

Dionysos and Apollo: Remediating Said's Orientalism with Metacritical Perspective

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Geography is a kind of differential calculus in the sense that the three-dimensional, that is, the act of tangentially accessing things, is mapped on to the two-dimensional or the concrete. It is why we can say that the East-West or Occidental versus Oriental dichotomy is so limited in its binary dualism. We could easily criticize not only Said's Orientalism, but also in turn, a critical self-defense by turning itself upon its own head. It can indeed be said that the cross or cardinal directions run four different ways and not two. "The East" is not just Far Eastern, that is, the so-called "Asian," but extends to the Far West or to California. Parts of Europe and the Dionysian are not simply limited to Central Europe and Southeastern Asia. We can see in Asia, that is, Eurasia and in North Africa, that 1-2% of non-Sub-saharan human DNA is genotypically Neanderthal in addition to being *Homo Sapiens* in DNA.¹ The task, it might be said, is to continually remediate binary directions and to reweave Apollo and Dionysos in Friedrich Nietzsche. We can see the limitations of Continentalism in categorizing the human.

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1. Introduction

It is in 1871's *Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* that Nietzsche decides to contrast the characteristics of the Apollonian (that of the dream-like) with those of Dionysian drunkenness: "In order to get closer to these two instinctual drives, let us think of them next as the separate artistic worlds of dreams and of intoxication, physiological phenomena between which we can observe an opposition corresponding to the one between the Apollonian and the Dionysian" (BT, 11).

We might, however, discuss features of the Id, the Freudian term for dreamlike yet also Dionysian states which are rewoven, intermeshed, and remediated with the features of the Apollonian Superego. Regarding the Apollonian, the word for fantasy (*Phantasie*) is one and the same as the word for imagination. There are different gradients or admixtures throughout the world. Such features or distinguishing characteristics of this dialectic, we can easily say, are easily mediated in cultural forms. (We could say regarding the overcondensed or simplified dichotomies such as those between the East and West, that such distinctive attribution and contradistinction of features or qualities might mean that the civilization of West is in some ahistorical sense typically characterized as Apollonian while the Eastern philosophy and cultural style is somewhat Dionysian.) The task, however, is to keep rehashing and remediating these woven elements. As I will attempt to argue, the

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melancholy of the Dionysian, however, is something that can be found not just in the Far East, but also in the Northwest or Southwest (as well as their Eastern counterparts of regional categorizations), extending to the four “corners” of the world and their permutations.

2. Dionysos-Apollo in the Fourfold or Cardinal Directions

Westerners and Easterners appear as superficially exotic in appearance to one another, as much as they constitute a dichotomistic ambivalence separated merely by the Ural Mountains, as the Alps separate the Northwest from Southern Europe. Southerners as well as Northerners hate being fetishized as “exotic” in appearance or other generalizations (as do Middle Easterners and Africans, those from central latitudes), but Orientalism is limited in its scope because it's not the only kind of racial or ethnic fetishism that exists. Heritage exists, too; i.e., *Blut und Ehre*, blood and soil, which denotes the honor from centuries of culture and migrations in addition to more arbitrary biological origins and mutations out of originary Southern latitudes (Africa and Indo-Pakistan) from which human beings came about. Any exoticism or fetish, it should be noted, is associated with minorities, is cultural, and comes with risk of marginalizing the minority.

Indeed, Nietzsche criticized Germanic society (or rather all of Western Civilization) which he praised for its strength in *Will to Power*, as falling to collapse because of its overbearing Apollonian rationality that lacks Dionysian mediational elements which can be found in ancient Greece. The Greek capital of Athens is in the general area of Asia Minor separated only by a bay, and like Jerusalem, it finds its way at the crossroads or meeting point of the East and West, North and South. The Middle East is much more mysterious than perceived to some because it hides or shelters the Dionysian elements in its deserts and caves. This can be seen in a certain way that Jesus the Essene Judaic was trying to worship the divine as a mystical person before the Apollonianism of the Romans and Pharisees crucified him.

3. Melancholia and the Dionysian-Apollonian

In the psyche of the West and many parts of the world, it is Jesus depicted in Dionysian mystery cults that is indistinguishable from Helios the sun God whose father is Zeus. We might state that tragedy is fundamentally soulful or Dionysian. In fact, it requires a lot of soul or Spirit (*Psyche*) to overcome and to cope with tragedies; we can note this in the psychicality of *Will to Power* in Nietzsche. We see how the Middle East and not just the Far East incorporates primarily minor or melancholic keys into its music while the Apollonian can be found in Bach's music, for example, which characterizes the West.² The Dionysian, it can be said, is a Platonic kind of muse. To counter Apollo in Christianity we can see, however, that Greek Orthodox Mysticism as well as Russian Orthodox hymns has minor keys. On the other hand, while we observe Dionysian elements diffused throughout Apollonian ones, we might see some quirky mediation in the Europeanized Far East such as culturally in Korea today thanks to the blending of Protestantism and Jesuit Christianity with Japan and Korea from French and Dutch missionaries and explorers since the 1650s.³ There are many paintings from Japan in the 1800s portraying folk dancers clad in plaid textile shirts or kimonos, bearing striking similarities to Scottish musicians' kilts or indie folk musicians today wearing flannel.

