CHAPTER SEVEN

MODERN MYTHOLOGIES: “DIONYSOS” VERSUS “APOLLO”

In modern culture, Apollo and Dionysos are the best known Greek gods, usually considered as opposite and complementary. By subterranean routes, this idea continues to influence Classical scholarship even though it belongs, as we shall see, to the modern rather than to ancient mythology of Dionysos. It now remains to determine whether, and to what extent, the modern myth rests on historical realities of antiquity.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Early in 1872 a book was published in Leipzig on a subject of ancient culture, destined to be famous well beyond specialist circles: “The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music”, written by the then twenty-seven year old ordinary professor of classical philology in the University of Basle, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). The concept of the “doubleness of the Apolline and the Dionysian” is introduced in its first sentence and is its main argument, particularly evident in the first twelve of its twenty-five chapters. The work immediately caused a great sensation, not only for the actual topic, the origin of Greek tragedy, but because it became part of a debate on the music of Richard Wagner, then prominent in Germany. It was also sensational because it led to lively polemics among classical philologists, the protagonists of which, Erwin Rhode and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who were then very young, would subsequently acquire great academic prestige. This was Nietzsche’s first major work and with the books that followed he would become one of the most

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2 “Duplizität”: Reibnitz 1992, 58–64. I wish to thank the author of this fundamental book for her valuable advice and information.
influential philosophers of the early twentieth century in Germany. This explains, superficially at least, the continuing popularity of the categories Apolline and Dionysian⁴.

Any student of antiquity who considers this text today can only be amazed at such explosive and lasting effects⁵, only partly made plausible by the exceptionally incisive and involving language. In fact it is immediately obvious that the author’s intention was not so much to resolve an historical and philological problem, the origin of a given dramatic genre, as to establish new categories in the field of aesthetics⁶; categories that, in the second half of the book, would have provided a framework for Wagner’s contribution to music, indeed to art and culture in general.

The thesis held by Nietzsche is briefly as follows. At the root of every artistic creation there are two impulses (Triebe) which for the ancient Greeks were embodied in the gods Apollo and Dionysos. Apollo expresses measure, calm and sunlight⁷, whereas Dionysos expresses ecstasy, the vital energy of nature, freedom from moralities, and symbiosis between man and the wild and between men of different social classes⁸. To each of these opposing principles are ascribed typical manifestations: to Apollo, for example, the kithara, epic poetry, the order of the Olympian gods; to Dionysos, the aulos, lyric poetry (with its particular manifestation, the dithyramb), metaphysical thought and the mystery religions⁹. Tragedy, the greatest expression of Greek creativity and of religious feeling was born from the synthesis of these two principles and it declines (with Euripides and Socrates) when rational thought begins to challenge myth¹⁰. With Socrates a long phase dominated by theoretical man begins—by the Alexandrinertum¹¹—a phase that would end in the rebirth of tragedy due to the rediscovered unity between tragic myth (meaning Germanic myth) and Dionysian music¹².

⁵ Latacz 1994.
⁶ "für die ästhetische Wissenschaft": Reibnitz 1992, 54ff.
⁷ Reibnitz 1992, 74.
¹² Nietzsche 1972, 143.
None of the concepts used by Nietzsche were in themselves new. Not only is the Apollo of Nietzsche ultimately the Apollo of Winckelmann, but also the antithesis of the kithara versus the aulos and of the respective musical and poetic genres was a well-established idea at least at the beginning of the nineteenth century. And the same applies to the opposition between Olympian religion and chthonian cults that goes back to Georg Friedrich Creuzer and Karl Otfried Müller. From Müller come many of the ideas implicit and explicit in the Birth of Tragedy, among them also the supporting idea: the antithesis between the Apolline and Dionysian.

Therefore, the impact of the Birth of Tragedy on the culture of his time and afterwards cannot be attributed to the novelty and originality of Nietzsche’s ideas in ancient matters. Instead, it is due to the fact that precisely on these ideas—well-known by his more educated readers, and belonging, even though in subconscious forms, to the cultural humus of his time—he founded his twofold message. Implicitly he presented his philological colleagues with an image of Greek culture that was new in respect of the traditional image, Winckelmann’s image: it was marked not by sublime calm but by existential tensions. Explicit, instead, is the message contained in the preface to the first edition dedicated to Wagner, in which the author states that he wishes to discuss, at a crucial moment of the history of Germany, not an erudite question but a serious German problem. This statement, dated the end of 1871, shows how much the book,
composed during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, was permeated by the idea of war.

What was the message? Now that history had confirmed the military superiority of Germany, it also had to be at the forefront in matters of culture: to give the world a new art founded on different aesthetic criteria from the traditional, implicitly equated with the criteria of the (French!) Enlightenment, which was a modern expression of ancient "Alexandrinism". The rebirth of tragedy as a new artistic genre that was realised in Wagner's work had to be the expression of Germany's new role as the leader of cultured nations.

