

DIONYSUS, THE CRETAN:
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF EUROPE

We are still far from a religious history of Europe (*l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe*) which would satisfy the requirements of modern religious scholarship. We do, however, have a picture of the religions of Europe, the old and the new, of their metamorphoses and effects on the intellectual world of European man, which we can use as a temporary survey. A modification in this survey concerns not only scholars; the religious history of Europe is our religious history, regardless of the value it has for the individual as creed or philosophical doctrine. Unlike religion, religious history cannot be repudiated on the basis of doubts as to its truth or its existential validity (could this be “my” religion?). What is more, such a history cannot be side-stepped, for even the repudiation of all religion is an act within religious history; and a presentation of the religious history of Europe

Translated by Edith Cooper.

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which does not concern itself with Nietzsche would not satisfy our demands as scholars.

This modification of the survey of which I want to speak here (though my account can contribute only fragments to a future history) concerns at the same time the history of Greek religion and Nietzsche's influence on both the religious history of Europe and the history of the scholarly investigation of Greek civilization. For even though Nietzsche's attempt to trace characteristic phenomena of Greek culture back to two principles, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, was not accepted as scholarship, the influence of the German philosopher on the Dionysus concept of investigators and scholars was far greater than they themselves realized. What is even more important is that, of all the Greek gods, Nietzsche set up Dionysus as antithesis to the Christ of Christianity and introduced the dichotomy "Dionysus or Christ" into the cultural history of Europe. We cannot be indifferent to finding out what in Greek cultural history stood behind this name which came to be so full of meaning, especially since the opportunity for doing so has unexpectedly arisen.¹

SPIRIT OF MINOAN ART

The collection most important for the cultural history of Greece next to that of the National Museum of Athens, and the most important in the world for the first high cultural epoch of Europe, is found in the Museum of Heraklion (with the Venetian name Candia) on the island of Crete. It should be pointed out to all who enter it that here they will find one of the basic elements of the religious history of Europe in its purest and most abundant form. This abundance has until now presented its astonishing artistic aspect mutely. It showed the wealth of a people highly gifted artistically whose written symbols we could not read. And were we able to read them, we would not understand the language, or so we thought until recently. All that we thought we knew was that the creators and continuers of this art were not Greeks and that a similar but even more catastrophic downfall than that which parted heathen Rome from the Christian Romanic and Germanic peoples had separated them from the Greeks. We could assume that there was an intellectual heritage in each case and that the younger peoples would not let it lie unused. Yet everything we could ascribe to those pre-Greeks—they were named "Minoans,"

1. Compare with my paper, *Die Herkunft der Dionysosreligion nach dem heutigen Stand der Forschung* ("Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen," Pamphlet 58 [Cologne and Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1956]).

after Minos, the mythical king of Crete—was only assumption, abstract and unprovable, except for their concrete objects of art and the character emanating from these objects of art.

This character I shall describe here in the words of a conscientious expert, one who has lived with the objects day by day for many years—the director of the greatest Cretan collection, N. Platon. He writes in his *A Guide to the Archaeological Museum of Heraclion* (1955):

They created a civilization whose characteristics were the love of life and nature, and an art strongly imbued with charm and elegance. Their objects of art were miniatures, worked with care and love; they chose carefully the material which they used and succeeded in creating masterpieces with it. They had a special inclination towards the picturesque and to painting, and even their miniature plastic work is elaborated in styles derived from painting. Motion is its ruling characteristic; the figures move with lovely grace, the decorative designs whirl and turn, and even the architectural composition is allied to the incessant movement becoming multifiform and complex. The art is ruled by conventions, and yet it looks equally naturalistic. The secret life of nature is outspread in man's creation, which imbues it with a special charm and grace. A hymn to Nature as a Goddess seems to be heard from everywhere, a hymn of joy and life [p. 27].

The wisdom of this characterization lies in the fact that it does not try to distinguish between “holy” and “profane” objects—a most primitive distinction which must always fail as a scholarly criterion when applied to the artistic monuments of any culture—but leads to something concrete and at the same time spiritual. Mr. Platon paraphrases verbally that revealing content of the objects of art which could be immediately conveyed only artistically and which was expressed always and everywhere, in all objects, whatever other purpose they might have had. If I call this revelation the “spirit of Minoan art,” I do not mean anything abstract, nor do I have to prove that it is there and that this is so. The characterization links this spirit with something obviously close to it: with the only deity known until now to have been revered by the Minoans, the Great Goddess who, on a seal from Knossos, appears on a mountain top; behind her is a mountain sanctuary, in front of her a man's figure either looking up at her or dazzled by her, and, flanking the mountain, two lions. We are not sure of any Minoan name for this goddess, but her close bond with the wilds of nature is as obvious as that of a similar figure in the mythology of Greece and Asia Minor: Rhea, the great mother of the gods, also called by the Phrygian name “Kybele.”

