

Conrad's
Heart of Darkness:
Rebirth of Tragedy

John P. Anderson

Universal Publishers
Boca Raton, Florida
USA • 2005

Conrad's Heart of Darkness: Rebirth of Tragedy

Copyright © 2005 John P. Anderson
All rights reserved.

Universal Publishers
Boca Raton, Florida • USA
2005

ISBN: 1-58112-467-8

Also by the same author and published by Universal Publishers:

Finding Joy in Joyce: a Reader's Guide to Joyce's Ulysses

The Sound and the Fury in the Garden of Eden

The Poltergeist in William Faulkner's Light in August

Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom: Uncertainty in Dixie

Flaubert's Madame Bovary: The Zen Novel

Conrad's Victory: Resurrection Lost

Conrad's Lord Jim: Psychology of the Self

www.universal-publishers.com

Listen to the Master

The title I [Conrad] am thinking of is ‘The Heart of Darkness.’ . . . The criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa is a justifiable idea [for a novel]. The subject is of our time distinctly—though not topically treated [is treated instead in terms of the enduring human traits]. It is a story as much as my *Outpost of Progress* was but, so to speak ‘takes in’ more—is a little wider—is less concentrated upon individuals.

Destiny. My destiny! Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late—a crop of unextinguishable regrets. [Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*]

Table of Contents

Protocol, Debts and Purpose	6
Introduction	7
Tragedy—Out of Africa	10
Outline of Novel	11
Nietzsche—The Birth of Tragedy	14
Dionysus	16
Apollo	20
Contrast	24
Inevitability	24
Myths	25
Greek Tragedy	27
Will to Power	27
Conrad's Use of Nietzsche—The Rebirth of Tragedy	28
Apollo	28
Dionysus	30
Merger	34
Dionysian-Driven Choices: Kurtz's Choice and Marlow's Choice	35
Oedipus in the Congo	38
The Unconscious	39
Ivory	41

Jungle	43
Cannibalism and Animism	44
Containers	44
Kurtz	46
The Control Stations	47
Yarn and Fate	47
Text	48
Part I	48
Part II	106
Part III	142

Protocol, Debts and Purpose

The text used for quotations from Heart of Darkness was the on-line Project Gutenberg ebook.

References to Adelman are to his book *Heart of Darkness: Search for the Unconscious*. I relied on that book for background. It also contains a sensitive reading of the text without, however, any reference to Apollo and Dionysus.

S&S refers to Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, a summary of Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Nietzsche are from *The Birth of Tragedy* in the *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* published by the Modern Library [paperback]. I spell Apollinian the way Nietzsche's translator did in that edition.

Quotes from Graves are from his *The Greek Myths*.

References to the Victorian sense of self are from Kimmel's on-line essay *Penetration Into the Heart of Darkness: An image-schematic plot-gene and its relation to the Victorian self-scheme*.

My capitalization or lack thereof with respect to deities and prophets is not meant to convey respect or disrespect. The same holds true for gender references. My references to the Congo inhabitants as "natives" is meant to be neutral.

My purpose is to make the power of this novel accessible to you, so you can experience it fully as an art object, not just as a good read or a page turner. This novel is like a painting, a sculpture or a symphony. It is serious in its artistic intent and a serious reading is called for.

Introduction

Heart of Darkness is a *tour de force*, a feat of passionate writing. Conrad wrote this short novel over a period of only one month—40,000 words in one month, several times his normal average production. Conrad was so fascinated by the idea for this novel that he abandoned writing the highly promising Lord Jim and totally immersed himself in the new project.

This novel was based on Conrad's own personal experience, his own 1890 voyage up the Congo River working as a steamship captain for a Belgian trading company exploiting the Congo. He waited for several years to write about it, this novel being published in 1899. But when he was ready, after the gestation was full term, he couldn't wait. The discipline to finish Lord Jim was too weak to control his rush for the new project.

Consumed by passionate intensity, he gave birth in 30 days to one of the enduring literary legacies in the English language. His inspiration broke water like a rampaging river. Given that short delivery, this novel had to come directly from Conrad's most fundamental beliefs, the rain forest of his spirit. Thirty days gives no time to tinker. And this is a deeply pessimistic novel; just read the quote on page three. It is powered by the indifferent and hostile energies swarming at the heart of nature.

