Jack Lindsay, Dionysos and Nietzsche: Siren Calls—Ancient and Modern

(i) 'But let’s accept that that’s how life is. Let’s even assume that it’s possible that all life’s brilliance is only the result of our illusions and that real truth is one stripped of all illusion. Then what? What does a person wake up to then? ...'


(ii) 'He who should wish that his fatherland might never be greater, smaller, richer, poorer, would be the citizen of the world.'

Voltaire, The Philosophical Dictionary, sv Fatherland.

(iii) 'Becos ol' Europe lost 'er block an' started 'eavin' bricks'

C. J. Dennis The Moods of Ginger Mick (Sydney, pocket edition for the trenches with illustrations by Hal Gye, 1916), 42.

Jack Lindsay (1900-1990), child of Lavender Bay, Sydney Harbour, can perhaps be fleetingly characterized by these three quotations. European learning, Voltaire’s cosmopolitan aphorism and an Australian-voiced dissenting identity, if not rebellion, were elements which helped form the Jack Lindsay persona. It is rather easy to stereotype the Lindsay family’s

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1 For a contemporary witness see Raymond Lindsay, A Letter from Sydney, edited by John Arnold (Melbourne, 1 June, 1983). See further, Jack Lindsay, Life Rarely Tells (London and Melbourne, 1982), originally published as three separate volumes: Life Rarely Tells (London, 1958), The Roaring Twenties (London, 1960) and Fanfrolico and After (London, 1962). The broad Lindsay
artistic contribution to Australian identity in the twentieth century as a vitalist experience which, in turn, can be simply defined as a ‘sexed’ view of the human being-in-the-world. However, rather more was going on than Rabelaisian voluptuousness, and this is especially the case when one turns to a consideration of Jack Lindsay’s roles in the output and literary production of Norman Lindsay and son in the immediate aftermath of World War I through the nineteen-twenties.

The romantic (oftentimes darkly romantic) and charming innocence of Lindsay’s work, *Dionysos: Nietzsche contra Nietzsche: an Essay in Lyrical Philosophy*, published by the Fanfrolico Press, London, 1928, should command readers’ and scholars’ attention precisely because this century has often been marked by ‘innocents’ or those who proclaim their intentions to begin their cultural-cum-ideological worlds again, or restore their lands to atavistic pasts and traditions ... imagined. If this innocence or naïveté now seems anachronistic it is only (or should be) because the end of this century’s progress has shattered the true innocents of humanity—precisely because they were perceived as not belonging to imagined, favoured or preferred traditions and ancestries. And there rests a central question which can define as well as dog Jack Lindsay’s work. ‘ Innocent’ and ‘innocence’ share synonymous qualities, and yet ‘innocent’ and ‘innocence’ could well stand opposed.

An important key to opening the door on the reasoning behind, as well as shedding light upon, the ultimate polemical intent of the work *Dionysos*, family was intrigue personified: see Joanna Mendelssohn, *Letters and Liars: Norman Lindsay and the Lindsay Family* (Sydney, 1996).

2 Note Wilding’s comments in the introduction to *Life Rarely Tells*, vii-viii. This essay is concerned with inquiring into the historical and philosophical origins and directions of Jack Lindsay’s formative work as represented in *Dionysos: Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche* (Fanfrolico Press, London, 1928). Hereafter this work will be referred to as Lindsay, *Dionysos*. Too often is family history surface dressage, rather than a study of the condition of the horse and its rider in their world.
is to appreciate that Lindsay was not only still working from his Australian Lindsayean roots, but was also taking part in the streams of popular intellectual discourse, dispute and polemic which had been bubbling and boiling up to the surface in Europe through the turn of the nineteenth century (his birth year), into World War I and beyond into post-war Europe. It should be emphasized that this was understood as post The-Great-War Europe. The Great War had re-made Europe's geopolitical and 'mental' landscapes. 1914-1918 had shaken, shattered or collapsed 'worlds' and empires which had preceded it. Assaults upon normative values extended themselves beyond the tragic confines of World War I. Once-familiar European landscapes were simultaneously illusionary and delusionary. Optimism and pessimism, dislocation and relocation, stood alongside restorations, revolutions and unpredictable human possibility. What we confront in Dionysos is a clash over the directions and the meanings of Western, civilization and culture. Here is a record as a time-capsule of one England-residing, Australian-born intellectual who advocated revolutionary change by appeal to classical Utopian thought and its synergetic potential in concert with Nietzsche and Nietzscheanism. This might have been a vain and wrong-headed appeal, but a reader would be unwise to ignore the workings of revolutionary self-belief. In a real sense, Lindsay's Nietzscheanism and his usage of classical antiquity was simultaneous act of violence and naïveté in the advocacy of physical, mental (a new mentalité) and spiritual revolutionary change:

I think the world is one-tenth too tired, and nine-tenths too primitive, for this religion. It does not matter. When the cataclysm comes, we shall be safe. Nietzsche is our prophet, and while we walk the crests of space with Zarathustra the whole surface of earth can crack up into the burning slime it is, but our feet will not notice the tremor.

The primary focus of this exploratory essay is to uncover a clearer picture of Lindsay the writer-as-idealistic and his published imaginings of

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3 Lindsay, Dionysos, 243.
what a twentieth-century Hellene-inspired and Nietzschean-touched Renaissance meant to him. Readers should not expect the work of a Nietzschean scholar from the second half of the twentieth century—for Lindsay was never a Nietzschean scholar, either in the 1920s or later. Nor should we expect the genius of hindsight. Jack Lindsay was an ideological fan: a naïve and ambivalent traveller who duelled and jested with ideas and ideals.

Of course, Norman Lindsay’s initial support and encouragement of Jack Lindsay’s foray into print—the Fanfrolico Press, London, and its hand-cut production of Greek and Roman literature in translation—rapidly became, in effect and through publication, Jack Lindsay’s child. A study of Fanfrolico in its entirety would constitute a book itself. What concerns us here, is the youthful, additional Lindsayean accompaniment of Hellenic-inspired-or-sourced Utopian-cum-prophetic philosophical explorations—contained in Dionysos. Jack Lindsay mixed Hellenic, particularly Platonic, ideas with

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4 For Lindsay’s much later views of his efforts and the autobiographical caricature which glosses over his early, often formative and certainly fervently held beliefs, see Lindsay, Life Rarely Tells, 478-83. History and memory can be alien bedfellows.

Nietzsche's and (in light disguise) Marx's: "The purpose of Thought is not to solve the riddle of the universe but to create it.' These lines, teasingly and provocatively, recall Marx-the-Younger, *Theses on Feuerbach*, no.11 (original version):

> 'The Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, is to *change* it.'

(printed according to manuscript)

Here we encounter a genuine philosophical innocence and cheekiness which sought to express itself through an endlessly recurring question. This was a world in which philosophical speculation and exploration were excellences in themselves, and surely anchored upon the wisdom (the educative insights) of the Hellenes. Lindsay adds:

> Once it [the philosopher as thought process] lapses from the giddiness of the search in order to construct reality out of its findings, it tends to become static. Philosophy must make statements, of course, and while making them it is limited to their time-space. But once made, the definition must be trodden underfoot as the thinker reaches onward. The function of philosophy then is not to systematize thought, but to create philosophers.

This the Greeks never forgot.

This is one of Jack Lindsay's finer moments. Here we have a

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6 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 3. Written in the spring of 1845. This version was first published in 1924—in German and in Russian—by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. in Marx-Engels *Archives*, Book 1, Moscow.