The correspondence between the adoration of such a goddess and the

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spirit of Minoan art makes Mr. Platon's paraphrase more meaningful than if it were merely the natural reaction of the modern viewer; but such a correspondence is not nearly sufficient to link that spirit exclusively to a mother religion, the cult of a single great goddess. Nor can we draw conclusions concerning the Minoan religion from the next sentence of the characterization: "The agony of death, so familiar in prehistoric civilization, is not perceptible here." Ancient art is by no means unlimited in its choice of subjects. We cannot draw a line between religious scruples and artistic taste; both together may have determined the choice. But, if this art did not express everything, everything in it was expressive: the expression of a characteristic whole which revealed itself both in art and in religion as ever the same, not one thing here, another there. The Minoan artist saw the world in its flora and fauna, completely unlike the Christian and, since the age of geometric art, the Greek artist whose eyes were trained on anthropomorphic-spiritual deities. We should, therefore, not be surprised if Cretan eyes saw gods of a different shape, like spirits or a godlike spirit of the world of plants and animals. The surrounding sea adorns wonderful Minoan vessels not with Nereids but with polyps and sea snails, adorns wall paintings with dolphins and flying fish. Votive offerings in the sanctuary of the goddess at Piscocephalo in eastern Crete testify that a scarab-like beetle of the dusk, the *Rhinoceros oryctes*, accompanied or announced the divine presence there.

It is a world of plants and animals, of divine epiphanies on mountains and under flowers, from the heavens, into which the Minoan artists transplant us. What, to them, was man?

THE MINOAN GESTURE

Again, we quote an objective present-day observer, an expert on the art of Crete and the Near East, H. A. Groenwegen-Frankfort, in her work *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (London, 1951):

Cretan civilisation is unhistorical not only in the sense that the modern historian happens to be unable to write an articulate account of its part, a record in which events and personalities have name and character, but because it lacked the desire for monumental statement, pictorial or otherwise. We find no interest in single human achievement, no need to emphasize, to rescue its significance [p. 186].

... Cretan art ignored the terrifying distance between the human and the transcendent which may tempt man to seek a refuge from space and time; it equally ignored the glory and futility of simple human acts, time-bound, space-

bound. In Crete artists did not give substance to the world of the dead through an abstract of the world of living, nor did they immortalize proud deeds or state a humble claim for divine attention in the temples of the gods. Here and here alone the human bid for timelessness was disregarded in the most complete acceptance of the grace of life the world has ever known. For life means movement and the beauty of movement was woven in the intricate web of living forms which we call "scenes of nature"; was revealed in human bodies acting their serious games, inspired by a transcendent presence, acting in freedom and restraint, unpurposeful as cyclic time itself [p. 216].

Firmly rooted in Cretan art is this negative characteristic as well—negative in regard to man as center, as bearer of his own historical or unhistorical glory, not in regard to the deity whose nearness is positively demanded here. The scene is always as if on the edge of a bodily epiphany of the spirit of this art—the spirit or spirits of nature. Indeed, just as it appeared in a swarm of insects, in birds, in animals of the sea, or in a bull, the deity in this comprehensive view could have appeared in man, determining his gesture as a model exactly imitated. For man is never without gesture here, unlike the gesture-less seated or standing figures in the art of the ancient Orient or Greece, although we must admit of a ritual gesture there, too. But here we are talking of the gesture as of an essential element, a characteristic of the comprehensive whole transmitted through art; not of ritual gestures side by side with other gestures just as characteristic of ordinary human existence, but of the gesture which, again and again, expresses in various forms of movement, not the central position of man, but one which can be comprehended only as the "opposite" position. Man here is not the center of things; we are firmly convinced of that from deciphering Cretan written characters, which not even the Myceneans used to immortalize themselves and spurned for their tombstones. But if, after all, an epic poetry existed to supplement the evidence of Minoan art, as was likely for the Myceneans, even then we would have the Minoan gesture, which shows man always in a ritual situation or in its service—perhaps taking part in, or greeting, a festival procession—as if fixed in an enchanted world.

I use the word "gesture" here in an all-inclusive sense. It should mean the first inner drive to movement as well as movement itself, carried out not always by the hands but always bodily, most perfectly by the whole body. The most dangerous of all Minoan gestures shows the body in free acrobatic movement in a ritual game with the bull, depicted as ivory figures or in painting. The player seizes the horns of the bull and lets them

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throw him into the air. At the first leap he is with his head down and his hands on the back of the animal; at the second he is standing upright behind the bull. It can truly be said that such movement, free and confined at once, was inspired by a transcendental presence, for it can be understood only by imagining the presence of the deity who finds pleasure in the game. Closest to it as ritual gesture is the dance. On two vessels from the high period of the oldest palace at Phaistós, only recently excavated, we see Minoan female dancers: two with the goddess, who is shown, on one vessel, three on the other. On the edge of the second vessel are figures bent far down, probably in the ritual for which these vessels were used. The two dancers flank the goddess, one hand raised in an arch, as two lions usually do. Or are they divine creatures who are dancing? The inspired gesture lifts man to the nearness of the gods. That male figure on a seal from Knossos looking up to the goddess on the mountaintop—is it a male deity or a mortal experiencing an epiphany? Votive figures from Týlissos exhibit the same gesture. They are made of bronze; one of the larger is an older man. Is it Minos glimpsing Britomartis in the mountains? The few names which Greek mythology has preserved from ancient Crete cannot yet be affixed with certainty to the figures shown. But the gesture becomes comprehensible only through a mythical epiphany: by thus greeting the goddess in her cult, the myth was repeated.

