THE RADICALIZATION OF NIETZSCHE’S DIONYSIAN-APOLLONIAN
DIALECTIC
IN THE VIETNAM WAR AND 9/11

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Department of Humanities and Religious Studies
Abstract

of

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Sociohistorical influences, such as the Vietnam War and 9/11, strongly stimulate the creative processes of dialectics within different epochs. In conjunction, diametrically opposed forms of human inventiveness, in rationalism and rapture, are dialectically inspired in times of human calamity. However, the historical and phenomenological progressions of these resurgent eras of profound creativity are not explicit.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s formative work *The Birth of Tragedy* gives form to both sides of these radicalized dialectical exchanges through the diametrically opposed Greek art deities Dionysus and Apollo, and isolates their historically and phenomenologically creative evolutions within Greek Attic tragedies.
The contemporary human catastrophes of the Vietnam War and 9/11 provide the conceptual arenas to isolate Nietzsche’s historical and phenomenological progressions of tragedy and creativity in “real world tragic experiences.” Conclusively, the modalities of Dionysus and Apollo resurface in these two distinct eras of American history to give form to a radicalized dialectical exchange of creativity in the process of tragic unfolding.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Victoria Shinbrot

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Date
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Music and tragic myth are equally the expression of the Dionysian capacity of a people, and are inseparable from each other. Both originate in a sphere of art lying beneath and beyond the Apollonian; both transfigure a region in whose joyous harmony all dissonance, like the terrible picture of the world, dies charmingly away; both play with the sting of displeasure, relying on their most potent magic; both thereby justify the existence of even the ‘worst world.’” (Nietzsche, Tragedy 91)

The above quote, taken from Friedrich Nietzsche’s seminal work The Birth of Tragedy, celebrates the unification of art and myth in a transcendent transmutation of pathos within the human psyche. For Nietzsche, this process is explicit in the vitiating creative responses towards variations of the concept of “tragedy,” in which violent human perils such as war and catastrophe are paradoxically justified due to the redemptive artistic expression they inspire. Calling upon the ancient art deities Dionysus and Apollo, Nietzsche develops the notion of the tragic with their manifestations in Greek Attic tragedies. This notion is important because the creative impetuses of the Dionysian and the Apollonian modalities in Greek Attic tragedies embody artistic faculties that are manifest in real-world situations. According to twentieth-century scholar John Carlevale, “Apollo and Dionysus are metaphors for psychic capacities bequeathed to us by the Greeks, ‘who taught and still teach us how to sublimate.’ Apollo … [subjects] matter and
instinct into the form of art and reason...Dionysus, by contrast, ‘is not dream but
drunkenness; not life kept at a distance and seen through a veil but life complete and
immediate’” (82-3). Carlevale’s appraisal of the Dionysian and the Apollonian is crucial
in understanding Nietzsche’s ideas concerning the relationship of ancient and modern
societies through dialectics. This notion is relevant because, Nietzsche sees the artistic
manifestations of the two diametrically opposed deities as the sources of celebrated
Greek philosophy, mathematics, science, and democracy. Along this line of thought,
Nietzsche seeks to reestablish the invaluable impetus of pathos as it unfolds creatively
and dialectically through the catalases of Dionysus and Apollo, a process that embeds
artistry within the very cornerstone of ancient and modern civilizations. With this in
mind, the notion of the tragic is an intriguing common thread that inter-weaves the
ancient and contemporary worlds as it exhibits itself in inter-generational trends of
profound resurgent artistic vitality.

Trauma manifested in “real world tragic experiences” such as war and
catastrophe, induces an all-pervasive pathos in the human psyche; this immensely
irrational mindset serves as an immediate reminder of the fragility and
incomprehensibility of the human experience. Correspondingly, the explicitly illogical
state of trauma requires artistic channels to sublimate emotions creatively.\(^1\) Therefore, in

\(^1\) “[T]rauma describes an experience so overwhelming that its understanding is at best
deferred and its very apprehension many only be through symptomatic
manifestations...Trauma is, one might say, the event par excellence, the event as
traumatic situations, such as the Vietnam War and the 9/11 attacks on New York City, those influenced by human calamity encapsulate their traumatic experiences within the diametrically opposed creative faculties of Dionysus and Apollo. Historically speaking, when placing these two artistic capacities within a temporal flux, the paradoxical inversions of this dialectical exchange unfold throughout history, both informing and changing the vast artistic and corresponding intellectual legacy of humankind. Moreover, as in the case of the Vietnam War where 3,000,000 people died (Lytle 176), and 9-11 where 3,000 people died (Morgan, et.al. 447), the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo is heightened, hurried, and enhanced. The radicalization of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic is due to an immense injection of pathos into the psychic milieu of the planet that sublimates artistically. This notion exhibits itself in a pattern throughout human history wherever human catastrophe occurs. The purpose of this essay is to explore how an infusion of pathos into the global consciousness through the trauma of the Vietnam War and 9/11 radicalizes each artistic modality in Nietzsche’s Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic in historically and phenomenologically verifiable contexts.

This exploration into the radicalization of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic during the Vietnam War and 9/11 is accomplished in the following ways. First of all, an unintelligible, as the pure impact of sheer happening” (Saltzman, Rosenberg xi). Since trauma is explicitly irrational, the only way it sublimes is by the creative, i.e. “irrational” mind.
introduction into the Dionysian and Apollonian modalities and their manifestations within the early developments of the Vietnam War and 9/11 will provide a critical-historical foundation for understanding dialectics. Secondly, an overview of Nietzschean cosmology and the dialectical impetus of pathos in contemporary epistemics will animate the historical relationship of the Dionysian and Apollonian modalities as they resurface in the contemporary American ethos. Thirdly, a phenomenological examination of modern trauma studies and the notion of tragedy will provide a confluence of Nietzschean thought and the societal tragedies of the Vietnam War and 9/11. After that, an analysis of Nietzsche’s aesthetic theory and its relationship to the artistry of Dionysus and Apollo will provide specific contemporary examples of novel artistry isolated from a radicalized dialectical exchange in the modern era. Next, a brief overview of pathological manifestations of Dionysus and Apollo within the sociohistorical environs of Vietnam and 9/11 are up-to-date illustrations of imbalances within the radicalized dialectical exchange of the two deities. Finally, a phenomenological study of ancient Greek Attic tragedies as well as real world tragic experiences within Vietnam and 9/11 will provide a conceptual schematic that illumines a highly radicalized dialectical exchange of the Dionysian and Apollonian archetypes in which art is elevated to myth. Finally, these components conjoin in symphony to explore how an infusion of pathos into the global consciousness during the Vietnam War and 9/11 radicalizes both artistic capacities in the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic.

The sociohistorical context of the Vietnam War enmeshes with the cold war consensus of the 1950’s. In this era, the United States was inundated with propaganda
and fear concerning the global threat of communism (Lytle 13). The rhetoric and ideology of the cold war consensus pervaded every facet of American life by the dawn of the 1960’s. According to 1960’s historian Mark Hamilton Lytle:

The phrase ‘under God’ was an essential ingredient in the cold war consensus that by the mid 1950’s had become and American orthodoxy. Never again would the nation be so clearly united in its determination to contain the communist menace at home and abroad. At the heart of the consensus was the belief shared by liberals and conservatives alike that America had a mission to fight the international communist menace. (14)

Moreover, in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, the American government and citizens alike feared that the spread of communism from North Vietnam into South Vietnam would further strengthen the Soviet communist regime (Lytle 13). Resultantly, the United States government took unprecedented steps in isolating the communist threat in Southeast Asia. The 1950’s and 1960’s era cold war included “a peacetime draft, the reconstitution of the wartime military-industrial complex, [and] acceleration of the nuclear arms race (development of the hydrogen bomb)” (Lytle 15). With the advent of military actions in the Vietnam War, the impetus of fear concerning communism and nuclear annihilation had risen to a fever pitch. Consequently, American citizens sacrificed their lives in the jungles of Southeast Asia to insulate the nation from impending global catastrophe.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001 caused a paradigmatic shift in the American consciousness. The disaster
shattered notions of homeland security that American citizens had enjoyed since the Pearl
Harbor attacks. To put this revolution in a somewhat metaphorical perspective,
“September 11, 2001 began as a bright and clear late-summer morning. By the time the
sun had set, a band of terrorists had crashed commercial airplanes into the World Trade
Center, the Pentagon, and a field in rural Pennsylvania, killing approximately 3,000
victims and vastly changing America’s social and political landscape” (Morgan, et.al.
447). Resultantly, as 9-11 is the first coordinated military attack on U.S. soil in decades,
9-11 represents “the end of Americans’ perceived invulnerability and freedom from
worry” that comprised the mindset of the post-WWII paradigm (Morgan, et.al. 447). The
existential complexity of the 9-11 attacks on New York City cannot be overstated.
According to 9-11 scholar Tovia G. Freedman:

No peacetime attack of this magnitude had ever befallen the United States, and an
unsuspecting population was assaulted by a seismic avalanche to mind and
landscape that created a sense of disbelief and disorientation. Making sense of
this terrorist act and what it meant was rendered all the more difficult by the fact
that it was a narrowly focused attack experienced as an assault on a whole country
and way of life. (387)

The attacks of 9/11 prompted a sense of fear and anxiety about Islamic terrorism that
encompasses American politics and military actions to this day, as with the attacks
“Terrorism moved from a minor concern to a ‘War on Terror” (Powell 90). By the same
token, as news coverage of the 9-11 attacks literally television screens the world over
with images of Muslim terrorists, there developed “a sustained climate of fear” in
America concerning the Islamic religion (Powell 90). Interestingly enough, and in reference to the cold war, “Following the attacks of 9/11 political Islam may well have replaced the Soviet Union in the eyes of most Americans as serving as the object of opposition to American foreign policy” (Al-Hamdi, Mostafa 725).
CHAPTER 2: THE DIONYSIAN AND APOLLONIAN MODELS

“War is always so attractive to young men who know nothing about it, but we had also been seduced into uniform by Kennedy’s challenge to ‘ask what you can do for your country’ and by the missionary idealism he had awakened in us. America seemed omnipotent then: the country could still claim it had never lost a war, and we believed we were ordained to play cop to the Communists’ robber and spread our own political faith around the world [sic].” (Caputo 150)

The featured quote, taken from Vietnam Veteran Philip Caputo’s book *A Rumor of War*, speaks to a historical resurfacing of the Apollonian inspired political and military narratives in early 1960’s America. The ideological underpinnings of this quote are noteworthy because they are evidence of a process of historical-dialectical unfolding of Dionysus and Apollo as it presents itself in the ethos of contemporary America. This process begins with Dionysus, an extremely ancient deity whose chaotic, amoral disposition finds its ontological ground in the creative and destructive ebb and flow of the natural world (Otto 52). Quite differently, Apollo’s ordered, rationalistic character is most notable in arbitrary constructs of human culture, such as the American political agendas in Vietnam (Sayer 112). Under these circumstances, the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo within the beginnings of the Vietnam War and 9/11 situates itself within the paradoxical tension of Dionysian anarchy and “excess” and Apollonian “restraint and measure” (Gambino 427).
The ancient Greeks were existentially troubled with their place in the cosmos; they created a pantheon of gods through which to solidify cultural and spiritual identities against the ever-present flux of time (Gambino 18). Nietzsche states:

The terms Dionysian and Apollonian we borrow from the Greeks, who disclose to the discerning mind the profound mysteries of their view of art, not to be sure, in concepts, but in the impressively clear figures of their gods….These two distinct tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births. (Tragedy 1)

Dionysus and Apollo represent two deities revered by the ancient Greeks, and Nietzsche places their characteristics within the creative faculties of humankind. By the same token, the dialectical exchanges of these two creative impulses are explicit in the notion that they stimulate one another in a historical unfolding of “new and more powerful births.” Nevertheless, while Nietzsche isolates the Dionysian and the Apollonian as artistic drives, he broadens the definition of art to include all human endeavors. For this reason, each artistic mode presents highly influential manifestations in the psychology, mythology, art, and politics of ancient Greece as well as the contemporary epoch of the Vietnam War and 9/11.

The mythology and psychology of the Dionysian ethos source themselves from the characteristics of the god Dionysus. Dionysus is believed to be an extremely ancient deity, and ancient Greece “is looked upon as the most important witness for the great age of Dionysus” (Otto 52-3). This is because ancient Greece, “is intimately acquainted with his cult and his myths, and it speaks of him in the same manner in which it speaks of the
deities who have been worshipped since time immemorial” (Otto 52-3). Correspondingly, Dionysus is far older than the Homeric gods, and his vitiating characteristics are enmeshed within the fabric of Apollo himself, giving birth to their dialectical exchange from the very conception of the deity Apollo (Otto 52). A few key elements of Dionysian mythology are profoundly influential in its psychological resurfacing into the era of the Vietnam War and 9/11.

Dionysian ontology is dynamically and non-dualistically grounded within the ebb and flow of the natural-world and greater-cosmos. Correspondingly, his entire existence is inconceivable to the rational mind as it is eternal as well as omnipresent (Otto 152). According to Dionysus scholar Walter F. Otto, “As a genuine god, he must pervade a great realm of natural phenomena with his spirit. He must be actively manifest in them in a thousand ways, and yet always remain the same. This realm must be whole, and not just part or a section of the world, but, instead, one of the eternal forms of its totality” (152).

According to the Dionysian ethos, empirical reality is illusory, as objective impressions of the cosmos artificially bifurcate and concretize a naturally pantheistic and dynamic universe that is well beyond the realm of logical comprehension (de Man 49). Contemporary philosopher Paul de Man describes the psychic influence of Dionysian sublimations as such:

All appearance…is appearance of something that, in the last analysis, no longer seems to be but actually is. This ‘something’ can only be Dionysos.

Contrary to the Dream, devoid of actuality, the intoxication which is said to be the physiological equivalence of Dionysos takes us back to the origin of things,
precisely to the extent that it awakes us from the sleep of empirical reality [sic].

(de Man 49)

For de Man, the artistic channeling of the Dionysian elevates the human mind to a point of rapture, in which the excessiveness of the deity’s pantheistic ontology saturates the mind with a sort of “intoxication.” It is for this reason that the Dionysian does not respect the arbitrary cultural constructs of man, such as nations and governments, which Apollo reveres. Dionysus’s non-dualistic ontology seeps between the divergent narratives of objective thinking.