7 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 3.
philosophical call for, and affirmation of, human intellect engaged with the idea of existence. A fivefold process can be posed: question, argue, invent, dissolve and renew. Life is creative activity. Of course, this begs the question, 'Just what is creative activity?' For Lindsay, the Greeks, like Nietzsche, were engaged in a form of dissent with the world through acts of questioning and differing from (or with) existing social order and life-in-society. These notions are naïve and romantic. However, one should not simply dismiss Lindsay's naïveté and romanticism with a recourse to a pejorative and adjectival flourish. Jack Lindsay was not an innocent proclaiming innocence. We need only to listen to Lindsay's voice and its scarred innocence:

(i) 'The late War (1914-1918) terrified him [in Lindsay's words: 'man the social animal'] as no other war has.'

(ii) '... and when, in 1914-1918, one of man's periodic lusts for blood broke out ...'

The world around Lindsay was all too real. History was alive and deadly. Jack Lindsay viewed humanity as a social organism generally taken with its own world of 'social values' based upon an intense work-a-day and industrial practicality where 'man prefers to exist domestically and to consider the making of books a spiritual act'.

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8 The problematic of the Greeks and Nietzsche remains just that: see the insightful work of Hubert Cancik, 'Mongols, Semites and Pure-Bred Greeks: Nietzsche's handling of the racial doctrines of his time' in Jacob Golomb (ed.) *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, (London, 1997), 55-75. For both Lindsay and Nietzsche the classical legacy afforded more than respectability to argument and polemic: it provided another model for the remaking of ‘Western’ humanity. This was, and remains, a dangerous model.

9 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 10-11. See also 63 and 106.

10 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 10.
Indeed, Lindsay, again cheekily, even suggested that ‘the bee has a better social organization’ without the distractions or challenges of creative and artistic inspiration weighing upon ‘the organization of the hive.’ This was not a view of the world in sympathy with a Western preoccupation with the world of industrial production and its expansion across the globe in the guises of Lindsay’s two-faced god ‘American Service or Marxian Justice’. Lindsay, the Utopian thinker, argued that the industrialized world, or world captivated by (I employ the term ‘captivate’ in its senses of ‘suppress’ and ‘subjugate’) ‘industrialism’, so dominated humanity that it was, in a real sense, understandable that ‘... man, the social animal, has every right in his hatred of art or thought which is creative and so does not flatter his sense of social values.’ The impact of industrialism upon man and his humanity was such that: ‘These trumpets cry so loudly that he is deafened.’

Of equal moment, fear, or rather more precisely, fright was an intimate part of modern humanity’s psychological and conscious make-up. For Lindsay, the Renaissance had ushered back into existence the idea and reality

11 Lindsay, Dionysos, 10. Lindsay was very much aware of Plato’s ideas and bee/drone discourses, and analogous reasoning on democracy, oligarchy and the ideal polis (city-state). See, for examples, Plato Republic 559-65. See also Aristotle’s memorable account of the bee and its ‘industrious’, organized, ‘work-a-day’ habits: Aristotle Historia Animalium 622b20-21 and 623b-627b.

12 Lindsay, Dionysos, 11.

13 Lindsay, Dionysos, 11.

14 Lindsay, Dionysos, 10.

15 Lindsay, Dionysos, 10.
of ‘consciousness’\textsuperscript{16}. With this vast awakening, it was not surprising to discover that: ‘He [humanity—the social animal] is frightened.’\textsuperscript{17} Certainty had been overturned and replaced by an acute appreciation of human mortality without hope—without divine promise.

Two broad and uncomfortably related currents were present. First, a sense of the power and momentum of historical change across time and within human societies and, second, a human ideal and aesthetic which