The gods themselves who appear in Minoan art have their epiphany gesture. Statuettes of women with uncovered breasts and hands outstretched or raised high, carrying snakes in their hands or around their arm, show this gesture. It may remain unclear whether they represent the priestess or her goddess; from the gesture we recognize, not the intermediary, but the deity. "Thus I appear" is the sense of the gesture and refers to the goddess. Not so clear is the gesture of the bared breast with which Minoan women appear in their festive dress. Does this, too, have a religious meaning, or is it only a "worldly" fashion, as in Paris during the Empire period? Emphasized as it is in art, it would seem that this gesture, too, has a special meaning which we would recognize if we knew the mythological background. It has been compared with the gesture of mourning in the Near East and many places on the Mediterranean, where women bared their breasts when weeping over the dying god Adonis. But nothing even hinting at mourning has been used in Minoan art as it reflects life. Must the question of this myth remain unanswered here?

DIONYSIAN NAMES

We are not dealing with a single question, a single feature, in the comprehensive view. We are witnessing an extraordinary situation in the history of culture and the history of religion as well as in the history of scholarly occupation with both of these. In Crete we are face to face with a great art which speaks to us far more clearly in its own purely artistic terms than is usual with prehistoric drawings, paintings, and sculptures. This art transmits to us the characteristic picture of a special world, dominated by a definite spirit which can be defined in terms of our European vocabulary. However, to translate the message of this art into comprehensible language takes careful phrasing to bring out the nuances. Therefore the danger of a gross simplification through a single word such as "magical" or "naturalistic" which could never describe the whole phenomenon has to be carefully avoided. In the designing of a general picture, a whole chain of errors could result from not observing carefully the steps in the development. But even with this difficulty no false picture resulted, because we viewed things from a later age: the last flowering of Minoan culture when all the elements were there together and even more abundant through the art of mural painting. It was the period between 1500 and 1400 B.C. that we had to choose to obtain the most complete picture possible for our day, through the combined evidence of artistic relics and deciphered texts belonging to the same century.

In the middle of the fifteenth century B.C., Greek was spoken within sight of these artistic relics. This fact assumes quite a different significance from, say, the fact that in the year A.D. 395, at the time of Alaric's invasion of Greece, Gothic was spoken within sight of the Parthenon or the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Historical analogies fail us. Not even the conquest of Italy by the Goths and Lombards can be used as comparison. The Greeks did not yield up their language when they took over the inheritance of their Minoan predecessors in the palace of Knossos. And this inheritance was not saved from a spiritual catastrophe, the downfall of an earlier religion, and transmitted piecemeal into a new cultural epoch, as the heritage of antiquity was transmitted to the Middle Ages where Christianity and not the Greek or Roman religion determined the new spirit. The catastrophies here were of an economic nature, caused by earthquakes and the migration of nations, the stages of which were not necessarily warlike. At any rate, these did not cause the downfall of Minoan

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culture but, rather, its enrichment and the possibility of its spiritual expansion through several centuries until about 1200 B.C. In the last two centuries, the fourteenth and thirteenth, the balance of power and spirit probably shifted in favor of the Greek mainland; the civilization received a new shading of style, became "Mycenean." In the fifteenth century, however, the Minoan style seems to have reached a synthesis of the gifts and intellectual requirements of the old and the new people which formed the basis for the whole further development of Greek culture and religion. This was the preamble to the history of our religion.

An example of this synthesis is the writing which from that time served for three centuries to preserve Greek texts in Crete and on the mainland. It was not especially created for the Greek language but followed that form of writing which the Minoans had been using for their own idiom for two hundred years. The adaptation was not easy, considering the diversity of the two languages, and could not be perfect. Once the new way of writing had been invented, however, it was applied with a consistency and correctness which testifies to the great sense of style of this Minoan-Greek world. It does so even more, since the application of writing until then appeared only on the fringes of the intellectual world which expressed itself in art. From the possession of about thirty-five hundred inscribed clay tablets, all of which have been read at least superficially, it seems safe to make some generalizations. One of these is that there is no text serving to immortalize any one man, none to preserve a historical event. No intellectual text remains but only bookkeeping texts of religious significance only insofar as accounts were kept of sacrifices and tributes to the gods. It is possible to draw conclusions from these about the religious life and the spiritual content of the religion and thus to form a combined picture of these texts—so completely unartistic—with the art.

We would certainly be doing violence to history if for the Cretan world of the fifteenth century we allowed only those Greek gods whose names appear in Knossos and excluded from the comprehensive picture those who by chance were not mentioned until the thirteenth century in Pylos on the mainland. Moreover, even the Knossian testimony alone shows elements of a synthesis, most of which was to become part of the pantheon of Homer. Sacrifices are made to Zeus—once designated more specifically as "Zeus of the Dikte Mountains"—Pallas Athena, Enyalios, Paian, Poseidon, Eileithyia, and Erinys. Hephaestus can be deduced from the name of a man who was probably called "Hephaistios." Repeatedly, all the gods, the *Pantes Theoi*, are honored, just as Achilles in the *Iliad*

(ix. 357) wishes to sacrifice to the “whole body of the Gods,” or as Zeus turns to them (*Iliad* xix. 100). Ares is mentioned specifically, even though Enyalios had already pointed to his domain, as Paian to that of Apollo. Sacrifices are also made to the “Goddess of the Labyrinth,” and gifts brought to the Daidaleion. These are names from the myth of Ariadne, which for the Greeks had always been connected with Crete and which in its old form, as it is transmitted by the *Odyssey*, included Dionysus as the lord of Ariadne. The conclusion which had already been drawn from this—that Dionysus “inhabited the Greek cultural sphere at least as early as the end of the second millennium” (W. F. Otto)—now becomes certainty.