In my view, Conrad based the new novel on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872], a treatment of ancient Greek tragedy in terms of the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses in human experience. This analysis not only holds together most of the important choices Conrad made in writing this novel but, to my way of thinking, also enhances its power. Reusing these materials, Conrad midwived the rebirth of ancient Greek tragedy as the Congo tragedy.

Summarizing very roughly, Apollo is a god of the higher orders of *civilization* and the civilized restraint and control that is necessary for getting along with others. Dionysus, on the other hand, is a god of *nature* and fertility and is associated with unrestrained, orgiastic worship. The bright sun is an emblem of Apollo and the dark underground seeking serpent is an emblem of Dionysus. They are a special version of the widely encountered myths of father sky and mother earth, but the Dionysian mother earth is more like Mother Nature—at her core dark and indifferent to life eating life.

Heart of Darkness is about the dangers to civilized Apollinian mental controls of exposure to stark naked Dionysian life forces. The unrestrained competitive and hostile life forces at the heart of nature not only power the teeming jungle but also lurk in the inherited instincts of mankind. In civilized societies, these instincts are underground, having been repressed by restraining influences in the human mental make up. But in the unstructured jungle, in the wilderness, they can once again come to the surface. In the wilderness Mother Nature calls out her own children—the aggressive human instincts.

In Conrad's rendition, the European search for ivory in the Dionysian Congo brought these primitive instincts to the surface, out of their holes like hungry serpents. And these serpents carried a venomous mixture of desire and hate and shed a thin layer of restraint. The result of unrestrained desire and hate was the rape of the Congo by the European exploiters. This rape consisted of lust-driven economic exploitation of resources and inhuman aggression against the Congo natives. The inhuman aggression that killed millions was fueled by hate and justified by viewing the natives as "brutes." Desire and hate made rape.

The European restraining influences were too weak to control their aggressive instincts because their restraints were not a fundamental part of moral character. As depicted

by Conrad, they turned out to be much less, just skin-like restraints merely for the purpose of covering reputation or appearances. This thin, dead skin the jungle serpent easily sloughed off on its way out of the hole.

In terms of the civilized Apollo and the orgiastic Dionysus, we may start with the notion that the Europeans in this story are to represent Apollo since they are from more civilized countries and the natives in the Congo are to represent Dionysus since they are in what we dismissively call the pre-cultural state. But Conrad unravels these assumptions.

Conrad shows the restraint of the exploiting Europeans to be weak and hollow. In the jungle where appearances don't matter, their actions are savage. By contrast, Conrad shows the most "uncivilized" of the natives, the practicing cannibals, to have the most in the way of fundamental restraint. The European exploiters dressed in the very proper tropical whites are savage in behavior while the naked man-eaters are restrained in behavior. This irony is the high ground of the novel—in the Congo clothes do not make the man.

This novel burns a hole in many a memory. In Nietzsche's words, it is sublime—"the artistic taming of the horrible." Conrad's use of Nietzschean elements gives many modern readers a sense of dread or uneasiness, suggesting that the Nietzschean elements jostle important structures in our unconscious.

This novel reads like a nightmare, an Apollinian dream infected by Dionysian fever. It may remind you of the movie *Alien*, which featured a silicone based monster buried in and cannibalizing a human body. It eventually breaks out to wreck havoc and destruction on a space ship and humans. For Conrad, each of us harbors a potential monster just waiting for the chance to crawl out and eat.

Tragedy—Out of Africa

The tragedy in this novel is the culture clash between Europeans and Africans in the late 1800's. The Europeans exploiting the Congo experienced from the depths of their instincts a mix of desire and hate. This explosive mix stripped away the fragile European control mechanisms and resulted in the rape of Africa, the brutalization and murder of millions of Africans in the service of the theft of the economic resources of the Congo. The Europeans killed and grabbed.