Apollo and Dionysos in German Classical scholarship before Nietzsche

As we know, it was Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68) who made the Greek god Apollo famous in modern culture. Indeed, it is to the statue located in the Belvedere of the Vatican, a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze original of the 4th century BCE, that he attributes the rank of the "most sublime among all the ancient works that have been preserved for us". To understand this choice made by Winckelmann, we will try to define the position of his Apollo in the "History of the arts of drawing in the ancient world", the work that immortalised him and has long influenced, not only the study of ancient art and art in general but German culture as a whole. This History of the arts is not a history of art in the modern sense: the author does not simply wish to describe a phenomenon in its historical development but to construct a Lehrgebäude, that is, a system that is also didactic, the final purpose of which is to understand the very essence of art. The book is founded on this and Apollo is considered in this perspective.

\[21\] Cf. a little earlier in the same preface: "amidst the terrors and glories of the war that has just broken out, I was assembling my thoughts" (Whiteside 1993, 13).


\[24\] Bianchi-Bandinelli 1976, 25.

\[25\] Winckelmann 1764.

\[26\] Sichtermann 1996.

\[27\] Winckelmann 1764, ix.

\[28\] Winckelmann 1764, x: "The main purpose, however, . . . is the essence of art".

\[29\] Borbein 1986, 294f.
The god is briefly named in the first part of the work, which can be defined as theoretical (the second part is really historical), in which the author examines the profound reasons for the aesthetic superiority of Greek art. In chapter four, the first piece (Stück) in which the author identifies freedom as the decisive reason for that superiority\(^{30}\), follows the piece entitled “On the essence of art”\(^{31}\). Apollo, a strong young god, is considered the most suitable subject to express perfect beauty\(^{32}\) (which does not mean that all the statues of Apollo do so). This is why his statue (evidently the one in the Belvedere), even if it was created by a less outstanding artist, is even better than the Laocoon\(^{33}\). It is worth noting that, here already, Apollo’s ideal masculine beauty is contrasted with that of Dionysos as a castrated youth\(^{34}\), of oriental inspiration (from the point of view of freedom therefore, lower than Greek beauty).

Apollo never appears again, either in the “beautiful” style (which corresponds to the style of the 4th century)\(^{35}\) or in the following periods between Alexander and the Roman conquest, except in the second part of the work, which speaks of Greek art under the Roman emperors. From this it could be deduced that Winckelmann wished to emphasise that the Apollo of the Belvedere is a copy. This hypothesis is very unlikely: whether a statue was an original or a copy in fact did not affect him in evaluating a work of art\(^{36}\). It would have been logical, then, to describe it as an outstanding example of Greek art in one of the phases when it flourished. Instead, he cites it as an example of work taken from the Greeks by the Romans.

\(^{30}\) Winckelmann 1764, 130–133; Pucci 1993, 18–21.

\(^{31}\) Winckelmann 1764, 141.

\(^{32}\) Winckelmann 1764, 158ff.: “The most noble concept of a male youth has its special image in Apollo, in which the strength of mature years appears fused with the delicate forms of the most beautiful springtime of youth”.

\(^{33}\) Winckelmann 1764, 154: “... and the Laocoon is the fruit of much greater study than Apollo... But the latter [i.e. the artist of (the statue of) Apollo] was probably endowed with a much higher spirit and a more delicate soul: in fact, in the (statue of) Apollo there is that element of the sublime that is missing from the L.”

\(^{34}\) Winckelmann 1764, 160: “The second type of youthful beauty taken from eunuchs is represented, intermixed with a youthful virility, in Bacchus”, and p. 152 (an explanation of “castrated”); Reibnitz 1992, 61 (and n. 25) and 97 (the anti-oriental prejudice of classicism).

\(^{35}\) Winckelmann 1764, 227ff.

\(^{36}\) Winckelmann 1764, 336: “Even if someone... were in doubt whether Niobe is an original or a copy... not even that would diminish the main artistic notions that can be attained from this work”. Instead, Pucci 1993, 95–98 sees “a gigantic removal of the problem”.
It is worth considering this passage carefully, which comes immediately before the famous description of the Apollo of the Belvedere. Here the text is arranged according to emperor: Claudius is followed by Nero. Winckelmann is well aware of Nero’s love of the arts, which, even in a tyrant, could be valued positively. Instead, the terms used immediately express the strongest disapproval: for example, Nero’s taste for art is defined as a miser’s Begierde, or avidity. But it is his attitude towards the Greeks that makes him more hateful, because, while superficially granting them the greatest freedom, he had taken away from them the most beautiful works of art. In this respect he was completely insatiable, as shown by the fact that from Delphi alone he had five hundred bronze statues removed. And, Winckelmann continues, the Apollo of the Belvedere, found in the imperial residence in Anzio, must have been one of these (together with the so-called Borghese Gladiator). Nevertheless, it is a marble statue: the contradiction is obvious. How can it be explained?

