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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

*Twilight of the Idols*

OR

*How to Philosophize with a Hammer*

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*Translated with an Introduction and Notes by*

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being which impoverished everything, thinned it down, made it consumptive. And indeed history is rich in such anti-artists, those starved of life: those who of necessity still have to take things and sap them, *emaciate* them. This is the case, for example, with the true Christian, with Pascal,\* for example: a Christian who is at the same time an artist *is not to be found*... Let no one be childish and raise an objection to me in Raphael,\* or some homoeopathic nineteenth-century Christian: Raphael said yes, Raphael *did* yes, therefore Raphael was no Christian...

## 10

What is the meaning of the conceptual opposition I introduced into aesthetics, between *Apollonian* and *Dionysian*, both conceived as types of intoxication?—Apollonian intoxication keeps the eye in particular aroused, so that it receives visionary power. The painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are visionaries

*par excellence*. In the Dionysian state, on the other hand, the whole system of the emotions is aroused and intensified: so that it discharges its every means of expression at one stroke, at the same time forcing out the power to represent, reproduce, transfigure, transform, every kind of mime and play-acting. The essential thing remains the ease of the metamorphosis, the inability *not* to react (—as with certain hysterics who also enter into *any* role at the slightest sign). It is impossible for Dionysian man not to understand every suggestion; he overlooks no emotional sign, he has the instinct for understanding and sensing in the highest degree, just as he possesses the art of communication in the highest degree. He adopts every skin, every emotion: he is constantly transforming himself.—Music, as we understand it nowadays, is likewise a total arousal and discharge of the emotions, and yet it is merely the remnant of a much fuller world of emotional expression, a mere *residuum* of

Dionysian histrionism.\* To make music possible as a specialized art-form a number of the senses, above all the kinaesthetic sense, were made inactive (at least relatively so: for to a certain extent all rhythm still speaks to our muscles): with the result that man no longer immediately imitates and represents with his body everything he feels. Nevertheless *that* is the truly Dionysian state of normality, at any rate the original state; with music it slowly becomes more specific at the expense of the most closely related faculties.

## 11

The actor, the mime, the dancer, the musician, the lyric poet are fundamentally related in their instincts and are actually one, but have gradually specialized and separated off from one another—even to the point of contradiction. The lyric poet stayed united with the musician the longest; the actor with the

I was the first person who, in order to understand the more ancient Hellenic instinct, when it was still rich and even overflowing, took seriously that marvellous phenomenon which bears the name of Dionysus: it can be explained only by an *excess* of strength.\* Anyone investigating the Greeks, like that most profound connoisseur of their culture alive today, Jakob Burckhardt\* in Basle, knew at once that this was an achievement: Burckhardt inserted into his *Culture of the Greeks*\* his own section on this phenomenon. If you want the opposite, then you should look at the almost laughable instinctual poverty of German philologists when they approach the Dionysian. In particular the famous Lobeck,\* who crawled into this world of secret states with the respectful self-assuredness of a worm which has dried out between books, and convinced himself this made him scientific, so much so that he was nauseatingly thoughtless and childish—applying all his erudition, Lobeck

gave us to understand that all these curiosities really did not amount to anything. In truth, he tells us, the priests may well have informed the participants in such orgies about a few things of some value: for example, that wine excites lust, that it is possible for people to live off fruit, that plants blossom in the spring and wither in the autumn. As far as that disconcerting wealth of rites, symbols, and myths of orgiastic origin is concerned, with which the ancient world is quite literally overgrown, Lobeck takes it as an opportunity to become even a shade wittier: ‘If the Greeks’, he says (*Aglaophamus*\* i. 672), ‘had nothing else to do, then they laughed, leapt, and rushed around, or, since from time to time man is also so inclined, they sat down, wept, and wailed. *Others* then came along later and looked for some kind of reason for their remarkable nature; and so, in order to explain these customs, those countless festival legends and myths were created. On the other hand it was

believed that that *droll activity* which now took place on festival days also belonged necessarily to the festival ceremony, and it was held to be an indispensable part of the divine service.’—This is contemptible twaddle, and no one will take people like Lobeck seriously for a moment. We are affected quite differently when we test the concept of ‘Greek’ which Winckelmann\* and Goethe shaped for themselves, and find it incompatible with the element from which Dionysian art grows—the orgiastic. In fact I have no doubt that Goethe would have excluded anything like this in principle from the possibilities of the Greek soul. *Hence Goethe did not understand the Greeks.* For only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, is the *basic fact* of the Hellenic instinct expressed—its ‘will to life’. *What* did the Hellene guarantee for himself with these mysteries? *Eternal* life, the eternal return\* of life; the future heralded and consecrated in

the past; the triumphant yes to life over and above death and change; *true* life as the totality living on through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. That is why for the Greeks the *sexual* symbol was the venerable symbol in itself, the true profundity inherent in the whole of ancient piety. Every particular about the act of procreation, of pregnancy, of birth evoked the loftiest and solemnest of feelings. In the doctrine of the mysteries *pain* is sanctified: the ‘woes of the woman in labour’ sanctify pain in general—all becoming and growing, everything that vouchsafes the future, *presupposes* pain... For the eternal joy of creation to exist, for the will to life to affirm itself eternally, the ‘torment of the woman in labour’ *must* also exist eternally\*... The word ‘Dionysus’ means all of this: I know of no higher symbolism than this *Greek* symbolism, the symbolism of the Dionysia.\* In it the most profound instinct of life, the instinct for the future of life, for the eternity of life, is



felt in a religious way—the very path to life, procreation, is felt to be the *holy* path... Only when Christianity came along, with its fundamental resentment\* *against* life, was sexuality turned into something impure: it threw *filth* at the beginning, at the precondition for our life...

## 5

The psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, within which even pain still has a stimulating effect, gave me the key to the concept of *tragic* feeling, which has been misunderstood as much by Aristotle as, more especially, by our pessimists. Tragedy is so far from providing any proof of the pessimism of the Hellenes in Schopenhauer's sense that it should rather be seen as its decisive refutation and *counter-example*. Saying yes to life, even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing in the *sacrifice* of its