\textsuperscript{16} Lindsay, Dionysos, 10-11. ‘Consciousness’ like the term, idea and word ‘civilization’ is very much a concept grown within the historian’s mind and the subsequently conceptualized historical world. As Lucien Febvre observed: ‘It is never a waste of time to study the history of a word ... Such terms, whose meaning is more or less crudely defined in dictionaries, never cease to evolve under the influence of human experience and they reach us pregnant, one might say, with all the history through which they have passed. They alone can enable us to follow and measure, perhaps rather slowly but very precisely (language is not a very rapid recording instrument), the transformations which took place in a group of those governing ideas which man is pleased to think of as being immobile because their immobility seems to be a guarantee of his security ....’ Lucien Febvre, ‘Civilisation: Evolution of a word and a group of ideas’ in Peter Burke (ed.) and K. Folca (trans.) A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre (London, 1973), 219. And then Febvre added, in another path-finding paper: ‘But a great historian, a creator of genius like Michelet binds together for the first time a bunch of heterogeneous but contemporary facts. He baptizes them with a beautiful name “Renaissance” which for quite personal reasons he finds alive within himself. And so that label, the Renaissance, becomes in turn a living reality in opposition to the middle ages. It confronts and destroys the middle ages. But it also to a large extent determines our way of conceiving of the middle ages .... And how right I am, more right than I can tell, for saying—“Histoire, science de l’homme. Histoire, oeuvre de l’homme” (History, the science of man. History, the work of man).’ in Lucien Febvre, ‘How Jules Michelet invented the Renaissance’ in A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre, 266.

\textsuperscript{17} Lindsay, Dionysos, 11.
could be placed astride or in opposition to these historical forces. There is a certain Blakean vision here. However, Lindsay’s sources of his educative aesthetic extend well beyond William Blake—and yet, interestingly, these sources of ideas were not only oppositional forces to one face of urbanity or townishness, namely, industrialization, they were also grown from the very same Western urbanity and identity.

Let us turn to an appreciation of the Hellenic foreground to Jack Lindsay’s philosophical world-view and its complex, if uneasy and dangerous, place in a world then entering unevenly upon its second century of modernity. This complexity and its connection to the modern world is caught in Lindsay’s wondrous phrase and romance with Plato and classical Greek ideas: ‘In Plato’s world it still seemed possible to make earth’s societies suburbs at least of the cities of eternity.’

There is optimism, originality and a certain youthful scholarly adventurousness about this comment. It would be engaging to think that perhaps there is something outwardly or openly Australian about this comment from the authorial hand but I fear that is just a fancy. However, this play upon a Greek philosophical imagining calls for further exploration. Jack Lindsay argued for wide-ranging, spirited imaginations (and imaginings) as the primary sources of human inspiration:

But are there philosophers in whom the aesthetic, human

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18 See for example, Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 4; 100—opposite page, drawing and comment and note 241; *Life Rarely Tells*, 206-10 and Index. Note the early reference to the creative, or rather, ‘thought by instinct’ capacity of Blake and Keats. However, their aesthetic capacity was transcended, in Lindsay’s argument, by the ‘aesthetic, human and intellectual sense of values’ achieved by only two philosophers, Plato and Nietzsche: *Dionysos*, 19-20.

19 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 24.

20 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 20.
and intellectual sense of values are equally balanced, ... but of all three sufficiently harmonized together that each one is largely present whichever predominates?

There are two, Plato and Nietzsche.

In the last resort there are only two complete philosophers for the very reason that they are, in comparison to a Spinoza, untidy, unsystematic, and basically more interested in life than in a dovetailed teleological edifice.

They are brothers, I repeat.

Plato and Nietzsche.

Lindsay's experience of the 1920s is clearly influenced not only by Norman Lindsay but a certain spirit of Australian irreverence. However, there is much more to Jack Lindsay's intellectual formation than an attachment to Sydney's Bohemians and its intellectual enclave based upon dissent from the Sydney elites of Church, State and University. Friendship, booze and sex were the holy trinity which bound together this Australian intellectual band. Lindsay's intellectual formation was to a large extent shaped by his classical education. It was then extended, influenced and layered by his eclectic forays into Western European ideas and writings which ranged easily across the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and certainly extended back further into European history and ideas. Europe became the abode of Jack Lindsay, the Australian, and confirmed itself as his terrain of intellectual agon (contest).