Besides the “Goddess of the Labyrinth,” there are three names which testify to the validity of the Dionysus myth in Knossos in the fifteenth century. The men who bear these names are mentioned among many others, obviously without religious implication. One is called “Iwakkhos,” like, in the later form, “Iacchus,” the youthful alter ego of Dionysus; the other “Phales,” a name for that Phallus who in the festival processions of Dionysus later was carried around and addressed as his friend and companion (Aristoph. *Ach.* 363). The third is called “Pentheus,” and thus bears a mythical name which originally probably referred to Dionysus himself as the god who was sometimes suffering pains, and only later refers to his famous enemy. It would be very unlikely that none of these had to do with the god who, like Hera, Hermes, and Artemis, probably by chance appears for the first time on a tablet from Pylos—Dionysus. Later, the Greeks no longer had personal names which went so far in associating men with deities as those three names in Knossos.²

DIONYSUS THRACIAN?

Scholars have for some time suspected or looked for Minoan origin or at least Minoan antecedents for some of the gods for whom there is evidence at Knossos and Pylos. Why, then, not for Dionysus? Why did he count as Thracian in religious historical scholarship or, if one has him emigrate from Thrace by way of Asia Minor, as Lydian? For he was still believed to have come south from Thrace, a wild uncivilized region in the north of Greece, even when some of the elements of his cult were al-

2. The names were read this way at first by the decipherer Michael Ventris but not included in his first publication. That is why they are missing in my lecture on the origin of the cult of Dionysus, which is based on the testimony from Pylos, on Minoan art, and on the myth of Ariadne. After the publication of my paper, Professor T. B. L. Webster, University College, London, drew my attention to the readings of Ventris.

ready suspected to be pre-Greek in origin. These questions are not unmeaningful within the history of research. Not only do they illuminate the doubtfulness of an assumption which claimed to be scientifically established fact and won the *communis opinio* of the scholars but they lead us out of the history of scholarship into the history of Western thought.

It is true that the history of scholarship is part of the history of thought in its widest sense. But not all events in the history of research are therewith and at the same time events in the history of thought. The increase in knowledge with which only scholars can work further and which does not at the same time cause a broadening of our intellectual world is only potentially an event in the history of thought, whereas the advance made by poets and philosophers in fields previously not spoken or thought of, thus conquering them for language and thought, is the actual history of thought. Knowledge about Dionysus, his myth and his cult, was extensive as the result of classical studies and the contemplation of antique works of art long before Nietzsche and his book on the *Birth of Tragedy*. It made possible a comprehensive survey which might be called a unit. The following characterization, taken from an old handbook of the archeology of art, never became part of the history of thought in the narrower sense. It was written by Karl Otfried Müller, who has long influenced scientific inquiry by his methodical work.

Nature overpowering the mind, and hurrying it out of the repose of a clear self-consciousness (wherein its most perfect symbol is wine), lies at the basis of all Dionysian creations. The cycle of Dionysian forms, which constitute as it were a peculiar and distinct Olympus, represents this nature-life, with its effects on the human mind, conceived in different stages, sometimes in nobler and sometimes in less noble shapes; in Dionysus himself the purest blossom is unfolded, combined with an afflatus which gladdens the soul without destroying the tranquil play of the feelings.³

Incredulous, we ask whether Karl Otfried Müller more than a hundred years ago described the effects of wall paintings in Cretan palaces he could not have dreamed of. There is so much similarity between the Dionysian world as he describes it on the basis of Greek relics and the spirit of Minoan art that really neither the Dionysian names in Knossos nor the name of Dionysus himself in Pylos were needed to recognize the descent of the religion of Dionysus from the Minoan-Greek world. Most scholars were

3. Müller, *Ancient Art and Its Remains; or a Manual of the Archaeology of Art*, ed. F. G. Welcker, trans. John Leitch (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), p. 488; *Handbuch der Archaeologie der Kunst* (3d ed., 1848).

kept from this knowledge by the *communis opinio* of the Thracian origin of the god. But the real stumbling block was the picture of Dionysus which exerted an influence on European history of thought and on scholarship without the scholars being at all aware of their dependence on it.

Of all the Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus were the first who were comprehended as spiritual “realities” in the epoch of European history we consider as “modern.” They were rediscovered as possibilities in the human condition and thereby in the world and, as such, were designated with the adjectives which were derived from their names: the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Or at least this was believed to be a rediscovery. But even the supposed recognition—and it was not pure supposition, since it could be based on ancient tradition—may here be cited as an achievement in the history of thought, because it expanded the intellectual world of modern European man. The contemplative condition, the spiritual reality of which can be experienced again and again, was for Schopenhauer the Apollonian: “In the Apollonian, the wheel of Ixion for once stands still. We find ourselves in a painless condition, free from the degrading force of the will.” This has to be called a broadening, because that condition which had so far been thought the aim of only contemplative men was recognized as an element in the whole of the world because of its association with the name of a god. Greek religion testifies to this, unphilosophically and without a religious revelation in the Christian sense.