As presented by Conrad, this rape was tragic because it was inevitable. The rape was inevitable given the lack of moral restraint in the European pursuit of economic gain, a pursuit then and now considered highly respectable and even inevitable, part of the basic nature of mankind. The invisible hand still wears dress gloves. Now it runs sweatshops and gives to charity when it can gain name recognition. Its mantra was and is to plan strategically but act ruthlessly. Like the human instinct package, the unrestrained profit motive inevitably carries the potential of great harm to others.

This novel is “based on a true story” —the efforts of King Leopold of Belgium to economically exploit the Congo, an area of 900,000 square miles. The King considered the Congo his personal property because the European “powers” had so agreed as part of their effort to maintain a balance of powers. You can already sense the presumption in this: that the Europeans were competent to make property grants in Africa because they were the “advanced” nations. You can also sense an underlying conflict in the assumptions—that a balance of powers needed to be maintained everywhere because the supposedly advanced European nations were naturally hostile and war-like.

The Europeans came to Africa under the flag of a moral mission, to eliminate the slave trade run mostly at that late date by the Arabs (and by the Europeans not that long before). They came in order to do good, they said, but their main mission was to do well, to profit economically. Contrary to their propaganda, the unrestrained pursuit of profit buried moral management.

In the process, agents of King Leopold turned the natives into slaves through enforced labor, cannibalized their lives and by a seemingly inevitable psychological process came to hate the Africans as uncivilized brutes, an attitude which in turn justified brutal treatment of them. Unrestrained by rules, policemen or neighbors, the Europeans in the Congo exploited the natives to a degree that would have been unacceptable back home. Away from home they did what they wanted. After all, the fittest are meant to triumph.

This novel gave powerful impetus to the forces of reform. Reform came slowly, mostly from England and based on the reports of one Roger Casement, a British consul in the Congo whom Conrad met there.

Outline of Novel

In order to make the following preliminary materials more meaningful, I give you an outline of the plot.

A thin “frame story” opens and closes the novel. It presents the circumstances in which Marlow tells the story of his personal experience in the Congo. Marlow’s story is the main story for which the frame story is the frame.

In the opening of the frame, Marlow and other men who serve an unnamed trading company headquartered in London are lounging on a pleasure sailing ship named Nellie (an affectionate form of Helen). They are waiting for the Thames tide to turn and take them out to the ocean. London glows in the background. Besides Marlow, the group

includes a Director of Companies, the Lawyer, the Accountant, and an “I” narrator none of whom are named.

While waiting for the tide to turn, Marlow tells of his experience as a steamship captain in the Congo working for a different company, a continental based trading company. In this story telling role, Marlow is described by reference to the Buddha, the Buddha post-illumination. Marlow’s experience in the Congo, as related by him, is in the nature of an initiation into the Dionysian.

Having obtained a position as a ship’s captain by way of political intervention by his aunt, Marlow visits the company’s offices on the continent to sign his contract of employment. Marlow registers an uneasy reaction to the city, the offices and the company people all exclusively dedicated to economic profit (we learn later at high cost to others). Then he visits the company doctor who advises him above all to remain calm in the Congo. The doctor measures Marlow’s head as part of a phrenological study of men going “out there.”

Marlow travels by steamers south along the coast of West Africa to the continental trading company’s Coastal Station, which is located near where the rampaging Congo River enters the ocean. Speaking of the Congo project, one of the steamer captains comments derisively on what some people are willing to do for a few extra francs.

At the Coastal Station, Marlow sees a huge mess, not the efficient construction project he expected. He also experiences brutal treatment of the natives by the whites and a general sense of belligerency among the whites. As he learns more and more of the actual situation, his mental structures struggle to adjust in order to maintain his sense of control and self-respect.

Marlow finds that his job is to steam upriver and rescue Kurtz. He is the prime company agent in terms of ivory acquisition and is seriously ill. He is a living legend in the company, producing more ivory than all other agents

combined. Despite paying lip service to Kurtz, those in charge are in no hurry to save him.

After a trek to the continental trading company's Middle Station, Marlow encounters intense company politics, many Europeans competing for the few company positions that pay a percentage of the ivory recovered. He also learns that his rescue steamer was sunk on submerged rocks just a few days before his arrival, apparently deliberately. His repair efforts take several months as those in charge apparently sidetrack the order for the necessary rivets, those permanent connecting devices that give the ship a solid foundation.

