrated by the ‘historical’. We must consider them as ways-of-being, because they nihilate each other when they become the product of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{380} \textit{BT} § 5, p. 31
\textsuperscript{381} Heidegger, \textit{Nietzsche}. Volume 3. § 1. p. 6 Taking into consideration Heidegger’s use of the terms \textit{being} and \textit{Being}, we may understand this as the negotiable space between subject and object wherein a decision is made that arrests \textit{Becoming} as \textit{Being}. \textit{Being} is therefore metaphysical representation of \textit{Becoming}. They are one and the same, and the “Will” is the decision that forces \textit{Being} either into individuation or into the One. We humans are in a constant state of flux here since it is an ongoing process.
\end{flushright}
negotiation of the underlying *Will*. One *is* either/or. That is to say, one given more either to *Being* or to *Becoming* in any particular moment. They do not interact.

Consider Heidegger here again. In an explanation of Nietzsche’s sophisticated move, Heidegger states that the decisive question of western philosophy, “How may the *Being* of *beings* be characterized?” is replaced with “What is *Being* itself?” This metaphysical revelation renders the ‘historical’ person impotent when attempting to gain any legitimate access to the past, because the past, no matter what interpretive method is used, is only a representation that clings to the ‘subject.’ The philologist, therefore, must understand the past in the face of the present, the presence of his own metaphysically projected self in which case history becomes transformed through our own resources of understanding. Confrontation with the past is, for Nietzsche, always distorted in this way.

On the other hand, the ‘unhistorical’ person has a certain immediate connection to *Becoming* that the ‘historical’ person lacks, but this can only be considered from a ‘historical’ perspective. This creates the problem for the historicism of the nineteenth-century in that it makes any hermeneutical method *ipso facto* invalid as a rendering of truth. Recognition of this predicament underlies Nietzsche’s criticism of Hegel and the Romantics, as well as of classical philologists, all of whom he feels to have misunderstood the nature of the past. For him, the past is a *way of being*, not a periodic entity extant in some invisible dimension where truth hides along with it. Without a precedent for handling this historical issue effectively, Nietzsche must deal with this problem himself if he is to resolve what seems to be an insurmountable problem of human interpretation. After all, how is one to access the past in a way that isn’t completely relative and pointless if all interpretive methods are invalid from the start? For Nietzsche, Dionysus represents an answer to this challenge.

---

383 *UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, pp. 90-95
The Problem of Historicism

Historicism lies at the heart of any reproduction of Dionysus, most profoundly in a manner of critical responsibility. Modern scholars are acclimated to the idea that hermeneutical paradox arises immediately when the meaning of a subject from antiquity is sought through the looking glass of contemporary society. It is the nature of interpretation that we shade our past with the hues of our present, regardless of our attempt at responsible conduct in the reconstruction of the phenomena of history. Nevertheless, it is Nietzsche’s maneuver to elude historicism that matters to his concept of Dionysus. Dionysus is not presented by Nietzsche as a product of ‘historical’ consciousness, but rather as synonymous with the previously discussed ‘ground’, the Ur-Ich, of the ‘eternal’ condition of human existence. Nietzsche’s contribution of the Dionysian finds it’s significance in this method of attempting to evade the trap of ‘historical’ criticism. In the words of Hans Georg Gadamer, “When historicism fails, the distinction between ancient and modern is no longer absolute.” Nietzsche tries to erase this distinction, seeing in it both a solution to historicism and a commensuration with Becoming that reveal the meaning of Dionysus.

In Nietzsche’s view, the productive insights into existence erupt from the aesthetic engagement of the individual with the cosmos. This position is certainly demonstrated in The Birth of Tragedy, a work that is responsible for delivering Nietzsche’s first conception of Dionysus to the public. A self-declared disciple of Schopenhauer during his early academic career, it seems evident that Nietzsche internalized Schopenhauer’s complementary perspective that history teaches us

---

384 This assertion is itself no doubt a cultural product of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, considering that it is in their works that we see this philosophical position take shape in its application to understanding history.

385 The act of phenomenological engagement is an act of the ‘eternal present’. Timelessness is considered here in the sense of phenomenological ‘temporality’. Phenomena cannot exist elsewhere, outside the present, because we are not there to experience them.

386 TM, p. xxxiv.
to know mankind when it is apprehended through “artistic eyes”.\textsuperscript{387} In fact, Nietzsche makes the claim in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} that “only as an \textit{aesthetic phenomenon} is existence and the world eternally justified.”\textsuperscript{388} While Nietzsche appropriates but does not fully agree with Schopenhauer’s metaphysical perspective on music, he can agree that history is a product of the reflective and rational limits placed on the ‘unhistorical,’ i.e. reflectively blind, element that defines the uniqueness of man.\textsuperscript{389} Such ontological remarks are anticipatory and influential in regard to the methodology of the human sciences developed in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{390} Again, Gadamer relates this sentiment in his influential text \textit{Truth and Method}, “through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way.” For Gadamer, like Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, this aesthetic insight “constitutes the philosophic importance of art.”\textsuperscript{391}

The affinity for an aesthetic ground of meaning has, on more than one occasion, resulted in the charge of Romanticism being leveled at Nietzsche. It is important here to quickly surmount this accusation by briefly repeating the point from chapter three that Nietzsche, like Goethe, criticized the Romantic view for its lack of methodology, its illimitable reliance on emotion and absence of logical procedure.\textsuperscript{392} Kaufmann addresses this issue unambiguously:

Parallels between Nietzsche and the German Romantics can of course be found, and it is also possible to define the notoriously equivocal word “romantic” in a sense which would permit its application to Nietzsche; but, especially where no precise definition is given, any interpretation of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{WWR § p. 244 Nietzsche also remarks in \textit{Ecce Homo} that \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} has Schopenhauer’s smell. See section on BT.}
\footnote{BT § 5, p. 33}
\footnote{UM II \textit{On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life}, p. 64}
\footnote{This step is a meta-step that intuits hermeneutics not as a methodology of interpretation but as a critical account of the process of interpretation.}
\footnote{TM, p. xxiii}
\footnote{Ulfers, Friedrich and Mark Daniel Cohen. “Nietzsche’s Ontological Roots in Goethe’s Classicism” in \textit{NA}, pp. 425-440}
\end{footnotes}
Nietzsche as a typical representative or the late son of a movement that he consistently opposed seems, to say the least, highly misleading. \(^{393}\)

The Romantics did indeed achieve a revival of the past and promote an interest in cultural history in general. Nevertheless, the Romantic production of the “historical school” which was reliant upon subjective judgments but sought to be a ‘scientific’ method cannot be equated with Nietzsche’s reliance on the human condition as a basis for meaning. \(^{394}\) Nietzsche’s concept is grounded in a “processual” philosophical principle rather than teleology, like Hegel’s *Geist*, or the futile attempt to completely comprehend a bygone age. \(^{395}\) The Romantic expectation that one could fully understand culture as the scientist understands his object was only the beginning toward a self-critical approach that is reflected in Nietzsche’s attention to the problem of historicism.

The difficulty faced by the Romantic historians that concerns Nietzsche and Schopenhauer was that any historical inquiry necessarily shares the same prejudices as those it criticizes. \(^{396}\) The consequences of Schopenhauer’s *Fourfold Root of Sufficient Reason* imply that history leaves the human being unexplained as the presupposed principle upon which the relational effects of history are recorded and conceived. \(^{397}\) Despite the rational approach to events of the past, Schopenhauer explains why history, as a discipline, does not function as do the other ‘sciences’. In simple terms, Schopenhauer tells us history’s particulars (events) are not deducible from its universals (time periods). Schopenhauer concludes that “history, strictly speaking, is rational knowledge certainly, but not a


\(^{394}\) *TM*, p. 275

\(^{395}\) Ulfers and Cohen, pp. 431-436.

\(^{396}\) Nietzsche notes that Goethe critiques ‘sciences’ in a similar structure and argument, i.e. its lack of applicability to life. See *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, p. 99 Gadamer elucidates this position in *Truth and Method* pp. 265-270 where he discusses the shared prejudices of rationalism and historicism precisely because they are based on Enlightenment ideals.

\(^{397}\) Ausmus, p. 141
Harry Ausmus argues effectively that Schopenhauer’s view of history is predicated upon the understanding that history as a subject does presuppose a principle of sufficient reason, but it does not follow the regular methods of a science. Precisely because we presuppose the complexity of humanity within each historical assertion, “the experience of the socio-historical world cannot be raised to a science by the procedures of natural science.” Ultimately, this is the problem of historical prejudice that Nietzsche must overcome. So long as historical investigation is constituted by intellectual methods such as the dialectic or impossible epistemological efforts that seek a real form of objectivity, history remains a tainted enterprise.

The main issue, here, is whether or not the historical issue is surmountable. If we take Heidegger’s word, Nietzsche spies an opening to a possible corridor which could circumvent this epistemological problem. This insight can be recognized in his admonition that “objectivity and justice have nothing to do with each other.” In his second Untimely Meditation, Nietzsche attacks the principle of objectivity as it is applied to history:

A historiography could be imagined which had in it not a drop of common empirical truth and yet could lay claim to the highest degree of objectivity.

Furthermore, he attacks the objection to alternative methods of engaging history, undoubtedly in defense of his own method of ontological inquiry.