The Apollonian lost much of this concreteness—the concreteness of a definite, not exchangeable intellectual experience—with Nietzsche, when in the *Birth of Tragedy* he equated it, within the frame of Schopenhauer’s world picture, with one of the “artistic drives of nature”—with the drive and the ability to produce a beautiful illusion, with or without the intervention of the human artist. There, too, Nietzsche moved away completely from the Greek tradition, something we cannot say absolutely about his description of the Dionysian as a spiritual reality opposed to the Apollonian. In the Dionysian Nietzsche believed he had apprehended Schopenhauer’s “will” as artistic drive—as drive to inebriation—and to have found the historical basis for it in the Greek tradition. An event in the history of thought was his description of the Dionysian magic which he believed he had experienced in the effects of the music of Wagner. I shall quote those phrases which most of all provoked the mockery of his scholarly opponent but which still diverted research from that path which might have led to the Cretan origin of the Dionysus religion:

A hurricane seizes all that was decrepit, decayed, broken, stunted, wraps it

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whirling into a red dust cloud, and carries it like a hawk into the air. Bewildered, our eyes search for that which has vanished; for that which they see has risen as if from a depth into the golden light, so full and green, so luxuriantly alive, so yearningly immeasurable.

When Nietzsche remains closer to antique accounts than that irruption of the Dionysian of which he himself here became the victim, then his description is not radically different from that of Karl Otfried Müller:

Under the spell of the Dionysian, not only the bond between man and man is renewed, but Nature, estranged, hostile, and enslaved, celebrates her reconciliation with her lost son, man. Voluntarily, the earth gives its bounty, and peaceably the beasts of prey approach from rock and desert. The chariot of Dionysus is showered with flowers and wreaths; under its yoke walk panther and tiger. If one transformed Beethoven's hymn of joy into a painting and did not lag behind with one's imaginative powers when millions sink shuddering into the dust, then one could approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; broken are all the rigid, hostile boundaries which want, caprice, or *freche Mode* have set up between men. Now, with the gospel of world harmony, everyone feels not only united, reconciled, fused with his brother, but one, as if the veil of Maia had torn and were only flapping in pieces before the mysterious *Ur-Einen*. Singing and dancing, man proclaims himself a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is about to rise dancing up into the air. His enchantment speaks from his gestures. As now the animals speak and the earth provides milk and honey, thus from him sounds something supernatural; he feels a god—he himself walks now as rapturously and exaltedly as he saw the gods walking in his dreams. Man is artist no longer; he has become a work of art: the artistic power of all Nature, to the highest ecstatic satisfaction of the *Ur-Einen*, here manifests itself in the shudderings of inebriation.

Thus did Nietzsche describe and interpret his “Dionysian Greek,” now leaning on tradition—as, for example, the *Bacchae* of Euripides—then again relying on his own imagination, but always anxious to keep the “Dionysian barbarian” with his “extravagant want of sexual discipline” apart from his own picture. He also thoughtfully preceded the general characterization just cited by a comparative view which actually made his influence on scholarship possible:

Either through the influence of narcotic drink [the mention of wine is expressly avoided by Nietzsche], spoken of in hymns by all primeval men and peoples, or with the powerful approach of spring, voluptuously pervading all of nature, those Dionysian impulses awaken, in the heightening of which the subjective passes

away into complete self-forgetfulness. In the German Middle Ages, too, ever growing crowds stampeded under the same Dionysian power, singing and dancing, from place to place; in these St. John-dancers and St. Vitus-dancers we recognize the bacchanalian choruses of the Greeks with their background in Asia Minor, as far away as Babylonia and the orgiastic Sacaean. There are people who, from lack of experience or stupidity, turn away from such phenomena as from a popular epidemic, mocking or pitying, in the consciousness of their own health; the poor things have no idea how wan and ghostlike this their "health" appears when the glowing life of Dionysian enthusiasts rushes past them.

Nietzsche featured the eruptive character (*Ausbruchscharakter*) of the Dionysian so emphatically that he thereby created, not exactly a false picture, but a one-sided one. However, a spiritual reality was rediscovered here as in the Apollonian. The parts which seemed acceptable to scholarship, above all the comparison with a religious epidemic, Nietzsche's friend Erwin Rohde tried to save by bringing out, next to this psychological side, the irruptive character (*Einbruchscharakter*), a historical trait, and by assuming a place of origin outside Greece for the Dionysus worship. Before him, Karl Otfried Müller had already doubted that Dionysus was originally a wine-god, because Homer, on the very few occasions on which he mentions him, never does so in connection with wine—a weak basis for a thesis which opposes the united testimony of all antiquity. Moreover, Homer treats the Dionysus worship with such reserve that no conclusions can be drawn from his silence. Now Rohde thought he could trace back the irruption of Dionysus in Greece to a land which did not belong to the old wine countries of the Middle Ages, whose inhabitants never knew how to manage wine properly, who in historical times, however—or just because of that—were complete victims of its intoxication: to Thrace.