At that time, the “History of the Arts of Drawing” was not an easy read, nor is it today. For lengthy sections, the argument remains abstract and theoretical. Certain statements are put into concrete terms only by extremely brief references to works in one or other of the collections. There are very few statues that recur in the text more than once and are described at some length, and only in the second part of the work: the Laocoon, the Belvedere Torso, the Borghese Gladiator, and Apollo. These, rather than the others, were intended to remain imprinted in the reader’s memory, principally Apollo. If for Winckelmann Apollo represented the undisputed peak

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37 Winckelmann 1764, 392ff.; Bianchi-Bandinelli 1976, 25f.
38 Winckelmann 1764, 390: “He was like a miser who is trying to hoard without producing (anything)”.
39 Winckelmann 1764, 391: “In spite of all the appearances of freedom, the best works were taken out of the country”.
40 Winckelmann 1764, 391: “Nero was truly insatiable; among other things he sent to Greece Acratus, a wicked freedman, and Secundus Carinas, a third-rate scholar, to choose for the emperor everything that they liked. From the temple of Apollo in Delphi alone they took away five hundred bronze statues”.
41 This provenance does not seem certain: Fuchs 1963, 170.
42 Winckelmann 1764, 391: “It is probable that the Apollo of the Belvedere was among those statues”.
43 Very few copper engravings accompany the text: see pls. 1–16 of the reprint, Vienna 1934, 395ff.
44 Winckelmann 1764, 347–350.
45 Winckelmann 1764, 371f.
46 Winckelmann 1764, 394.
of Greek art, this was not due to his beauty—otherwise, he would have had to place him differently in his work—but because, being aesthetically perfect, he perfectly expresses freedom. So Nero became even more hateful, guilty of having transformed freedom into captivity.

Another aspect that this passage makes clear is the link between Apollo and Delphi, also suggested by the interpretation of the work as Apollo vanquishing the dragon Python\textsuperscript{47}. This link will determine the subsequent estimation of Apollo by Classical scholarship and his relationship to Dionysos.

Of the precedents of Nietzsche's Apollo, one of the most important after Winckelmann was Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840), professor of Greek philology and archaeology in Göttingen since 1819 and the author of manuals that have become standard, with enormous influence on Classical studies throughout the nineteenth century and beyond\textsuperscript{48}. In the image he has transmitted of the Greek world, Apollo is fundamental and is contrasted with Dionysos: this can be established in the two volumes of the work that made him famous in Germany while he was still very young: his "History of the Hellenic tribes and cities"\textsuperscript{49}. The first volume deals with the peoples that inhabited Greece before the arrival of the Dorians. The treatment is presented as historical, but in fact it is an ingenious reconstruction based on mythological traditions\textsuperscript{50}. The most important among the peoples of this primordial Greece, after the Pelasgians, were the Thracians: however, according to Müller they should not be confused with the peripheral and barbarian Thracians of later Greek history\textsuperscript{51}. To these Thracians who inhabited Boeotia and the area around Delphi before the Dorians is attributed the cult, composite in origin, of Dionysos\textsuperscript{52}. Müller’s intention is certainly not to force Dionysos out of the Greek world by giving him non-Greek origins, as for example Wilamowitz

\textsuperscript{47} Now an obsolete interpretation as the original is attributed to Leochares: Fuchs 1963, 172.


\textsuperscript{49} Müller 1820; Müller 1824.

\textsuperscript{50} Unte 1990, 313.

\textsuperscript{51} Schlesier 1998, 410–415. On the modern myth of the Thracian Dionysos see Isler-Kerényi 1999e.

\textsuperscript{52} Müller 1820, 384: "But it is precisely Boeotia that is the country in which the cult of Helicon and of the Cithairon, of Dionysos and Bacchus, were fused together, to produce one mythical figure".
was to do, even if this drags him into contradictions that are difficult to disentangle. At all costs, Dionysos, far-removed from what is considered typically Greek, as we will see, clearly must remain Greek.

Instead, the incarnation of Greek culture that Germany liked at that time is Apollo. In fact, of all the Greek gods, Apollo is by far the most important in the second volume of the History devoted to the Dorians, published four years later. Up to 1950 and later, the Dories would retain the rank of the most Greek of the Greeks, with whom many of the students of antiquity in Germany identified themselves. The identification of the Germans with the Greeks also goes back to Winckelmann. From linguistics a welcome confirmation is provided by Indo-European studies (today called “Indo-Germanic” in the German-speaking world) initiated in Germany by Franz Bopp (1791–1867). The visceral affinity between ancient Greece and Germany was therefore already part of the cultural baggage of Müller’s teachers. In Prussia this was exacerbated by anti-French (and therefore anti-Catholic and anti-Roman) sentiments provoked by the behaviour of Napoleon’s Frenchmen during the occupation of Berlin in 1806. This was one of the reasons for the public success of Müller’s Dories. Müller’s Doric Apollo, i.e., essentially Spartan (and implicitly Prussian), is a god of purity and light. Instead, but not without distorting the argument, Dionysos is presented as being far less important to the Dories.

