CHAPTER 1

"The Apollonian and the Dionysiac in Art"

In his book, "The Birth of Tragedy" (1872) Friedrich Nietzsche outlines a separation in culture where he identifies two separate strains of human activity. Firstly the Apollonian, named after the Greek sun god Apollo who symbolised order and classical beauty. Secondly the Dionysiac named after the Greek god of wine, Dionysus typified by excess and suffering.

Nietzsche identified these two strains of culture within the arts (music, poetry, sculpture, theatre and painting) of ancient Greek civilisation. Painting and sculpture have been identified as Apollonian, an area of the arts which works through a direct representation of phenomenal reality. Nietzsche calls them the plastic arts. Music, particularly the music of Wagner is Dionysiac.

The duality of the two (Apolline and the Dionysiac) Nietzsche claims "was the very origin and the essence of Greek tragedy" (p. 59, B.T.) The Apolline Nietzsche says "delight in illusion" (p. 61, B.T.) from which we are tempted to deduce that he is identifying Apolline with representational art and the dreamlike images which were used in painting from the time of Raphael down to the Neo-classical paintings of David & Ingres which maintain the same classical dictum as Raphael, and carry with them the theoretical characteristics of the 'Socratic World' as Nietzsche would say in total opposition to the Dionysiac. Further he says that "these Apolline thoughts and emotions are highly realistic counterfeit". (p.62, B.T.) "The Apolline tendency is cocooned within its logical schematism."

"Apollo and Dionysus. For me they are the vivid and concrete representations of two worlds of art, utterly different in their deepest essence and their highest aims." (p. 75, B.T.).

Nietzsche has identified not only a division of culture but two separate worlds of art which he calls Apollonian and Dionysiac, whose differences I will examine with this chapter.
My immediate reaction when citing reference to Nietzsche's division of culture (Feldman, E.B. 1987, "Varieties of Visual Experience", (third edition) New York: Prentice-Hall) was that the two principal strains were representational art and abstract art. After further consideration I felt that there were other dimensions to each. The Apollonian and the Dionysiac demonstrate opposite characteristics to one another, however there are also subtle variations in each which take us away from a black and white approach to their differences.

According to Joseph Henderson (1964), "The Dionysiac religion contained orgiastic rites that implied the need for an initiote to abandon himself to his animal nature and thereby experience the full fertilizing power of the earth mother. The initiating agent for this rite of passage in the Dionysiac ritual was wine. It was supposed to produce the symbolic lowering of consciousness necessary to introduce the novice into the closely guarded secrets of nature, whose essence was expressed by a symbol of erotic fulfilment.". This description of the Dionysiac consciousness suggests that while the Dionysiac is liberated from the conventional or scientific approach to life he is an emotionally charged creative artist.

My belief is that the Dionysiac painter as with music is an artist with great expressive powers "able to represent the metaphysical world directly" also as Nietzsche accords music with this ability saying "the nonmusical arts represent it at best indirectly. Music, though no longer the (only) Dionysian art, remains the "Dionysian art par excellence." (Young, J., (1993). p.36, "Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art", Cambridge: Cambridge Press.)

Nietzsche's Apollo seeks "redemption through illusion", "moderation" and will "coexist with the aesthetic necessity of beauty." (p.28, B.T.) His "Apollo could not live without Dionysus." Could his Apollo have become a twentieth-century Dionysus? When we examine painting of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth-century, it is evident that there was a considerable move away from tradition in the artist's approach to painting, sculpture and architecture. Artists became more subjective in their approach.
It is easy to identify in artists such as Vincent van Gogh a closer relationship with the Dionysiac spirit. In particular observing his move away from the traditional subject to the subject of paint as in "The Plain Near Auvers", (France) July 1890 (see Fig.2), where the detail reveals the language of paint. The artist has painted vigorously, engaging in an act of immersing himself in the moment, touching raw feelings, moving the voyeur with his brush strokes and colour, as a composer such as Wagner would through his music. The criteria with which I am comparing these two artforms is from Kandinsky's theories on painting and music in which he continually draws parallels between music and painting in his book titled 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art'. Nietzsche has referred to what he may describe as, a classical example of the Apolline artist in Raphael, who he defines as "...one of those immortal naives, in one of his allegorical paintings depicted the reduction of illusion to mere illusion, the original act of the naive artist and also of Apolline culture". He was referring to the last of Raphael's paintings, "The Transfiguration" (see Fig.1) commissioned in 1517 by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici. He also says, "Here in the highest artistic symbolism, we behold that Apolline world of beauty and its substratum,..." Nietzsche may not have seen Francisco Goya's "black paintings: in particular "The Vision of the Pilgrims of San Isidoro" 1824 (see Fig.3) described by Feldman (1985) p. 279) "...it represents a drunken orgy..." "...Goya's angry brushwork..." "This is the expressionists vision that has preoccupied so many painters, from Rouault to de Kooning." It may have been the first step away from purely illusionist painting. The work is still representational although it does much more for us than merely depict a scene. It has a force or a power to communicate to the other side of our structured existence, our fears, our suffering our base emotions. Our fear of allowing ourselves to be subject to what could in fact be described as Dionysian impulses. Feldman (1985) describes Van Gogh's work as making "a powerful assault on our bodies" when referring to the impact his paintings have on us, he says, "certain works actually seem to exert a force on one's skeletal system", is alluding to the dynamic or energetic quality of Vincent van Gogh's brushwork.
Fig. 1 "The Transfiguration" (1517) Raphael
Fig. 2 "The Plain near Auvers" (France, July 1890) Vincent van Gogh

Fig. 3 "The Vision of the Pilgrims of San Isidoro" (detail) oil on plaster transferred to canvas (1824) Francisco Goya
These examples clearly demonstrate changes of artistic intent and purpose.

Painting post 1872 has changed its direction at an alarming rate. Though not all twentieth century art can be defined as Dionysiac, there are certainly a good proportion that fit Nietzsche's definition of Dionysiac. To be Dionysiac a painting must not be totally illusionist, must show signs of excess, for example, not tightly controlled and should not rely on the aesthetic beauty of its brushwork, subject matter or colour. In that it is not illusionist the Dionysiac painting is a painting first and foremost. Its application has life in contrast to the life like appearance of Apollonian painting.

The characteristics of the Apollonian painting are predictably formatted. The method of painting construction are ordered and methodological. The approach is entirely Socratic, by which I mean it is produced through sound and scientifically proven technique. Technique which at its highest point during the Renaissance saw the production of highly representational works of art in both painting and sculpture, which possessed the almost flawless characteristics of Ancient Greek classical sculpture. Nietzsche has identified this type of painting as being typical of the Apollonian. This technique has been passed from Da Vinci and Raphael down to the French Neo-classical artists David and Ingres, in whose works the final results are representational and highly illusionist. Their paint application is controlled and ordered with aesthetically beautiful brushstrokes and idealised subject matter which would be in direct contrast to what appears to be a lack of order and control in the work of a Dionysian painter.