He described the Thracian tribes swarming about the god "whom the Greeks later called Dionysus"—a description of the Dionysian cult in its wildest, most abandoned form. Those were Rohde's words, and they were decisive in further research. He provided the historical foundation of the picture which Nietzsche had sketched, and corrected him at the same time. The correction was meant to consist of this—that this kind of entering "into the pit of divine all-life" (again Rohde's words) was presented as "a foreign drop of blood in the blood of Greece," as a current which "rushed down to Greece" from the north. Nietzsche penetrated, with Rohde's help. Proof was never brought for the spreading of the Dionysus religion from north to south, unlike that of the viticulture which pro-

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ceeded from south to north. On the other hand, the influence of Greece on Thrace as early as the Mycenaean age seems now established. But, dominating the picture of the Dionysian, an overstrained trait remained, leading to explosions. This is owing to Nietzsche and that non-Greek irruption of the Dionysian, which in his later writings he attempted to shape into a movement against Christianity with an incisiveness and single-mindedness carried to even greater extremes.

THE BOND

If the information of the scholars has come from only one direction, then the accents, too, shift in a one-sided way, and things remain unconsidered, the significance of which cannot show until the crooked picture has been straightened. The Dionysian as spiritual reality, one of the oldest elements in our religious history, rediscovered in the spirit of Minoan art, obtains a center of gravity and great internal breadth. The center of gravity lies in the harmony with nature of a religiousness deeply one with the world of plants and animals, which, like the viticulture itself, was able to form the foundation for an inwardly firm, high civilization. The breadth includes the Minoan processions, welcomed by the elegant ladies of the palace with their uncovered breasts, and the swarms of ecstatic maenads in the wintery mountains of the Greek mainland. We have to consider that this breadth also includes more than a thousand years of time and that Minoan art does not represent in the relics preserved by chance all that took place during the great festivals of fifteenth-century Crete. But does not that which we deduce from those Minoan works we have rest too much on the general impression made on us by that art? Are the few Dionysian names in Knossos enough to combine the impression we have found there with the picture of the Dionysian in Greek historical times? Is there nothing more concrete which ties the two together?

The cult of Dionysus knows eruptions, the myth irruptions of the Dionysian, which took the form of divine advents against which a futile resistance was made. According to one type of myth, women tried the resistance. This type is connected with the daughters of King Minyas in Middle Greece and also with the daughters of Proetus, the founder of the Mycenaean fortress of Tiryns.⁴ To these advents belonged also the epiphanies of Dionysus as child in various places designated as his place of birth

4. Compare my *The Gods of the Greeks* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 1951), pp. 260–61; *Mythologie der Griechen* (2d ed.; Zurich, 1955), p. 253; *La Mythologies des Grecs* (Paris, 1952), p. 257.

or as places of his nurture by nurses who were the prototypes of the maenads. In this other type of tale the representative of the resistance is a wild king who disturbs the nurses in their sacred action with the god and tries to chase them away. In Homer this king is called Lycurgus. He was afterward always considered a Thracian. The cult of Dionysus thus was once resisted in Thrace, too. The Nysa Mountains, to which, according to this tale, the nurses were pursued, cannot be fixed as a geographical point. It is a mythical place; a Homeric hymn to Dionysus, preserved only in fragments, places it on the Nile. This hymn recites quite a number of birth-places for the god, among them one usually forgotten, at Alpheios in the Peloponnesus. Another, at Inachus in Argos, may perhaps be inferred from a papyrus fragment of a tragedy of Aeschylus. After Thebes as the most famous birthplace eclipsed them all, they were forgotten or connected with the Theban birth. Old Dionysian places in the Peloponnesus, where the mention of Dionysus in the thirteenth century B.C. appears on a small tablet from Pylos, already show a certain connection with Crete.

In the Greek tradition the Gulf of Argos, which, like no other, stands exposed to Minoan influences, exhibits two places of irruption by the Dionysian. One connects the arrival of the god with Perseus, the founder-hero of Mycenae. It refers, then, to an event which took place in very ancient times, like the tale of the daughters of Proetus, the uncle of Perseus. The tale was of the same type as the story of Lycurgus. In Argos—all these accounts come from the second book of Pausanias—was shown the tombstone of a maenad with the name "Choreia," "the round-dance." She was said to have once accompanied Dionysus, fought with him against Perseus, and, like so many of her companions, had been killed by the Heros. The grave of the other women who had fallen was also shown, and we discover from an accompanying tale that these women were called Haliai, "seawomen," because they had supposedly come with Dionysus from the islands of the Aegean Sea. The name, meanwhile, discloses the sea-goddesses who, according to the oldest form of the tale, accompanied Dionysus to Argos. According to the Orphean hymn to the Nereids, it was they who first showed men the mysteries of Bacchus and Persephone. Finally, among the objects of interest at Argos there was a temple of Dionysus, who there has the second name of *Cresios*, "the Cretan." This was explained by the tomb of Ariadne found in the temple. The god received this stately holy precinct after having made peace with Perseus. According to another tradition, Perseus had killed him and thrown him into the deep waters of Lerna, the neighboring city of Argos, the prehistoric impor-

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tance of which has only recently become known through excavations. Near Lerna, Dionysus was called back from the underworld with the sound of trumpets and was called "the Son of the Bull." The embellishment of the fight between Perseus and the maenads, found already in the painting of vases with black figures, is late compared to the tomb in the temple and the rites of Lerna which are among the most ancient relics left us of the cult of Dionysus.