The anarchistic, amoral nature of Dionysian mythology links itself to his paradoxical manifestations in the ever-present dynamic movements of creation and destruction, through which nature thrives and feeds off itself (Otto 95). To again look to Otto, when the Dionysian archetype is illumined, “The primeval world ... [steps] into the foreground, the depths of reality have been opened, [and exposed] the elemental forms of everything that is creative, everything that is destructive, bringing with it infinite rapture and infinite terror” (95). As Dionysus embodies the natural world, his features are manifest in a random chaos that does not abide by any moral code or teleological impetus. To elaborate further, in The Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche describes the character of the cosmos as such:

[T]o talk of intrinsic right and intrinsic wrong [in the natural world] is absolutely nonsensical; intrinsically, an injury, an oppression, an exploitation, an annihilation can be nothing wrong, inasmuch as life is essentially (that is, in its
cardinal functions) something which functions by injuring, oppressing, exploiting, and annihilating, and is absolutely inconceivable without such a character. (49) Nietzsche’s insightful evaluation of the natural-order-of-things presents an ontology where oppression is as necessary, and natural, as nourishment. Therefore, while the Apollonian is situated with the “restraint and measure” of moral codes, the Dionysian exemplifies the necessity of amoral destruction which is overt in the natural world.

Regarding the Vietnam conflict, the impending threat of nuclear attack resonated throughout the cold war era, representing a contemporary manifestation of a prototypical Dionysian destructive force (Lytle 110). Along this line of thought, in the pre-Vietnam cold war era, Soviet allies in Cuba installed nuclear missiles within firing range of the American mainland (Lytle 115). Point being, the archaic deity Dionysus is pervasive in the American consciousness of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s as at the time “the seemingly secure world” of the U.S. “stood on the eve of destruction” (Lytle 114). To enumerate, Apollonian narratives that promised to insulate American citizens from the possible unleashing of “the titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysian” in the form of atomic weaponry saturate political agendas of the era. (Nietzsche, Power 12). For example, “Among [President] Kennedy’s earliest initiatives was an article in Life magazine encouraging the building of home bomb shelters. The most popular book of 1961 was a Defense Department pamphlet called The Family Fallout Shelter” (Lytle 110). To sum it up, in the cold war era the Dionysian resurfaces in the psychology of American citizens with the impending threat of nuclear annihilation, U.S. politicians
utilized this “usable crisis” to establish a globalized assault on communism that eventually manifested in the Vietnam War (Lytle 177).

Dionysian insight is a wholly subjective endeavor; this notion is manifest in altered states of consciousness rendered from compounds in the natural world (Otto 145). As the link between Dionysus and the natural world is one of ontological homogeneity, the god manifests himself in a perpetual myriad of ways, including magical and intoxicating plants (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 24). Otto elaborates, in reference to the use of wine in ancient Dionysian ceremonies, “the glories which arise from a primal world…emerge like blessed miracles from Dionysian madness. But there is a sacred plant in which this madness itself rises out of the earth in the form of an elixir which intoxicates. This is the vine” (145). To look again to the Vietnam War, battle stricken American soldiers engaged in daily rituals of stopping “at four-thirty” every afternoon to drink with one another (Santoli 5). When faced with the absolute horrors of warfare in Vietnam, alcohol was used as a “blessed miracle” to stifle temporarily the trauma of warfare by altering one’s consciousness.

Due to the limitless nature of Dionysian ontology, psychological identifications with the deity are both transformative and life affirming (Carlevale 86). As Carlevale elucidates, these ideals are in stark contradiction to the concretized, rationalistic ethos of the deity Apollo:

Dionysus remains a central metaphor for the power of consciousness to transform itself by shattering the artificial categories imposed by Apollonian rationalism…Frequently endowed with the epithet ‘the mad god,’ Dionysus
‘breaks down the boundaries; releases the prisoners; abolishes repression; and abolishes the *principium individuationis*, substituting for it the unity of man...’

(86)

With immersion in the universal consciousness of Dionysus, the way opens for metamorphoses of the psyche, in which humans reconnect through an ontological union with one another and the natural world (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 4). Nietzsche elaborates that “Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become estranged, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more here reconciliation with her prodigal son, man” (*Tragedy* 4). As espoused by both Carlevale and Nietzsche, by peering beneath the arbitrary categorization of Apollo humans strip themselves of objective identities that are meaningless in the boundlessness of time, space, and flux in the Dionysian cosmos (Carlevale 86).

Unlike Dionysus, who exists before the conception of orthodox Greek culture, Apollo’s existence as a “Homeric god” manifests from the creative and destructive powers of Dionysus (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 12). Nietzsche describes Apollo’s a priori connection to the Dionysian as such, Apollo “had to recognize even more than this: despite all its beauty and moderation, his entire existence rested on a hidden substratum of suffering and knowledge, which was again revealed to him by the Dionysian. And lo! Apollo could not live without Dionysus! [sic]” (*Tragedy* 12). Apollo’s genesis in Dionysian ontology sets the stage for the inter-generational dialectical relationship of the two psychological prototypes from the era of the ancient Greeks to that of the Vietnam War and 9/11. de Man puts it this way:
Truth, presence, and being are all on Dionysos’ side, and history can only occur as the birth and rebirth of a father in whose absence no son could ever exist. The starting-point, Dionysus, contains the endpoint, the Apollonian work of art, within itself governs the dialectical pathway that leads from the one to the other. Any cross-section made in the diachrony of the history can be valorized in terms of the greater or lesser manifestations or presence of Dionysos, the original ‘ground’ by means of which distance and proximity can be measured [sic]. (46) de Man is presenting a dialectical exchange in which archaic Dionysian vitality presents itself as a wellspring of energy with which the Apollonian manifests itself through artistry in form. Correspondingly, within the human consciousness, the dynamism of Dionysus requires Apollo’s obsession with structure to manifest novel forms of expression in a communicably intelligible fashion.

Apollonian psychology bases itself on “the joy and wisdom of ‘appearance’” as it requires an unbending faith in the legitimacy of objective reality in order to operate (Nietzsche, Tragedy 3). For this reason, “the veil” often metaphorically represents Apollonian psychology (Pappas 44). When juxtaposed against Dionysian psychology, which lends no credence to empirical reality, Apollonian psychology operates strictly within “the veil” of the empirical (Pappas 44). Apollo’s objectively sourced worldview necessitates a bifurcating logic that enmeshes itself within the laws of rationality (Hayes, Quinby 160). Correspondingly, according to Nietzsche, “Apollo seeks to calm individual beings precisely by drawing boundary lines between them, and by again and again, with his requirement of self-knowledge and self-control, recalling these bounds to us as the
holiest laws of the universe” (Tragedy 33). Nietzsche’s statement is important because the ideal of “self-knowledge” requires a dualistic worldview in which objective thought claims to claims to statically isolate a phenomenon and understand it in its entirety. For example, in the wake of 9/11, many Americans created strict delineations between themselves and Muslims, assuming they fully understand the highly complex historical, sociopolitical phenomenon of terrorism (Pilat 171). In the same vein, a by-product of this sort of dichotomizing is a morally evaluative comparison of “better” and “worse,” a notion that drastically heightens during times of human catastrophe and war. The sort of arbitrary valuation occurring with Apollonian psychology is embedded in many facets of Western culture, including race, morality, rationality, religion, and law.

Nietzsche refers to Apollo as the god of “principium individuationis” largely because his worldview necessitates strict delineations between different cultures. For Nietzsche, this notion is extremely dangerous, as pathological Apollonianism can lead to the domination of one culture over another (Pilat 175). Specifically, this concept is evident with the American westernization of the Middle East and its vast Muslim populations (Al-Hamdhi, Mostafa 732). Thus, cultural scholars believe that “American hegemony, arrogance, and disregard for the lives of the people in the Arab world” is a leading cause of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks (Al-Hamdhi, Mostafa 733). To elucidate this notion further, in Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche glaringly describes a cultural caste system that arises from Apollonian leveraging and cultural evaluation:

While every aristocratic morality springs from a triumphant affirmation of its own demands, the slave morality says ‘no’ from the very outset to what is ‘outside
itself,’ ‘different from itself, and ‘not itself’; and this ‘no’ is its creative deed. This volte-face of the valuing standpoint—this *inevitable* gravitation to the objective instead of back to the subjective…the slave-morality requires as the condition of its existence an external and objective world, to employ psychological terminology, it requires objective stimuli to be capable of action at all—its action is fundamentally a reaction. (*Genealogy* 19)

Nietzsche’s compelling appraisal of hierarchical social orders further illuminates the inherent dangers in Apollonian objectivity and resultant valuation, as when applied to the human condition they can perpetuate a “slave morality.” In a contemporary context, the perspectives of the terrorists who committed 9/11 evince this notion. These Islamic fundamentalists were reacting against the “aristocratic morality” of hegemonic American political and economic entities in the Middle East which are obsessed with their fulfilling their “own demands.”

The Apollonian also manifests itself concerning orthodoxy religious beliefs; this notion helps inform the causes of 9/11. Nietzsche scholar Giacomo Gambino describes this process as such, “‘orthodox dogmatism’ [arises] when its religious premises are ‘systematized as a sum total of historical events’ that ‘opposes any continuation of their natural vitality and growth.’ Collective identity thus gets entrapped in a rigidified past that holds the present generation in its debt” (436). In the context of 9/11, the terrorists inherited a mutated form of Islam that they isolated in their generation as “objective Apollonian religious law.” According to terrorism authority Joseph F. Pilat:
It must be stated at the outset that Islam, which is a religion of peace and tolerance, was not the cause [of 9/11]. But the terrorists’ rhetoric expressed a violent brand of Islamic extremism. In particular, they declared they were acting in the name of God. They decreed the desecration of Islam and its holiest sites by the influence and presence of ‘Jews’ and ‘Crusaders.’ (175)

Point being, the sort of Islamic fundamentalism that motivated 9/11 represents a gross transfiguration of the Muslim religion, which Nietzsche identifies with the dogmatically oriented narratives of “learned religions” (Tragedy 65). This religious orientation has profound political impacts as Islamic fundamentalists “believe that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and implemented in some fashion” (Al-Hamdi, Mostafa 724). Consequently, the Apollonian oriented religious ethos of fundamentalist Islam motivated the 9/11 attacks to appease a misguided debt to Muslim icons such as Muhammad.

As witnessed with the formation of religious dogmas in fundamentalist Islam, the inter-generational trends of Apollonian thought cause a solidification of heterogeneous cultural customs into homogeneous laws that are upheld at all costs, often resulting in violence and warfare. For Nietzsche, this process represents a gross normalizing conditioning of the human psyche, in which Apollo molds and sculpts individual minds to match political narratives, motivating them to vehemently defend “the State” (Genealogy 58). This sort of ideological control was rampant in cold war America and
eventually led to the outpouring of violence in the Vietnam War. Nietzsche describes the power of Apollo to shape the people of a nation as:

[T]he fitting of a hitherto unchecked and amorphous population into a fixed form, starting as it had done in an act of violence, could only be accomplished by acts of violence and nothing else—that the oldest ‘State’ appeared consequently as a ghastly tyranny, a grinding ruthless piece of machinery, which went on working, till this raw material of a semi-animal populace was not only thoroughly kneaded and elastic, but also moulded…Their work is an instinctive creating and impressing of forms, they are the most involuntary, unconscious artists they are:-- their appearance produces instantaneously a scheme of sovereignty which is live, in which the functions are partitioned and apportioned, in which above all no part is received or finds a place, until pregnant with a ‘meaning’ in regard to the whole [sic]. (Genealogy 58)

For Nietzsche, Apollo necessitates violence in the formation and defense of political ideologies that staunchly isolate cultures from one another. Furthermore, Apollo’s artistry manifests by sculpting of both civilian and soldier minds to serve military ends. This process is required for the induction of any military campaign in the contemporary United States. Not to mention the fact, the pervasiveness of Apollo was widespread in almost every facet of life in 1950’s America as FBI director J. Edgar “Hoover insisted that winning the cold war required more than stamping out Communism. His propaganda mill churned out endless platitudes about the sanctity of moral character, family, patriotism, and respect for God” (Lytle 17). In like manner, Presidents Kennedy,
Johnson, and Nixon espoused the propagandist narratives of Hoover as they saturated the minds of Americans with cold war ideologies that shaped an “amorphous population [of pluralistic Americans] into a fixed form” engrossed with destroying “the communist menace” in North Vietnam.

To Nietzsche, “‘war is ... Apollo, [he is] the true divinity for consecrating and purifying the state’” (Gambino 423); Apollonian nationalistic narratives inspire men to achieve battlefield glory in the name of arbitrary ideologies. This notion also applies to the war in Vietnam as “For all the blood and treasure spent in Southeast Asia [during the conflict], few Americans, even those planning the war, cared much about Vietnam or knew much about its history. For most in Washington, it was a piece of a larger cold war puzzle made consequential only because of its links to ... the Soviet Union” (Lytle 246). Point being, the propaganda and rhetoric of the cold war eventually solidified into motivation for military maneuvers in Vietnam to protect the sanctity of “global democracy.” The notion of wartime killing in the name of preserving a state identity was practiced by the ancient Greeks and aligns with Nietzsche’s conception of Apollonian nationalism. According to Gambino, “For Nietzsche, war did not result from the failure of the Greeks to establish an authoritative identity; rather, it was a direct consequence of the need to assert it against others. Victory over others was a means of gaining reassurance from the insecurities and ambiguities associated with one’s own identity” (423). To elaborate with a specific example, prior to the escalation of war in Vietnam, “Kennedy had promised repeatedly to infuse the cold war crusade with new energy. As a consequence, he intended to make foreign policy the focus of his administration” (Lytle
10). Conclusively, Kennedy’s Apollonian drive to protect an American “identity” embedded with ideals of freedom and democracy led to a globalized assault on the spread of communism, resulting in the shedding of “Vietnamese and American blood to protect nation prestige” (Lytle 176).