In his final sentence of "The Birth of Tragedy" 21, Nietzsche greets us with what he describes as "the supreme goal of tragedy and of art in general"..."symbolised by the fraternal bond between the two deities", Apollo and Dionysus. "Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, but Apollo finally speaks the language of Dionysus", in what appears to be a union which creates a necessary friction to keep their relationship alive, following the scientific theory that opposites attract. Their union also provides the necessary tension to make good art. In painting it has traditionally been a taboo to mix styles.
This can be evidenced through the history of Western painting which has been influenced by classical technique for centuries, whereby apprentices were taught to paint and draw with precision and the art of classical painting had become a tradition which was later fostered by the French Academy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though in this case Nietzsche is possibly referring to the mixture of the states of Apolline illusion with Dionysiac truths - "a dream artists and an ecstatic artist at one and the same time." (B.T. 2, p. 16). Another issue brought into focus here is the marriage of objective and subjective forms of art, or the representational and the abstract.

In "Birth of Tragedy" 5, Nietzsche gives us an example of the Ancient Greek poet and writer "Homer"... "the prototype of the Apolline naive artist" and "Archilocus" questioning "is he, the first to be termed 'subjective'?" and "here the objective artists stood face to face with the first 'subjective' artists." Until this time the perception was that "the subjective artist" was known "only as a bad artist." (B.T. 5, p.28). The mixture of what was perceived to be good and bad art, objective with subjective was becoming more evident post nineteenth century, a time when artists were also being influenced in thought by the writings of Freud clearly evidenced through the works of Surrealist painters such as Salvador Dalí and Max Ernst. Feldman (1985) says that "Freud's psychoanalysis was a direct source of Surrealism" ( 'Thinking About Art', p.228). With certain subjects there was no alternative but to mix objective styles with subjective, for example, Gustave Klimt's painting entitled "Death and Life" (see Fig.4), 1916 (where the artist's subject is focused on expectation of the tragic), when the objective truth was no longer sufficient, the way was left open for the Dionysian to encroach upon the Apollonian, a pathway which would lead to a purer Dionysian consciousness through the paintings of Kandinsky.
Fig. 4 "Death and Life" (1916) oil on canvas
Gustav Klimt
CHAPTER 2

"Music, Painting and the Metaphysical"

"Music obeys quite different aesthetic principles from the visual arts, and cannot be measured according to the category of beauty." - Richard Wagner, from his essay entitled "Beethoven" which was cited by Nietzsche (B.T. 16, p.76).

"Music differed in character and origin from all other arts.... it was not a replica of phenomena, but the direct replica of the will itself." - Arthur Schopenhauer, "World as Will and Representation, 1".

"In its use of form, music can attain results that cannot be achieved by painting. On the other hand, music lacks many of the characteristics of painting. e.g., music has time, the duration of time at its disposal. Painting on the other hand, while not possessing this advantage can in an instant present the spectator with the entire context of the work, which music is unable to do." - Wassily Kandinsky, "Concerning the Spiritual in Art." Nietzsche's supporting argument for music as Dionysiac firstly identifies Schopenhauer's proclamation that "it was not a replica of phenomena", as could not be said for painting and sculpture up until that time, it was not "measured according to the category of beauty" and it relates directly to the metaphysical.

Wassily Kandinsky had written his book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" during the first decade of the twentieth century, which came into print for the first time in 1914. Kandinsky had not sought to debate whether or not painting was Dionysiac. He had a great interest in painting following the path of music away from representation and nearer to a spiritual awareness and sensitivity of the soul toward colour and paint application. He had a powerful reaction to a Wagnerian opera which he describes as, "The violins the deep tones of the basses, and
especially the wind instruments at that time embodied for me all the power of that pre-nocturnal hour. I saw all my colours in my mind, they stood before my eyes. Wild almost crazy lines were sketched in front of me. I did not dare use the expression that Wagner had painted "my hour" musically. It became, however, quite clear to me that art in general was far more powerful than I thought, and on the other hand that painting could develop just such powers as music possesses." These powers reflect the influence of Dionysus. Kandinsky may have been experiencing a Dionysiac frenzy, hastened by Wagner's music. It seems to have broken new ground for him, an experience through which he could perceive the future development of painting in what appears to be a vision of Dionysiac painting.

Twentieth-century abstract painting led by Wassily Kandinsky had gone beyond Nietzsche's expectations of what was considered to be a purely illusionist artwork and had crossed the threshold into the paradigm of music. Kandinsky wanted to emphasize the "deep relationship between the arts, and especially between music and painting." Speaking of painting he quotes Goethe as saying that "painting must count this relationship her main foundation, and by this prophetic remark he seems to foretell the position in which painting is today. She stands, in fact, at the first stage of the road by which she will, according to her own possibilities, make art an abstraction of thought and arrive finally at purely artistic composition." (p.26,27), (C.S.A.). The spell of Dionysus complete, Apollo is being transformed.

There are a number of issues brought to light in relation to Nietzsche's argument for music as Dionysiac as opposed to painting. These can be identified within the quotes at the beginning of this chapter:

Firstly it is implied that the visual arts is "measured according to the category of beauty."

Reference taken from Richard Wagner, cited by Nietzsche.
The primary focus of art within the twentieth century has moved away from aesthetic beauty, which did predominate in the art of central Europe up to and during the nineteenth century. "Beauty of form and colour is no sufficient aim by itself, despite the assertions of pure aesthetes or even naturalists, who are obsessed with the idea of "beauty"." Kandinsky (1914), (trans., Sadler, M.T.H., 1977), "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", p. 47, New York: Dover Publications.

Aesthetic beauty has been looked upon as a deceptive devise and a distraction, particularly by contemporary artists and mainstream visual artists during the latter twentieth century. Figure painters, Lucian Freud and Peakestein have chosen models with slight to gross imperfections, Freud's subject matter may be a clear reflection of the attitudes and taste in the arts during the second-half of the twentieth century (see Fig. 6). Peakestein selected subjects in whom you could read their life's experience, evidenced through their hands and maturity of body form (see Fig. 5).

If beauty has been evidenced in the visual arts during this century, it has been existing on the fringe of society, relegated to the 'brushmen of the bush' and purveyors of nice landscapes. Most artists capable of producing aesthetically beautiful figures with handsome brushwork have been in a state of denial (a denial of the existence of beauty in art) particularly during the past few decades, which has been dominated by Dionysian tendencies, self expression, individualism, concept, performance and the alter-ego. Apollonian tendencies are present, though obviously suppressed, they emerge when summoned by the promise of wealth and riches, through popular art prizes. Beauty has not been a hallmark of twentieth century painting, sculpture, architecture or photography. It can no longer be applied as a measurement or purpose of visual art. Robert Henri (1923), maintains that "beauty rests in the subject". Then does it follow that, if there is no subject as in non-objective painting which is abstract, there is no beauty? Feldman (1985) says,

"However our age has seen the emergence of a new type of art - which aims at aesthetic effects (the beautiful, the sublime, the pathetic, the transcendent, even the perfectly ugly) without representing real things or recognisable places."
Fig. 5  "Model in Kimono on Enamel Chair" (1980). Philip Pearlstein

Fig. 6  "Naked man with rat" (1977/78). oil on canvas Lucian Freud
As can be imagined, this art has an almost metaphysical appeal hence it is
difficult to discuss rationally. Still examples of it can be seen - in work of
twentieth century painters like Kandinsky, Mondrian, Rothko, Mark Tobey, and
Barnett Newman. In many respects they have changed painting into a whole new
visual art form."