A grave of Ariadne was also shown at Amathus on Cyprus. But there the owner named for the sacred precinct in which it lies was Ariadne herself, moreover, as goddess, as "Ariadne Aphrodite." (At Argos a temple of the Aphrodite Urania at least bordered on the temple of Dionysus with the tomb.) Ariadne is also supposed to have died at Delos, after leaving Theseus; but she, too, was supposed to have given a statue of Aphrodite, a work by Daidalos in Crete, to the Heros, and thus to have founded the cult of the Hagne Aphrodite, as the inscriptions from Delos call the goddess. At Naxos an Ariadne was worshiped with rites of mourning; another, with a festival of joy. The Cretans had for her besides the name "Ariadne"—which in their language meant *Ariagne*, the "exceedingly pure"—also the name *Aridela*, the "exceedingly clear," a fitting designation for a heavenly goddess. There can be no doubt that always the same goddess is meant, with two aspects and two phases in her cult: the grave and death—and, in Crete, the Labyrinth—were hers as the queen of the underworld; heaven was hers as Aphrodite. But he who let her die, as is written in the *Odyssey* (xi. 323), and who carried her up to heaven, as so many poets and artists proclaimed, was Dionysus. The places of her cult mentioned—Argos in the west, Cyprus in the east, Crete in the south, and Naxos and Delos in the middle—demonstrate the continuity of a religious world which is markedly different from that which we otherwise know as Greek. Through the fact that this world clearly continues to live in the islands and reaches over into the mainland, we can begin to see the natural paths of communication.

A second place of irruption in the Peloponnesus is found at the entrance of the Gulf of Argos, at the Bay of Prasiae, a small harbor of the "free Laonians" in antiquity. Only Pausanias calls it Brasiaie, on the basis of an etymological joke. The name means a "green spot." The vicinity was also named "garden of Dionysus," and the grotto was shown in which the god was nurtured. He had reached it, so says the holy myth of the place, in a chest drifting across the sea. If, according to this tale, the divine child's attendant who arrived dead and was buried in Prasiae is named Semele,

cast out by her father, Cadmus, with her child in a chest, then this is a continuation of the Theban history of the birth and, in another way, of the story of Perseus. In this myth the geographical position of Thebes and Prasiae, which would make the voyage hard to imagine, was not the decisive factor; rather it was the fame of Thebes as birthplace of Dionysus. The heart of the tale is the arrival of the god and his nurture by a divine nurse: Ino. She was, it is true, made by the Thebans into Semele's sister. Originally, however, she was not at home in a city on the mainland such as Thebes but on the sea and on the islands, where she was called, in Greek, *Leukothea*, "the white goddess," or *Halia*, "the seawoman" (for "Ino" and the name of the river Inachus are not Greek). At the place of her oracle at Thalamai in Laconia she was even called *Pasiphae*, like the Cretan "Daughter of the Sun," mother of Ariadne. In Crete the mourning festival *Inachia* was in her honor. She did not have to reach Prasiae through wild-goose chases across the mainland, as the late version of the story has it. Even when veiled, the legend preserves a tradition of the god's irruption from the sea.

In Attica this tradition appears in very concrete form. There not only art has captured the ride of Dionysus over the sea—as, for example, the bowl of Exekias, in agreement with a Homeric hymn—but also ritual. Again it is vase painting which has drawn a detailed picture of the ritual procession of the god through the land on a ship with wheels. Dionysus sits on his ship and is led to the place where a sacrifice is being made to him; the sacrificial animal, a bull, is included on one of the vases. There is no text which explains the picture. There is only a mention of a wheeled-ship procession in honor of Dionysus in Smyrna, at the festival of the *Anthes-teria*. From this only one conclusion can be drawn for the Attic representation: that the ship did not mean the arrival from Asia Minor where Smyrna is located. All this we have to conclude from the picture and from geography. An enthroned cult figure seems to have arrived from across the sea. The ship had to be placed on wheels, having a fairly long way overland, in order to arrive and still remain the "God from the Sea." The harbor for the Attic wine-growing villages today is Porto Rapti; from there, the yield of the grape harvest is sent to—Thrace. In antiquity there was on one side of the bay a little harbor town called Prasiae, like the one on the Gulf of Argos. From there was the shortest way to travel to Delos and Naxos. The two entrances into the bay are still guarded from the top of a pyramid-shaped island by a seated colossus, the draped figure of a man from the time of the empire. On the other side rises the mountain of

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Brauron. Behind it, the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia has been excavated. Tradition speaks of the most unrestrained Dionysus festivals in this place. They were celebrated once every four years, and the Athenians sent a *theoria*, a festival deputation, to them (Aristoph. *Pax* 873).