---

398 WWR §14, p. 63
399 Ausmus, p. 142
400 TM, p. 4
401 UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, p. 91 Objectivity for Nietzsche is exactly the opposite of seeking ‘truth’. From his position concerning metaphysics, the solidification of the world outside of one’s own experience of it as if it were an object in itself deprives it of the possibility of meaning and thus ‘truth’. Justice, on the other hand, is bound to one’s experience and affirmation of life and not to an ‘objective’ set of values since, for Nietzsche, we construct values subjectively.
402 Ibid., p. 91
These naïve historians call the assessment of the opinions and deeds of the past according to the everyday standards of the present moment ‘objectivity’: it is here they discover the canon of all truth; their task is to adapt the past to contemporary triviality. On the other hand, they call all historiography ‘subjective’ that does not accept these popular standards as canonical.\(^{403}\)

In opposition to this ostensible objectivity of the naïve historian, Nietzsche’s philosophy is constructed over a lifetime in order to advocate an approach to history that imparts existential human meaning of past events and cultural products to the present. To him, this method of encountering the phenomena of history on the level of the ground-of-being overcomes the ‘historical’ in a Heraclitean sense of justice, wherein the necessity of Becoming is its own justification.\(^{404}\) Remembering Nietzsche’s statement that life is only aesthetically justified, this justification comes precisely because it is the ‘unhistorical’ human, and not the ‘historical’ intellect, regarded as the ground of meaning that affirms the decision that is made between existing individually as beings or as one in Becoming. Perhaps some of Nietzsche’s remarks about the uses of history can help clarify this maneuver around the ‘historical’ obstacle.

**Dionysus as History**

Nietzsche wants “to serve history only to the extent that history serves life.” So long as history remains an image or a construction of the past, it cannot impart its real value. For Nietzsche, history fails to serve life whenever it is unable to manifest itself to the individual on an ontological level. “When the

\(^{403}\) Ibid., p. 90

historical sense no longer conserves life, but mummifies it,"\textsuperscript{405} the events of the past crystallize and slip into the unsalvageable abyss of antiquity. Eluding this ‘historical’ pitfall, Nietzsche presents Dionysian deity as a phenomenon of the human condition, as a necessarily ‘\emph{unhistorical}’ modality of being. He does not present the metaphysical Dionysus of antiquity to modern times, but rather the phenomenon of Dionysus made new that also makes antiquity itself relevant. In this way, Nietzsche fulfills the role of ontologist by linking the Dionysian with \emph{Becoming} instead of a ‘historically’ conceived metaphysical figure that belongs only to antiquity.

According to the modern phenomenological approach of the human sciences, “the real fulfillment of the historical task is to determine anew the significance of what is examined”\textsuperscript{406} From this perspective, Nietzsche’ Dionysus is undoubtedly successful in fulfilling the task. One may even consider Dionysus as constant reminder of a hermeneutical consciousness wherein there is a “new experience of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice.”\textsuperscript{407} These, Gadamer’s, words are especially helpful in understanding Nietzsche’s endowment of priority to an aesthetic methodology over a ‘scientific’ one. In Gadamer’s account of the development of hermeneutical inquiry, he demonstrates the priority of the human sciences by detailing the manner in which scientific methodology is predicated upon the ‘guiding concepts of humanism’.\textsuperscript{408} This argument finds resonance with Schopenhauer’s critique that the human being is the unexplained presupposition to history because it also shows that even science demands a fundamental ground of human engagement with the substantial world in order to produce a ‘scientific’ attitude. Nietzsche anticipates Gadamer’s point, as well as follows Schopenhauer’s example by placing life above ‘scientific’ knowledge in order of priority. Just as science could not have

\textsuperscript{405} \textit{UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life}, p. 75
\textsuperscript{406} \textit{TM}, p. 282
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid., p. 284
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid. see first section which explores the origination of the concepts of humanism that are predicated upon medieval notions of culture, common sense, and taste. pp. 9-42
established its method without the foundation of humanism, there is no doubt in Nietzsche’s mind that life is the “dominating force, for knowledge which annihilated life would have annihilated itself.” 409 Once again the priority is ontological. This posture toward a hermeneutic principle that offers what one may term ‘legitimate’ 410 access to the cultural capital of the antiquity appears to be the soundest platform from which to discuss the modern Dionysus and the conditions necessary for his revitalized relevance and continued cultural viability.

The term ‘legitimate’ access can be illustrated through Nietzsche’s notion of monumental history. In On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, monumental history is portrayed as a false belief in a past that is ontologically separate from the present. Nietzsche derides it as a “masquerade” for those who wish to elevate another time to prominence over their own. Pointing out what he considers a misconception that accompanies this view of history, he remarks that in this manner of thinking there is a misperception that “as long as history serves life…the past suffers.” 411 This past is supposed to be a ‘real’ past somehow separate from the ‘real’ present. Yet Nietzsche already understands that there is no ‘real’ past outside of present life. No past as an ‘object-in-itself’ exists. For him, this is primarily because it is the present that seeks to ask questions about the past, as we read in his admonition from “We Philologists.” As Gadamer relates, historical research is carried on the back of the historical movement of life. 412 Thus, Nietzsche’s insight is that, for humans, legitimate historical meaning is unequivocally connected with the present in an ‘unhistorical’ sense, but the ‘historical’ framing of this meaning represents a departure from the ground where existential meaning can take place to begin with. Aware of Kant’s relegation of all appearance to inaccessibility, Nietzsche places the ‘historical’ which is

---

409 UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, p. 121
410 The term “legitimate” is used in opposition to the term “true” access to cultural capital – legitimate simply implies a methodology is present, true implies metaphysical objectivity which is the target of Nietzsche’s attack.
411 Ibid., p. 74
412 TM, p. 284
constructed of time, space, and causality, also on the level of inaccessible appearance.

History then, for Nietzsche, is accessed not through intellectual reflection or by the projection of organizational structures, but by the existential, ‘unhistorical’ mode of being that allows, in Burckhardtian fashion, high specimens of culture to speak to one another across the “desert intervals of time.” Dionysus is the prime example of this form of engagement. It is the ‘unhistorical’ structure of engaging Being, and revealing Becoming, that allows the phenomenon of Dionysus to be revitalized in a form that is relevant to modern culture. Such a use of the Dionysian should come as no surprise. After all, investigating phenomena in order to reveal truth about the given world is in accordance with the meaning of the Greek term aletheia, unveiling or revealing, and is a method that Nietzsche used relentlessly in his pursuit of ‘truth’. Dionysus fits the mode of ‘historical’ phenomenon in which humans give character and appearance to the metaphysical deity, as in Euripides’ plays, as well as the mode of the ‘unhistorical’ existential presence within the moment. Presence in the moment is anti-intellectual, anti-metaphysical, anti-representational. As he says in The Birth of Tragedy, Dionysus is only first realized in an “imageless art”, or more precisely, outside the realm of metaphysics. For Nietzsche, this imageless art is music because music must be experienced in the moment. When experiencing music, the art form does not hold still like a representation and yet it remains symbolic. Like all cultural values in Nietzsche’s system, Dionysus and his revelatory music belong to the negotiation of the moment and echo the immediacy of Becoming. His status as

---

413 UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, p. 111
414 Nietzsche pursuit of truth despite personal difficulties is summarized in Ecce Homo in the section entitled “Why I am so Wise”. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche’s conception of truth is predicated upon the determination that truth is not simply a holding-to-be-true. It also involves a revealing of the conditions of human consciousness, an ontological insight. See Heidegger, Nietzsche, Vol. 1 § 11
415 BT § 1, p. 14 An aside: It is interesting to take note of Nietzsche’s disdain for the Judeo-Christian conception of deity and then juxtapose his concept of an imageless god with the 2nd commandment which states that one shall not create an image of god! Both, it seems, recognize the problem of fossilizing deity in representation.
phenomenon is valued above and beyond his status as a concept. This allows Nietzsche to engage him as deity by making him present in the transformation of Being into Becoming, rather than present in the guise of an ‘historical’ character manufactured through metaphysical reflection.

**Nietzsche’s Ontology**

I have labeled Nietzsche an ontologist based upon his concern with Being/Becoming. However, it should be noted that psychological presence is his fundamental philosophical problem. It is important to take a moment and flesh out the nature of this descriptor because there are several ways that one may fit the classification of ‘ontologist’. Primarily, a concern with Being and the nature of existence is required. Ontology can also be understood as metaphysics in a loose sense, so we must determine the necessity for using the term in its application to Nietzsche. As Heidegger demonstrates in his four-volume explication of Nietzschean philosophy, ontology as understood by Nietzsche is quite different than the normal concern with Being. This difference is key to understanding Dionysus’ relevance to the modern era. The difference, in short, Heidegger tells us, is that Nietzsche thinks Being as Time rather than Being as Presence (ousia).

To think Being as Time means that while Nietzsche is concerned with an outlook that is consistent with the fundamental consequences of materialism, he is more concerned with the nature of psychology, at least in so far as we are able to apprehend his historical critique. Nietzsche thinks Being in terms of temporality, or, in other words, in terms of the nature of consciousness. Since psychological activity is temporal, Nietzsche considers it synonymous with Becoming, thereby replacing Being altogether. Conscious being is the subject of Nietzsche’s investigation, and it is interrogated by attempts to

---

416 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 1. § 4 p. 20 Ousia, presence, was the standard Greek way of considering Being and continued to be the standard philosophical understanding up until Nietzsche’s philosophy.
phenomenologically disclose the modes of *being* which make the world present. The presence of the world is only apprehensible in Nietzsche’s view in modes of temporal *being* which he communicates directly in his *Untimely Meditation: On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, as we have discussed above. The term ‘conscious’ can also be ambiguous. After all, Nietzsche posits that awareness is present via the *Will* even when the principle of individuation, what we normally refer to as ‘self-consciousness’, has been dissolved. However without self-consciousness, there can be no sense of temporality as we discussed in relation to Nietzsche’s conception of the ‘unhistorical’ animal. So, in Nietzsche’s case we can take it that for him conscious *being* is not self-consciousness, but rather the awareness or action of the primordial filament of life he calls *Will* that undergirds the individuated consciousnesses of individual humans. Like Freud’s subconscious, Nietzsche’s understanding of *being* in this manner is manifestly psychological, and not substantial. To clarify, he discusses humans in terms of their psychological mode of *being* but he never discusses whether or not the physical molecules of their brains actually exist. In this way, he is not an idealist at all in the traditional sense, and Heidegger notes that this distinction could keep him from being classified as an ontologist at least in terms of his concern for substantial *Being*.  