What could be determined as beauty of the subject or the beauty of paint application, is now
solely the beauty of paint application.

Secondly, that "art is a replica of phenomena" as quoted by Arthur Schopenhauer, in his book
"The World as Will and Representation, I." Feldman (1985) says -

"The mid-twentieth century witnessed a determined effort to break the connections
between painting representation. Abstraction did not go far enough; in its simplifications
and generalisations of objects one could still recognise bits and pieces of the world "out
there." The non-objective painters - Kandinsky may have been the first one - made the
break: they claimed to create without reference to external reality. Whether this was a
psychological possibility may be questioned. Still, in the work of painters like Rothko and
Gottlieb, it is difficult to see any real-world point of departure: these artists do in fact
seem to compose with pure colours, shapes and textures; representationally speaking,
they burn bridges behind them."

By 'Psychological possibility' Feldman is inferring that a total departure from the representational
image in painting appears to be difficult at this stage and that few had managed to depart from
the representation of phenomenal reality utterly.

Art is not always a replica of natural phenomena. Art as Arthur Schopenhauer had known it up
until his time had definitely been a replica of natural phenomena. All that was about to change,
although the change had already begun, with Goya and his "black paintings", possibly when
Arthur Schopenhauer was a young boy. In his chapter called "the pyramid" (C. S. A.) Kandinsky
highlights the importance of music as a model for the future direction of painting in its move towards abstraction and adds that, "With few exceptions music has been for some centuries the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but to the expression of the artist's soul, in musical sound," Kandinsky adds, "A painter, who finds no satisfaction in mere representation"..."naturally seeks to apply the methods of music to his own art"..."and from this results the modern desire for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, for repeated notes of colour, for setting colour into motion."

Kandinsky's vision of painting may have been spurred on by Friedrich Nietzsche, who Kandinsky mentions in his chapter on "Spiritual Revolution" with an underlying reference to change (p.14) he says, "When religion, science and morality are shaken, the last two by the strong hand of Nietzsche, and when the outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze from externals in unto himself." Nietzsche and Wagner it appears may have been the catalyst for Wassily Kandinsky's theories of painting and music and further the use of music as the model for the progression of painting into a non-representational artwork.

The move away from representation in painting brought with it a new understanding of the potential of colour, as Kandinsky explains, when referring to Vincent van Gogh, "To him it seems as outrageous as his own change from brown shadows to blue seemed to his contemporaries."

An adherence to pursuing the relevance of colour in painting and its association with music had been explored specifically by Kandinsky, in the first instance. Though Matisse, then the Fauves gave colour its emotional emphasis. The focus on colour in painting during the first half of the twentieth century developed in painting a greater breadth of language for the visual artist, with strong similarities to music evidenced through the use of discordance in colour, harmonies, and low and high key in major and minor keys. Kandinsky had the insight to identify that colour could assist paintings transition from representation of phenomenal reality to abstraction, to what I perceive as being a transition from Apollian to Dionysiac. The artist could invent with colour, while colour and pattern could be dominant within composition giving the subject only secondary
importance. Kandinsky describes the artist's involvement with colour in the following quote.

"Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano, with its many strings. The Artist is the hand that purposefully sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key."

In my view, Kandinsky's aim was to totally deconstruct the traditional perception of painting. He had set his sights upon the very basis of formal ideals in painting construction and removed all safety nets through the use of "radial vision of space without which we could refer to the number of constraints and variables in an event" through which he "put painting on a different plane than the fusion of dream reality" which I feel reduces if not eliminates the Apollonian state entirely.


It was the New York School during the nineteen forties which embraced the Dionysian concept, and the genius of its influence through Greek tragedy, translating this concept into modern painting. Nicolas Calas, who Ashton, Dore. (1972) describes as "a Greek thinker" ("The New York School", p. 187) living in America developed a summation of tragedy identifying 'the Hero' which was embraced by painters during the forties. Ashton, Dore. (1972), says, "His analysis could well be juxtaposed with Sartre's informal explanations of existentialist positions; it is because individualism is grounded in self-confidence that the individual who has extreme self-confidence and great will power can rise above others and become a hero," Calas wrote.

"However, the hero's self-confidence should never blind him to the fact that, as an individual, he, like all mortals, remains exposed to the vicissitudes of fortune." (p. 188). "His concluding sentences anticipated those painters who would soon be talking about the value of 'risk' in the act of painting." According to Ashton (1972), "The preoccupation with the Dionysian, and with Greek tragedy...informs the comments of Newman, Rothko, Gottlieb, Barizotes and many others..." who were part of 'the New York School' during the nineteen forties." (p. 187). Ashton also adds that, "Rothko's contribution also suggests that he might have been inspired by Nietzsche's 'Birth of Tragedy', especially when he refers to the archaic Greeks who used as their
models the inner vision they had in their gods." The artists real model, he added is "an ideal
which embraces all of human drama." Artist as 'Hero' and 'risk' taker would be a fitting title for
twentieth century achievements in painting, which I feel is clearly under the spell of Dionysus.
Thirdly, Julian Young, (1993), in his book 'Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art' says that, "Nietzsche's
continued association between music and the Dionysian is readily understandable in
Schopenhauerian terms: music represents the metaphysical world directly." (p.36) Young asks,
'Must art have a hidden metaphysical curriculum?" and "Is the possession of metaphysical,
'afterworldly' (ibid.) meaning a condition of greatness in art?" Young is critical of Nietzsche's
views here and adds, "Nietzsche's insistence that it is is, in my view, a product of the distortion of
aesthetics by pessimism."
That music represents the metaphysical directly there is no doubt. Whether the metaphysical
attributes alone in music or painting can determine greatness in art is questionable. The aim of
my inquiry is to clearly identify painting as Dionysiac. It was the metaphysical quality of the music
d of Wagner that set music apart from other artforms. This quality in music Schopenhauer and
Nietzsche praised to the point of adulation; marvelling at its uniqueness. Metaphysical activity in
painting was recorded as early as 1916 (see Fig.8). Massimo Carra's book on 'Metaphysical Art'
(1968), names a small group of artists, which included Giorgio De Chirico and Carlo Carra who
for a brief period from 1916 to 1921 produced paintings which have been identified as
metaphysical art. The author Massimo Carra says, "The poet Alberto Savina, De Chirico's
younger brother described it as a way of seeing.
Carra, using reference to Nietzsche says of De Chirico, "In the writings of Nietzsche, De Chirico
found confirmation of his own melancholy and mystical tendencies. In 'the Birth of Tragedy',
Nietzsche describes the 'symbolic dream picture', which reveals to the artist his state of unity
with the primal source of the universe; he also communicates his foreboding that beneath
apparent reality another reality is concealed. De Chirico's metaphysical painting was the first to
question this "apparent reality". Nietzsche's call for a poetic reappraisal of everyday objects and scenes to reveal the more profound meaning beneath superficial appearances is clearly reflected..."