In Müller’s manual, “History of Greek literature”, published shortly after the author’s death by his brother, a harmonised picture of

53 Schlesier 1998b, 419–421.
55 Calder 1998, 146f.
56 Wittenburg 1984; Reibnitz 1992, 126.
57 Sichtermann 1996, 96f.
60 But later, Müller distanced himself from this work: Losemann 1998, 314.
61 Müller 1820, II, xix: “At the centre is the concept of purity, of light”; Reibnitz 1992, 106ff.
62 Müller 1820, II, 403: “But we have no information about sumptuous festivals or a worship specially requested by the god; we can presuppose that in general, the severe and sober spirit of Sparta would hardly appear favourable to it”. Cf. Schlesier 1998, 420: “It is true that Müller is trying to isolate the Dionysian orgies of the Dories as a specifically female affair or as a local deviation (within the Dorian colonies), but he cannot deny the invention of drama by the Dories”.
63 Müller 1841. It had first been issued in an English translation: Calder 1998, 123ff.
the religious world of the Greeks is presented, rather artificially, smoothing over the contradictions in respect of Dionysos. On the one hand, we have the Olympus of Homer, governed throughout Greece by a single god of the sky and daylight, Zeus. On the other hand, this world is based on an older foundation, chthonian in character, that goes back to before Homer, which could be defined as Pelasgian. Clearly, Apollo belongs to the Olympian level, Dionysos to the chthonian level. However, Dionysos is distinct from the rest of the pantheon for other reasons. For Müller, his cult has some affinity with the religions of Asia Minor and was spread by the Thracians residing in northern Greece—it is uncertain whether it still corresponds to Boeotia!—but not uniformly throughout Greece. Even so it was to have a decisive influence on the culture of the Greek nation. This influence materialises giving origin to tragedy and establishing a link between tragedy and mystery cults.

Müller’s Apollo represents the quintessence of Doric culture and is the highest possible form of the divine before Christianity: clearly it has the look of Winckelmann’s Apollo. Even if for Winckelmann, who was more “pagan” than Müller, Apollo had instead been the symbol of freedom temporarily humiliated, but destined to triumph. In the teleological view of history—directed towards a goal, whether Christian redemption or freedom—Apollo is in any case a perfect forerunner. Unlike Dionysos, who for Winckelmann and later also for Müller, was the opposite of Apollo in that he aroused exaggerated emotions and provoked excessive and uncontrolled attitudes.

With this circumlocution, Müller expresses in his way the two subterranean reasons for modern aversion towards Dionysos, which make

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64 Müller 1841, I, 22: "...So just as there are similar beings alongside the god of the heavens who with the force of light permeate the earth and destroy opposing forces—like Athena, born from her father's head in the celestial heights, or luminous Apollo—so other deities act in the depths of the earth.”

65 Müller 1841, I, 23: “But here is, as a peculiar being, the multiform god of nature who flowers and withers and is rejuvenated, Dionysos”.

66 Müller 1841, I, 23.


68 On Müller’s teleology see Calder 1998, 147ff.


70 Müller 1841, I, 23ff: “It arouses a series of manifestations in art and poetry, the common element of which is that in them a stronger excitement of the mind is revealed, a higher leap of the imagination and even more lack of restraint in pleasure and pain”.

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him incompatible with the Protestant conception of religion as ascetic and moderated: the irrational and orgiastic component of his cult and sexuality. On other occasions as well, the son of a Protestant pastor\(^{71}\) accurately avoids even naming the sexual sphere\(^{72}\): characteristically, Nietzsche does not follow him here\(^{73}\). The protagonists of the polemic concerning "The Birth of Tragedy" will continue to use vague allusions, as soon as the sexual sphere is even mentioned\(^{74}\). We will see how this incompatibility of Dionysos with the Protestant idea of religion also influenced successive interpretations of the god.

However, there remain at least two incontestable arguments that force us to take an essential contribution of Dionysos to Greek culture into consideration. The first, from at least the 6th century BCE, is the intimate cultural proximity of Apollo and Dionysos in Delphi\(^{75}\). The second is tragedy, considered the most original and admirable of all the creations of Greek culture\(^{76}\), although it goes back, according to the ancient sources, through the dithyramb, not to Apollo but to Dionysos. Müller resolved this problem by attributing Dionysos to Delphi and a religious and historical level that precedes the one to which Apollo belongs, i.e. further away in time from Christianity.

*Apollo and Dionysos in Classical scholarship after Nietzsche*

"The Birth of Tragedy" put an end to Nietzsche's philological phase\(^{77}\) and shortly afterwards he even left academic work. However, the ostracism of his colleagues\(^{78}\) did not succeed in preventing his Dionysos, who was derived directly from the romantic Dionysos—orgiastic, martyred, erotic—gradually defined by Schlegel, Creuzer, Schelling,

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\(^{71}\) Wittenburg 1984, 1031f.

\(^{72}\) Calder 1998, 142: "Embarrassing details of costume (of Greek comedy)... are discreetly dismissed (II.90) as 'other disfigurations and appendages purposely extravagant and indecorous...'. Also illuminating is Müller's comment, summarised by Calder 1998, 134: "What this means at the end is to minimize any startling divergence from Christianity".


\(^{74}\) See the controversy between Rohde and Wilamowitz concerning the meaning of satyrs: Gründer 1969, 46ff. and 98ff.

\(^{75}\) Privitera 1970, 125 n. 53. The most relevant facts, attested by Plutarch, are that Apollo and Dionysos shared the cultic year and some of their rituals were celebrated at the same time: Reibnitz 1992, 108f.

\(^{76}\) Rohde in Gründer 1969, 9: "This wonderful creation, the tragic art".

\(^{77}\) Cancik 1995, 33f.

\(^{78}\) Latacz 1994, 42.
Welcker and Bachofen\textsuperscript{79}, from prevailing over a radiant and pure Apollo. Two phases are distinguishable: the first, around 1900, was more creative; the second, between 1930 and 1940, was more ''academic'' and as influential.