Having been jarred by the brutality against the natives, Marlow also needs personal rivets. Marlow's repair work helps repair the foundation of his self-respect as well as that of the steamer. All the time he hears about Kurtz upriver at the Inner Station and develops a fascination for him. Marlow fastens on saving Kurtz as the self-respect saving reason he is working for the company.

The much-delayed voyage in the repaired steamship upriver to the Inner Station is the voyage to the heart of darkness. A large group of practicing cannibals serves in Marlow's crew as wood gatherers for the steam engine. As man-eaters, they practice self-restraint, apparently only eating flesh of the dead naturally available to them. They observe taboos and do not kill for food, even when the odds are in their favor and they are starved.

Kurtz's natives attempt unsuccessfully to repulse the steamer's arrival at the Inner Station where the mysterious Kurtz is ailing with fever. Kurtz is attended by a Russian dressed like a Harlequin. Marlow learns from the Harlequin that Kurtz ordered the natives to repulse their arrival. More troublingly, he also learns that the restless Kurtz uses the natives loyal to him to raid and kill other natives and steal their ivory. The ivory Kurtz and crew find is usually fossil ivory, that is buried ivory.

Kurtz's natives want him to stay since he is their god. The natives practice cannibalism and Kurtz apparently breaks bones with them, not just bread. Kurtz is torn between staying with his worshippers and leaving down river to attend to his precarious health in white man land.

Kurtz has jungle fever, a fever of the body to match his fever of the spirit, his maniacal pursuit of ivory. Finally Kurtz is taken aboard the steamer and downriver. Remarkably, the rescuers have no medicine with them. The trip downriver is delayed by problems with the steam harnessing system. Not surprisingly, Kurtz dies on the trip. Facing the naked face of death, Kurtz's last words heard by others are "the horror the horror."

Possibly infected by proximity to Kurtz, Marlow survives his own dose of the fever and terminates his relationship with the continental based trading company. He refuses to help their agents locate Kurtz's sources of ivory. Marlow visits Kurtz's Intended, his fiancée, and lies to her about Kurtz's last moments. He panders to her desire for exclusive possession of Kurtz's memory. She magnifies Kurtz's glory for her own ego-inflation.

After Marlow finishes his story, the main story, Conrad gives us a short closing of the frame. In that short closing, the Nellie misses the beginning of the ebb tide and dark clouds block the way to the sea.

Compared to the facts of Conrad's actual experience in the Congo, the entire story of Kurtz, his fiancée and the political intrigues against him are fictional. These imaginative changes allowed Conrad to dress the story more pungently with Apollo and Dionysus. Otherwise, the experience is basically Conrad's.

Nietzsche—The Birth of Tragedy

In this story Conrad pressed his Congo experience through the template of the ideas set forth by Nietzsche in

The Birth of Tragedy. These ideas are hard to understand so please bear with me in the following lengthy materials. The Apollinian and Dionysian are poles of meaning that are basically lost in our modern culture.

Nietzsche's first and passionate work viewed ancient Greek tragic drama (in the 6th century BCE) as the product of two impulses in human experience—the Apollinian and the Dionysian. These two impulses were not conceptualized by the Greeks as we moderns tend to do. Instead, they projected these impulses onto gods. The two gods selected for these particular projections were Apollo and Dionysus. This is something like saying men are from Mars.

For the Greeks, their gods were visionary deposits of strong human experience. These Greeks thought that certain strong human experiences had to be effects of the gods. Moreover, these experiences had to be inevitable since they were decreed by the all-powerful gods. So they attributed certain experiences they had to Apollo and others to Dionysus.

So who are Apollo and Dionysus when “they are at home?” As summarized by S&S, Nietzsche wrote that:

All true art is either Apolline or Dionysiac or both. . . .The names of the two impulses are derived from the Greek art deities, Apollo and Dionysus. Like all the Greek gods, these two have many differing spheres of activity and areas of special interest, but taken together they present a particular contrast. Apollo is in various ways a god of higher *civilization*: he is, for instance, the god of medicine. Dionysus, on the other hand, is a god of *nature* and natural fertility, associated with wine and ‘uncivilized’, orgiastic worship. Some of his mythical exploits are equally remote from civilized life: among the events recounted are his dismemberment by primitive powers, the Titans, and subsequent rebirth.