The epic poems by the famous Greek author Homer are a primary example of Apollonian artistry in ancient Greek culture (Gambino 418). For example, Homer’s famous works, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, provide a unified cultural identity that gives rise to sharp distinctions between the Greeks and others (Sayre 108). Homer’s epic poems provide a dualistic worldview that propagates Greek law, morality, and finally war. Resultantly:

In later Greek culture, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were the basis of Greek education. Every schoolchild learned the two poems by heart. They were the principal vehicles through which the Greeks came to know the past, and through the past, they came to know themselves…But in defining this larger cultural ambition, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* laid the individual values and responsibilities that all Greeks understood to be their personal obligations and duties if the state were ever to realize its goals. (Sayre 108)

Correspondingly, the Apollonian impetuses behind the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* resonate with the exceptionalizing narratives of religion and politics as seen in the Vietnam War. Veteran Thomas Bird recalls, “We never had much indoctrination about the Vietnamese according to their culture, their traditions, how different they were going to be. They were shockingly different from the moment we got there” (Santoli 35). Bird’s
recolletion of the cultural differences of Americans and the Vietnamese is indicative of cultural functions of Homeric epics, in which the Greeks, like Americans, are seen as more “human” than other cultures (Santoli 35). What Bird is presenting here is the power of political narratives to stimulate differences between nations by way of discriminative cultural education programs. As can be seen, the congruence of the Homeric epics of ancient Greece with the political narratives of the Vietnam War is an example of a historically resurgent trend of Apollonian artistry.

Conversely, Greek Attic tragedies are the most famous display of Dionysian artistry within ancient Greek culture. 2 Again, Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* is largely dedicated to the phenomenological and societal functionality of these plays. Paradoxically, the Greek Attic tragedy is an artistic expression of Dionysus’s ontology. Dionysian wisdom, when channeled, exposes the illusory nature of the only reality humankind can grasp, that being empirical reality (de Man 49). de Man elaborates, stating “Why then, if all truth is on Dionysos’s side, is Apollonian art not only possible but necessary?...It follows directly from the characterization of the Dionysian insight as tragic insight. The discovery that all empirical reality is illusory is called a tragic discovery; no man, it seems, would be able to withstand its destructive power [sic]” (49). For the ancient Greek, the metaphorical union of Dionysian ontology and Apollonian

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2 The Greek tragedy is an expression of Dionysus as he is the wellspring of the creative energy of the cosmos. However, as will be explained in a later section of this work, Apollo’s structured thinking is required in the function of the play.
expression manifests in Attic tragedies such as *Oedipus the King* (Gambino 434). This is because, Oedipus’s reality as a king represents Apollo’s empirical reality, in which Oedipus is living within the confines of the Apollonian veil. Forthwith, when Oedipus finally realizes that he has killed his father and married his mother, the horror of the Dionysian is exposed, and “All laws, all natural order, yea, the moral world itself … [are] destroyed through his action” (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 29-30). Given those points, the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo is explicit in this Greek Attic tragedy as Oedipus reveals “the difficult fact that humans can neither live without, nor fully be at home within an artificially constructed home” (Gambino 434). For Nietzsche, the dialectical exchange of this Greek Attic tragedy comes to a head when Oedipus’s suffering reveals a hidden reality beneath his previously conceived reality and exposes the unfathomable Dionysian.
“Such events and phenomena as the ‘Cold War, the ‘American dream’, ‘Vietnam’, are epochal signifiers, which is to say that they do not simply apply to actual events located in the theatres of war, politics or economics at their core but to ‘a mood of the times’; to a set of anxieties, fears, hopes, dreams, investments that flowed more extensively, that touched, captured, mobilised people in their daily lives [sic].” (Bennett 63)

Jill Bennett’s quote, taken from her work *Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affects and Art after 9/11*, elucidates the function of a “mood,” such as pathos, in animating historical events as seen in the Vietnam War and 9/11. With this in mind, Nietzsche’s cosmogenesis of “Primordial Being” vitiates the historical unfolding of Western epistemics with emotions channeled through the catalysts of the Dionysian and Apollonian (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 60). Firstly, the energetic wellspring of Nietzsche’s cosmogenesis is located upon an ontological praxis mirroring the dynamic characteristics of the deity Dionysus. At the same time, Nietzsche implants emotive stimulants as the impetus behind the epistemological upsurges within the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic as he feels they are what truly motivate “people in their daily lives.” Also, Nietzsche challenges the legitimacy of Apollonian epistemologies by placing epistemics within a temporal flux, which renders all rational knowledge susceptible to the corrosion of time. To illustrate the crux of this exploration, as the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic finds its
vigor in the fountainhead of Dionysian energetics and its expression in Apollonian form, the emotional profundity present in times of military conflict and human catastrophe stimulates this creative exchange of the two deities.

Nietzschean cosmology situates itself ontologically in a fashion that mirrors the metaphysical characteristics of the deity Dionysus: it is dynamic, amoral, and non-teleological. Correspondingly, Nietzsche labels the ontological state of the cosmos as “Primordial Being” which he describes as “the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena…the surplus of the countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life” (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 60). Like Dionysian mythology, Nietzschean cosmogenesis describes a universe in which all phenomena are intrinsically bound to one another in a continuous flux of creation and destruction, yet manifest themselves in different forms (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 60). Moreover, this continual transposition of life and death, form and formlessness, is not bound by any rational, religious, or positivistic impetus. To elucidate this notion Nietzsche proclaims:

Perhaps there is no more pregnant principle for any kind of history than the following, which, difficult though it is to master, *should* none the less be *mastered* in every detail.—the origin of the existence of a thing and its final utility, its practical application and incorporation into a system of ends, are *toto ceolo*\(^3\) opposed to each other—everything, anything, which exists and which prevails anywhere, will always be put to new purposes by a force superior to itself, will be commandeered afresh, will be turned and transformed to new uses; all

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\(^3\) This term is defined as “reason for the existence” of a thing (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 50).
‘happening’ in the organic world consists of overpowering and dominating, and again all overpowering and domination is a new interpretation and adjustment, which must necessarily obscure and absolutely extinguish the subsisting ‘meaning’ and ‘end’ [sic]. (Genealogy 50)

With these powerful insights, Nietzsche is describing a purely natural world in which existence of all phenomena bases itself upon an unprincipled, frenzied disposition for survival; Nietzsche is describing the figure of Dionysus himself.

Nietzsche enmeshes his concept of Primordial Being within a constant temporal flux to create an epistemologically corrosive worldview in which all human ideals first source themselves from the archaic, inclusive ontology of Dionysus. This notion means, Apollonian rationality is an arbitrary human fixation on the belief that cultural constructs exist independent of an underlying ontology of Dionysian disorder. This notion directly informs the historical continuum of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic. This is because, each artistic modality manifests as dominant for a time, only to be defeated by the other as random occurrences stimulate the creative capacities encased in both sides of the dialectic. Nietzsche scholar Peter J. Burgess states:

Important segments of Nietzsche’s work focus on history, understood in terms of changes to culture, knowledge, values, etc. Specifically, Nietzsche’s critique of historical rationality generates a theory of temporality and offers a number of insights not only into history—and the ebb and flow of changes it brings—but into the temporality of experience; of our relation to what is understood as a function of what has been. Nietzsche understands and tries to express the changes
to human culture in time and so, looking beyond the difference between what is and what has been, he also digs into the far more elusive pathos of that change, the troubling and contradictory experience of what is lived through the thought of what is not, of what has been, of what could still be. (697)

What Burgess is offering here is a description of Nietzschean temporality that holistically situates the history of human thought within a constantly changing epistemic environ. This idea is important because, one’s understanding of the cosmos builds itself largely upon the understandings of predecessors, who lived in a different world. With a genealogical reduction, it is evident that the historical-contextual “victor” arising within the ebb and flow of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic shapes the epistemic environs of ancestral historians and teachers.

For Nietzsche, the epistemological underpinnings causing the surging of either Dionysian or Apollonian thought throughout specific historical contexts find their genesis not in rational observation, but in emotions. For example, in the legacy of Western rationalism, “Whereas intellectual history unproblematically lines up ‘rational’ events along a singular linear chronology of history, Nietzsche sees a pathos, an appeal to emotion or sentiment, to passion or ardour [sic]” (Burgess 697). What is meant here is that “rationality” is completely entwined with humankind’s impassioned states, and what one might regard as “fact” is nothing more than a predecessors “feeling” concerning some sort of conceptual analysis. When paradigm-shifting tragedies as seen in the Vietnam War and 9/11 stimulate this dialectical schematic, the resultant amount of pathos in the global consciousness heightens profoundly.
The functions of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic are explicit with the advent of traumas within the Vietnam War and 9/11, as explosions of Dionysian energy shatter historically established Apollonian conceptions of the self and reality. To illustrate this notion, on September 11, 2001, “The chaotic situation unfolded [in New York City] on what was described by firefighters as ‘a spectacular day, not a cloud in the sky.’” In this juxtaposition of catastrophe and beauty, two large airliners struck the North and South towers of the World Trade Center (Freedman 378). With the utter dread of this scenario, “The [Apollonian] individual, with all his restraint and proportion, succumbed to the self-oblivion of the Dionysian state, forgetting the precepts of Apollo. [Through destruction] excess revealed itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out at the very heart of Nature … the Apollonian was checked and destroyed” (Nietzsche, Tragedy 12). Be that as it may, the paradigm shattering profundity of Dionysian unleashing on 9-11 is dialectically adjoined with a rising surge in Apollonian vigor to subdue the maelstrom. Nietzsche continues, in remembrance of ancient Greek culture, “But, on the other hand, it is equally certain that, wherever the first Dionysian onslaught was successfully withstood [by its oppositional counterpart], the authority and majesty of the Delphic god [Apollo] exhibited itself as more rigid and menacing than ever” (Power 12).

The dialectically adjoined pair of the Dionysus and Apollo consistently vitiate one another by a paradoxical rapport that necessitates the disbandment of totalized triumph to give birth continuously to novelty. In other words, within a temporal-historical unfolding, unbalanced manifestations of either deity stifle creativity. This process occurs by either entrapping human thought within the rationalistic narratives or Apollo or the epistemic
dismissal present in Dionysian nihilism. With pathological Apollonianism, the dialectical exchange of the two deities is mutated for a time, as cultural, religious, and political ideals become bent with arbitrary teleological aims, as seen with ideology of fundamentalist Islam (Carlevale, *Myth-History* 93). According to Carlevale, “The Apollonian drive to order and control turns pathological when ‘the compulsive, the philosophical determinist, and the social conformist turn everything into obligation, necessity, or fate,’ thereby turning the world from home into prison” (93). Taken to the other extreme, if the Dionysian functions psychologically without any inversion of the Apollonian, thoughts and expression never congeal into logically communicable concepts and rapidly fall into the realm of nihilism (Gambino 430). For Gambino, pathological “Dionysianism leads to a disgust with, and ultimately a rejection of, action and worldly affairs” (430). Be that as it may, if the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic functions in a balanced fashion, Nietzsche praises Apollonian artistry as an essential force in expressing unchecked Dionysian energy. This is because, Nietzsche feels that the Apollonian “satisfies our sense of beauty which longs for great and sublime forms; it presents us with biographical portraits, and incites us to a thoughtful comprehension of the essence of life dwelling within them” (*Tragedy* 79). Therefore, Apollonian artistry encases the Dionysian life force within cerebrally intelligible forms of expression, providing informative “biographical portraits” of the animate world.

Exploring how pathos radicalizes both modalities in Nietzsche’s Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic reveals strong congruencies between Nietzschean cosmology and the epistemological underpinnings of influential emotive states through the passage of
time. This notion presents a logical link of pathos between the traumatic dealings of the Vietnam War and 9/11 and historical resurgences of quickened dialectical exchanges between Dionysus and Apollo.
CHAPTER 4: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF TRAGEDY AND TRAUMA

“[U]nlike other forms of visual representation, photography is, while always merely itself, nearly always adjudged, perhaps incorrectly, to be of something. Painting is painting; architecture architecture ... But photography is quite simply a version of the world that no longer exists ... So photography offers the assimilation of death as a possibility, an impossible possibility, or a possible impossibility. In the center of which, lies trauma; in the center of whose facilitation is trauma.

In fact, trauma is the sense of what I have just described—a blow to consciousness so overwhelming as determine death in life, while disallowing life in death, that ingredient of faith, or fantasy, or ideology that, for better or worse, allows us to live, or perhaps survive life, to assimilate death, whether we like it, or know it, or not.” (Rosenberg 31)

Eric Rosenberg’s thoughts about trauma and its artistic representation in photography, taken from his book *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity*, lend insights into the phenomenological underpinnings of trauma and its relationship to the dialectical exchanges of the tragic. In real world tragic experiences, as seen in Vietnam and 9/11, victims are faced with harrowing life experiences precisely by meeting life’s counterpart, death. Resultantly, and through the excessive loss of life in wartime, trauma on a societal scale manifests en masse a “blow to the [global] consciousness so overwhelming” to
infuse an amplified amount of pathos into the cathartic catalysts of the Dionysian and Apollonian. Correspondingly, because traumatic situations present a state of mind wholly “unintelligible” to rationalism (Saltzman, Rosenberg xi), this state of mind requires creative channels to sublimate emotive transgressions in a psychically purgative fashion. With this in mind, Nietzsche’s conceptions of tragedy illuminate how the heightened amount of pathos present in traumatic situations manifests itself creatively, and liberatingly, within the human psyche. Perhaps most importantly, the phenomenological study of trauma provides an essential present-day link between Nietzsche’s notions of tragedy and creativity within Greek Attic tragedies and the unfolding of real world tragic experiences in Vietnam and 9/11.

The incomprehensible cost of human life during the Vietnam War rouses the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic due to the amount of emotions generated psychically at home and abroad during the military conflict. According to 1960’s historian Mark Hamilton Lytle, towards the middle 1960’s “No amount of presidential jawboning [on the part of President Johnson] could cover up one harsh reality: the human cost of the war was rising... By 1966, few families did not know someone with a son in Vietnam or who might soon go. Increasingly, young Americans had friends who had been killed, wounded, or returned from the war…strangely changed [sic]” (193). In conjunction with this notion, out of the 3,000,000 casualties attributed to the Vietnam War, 57,661 American soldiers were killed, and violent images of jungle warfare pervaded television screens across America (Santoli xv). Not to mention, the American military developed and utilized an array of weaponry that generously disposed of human life in a fashion
appalling to most American citizens (Lytle 191). This is largely because with increasingly brutal forms of warfare:

[T]he Americans began to make war on the jungle itself. By spraying large areas with defoliants such as Agent Orange, they sought to deny the enemy of the cover of triple canopy growth. Jellied gas bombs, or napalm, burned everything and everyone in its path. Daisy cutters sprayed lethal clouds of metal fragments. With such ghoulish devices, the American military adapted its deadly arsenal to the special circumstances of jungle warfare. (Lytle 191)

The loss of human life, coupled with the inhumane approaches to forest combat within the Vietnam War, was traumatically and emotionally impactful across the American landscape.