Carras says, their work was "realistically depicted and sometimes combined with incongruity or overt fantasy." Other ways of describing this "new way of seeing" were "another form of reality" and that it questions apparent reality. "The foundations of De Chirico's early style, and the Nordic strain of metaphysical painting, were laid in Munich, principally through contact with the magic realism of Arnold Böcklin, and the philosophy of Nietzsche.

The Metaphysical school of painters are often mistaken for surrealists. This is possibly because of the dreamlike content through which they developed "an art that can be understood in more than one way." "We who feel ourselves to be uncorrupted sons of a great race of constructors (Giotto, Uccello, Masaccio, etc.)..." The unusual construction which characterises the metaphysical painters' work, at times using architecture which emphasized man's insignificance, by using an imposing perspective with sharp dissecting lines, cutting deeply into the picture plane as in De Chirico's compositions, were to influence Mark Rothko during the early stage of his development as a painter, as Dianne Waldman identifies in Rothko's 'Subway Paintings' of the late 1930's. Waldman uses adjectives such as 'shadowy', 'apparitional', "Ghostly and unreal", "... a sense of silence, of distance and lack of communication that is extremely disorientating and recalls Edward Hopper or Giorgio De Chirico." Waldman further adds, "...these paintings suggest a strange, neither region that re-emerges in his surrealist inspired subterranean fantasies of the mid-1940's." It appears that the influence of Giorgio De Chirico's metaphysical painting may have possibly been mistaken for surrealism by Waldman. Rothko's paintings of the mid-1940's certainly have taken him steps away from the Apolline reality of the 'Subway Paintings'. Though the influence during this period is more metaphysical than surreal, among other influences which ranged from Miro to Duchamp, Yet, on the other hand you cannot deny the clear influence of Paul Klee upon Rothko's painting during this period also. Waldman adds,
Fig. 7 "The Disquietening of the Muses" (1916)
Giorgio De Chirico

Fig. 8 "Metaphysical Interior" (1916)
Giorgio De Chirico
"Rothko belongs very much in the tradition of such metaphysicians of painting as Mondrian, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky." (p. 58) "The paintings and writings of... Kandinsky, particularly... 'On the Spiritual in Art', received much attention in New York in the 1940's."

Rothko's paintings of this period, particularly 'Phalanx of the Mind' (1944), (see Fig.9) 'Ritual' (1944), and 'Rites of Lilith' (1945), (see Fig.10) use compositional structures with landscape horizon and a sense of space which extends beyond the perimeter of the canvas, as do the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio De Chirico. 'Phalanx of the Mind', by Rothko has a similar balance to the 'Disquieting Muses', (1944) of De Chirico (1916), (see Fig.7) only the placement of the horizon has been inverted and is seen in the lower half of Rothko's painting. At this stage of his development, Mark Rothko's paintings have departed from the Apolline, though the presence of the figure is still apparent.

Dionysiac content outweighs the Apolline in Rothko's paintings of the mid-1940's. Rothko's paintings from the late 1940's till his death in 1970 could be said to be a twentieth century example of Dionysian consciousness represented by the art of painting, being totally devoid of even the faintest hint of the Apollonian, all figurative content has dissolved. Waldman (p.60) says; "...illusionism was extremely limited as early as the 'Subway Paintings.' " painted by Rothko in the late 1930's. This clearly indicates that Apolline consciousnes was beginning to recede very early in Rothko's painting career. Rothko's attention to the central importance of spiritual aspects of painting through colour, composition and paint application, give him a closer association to Kandinsky. Waldman points out that this "...contrasts markedly with the attitudes of painters like Pollock or de Kooning and Franz Kline" who she describes as 'physical' rather than 'spiritual'. Waldman says, "For these artists who emphasize the gestural elements of Abstract Expressionism, the canvas must reflect the very act of painting." "Rothko's approach was contemplative rather than physical; unlike Pollock who worked intuitively, rapidly and spontaneously."

Rothko's death by suicide is highlighted by Waldman when she says, "It is well known that
Fig. 9 "Phalanx of the Mind" (1944) oil on canvas
Mark Rothko
Fig. 10  "Rites of Lilith" (1945) oil on canvas
Mark Rothko
Rothko's success brought him at least as much terror as comfort." Evidence that pessimism was an increasing element in Mark Rothko's personality was reflected in the dark and sombre colours of his latter paintings. Waldman says, "...as fame grew, so did his uneasiness, and he became increasingly depressed as the years passed." The 'Artist', 'Hero' and 'Risk' taker as with many of his contemporaries, was engulfed with a pessimism similar to that of Arthur Schopenhauer, the same which Friedrich Nietzsche tried to suppress in his 'Birth of Tragedy' which defines the Apollonian state as optimism and the Dionysiac as pessimism.

In Dionysian terms, Rothko's contemplative approach to his painting, tends to be contradictory to what we expect of the Dionysian painter. In part four of Nietzsche's 'Attempt at Self-criticism' (p. 6) Nietzsche asks the question, "So what is Dionysiac?" In chapter one of 'The Birth of Tragedy' Nietzsche describes the Dionysiac as one of two very different tendencies, "Which walk side by side, usually in violent opposition to one another..." The Apolline and the Dionysiac are depicted by Nietzsche as two "separate art worlds" of "dream" and "intoxication", "two psychological states...." Apolline as "dream" or "illusion" and Dionysiac as the analogy of "intoxication." "Under the influence of the narcotic potion hymned by all primitive men..."