It might seem the case that because he focuses on the psychological he avoids the trap of metaphysics by keeping the focus off of the external world while keeping the spotlight on internal *being*. Nietzsche, however, is not so uncritical as to miss the possible objections to that claim. He recognizes even within his own philosophy that the words and conceptions that he uses to describe his observations of the dichotomy of *Being/Becoming* are themselves metaphysical productions. As stated earlier, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he recognizes that even the music of Dionysus is a symbol of truth, an echo, rather than the truth itself. The vocabulary of human language is subject to the laws

---

418 *DW*, 1870. Reprinted in *BT*, p. 133
of conscious operation and thus only exists in relation to the temporal modes of being. Our vocabulary is effectual only in relation to the past, present, and future when it treats these realms as if they exist independently of one another. Twentieth-century scholars are well aware of the popularity of language theorists who strongly argue that no human experience undercuts the circular trappings of metaphysical conception. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s intuition revealed in his theory of history is that these realms of past, present, and future are not independent except in a psychological sense. He does not deny change, i.e. Becoming. Instead, he posits it as the true nature of Being, wherein Being and Becoming are interchangeable psychological modalities. Understanding, as such, is therefore a temporal activity and Being/Becoming is only relatable via a psychological modality. Substantial existence is of no importance here, or is at least of secondary importance because it requires psychological existence in order to be aware of substance.

Nietzsche is seeking a ground-of-being and, for him, temporal being indicates that a negotiated space of individuation lies prior to the formation of the ‘subject’ which he, like Fichte, refers to often as the ‘I.’ This does not mean a substantial space, as in another physical dimension. Rather, it means that Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, does not focus on the ego, but on the phenomenon from which the I’ is an upsurge. Nietzsche posits the ‘subject’ as an upsurge from primordial unity, from Becoming, by using Dionysian revelry as the disclosive experience. For him, to dissolve individuality and to experience the unity of Being as Becoming is to commune with Dionysus. Dionysus becomes an

---

Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 1 § 2 p. 7 – the substance of Being does not change because of Time. Rather we change the way we think about Being because we constitute Being through the limitations of temporal consciousness.

Obviously one may make the objection that it takes substance to create a brain wherein psychological activity may take place. However, Nietzsche does appear to still be partly in the German idealist camp in his considerations of the Will as an immaterial processual psychological negotiation with the influence and effects of substantial existence. He does not ignore substance, but his philosophy, which is mainly focused on values, morality, and the overcoming of conceptual metaphysics, is predicated on the psychological. For more on Nietzsche’s psychological insights it may be helpful to consider his relationship with Paul Rée. See Small, Robin. *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship*. Oxford. 2005
expository for *Becoming* as something chaotic, violent, pleasing, and most of all contradictory. As he states in Part One of *Beyond Good and Evil* the main question concerning human values is how anything could originate out of its opposite. In this way, Dionysus is an ontological agent whom we may say serves life to the extent that he is always disclosive of *Becoming* as presence in the moment or the present, the now, regardless of the historical time period. And since full presence in the moment is lacking in its awareness of temporality as in the ‘unhistorical’ animal, Dionysian revelation is not intellectually, i.e. metaphysically, communicated. Instead, in Nietzsche’s words, Dionysus is forgetful happiness even in the chaos, as is Heraclitus’ child at play.

The disclosure of Dionysian *Becoming* is therefore revealed in a modality of *being* which is inherently dependent upon psychological temporality. While Heidegger is correct in stating that Nietzsche does not think *Being* in terms of substance, it does not seem fair to say that Nietzsche is therefore not an ontologist. Heidegger does not make that claim but does note its possibility. In fact, it is *Becoming* that Nietzsche is concerned with first and foremost, and his temporal perspective is part of the allure of his philosophy. By considering Dionysus and *Being* in terms of temporality, Nietzsche is attempting to evade the problem of historicism. Dionysus is always present, always relevant, so long as one considers the engagement with *Becoming* and the Dionysian communion as the same unified experience of connection with the plenitude of *Being*. Without the possibility of intellectual reflection, it appears that confirmation of this position is impossible, since it cannot be communicated reflectively, i.e. metaphysically. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, for Nietzsche, the Dionysian modality revealed a certain primordial unity beneath the ‘subject’ both to the ancients and to the moderns, so long as the moderns were able to make this atemporal connection. And Nietzsche believed this to be possible by his descriptions of the experiential

---

421 *BGE* § 2, p. 5
422 The forgetfulness is the key component to Happiness in Nietzsche’s view. See *UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*. § 1
recognition that takes place between the higher individuals that culture produces such as Goethe, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and himself, just to name a few.\footnote{UM II On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, p. 111 – See Chapter three for Burckhardt’s influence on this theme in Nietzsche’s thought.}

**Beneath the “I”**

So long as we understand Nietzsche as an ontologist, an investigator of \textit{Being/Becoming}, it is necessary to understand him as an investigator of temporality, especially the atemporal self, which lacks its own cognition as a ‘subject.’ The eradication of the ‘subject’ as an ego that stands over against an “other”, a substantial objective world, reveals the nature of \textit{Becoming} as something that is completely beyond manipulation by psychological, metaphysical reflection. In Nietzsche’s words, it is the primordial unity or “not the same ['I'] as that of the waking, empirically real human being, but rather the only ‘I'-ness which truly exists at all…the very ground of all things.”\footnote{BT § 5, p. 31} In other words, the eternal ‘I,’ viewed as a resting ground for human consciousness, is addressed as the ultimate source of human meaning and the ultimate position of revelation. It represents, for him, a constant negotiation of the human condition as well as continuity in the recognition of \textit{Becoming} as the true nature of \textit{Being}. Nietzsche labels this source the Dionysian because Dionysus is the phenomenon that he believes demonstrates the possibility of a ‘legitimate’, not a metaphysically ‘historical’, connection to the ancient culture of the Greeks. As such a phenomenon, Dionysus reveals the arena of negotiation between the subject and object from which the creative manifestation of individuality is produced.\footnote{Principium individuationis is not simply an object or a subject but a reflection upon the decision of the interaction between them. See BT § 1, pp. 16-18}

Through his ontological insight, Nietzsche delivers an account that has attained long life precisely because his Dionysus is an attempt to penetrate to the
origins of symbolism within the dual nature of existence rather than provide an encyclopedic rehashing of symbolism itself as a substitute for Dionysus. Nietzsche is interested in exploring the self through the foil of godly production. For him, they are portals of ontological exploration. This focus on the temporal is the method Nietzsche uses in his hope to illuminate the difference between regular conceptions of history which, for him are useless studies of the past, as if the past exists elsewhere, and his radical understanding of history which places all events under the constant influential flux of the present. Thus, he can admonish philologists, saying that one only understands the past in the face of the present, the implication being that the present is ahistorical.

Dionysian phenomenon, exemplified by the connection with music is the ultimate revealer of what Nietzsche terms das Ur-Eine, the primordial One. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche quickly tells us that he acquired this conception of the Dionysian ground, the Will, from Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation*. However, the explication of the nature of that ground is far less often forthcoming. The *Ur-ich*, the primordial ‘I,’ is a necessary part of his overall argument in *The Birth of Tragedy*, without which the reader’s understanding of Nietzsche’s Dionysus and the nature of Being itself would fall short. Nietzsche has moved, *a la* Schopenhauer, one step beyond the idealist conception of the ‘subject’ as the ground of being and posited the force, the Will, which is atemporal and thus inaccessible to intellect. In a certain sense, one may say that there is much going on in the ‘now’ that the ‘subject’ simply cannot grasp in order to be a ‘subject.’ The focus on presence in the moment that has been discussed above allows Nietzsche to determine the ground-of-being, i.e. the ground beneath the ‘subject’ as a modality of being and not an objective metaphysically separate ground in itself. In this way the Dionysian presents not only a mode of unity and communion, but also, for philosophers, presents a critique of human consciousness. This again is in keeping with the phenomenological method of investigation.

---

426 Ibid., pp. 18, 30, 104-105
The application of this method even in its early stages, as Nietzsche later admits, performs the function of making history serve life via an understanding of the Dionysian phenomenon. He does not wish the reader to know Dionysus in the manner that an academic would realize him. Instead, he would have the reader seek Dionysus as a reveler would who wishes to join in and thus make Dionysus present in the experience and being of participation. In order to serve life, the historical phenomenon is not employed for knowledge of an object. After all, in the dissolution of the self, the ‘object’ does not become reflectively known to the intellect, since both ‘subject’ and ‘object’ dissolve into each other. In Nietzsche’s view, it is the non-metaphysical experience itself that reveals the nature of the human condition as a temporal one, of which the reflective ego is only a limited phenomenon. The human condition becomes the focus. The investigation of the world turns an inward eye toward an investigation of consciousness and the nature of the real ‘subject’ and its relationship to the objective world.

Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Cohen, in their essay *Nietzsche’s Ontological Roots in Goethe’s Classicism*, contend that Nietzsche successfully infers the equitable relationship between the ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ i.e. self and world, by grasping their ontological proximity in the experience of phenomena. Moreover, what makes Nietzsche’s production of Dionysus an important philosophical contribution is that unlike the Romantics, Nietzsche does not rely on the human sensibility and feeling for this conclusion. He replaces sensibility with a reliance on logical philosophical procedure. Confident in the disclosive potential of engaging experience through phenomena in a critical way, Nietzsche makes the investigation of the Dionysian both a project with philosophical bite and existential promise.

The connection to the primordial One, the *Ur-Eine*, and the primordial ‘I’, the *Ur-ich*, shows itself in Nietzsche’s regard of the ontological proximity of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in his phenomenological investigation. In other words, the

---

427 Ulfers and Cohen, p. 437
'subject,' the Ur-ich, is not an object as in some thing over against the Ur-Eine. Rather, the 'subject' is universal. All is One, and the 'subject' and 'object' are One, just as in Schopenhauer’s philosophy. This exposes again the concept of the relationship between them as the negotiable ground of Being/Becoming wherein the decision is made between “the preponderance of Being and the rule of being.” Consciousness is the resultant grasp of that decision and thus an observer of the contract. Nietzsche’s proposal of this formulation of individual self-conscious being is further support for labeling him an onto-logist, precisely because he does not base his understanding on appearance.  

**Dionysus as Ontological Phenomenon**

Both Heidegger and Gadamer pick up on the twist of Nietzsche’s ontological investigation. Recognizing his phenomenological procedure, which uses the experiences he calls Dionysian as they are engaged by consciousness in order to deliver information about the nature of the human condition, they are quick to point out that his method is not equitable with the method of the natural sciences. The natural sciences require a method that is trapped in the temporal clutches of metaphysics by demanding reflective research and symbol or sign which points to the subject with clear language. Nietzsche realizes that reflectivity requires a ‘historical’ mode of being and the Dionysian cannot be addressed reflectively without degrading it into a metaphysical symbol. Therefore Nietzsche describes Dionysus as an “imageless” god first revealed in music which is not seen but felt. He also recognizes the inability to express the Dionysian in language that is metaphysical, which means any language at all since all language is known to the reflective consciousness. This realization comes very early in his philosophical career. At the end of *The Dionysiac Worldview*, written

---

428 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 3, § 1
429 Ulfers and Cohen, pp. 436-7
430 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 2 § 15 Also see *TM*. Gadamer’s whole premise on historical investigation follows this presupposition.

167
prior to his production of *The Birth of Tragedy* and not published in his lifetime, Nietzsche calls for a new way of addressing the nature of Dionysus, and by implication the nature of *Being:*

> In the Dionysiac dithyramb the Dionysiac enthusiast is stimulated to the utmost intensity of all his symbolic powers; something never felt before demands to be expressed: the annihilation of the *individuation*, one-ness in the genus of species, indeed of nature. Now the essence of nature is to be expressed, a new world of symbols is needed.  

As a phenomenon, Dionysus represents new methods of knowledge making. Most importantly, he represents the fact that metaphysics, as a method of understanding the cosmos, is bound to illusory appearance (*Schein*) and continues in the circular development of knowledge, which uses itself as a foundation. With his method, the investigation of phenomena can overturn and see anew the conventional values and judgments of societies. While one way of making new knowledge is the conceptualization of Dionysus as a phenomenon, the other is the development of a method that can be used not only in terms of the Dionysian, but can be applied to other phenomena as well. This phenomenological method opens the gates for his attack on Platonism, Christianity and all ‘Truth’ seeking disciplines.

Nietzsche employs the rubric of ‘cases’ in order to reveal his phenomenological method. These cases are perspectives that concern particular phenomena such as religious, philosophical and societal norms, as well as historical concerns and cultural products such as music, dance and poetry. Heidegger recognizes this investigation as ontological, yet notes that, strictly, Nietzsche is an ontologist by implication only.  

---

431 *DW* in *BT*, p. 138  
432 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 4. Part II p. 199-200 In Heidegger’s mind, since factuality (presence) is not discussed by Nietzsche, Nietzsche cannot be simply an ontologist. He argues that Nietzsche is a metaphysician who puts an end to metaphysics via metaphysics by focusing
engage *Being qua Being* but uses his cases as explanatory vehicles for his readings of phenomena as they appear to him after the experiential disclosure of the Dionysian. Through his cases, Nietzsche can use phenomena to disclose the ways in which values and ideas are not objects given by the objective world, but are metaphysical representations that are employed by societies. In Heidegger’s words “we must grasp Nietzsche’s philosophy as the metaphysics of subjectivity” wherein Nietzsche’s metaphysics is the end of metaphysics and discloses ontology as the foundation under metaphysics.\(^{433}\) Through his philosophical procedure, Nietzsche unveils metaphysics for what it is; a screen in front of *Becoming* that solidifies the word in the language of *Being*. Nietzsche ends metaphysics, according to Heidegger, because he represents the “moment when the essential possibilities of metaphysics are exhausted.”\(^{434}\) What Nietzsche does with his use of cases is to address *Being* first through examples of phenomena and to place the existence of these phenomena prior to their perceived essence. In other words, the phenomena sans value exist as action, movement in the Democritean sense, prior to any imbue of form. It is the inversion of Platonic metaphysics. The ideas and forms of *Being* do not come first, existence as *Becoming* does. The moral values we see in society, the concepts of history, and the religious doctrines are thus all created by the negotiation between *Being* and *beings*, one step removed from *Becoming*. Conceptualizing values as something produced by societies and not given from on high allows him to critique the very nature of even the most firmly held presuppositions of the social order and historical understanding. Clearly, his later call for a re-evaluation of all values can be glimpsed first in this, his case method of explication.

\(^{433}\) See Heidegger’s comments in *Nietzsche*, Volume 4 § 23
\(^{434}\) Ibid., § 22 p. 148
To return to the effect this method of knowledge making has on the relevance of Dionysus as a phenomenon, we may reencounter Gadamer in his admonition that subject matter is only significant if it is properly portrayed. Resonance is found between this statement and the phenomenological portrayal of the Dionysian case, which Nietzsche feels serves life by evading the 'historical' trap. For Nietzsche, the proper portrayal of Dionysus is phenomenological, not 'historical'. Through the phenomenological portrayal, Dionysus gains in significance regardless of whether or not Nietzsche brings new classical information to the public or even completely accurate information. The Dionysian phenomenon is significant because it reveals the human condition. Kaufmann elaborates this point to show that Nietzsche’s consideration of ultimate meaning lies in the relation of knowledge to human purpose. In this way, the new method of knowledge making, for Nietzsche, targets the parameters of our construction of value and not values or factual information in and of themselves.

Nietzsche presents his case of Dionysus as a way of revealing the operational rules of the metaphysical being, the subjective 'I', and the method of engaging the real ontologically present world. These operational rules are, for Nietzsche’s philosophy, the limits of the human condition and the phenomenon of consciousness. Richard Schact agrees that Nietzsche’s notion of perspective seeks to expose the underlying methods of human engagement with the real world by shedding light on the problems of art, literature, religion, science, etc. Nietzsche refused to hold simplistic one-sided views, even on matters which he had some vested interest. Rather, he sought to encounter his objects, discussed via cases, from multiple angles.

In his introduction to the 1999 Cambridge edition of The Birth of Tragedy, Raymond Geuss comments, “Nietzsche prided himself on his ability to see things from a variety of different perspectives, even (and especially) when that resulted

---

435 Kaufmann, p. 135
436 Ulfers and Cohen, p. 429
in holding views that to lesser minds would have seemed inconsistent.\textsuperscript{437} In his essay \textit{Nietzsche’s Kind of Philosophy}, Schact comments on Nietzsche’s use of perspectives in order to examine his cases, by regarding them as products of his attitude toward the ‘historical’.\textsuperscript{438} Nietzsche recognizes that perspective shifts with history. His perspectivism is the method of engagement that demonstrates his philosophical contention that \textit{Being} and \textit{Becoming} are one in the same. \textit{Being} for Nietzsche is a process. Thus the considerations we make about history are not about facts, which are only fossilized truth, but about phenomena, events that are always present. Nietzsche’s use of perspective illuminates that in a radical way events of the past, histories, are always bound to the present because they are bound to our thinking about them.\textsuperscript{439} Nietzsche’s perspectivism reveals his sensitivity to the negotiation of the ontological space between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and the way in which the phenomena of ‘history’, and indeed metaphysics in general, are encountered in this space. Dionysus acts as his example that brings the phenomena of history, art, and godhead together in one.

Perspectivism, according to Arthur Danto, is the view that there are no “facts”, only interpretations.\textsuperscript{440} Multifarious interpretations are possible because the negotiating space between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ occurs between each instance of localized \textit{being}, the individual, and ubiquitous \textit{Being}, the One. Again, for Nietzsche the real ground-of-\textit{being} is not a “ground” at all, but a nihilistic space that may issue and appearance of the ‘I.’ The ‘I’ itself is, by Nietzsche’s reckoning, a metaphysical phantom, much like history. Karl Löwith makes this assessment in his text, \textit{From Hegel to Nietzsche}, comparing Nietzsche’s ontology and phenomenological method of using cases with Goethe’s “primary phenomenon” which is somehow separated from us via the gulf between idea

\textsuperscript{437} \textit{BT}, p. viii
\textsuperscript{440} Ibid., p. 59
and experience. Like Goethe, Nietzsche preferred the classical world as an ideal for exposing the nature of reality and providing insight into the real world.

