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### The Dionysian Experience

There goes a saying “Life imitates art” which is the notion that life events are inspired by creative artworks. Although not explicitly said, Friedrich Nietzsche believed this quote to be evident and true. Nietzsche in his work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, both criticized and praised the ancient Greeks for their ways of life, especially their arts of theatre and music. He believed that the Greeks were initially naive and never truly immersed in their art. This changed when the effects of Dionysus influenced the Greek culture to embrace their ecstatic primal side and become immersed in art and music. Dionysus was the Greek God of Chaos, he represented primal urges and the urge to drink and enjoy life in the present. Nietzsche found this to be crucial to live a proper life and praised the Greeks when they began to incorporate representations of Dionysus in their theatre, music and arts. Apollo was the Greek God of music truth and prophecy. His representation solely existed in the Greek theatre before the incorporation of Dionysian ways. This sole, boring representation is what Nietzsche believed to be naive and too individual as he mentions in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “Wherever we encounter the “naïve” in art, we have to recognize the highest effect of Apollonian culture” (13). There was no social immersion. The representation of Dionysus in the theatre contained a fragile balance of Dionysian and Apollonian elements that countered each other perfectly so that neither side would have complete control resulting in either total chaos or complete separation from true art. We can see the influence of the Dionysian in today’s films, books, plays and other forms of art

and without it, we may never have rediscovered truly immersive and profound art forms that we are all used to today.

Nietzsche believed that the Dionysian culture was necessary as in order to be more connected to the world a society must be able to become immersed in it through being connected to their primal side. As Nietzsche states in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “The un-Apollonian character of Dionysian music keeps such an element of gentle caution at a distance, and with that turns music generally into emotionally disturbing tonal power, a unified stream of melody, and the totally incomparable world of harmony” (11), he was a firm believer in the importance of Dionysian immersive music as it is a universal medium of communication that transcends beyond language. Music, according to Nietzsche, was primal in its nature. Understood unconsciously by those who immerse themselves in it, it was a method to communicate feelings and emotions through sound. This is why Nietzsche believed it was so crucial to include in the Dionysian Greek tragedy. We view this as one of the most significant elements of the Dionysian in today’s culture. Music is always widely popular and always will be simply because people connect to it. A person could listen to music and connect with their lyrics internally, or listen and connect to the melody while on a run or while dancing at a party. Music used in film and theatre connects the audience to the show and gives them a sense of emotion to the film. Action movies, such as this year’s *Avengers: Infinity War*, always play loud intense music when large amounts of actions or fighting is going on. This allows the audience to be immersed and get an exciting feeling of rush when these fast paced movies kick off. Horror films do the same thing except with eerie and often unsettling tracks so that the audience knows the creepy essence of the work. Often people may play calming music to soften up a background when they want to relax because it immerses the listener into the serene world around him. The Greeks and their tragedies

were no different and this was praised and loved by Nietzsche and continues to be a very important element in today's time.

As a man of many criticisms, Nietzsche was known for harsh criticism of the organized religion of Christianity for its push on life in Heaven rather than life on Earth. Nietzsche believed that Dionysus gave way to a much more uplifting salvation and believed that the Greeks should follow his teachings as when comparing Christianity to Greek in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "And to the influence of this outrage we can ascribe the fact that the view of Greek antiquity as a time of rose-coloured serenity" (31). This was because Dionysus taught to immerse oneself into life in the present rather than constantly worry about some future life. In modern times, Christianity is a major religion in many countries around the globe as people follow its teachings. Of course Nietzsche wouldn't be pleased with this and I do not necessarily agree with his criticisms but his message and reasoning should not go unnoticed. The thought of living in the present time and fully immersing oneself into the world around him is a healthy way of life. Too much worry about a future life can cause stress and worry that are only painful and unnecessary. We see this all throughout the stages of growing up as once we get to High School we are taught to look out for College and worry about College. Once we get to College, we are then taught to worry about finding a job after graduation. From firsthand experience I can give assurance that it is true and evident that constant worry about the future causes stress and worry and is unhealthy to the mind. This case continues after school as well as jobs and life have deadlines. Of course we cannot just dump everything to party and have fun which, and Nietzsche understood this, which is why he was a fan of the balanced Dionysian and Apollonian ways of tragedy and life. Incorporation of this concept is extremely important in modern day life especially with every year growing potentially more stressful than the last.

After the age of the Greek Dionysian, Euripides convinced the Greeks to follow the teachings of Socrates and to give up all elements of the Dionysian. Nietzsche was extremely critical of this and believed it to be a great downfall. As a modern society, we must be wary of this. Socrates taught that science, logic and reason were the only truths and that is what a society should solely pursue. These things have brought great advancements to humanity and we would not be in the place we are now if it wasn't for science, logic and reason however we cannot simply give up everything that is primal. We must embrace the Dionysian as Nietzsche claims as a careful balance of the elements, Dionysian, Apollonian and even Socratic, are important to being a part of our world and furthering progress of our society. There must be a balance between the future, the drive to know and the living of the present times to fully experience life. Without this balance, our society becomes lost, naive and blind. Currently today, we express a great balance of these elements in our society through our cultures, religions, and aesthetics the only thing left is to make sure we incorporate them into our own lives and do not let our society break this fragile balance.

### Works Cited

- Anthony, Russo and Russo Joe, directors. *Avengers: Infinity War*. Marvel Studios, 2018.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Blackmask Online, 2003.