Nietzsche writes about art, impulses in art, and Conrad translates the impulses to life experience, to a broader stage.

Dionysus

Dionysus [pronounced Die **on** e sus] basically represents the driving force of mere life: the sap, the juice that makes for growth and replication. This is most easily seen in plants, particularly plants in the teeming Congo jungle. Dionysus dwells in nature, is of the earth. The serpent that dwells in the earth is one of the emblems of Dionysus.

In humans, Dionysus inhabits what humans share with all of life—the instincts. Dionysian basic life consists of instinct-driven birth, growth through competition for resources and competition for procreation. Survival is the governing desire. Nothing more and nothing more refined. And whether humans like it or not, the competitive and hostile attitudes towards other competitors for the same scarce survival goods have been bred in human instincts through a long line of ancestors. The sexual instinct is the most obvious manifestation of this impulse.

Humans can transcend these attitudes, be more than just Dionysian competitors—be compassionate rather than aggressive. But they inevitably carry these more primitive attributes in their instinctive makeup, buried in their potential.

Dionysus lives in the undifferentiated, in the primal unity of natural life. Most of Dionysus' followers were female. Dionysus visits humans in the form of many emotions but the most characteristic are intoxication, passionate abandon, excess, and enthralling enthusiasms. All of these visits of Dionysus take a person “out of him or herself.” Note the characteristic profile of the artist in the Dionysian. Note also that Conrad was consumed with something like Dionysus when he wrote this novel.

In our current experience, deeply in the Apollinian mode in cities, the Dionysian jungle experience is hard to understand. We experience most of modern life as individuals, not as part of a unity. The Dionysian analysis is going to take us back to square one, the primal source of it all. Again S&S summarizing Nietzsche:

In a state of intoxication, an individual loses himself. This is the basis of the Dionysiac experience: *the collapse of individuation*. In its fuller forms this is an ecstatic experience with mystical implications, and an experience of supreme intensity: rapturous, but also terrifying. . . . In particular, they tend to find collective expression, as with the medieval dances of St John and St Vitus In his Dionysiac state a man feels that all barriers between himself and others are broken in favour of a rediscovered universal harmony. Between himself and nature, too, all things are as one. There is, in fact, no place for any distinctions, for anything that sets one thing off against any other thing: limits, forms, conventions, individuals.

If you think the Dionysian has been stamped out, just remember Woodstock, consider the Islamic martyrs and contemplate the radical causes and movements of all types. We are one in the music, one in Jihad, one in the cause. The Dionysian is the black hole of individuation. It is still out there, waiting.

The chorus in ancient Greek tragedy was made up of satyrs, a synthesis of a god and a billy goat. Nietzsche analyzed them as symbolic of the **unchanging** nature of the Dionysian, the unifying base of all life:

. . . the Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satyric chorus this is the

most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort—with which. . . every true tragedy leaves us—that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably . . . behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations. [Nietzsche]

The Greek satyr chorus occupied the front of the stage and thus separated the audience from the individual actors. This arrangement, with the chorus down stage, symbolized the necessity to understand individuation through the Dionysian. This dramatic orientation was the antidote to normal experience in which the Dionysian is viewed through Apollinian appearances.

Silenus was a satyr companion of Dionysus. His pessimism was reflected in his one pronouncement: the best thing is not to be born—the next best is to die soon.

One possible effect of knowledge of the Dionysian, of the Dionysian initiation, is Buddha-like self-negation, denial of the personal desires and hates associated with individuation as ego. Again S&S:

In its pure form, the Dionysiac impulse leads to apathy and hostility to any political action, and eventually to a total, Buddhistic withdrawal from the public world in pursuit of mystical self-negation.