The dishonest way in which the U.S. government publically conveyed military maneuvers in Vietnam further generated impassioned responses to the war on the part of the American public, namely in the nation’s youth. To illustrate, early in the conflict President Kennedy’s military advisors utilized the fear inherited from the cold war consensus by playing up “North Vietnamese aggression” in the Gulf of Tonkin incident. In this instance, the U.S. Navy devised fallacious reports to manipulate public approval of military action in Vietnam (Lytle 165). The emotive consequences of this initial public campaign of dishonesty are palpable as this “pattern of secrecy and misinformation would be repeated throughout the war, first by Johnson and later by Nixon. It would ultimately create suspicion of official claims and increase the intensity of domestic opposition” (Lytle 166). Finally, as the Vietnam War escalated, the implementation of the
draft led to a deep distrust of U.S. government sensibility and morality. This is partially because by the middle 1960’s a vast majority of the nation had experienced the death of a friend or loved one due to the war (Lytle 193). These government actions largely influenced the rise of the 1960’s anti-war counterculture movements, which is representative of civilian responses to the trauma of wartime. Importantly, in her book *A Different War: Vietnam in Art* author Lucy R. Lippard states, “With the government and military both busily manufacturing disinformation, the truth about Vietnam might never had emerged were it not for the grassroots antiwar movement—[dubbed] ‘the war at home’” (10).

The sheer destructiveness of the 9/11 attacks on New York City sent ripples of terror across the American and global landscape. As the images of the two planes hitting the World Trade Center towers on that sunny morning were transmitted globally through television sets and internet feeds, the sociopolitical landscape of America was instantly altered (Freedman 378). According to Freedman:

The unparalleled attacks of 9/11/01 that caused the World Trade Center buildings to collapse in an avalanche of twisted steel, black smothering smoke and debris, resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, and created a pyramid of loss that reverberated throughout the national and world community. The psychological and physical enormity of 9/11 was impossible to comprehend. (377-8)

Due to the intensity of news coverage concerning 9/11, firefighters at ground zero, just as American citizens at home, experienced profoundly emotive responses to these peacetime attacks on the United States. Freedman continues, in reference to a fire marshal’s
recollected of the disturbing sights that unfolded on September 11, “Right there people were jumping … [I saw] a part of a torso [falling] … I knew that the jumpers were making a decision. They stood on the edge and made a decision … [as] a roaring hot fire ensued. I saw a guy fall and flip in the air and he went down on his back and his tie floated and fluttered in the air” (384). To put it another way, and as seen with the Vietnam War, the logical incompressibility of the profound experiences involved with 9/11’s unfolding is indicative of the rational departures experienced in immersion in the Dionysian archetype, this notion is enmeshed with both trauma and tragic experiences.

The notion of tragedy illuminates how the heightened amount of pathos during human catastrophes manifests itself creatively within the human psyche. The concept of tragedy expresses itself in a vast array of forms in the fifteen-hundred-year period between the “golden age” of ancient Greece and the real world tragedies inherent in the Vietnam War and 9/11. Consequently, “tragedy” is a term “rich in meaning and available for a variety of uses” that pervade many arenas of the human experience (Pirro 6). In summary, the notion of tragedy is present in “an unexpectedly fatal event or to an unusually difficult situation or condition [such as wartime or human calamity]; to a particular work of literature or to a genre of such works; … [and finally within] the distinctive theatrical practice associated with the Festival of Dionysus in ancient Athens [sic]” (Pirro 6). Of importance within this portion of the exploration is how notions of the tragic express themselves in relationship to contemporary trauma studies that inform psychological conditions of the disturbed mind in environs like war.
The historical-dialectical interplay of the Dionysian and the Apollonian radicalizes within the Vietnam War and 9-11 because it results in an amplified amount of redemptive artistry with the unfolding of tragic experiences. This phenomenon exists largely because, as individuals traumatized by the Vietnam War and 9/11 suddenly face harrowing reminders of an amoral, Dionysian cosmos, they often ask existentially poignant questions. This internal reexamination is linked to the pathos of the tragic experience, in which “a sort of attentiveness to suffering [is fostered] in which emotions are intensely engaged and, as a paradoxical result, a contemplative mood is fostered” (Pirro 13). The aforementioned process is essential in understanding the role of Dionysus and Apollo within processes of the tragic experience. The psychological state of the tragic experience is an altered state of consciousness representative of Dionysian insight or enlightenment that encases itself within the stabilizing precepts of Apollo. Importantly, when these two modalities work harmoniously, “Tragedy seeks…to transfigure suffering aesthetically in the uncertain hope of provoking cathartic and reconciliatory or redemptive forms of relief from it” (Pirro 18). This transformative phenomenon is further elucidated by Vietnam veteran Thomas Bird, recalling his mood after enough time in the jungles of Southeast Asia, “Morale was real low, the shock was real heavy, and I relate to the experience from the naiveté and gung-ho-ness with which we arrived until it was ghost time” (Santoli 42). Bird is elucidating the departure from Apollonian “naiveté” concerning the romanticization of war with the advent of transformative Dionysian consciousness in battle, denoted with the cryptic description of “ghost time.4” However,
and paradoxically, this intuitive, irrational insight of Dionysus paradoxically adjoins with the Apollonian to manifest in a consciously communicable fashion, such as Bird’s description of the inexplicable traumas of battle as “ghost time.” Consequently, an enigmatic immersion into Dionysian consciousness through tragic experiences provides a hyper-redefining of one’s worldview that necessarily unfolds in a novel form of Apollonian expression to be communicated.

A brief phenomenological investigation into trauma presents it as an essential ingredient in the radicalization of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic during times of human calamity as seen in the Vietnam War and 9/11. This is largely because traumatic experiences inexplicably cause one’s mind to pierce the Apollonian veil and expose the Dionysian ontology looming beneath “appearance.” Saltzman and Rosenberg explain trauma as such:

We know this term [trauma], whose literal meaning is wound, was adopted first by medicine and later by psychiatry and psychoanalysis to mean a psychic injury. We know further that, in its most general sense, trauma describes an experience so overwhelming that its understanding is at best deferred and its very apprehension many only be through symptomatic manifestations...Trauma is, one might say, the event par excellence, the event as unintelligible, as the pure impact of sheer happening. (xi)

As described by Saltzman and Rosenberg, the impact of trauma on the mind is so profound that the mind has no way to rationally apprehend and categorize the experience. This is because, trauma implants the human psyche directly into the realm of Dionysian
ontology or Primordial Being. With this notion, trauma is the creative or destructive “event par excellence” of which no Apollonian elucidation can grasp. To demonstrate, Bennet and contemporary philosophers such as Jaques Derrida have delved into the phenomenology of sublimating trauma within the realm of 9/11. She elaborates:

Leading writers who offered theoretical or creative work ‘in response’ to 9/11 concur on the difficulties of grasping the event, their work often distinguished by a focus on the quality of uncertainty or the very appearance of things not making sense. ‘Something took place,’ argued [Jaques] Derrida a few weeks after 11 September, ‘we have the feeling of not having seen it coming […] But this very thing, the place and meaning of this ‘event,’ remains ineffable, like an intuition without a concept…[T]he feelings which constitute the impression of the event—such as the feeling of not having seen it coming—themselves confound the idea that this ‘event’ has defined parameters. Thus, Derrida argues, the repetition of its shorthand name –three digits [9-11], representing ‘the attacks’—serves to underline ‘that we do not yet know how to qualify, that we do not know what we are talking about [sic]. (17-18)

With this example, Derrida provides phenomenological insights into how the traumatized mind attempts to encapsulate the ineffable event in a communicable fashion. The Apollonian again resurrects itself within “symptomatic manifestations” of the sublimating mind, in this case with the “shorthand name” of 9-11.

With the advent of trauma, there is a rational disconnect between the traumatic experience and its representation; this notion parallels Nietzsche’s epistemology of
emotions in which a creative act is a priori in the sublimating of Dionysian ontology. Correspondingly, a phenomenological investigation into trauma shows that the logically overwhelming nature of traumatic experiences exposes the pathos inherent in the Nietzschean conception of creativity. To begin with, because there is absolutely no logical registration occurring within the human mind at the time of trauma, the traumatic experience is pathos par excellence. Contemporary aesthetic theorist Isabella Wallace further elucidates this rather enigmatic notion as such:

[T]here is no relation between trauma and representation, as trauma is…the very thing about which nothing can be said, written, painted, or performed. On this more radical account, representations aimed at the traumatic do little more than point to their own limitations, producing as their ultimate subject the insurmountable distance between themselves and the traumatic event they seek to evoke. (3)

Wallace’s theory concerning trauma and artistic expression is crucial in informing the crux of this investigation as it provides a contemporary link within the Dionysian and Apollonian dialectic and its radicalization during times of war and catastrophe. In like manner, for the millions of victims of both the Vietnam War and 9/11, for the

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5 “Whereas intellectual history unproblematically lines up ‘rational’ events along a singular linear chronology of history, Nietzsche sees a pathos, an appeal to emotion or sentiment, to passion or ardour [sic]” (Burgess 697).
traumatized mind to move beyond the immersion in the Dionysian, it requires Apollonian artistic expression to sublimate in a psychically healthy fashion (Saltzman, Rosenberg x).

*In real world tragedies, the phenomenological unfolding of the tragic experience begins with trauma, and the transmutation of ineffable pathos into communicable artistic expression represents the psychic transformation of self that encases Dionysian insight within the transmittable precepts of Apollo.* The sheer magnitude of individual tragic experiences occurring within the psychic milieu of the Vietnam War and 9-11 leads to a greatly heightened amount of creative acts as individual minds collect themselves cathartically. These acts of artistic novelty represent a greatly radicalized version of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic as the two artistic deities consistently adjoin one another in paradoxical rapport within individual tragic experiences (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 1). To illustrate, in his oratory work *Bloods* Vietnam Veteran Wallace Terry recounts the first time he killed a Vietcong (332). Wallace vividly recollects that after shooting the man:

> I started draggin’ his body by the feet. And his arm fell off. So I had to go back and get his arm. I had to stick it down his pants. It was a long haul ... And I started thinkin’. You think about how it feels, the weight. It was rainin’. You think about the mist and the smells the rain brings out. All of a sudden I realize this guy is a person, he got a family. All of a sudden it wasn’t like I was carrying a gook. I was actually carrying a human being. I started feeling guilty. I just started feeling really badly [sic]. (332)

For Terry, the transformative nature of the tragic experience begins with the trauma of killing another human being. Next, this immersion in the Dionysian sublimes
therapeutically through the Apollonian with the recollection of the killing. Resultantly, Terry adopts a novel perspective concerning the humanity inherent in the Vietcong. For Nietzsche, these paradoxical inversions of death and creativity make “notions of tragedy congenial in … [his] reflections on the burdensome aspects of human existence” (Pirro 6). This is because, to return to the introductory quote of this essay, as the Dionysian and the Apollonian work in unison in tragic experiences, “both play with the sting of displeasure, relying on their most potent magic; both thereby justify the existence of even the ‘worst world’ (Nietzsche, Tragedy 91).
CHAPTER 5: NIETZSCHEAN AESTHETIC THEORY AND THE ARTISTRY OF DIONYSUS AND APOLLO IN VIETNAM AND 9/11

“Some people say / It’s what we deserve / For sins against god / For crimes in the world / I wouldn’t know / I’m just holding the fort / Since that day/ They wounded New York/ Some people say / They hate us of old / Our women unveiled / Our slaves and our gold / I wouldn’t know / I’m just holding the fort / But answer me this / I won’t take you to court / Did you go crazy / Or did you report / On that day / On that day/ They wounded New York.” (Cohen, Leonard)

In his tune “On that Day” contemporary singer and songwriter Leonard Cohen comments on the sociopolitical impetuses behind 9/11 as well as the psychological manners in which individuals have coped with the catastrophe. Cohen’s insightful lyrics, stating “Did you go crazy / Or did you report,” provides, and describes, an example of artistic sublimations isolated from the radicalized dialectical exchange of the Dionysian and Apollonian in the wake of 9/11. According to Nietzschean aesthetic theory, artists like Cohen are brave for creating works amidst the amoral flux of Dionysian ontology. Firstly, for Nietzsche, the artistic expression of the ancient Greeks sets the standard for purgative artwork encased in the Dionysian and the Apollonian. To illustrate this notion, music is the most fitting artistic expression of the Dionysian due to its fluid, fleeting nature; music has had powerful rebirths in the time of ancient Greece as well as in 1960’s era United States. In the same way, Nietzsche looks to the Apollonian practice of artistic
imagery as a vehicle for expressing existential stability in the face of the Dionysian. With this in mind, contemporary news coverage of 9/11 attacks is an example of an artistic medium which utilizes Apollonian imagery in the sublimation of emotions of terror.

Nietzsche vehemently praises the artist, whether predominantly Dionysian or Apollonian in character, because he feels artists are brave for creating artwork in spite of a meaningless cosmos embedded in Dionysian amorality and nihilism. *It is important to note, Nietzsche designates anyone who has a strong enough will to create something original in a chaotic cosmos, whether it be within in the sciences or humanities, as an artist* (*Power* 111). To elaborate, Nietzsche states, “there is only one world, and this is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, without meaning—a world thus constituted is the real world: *We have need of lies* in order to conquer this reality, this ‘truth,’ that is, in order to live. That lies are necessary in order to live is itself part of the terrifying and questionable character of existence” (*Power* 111). In order to quell the existential anxiety of living in Nietzsche’s Dionysian inspired notion of “the real world,” he feels that humans need artists to lie to themselves “in order to live.” *In other words, all elements and sublimations of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic source themselves from a pathos of dread reflective of Dionysian ontology.* Furthermore, Nietzsche’s highly controversial appraisal of epistemology and aesthetic theory further embellishes the paradoxical nature of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic, as for him the greatest liars are the most
accomplished artists (Nietzsche, *Power* 111). He continues, about the critical functions that artists play in society, “‘Life ought to inspire confidence’: the task thus imposed [on artists] is tremendous. To solve it, man must be a liar by nature, he must be above all an *artist*. And he *is* one: metaphysics, religion, morality, science—all of them only products of his will to art, to lie, to flight from ‘truth,’ to *negation* of ‘truth’” (*Power* 111). With this glaring statement, Nietzsche is further elucidating the function of emotions within the very foundations of contemporary society. *For Nietzsche, the greatest accomplishments in the legacy of humankind are lies motivated by emotions of fear*. Therefore, Nietzsche enmeshes the functionality of sentiments and artistry within every facet of ancient Greece and throughout history to the era of the Vietnam War and 9/11.