Brauron did not have as good and safe a harbor at the mouth of the river where the sanctuary of Artemis was located as did Prasiae. And only from these harbors on the west coast of Attica, and not, as one would suppose, from the Bay of Marathon, was there a road, passable by cart and not very long, leading to the village of Icaria at the Pentelikon, whose founder-hero, with the pre-Greek name of Icarus or Icarius, received the god, according to the Attic myth of Dionysus, as "Bringer of the Viticulture." There, in a sanctuary of Dionysus, for which the place to this day is called *sto Dionyso*, the archaic cult image of the enthroned wine-god has been excavated. Its predecessor may very well have been a portable wooden image. For the place of irruption, Thoricos, south of Brauron and Prasiae, could have served, too, as it is proved by finds to have been an early Mycenaean settlement and connected with Minos through the heroine Procris. The theater there testifies to the cult of Dionysus, as stone edifice only as far back as the fourth century, but with an unusual floor plan. We shall not pursue all these paths but mention only one other in the Dionysian world of the Aegean Sea which has been proved to have originated in Crete. According to antique tradition, the Cretans introduced wine-growing on Peparethos, the largest island of the Sporades, under the leadership of a son of Dionysus and Ariadne from the wedding at Naxos, with the transparent name of *Staphylos*, "the grape." According to another tradition, Peparethos, who gave the island its name, was also a son of Dionysus and Ariadne. The heart of this mythological testimony is confirmed by the Minoan content of a grave which was uncovered at Peparethos, today Skopelos.⁵

Dionysus enthroned we find again in Crete, on coins from the city of Sybrita, in the middle of the island, from the classical age. Sherds prove that the city existed already in Minoan times. Dionysus seems to have been its main deity. Traces of his rock sanctuary have been found on a height which to this day is called *Thronos* by the inhabitants.⁶ Cretan repre-

5. N. Platon, *Kretika Chronika*, III (1949), 534-73.

6. I owe this allusion to Professor Charles Picard, Paris, as well as to the following literature: E. Kirsten, "Siedlungsgeschichtliche Forschungen in West-Kreta," in Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, *Forschungen auf Kreta 1942* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1951), pp. 142-44; and Ernst Kirsten, "Folklore und Archäologie auf Kreta," in *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson*, ed. George E. Mylonas and Doris Raymond (2 vols.; St. Louis, Mo.: Washington University, 1953), II, 1198-1210.

sentations also preserve another form in which the god appears—a form which is later found less often in Greece and is considered very ancient: the god spreads out his hands over two lions which he tames in this manner. Fittingly he was called *dompteur des animaux*. He was also referred to as “Master of the Wild Beasts” instead of by name, while in similar Greek representations Dionysus has been definitely identified. A few of the Greek examples maintain the winged Dionysus, which can be traced back to a common oriental origin; an impressive example of the winged type in the fifteenth century B.C. is shown on a Churritic seal from Nuzi.⁷ In the Peloponnesus he was replaced by the *Dionysus Psilax*, the “winged Dionysus” at Amyclae near Sparta, where there is evidence of “Bacchian rites” in connection with the pre-Doric festival of *Hyacinthia*. The type without wings exists at its purest on a Minoan gem from Cydonia, a town in western Crete which gave evidence of having had a cult of Dionysus also in later times (Inscr. Cret. II, x. 2. 17). The connection between the Minoan and the Greek god of the Cretan Doric age is provided by an Assyrianizing representation of the animal-tamer on a bronze shield of the eighth century from the cave of Ida. This shows a wilder aspect of the Dionysian than the Minoan art. The god is stepping on the head of a bull and is holding up a lion which apparently he is ready to tear to pieces. In the tragedy *The Cretans* by Euripides, a song by the chorus connects this aspect with the cult of Ida by calling the god by the name of *Zagreus*—a word which means the hunter who catches live animals and which is another name for Dionysus (Frag. 472).

And, lastly, the general Dionysian impression of Minoan art can be reduced to concrete elements, which in Greece exist in the same combination only in the cult of Dionysus. Dionysus appears to the Greeks primarily as wine-god, son of the bull, and the god of women; also as the god of goddesses whose nature was ecstatic, the greatest of whom was the mother-goddess Rhea. The presence of the great mother in Minoan art has been recognized by all other scholars, and until now the Dionysian spirit of the representations has even been ascribed to her. But the most striking elements of the cult as represented were these: the bull, the wine—even both together in precious drinking vessels and votive vessels having the shape of bulls’ heads⁸—also the women as priestesses, the snake in the

7. H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1939), Pl. XVIIIa.

8. It is almost too ridiculous to say this, but a great hindrance to the understanding of the whole Minoan culture was the unfounded assumption of its discoverer, Sir Arthur Evans, that the chief beverage of the Minoans was beer. It has been conclusively disproved by Ventris and Chadwick in *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 130, after the procedure by J. Sundwall.

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hands of divine figures of women, and the uncovered breasts. A Dionysian element, surely, is the handling of snakes, known to us from several Greek vase pictures and from the myths about the maenads. The basis of the relation of Dionysian women to their god was that they represented his nurses. The story is told that in their Dionysian abundance they nursed the animals. They offered their milk to the god and to all newborn creatures, and it was said that even virgins attained that power in their Dionysian ecstasy (Nonnos 45. 299). This is probably the meaning of the exposed breasts of the Minoan women: this gesture was fitting to the nurses of the god, which they all were in the observation of the myth of Dionysus.