From the description of the Dionysiac mentioned previously, it would seem that the opposite approach to Rothko's contemplation as seen in the physical method of paint application by Pollock, de Kooning and Kline would be more appropriately defined as typical of Dionysiac painting. However, there is no particular method of approach outlined by Nietzsche, which says how the Dionysiac evolves their work, whether it is done fast or slow, with gaps left for thought and consideration, or as a thoroughly impulsive experience. The very nature of the Dionysiac has been described as "intoxicated" by Nietzsche, which through ones experience could produce rather long pauses, meditative and otherwise. Intoxication may induce speed, though accuracy can be impaired because of the slowness of the reflexes to respond. Everything is left to chance, and risk must still be a prerequisite for the Dionysiac. Certainly the spontaneous approach of Pollock provides an excellent model for the Dionysian painter, though both Pollock and Rothko...
satisfy all of the criteria set by Nietzsche in his prescription of Dionysian consciousness.
There can be impulsive Apolline artists as well as contemplative ones. Ultimately it is the lack of
importance placed on the material world and it's representation that counts in the minds of both
painters that satisfies their Dionysiac leanings. Further the impact of their paintings upon the
individual stirs the emotion directly and indirectly. Arnason (1963) says of Pollock's approach to
painting, "...the element of intuition or the accidental play a large and deliberate part; this is one
of the principal contributions of abstract expressionism. However, nothing that an experienced
and accomplished artist does can be completely accidental." Even though the Dionysiac painter
works in a manner unacceptable to the painting tradition, as Nietzsche describes, which
appears "intoxicated", he is still in control of his medium. Through the artist's personal
knowledge and understanding of the medium, he is allowed to take the necessary risks, working
on the brink of tragedy, using the accidental to create unexpected results. Arnason describes
Pollock's paintings as "...a labyrinthine network of lines, splatters, and paint drips." Kline's
paintings are described by Arnason as, "...large, rugged, but controlled brush stroke; the
powerful" and "architectural structure." Clement Greenberg (1947) asks, "What did Nietzsche
say? He knew in spite of his profession of the Dionysian:"..."Balance, largeness, precision,
enlightenment, contempt for nature in all its particularity - that is the great and absent art of our
age."
CHAPTER 3
On the nature of the Dionysiac artist
Intoxication/Violence/Suicide/Pessimism/ & the Erotic

Nietzsche's Dionysian artist is as Joseph Henderson describes, abandoned 'to his animal nature......'. His mental and spiritual processes loosened by wine, he is subject to his base emotions, detached from moral judgement and free from laws which restrict natural responses. Laws which tend to limit the artist's choices because of social taboo. The choice to please yourself at the expense of putting aside convention or accepted practices in art. Following familiar paths is expected and divergence is rarely rewarded. The Dionysian takes pleasure in pleasing himself. He is a risk taker. Euripides in his play 'The Bacchae' portrays the god Dionysus exacting revenge upon non believers, using his power over their will they would even destroy their own offspring. Life has little value in the Dionysian schema. Tragedy becomes the point of tension between Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus or the collision between the subjective and the objective in art, representation versus abstraction, scientifically proven fact versus the imagination. When I reflect upon the tragic circumstances which surround artists lives, particularly those of the New York School: Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko in particular. The violent death of Pollock and Rothko's suicide, I wonder was this all part of the Dionysian scheme? Has the art of painting in the twentieth century adapted itself to Dionysian consciousness as Nietzsche accords music? Its artists becoming subject to pessimism and tragedy. Losing touch with reality they are ruled by their emotions, while being partakers of orgiastic rites as identified in the mythology surrounding Jackson Pollock's life.

Friedman, B.H., was cited by Arthur Lubow ('HQ' magazine, October 1994) as saying 'Here was a man who was taking big chances. He was living on the outer edge of the wheel.'
On Rothko, Bernard Malamud (1978) says 'Shortly before he died in February, 1970, the Schrags saw Mark from their window across the street. His long hair was lank. He looked haggard, pale, joyless. ('The Aquamarine Sunrise': a memory of Mark Rothko.)

Arthur Schopenhauer in his book 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. 1, p. 259 says 'suicide becomes very easy for the person in despair or consumed by morbid depression'.

Rothko's depression was fuelled by ill health heavy drinking and what Waldman defines politely as 'family problems'. Was Rothko's tendency toward heavy drinking and his later suicide relative to his creative disposition? In Dostoevsky's 'The Brothers Karamazov' there is reference to a young lady who after 'an enigmatic passion for a gentlemen', committed suicide 'by throwing herself one stormy night into a rather deep and rapid river from a high bank, almost a precipice, and so perished entirely to satisfy her own caprice, and to be like Shakespeare's Ophelia.' As Nietzsche explains in BT 7 p. 39 'everyday reality becomes repellent' and further 'man can see the horror and absurdity of existence, no he understands the symbolism of Ophelia's fate, now he understands the wisdom of Silenus the god of the woods, it repels him' p 40. Schopenhauer in Volume II, p. 549 adds '... being in love can reach so high a degree that without their satisfaction all the good things of the world and even life itself lose their value... it makes a person ready for any sacrifice, and, if fulfilment remains forever denied, can lead to madness or suicide.' Silenus is quoted by Nietzsche as saying, 'The best of all things is something entirely outside your grasp: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second-best thing for you - is to die soon.' (S3, p. 22, BT.) Silenus' quote does not specifically mention suicide though it assists the reader to entertain the idea. How else could you 'die soon' (apart from willing yourself to death) if not by suicide? Nietzsche himself would supply the hemlock to dispatch you, particularly if your leanings are toward the Socratic. Feldman (1985) says, 'Several of the action painters died early or tragically: Pollock and Gorky among others. Waldman (1978) says, 'Arshile Gorky. Jackson Pollock(Fig. 11 & 12), David Smith, Franz Kline and others of the New York school had also met untimely ends, but it is Rothko's suicide that is the most disturbing.
Fig. 11 "Lavender Mist" (1950), oil, enamel, and aluminium paint on canvas
Jackson Pollock

Fig. 12 "Ocean Greyness" (1953), oil on canvas
Jackson Pollock
symbolically, of all the deaths.' Malamud (1978) tells how Rothko had told him, 'he had left Meil (his wife) and talked about his depression. Mark recited his various troubles yet seemed content with himself.' He described a black painting done by Rothko as 'symbolic of the dissolution of his black mood.' Rothko's black painting I feel represented the depth to which he was able to express his feeling in a similar manner to Goya. It may reflect his pessimism, though I don't know that would be any more true than Malevich's white on white reflecting his optimism.

The need for 'erotic fulfillment' as part of the lowering of consciousness in the Dionysian rite described by Henderson leads to an irresistible passion free from logic and laws or process. Submission to sexual desires without inhibition. Nietzsche himself describes the mood of the Dionysiac festivals where there 'was an extravagant lack of sexual discipline, whose waves engulfed all the venerable rules of family life.' (S2, p.22, BT). It is tempting to think that Pollock and Rothko were more of the Dionysiac mould than Wagner, because as risk takers and the partakers of the tragedies of life they were Dionysian to the point of death. Wagner turned toward Christianity, much to Nietzsche's disdain. Howard Grey in his book 'Wagner' p. 109, (1990) refers to Nietzsche's '...disgust at Wagner's apparent surrender to Christianity...' which was in clear opposition to Nietzsche's anti-Christian writings and after already proposing music and in particular the music of Wagner as Dionysiac. Wagner's about face was a severe blow to the credibility of Nietzsche's ideal Dionysian artist, chameleon. It is both artist and the artist's work which reflects the Dionysian consciousness, the artist as a vehicle for its translation must be capable of imparting to his work an element of the tragic through his emotive nature which in turn reflects Dionysian truths. Wagner's surrender to Christianity may have increased his tendency towards a more Socratic approach to his music. Nietzsche himself describes Socrates as 'the opponent of Dionysus' (BT, p.64). Socrates was seen by Nietzsche as 'Theoretical man' who accepts nothing but scientifically proven fact. This of course leaves no room for creativity or the accidental, Dionysian consciousness being more of the latter. Nietzsche's main thrust in his division of culture clearly separates sculpture from music or visual from non-visual art works.
Neither images nor words could be included in Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian in the context of the Greek tragedy "...tragedy perishes when deprived of the spirit of music just as sure as it can be born only of that spirit" (BT 16 p.75) and "music makes every painting, indeed every scene from real life and from the world, at once appear in enhanced significance." Neither painting nor music can lay exclusive claim to the Dionysian. Music does have intrinsic values which set it apart from the visual art works of painting, sculpture and drawing, however as implied by Kandinsky there are also aspects of painting which cannot be replicated by music. Both music and painting have the ability to be representational, to be objective and subjective and to lay claim to the metaphysical. Is music, however, still exclusively Dionysian?