I am not sure if cultural appropriation of the essentially peaceful and benign Hindu-Buddhist *svasti* symbol (“svasti” meaning “all is well” in Sanskrit) by ill-meaning neo-Nazism is at all positive as a phenomenon, and perhaps we can condemn all appropriation as theft or an unmediated cultural shortcut that wears the Other without bearing its chains; without understanding. Indeed, we become and understand the Other only by

empathy. All white supremacists are obviously ignorant of the fact that Aryans are originally Eastern in blood and soil (ethnoraciality and heritage), which includes Persians, Koreans, and other Indo-Europeans or ruling caste of Indo-Pakistan. Korean Hangul is derived from Brahmi, a first-century B.C. script of Sanskrit. When I refer to the Far East, some people might take it I mean China, although I will more specifically refer also to Japan, Indic countries and Korea which represent the mediated ur-Arya out of which the world's creative cultures arose. This fourfold origin is what I would like to refer to as a cultural singularity where the human being in its essence was thriving culturally. In paintings depicting Eastern (Japanese) artwork, we see women with porcelain painted faces and upwardly curving eyes. The Deleuzian fold might indeed apply to the epicanthal fold in terms of the way subjectivity is particularized, and then wrongfully generalized.

China might well apply to our view of the Far East, while we might say that it is in some respects tempered by proximity to Russia, just as are parts of the Dionysian or East Asian or Korean peninsula which are distinctively Central or Western European in culture. This also applies to Western Japan. The original *arya* or nobility is denoted by a seamless cross-mediation of the West and East, North, and South. While Greece is characterized as the beginning of Western civilization, it propped itself up only according to Asian elements, to follow Nietzsche's own line of thought regarding the essential aspect of the Dionysian. This is perhaps also true for Israel, which is geographically categorized as being Asian although politically Europeanized. For the Far East, the Dionysian blends into the Apollonian in a seamlessly connected line around the globe where Japan is only a boat ride away from the Hawaiiis or from the West Coast. Yet it is true, Central Asian latitudes do exist, as do Southeast Asian ones.

4. Cosmopolitan Empathy: The Weight of Enchainings

The melancholy of the North(west) is mirrored in the North East, and can be found in the domestic problem of suicide that occurs at disproportionately high levels in Scandinavia as well as in Japan and the Koreas. These societies all have low rates of infant mortality but have high levels of internal domestic problems and relatively high levels of self-aggression in their populations. And indeed, I argue that such Dionysian elements cannot be easily understood or empathized with from a strictly Apollonian academic approach. To treat these types of problems as a mere literary and parochial phenomenon devoid of empathy is to fetishize Asiatic or other world problems. Asian Americans who are Japanese or Korean might become angry at the way that people are underrepresented in the media or how problems just do not seem to hold much weight to the conglomerated melting pot of the West, while Chinese Americans might be relatively neutral to there being any media coverage whatsoever of themselves. Indeed, it has been said that "Asians are the loneliest Americans. The collective political consciousness of the '80s has been replaced by the quiet, unaddressed isolation that comes with knowing that you can be born in this country, excel in its schools and find a comfortable place in its economy and still feel no stake in the national conversation."⁴ It is variable and dependent upon how people construe social problems, although the West does seem to be a highly parochialized region in North America.

5. Conclusion

It might easily be noted that Korean or Japanese, rather than being a strictly "Asian" language, is Central or Northwest European, being Altaic (like Turkish, Finnish, or Hungarian) rather than simply Far-East, Oriental, or Middle Eastern. Once again, Orientalism is tied to a fetishization of so-called stereotyped perceptions of "Oriental" features. Thus, the people described share greater similarity to Western culture than fetishism and

arms-length portrayals by North Americans make us out to be. The Koreans and Japanese, in addition to embracing the Far West religions, also embraced the Middle East by sharing trade routes and artistic techniques with Persia since the ancient days of the Silla Kingdom with which it traded via the Silk Road since the days of Jesus Christ, approximately between 60 B.C. and 0 A.D. in the early age of the Koguryo Kingdom.⁵

Notes

1. Simonti et. al, *Science*. 12 Feb 2016.
2. "With those two gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus, we link our recognition that in the Greek world there exists a huge contrast, in origins and purposes, between visual (plastic) arts, the Apollonian, and the non-visual art of music, the Dionysian. Both very different drives go hand in hand, for the most part in open conflict with each other and simultaneously provoking each other all the time to new and more powerful offspring, in order to perpetuate for themselves the contest of opposites which the common word 'Art' only seems to bridge, until they finally, through a marvelous metaphysical act, seem to pair up with each other and, as this pair, produce Attic tragedy, just as much a Dionysian as an Apollonian work of art" (BT, 11).
3. This is why Alan Watts found it relatively easy to bring the West Soto Zen Buddhism from Japan.
4. Jay Caspian Kang, *The New York Times*.
5. Hee Soo Lee, Middle East Institute: "1500 years of contact between Korea and the Middle East" states that in 845 A.D., "Ibn Khurdadhbih was the first Arab scholar who chronicled Muslim settlement in Korea during the Unified Silla era (661-935)," [stating], "Silla is located to the extreme end of China and as a white race, Silla people are descendants of Noah's son Japhet and Japhet's son Amur...Silla is a country abounding in gold. Muslims who advanced there, captivated by its congenial surroundings, tend to settle there for good".

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