The ancient Greeks felt the sort of dread that confounds Nietzsche, and this fear manifested itself creatively through Dionysus and Apollo in a vast array of expressions that eventually solidified into Greek culture. In a tone resonant of Nietzschean cosmology, Gambino describes the philosophical concerns of the ancient Greeks, stating, 

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6 This notion doesn’t represent Nietzsche’s personal appreciation for specific works of art, but rather it provides a compelling look at the power of artists to influence society.

7 The radicalization of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic is due to an immense infusion of pathos in global consciousness that sublimates artistically; this notion is witnessed in a pattern throughout human history wherever human catastrophe occurs. Yet, the dialectical rapport of the two deities continues to manifest novelty in a less rapid form in more stable epochs of human history.
“The experience of radical temporality of existence initially struck the Greeks with horror and terror. For if all existence is self-consuming, than any individuated form of existence would appear futile. In Nietzsche’s view, the root source of suffering for the Greeks was not the fear of death but the meaninglessness of an existence in which everything falls into oblivion” (418). In conjunction with Nietzschean aesthetic theory, seminal thinkers of ancient Greece, such as Homer, channel Apollo with creative “lies” to subdue the apprehension of the polis concerning uninhibited Dionysianism. Gambino continues, that in ancient Greece “Identity exists in a world of [Apollonian] appearances, which are themselves artistic simplifications of an infinitely complex reality [of Dionysus] that presents itself to man in a multiplicity of aspects. The task of art was not to present a moral solution to human dilemmas, but rather, to enhance the capacity to endure the internalization of opposition” (436). With Gambino’s insights, the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic is seminal in the very foundation of celebrated Greek culture. In conjunction, Nietzsche states:

[T]he Dionysian and the Apollonian, in new births ever following and augmenting one another, controlled the Hellenic genius; that from out the age of ‘bronze,’ with its wars of the Titans and its rigorous folk-philosophy, the Homeric world developed under the sway of the Apollonian impulse to beauty; that this ‘naïve’ splendor was again overwhelmed by the influx of the Dionysian; and that against this new power the Apollonian rose to the austere majesty of Doric art and the Doric view of the world. (Tragedy 12)
Therefore, according to Nietzsche and Gambino, in ancient Greek culture artistic expression channeled through the Dionysian and Apollonian vitiates the polis through “the internalization of opposition” in dialectical exchange.

While Nietzsche considers any individual brave enough to design something imaginative as an artist, there are certain facets of traditional artistic expression that are primarily Dionysian or Apollonian. As aforementioned concerning mythology and psychology, the artistic physiognomies of Dionysus and Apollo are representative of the deities themselves. In line with this investigation, contemporary examples of artistic expression of Dionysus and Apollo in the epochs of the Vietnam War and 9/11 provide evidence of artistic expression cathartically sourced from each human tragedy. To begin with, in the Vietnam era United States, rock and folk music became Dionysian catalysts through which artists and the nation’s youth could channel transgressions of trauma and fear concerning the war. Secondly, after 9/11, the inundation of news coverage into the global consciousness is an illustration of Apollonian expression that quells the trauma of the attacks through explanatory symbolism.

For Nietzsche, music is the ultimate artistic representation of the Dionysian because its formless, dynamic nature is indicative of pure Dionysian ontology, which holistically adjoins with the bosom of Primordial Being (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 56).

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8 [M]an must be a liar by nature, he must be above all an artist. And he is one: metaphysics, religion, morality, science—all of them only products of his will to art, to lie, to flight from ‘truth,’ to negation of ‘truth’” (Nietzsche, *Power* 111).
Nietzsche feels music has, “a character different from, and an origin anterior to, all the other arts, because, unlike them, it is not a copy of the phenomenon, but an immediate copy of the will itself, and therefore represents the metaphysical of everything physical in the world, the thing-in-itself of every phenomenon” (Tragedy 56). A phenomenological look at musical expression exposes an art form without form. This paradoxical characteristic is analogous with the creative drive of Dionysus himself, as he too “represents the metaphysical of everything physical in the world.” To elaborate further, Nietzsche juxtaposes the fluidity of Dionysian expression against Apollonian art, which loses itself in the “pleasures” of objective appearance (Tragedy 61):

Dionysian art, too, wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena [like Apollo], but behind them. We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence…We are really for a moment Primordial Being itself, feeling its raging desire existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear to us as a necessary thing, in view of the surplus of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life… In spite of fear and pity, we are the happy living beings, not as individuals, but as the one living being, with whose creative joy we are united [sic]. (Tragedy 61)

For Nietzsche, musical expression can return the existentially troubled mind to the non-dualistic womb of Dionysus himself. As music is a dynamic reflection of pure creation, it has the ability to induce altered forms of consciousness in the human psyche, which
Nietzsche refers to as “Dionysian ecstasy” (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 61). Musicians have utilized these vitiating characteristics of expression since the time of ancient Greek Attic tragedies, and their audiences share in this primal embrace (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 61).

The anti-war counterculture proponents of 1960’s America harnessed the vitalizing attributes of musical expression to transmute the trauma of the Vietnam War into Dionysian inspired forms of redemptive novelty. For the youths of the Vietnam era, music provided a channel for sublimating the harrowing effects of increased draft summons, lost loved ones, and television footage of wartime atrocities (Lytle 183). Correspondingly, “The ‘Neomystics’ [of 1960’s America]—hippies and flower children—‘luxuriate[d] in loud music, bright costumes, and convulsive dancing’ and … [sought] to lose themselves in their ‘noisy, Dionysiac, even orgiastic’ celebrations…these phenomena have an ancient and respectable provenance: they recall ‘the pandemonium’ of the ancient rites of Dionysus [sic]” (Carelvale, *Myth-History* 88). The historical resurgence of the Dionysian is explicit in 1960’s America, and music is the centerpiece of the counterculture. For Nietzsche, the phenomenological implications of live musical events further reveal the enigmatic return to Primordial Being by way of artistic expression. *Live music entwines musician and audience in a phenomenological embrace of raw Dionysian creative energy.* To look again to *The Birth of Tragedy:*

In song and dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and speak; he is about to take a dancing flight into the air. His very gestures bespeak enchantment. Just as the animals now talk, just as the earth yields milk and honey, so from him emanate supernatural sounds. He
feels himself a god, he himself now walks about enchanted, in ecstasy, like to the
gods who he saw walking about in his dreams. He is no longer an artist, he
becomes a work of art. (4)

In the anti-war era of the 1960’s United States, soldiers and citizens alike embraced the
ergetic impetus of musical expression, as the pain of the Vietnam War is transferred
into forms of cathartic novelty that are resplendent with “Dionysian ecstasy.”

Interestingly, Nietzsche develops a strong correspondence between folk music
and Dionysian expression, which he sees as an intrinsic bind between artistic expression
and the revitalization of culture (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 17). Folk music experienced a
profound resurgence in the 1960’s counterculture society. Correspondingly, the anti-war
movement of the Vietnam era “with its songs of resistance and change … had a powerful
influence on the devotees of folk music” (Lytle 144). To put this notion in a historical
context, Nietzsche recognizes the historical revivals folk music with strong shifts in the
Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic towards excessive manifestations of Dionysian artistry
(Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 17). Nietzsche states, about the revitalizing nature of folk music as it
reemerges in different historical epochs:

[Folk music’s] enormous diffusion among all peoples, further re-enforced by ever
new-births, is testimony to the power of this artistic dual impulse of Nature:
which leaves its vestiges in the folk-song just as the orgiastic movements of a
people perpetuate themselves in its music. Indeed, it might also be historically
demonstrable that every period rich in folk-songs has been most violently stirred
by Dionysian currents, which we must always consider the substratum and prerequisite of the folk-song [sic]. (Tragedy 17)

Furthermore, the sheer eruption of the amount of folk musicians in the Vietnam War represents a radicalization of the Dionysian with the purifying sublimation of homeland trauma during wartime (Lytle 147).

To enumerate, in 1964 revered folk musician Bob Dylan adopted the Dionysian inspired, consciousness altering hallucinogen LSD into his song writing rituals. As folk music authorities confirm, during this experimental part of Dylan’s career, his lyrics “took more cynical, abrasive, and cryptic quality” than seen with his earlier works (Lytle 147). To demonstrate, Lytle states, in reference to Dylan’s transformation as well as popularity:

Several songs stand out as of particular importance. ‘Like a Rolling Stone,” the lead track on Highway 61 Revisited, became Dylan’s first chart topping single … Unlike the usual pop fare, the lyrics really mattered: ‘How does it feel / to be on your own? / No direction known / like a complete unknown / Like a rolling stone?’ Most of the songs on the album came across with a cynical sneer and a ‘fuck you’ bite: ['Mr. Jones’ states] ‘Something is happening and you don’t know what it is do you, Mr. Jones?’ (Lytle 148).

Interestingly, Dylan’s turn to Dionysian expression and searing social commentary represents a shift in the American consciousness concerning the war in Vietnam. In 1964, Dylan’s formative transition occurred in unison with “Higher draft calls [that] increased the skepticism of many college-aged young men about the purposes of the war. [Because
of this] those without moral or political cause to question the war had a self-interested reason to do so” (Lytle 183-4). The historical resurgences of folk music are a testimonial to the historical unfolding of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic, and folk musicians such as Dylan represent part of the Dionysian lineage of artists.

For Nietzsche, the Apollonian will to “illusion, through which [he feels] we are to be saved from an immediate oneness with the Dionysian” manifests itself artistically through imagery (Nietzsche, Tragedy 88). To begin with, Apollo sublimates elements of an ineffable Dionysian ontology by giving energy form, this Apollonian form constitutes the “veil” of objective reality that bases itself on illusion. Therefore, in a similar fashion, Apollonian imagery is a sublimation of enigmatic traumatic experiences in human catastrophes. Saltzman and Rosenberg state:

[W]e are convinced of the centrality of pictures, of the visual, or, more specifically, artistic production and practice, to… [the] negotiations [of representing trauma’s phenomenality]. The formulation of trauma as discourse is predicated upon metaphors of visuality and image as the unavoidable carriers of the unrepresentable. From primal scene to flashback to screen memory to the dream, much of the language deployed to speak trauma’s character is emphatically, if not exclusively, visual [sic]. (xi-xii)

When a sudden occurrence of trauma accesses the Dionysian, the visual artistry of Apollo is required in order to convey communicable meaning. To demonstrate, a news reporter recalls the requisite function of imagery used by victims at ground zero in describing 9/11 (Freedman 391). According to Freedman, during the interviews, there was an “enhanced
importance for the interviewer to be acutely aware of the emotional state of the conversation...The nature and quality of the materials that emerged from these interviews were very unexpected, the depth of recall remarkable, the eloquence amazing, and the sense of imagery extremely graphic [sic]” (379). With Freedman’s description, it is apparent that the unleashing of Dionysian energy at the World Trade Center rapidly meets the artistic drive of Apollo, as he transmutes the “emotional state” of victims into articulate imageries.

The media coverage surrounding 9/11 is an example of redemptive novelty encased within the artistry of the Apollonian. In the wake of the terrorist attacks, American citizens looked to expressive elements of Apollonian normalcy in the media to quell their horrific existential anxiety. However, the agendas set forth by a majority of media outlets used the emotive imagery of the two planes hitting the World Trade Center to reinforce cultural differences between Americans and Muslims (Powell 92). For Nietzsche, this notion is highly indicative of Apollonian artistry, as the Apollonian “artist as also the epic [Homeric] poet, who is related to him, is sunk in the pure contemplation of images.... For the latter lives in these pictures, and only in them, with joyful satisfaction” (Tragedy 15). Nietzsche’s critique of the Apollonian is evident in 9-11 as, according to media analyst Kimberly A. Powell, “the media are a dominant element of popular culture and have the ability to set the agenda. When the agenda is consistent among media sources, the media has the power to create associations for people, race, culture, and religion” (93). For a vast amount of American citizens, the media’s use of the horrific imagery of 9/11 adjoined with narratives of American cultural exceptionalism
caused a stifling of any critical analysis of the occurrence. These people naively existed
“in these pictures, and only in them, with joyful satisfaction.”

When the media isolates an image, such as the crumbling of the World Trade
Center, and explains it with a political agenda, the image becomes explicitly Apollonian.
Arbitrarily created political narratives attempt to stymie the dialectical relationship of
Dionysus and Apollo by negating the dynamic-historical context of the image (Bennett
38). In a similar vein, “The mass media are distributors of ideology. This ideology is
created and distributed primarily through framing, or the way that information is
organized and presented” (Powell 93). The bifurcating logic of this sort of media
coverage becomes compulsive with a further removal from the Dionysian.⁹ According to
Bennett:

The events of 9/11 did not, of course, begin on September 11, which is
nevertheless a watershed; nor in any meaningful political sense do they finish on
this date. Historical events such as wars or terror campaigns in general have no
precise temporal boundaries; it is not always clear when they begin or when their

⁹ “Dionysus, contains the endpoint, the Apollonian work of art, within itself governs the
dialectical pathway that leads from the one to the other. Any cross-section made in the
diachrony of the history can be valorized in terms of the greater or lesser manifestations
or presence of Dionysos, the original ‘ground’ by means of which distance and proximity
can be measured [sic]” (de Man 46).
effects cease to be felt. They are structured by relations with other events and may even involve long periods when it appears that nothing is happening. If the ebb and flow of such events are ‘covered’ by media, the question of how they may be represented in art is increasingly moot, as the notion of documentary…moves away from established precepts [sic]. (38)

To put Bennett’s ideals in the schematics of Nietzsche, media representations removed from the dynamic currents of the Dionysian function in an unbalanced fashion, as they require an isolation of a phenomenon from its historical genesis. Paradoxically, however, if a media outlet actually attempted to cover the events of 9/11 with a holistic temporal perspective without horizons, the story would eventually dissipate into an all-inclusive ontology, far “away from established precepts.” This is because the Apollonian veil (media coverage of 9/11) occludes the “intrinsic truth of nature and the falsehood of culture” by negating the geneses of the Dionysian (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 24). The negative effects of this dialectical imbalance pronounce themselves within the racially divergent ideologies of post 9-11 America. Conclusively, American communal solidification bound to these culturally bias narratives allows for the induction of highly polarized government homeland security programs such as the Patriot Act.