In his youth \textit{Erwin Rohde (1845–1898)}\textsuperscript{80} had been a close friend of Nietzsche, as documented in substantial correspondence\textsuperscript{81}. Already in the first item he wrote in favour of his friend, published in a daily newspaper on the 26th May, 1872\textsuperscript{82}, he adopts the idea that Dionysos, like Apollo, impersonates a fundamental impulse of the artist of all times. He also accepts that the tragic myth, a perfect synthesis of the ''Apolline and Dionysian'', is a manifestation of the ''spirit of music'' which, being the most immaterial artistic genre, is also the highest\textsuperscript{83}. He confirms it shortly after in his violent reply to Wilamowitz\textsuperscript{84} (no less personal and offensive than Wilamowitz's pamphlet against Nietzsche). He then sets out his own theory, which is not aesthetic but historical and philological, on the origin of tragedy from the dithyramb, on the development of the dithyramb and Satyr plays, and on the role of the satyr, considered to be fundamental\textsuperscript{85}.

The Dionysian phenomenon would be one of the principal themes of Rohde’s book from 1893, which became standard, and was widely appreciated beyond the circle of Classical scholars: “Psyche. Cult of the soul and belief in immortality among the Greeks”\textsuperscript{86}. It is an historical treatment of Greek spirituality based on practically all its literary and philosophical expressions. This problem, like the approach of the work, brings out the teleological and evolutionist conception of the history of religion\textsuperscript{87}. The first volume deals with the convictions and practices of what is considered genuine Greek religion as

\textsuperscript{79} Henrichs 1984, 218ff.; Reibnitz 1992, 61ff. and 267. On the romantic pre­cendants of Nietzsche in more detail: Reibnitz 2000. It was the monograph by Creutzer (1771–1858), Dionysos, sive Commentationes academicae de rerum bacchicarum orphicorumque originibus et causis, Heidelberg 1809, attacked immediately by C.A. Lobeck, which began the discussion on Dionysos in Classical scholarship.

\textsuperscript{80} Calder 1983, 238ff.; McGinty 1978, 36.


\textsuperscript{82} Reibnitz 1992, 66.

\textsuperscript{83} With the title Afterphilologie (i.e., “Anal philology”): Gründer 1969, 65–111.

\textsuperscript{84} Gründer 1969, 93–99; cf. also Reibnitz 1992, 104.

\textsuperscript{85} Rohde 1910 (5th edition); McGinty 1978, 34–70.

\textsuperscript{86} Even though the author expressly wished to refrain from a Christian inter­pretation: Rohde 1893, x f.
expressed by the Homeric poems. However, this religion was not able, states Rohde in the preface to the second volume, to attain the “idea of the true immortality of the soul”\textsuperscript{88}. This could have happened only by the diffusion, from Thrace, of a new cult that the Greeks attributed to Dionysos, a cult that, by means of ecstasy (that is, to leave one’s self in a momentary madness) promised union with the deity and so participation in his immortality\textsuperscript{89}.

In reality, this cult was, as for Nietzsche, the particular expression of a human impulse present always and everywhere\textsuperscript{90}. However, where the Thracians would never have succeeded in going beyond a primitive stage of this religion, the Greeks would have realised a synthesis at Delphi between the traditional, Homeric beliefs and this new cult through Melampus dear to Apollo\textsuperscript{91}. From here, between the 8th and 6th centuries, it was spread by the first initiates into the whole of Greece, together with the humanised image of Dionysos\textsuperscript{92}. There follows, logically, a chapter on the Orphics, followers of that Orpheus who, like Melampus, belongs to the sphere of both Apollo and Dionysos, who were the first to believe in the immortality of the soul\textsuperscript{93}.

Rohde’s thesis is not that different from Müller’s and retains its ideological presuppositions, such as the distinction between Apolline religious vision, genuinely Greek, and the cult of Dionysos, eclectic and primitive in nature; such as the idea that the memory of extremely ancient historical facts is preserved in mythology; and the teleological course of the history of religion. As against Müller’s model, the “exotic” element in Dionysos is amplified and better defined. Simultaneously, and paradoxically, the historical role of Dionysos becomes more important.

\textsuperscript{88} Rohde 1910, II, 2: “It was not from the cult of souls that idea of a real immortality of the soul could be developed, of its imperishable, autonomous life, based on its own strength ... In that case, in fact, it would have had to wish to give up its most intimate nature”.

\textsuperscript{89} McGinty 1978, 54f.

\textsuperscript{90} Rohde 1910, II, 23: “In fact, that Thracian cult of exaltation was only the manifestation, peculiarly configured, according to national specificity, of a religious impulse that appears ... in every time and place over the whole earth, and therefore must derive ... from a need that is deeply rooted in human nature”.

\textsuperscript{91} Rohde 1910, II, 51f. On Melampus: Casadio 1994, 78-82 and 103f.

\textsuperscript{92} Rohde 1910, II, 67.