As Julian Young points out in his book, "Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art", (1993, p.36) although Nietzsche originally in "The Birth of Tragedy", "accords music a monopoly over Dionysian, calling it the Dionysian art." Young points out "that his more considered discussions (Nietzsche's) moderate the demand that great art should be literally musical by the requirement that it should contain, should be generated out of, 'musical mood' (BT 5); that is, in the words of the original title of the book, 'the spirit of music'." Young says, "what Nietzsche means by 'musical mood' is simply Dionysian consciousness."

Thomas M. Messer, in his preface to Diane Waldman's book, 'Mark Rothko, 1903-1970 a Retrospective' alludes to the affinity Rothko's painting had with music. "Mark Rothko shares with composers of music an absence of explicit imagery and correspondingly developed capacity to evoke content by association; an ability to engage the responding organ (in his case, the eye) in a process that is akin to listening because it involves attention to consecutive passages; he describes Rothko 'as a creator of melodic surfaces.' Reflections of Kandinsky? Silk & Stern (1981) p.266, add that 'Nietzsche prefers not to say: that the pure Dionysiac never exists in art, and therefore the dialectic between Dionysian and Apolline is visible in all forms and all aspects of art. Wherever we look, we see both tendencies, but in varying degrees.' Nietzsche also concedes that (S22, BT.) 'Even music, as we have seen, must be regarded as both.' Though
he still maintained that music alone was exclusively Dionysian.

It appears to be true, though that the artist, painter along with representatives of other art works, drifts in and out of Dionysiac consciousness in a natural progression in the development of his art. Beyond being able to represent the painter composes, beyond dreamlike illusions of reality which are referred to by Nietzsche as Apolline, the painter uses the language of paint to convey mood or emotion. These are the intangible metaphysical qualities shared between the arts.

Painting is not given a great deal of attention by Nietzsche because 'The Birth of Tragedy' is written specifically with reference to 'Ancient Greek Art', sculpture, epic and lyric poetry, music and theatre (particularly Greek tragedy). It is within this context that Nietzsche developed his dichotomy of the Apolline and the Dionysiac in art. Wagner was Nietzsche's modern answer to the Dionysiac: Nietzsche is quoted as saying, 'Wagner sums up modernity' cited by Catinescu, M., (1990): 'Five faces of Modernity' chapter on 'The Idea of Decadence'. p.179.

To me this statement indicates the extreme to which Nietzsche would be prepared to go with his obsession with the Dionysiac which becomes obvious when Kaufmann says that 'Nietzsche also identified himself as Dionysus' Kaufmann, Walter., "Nietzsche" (1956). New York: Meridian Books. p. 34: '......when he breaks with Wagner, determines to express himself in Apollonian aphorisms - makes Dionysus in the end his own god, while claiming that Wagner was really not Dionysian but only "romantic". Kaufmann (p.25) says of Nietzsche - 'he both loved and hated Socrates and Wagner.' Kaufmann adds Nietzsche, 'himself sought to avoid any ambiguity by distinguishing sharply between the "romantic" and "Dionysian" - and the "romantic" was precisely what he opposed. (p.26). When Kaufmann refers to Nietzsche Contra Wagner (5) he says expressly that it was in part Wagner's "ambiguity" which he could not "bear". So, Wagner, the central character in Nietzsche's 'Birth of Tragedy' thesis was reduced from Dionysian to merely "romantic".

Waldman often refers to Mark Rothko as "romantic" also. In spiritual terms, if his god was not Dionysus as evidently was Nietzsche's, which implies an anti-god, anti-Christian philosophy, then
being a Dionysian artist was out of the question.

Rothko evidences a very strong Jewish background as did Barnett Newman and his latter paintings were deeply religious with reference to the Passion of Christ. Waldman (1978), writes, (p.68). 'In these murals on the Passion of Christ, Rothko evokes with his red and black his belief in the passion of life, the finality of death, the reality of the spirit.' (Fig.13 "The Rothko Chapel")

The Dionysiac is not consistently spiritual as Henderson (1964) points out. (p.141). 'The Dionysiac religion, shifting constantly from spiritual to physical and back again, perhaps proved too wild and turbulent for some more aesthetic souls.' This may partly explain the differences between Rothko and Pollock if they can both be identified as being ruled by opposite poles of the Dionysiac spectrum. Rothko being the more spiritual entity and Pollock most would agree is the classic example of the physical side of the Dionysiac. The spiritual emphasis on Rothko's work sits comfortably with the "romantic" and "mystical" tags given to him by Waldman. While Pollock engenders the physical and possibly the more violent characteristics of Dionysian consciousness.

On violence and the Dionysian, Henderson writes, 'Some men need to be aroused, and experience the initiation in the violence of a Dionysiac "thunder rite" (Henderson, J.L., 'Symbols of Transcendence', p.149). Implies a transference of energy through the sheer terror of impending tragedy. The adrenaline rush experienced by 'action painters' of the New York School, Pollock & De Kooning being the foremost, whose paintings were highly energetic even haphazard, hints of anger and even violence can be detected in their brushwork. 'The Dionysiac participant looks back to the origin of things, to the "storm birth" of the god who is blasted from the resistant womb of Mother Earth. (p.143, Henderson, J.L., 'Orpheus and the Son of Man').

According to Greek mythology, Semele Dionysus' mother was killed by his father Zeus with a bolt of lightning. Dionysus was saved from the fire by Zeus, who enclosed him in his own thigh until he came to maturity. As an analogy to this I propose the birth of Expressionism in the twentieth century, which I feel prepared the ground for the development of painting into a Dionysian artis...
Fig. 13 "The Rothko Chapel" Dedicated in 1971
work, with offspring such as Munch, Noide and Kokoska. The patriarch being Kandinsky who fostered the "storm-birth" in painting, of which Rothko and Pollock were the heirs.