From this perspective, the gulf between idea and experience, the negotiation between ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ is the space where ‘history’ is decided upon. Nietzsche’s apprehension of this engagement with the real does not give beings priority over Being/Becoming. In other words, his philosophical method fights the inclination to make the universe a human centered one, all the while explicitly driving home the fact that for humans the universe has never been considered in any other capacity. Nietzsche not only flips metaphysics so that beings cannot have priority over Being/Becoming, but he is careful to keep from giving Being/Becoming a hierarchical priority over beings. In either case the facticity of the two are given prior to the negotiation that resolves itself in individuation, facts, history, and all other phenomena. The space for negotiation is limited by what is possible in any particular situation, yet is completely void of internal essence. The space of negotiation is the space of erupting creativity. Precisely because the space is available for negotiation and is void of inherent meaning, meaning can be created therein. This view is applicable not only to history, but to deity. What Nietzsche accomplishes with Dionysus is to turn metaphysics into anthropology, to show that humans have made their symbols and their world after their own experiences and decisions, thus creating values. In the negotiation with Being humans create a god that is concerned metaphysically with their own projections. Both treatments of metaphysics and Christian theology demonstrate that the fundamental position of philosophy is an ontological question: What is the nature of Being? As a classicist Nietzsche

441 Löwith, p. 6 For both Nietzsche and Goethe, Löwith cites Schiller as the major influence on this understanding of the comprehension of the analogous nature of experience and idea.

442 Heidegger, Nietzsche, Volume 3, § 1 p. 7. Recall Heidegger’s definition of metaphysics as that decision which negotiates the predominance of being over Being. The “Will” for Heidegger is the negotiation, the ‘unhistorical’ is a predominance of Being, while metaphysics -reflectivity- is the predominance of being.

443 Heidegger, Nietzsche, Volume 4 § 13 p. 86

444 For an explanation of the fundamental metaphysical question see Heidegger, Nietzsche, Volume 2 § 25 pp. 184-197
would recognize Protagoras’ statement that ‘Man is the measure of all things’ as the relevant reply.

Nietzsche also intends to reduce history to anthropology, but in a much more useful manner than a reduction of deity. With perspectivism as a tool, Nietzsche overcomes what Goethe called the ‘universal sickness of the age’ in reference to the Romantics. While the Romantics were caught in ‘shallow subjectivism’, Nietzsche, as we have said employed a method and relied upon logical procedure to illuminate the area of unknown ground, or at least expose its existence. The ground of history is, Nietzsche finds, like human consciousness, bound to temporality and empty of inherent meaning or value. In the very least, the value of history is directly connected to its use by the present. Once again we return to Nietzsche’s admonition to philologists that the past can only be understood in the face of the present. In order to overcome the ‘historical’ attitude, Nietzsche must set forth a conception of history as an empty vessel that is filled with meaning by the continuous negotiation of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in the present. History itself can and will only mean what can be encountered by the true ‘subject,’ the empty space of the ‘I’, in the empty space of the ‘now’, and then only so long as it is understood as a human metaphysically produced meaning continuously open to revaluation. The contentious nature of such a proposition does not escape Nietzsche’s sensibilities, and he warns of misunderstandings and the advancing rise of nihilism.  

Nihilism as History

Nihilism must not be considered a negative attitude in the construction of Dionysian meaning and experience. It is, in fact, for Nietzsche the great source of illimitable values. While arguments can be made about Nietzsche’s success or failure in surmounting the problem of understanding nihilism in this manner, they

445 Löwith, p. 189
are not important for understanding how it is that Nietzsche produced Dionysus as one who reveals this nihilism as an embraceable fate. Löwith, in *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, provides a crisp account of Nietzsche’s attempt to defeat the problem and surmises that Nietzsche oversteps his philosophical bounds by reaching the point where one must “leap” in order to experience the Dionysian *Becoming* which is at the same time *Being*. For Löwith, Nietzsche’s attempts to grasp eternity and temporality are reduce to the effects of his loss of faculties. Nevertheless, in order to understand how it is that Dionysus is produced in Nietzsche’s philosophical context we must consider nihilism as Nietzsche does. He hopes to show nihilism as an experiential avenue of assessment that escapes the metaphysics of ‘historical’ consciousness. It is the way in which he answers the grand philosophical question of the nature of *Being/Becoming*. Heidegger states that Nietzsche’s entire philosophy is a response to this “guiding question” of western philosophy. It is in the sense of a response to western metaphysics that we must see Nietzsche’s nihilism as a metaphysical project that seeks to reveal metaphysics as a fraud. One caveat, however, remains. Nihilism, as understood by Nietzsche, is completely misunderstood, in terms of its commensurability with the Dionysian if one conceptualizes it as an ideology.

As quirky as it may sound, for nihilism to be worthwhile as a project, it must produce something rather than nothing. Unlike the other forms of nihilism which are often rejections of common social or political beliefs and structures or the like, Nietzsche’s nihilism is ‘nothingness’ that is descriptive of a modality of *being contra Being*, not a condemnation of the fact that values exist *qua* values. A common critique of philosophical topics or areas of philosophical investigation is that they all require a philosophical structure that remains unfounded. This was, in fact, Schopenhauer’s foundation for objection to considering history as a science in a strict sense, which we previously discussed. Danto remarks that Nietzsche recognized this problem underlying philosophy at its core and realized

---

447 Löwith, pp. 193-195  
448 Ibid., pp. 198-200  
449 Danto, p. 12
that “in a genuine sense all philosophical problems must be solved at once.”

Though it comes late in Nietzsche’s life, from which we only have the notes that his sister compiled into the *Will to Power*, the answer to philosophy in general can be seen in Nietzsche’s treatment of nihilism.

Admittedly, the Dionysus of Nietzsche’s late period is not the equivalent of the Dionysus of Nietzsche’s early creativity. However, the nature of the negotiation between ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ which are collapsed into one, is already addressed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as discussed in chapter one. His later articulation of it as nihilism, the collapsing of Apollo and Dionysus into One, and the mature grasp of this nature of consciousness took a considerable amount of time to develop. It demanded his entire life to put forth a common structure for the production of values *ex nihilo*. This nihilistic structure can be applied to art, image, language, intellect, the subjective ‘I’, and society. We have seen this insight briefly in his *Untimely Meditations*, especially as it concerns the discipline of history, which is at question here. Both Heidegger and Danto agree that for Nietzsche, history is bound to his philosophical nihilism. Nihilism represents a Dionysian emptiness that considers *Being/Non-Being* as Abundance and the Void. Like Democritus, Nietzsche recognizes that Abundance and Void are plenitudes and do not act upon their own. It is only by their confrontation that the negotiation between Abundance and Void result in action and temporality. The negotiation between Abundance and Void, between *Being* and *Non-Being*, we understand as synonymous with *Becoming*. History, like all values produced *ex nihilo*, is pregnant with an abundance of potential meanings. Likewise, it is pregnant with the abundance of possible metaphysical labels that, from a perspectivist view, are all neither true nor false when they are fossilized into some form of standard, factual meaning. Karl Löwith exemplifies this aspect to Nietzsche’s nihilism by using Zarathustra:

---

450 *Ibid.*, p. 6
451 *BT § 5* pp. 32-33
452 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 4 § 9 p. 53
453 *Ibid.*, § 29 pp. 188-196
Therefore in Zarathustra he left the question open to which he really was: a promiser or a fullfiller, a conqueror or an inheritor, a harvest or a plowshare, a fabricator or a truthteller, a liberator or a restrainer, because he knew that he was neither one nor the other, but both together. 454

The Dionysian emptiness is twofold. It, like Nietzsche’s perspectivism, allows for the cohabitation of contradictory values. It thrives in multiplicity. It answers the question that metaphysics is unable to grasp: “How could anything originate out of its opposite?”455 The emptiness allows for the origination of opposites from the very same space, the ground of the ‘subject’ in its negotiation between Abundance and Void.

Nietzsche delivers the empty ground of all metaphysics under the title Will to Power. What Nietzsche is signifying with the term Will is somewhat complicated. It seems that there is no particular thing that wills per se, yet there is in fact a decision made about Becoming that is arrested in the form of Being and is given a metaphysical symbol, realized by the ‘I’. Though the atemporal emptiness of Being is replaced with a metaphysical result, nihilism is not overcome by metaphysical production of values. Instead, nihilism reveals metaphysics as a veil by the fact that the source of metaphysical signification is unfounded. The only access to this ground, according to Nietzsche’s temporal philosophy, is through direct experience of the ‘now’. The experience of emptiness is the experience of pregnant possibility. It reveals both the possibility of value and the nature of the decision that creates value. Illumination of the nature of the decision through experience is the way that Nietzsche intends for Dionysus to serve life. The empty ground of negotiation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ must be realized, from Nietzsche’s perspective, as a valueless arena

454 Löwith, p. 190
455 BGE § 2, p. 5
because the experience reveals that existence lacks purpose, oneness, and objective value.\(^{456}\)

Karl Löwith also calls this possibility for the eruption of opposite valuations from the space of negotiation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ the Dionysian “twofold” gaze.\(^{457}\) The twofold gaze is understood as the dual nature of existence that is repeatedly referenced in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It is, however, understood by Nietzsche as *one* will. As said previously, the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ are One; one in their *Becoming*, two when *Becoming* is arrested as *Being* in the principle of individuation, as metaphysical sign or symbol. Heidegger reinforces this reading. Quoting the *Will to Power*, he characterizes nihilism as a “divine way of thinking” in order to make the understanding of Nietzsche’s conception of Dionysus clear. Danto frames the recognition of nihilism’s pregnant void as a “Dionysiac thought” whose challenge is to create a non-metaphysical “Dionysian language”\(^{458}\) We have already seen that Nietzsche was explicit about this in his *Dionysiac Worldview* which preceded the 1872 *The Birth of Tragedy*. He also took the time to lament the human lack of this capability in his *Attempt at Self Criticism*.\(^{459}\) Nihilism is the creative ground where *Becoming* is affirmed.\(^{460}\)

Nietzsche’s position is to affirm the negotiation, to say “Yes” to what is willed by recognizing one’s own part in the process. The affirmation is appropriate from Nietzsche’s perspective because the emptiness that is the ground of creativity lends definition and determinability to all things that are metaphysically established.\(^{461}\) The totality of the dual nature of *Being/Becoming* is wrapped in Nietzsche’s Dionysian *will to power*. The *will to power* is itself, from Nietzsche’s view, an ‘unhistorical’ modality of *Being/Becoming* that embraces fate. The decision made in the negotiated space between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ is

\(^{456}\) Danto, p. 14 Quoted from Nietzsche’s unpublished notebooks.