\textsuperscript{93} Rohde 1910, II, 131: “In the building of Orphic religion it is the keystone that holds everything together: faith in the vital force, divinely immortal, of the souls”. 
Dionysos was also a favourite theme of Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928), and her interpretation, a decade after Rohde's, was very influential especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Her “Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion” of 1903 is intended to throw light on the oldest phases of Greek religion: not based on myth but on ritual, according to the new perspective adopted in the study of ancient religion by the so-called “Cambridge Ritualists” to whom she belonged. For her, the purpose of the rituals was to guarantee physical subsistence: hence the importance of fertility. The progress of history is essentially evolutionistic and Darwinian, that is it goes from the rough and primitive to ever higher forms of life and ultimately to Christianity. Like Rohde and Nietzsche, who were received positively, Harrison is also connected with many of Müller’s ideas: one of the things she adopts from him is the distinction between Olympian and chthonian cults that tend to replace or rather to incorporate the “Apolline-Dionysian” binomial. Her use of archaeological material is new, from the images on vases to the discoveries by Schliemann and Evans.

Harrison’s Dionysos is of Thracian origin (as are the satyrs) and therefore his connection with wine is secondary; even before that he is god of vegetation, including cereals, and primitive intoxicating substances, such as beer and honey. Dionysos is a god of the trees who also identifies with some animals, such as the bull. Delphi has a role similar to the one hypothesised by Müller and Rohde: it is the place in which together with the decrepit Olympian system, personified by Apollo, there lives the most genuine Dionysian cult, which was to give rise to the dithyramb. As in Rohde, Orphism would bridge the gap between ancient polytheism and Christian monotheism.

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95 Henrichs 1984, 229ff.
96 As Müller had done in his famous “Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie” of 1825.
97 The idea of fertility, which even today enjoys disproportionate popularity especially among archaeologists, seems to go back to a study of the cult of Priapus by the English scholar R.P. Knight (1751–1824).
99 On the reception given to Nietzsche: Reibnitz 1992, 148f. and 184 (n. 9).
100 Harrison 1907, 363–453.
This idea of Dionysos was to remain essentially the same in Harrison’s second major work, called “Themis”\textsuperscript{102}, which contains a revised reading of the phenomena presented in Prolegomena from the perspective of the collective. Where Dionysos, essentially the son of his mother in a matriarchal order, remains of crucial importance, the antipathy towards Apollo, representing a patriarchal system, is more obvious\textsuperscript{103}: this is the chief difference from Rohde (and Müller). To Dionysos, who is now also an initiating god\textsuperscript{104}, Harrison attributes instead both markedly exotic traits and exceptional religious efficacy.

The books by Rohde and Harrison are exceptionally rich in documentary material on the history of Greek religion, but are based on predetermined theses. The next stage in the progress of the Apollo-Dionysos binomial is marked by two great manuals—and between the two, by something like a proclamation—which for many decades were to affect not only philological studies but also the study of the history of religion and archaeology\textsuperscript{105}.

Chronologically and personally closer to the phase of Nietzsche and Rohde is the survey called “The faith of the Hellenes”, by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1931)\textsuperscript{106}. He first expressed his opinion on Dionysos, as has been mentioned, in a long article that ferociously attacked Nietzsche’s “The Birth of Tragedy” with clues from academic philology in the year of its publication\textsuperscript{107} (distorting its argument which is not philological and historical but aesthetic and programmatic). The Greek gods, including Apollo and Dionysos, were subsequently the object of sporadic minor studies, brought together in a great manual written during his last months and not completely finished\textsuperscript{108}. In spite of the superficially historical and positivist tone of his text, not even Wilamowitz moves away from Müller’s axioms on the connection between stock and religion, on the teleological

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\textsuperscript{101} As for Rohde 1910, II, 39, and obviously for the same reason that the cultivation of wine cannot be of Nordic origin. However, cf. now Privitera 1970, 43.
\textsuperscript{102} Harrison 1912.
\textsuperscript{103} This combination is inspired by Bachofen and later by Nietzsche: Schlesier 1991, 214ff.; Behler 1983, 337.
\textsuperscript{104} McGinty 1978, 94f.
\textsuperscript{105} For example, Simon 1980, 269–294.
\textsuperscript{108} Henrichs 1985.
progress of history, on the congeniality also in the matter of "faith" between Greece and Prussian Germany. His position, deeply conservative, is also evident in the overwhelming attention for myth as against ritual in reconstructing the individuality of each god. The course of Greek religion of the first centuries is no different from the one proposed by Rohde (and by Harrison): for him too the irruption from Thracia of Dionysian enthusiasm into the divine cosmos of Homer between the 8th and 7th centuries BCE is a crucial moment. As for Harrison, Dionysos has oriental origins besides the Thracian and his connection with wine is secondary. However, he enjoys no attraction of any kind and even less Orphism: Wilamowitz conferred on Dionysos a plebeian, rural, even barbaric connotation, stressing in a disdainful way his supposed belonging to the feminine world. The only merit that he allows him is of having given tragedy to the Greeks: and it is precisely here, surprisingly, that the Nietzschean category of Apolline and Dionysian re-emerges. Even more paradoxical is the thesis of the oriental origin not only of Dionysos but also of Apollo.