In Euripides play the Bacchae (p.235), 'Agaue has been punished for her blasphemy against Dionysus by being tricked into performing the usual Bacchic rite of slaughter, not upon the usual victim, a beast, but upon a man and that her own son.' (p. 249, Vellacott, P., London: Penguin.). B.H. Friedman recalls an incident with Jackson Pollock '...at Thanksgiving time in 1950, during a dinner party at his house' ...' the artist poured himself several glasses of bourbon, grew more and more belligerent, and then overturned the heavily laden table...' Schopenhauer discussed the effects of lies and violence in 'The World as Will and Representation I': '...it has, as such, the purpose of extending the authority of my will over other individuals, of affirming my will by denying theirs, just as violence has.' Momentarily letting oneself go in order to obtain a reaction, or to be noticed can be justified in artistic terms, even violently. In painting the violent action in Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionism implies a release of artistic emotion. Feldman (1985), p.235 says in regard to the abstract expressionists approach to subject matter '...whether figure or landscape, the message is one of aggression towards objects or persons who are simultaneously loved and feared; a macho manner pervades the style.' Feldman also says, p.233 'Expressionism, on the other hand, is emotionally charged; its main features are exaggerated colour, distorted form, and agitated paint surfaces. Abstract Expressionism, therefore, seems to be a contradiction in terms: can an artist be violent and calculating, angry and cool, at the same time? Apparently, yes. On action painting Feldman further adds p.251, 'The drip or the splash could express hostility or joy, artistic exuberance or painterly sabotage. Has the canvas been insulted, jabbed, slashed? Does it bleed?' he asks. Violence has been the method of application in the twentieth century effort for paint and other media to become the subject of the artwork.
Arnason (1978) says of Pollocks works p.523, of the mid 1940s that they are 'filled with a nervous, brutal energy of their own.' Arnason here is indicating that Pollock's method of paint application was if anything not a casual experience but a thorough bodily assault, they are sensual experiences.

In regard to intoxication, Henderson tells us how 'wine' was used by the Dionysiac 'to produce the symbolic lowering of consciousness necessary to reintroduce the novice, into the closely guarded secrets of nature....' Wine created a window or an exit from Apollonian reality into Dionysian truth. An escape which left behind the inhibiting rules and structures of the Socratic world.

Young (1993), p.33 points out that 'If dreams stand for the Apollonian, Rausch - "intoxication", "rapture", "ecstasy", "frenzy" - stands for the Dionysian. Dionysian consciousness is a "high", a state of literal or metaphysical drunkenness in which we overcome the "sobriety" of ordinary (Metaphysically Apollonian) consciousness which presents the principium individuationis as absolute reality.

Nietzsche distinguishes between the two tendencies of Apollonian and Dionysiac, calling the latter "intoxication", He says p.17, '...the nature of the Dionysiac, most immediately understandable to us in the analogy of "intoxication". Under the influence of the narcotic potion hymned by all primitive men and peoples, or in the powerful approach of spring, joyfully penetrating the whole of nature, those Dionysiac urges are awakened, and as they grow more intense subjectivity becomes a complete forgetting of the self.' Nietzsche may have been speaking metaphorically, however, in reality the lives of many of the artists from the 'New York School' have a close literal resemblance to all the characteristics of the Dionysian, including intoxication. In Australia too it would be all too easy to typecast artists of that same genre who had specifically moved away from conventional art, even surrealism, into freer modes of expression, among whom, Brett Whiteley and Peter Upward strike a fair resemblance to Nietzsche's Dionysiac. Peter Upward's 'Blue Note' (1972). (see Fig. 14). Acrylic on canvas evokes
Fig. 14 "Blue Note" (1972), acrylic on canvas

Peter Upward
Fig. 15 "Alchemy" (1972/73), (detail)
Brett Whiteley
more intimately the spirit of the 'New York School', echoing painterly sentiments of Kline, Pollock and De Kooning. Upward had been freed from the yoke of representation through an interest in the art of Japanese ink painting, its influence is clearly apparent in many of his paintings.

Whiteley on the other hand frequently uses illusion and representation, though in a lyrical manner and would be best described as Nietzsche's 'dream artist and ecstatic artist at one and the same time.' This combination is best noted in Whiteley's painting "Alchemy" 1972-1973 (see Fig.15), panels 1-18, oil, tempera and photography, which contains dreamlike illusions, erotica, intoxication and images of violence. Sandra McGrath (1992), quoting Whiteley p.138 says, "He worked on the panels ('Alchemy') for only a month when he noted darkly: "The further in, the further in, the more the violences and not the illumination show. I am drawing in excruciating panic. I must find the middle of the road: somewhere between the celestial and the terrestrial.'"

Whiteley seemed sunk in a wallowing pessimism: worse, in a morass of doubt. "Nothing waits at the centre of the brain except Death. Nirvana's cousin is catatonia." In Whiteley's painting, the American Dream' (1969) he is described as using 'Images of Optimism and Pessimism' which 'are mixed in equal proportion.' Exemplifying 'the fraternal bond between Apollo and Dionysus,' (BT. 24, p.113). Brett Whiteley and Peter Upward both died tragically. Whiteley through suicide and Upward died suddenly.
CHAPTER 4

"The Art of Painting and its affinity with the Apollonian and the Dionysiac"

Zeitlin (1994) p. 141 says that 'Nietzsche accords both Apollonian and Dionysian, as forms of intoxication. In Apollonian intoxication it is primarily the eye that is alerted so that it acquires heightened powers of vision. Painters, sculptors and epic poets are examples of such visionaries.'

More specifically the two forms of intoxication are defined as:

(i) One, which alerts and intensifies the powers of the eye - Apollonian

(ii) Two, which does the same for the entire emotional state - Dionysiac

Zeitlin appears to be attempting to fill an apparent gap between the visual and non-visual art works classing both as intoxication. It may be easier to concede that painting can be Dionysiac, regardless of whether it is a visual or non-visual art work. The distinction is clearly within the 'emotional state' through which painting has equal footing with music and can be classified as Dionysiac also. The distinction that is being made is between the eye (Apollonian) and the emotions (Dionysiac). If there is a distinction is between the visual arts and music as Nietzsche would have it, then it would have to be affected by the senses of sight and hearing, the eye and the ear. As music is heard before it can strike the emotional chords within a person, just as a painting is seen, then why is it that Nietzsche has doubts that the visual arts, painting and sculpture could not be Dionysiac? Kandinsky, in his book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" talks of chords being strummed in the person viewing a painting as they respond to colour and the artists manner of application. It appears that the emotions can be stirred as much by the visual, through the use of colour as they can through hearing music.
Consequently, I do not feel that the Dionysiac state requires art to be non-visual at all. An emotional response can be triggered by any of the senses, which includes touch, scent, hearing and seeing. The visual arts and in particular the art of painting which has been typified by its use of colour and expressive brushstroke in the twentieth century must be considered to be Dionysiac, equally with music. Distinctions can be drawn when the specific aim of the visual artist is to create an illusion of reality such as was the intention of the Neo-classical painter Jacques Louis David, whose work is clearly Apollonian.