The confluence of racially influenced political narratives and the profound imagery of 9/11 is manifest in the concept of “media framing” (Powell 93). According to Powell, the “angle, or lens through which the events [of 9/11] are interpreted, creates the frame. When this lens is that of the dominant, white, Christian perspective in the United States, or a Western view, the ‘other’ as a result gets portrayed in a biased manner” (93).
Therefore, “if a majority of [news] coverage through photos and words reinforce negative images of Muslims and Islam…the audience is likely to conclude that Muslims are terrorists” (Powell 94). To elaborate further, in 2009 MSNBC reported an attempted airline attack in Amsterdam by a man they deemed the “underwear bomber” (Powell 97). Without any sufficient evidence, MSNBC claimed that the underwear bomber was affiliated with al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden (Powell 97). Under those circumstances, MSNBC manipulated the compulsive fear of the American public generated on 9/11 to sensationalize a news story under a veil of misinformation. In final analysis, the historical resurgences of Apollo are evident in the fact that due to the exceptionalizing narratives of U.S. media outlets after 9/11 “fundamentalism, particularly Islamic Fundamentalism, ‘equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against, as we did with communism during the Cold War’” (Powell 93).
“San Francisco in the middle sixties was a very special time and place to be a part of. Maybe it meant something. Maybe not, in the long run ... but no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were there and alive in that corner of time and the world. Whatever it meant...

History is hard to know because of all the hired bullshit, but even without being sure of ‘history’ it seems entirely reasonable to think that every now and then the energy of a whole generation comes to a head in a long fine flash, for reasons that nobody really understands at the time—and which never explain, in retrospect, what actually happened...

There was madness in any direction, at any hour. If not across the Bay, then up the Golden Gate or down 101 to Los Altos or La Honda ... You could strike sparks anywhere. There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning...

And that, I think, was the handle—that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn’t need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting—on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave...
So now, less than five years later, you can go up to a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark—that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back [sic].”

(Thompson 66-8)

Hunter S. Thompson’s quote, taken from his controversial book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, poetically and poignantly describes the robust Dionysian undercurrents of the 1960’s era as they surged against the fortifications of the Apollonian. Thompson, as a celebrated iconoclast and author of the counterculture movement, embodies an extreme of the Dionysian model as it resurfaces in the Vietnam era. The intensity of Thompson’s chaotic lifestyle is evident with his over indulgences in intoxicants and his wholesale dismissal of the “forces of Old and Evil” present in the cold war consensus. With this in mind, pathological manifestations of the Dionysian within the sociohistorical environs of Vietnam and 9-11 are up-to-date illustrations of imbalances within the radicalized dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo. For the Dionysian, pathological manifestations are adversely hysterical, nihilistic, and boundless due to a lack of the structure inherent in the Apollonian ethos. To illustrate, extreme Dionysianism is explicit in posttraumatic stress disorders of Veterans as well as with the rampant drug use of the 1960’s counterculture movement, with which Thompson’s wave “finally broke and rolled back.”
The historical unfolding of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic is vitiated by a paradoxical rapport between the two diametrically opposed deities; this association becomes momentarily askew with pathological manifestations of each modality. Nietzsche feels if the creative capacities of the deities Dionysus and Apollo are to be beneficial to society “they must unfold their powers in strict proportion” (Gambino 439). This process accomplishes itself through tragedy as an enigmatic immersion into Dionysian consciousness provides a hyper-redefining of one’s worldview, which necessarily unfolds in a novel form of Apollonian expression. To enumerate, when the human consciousness experiences immersion in the Dionysian without the Apollonian, it experiences “a boundless life in which humans have no horizons, place, and identity” (Gambino 416). Therefore, pathological Dionysianism represents a disbandment of any logically transmittable edicts in service of an indulgence in nihilism and the ineffable.

Battleground experiences during the Vietnam War represent a violent unleashing of archaic energy sourced from the amoral character of Dionysus, the psychological trauma of such events can turn pathological without a balanced exchange within the dialectic. To illuminate this notion, Vietnam veteran Thomas Bird recalls the cognitive shock of a surprise jungle attack on the part of the North Vietnamese:

When they made their rush there was a lot of shooting. They shot all our wounded, killed them. During the course of the fighting all the horror of people being wounded, parts of their body being blown off, became a blur. I think I stopped seeing after some guy got shot in the midsection and doubled over and he caught all kinds of blood and crap coming out of him [sic]. (Santoli 39)
The traumatic nature of Bird’s experiences in Vietnam is evident in the notion that his vision and memory stopped working in the face of such a primal, destructive spectacle. Bird’s recollection is indicative of Nietzschean theory, as Nietzsche feels, “Dionysian emotions awake” as “the terrible awe which seizes upon man, when he is suddenly unable to account for the cognitive forms of a phenomenon, when the principle of reason, in some of its manifestations, seems to admit of an exception (Tragedy 3-4). With the rise of Dionysian “terror” in warfare (Otto 95), the human psyche omits all rational functions as it faces the awful and the unfathomable. To further elucidate this idea, Vietnam Veteran John Muir describes a cognitive departure he experienced when his entire company was killed in battle (Santoli 28). He states, “I have a little problem at the bottom here [recollecting what happened] because there’s three days that I don’t have memory of… I lost my entire squad and I kind of went berserk. At least I’m told I went berserk. I don’t have the foggiest idea of what I was doing [sic]” (Santoli 28). Correspondingly, the idea of a complete disbandment of rational operating systems is indicative of the psychological states described by way of contemporary trauma studies. To look back to Saltzman and Rosenberg, they state “trauma describes an experience so overwhelming that its understanding is at best deferred...Trauma is, one might say, the event par excellence, the event as unintelligible, as the pure impact of sheer happening” (xi). Consequently, traumatic experiences become pathologically Dionysian when the traumatized mind fails to sublimate the experiences cathartically with the requisite configurations of Apollo.
When the Dionysian impact of the trauma of the catastrophes of Vietnam and 9/11 does not express itself in a purgative fashion through the Apollonian, psychological imbalances occur within the minds of Vietnam Veterans and 9/11 victims. For example, after 9/11, many firefighters failed to sublimate the trauma of their experiences in favor of “numb” or “dissociative” states (Freedman 388). Psychologists feel that if trauma is not articulated through structured outlets the “capacity for normal [social] interaction could be diminished or even lost” (Freedman 388). Similarly, in the Vietnam War, American soldiers committed and witnessed unspeakable acts of violence, and the phenomenon of posttraumatic stress exhibits itself in pathological Dionysianism (Santoli xv). To illustrate, in his famous book *Born on the Fourth of July*, Vietnam Veteran Ron Kovic retells his disturbing and dehumanizing experiences after a battle wound paralyzed him (119). Kovic recalls, concerning his psychological state in an army hospital:

> I am afraid of letting them know how lonely and scared I have become thinking about this wound. It is like some kind of numb twilight zone to me. I am angry and want to kill everyone—all the volunteers and priests and the pretty girls with the tight short skirts. I am twenty-one and the whole thing is shot, done forever. There is no real healing left anymore, everything that is going to heal has healed already and now I am left with the corpse, the living dead man, the man with the numb legs, the sexlessman, the sexlessman, the man with the numb dick, the man who can’t make children, the man who can’t stand, the man who can’t walk, the angry lonely man, the bitter man with the nightmares, the murder man, the man who cries in the shower [sic]. (125)
Due to the unbalanced psychological coping mechanisms in the advent of trauma, as seen with firefighters in 9/11 and with the recollections of Kovic in Vietnam, victims of both catastrophes develop mental illnesses in which the mind loses itself in the maelstrom of the Dionysian.

In response to the traumas of the Vietnam War, the youths of the American counterculture movement in the 1960’s developed adverse proclivities towards unrestricted Dionysianism. Elements of Dionysian mythology were resurrected by the counterculture movement to become centerpieces of its radicalized ideals. To point out, in 1960’s America, novel manifestations and evolutions of Dionysus are evident in the creeds of “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll” (Carlevale 78). Carlevale describes this notion as such:

[U]nder the sign of Dionysus…‘sex’ became the overcoming of restrictive genital sexuality through ‘polymorphous perversity’; ‘drugs’ became the royal road to visionary intoxication that could disclose a new reality and erase the boundaries between work and play, reality and fantasy; ‘rock ’n’ roll became not just music but the pulse-beat of a new kind of mass community. (78)

Accordingly, youths of the counterculture movement achieved a lifestyle anterior to the established American identity of the cold war consensus. This notion is explicit in the use of psychoactive compounds largely because, counterculture “Radicals discovered that after smoking dope, ‘the tension of a political life dissolved; you could take refuge from the Vietnam War, from your own hope, terror, [and] anguish”’ (Lytle 201). With the use of drugs, or Dionysian intoxicants (Otto 95), members of the American counterculture in
the 1960’s further removed themselves from established American identities in search of more personalized worldviews.

For counterculture extremists, the use of the powerful hallucinogenic drug LSD induced psychologically transformative states indicative of pathological Dionyianism. To illustrate, psychedelic enthusiast and author Ken Kesey colors these Dionysian sourced escapades as “‘shell-shattering ordeals that left us blinking knee deep in the crack crusts of our pie-in-the-sky personalities. Suddenly, people were stripped before one another and behold: we were beautiful. Naked and helpless and sensitive as a snake after skinning...We were alive and life was us [sic]’” (Lytle 194). By embracing the ancient Dionysian rite of intoxication, members of the counterculture movement were able to dissolve elements of cold war solidarity within their psyches. These psychological experiments represent a highly personalized transformative experience that embraces Dionysian excess beneath the veil of Apollonian constraint, which set forth to alter the emotive implications of a United States populace traumatized by the war in Vietnam.

For LSD devotees of the counterculture movement, pathological Dionysianism displays itself with the formation of drug-fueled, novel spiritual traditions that lack the boundaries of Apollo. During the Vietnam era, the youths of America were faced with the choice of joining the wartime ranks of Apollo, “or turning on, tuning in, and dropping out” into Dionysian ecstasy (Carlevale, Myth-History 93). This counterculture catch phrase was conceived by self-proclaimed “LSD guru” Timothy Leary (Lytle 197), who admits to giving LSD “to more than 1,500 persons” by 1963 (Leary 187). Notably, for Leary, LSD was a radical alternative to traditional religious practice, as “His group
established as their goal the discovery and nurturing of the divinity in each person” (Lytle 197). For instance, in his book *Your Brain is God*, Leary elaborates:

> God is defined in terms of the technologies involved in creating a universe and engineering the obvious stages of evolution. Anyone interested in playing the God-game is given suggestions for activating the various levels of intelligence in his own brain and DNA and expressing them through the tools of modern science. Any human being who wishes to accept the responsibility is offered the powers traditionally assigned to the divinity. (6)

For Leary, LSD provides a pathway into the creative ontology of the Dionysian, and he actually believes that humans can harness this divinity. However, as these psychedelic spiritualists engaged in this “‘radical dissolving of the ego…the experience of ego loss…[was simultaneously] fraught with the possibility of terror’” (Carlevale 94). To look again to 1960’s iconoclast Thompson, he describes the failure of Leary’s project as such:

> [Leary] … crashed around America selling ‘consciousness expansion’ without ever giving a thought to the grim meat-hook realities that were lying in wait for all the people who took him too seriously…All those pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy Peace and Understanding for three bucks a hit…What Leary took down with him was the central illusion of a whole life-style that he helped create…a generation of permanent cripples, failed seekers, who never understood the essential old-mystic fallacy of the Acid culture: the desperate assumption that somebody—or at least some *force*—is tending that Light at the end of the tunnel [sic]. (178-9)
With Thompson’s intriguing appraisal of Leary’s LSD mythos, he reiterates the pathological manifestation of the ancient deity Dionysus in the youths of 1960’s America. Leary’s drug culture lacked stabilizing topographies of consciousness provided by Apollo, and consequently turned “the world into a ‘featureless desert’ where ‘the space that surrounds the self cannot be domesticated’ and ‘no law, no limit, no boundary, and no familiar landmarks exist which can serve to orient man lost in the boundless’” (Carlevale, *Myth-History* 93-4). As the “failed seekers” of the counterculture movement respected no Apollonian constraints in their drug use, many never escaped the “boundless” psychic arena of Dionysian ontology.
“In the panicked and grief-stricken first few months after the horrific events of September 11, 2001, a small group of people within the Bush administration sought to take full advantage of the fear and terror of the moment by pushing legislation through Congress that vastly expanded governmental power and radically truncated the civil rights of the citizens of the United States ... [P]eople are concerned that Congress in general and the Bush administration in particular are attempting to use the fear generated by 9/11 in order to further a narrow agenda of power consolidation by upper-level government officials, at the expense of the rights guaranteed by our Constitution with we hold as such an integral part of our democracy.” (Abele vii)

The above quote, taken from writer Robert P. Abele’s book *A User’s Guide to the USA Patriot Act and Beyond*, applies critical thinking to the exceedingly dichotomous, constitutionally questionable Patriot Act. The bifurcating logic of Apollo is manifest in this legislation and turns pathological with a growing rift of “of power” between the U.S. government and American citizens and aliens (Abele 30). Along this line of thought, unrestrained manifestations of Apollo within the sociohistorical environs of ancient Greece, Vietnam, and 9/11 are illustrations of imbalances within the radicalized dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo. Nietzsche originally displays this notion in his critique of the Homeric epics of ancient Greece, which solidify an extraordinary
cultural identity for Greeks bent with an obsession in warfare. Comparatively, a solidification of political and religious ideologies sourced from Apollonian psychology result in diverging worldviews surrounding both the Vietnam War and 9/11. Pathological Apollonianism appears in both arenas to enforce a cultural exceptionalism for American citizens that results in indiscriminate killing and racial prejudices. Finally, in the case of the 9/11 attacks, obsessive infusions of Apollonian thought enter the process of government legislation with the Patriot Act.