Summarising the work of Wilamowitz we can say that he succeeded, using their very arguments, to remove from Dionysos precisely that religious value that Nietzsche, Rohde and above all Harrison had recognised in him. His powerful and lasting academic prestige and the influence that he consciously exerted on Classical scholarship through four decades of university teaching, also imposed this strongly reductive image of the god on archaeology. It has survived to our own times, even beyond the discovery of the name Dionysos on Mycenaean tablets, which would open the way for a fundamental redirection of Dionysian studies.

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110 Henrichs 1985, 303ff.
111 Wilamowitz 1931/32, II, 81: "Dionysos never succeeded in leaving behind his barbaric origin. All the more worthy of admiration, then, is what the Greeks made him."
113 Wilamowitz 1931/32: "What Dionysos brought to the Greeks, i.e. the intensification of the creative force of the soul, is evident in the clearest manner in the fact that they created tragedy, so showing to the world the path for reaching the highest peak of poetry; this peak, however, has not been reached by any people, since none has succeeded in clarifying religious solemnity, with its Dionysian ecstasy, ultimately to make it become pure beauty through formal Greek severity".
114 Today replaced by more differentiated hypotheses: Burkert 1977, 227f.
Two years later, against Wilamowitz, Walter F. Otto (1874–1950) re-established the divine dignity of Dionysos. His monograph on Dionysos of 1933, which follows and completes his successful book on the gods of Greece, is an explicit polemic against the dominant approach of the history of religions of his time, positivist and evolutionist, personified by both Wilamowitz and Nilsson and by the Cambridge Ritualists. For Otto, history begins not with the superstitious practices of primitives in favour of fertility but with the epiphany of the gods: Otto’s approach is clearly neo-paganism of Nietzschean derivation. Not by chance, he would propose again, forcefully, the Apollo-Dionysos union and make it the driving force not only of the birth of tragedy but of everything that comes into existence in the universe. However, Otto’s Dionysos, which already expresses the fundamental duality of creation, the antithesis between opposing tendencies, was at first ignored by academic Classical scholarship and only rediscovered decades later when the structuralists emerged in France.

Evolutionist thought—and with it a primitive Dionysos—was to be proposed again in the second great manual on Greek religion, by Martin P. Nilsson (1874–1967), with the title “History of Greek Religion” in 1941. This author, one of the most famous and most influential of Wilamowitz’s students, is, however, less averse to Dionysos than his teacher: his deep interest in the god is already apparent in his doctoral thesis of 1900 and was to continue during a long scholarly career. Even though he was a convinced historian and positivist, Nilsson was not deaf to the arguments of

117 Otto 1933; Cancik 1996, 105–123.
118 Otto 1929; Cancik 1998, 139–163.
121 Otto 1933, 188: “In this way earthy Dionysian duality would be accepted and taken up again into a new and higher duality, in other words, in the unceasing opposition between life in perpetual motion and the spirit which, unmoving, sweeps the distance with a look”.
122 Henrichs 1984, 234f.
123 Mejer 1990.
124 Quotations taken from Nilsson 1955; McGinty 1978, 104–140.
125 Mejer 1990, 333; Briggs/Calder 1990, xi: “Nilsson and Heiberg for most of their lives were encouraged or taught through books and letters by Wilamowitz”.
126 Nilsson 1900.
unorthodox colleagues such as Rohde and Harrison: this is reflected in the image of Dionysos proposed by him. However eclectic and transient\textsuperscript{128}, Dionysos is not as impoverished as in Wilamowitz. Dionysos is always of non-Greek origin, hence his position, immediately after Apollo, in the section of the book devoted to immigrant and Hellenised gods. In this process of “Hellenisation”, it is due to Dionysos that Apollo became the most Greek of the Greek gods\textsuperscript{129}; the role of Dionysos in the history of Greek religion, then, for Nilsson also, goes well beyond tragedy.

On reconsidering the course described it is clear, at this point, how Apollo, at the start considered to be the quintessence of Greek culture and religion, was gradually supplanted by Dionysos in studies on antiquity: implicitly confirming Nietzsche’s intuition that it would be impossible to understand Greek culture as long as the essence of “Dionysian” escaped us\textsuperscript{130}. The Apollo-Dionysos binomial which does gradually lose interest as studies progress in an historical and positivist sense, seems however to retain a nucleus that cannot be eliminated.

A deep unease remained about Dionysos for a long time, at least in “orthodox” circles, which in Germany and elsewhere was connected to Wilamowitz\textsuperscript{131}, damaging his religious credibility. In our view this unease is due to the orgiastic and erotic components of that god. The orgiastic component was to be tackled systematically but differently in two important monographs, one by Eric Roberston Dodds\textsuperscript{132} and the other by Henri Jeanmaire, both from 1951\textsuperscript{133}. Sexuality, which remained suppressed even by Otto\textsuperscript{134}, was to become a theme only when, together with the interest in the historical and

\textsuperscript{128} Nilsson 1955, 602: “This is why the original figure of Dionysos is so difficult to grasp; and what was ambiguous in him in his appearance was ultimately strengthened by the fact that probably he entered Greece following two paths and coming from two countries, in slightly different guises”; McGinty 1978, 113ff.