The Buddha withdraws from action. After a Dionysian experience, action requires illusion. Otherwise the Dionysian

graduate sees just the horror and absurdity. This was Nietzsche's take on Hamlet's indecisiveness:

In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint Conscious of the truth he has once seen, man now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence. . .

The Dionysian festival featured the rape-oriented mixture of sensuality and cruelty:

In nearly every case these festivals centered in extravagant sexual licentiousness, whose waves overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be real 'witches' brew. [Nietzsche]

In the dimension of time and space, looking at Dionysian reality is looking "right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature." [Nietzsche] In the psychological realm, "the Dionysian state with its annihilation of ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a lethargic element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed." [Nietzsche]

In our modern terms post-Freud and post-Jung, looking into the Dionysian is like looking into the *id*, which contains repressed, destabilizing personal memories and the

instinct patterns inherited from all mankind and all life. There the first feature is survival.

Apollo

The Apollinian and Dionysian impulses do not stand in the relation of direct opposites. Apollo is more a development in reaction to Dionysus than its opposite. The Apollinian serves as a veil to hide the Dionysian truth about mere life.

Apollo represents the impulse to control, to measure, to inhibit, to dam up the Dionysian energies. It is behind the notions of responsibility, status, hierarchy and control structure in general. Apollo lives in cities. It is the foundation of differentiation and in humans the sense of individuality. It is male.

The sun is one of the emblems of Apollo. His titular name is Phoebus Apollo, which means pure light. Like the sun, Apollo is distant, not a god that intimately takes over a human as Dionysus does.

At the same time the Apollinian outlook involves illusion since it looks away from or veils the primal reality of natural life. Its fundamental metaphysical aspect is appearance, as in mere appearance.

This Apollinian emphasis is, in my view, representative of the development over time in human intelligence of less control by instinct, of more intelligence capacity to adapt and learn and of a frail sense of consciousness. Apollo can be partially understood as a reaction to Dionysus as intelligence is to instinct, as the later, "higher" orders of the brain are to the earlier, "lower" orders. In personal psychology post-Freud, Apollo is related to the *ego*, that part of the human psyche that adjusts the reaction of the *id* to the environment.

The Apollinian impulse finds expression in dreams. Again S&S summarizing Nietzsche:

Dreams are, by their nature, imagistic. They give us an immediate apprehension of form, albeit with a residual sense that the forms apprehended are illusory. For the dreamer this illusion represents a deep and pleasureable necessity the dream seems to have one kind of reality and yet is felt, at the same time, to have another, deeper reality underlying. In this it is analogous to reality itself; that is, the ordinary individuated reality in which we as individuals live. For that reality too may be reinterpreted philosophically as an illusion, a world of appearances . . . ‘the veil of maya’, interposed between ourselves and the ultimate reality—by which is meant the ground of being, the primordial oneness or unity of all individual things.

The Apollinian is like a dream in terms of the frail sense of reality. It is not like a dream in terms of being asleep.

Further exploring the meaning of Apollo in human experience, S&S summarizes:

Apollo is the bright sun-god, the symbol of all brightness, all appearance, all plastic energies that express themselves in individual shapes. The Apolline is the sphere of *individuation*, restraint, form, beauty, *illusion*. Apollo is also the soothsaying god, the god of the Delphic oracle; but though Apolline images seem to offer higher truth, they are and remain mere appearance.

Apollo sponsors the sense of individuality each of us experiences and our feeling of self-respect, respect for our individual self. This, you can sense, is related to the survival instinct and fear of death. To be sure, the degree of individuality varies from individual to individual. For

example a monastic dedicated to service and secure in the knowledge that a heaven awaits thronged with deceased members of the same order feels a different level of individuation and fear of death than a CEO of a major commercial enterprise who believes that this life is it and the main goal is conspicuous consumption. Kurtz dies like a CEO.

The Apollinian hides the Dionysian truth about life. Again S&S:

But actually the Greeks in their most creative period [age of the tragedies] knew only too well that the basis of existence is horrific. Beneath its Olympian surface, Greek culture evinces an unmistakable and unique sensitivity to the painful truth about life: the Dionysiac truth that the underlying reality of existence is unchanging contradiction, pain and excess, represented to our immediate experience as the curse of individuation—our subjection as impotent individuals, to the change and suffering that befall us from birth to inevitable death.