Orthodox Apollonianism bases itself upon a positivistic faith in an objectively understandable cosmos as well as a belief in the teleological aims of structured religious and cultural codes. As Apollonian thought claims to understand, and predict, the inner workings of the cosmos, it attempts to escape the paradoxical inversions of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic. Consequently, pathological Apollonianism momentarily drains the consciousness of the creative vitality from which Apollo himself manifests, that of the Dionysian.

For the ancient Greeks, the Homeric epics serve as prototypical political narratives that provide the impetus and justification for war: this phenomenon mirrors the military ideology of the Vietnam era. As an example of pathological Apollonianism, Homer’s famous recollection of The Battle of Troy recalls violence with a romantic idealism. As this sort of prototypical narrative is inherited by later generations, the Greek polis adopt a temperament for war indicative of the Apollonian notion of a “naïve splendor” in elements of military “beauty” and “majesty” (Nietzsche, Tragedy 12). To point out, Gambino feels, in ancient Greece “War provided the principal means by which
members of the present generation reaffirmed identity with ... ancestors” (Gambino 423). Moreover, for the ancient Greeks, the heroization of war intertwines with the mindset of the polis themselves. Gambino continues:

The polis provided a means for dealing with the fragile nature of [Homeric] poetic memory. It attempted to construct an even more imposing Apollonian bulwark against the restless onslaught of time and forgetfulness. Like Homeric art, it organized the pre-political chaos into an enduring order that made politics possible. Unlike poetic memory, however, it had at its disposal all the tools of violence for reinforcing collective memory. (421)

To put this notion in context of the Vietnam War, American youths of the 1960’s were steeped in tales that celebrate and romanticize the “defeat [of] the Germans and the Japanese” in WWII (Santoli 69). Due to the influence of this sort of fanciful military narrative, many Vietnam Veterans originally entered the war with grossly misplaced “ideals” concerning the reality of warfare (Santoli 69). Therefore, there is a confluence of ancient and contemporary thought concerning pathological Apollonian expression within romantic narratives of The Battle of Troy and WWII. This phenomena is evident as both the ancient Greek polis and the United States government employ ideological tales to “conceal…bloody origins [of the state] with pious illusions,” in inter-generational trends (Gambino 421). To put this in a dialectical-historical perspective, the Apollonian archetype shows strong imbalanced resurgences in the time of war as romanticized notions of battles pacify the emotive underpinnings of both the Dionysian and the tragic.
In the Vietnam War, pathological manifestations of Apollo resurfaced to solidify a cultural exceptionalism between Americans and the North Vietnamese in order to excuse violence and massacre (Santoli 48). To demonstrate, Vietnam Veteran David Ross recalls that U.S. military agencies used desensitizing propaganda of the cold war era to influence the psyches of American soldiers (Santoli 48). Ross states, “Most of us were never able to see the Vietnamese as real people. I remember president Johnson in one of the psych-op [psychological warfare] flicks we saw saying that the communists weren’t like us—they didn’t have feelings [sic]” (Santoli 48). The dehumanizing nature of this sort of military psychology is indicative of Apollonian artistry. To elaborate, according to Nietzsche, “Whenever we meet with the ‘naïve’ in art, we recognize the highest effect of Apollonian culture, which in the first place has always to overthrow some Titanic empire and slay monsters, and which, through its dazzling representations and its pleasurable illusions, must have triumphed over a terrible depth of world-contemplation” (Tragedy 9). With this example, Nietzsche is expounding on the naïveté of Apollonian images and narratives of heroism that do not embrace the true suffering beneath wartime atrocities. Comparatively, with Ross’s recollection of U.S. military psychology and Nietzsche’s conceptions of a “Titanic empire,” there is a genealogical confluence of Apollonian influenced cultural exceptionalism that resurfaces in times of war to excuse the slaughter of an “enemy” populace. In a like fashion, Vietnam Veteran Scott Higgins elucidates the profundity of employing Apollonian artistry in battlefield psychology (Santoli 99). He states, in reference to the indiscriminate killing of the North Vietnamese, “If you just keep it at that and don’t go closer and try to anthropomorphize them…it is pure
symbolism at that point. Everything is symbolism that you’re living on” (Santoli 99).

With these powerful recollections of combat psychology, it is evident that soldiers were encouraged to objectify the North Vietnamese with Apollonian artistry. Consequently, pathological Apollonianism arises in hyper-generated attempts to suppress the dialectical exchange with Dionysus in times of war, as Dionysian insight could lead to a contemplation about wartime atrocities indicative of the tragic experience.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush applied orthodox Christian valuations to further solidify cultural differences between Christians and Muslims. In this case, Bush applied a highly dualistic approach to morality and religion in attempts to ease the existential anxiety surrounding the 9/11 catastrophe. Pirro reports, “President Bush, who has told reporters that he does not agonize over decisions … by embracing a kind of moral absolutism…whereby policy judgements take on the character of moral decisions made according to an unquestioned and highly polarized framework of right and wrong” (21). The most compelling evidence of Bush’s dogmatism is in his “National Cathedral Address” which took place shortly after 9/11. (Pirro 18). In this example, Pirro illustrates the pathologically Apollonian nature of Bush’s reasoning by juxtaposing it against the purgative nature of Dionysian balanced tragedy (Pirro 18). In the “National Cathedral Address”:

[Bush states] ‘this world…[God] created is of a moral design. Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance, and love have no end. And the Lord of life holds all who die, and all who morn.’… In [the] offering a truth claim [on the part of President Bush] about the existence and nature of an
afterlife, this notion of religious consolation manifested a sensibility at odds with tragedy in which the mode of response to the unbearable suffering is not to alleviate that suffering by claims to transcendental truths. Tragedy seeks instead to transfigure suffering aesthetically in the uncertain hope of provoking cathartic and reconciliatory or redemptive forms of relief from it [sic]. (Pirro 18)

With Pirro’s insightful contrast of tragedy and orthodox Christianity, he further illuminates the loss of Dionysian vitality with the standardizing narratives of “learned religions” (Nietzsche, Tragedy 65). Consequently, President Bush’s compulsive embrace of Apollonian expression causes a further imbalance in the already unstable affiliation of Christianity and Islam.

For American citizens living in the post 9-11 world, President Bush’s claims of moral exceptionalism motivate an uncritical consent for the government implementation of the highly unconstitutional Patriot Act (Abele vii). Pirro explains the emotive impetus for this sociopolitical phenomenon within a framework known as “Terror Management Theory” (22). Pirro states:

TMT posits that popular support for [political] leaders is partly the result of the need to allay a deeply rooted fear of death. At time when issues of mortality become more salient in public consciousness, as, for example, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, this theory predicts that the public will feel greater need for leaders able ‘literally and symbolically to deliver people from illness, calamity, chaos, and death as well as to demonstrate the supremacy of the worldview.’… The authority of Bush or other political leaders is enhanced, according to this theory,
to the extent that he or she can ‘assume mastery over nature and tragedy and
uphold the cultural meaning system [sic].’ (22)

As an illustration, the Bush administration passed the Patriot Act just six weeks after the
attacks, in a period when the nation was still intensely mourning (Abele 23). In this
instance, President Bush adopts the role of Apollo as a protector of “orthodox culture” by
emblematically insulating American citizens from future terrorist attacks with novel
legislations (Gambino 423).

While Bush claims to protect the “freedom” of American citizens with the
passage of the Patriot Act, many feel that it reinforces established power structures within
the United States government by infringing on the rights of citizens (Abele 43). To
elaborate, Abele feels “the USA PATRIOT Act ... [does not] uphold the tradition of
respecting the rights of the people [in the Constitution of the United States] to due
process, probable cause, habeas corpus, excessive bail, or cruel and unusual punishment
[sic]” (Abele 39). Notably, the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution states that
government agencies must have “probable cause” for the “surveillance” and searching of
American citizens (Abele 43). However, in Sections 214, 215, and 218 of the Patriot Act,
the government disbands with the necessities of warrants and probable cause in
wiretapping and the seizure of evidence “involving criminal (not limited to terrorist)
investigations” (Abele 44). Furthermore, the implementation of the Patriot Act fuses the
polarized sentiments of Christian morality and American exceptionalism with the process
of law making. With attention to Section 411 of the Patriot Act, there is a strong
dichotomization between American citizens and foreign aliens (Muslims) with the
creation of a new definition of the term “terrorist activity” *only* for foreign aliens (Abele 30). This is cause for concern, since, for foreign aliens, the term “‘terrorism’ includes ‘wholly non-violent activity and ordinary crimes of violence’” which can be tied to the support of “virtually any group which has used violence” in the past (Abele 30). Point being, a pathological infusion of Apollonian influenced cultural exceptionalism in the scripting of the Patriot Act *has placed foreign aliens in a realm where the American government can define, and enforce, terrorism at its own convenience*. Conclusively, in the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration utilized the emotional state of a nation petrified by fear to pass the contentious Patriot Act. With this legislation, the U.S. government employs a twenty-first century cultural caste system and “slave morality” to control its own people as well as foreign Muslims (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 19).¹⁰

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¹⁰ This caste system exists within the functionality of the democratic system of the United States, where the people are supposed to decide the fate of the nation. However, with the Patriot Act, a leveraged delineation manifests that places the rights of the government above those of the people.
“Without myth, however, every culture loses its healthy creative natural power: it is only a horizon encompassed with myth that rounds off to unity a social movement. It is only myth that frees all the powers of the imagination and of the Apollonian dream from their aimless wanderings. The mythical figures have to be the unnoticed omnipresent genii, under whose care the young soul grows to maturity, by the signs of which man gives meaning to his life and struggles: and the state itself knows no more powerful unwritten law than the mythical foundation which vouches for its connection with religion and its growth from mythical ideas.” (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 85)

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche determines that mythology is a vitalizing source of “healthy creative power” for cultures, countries, and religions (*Tragedy* 85). To reach this conclusion, Nietzsche applies a phenomenological scrutiny to the Greek Attic tragedy that discloses a harmonious equilibrium of the Dionysian and Apollonian artistic modalities. Consequently, Nietzsche feels that during the Attic tragedy Dionysian music “inspires” Apollonian image as their dialectical interplay reaches transcendent, frenzied heights on stage (*Tragedy* 14). In light of this artistic progression, the process of tragic
unfolding manifests in the minds of all participants of the Attic tragedy, concluding with the creation of unique, personalized mythologies. The phenomenological schematic of Greek Attic tragedies is analogous to that of the real world tragic experiences of the Vietnam War and 9/11. The confluence of both tragic modalities shows itself, for the reason that Nietzsche’s a priori appeal to pathos within the Greek Attic tragedy is a phenomenological link to the trauma and pathos of real world tragic experiences. In summary, through agony and pain, participants of the Greek Attic tragedy and the tragic experiences of Vietnam and 9/11 generate fresh perspectives in myth, by “the signs of which man gives meaning to his life and struggles.”

Nietzsche’ phenomenological appraisals of Greek Attic tragedies shows they are the apex of artistic expression in Ancient Greece precisely because they achieve a harmonious unification of the dialectically opposed archetypes of Dionysus and Apollo. Nietzsche explains this notion as such:

Tragedy closes with a sound which could never emanate from the realm of Apollonian art. And the Apollonian illusion thereby reveals itself as what it really is—the assiduous veiling during the performance of the tragedy of the intrinsically Dionysian effect: which, however, is so powerful, that it ends by forcing the Apollonian drama itself into a sphere where it begins to talk with Dionysian wisdom, and even denies itself and its Apollonian conspicuousness. So

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11 The term “participants” in Greek Attic tragedies, in this context, refers to the cast, chorus, and audience.
that the intricate relation of the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy may really be symbolized by a fraternal union of the two deities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; Apollo, however, finally speaks the language of Dionysus; and so the highest goal of tragedy and art in general is attained [sic]. (Tragedy 80-1)

Nietzsche’s description of the artistic goal of the Greek Attic tragedy is extremely informative for a couple of reasons. First of all, the Attic tragedy is originally Dionysian as Dionysus is the creative wellspring of the plays, and his transformative nature is essential in the unfolding of tragic experiences. Secondly, with the Attic tragedy, Nietzsche presents a highly radicalized example of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic as the two archetypes exchange creative capacities with a heightened tension that is viewable within a phenomenologically isolatable matrix. These characteristics are important because the dialectical tension that takes place on stage during the Greek Attic tragedy serves as a microcosmic example of macrocosmic real world tragedies as those seen with the Vietnam War and 9/11.

Dionysus gives birth to the dialectical exchange that takes place on stage during the Greek Attic tragedy. Therefore, the Attic tragedy is tied to an ontologically binding ritual with the god Dionysus himself (Sayre 151). Sayre puts it this way:

The Dionysian aspects of the symposium—the drinking, the philosophical dialogue, the sexual license—tell us something about the origins of Greek drama. The drama was originally a participatory ritual, tied to the cult of Dionysus. A chorus of people participating in the ritual would address and respond to another
chorus or to a leader, such as priest, perhaps representing (thus “acting the part” of) Dionysus. (151)

The dialectical underpinnings of the plays manifest themselves phenomenologically in a temporally isolatable fashion, as during the performance, “the audience feels that it is experiencing the action in real time, that it is directly involved in and affected by the play’s action” (Sayer 153). Therefore, with a hands-on role in Attic tragedies, members of the audience cognitively experience the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo as each participant manifests tragic experiences within their psyches.