\textsuperscript{129} Nilsson 1955, 602: “Dionysos provoked nothing less than a religious revolution, re-invigorating the flame of ecstatic and mystic religion, repressed up to then; and Apollo gave life to the pressure to observe carefully the commandments of the gods and of religion... In this way... he[Apollo] became the representative of measure, of order, of harmony, becoming the most Greek of the Greek gods”.

\textsuperscript{130} Dixsaut 1995, 12.

\textsuperscript{131} Briggs/Calder 1990, xi.

\textsuperscript{132} Dodds 1951.

\textsuperscript{133} Jeanmaire 1951.

\textsuperscript{134} Kerényi 1994, 8.
anthropological phenomenon of the Greek polis, a new Dionysian
topic was to emerge: the symposium\textsuperscript{135}. Before that moment, the
Apollo-Dionysos binomial—that is, the generalised attribution of oppo-
site competences to two deities—has caused an essential but “Apolline”
element of Dionysos to remain unnoticed: his being also a civic god, intim-ately
connected with the institutions of the polis\textsuperscript{136}.

\textit{Apollo and Dionysos today}

Since there is growing evidence that the myth of the Apolline and
the Dionysian is modern\textsuperscript{137}, we must ask what the irreducible his-
torical nucleus of this “genial mistake” is\textsuperscript{138}. It would be premature
to answer this question today. Therefore we will simply indicate
recent trends in Classical studies.

Walter Burkert’s manual which replaced Nilsson’s manual in 1977,
is an authoritative voice\textsuperscript{139}. In a few but dense pages he lists the
arguments that can be derived from ancient tradition in favour of
a special link between Dionysos and Apollo. The historical existence
of such a link can be confirmed, however, only if couplings such as
Dionysos and Apollo on Greek vases or coins\textsuperscript{140}, or in the ritual
practice of Thebes at the time of Pausanias, should turn out to be
exclusive to these two gods. The distinction between musical instru-
ments and poetic genres peculiar to Apollo and Dionysos respec-
tively is definitely ancient but not sufficient to construct an ideological
antithesis\textsuperscript{141}. In this completely dispassionate survey, too, Delphi
emerges, either as a theatre of complementary rituality or as a spe-
cial place in the imagination of tragedians: from which Burkert is
inclined to extract, if nothing else, a polarity of the two gods\textsuperscript{142}.  

\textsuperscript{135} Murray 1990.
\textsuperscript{136} For Graf 1996, 370, Dionysos is still one of the gods that are most alien to
the polis and its order, as Jeanmaire 1951, 199, states. And this in spite of the cen-
tral and well documented role of Dionysos in the major cultic manifestations of
the polis of Athens: it is enough to mention the marriage with the basilinna during the
Anthesteria.
\textsuperscript{137} Hamdorf 1986, 44ff.; Graf 1996, 373.
\textsuperscript{138} As stated in the subtitle of the book by Vogel 1966 “History of a genial
mistake”.
\textsuperscript{139} Burkert 1977, 341–343.
\textsuperscript{140} For the Roman coins cf. Mannsperger 1973.
\textsuperscript{141} Privitera 1970, 125f. on Pindar’s interpretation by Wilamowitz.
\textsuperscript{142} Burkert 1977, 343.
Orpheus stands out between the mythological characters belonging to both the world of Apollo and the world of Dionysos, today as in the past, and he is far more important to Greek religion, for example, than the satyr Marsyas.

A famous peculiarity of Delphi is that a delegation of Athenian women took part in Dionysian winter rituals, attested by Plutarch. Also well known is the prominent role of Dionysos in the ritual calendar of Athens, the model polis, which conspicuously contradicts the thesis of his being alien to the political sphere. This role belongs, instead, as shown by Claude Calame, to a topographical, in fact geographical mental framework of which Apollo and Dionysos—however, together with other deities of the polis such as Athena, Poseidon and Demeter—define the poles. In this system, Delphi corresponds to Delos, an important setting of the Dionysian adventures of Ariadne.

Marcel Detienne’s reasoned survey allows him to illustrate the dynamics peculiar to polytheism (not only Greek), which specifically combines and contrasts divine figures in order to throw light on reality. Here the focus falls on the places in which Apollo and Dionysos co-exist ritually outside Delphi: Ikarion in Attica, Rhodes, Magnesia ad Maeandrum, Naukratis. From it are derived areas of action common to the two gods: besides prophecy and poetry (often discussed in the past), viticulture, medicine, the paideia. With the paideia (the way Greeks were led into adulthood), as with the symposium, we are now touching the public and political sphere, namely that feature of Dionysos’ physiognomy which earlier scholars of antiquity, too fascinated by the modern myth, seem to have missed completely: the Dionysos of the polis.

The few recent contributions on Apollo and Dionysos taken into consideration here show that there are real connections between the modern myth and ancient tradition, but they still await adequate interpretation. Hence the need, to which future studies of ancient civilisation must respond, to re-examine all the evidence. Such studies

144 Casadio 1994, 179–182.
146 Cf. also Graf 1996, 379.
147 This feature is abundantly evident in the ancient iconography of Dionysos, as presented in this book.
must bear in mind that Apollo, or Dionysos, or all the gods are manifestations not of stirps, nor even of a divine will over and above cultures, but of the cultural polycentrism and the historical dynamics active in Greece from the 2nd millennium BCE right until the very end of antiquity.