\(^{457}\) Löwith, p. 194

\(^{458}\) Danto, p. 17

\(^{459}\) “Attempt”, pp. 3-12 Nietzsche discusses metaphysics and the inability to properly reach the ground of metaphysics through semblance, delusion, error, interpretation, and art.


\(^{461}\) Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 4 § 9 p. 55
affirmed and not forced upon the metaphysically separated subjective ‘I’. Nietzsche plainly states this as the “fatality” which is the “good fortune” of his life in the secondary title to his last work *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*.\(^462\)

**Conclusion**

In relation to the problem of historicism that faces Nietzsche as a philosopher who seeks to reintroduce Dionysus as a relevant persona in the nineteenth-century, the conception of nihilism as abundant possibility advances the prospect for an avenue of access to Dionysus, which was as yet unavailable. Nietzsche creates a peripety in philosophical foundations. Instead of seeking knowledge determined by a basis of truth, he seeks truth determined by a basis of knowledge.\(^463\) Knowledge, as understood here, is not factual data, but experience. As he tells us in *Ecce Homo*:

> Ultimately, nobody can get more out of things, including books, than he already knows. For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear.\(^464\)

Thus Nietzsche contends that in the historical discipline one is foolish to pursue antiquity via an ‘objective’ route when it is obvious that no one alive has experience in the ancient times.\(^465\) For Nietzsche the only possible access to the past is to find the point of connection between past and present in *Becoming*. Only in the atemporal modality of *being* does one experience and share the rules of operation, the human condition that parsimoniously limits and defines the nature of humanity, with the generations of antiquity. The goal of culture then, as

---

\(^{462}\) Consider Nietzsche’s introduction along with Löwith’s explanation in *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, pp. 193-194  
\(^{463}\) Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 3 § 10 p. 67  
\(^{464}\) EH “Why I Write Such Good Books” § 1  
\(^{465}\) UM II *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, pp. 90-91
Nietzsche sees it, is to produce the highest individuals who speak to one another across the expanse of ‘history’ and connect on a level of human truth that transcends the ‘historical’. Nietzsche employs transcendence to overcome the problem of historicism. Dionysian works speak by transcendence across the abyss of time. And Nietzsche assumes his own work will speak by transcending to generations not yet born in his time.

Since ‘history’ is a metaphysical construct for the reflection of a society, it is an illusion when it is established as a ‘truth’. For Nietzsche, this is no different than the simple statement that causality is an illusion. Individual beings only legitimately access other beings when they encounter shared Becoming, the source of the human condition. Only in this ‘unhistorical’ mode does experiential light shine on the symbols of ‘historical’ culture. In his Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist Kaufmann clarifies this position. Since causality is itself an illusion in Nietzsche’s view, “the goal of humanity cannot lie in the end of humanity, but only in its highest specimens”. In accordance with his criticism of Hegel, Nietzsche acknowledges no telos inherent in the cosmos. Humans, in their state as animals, have no essential character, only a common condition, i.e. the previously related temporal rules of operation that govern the ontological modalities of beings.

Nietzsche imagines humans speaking across time, though not just any humans, only the ones who have the capacity to connect on a level of experience that grants them this capability. In Heidegger’s words, “all great thinkers think the same, yet this same is so essential and so rich that no single thinker exhausts it.” Nietzsche’s concept of history agrees. The present is not connected to the past by necessity or causality. Human history is at its core a personal and/or social construction. Therefore ‘dependence’ cannot be a concept applied to understanding the relationship between great thinkers or the highest specimens of culture. They connect because they think and experience the same, and thus

---

466 Pletsch, pp. 38-39
467 Kaufmann, pp. 149-50
468 Heidegger, Nietzsche, Volume 1 § 6 pp. 35-36
reveal themselves, though only in one direction. In ontological language, the lesson here is that anything that does not address the human condition in *Becoming* cannot be fully affirmed because it is metaphysical in nature, and thus illusory.

History cannot address the human being in a truthful manner unless it reveals the common ground between ancients and moderns whereby history serves life in the present. Rather than conceptualizing time then as an expanse of some *thing* or some *force*, time is understood as a way we *are*, a modality of *being*. Time and history are then ontologically distinct, though they remain metaphysically dependent upon each other.

Revealing the openness of *beings*, their emptiness and their potential for creativity, in any moment is Nietzsche’s truth, his understanding of *aletheia*. When the openness of *beings* is encountered in the ground-of-*being*, what Nietzsche labels truth is exposed from behind the metaphysical veil. This after all, is not metaphysical truth, not history as a *thing-in-itself*, but ontological experiential knowledge, which is Nietzsche’s basis for truth and provides insight into culture and into life. This revealed truth is, in his view, Dionysian. Dionysus, the expositor of a purposeless, valueless cosmos also discloses that purposelessness and valuelessness are only applicable to the metaphysical fossils of ‘historical’ culture. Nietzsche maligns the attempt of nineteenth-century historians to ‘objectively’ apply value to the past, and to do so as if they are disengaged from prejudice.

One goes so far, indeed, as to believe that he to whom a moment of the past *means nothing at all* is the proper man to describe it. This is frequently the relationship between classicists and the Greeks they study: they mean nothing to one another – a state of affairs called ‘objectivity’! It is precisely where the highest and rarest is to be represented that this

---

469 Ibid. We do not yet have access to *future* thinkers in the same way we have access to past ones.
470 Ibid., § 24 p. 207
471 Pletsch, pp. 37-38
472 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Volume 1 § 11 p. 68
ostentatious difference becomes most infuriating – for it is the vanity of
the historian which is responsible for it.\textsuperscript{473}

To Nietzsche, classicism does not mean ‘nothing at all’ but is instead the reason
that he is able to have his philosophical understanding of the world at all. By self-
proclamation it is only due to his study of the Hellenic that he is able to have his
‘untimely experiences’.\textsuperscript{474} Nietzsche’s contribution to Classicism, which in his time
is bound by its roots in metaphysics, is to provide a living, breathing relevant
Dionysus instead of the ‘historical’ frozen image that nineteenth-century philology
and art portrayed. In fact, the affirmation of life, the affirmation of the Dionysian
ground-of-being, is exactly what Nietzsche seeks to present to the modern by
making the ‘unhistorical’ gateway to the past a portal of existential, experiential
relevance. Nietzsche’s Dionysus is successful in eliminating the pre-conceived
notions of metaphysics and reveals that values belong only to the realm of
society and politics, not to the objective world. Nietzsche transcends the
‘historical’ to reach Dionysus and release Dionysus in the present. He does so
because the philosophy of the ancients means much to him and points directly at
the heart of the nature of the guiding question of western philosophy from which
he, and we, cannot escape. The phenomenological method, in Nietzsche’s view,
transcends the ‘historical’ and positions humans, across time, face to face in the
experience of \textit{Becoming}, in the face of Dionysus.

\textsuperscript{473} UM II \textit{On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life}, p. 93
\textsuperscript{474} Ibid., p. 60
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The overall purpose of this dissertation was to determine the conditions necessary for the production of the modern Dionysus delivered by Friedrich Nietzsche, and to illuminate the most profound individual causes that made the modern understanding of the deity possible. The content of the chapters demonstrated that Nietzsche, though a philologist by discipline, was heavily influenced by philosophy and reconstructed his conception of Dionysus to fit his philosophical demeanor. In addition, Nietzsche employs philosophers from the ancient world to produce a truly interdisciplinary product whereby the Dionysian crosses the boundaries of philosophy, philology, religion, and history.

The pieces of Dionysus were taken from these disciplines and melded into a new vision of the god as well as into a method of engaging existence which Nietzsche termed the Dionysian. The chapters follow Dionysian example in that the first two show the philosophical debt Nietzsche owes, and then the second two chapters expand upon this philosophical ground and demonstrate how Nietzsche turned the deity into a methodology to be engaged in the present and to be useful to life rather than only for reflective scholarly, philosophical, or historical purposes. Examining only the ideas that made Dionysus possible would have simply been a history. Showing how it is that Nietzsche transformed Dionysus into a method, and then discussing the method, demonstrated that the modern Dionysus was constructed to break the chains of a standard historical approach and to speak directly to the way in which we create our histories.