The singularly transformative nature of Greek Attic tragedies is in stark contradiction to the psychologically homogenizing nature of Apollo’s Homeric epics. Gambino feels:

Nietzsche found in tragedy a mode of expression that resisted theoretical closure to keep open the mysteriousness of being in time. It refused a dogmatic ‘solution’ that seeks to master the fleeting character of such an experience…Thus it defined humans not as rational animals, but as poets, sufferers, and spectators who participate in transcendence by making the eternal suffering and joy their own, even if for only a moment [sic]. (440)

Consequently, participants of Attic tragedies partake in a vitiating internal transformation, free from the “dogmatic” constraints of Homeric normality (Gambino 440). However, as the Attic tragedy functions within the realm of the ever-evolving Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic, it requires a harmonious union of both archetypes to function in a non-pathological fashion. To look again to Gambino:
Nietzsche’s understanding of Greek tragedy…centers on how the Greeks constructed their identities in time…exposed the violence and fragility beneath their [Apollonian] heroic surface by continually appealing to the Dionysian richness of life, and finally created a public space, through tragedy, in which the paradoxical relationships between identity and the inexhaustibility of life are confirmed. (442)

What Gambino is describing here, phenomenologically, is a radical Dionysian re-defining of oneself coupled with re-solidification of Apollonian “identity” during the Attic tragedy. Under those circumstances, Attic tragedies play a revitalizing role in ancient Greek society by creatively equalizing the psychological impulses of Dionysus and Apollo within individual psyches that comprise the greater community.

The dialectical interplay of the Dionysian and Apollonian archetypes is radicalized within Greek Attic tragedies because they germinate an amplified amount individualized pathos and creativity in participants with the unfolding of individual tragic experiences. This pathos is wrought with the irrationality of the Dionysian archetype, and its requisite creative channels flow from this source in a transformative process.

According to Nietzsche:

The effect of tragedy never depended on epic suspense, on a fascinating uncertainty as to what is to happen now and afterwards: but rather on the great rhetorical-lyric scenes in which the passion and dialectic of the chief hero swelled to a broad and mighty stream. Everything was directed towards pathos, not action:
and whatever was not directed toward pathos was considered objectionable.

(Tragedy 44)

With Nietzsche’s quote, the Attic tragedy further illuminates the significance of pathos in the unfolding of tragic experiences. This pathos provides a link between the ancient world of Greek Attic tragedies and the contemporary ethos of real world tragic experiences in the Vietnam War and 9/11.

While Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* elucidates the role of the artistic deities Dionysus and Apollo in ancient Greek culture, primality within Attic tragedies, his a priori appeal to pathos in the creative act provides a link with the Vietnam War and 9/11 through the concept of trauma. Since there is no logical registration occurring within the human mind at the time of trauma, the traumatic experience is pathos par excellence. For the millions of victims of both the Vietnam War and 9/11, in order for traumatized minds to move beyond immersion in the Dionysian and its subsequent mental disorders, they require Apollonian artistic channels to sublimate in a psychically healthy fashion (Saltzman, Rosenberg x).\(^\text{12}\) Nietzsche’s intensive exploration into the phenomenological “happenings” of Greek Attic tragedies illuminates the psychological schematic of this process in detail. Furthermore, according to Pirro, the inter-generational resurgence of tragedy from ancient to modern is a recognizable phenomenon:

\(^{12}\) Since trauma is explicitly illogical, the only way it can be sublimated is by the creative, i.e. “illogical” mind.
To be sure, compared with tragiodia’s multifaceted impact on the civic culture of the ancient Athenian polis, the contemporary discourse of tragedy in the United States exercises far less of an obvious civic influence. However weak the contemporary effects of tragedy…are, they do bear a family resemblance to the strong effects of tragodia in ancient Athens [sic]. (16)

The historical congruencies shared between ancient Greek Attic tragedies and contemporary America base themselves on pathos, and subsequent creative channels, that manifest within the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo.

For individuals who experienced the Vietnam War and 9/11, trauma and its cathartic creative expression provide the transformative underpinnings for individual tragic experiences. For example, Vietnam Veteran Douglas Anderson recalls serving with a number of Baptist soldiers from the Southern United States that had “a lot of trouble reconciling what they were doing” in war with their religious beliefs (Santoli 71). He elaborates, stating, “They were having a lot of trouble killing people, basically. I saw some fairly sensitive kids begin to know themselves because of this and began to discover contradictions in their thinking” (Santoli 71). This recollection is noteworthy because, it took the trauma of wartime atrocities to induce psychological transformation within the psyche of the young Baptist soldiers. This eventually led to the overturning of hegemonic ideologies of Christianity and American politics. With this notion, elements that initiate the tragic unfolding within the Vietnam War meets with those presented on stage in the Greek Attic tragedy: the paradoxical identification with Dionysus himself.
First responders to 9/11 experienced agony and sorrow when exposed to the Dionysian at ground zero in New York City. A photographer working the scene further elaborates on the transmutation of the psyche indicative of the commencement of the tragic experience, he explains:

[Due to the experience of 9/11, photographers] developed close relationships with the firefighters and police officers, often spending time together beyond work hours. Consequently, both of them lost many close friends on 9/11. Because of this, the story they covered turned into what was described by the photographer as a ‘sacred obligation.’…Although the photographer saw 9/11 through a lens, he said that he could not remain a bystander. He and the journalists did more than take pictures and report. They pulled people to safety from the rubble, made calls for help, tried to save people high up in the Towers, dug for remains, and handed out water [sic]. (Freedman 383)

With the terror of 9/11, immersion in the Dionysian shattered arbitrary constructs of the Apollonian veil, such as professional titles, and exposed the Primordial Being of humanity. For Nietzsche, this paradoxical inclusion of dread and humanistic validation is represented in victims of 9/11 by “a shuddering suspicion that all this [Dionysian reality] was actually not so very alien…after all, in fact, it was only his Apollonian consciousness which, like a veil, hid this Dionysian world from his vision” (Tragedy 7). As seen with the emotive underpinnings of real world tragic experiences in the Vietnam War and 9/11, the dread of the Dionysian initiates tragic unfolding.
Within the phenomenological happenings of the Attic tragedy, the artistic channeling of Dionysus expresses itself in music and lyrics, while Apollo manifests himself within the imagery of the play. For Nietzsche, the heightened dialectical exchange of these two artistic impulses is of upmost importance, as they feed off one another in real-time on stage (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 14). He further illuminates this notion, in reference to an ancient Greek’s participatory identification with both Dionysus and Apollo on stage during a play:

In the first place, as Dionysian artist he has identified himself with the Primal Unity, its pain and contradiction. Assuming that music has been correctly termed a repetition and a recast of the world, we may say that he produces a copy of this Primal Unity as music. Now, however, under the Apollonian dream-inspiration, this music reveals itself to him again as a *symbolic dream-picture*. (*Tragedy* 14)

With the above quote, Nietzsche is revisiting his cosmogenesis in “Primal Unity,” while casting music as the most proper metaphorical harbinger of this Dionysian ontology. Correspondingly, *the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo radically harmonizes instantaneously* as Dionysian music inspires the creation of the Apollonian image. This dialectical interchange applies to the lyrics of chorus as well. Nietzsche states, “Accordingly, we recognize in tragedy a complete stylistic opposition: the language, color, flexibility, and movement of the dialogue fall apart into two entirely separate realms of expression, into the Dionysian lyrics of the chorus on the one hand, and the Apollonian dream-world of the scene on the other” (*Tragedy* 28). The “stylistic
opposition” aforementioned by Nietzsche is the paradoxical tension requisite in the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic as it manifests in a hyperactive form on stage.

For Nietzsche, the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic reaches a frenzied state during the conclusion of the Attic tragedy, and participants achieve a transcendent unification of the diametrically opposed archetypes within their own psyches.13 With this phenomenon, artistic expression transmutes to novel mythologizing. According to Nietzsche, Apollonian “image and concept, under the influence of truly [Dionysian] corresponding music, acquire a higher significance…I infer the capacity of music to give birth to myth (the most significant exemplar), and particularly the tragic myth: the myth which expresses Dionysian knowledge in [Apollonian] symbols” (Tragedy 59). Consequently, the transcendent experience of the Greek tragedy is comprised of Dionysus’s creative vitality perfectly enshrined within Apollo’s imagery. The psychological enormity of this mystical phenomenon is nothing short of paradigm altering, and participants form individualized mythologies temporally compatible this existential novelty. Furthermore, the marriage of art and myth honors the social functionality of tragedy,14 because “it is precisely the function of tragic myth to convince us that even the ugly and unharmonious is an artistic game which the will plays with itself in the eternal fullness of its joy” (Nietzsche, Tragedy 89-90). Conclusively, the novel outlooks and mythos provided by

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13 The term “participants” in Greek tragedies refers to cast, chorus, and audience.

14 In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche determines that mythology is a vitalizing source of “healthy creative power” for cultures, countries, and religions (Tragedy 85).
the dialectical exchange of Dionysus and Apollo in Attic tragedies finally justifies “the existence of even the ‘worst world’” as those seen with the cataclysmically traumatic events of the Vietnam War and 9/11 (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 91).

Representing the final element of the unfolding of tragic experiences, the phenomenological interaction of the Dionysian and the Apollonian during 9/11 coalesces in firefighters with the genesis of contextually relevant mythos. A fire chaplain on scene at ground zero for 9/11 explains the enigmatic nature of such experiences, “‘It really has to do with whether [or not] people can attach meaning to what happened [on 9/11]—not necessarily control—but meaning. If they can make meaning of this, that is really spiritual work, not from the pulpit, but from within themselves,’ then perhaps they can move ahead in work and life” (Freedman 387). Under those circumstances, original mythologies are manifest with first responders as the destructive energy of the Dionysian onslaught of 9/11 crystallizes into the monuments of Apollo. To illustrate, Pirro identifies the closing of the tragic unfolding of 9/11, stating that a “‘powerful new iconography…was associated with the disaster…New York fireman as tragic heroes…these smoking ruins as America’s hallowed ground” (11). In conjunction, according to a firefighter present at ground zero:

In additions to the repertoire of rituals that were already available to them … [firefighters] created some new ones. One of the most striking was the way that firefighters came together at ground zero with construction workers, and sometimes with chaplains, to engage in communal acts of prayer that were often silent. This group ritual, which was described by some as ‘ground zero religion,’
took place many times during the day and throughout the night, over a period of weeks that extended into months. An indicator of how important it was to those who participated in it was poignantly expressed by a fireman who testified that it not only strengthened their comradeship with each other, but also their communion with their comrades who had died in action. ‘We breathed them in though the dust of their bodies and continued to feel close to them,’ he said. (Freedman 391)

These powerfully intimate and lucid recollections of “ground zero religion” present an iconoclastic image of modern “tragic hero,” as those firefighters who fell in the disaster inspire those who survived (Pirro 11). In like manner, if Nietzsche would have witnessed the harrowing spectacles of humanity on September 11, 2001, he would no doubt understand that though the experiences of 9/11 “tragic myth attains its most vital content, its most expressive form; it rises once more like a wounded hero” (Nietzsche, Tragedy 36).
“Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction of life, the great stimulant of life…Art as the *redemption of the man of knowledge*—of those who see the terrifying and questionable character of existence, who want to see it, the men of tragic knowledge. Art as the *redemption of the man of action*—of those who not only see the terrifying and questionable character of existence but live it, want to live it, the tragic-warlike man, the hero. Art as the *redemption of the sufferer*—as the way to states in which suffering is, willed, transfigured, deified, where suffering is a form of great delight [sic].” (*Power* 112)

For Nietzsche, the creative act is the very cornerstone of ancient and modern societies, as “It is the great means of making life possible.” By the same token, Nietzsche heroizes the artistic mind because it has the gumption to paradoxically synthesize its foundations with an agnostic primordial cosmos. To him, this creative valor sublimates through the rapture of the Dionysian and the rationality of the Apollonian in a phenomenological embrace of imagination and its esteemed progeny: mythology. Interestingly, it often takes the trauma, suffering, and anguish in cataclysms such as Vietnam and 9/11 to stimulate the inherent creative capacities of humankind though the processes of tragedy. Therefore, the cathartic nature of artistry is bound to sublimations of the Dionysian and Apollonian due to a heightened infusion of pathos into the global
consciousness during human catastrophe. This occurrence is both historically and phenomenologically verifiable. Finally, the innovative creations and mythos sourced from the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic dynamically mold themselves to personalized-novel-paradigms. In ancient Greece, these psychologically vitiating endeavors played an essential role in the health and functionality of the polis.

The emotional profundity of the Greek Attic tragedy momentarily returns all participants of the play to the Dionysian womb of Primordial Being. This notion is applicable in a societal sense because of the Attic tragedy’s “role as an institution of self-reflection and critique [offers an opportunity] by which democratic citizens ...[can] submit their newly won freedom of action to an authority beyond (and yet somehow also originating from) themselves” (Pirro 15-6). In other words, with the transcendent experience of self-mythologizing, ancient Greeks paradoxically redefine themselves in a fashion that is beneficial for “the greater good.”

Point being, the enlightening and rejuvenating nature of Attic tragedies make the plays a cornerstone of one of the world’s most celebrated, and imitated, societies. In light of this notion, the illuminating nature of tragedy can greatly inform the modern world.

When crafting *The Birth of Tragedy*, in the late nineteenth-century, Nietzsche largely set forth to criticize the early stages of modernity which he diagnoses as pathologically Apollonian. Nietzsche describes this loss of Dionysian vigor in contemporary Western culture as such, “There has never been another art-period in which so-called culture and true art have been so estranged and opposed, as we may observe them to be at present. We can understand why so feeble a culture hates true art: it fears
destruction from its hands” (Tragedy 74). To Nietzsche, the praxis of “true art” is the chaotic, amoral wellspring of Dionysian ontology, which consistently seeks to demolish the established laws, customs, and ideologies of Apollo. This notion is invaluable to the crux of this exploration because, creative minds harness the eruption of Dionysian energy in the Vietnam War and 9/11 to promote paradigmatic change in a society bent with the political narratives of Apollo. Therefore, paradoxically, if used in a cathartic fashion, human tragedies operate as catalysts for creativity to play an essential role in society once again. Additionally, Nietzsche’s appraisals of both ancient and modern societies through the modalities of Dionysus and Apollo are extremely informative in the scripting of more fluid beliefs and principles precisely because they function through the ever-evolving process of dialectics. Conclusively, with his exhaustive evaluation of the concept of tragedy, Nietzsche positions himself in the belief that humankind can transcend itself through the mystic components of creativity (Tragedy 75). He eloquently advances, “Yes, my friends, have faith with me in Dionysian life and in the rebirth of tragedy … crown yourself with ivy, take the thyrsus in your hand, and marvel not if tigers and panthers lie down fawning at your feet” (Tragedy 75).


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