In relation to David’s painting, "The Oath of the Horatii," (1784) oil on canvas, 14' X 11' (The Louvre, Paris, see Fig.16.), Feldman says, "not a brushstroke shows" (p.200, "Thinking About Art"). Here in "The Oath of the Horatii", David sets the standard for absolute representation, with a clear emphasis on compositional structure influenced directly by the "Golden Section", a principle called the "Divine Principle" which governed the proportions of classical Greek architecture and sculpture. Feldman refers to David as well as Napoleon as "men of mind rather than emotion" and further he adds that David "If he has the capacity for passion, it was exhausted by politics; in art he was rather cold blooded." In relation to David’s painting "The Oath of the Horatii", Feldman says, "The effect is one of passionless heroism. He did not so much express emotion as declare it." Feldman also adds that David’s problem "was too much self control." This self control created limitations which clearly relegated David and Neo-classical art to the Apolline side of Nietzsche’s dichotomy of art. As I have indicated in the first chapter of this paper, there are subtle variations in both the Apolline and the Dionysiac in art, from which David can be identified as an extreme example of the Apollonian. This is evidenced in his work where there can be seen a strong adherence to representation and an acceptance of only proven technique in painting style.

During the twentieth century, the expressionists took painting further away from representation and also further from the limitations of working within a preconceived framework as was the case with the Neo-classical school of painting. The compositional structures of the Neo-classical
Fig. 16 "The Oath of the Horatii" (1784),
Jacques Louis David
painters, David and Ingres and their representational style of painting was in direct opposition to the aims of expressionist painters who were to emerge during the twentieth century. Kandinsky in his introduction to "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" says, "Efforts to revive the art-principles of the past will at best produce art that is still-born. It is impossible for us to live and feel, as did the ancient Greeks. In the same way, those who strive to follow the Greek methods in sculpture achieve only a similarity of form, the work remaining soulless for all time. Such imitation is mere aping."

There was always the chance that painting would remain Apollonian, though it was through the efforts of Kandinsky (see Fig. 17) who took painting beyond representation, preparing the pathway for painting to pass into the non-representational following the influence of music.

The art of painting has exceeded the limitations set by Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Wagner, in that it has attained a level that previously could only be achieved by music and that is Dionysian consciousness. The art of painting in the twentieth century has developed many attributes that were previously ascribed to music alone.

The visual arts in the twentieth century can not always "be measured by the category of beauty" as Richard Wagner implied in his essay entitled "Beethoven", and painting is not always "a replica of phenomena" as Arthur Schopenhauer also implied in his book "The World as Will and Representation I". Nietzsche's insistence that music alone lays claim to the Dionysiac, saying "Music then is "the Dionysian art" (Ibid.), for it is music that arises out of and communicates Dionysian consciousness" in terms of twentieth century achievements of the art of painting is questionable.

Kandinsky's insight for a new direction in painting influenced many twentieth century painters, in particular the New York school, which included Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman and Jackson Pollock as indicated in the second and third chapters of this paper. They became aware of Nietzsche's dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac as attested by Dore Ashton in his book "The New York School"; and they used both Kandinsky's and Nietzsche's thought to further develop the art of painting within an emotive context to a higher level of Dionysian awareness.
Seldes, L. (1978) "The Legacy of Mark Rothko", p. 111 says

"Perhaps more significant in terms of Rothko's philosophy is the poetic symbolism of the tragedy. The enormous patch of congealed blood was the ultimate work of art, the final dramatic gesture, the true, most poignant action painting. Motherwell remembered that Rothko had explained that "the main criterion for his work was ecstasy - that was the only subject he was concerned about." As his mentor, Nietzsche, emphatically described Dionysian rite in The Birth of Tragedy: "No longer the artist, he has himself become a work of art."
Bibliography


"From Apollonian to Dionysiac"
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
"From Apollonian to Dionysiac"

David White


THESIS

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1996
I certify that this thesis has not been submitted in part or in full for a higher degree in any other institution.

David White 18th March, 1996
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(i)
Abstract

In this research paper for the postgraduate degree of Master of Arts (Honours) Visual Arts, I am proposing to investigate the relationship of Nietzsche's division of culture into two principal strains, "The Apollonian and the Dionysiac", and its application to the art of painting.

When Nietzsche wrote the "Birth of Tragedy" in 1872, from which his division of culture emerged, it was entitled "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music." Young (1992), also describes music as "the Dionysian art" in his book "Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art".

With consideration to changes in art and perception between the latter nineteenth and the twentieth century, a stronger argument for the inclusion of painting as "a Dionysian art", can be formed. I will also be analysing the metaphysical in art and through an examination of the nature of the Dionysiac as described in religious rites as opposed to varying analysis from Nietzsche and his critics.
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(iii)
Introduction

In Nietzsche’s book “The Birth of Tragedy” (BT.16, p.80.), the undisguised voice of Dionysiac art says, “Be like me! The primal mother, eternally creative, eternally impelling into life, eternally drawing satisfaction from the ceaseless flux of phenomenal!”

Possibly as a result of developing notions of the abstract in art during the early twentieth century, there has been a great deal of division brought about on the one hand by a belief that the work of art must be anything but beautiful, which is in direct contrast on the other hand with the aesthetic of beauty accepted in art from ancient times to the present. The perception that many people have of art to this day is one of beauty, that art above all else should be beautiful:

We owe a great deal to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and his thesis “The Birth of Tragedy”, in which he explains the dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac, through which he defines two entirely separate worlds of art. Nietzsche identifies the Apolline, as representing that part of society which accepts only scientifically proven fact, absolute beauty in art and the human form before it can be considered worthy or acceptable. These beliefs parallel with the ancient classical Greek concept of beauty and proportion (“Golden Section”) by which the style of sculpture and architecture were determined in ancient Greek culture. These ideals were also reflected in the works of the Renaissance artist Raphael during the early sixteenth century and the Neo-classical artist, painter, Jacques Louis David, during the latter eighteenth century.

Physical strength, bodily perfection and an ordered and logical mind also characterised the principles adhered to by the artistic elite of Nazi Germany during World War two. The Apollonian artists tends to be representational and at the extreme he can produce images of dreamlike reality, such as those of the Renaissance artist Raphael.

The other half of Nietzsche’s dichotomy deals with that part of society which possess Dionysiac
tendencies and they are in total opposition to the Apollonian. The Dionysiac is subject to his emotions and is perceived to be out of control and lacking in order or logic. The Dionysiac is typified by intoxication, violence, suicide, pessimism and the erotic.

My task in this paper has been to lay open the idea that the art of painting can be considered as having obtained many of the characteristics of the Dionysiac during the twentieth century and that painting can now be considered as Dionysian.

Painting and the plastic arts are considered by Nietzsche to be Apollonian and only music and in particular the music of Wagner laid claim to the Dionysiac. It is my belief that the art of painting in the twentieth century is a viable opponent to Nietzsche's claims.