The first genealogical moment of the modern Dionysus is the impact of Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* on Friedrich Nietzsche, especially his notions of the *Will* and subjectivity. The primary position of chapter one demonstrates that the modern Dionysus is made possible by, and is part of, the German Idealist tradition’s handling of the conceptions of ‘subject’ and ‘object.’ Dionysus stands as another step in the process of reworking notions of
'subject' and 'object' in Kantian formulation. These concepts were notably modified and continued by Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, and Schopenhauer. Since Schopenhauer’s unique response and criticism of Kant’s idealist position constitutes part of this tradition, Nietzsche’s extenuation of Schopenhauer’s conclusions via Dionysus constitutes sustained focus on the issues of subjectivity and objectivity and thus engages in the dialogue of Idealism. Furthermore, Schopenhauer’s text spoke to his broad foundation, which included the British Idealist tradition. In this way, Nietzsche’s Dionysus is indirectly located in a position that connects with Hume and Berkeley, even if he did not consider them directly in his philosophical swath. The fact that Nietzsche is speaking to these traditions sets up his concept of Dionysus, especially later in his life, as a climax and terminal figure for Idealism and metaphysics in general. The primary area in which he engages these traditions is through his appropriation of Schopenhauer’s perspective of ‘subject’ and ‘object.’

There is no doubt that Nietzsche’s philosophy, especially his conception of Dionysus from The Birth of Tragedy, is profoundly indebted to Arthur Schopenhauer’s conception of the Will as an arena beyond the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in the standard early nineteenth-century understanding of the terms. Most prominently, Schopenhauer’s conception of Will extends from his notion of motivation and kinesthetic knowledge as part of his philosophy that human beings do have legitimate and immediate knowledge of the world beyond the reflective intellect. Based on these foundations, Schopenhauer presents his philosophical system in his text The World as Will and Representation wherein he discusses the ramifications of his position that “no truth is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof than this, namely that everything that exists for knowledge, and hence the whole of this world, is only object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver, in a word, representation.”475 This Idealist problematic has consequences that ultimately arrive in the realm of aesthetics. Schopenhauer’s aesthetic conclusions take into

475 WWR §1, p. 3
account his notion of motivation and bodily knowledge and mark music as the closest approximation of the Will. Since music, like human subjecthood, is dependent upon temporal representation, music is considered a “copy” of the Will, and thus mimics the original relation of the human to the ever-shifting cosmos.

Nietzsche’s Dionysus epitomizes each of these threads of Schopenhauer’s philosophy and acts to undo the illusion that the reflective ‘subject’ is the only method of engaging the objective world, i.e. the “other.” Dionysus dissolves the ‘subject,’ and the objective world with which it corresponds, and reverses the principium individuationis that is responsible for distinguishing the two. By this act as deity, Dionysus remains symbolic of the Will and his spirit is born out of the music that surfaces as the rhythmic human bodily product, which is a manifestation of the Will. In part, Nietzsche’s Dionysus corresponds directly as an ambassador of Schopenhauer’s philosophical conclusions about the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and their aesthetic ramifications laid forth in The World as Will and Representation. On the other hand, there is much more to Nietzsche’s Dionysus than Schopenhauer’s influence.

The second key position reached in chapter one is that the modern Dionysus is also dependent upon Nietzsche’s separation from Schopenhauer. Even in his early infatuation with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is not a blind follower. He remains critical of Schopenhauer, and while Dionysus is based upon Schopenhauer’s philosophical perspective, Nietzsche comes to repudiate Schopenhauer’s negation of the Will in favor of Dionysian embracement of the Will. In Nietzsche’s words, “How differently Dionysus Spoke to me!” Nietzsche develops his concept of the Dionysian from early insights that are heavily reliant upon Schopenhauer’s philosophy, but later redefines the Dionysian in opposition to Schopenhauer’s conclusions about life. Nietzsche rejects the resignation of the Will and laments that he “ruined Dionysiac intimations with Schopenhauerian

476 “Attempt” §6, p. 10
Nietzsche’s Dionysus is dependent upon Schopenhauer in two respects. Early on Dionysus is dependent upon him for the initiation and content of his form contrasted against the Dionysian. Later in Nietzsche’s life, he uses Dionysus as an antithetical prop by which to demarcate his philosophical development from his early reliance upon Schopenhauer. The fact that Nietzsche’s Dionysus is in both respects predicated upon Schopenhauer’s philosophy is testimony to the god’s deep obligation, showing that Schopenhauer’s philosophy is a major pre-condition for the transformation of the deity into his modern Nietzschean form. Furthermore, it upholds the declaration that the impact of *The World as Will and Representation* on Nietzsche stands as one of the primary genealogical moments for the modern reception of the deity.

In chapter two, the primary focus is on the grounding of Nietzsche’s overall philosophy in the notion of *Becoming*. Since the Dionysian springs as a consequence of *Becoming*, it is presented as a necessary pre-condition to Nietzsche’s formulation of the deity and the god’s second modern genealogical moment. Consequently, it was necessary to demonstrate how Nietzsche conceives of *Becoming* and from where this notion entered into his philosophical thought. We saw that Nietzsche created a division in philosophy directly between Socrates and Plato, and placed Socrates on the side of what he termed the “Pre-Platonic” philosophers. In the Pre-Platonic world, Nietzsche zeroes in on the figure of Heraclitus as a model philosopher, and Democritean materialism as a cosmological principle that supports his Schopenhauerian view that the metaphysical world is illusion. Ultimately, the combination of *Becoming* and materialism destabilize any sense of valuation which appears to be garnered from the objective world, leaving behind a modified version of Schopenhauer’s position on the illusion of representation. Dionysus reflects this understanding of

---

477 Ibid.
478 Fascinatingly, Nietzsche was enamored of Democritus, and materialism struck him as a clear equalizer from which to dispense a cosmology that could be rendered consistently without value attached to it. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer, who considered outright that the representational world was illusion, thought very little of Democritus and his materialism, going so far as to call him “clumsy” and a “child.” *WWR* §24, p. 123
revaluation since his function is to deprive humans of their illusory individuality and to unite them within the overall developing non-reflective cosmological principles of materialism.

_Becoming_ is approached as the persistently changing cosmos. Nietzsche, in his reach toward alternatives to post-Platonic philosophy, comes to agreement with Heraclitus’ position that the universe is in constant fluctuation. Nietzsche sides with the Idealist tradition that even the reflective intellect cannot keep step temporally with the driving force of the cosmos. The driving force, understood as _Will_ by Nietzsche, is constant antagonism derived fundamentally from a materialist perspective. Dionysus arrives as the experiential revelation that the reflective nature of the intellect seizes its apprehension of _Becoming_ and solidifies it as the notion of _Being_, i.e. _Being_ does not exist objectively, only reflectively. The key element that chapter two emphasizes is that, for Nietzsche, existence cannot be justified if it is understood as _Being_. It can only be consistently justified if it is understood as _Becoming_. Thus, aesthetics are the major tool for engaging existence, because the intellectual tools are derivative of the reflective intellect, derivative of _Being_. In other words, valuation, especially moral valuation, according to Nietzsche’s consideration of the Dionysian is dependent upon aesthetic interpretation and is therefore not absolute. This led to an “anti-moral tendency” which fueled his perspective while writing _The Birth of Tragedy_. Nietzsche directly states that this is the form his thoughts took when he began to seriously consider Dionysus during his early development.479 This approach directly reflects Schopenhauer’s view that tragedy is the “summit of poetic art” and represents “the antagonism of the _Will_ with itself…completely unfolded at the highest grade of its objectivity.”480

In addition, Nietzsche embraces a non-empirical form of philosophical production that is predicated upon the revelations of _Becoming_. Heraclitus is his primary example of this philosophical format, which includes aphorisms and

479 “Attempt” § 5, pp. 8-9

480 WWR §51, p. 253
seemingly paradoxical or conflicting positions. The character of the modern Dionysus is dependent upon Nietzsche’s incorporation of Heraclitus’ enigmatic style. Since Nietzsche often affects a similar style in his overall work, Dionysus comes to characterize Nietzsche’s philosophical demeanor. Dionysus is more than his appearance in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He represents a method of engaging existence, the method that Nietzsche retrieves from Heraclitus that is ultimately at odds with the ‘historical.’ This method is why Nietzsche reiterates throughout his later works that he is a disciple of Dionysus. Nietzsche aligns Heraclitus’ philosophy with his own consideration of the Greeks as those who embraced life and stood in opposition to Schopenhauerian pessimism. Dionysus acts as a symbol of the precipitation of this realization. In effect, Heraclitean notions end up as primary building blocks for Nietzsche’s identification of Dionysus.

Lastly, the beginning of Nietzsche’s historical move, discussed in chapter four is evident in his appropriation of Heraclitean philosophy. After all, it is Heraclitus’ philosophy that Nietzsche identifies as revelatory of the non-historical and a promoter of the *agon*. The equation of strife as justice in Heraclitus’ surviving maxims serves to support Nietzsche’s picture of Dionysus as the “antagonism of the *Will* with itself,” which based on Democritean materialism, necessitates the priority of aesthetic inquiry into existence. Dionysus, in effect, displays part of his character beyond *The Birth of Tragedy* by exemplifying a type of “Heraclitean wisdom” that repudiates the ‘historical’ mindset. This Dionysus is no longer solely an impetus toward the aesthetic, but serves as a living method, an aesthetic method in and of itself, that engages existence in an *un*historical manner. This shift is responsible for bringing the modern Dionysus to life. Though it began with Nietzsche’s work on *The Birth of Tragedy*, the revitalization of Dionysus is demonstrated most effectively by Nietzsche’s critical orientation toward the historical process. Nietzsche saw that the historical process was vulnerable to the consequences of Heraclitean *Becoming* and that Dionysus was the symbolic tool for exposing this vulnerability. Chapter two demonstrated that
this dependence was a pre-condition to establishing Dionysus as an effective critical methodology and that the second genealogical moment of the modern Dionysus is found in Nietzsche’s embracement of *Becoming* in opposition to *Being* as his primary philosophical orientation.