The most obvious instance of this kind of suffering as an individual is the knowledge that as an individual you must die, inevitably must die. Your value while living is measured and experienced as an individual, but as an individual you must end and all too soon. If instead of an individual you consider yourself as part of a greater whole such as your family, your ancestors, your clan, your tribe or the Kingdom of God, your death as an individual is not so important and not so horrible.

The concept of the suffering individual is associated with the modern nation-state, with which we have much less personal attachment compared to the earlier hunter/gatherer survival unit, the clan and the tribe. And the modern

capitalist nation-state features the profit motive—more for me as an individual.

By contrast to Dionysian excess, the Apollinian stressed limits and order. Again S&S summarizing Nietzsche:

. . . it [Apollinian] imposed norms of order and limitation to conceal the Dionysiac revelation of contradiction and excess as ultimate realities. Moderation became a central ideal in human affairs, requiring observance of the limits of the individual. Hence the celebrated commandments of Delphic Apollo, ‘know thyself’ and ‘nothing in excess’. And hence, inevitable, the hostility towards any manifestations of excessive self-assertion. . . .

Hubris or flagrant self-assertion was sacrilege against Apollo.

In the realm of metaphysics, the study of being, Apollo is viewed as mere phenomenon and Dionysus as the underlying reality. “Phenomenon” derives in the Greek from the Apollo-like characteristics to show, to be seen, to appear. The Apollinian serves to “redeem” the Dionysian primal unity:

. . . that the truly existent primal unity, eternally suffering and contradictory, also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasure illusion, for its continuous redemption. [Nietzsche]

This redemption is our empirical reality—becoming in time, space and causality. The wounds of contradiction and suffering are dressed with pleasurable appearance, a redeeming appearance that seems to be beyond chaos and promises a mending coherence.

An important point is that normally the Dionysian is viewed through the Apollinian and is shaped by that lens. That lens carries its own filters, filters designed to block out the suffering, contradiction and excess of the Dionysian.

Contrast

While not exactly opposites, the best way I know to try to explain these two impulses to contrast them. Here is a list of factors:

Apollo	Dionysus
Day	night
Light	dark
Individuation	unity and group
Control	chance
Veiled and withdrawn	naked and present
Utilitarianism	ecstasy
Morality	will to live
Rationality	instinct
Appearance	essence
Subjective	self-forgetful
Conscious	unconscious
Permanent	becoming
City	jungle
Imposter	genuine
Responsibility	innocence and play

Chew on these contrasts for a moment and digest them for your reading experience.

Inevitability

Ancient Greek tragedy was based on inevitability. Agamemnon inevitably killed his daughter to induce

favorable winds for his war ships to sail to Troy, so his wife inevitably killed him in revenge after his return from the Trojan wars, and then their son inevitably killed his mother in further revenge. Oedipus inevitably killed his father and married his mother. All of these acts were horrible and inevitable. And according to the Greek way of thinking, these acts had to involve the actions of the gods since these actions resulted from strong human emotions. And participation by the all-powerful gods made the actions inevitable.

Myths

The Greek myths bear out these traits of the Apollinian and Dionysian. The Encyclopedia Britannica:

According to the most popular tradition . . . Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Semele, a daughter of Cadmus (king of Thebes), but in origin a Phrygian earth goddess. Hera, the wife of Zeus, out of jealousy persuaded Semele to prove her lover's divinity by requesting him to appear in his real person. Zeus complied, but his power was too great for the mortal Semele, who was blasted with thunderbolts. Zeus, however, saved his son [Dionysus] by sewing him up in his thigh, keeping him there until he reached maturity, so that he was twice born [once from Semele and again from the big thigh]. Dionysus was then conveyed by the god Hermes to be brought up by the Bacchantes

Representing . . . the sap, juice, or lifeblood element in nature, the novel and exciting *orgia* (rites) of Dionysus quickly won converts among the women in the post-Mycenaean world. The men, however, met it with hostility. According to tradition, Pentheus, king of Thebes, was torn to pieces by the