The first two chapters focused primarily on the philosophical and philological components of Nietzsche’s view of Dionysus. The third chapter, however, spoke to Nietzsche’s self-proclaimed position amongst his contemporaries and his relationship to earlier thinkers who had considered Dionysus. Nietzsche considered his *conception* of Dionysus to be new. He did not consider the *experience* of Dionysian epiphany to be new, but he did claim that it was not properly envisaged until his treatment of it. He lauded himself to be the first to “transform” the Dionysian, as well as the first to “understand the psychology” of the Dionysian. Chapter three considered his claim against the recognizable influences on his philosophy and former accounts of Dionysus in the Romantic tradition and in the academic field of philology. As with most innovations, Nietzsche’s Dionysus is influenced by earlier Romantic accounts and by the shifting tide of academic study in the nineteenth-century. The primary position taken in the chapter is that the modern Dionysus is dependent upon the way in which Nietzsche appropriates and restructures his Romantic and philological influence to conform to the philosophical insights accounted for in chapters one and two. The major areas discussed in the chapter are the debts to the Romantics, philology, and evolving nineteenth-century culture.

The extensive relationship the Romantics had with Dionysus is enough to cast a shadow of doubt on Nietzsche’s claim to be the “first” to do anything with him. In fact, chapter three details that the most accomplished scholars who have considered this area are at odds as to whether or not Nietzsche’s contribution is, in fact, original. Max Baeumer finds that Nietzsche is not at all original and that the Romantics and other philological scholars provide nearly every conceivable part of the deity for Nietzsche’s formulation. My argument against Baeumer is not directed at his research, which I concede clearly demonstrates that Dionysus had
many sophisticated readers prior to Nietzsche. Instead, my argument to uphold Nietzsche’s claim is directed at Baeumer’s conclusion that Nietzsche’s Dionysus is not original or transformative. While Nietzsche borrows from predecessors, he also envisages a highly original purpose for Dionysus and predicates Dionysus upon a conception of self that is dependent upon Schopenhauer’s conception of subjectivity, which was highly different from that of the Romantics. Furthermore, Nietzsche employs Dionysus, based on a foundation of *Becoming* as an alternatively legitimate philosophical method, which the Romantics did not claim. Nietzsche conforms the personal Dionysus to his understanding of self as a nihilistic space beyond the ‘subject,’ and equates him with his *ur*historical method derived from Heraclitean influence. The Romantics did not employ Dionysus in this manner, though their appreciation of the deity does harmonize with Nietzsche’s characterization of him as a personal deity representative of the psychological and emotional realms. The major distinction levied by the chapter is that Nietzsche’s Dionysus is a compilation of threads of earlier conceptions of the deity then applied to a new purpose, the purpose of radically critiquing personal historicity.

The philological influences are also considered, but it is noted that classical scholars consider Nietzsche’s philological contribution rather negligible. His perspective of Dionysus is not so much an accurate philological one as it is a self-critique of the historical methods used by his contemporary philologists. The modern Dionysus develops beyond *The Birth of Tragedy* in Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations*, especially in *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* and in his unfinished and unpublished “We Philologists.” A key conclusion reached in chapter three is that Nietzsche employs the philological tradition, especially Weimar classicism as a foil to promote his own version of Dionysus and his critique of the historical method which did not locate culture as a foundation of literature and art, but instead attempted to build a concept of culture by picking the favorable aspects of surviving art and literature. Nietzsche advocated embracing the totality of Greek cultural products, even the unpleasant ones.
Nietzsche’s Dionysus is a reminder that the human condition, bound by *Becoming* and the antagonism between subjectivity and unity, is the foundation of human action, and that culture is not sufficiently understood when engaged reflectively, i.e. historically. The major influence on Nietzsche in this vein of historical criticism was Jacob Burckhardt, who pioneered cultural historicism. From this relationship Nietzsche found a philosophical historical method that he felt was commensurable with his philosophical purposes.

The final conclusion of the chapter demonstrates that Nietzsche followed a major trend of nineteenth-century culture and academics. He invariably turns what began as a study of tragedy and a sophisticated perspective of Dionysus into an anthropological criticism of history, which turned the discipline on its head. This followed the lead of other reversals within academic disciplines of the mid-nineteenth-century that worked to illuminate the anthropological aspects involved in each. Likewise, Dionysus comes to be synonymous with the human condition as it flows in time with *Becoming*, rather than a deity which stands as ‘other,’ or ‘object,’ such as Apollo or Zeus. In this way, it is exactly the psychological aspect of Dionysus that renders anthropological conclusions about humans and value making. To reiterate that this cultural inheritance is brought in line with Nietzsche’s philosophical perspective, consider Schopenhauer’s question, “In the end, do we understand more about the inner nature of these natural forces than about the inner nature of an animal?” The anthropological consequences for those who seek to categorize all things by empirical reasoning is at stake each time the empirical structures of history are relied upon to create concepts of human culture, past and present. In chapter three, we saw that this is what Nietzsche sought to illuminate with Dionysus by restructuring philology to fit his philosophical perspective. This restructuring constitutes the third genealogical moment. How he employed the deity to succeed in critiquing the historical process constitutes the final genealogical moment of the modern Dionysus and is accounted for in chapter four.
The final genealogical moment established in this dissertation is Nietzsche’s radical interpretation of history and his *untimely* historical awareness that establishes a bridge of communion between moderns and ancients via the psychology of the human condition. The modern Dionysus is separated from earlier conceptions of the god by this bold philosophical move. Dionysus acts as the methodology whereby history is exploded into ways of *being* rather than objective temporal arenas that are no longer accessible. The key points to the chapter include Nietzsche’s philosophy of history and how this philosophy of history intertwines itself with Nietzsche’s ontology and Dionysian perspective. Nietzsche brings the modern Dionysus to life by making Dionysus serve modern life rather than ancient life in a historical sense. Moreover, he demonstrates that being modern does not simply mean being alive in modern times, but being uncompromisingly present in this very moment of existence. To do so foils the process of historical and intellectual reflection, demonstrating that Dionysus is not confinable to the empirical process and is revelatory of *Becoming*.

Nietzsche makes distinctions between ‘historical,’ ‘unhistorical,’ and ‘suprahistorical’ modes of *being* that define how we distinguish ourselves subjectively. Both the ‘historical’ and ‘suprahistorical’ are too disassociated with the present and too dependent upon metaphysical reflection to reveal the connection to other human beings. Dionysus, on the other hand, provides this connection by revealing the mode of ‘unhistorical’ *being*. Dionysus, then by Nietzsche’s account acts as a medium of divination and communion between those who know how to be fully present in the modern age and the ancient Greek culture that produced him. The substance of this claim, for Nietzsche, is that this understanding of Dionysus reveals the necessity of losing one’s own subjectivity in an ‘unhistorical’ manner and thus experiencing the loss of self and the other emotive concomitants of such an experience. By doing so, Nietzsche feels that the destructive and irrational sides of the Greeks that earlier philologists and historians had elided prove to be much more serious and consequential. It also
raises these unflattering aspects of the culture to a level where they are just as revealing of the ancient Greeks as are their productions of art and literature.

Woven throughout the chapter is Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche as the *terminus ad quem* of metaphysics and the reiteration of the philosophical threads from the first two chapters concerning subjectivity and *Becoming*. The purpose of this is to demonstrate that Nietzsche is intending to overthrow metaphysics with his evolving production of Dionysus. Zarathustra is considered a “Dionysian monster.” He places Dionysus opposite Christ as reminder that the Dionysian embraces life *and death* rather than attempts to escape life or be saved from death. He continues to call himself a disciple and follower of Dionysus as he writes about nihilism in his late notebooks. Dionysus brings the productivity of nihilism to light by showing that it is the pregnant possibility of a nihilistic space that leads to creative production and accounts for how things originate out of their opposites. He discloses the rise and fall of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ from the same void that constitutes the inaccessible *Will*. In all cases, Dionysus remains his symbol for confronting the limiting boundaries of metaphysics, whether it be found in the Church, in academia, or in the psychological nature of the historical reflective consciousness of the ‘subject’.

Certainly, no other formulation of Dionysus fits this grand attempt. For this reason, Nietzsche’s historical move constitutes the final genealogical moment of the modern Dionysus. His vision demands that one consider Dionysus as a living entity rather than a symbol for the passions or a mythological character. One must engage Dionysus by shifting one’s mode of *being* and reconfiguring the meaning of historical enterprises. The modern Dionysus is far different than earlier treatments and challenges the status quo of philology while also performing a dynamic philosophical critique. In the end, the modern Dionysus is (1) an original philosophical contribution that fatally attacked metaphysics, (2) an extensive critique of philology’s purpose and method, and (3) an example of existential engagement that heavily influenced philosophy in the twentieth century and continues to do so today.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas Drew Philbeck was born in Shelby, North Carolina in 1976. He graduated from Appalachian State University in 1999 with a B.A. in Philosophy and Religion. After several years of travel and work he completed an M.A. in Interdisciplinary Humanities from Florida State University in 2002 and decided to finish his PhD there as well, also in Interdisciplinary Humanities. His focus has consistently been on the interaction between philosophy and classical studies. In addition, he has found that the lessons from these studies have proven valuable in analytical measures used to excavate the preconditions of themes of cultural development throughout the history of Western civilization. Beyond these academic interests, he is a computer programmer and professional artist and holds a certification in Museum studies which he completed by serving a 4 month internship at the British Museum in London, England in 2003.