Within this context, it is salient to signal the flavour of Lindsay's call

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21 In many ways, P.R. Stephensen's memoir of those days with Jack Lindsay has captured the dissenting, youthful and zealous spirit which drove these Australians down their Nietzschean, Communist and peculiarly intellectualized blend of aristocratic and demagogic politics: see P.R. Stephensen, *Kookaburras and Satyrs: Some Recollections of the Fanfrolico Press* (Sydney, 1952).
for an intellectual revolution (it is not too strong a word): 22

We shall have to sever from him whatever static elements of his thought have been seized on by the Neo-Nietzscheans, to ask: Where will evil, the Anti-Nietzsche, attack in order to drive out the vital content and set up instead a few barren formulae isolated from the continuing unity of Nietzsche's mind?

Nietzsche himself says, with the noble generosity of all who seek high individual ends:

_You will find me best when you have rejected me. I am all that surpasses me._

By rejecting here, of course, he does not mean ignoring or repudiating. Lindsay goes on to say:

_Draw from me the essence of my vision, and use the power it gives you to reach a more sensitively powerful vision..._

_We must see then that we only reject what Nietzsche has really himself rejected already: the dust accidentally thrown up by the wind of his thought. We must set the rhythms of his mind against fortuitous elements, and winnow them away. Then we shall find what phoenix will be born out of the ashes when Nietzsche is passed through the fire of Nietzsche._

_Thus we shall create the Über-Nietzsche. Unless we do this, and keep doing this, all those parts where Nietzsche is least himself will be the parts acclaimed. We shall behold the same fate overtake him as overtook Plato. Nietzsche will be accepted for all the wrong reasons, and his profundities passed over as_

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22 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 43-4. Youthful, irreverent and biting notions; yet, in the end, fundamentally anti-intellectual.
poetical extravagances.

Let us save Nietzsche from the Nietzscheans. Here in the arena let Nietzsche, the Liberator destroy Nietzsche, the Social Theoriser. Already there are a thousand misconceptions abroad. Fifty more years and his meaning will be so obscured that he will be placed in University curricula as one more historical exhibit. It will be discovered he was a gentle and slightly puritanical rhapsodist, very religious underneath; and sociological theories will be advanced from his work.

He must be saved from this fate at all costs. Let him be hated, by all means; but let him be preserved from the deadly impartiality of text-books.

This personal, as well as Lindsayean, vision assists in shedding a primary and early literary light upon Jack Lindsay's keen interest in classical Athens, Plato, ancient philosophy and their histories. Political and philosophical ideals or outlooks were clearly present and they were volatile, if idiosyncratic elements, of Jack Lindsay's intellectual persona.

For Lindsay, classical Athens was not an historical world of perfection, but was strikingly alive and focussed upon its own uniqueness (historical or otherwise) and self worth. Whilst this world, Athens, had marked and scarred Plato's own intellectual career and life (to say nothing of his political and philosophical misadventures abroad in Syrakusan Sicily), it was vibrant and original. Generally speaking, the small size of Hellenic societies and, in turn, their intimate grasp upon ideas of justice and injustice gave them an intellectual character and childhood, if you will, etched by citizen action. Significantly, Lindsay has much to offer in a general history of classical Athens' roles in shaping Hellenic intellectual life in and around

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23 See further, for the ideological and personal flavour of these writings, Plato Epistles 3 and 7, and also Ludwig Edelstein, Plato's Seventh Letter (Leiden, 1966).
what was a particularly large Greek polis. The contradiction or perhaps the paradox, a large polis becoming the character signature of a small polis world, becomes apparent.\textsuperscript{24} The liveliness and destructiveness of many dynamic historical societies might well be a truism but the idea of a breathing, human-centred, historical existence is central to Lindsay's worldview as is the distant and distinct fabric of a Greek pre-Christian idea (or Greek pre-Christian ideas) of reason and reasoning.\textsuperscript{25}

The chief external causes of Plato's despair are easy to find. He saw Athens destroyed and social stability grow more and more problematic ... As the years brought only further promises of anarchy, the stress of far-thinking and constructive minds such as Plato's must have grown wellnigh intolerable ...

Even worse, he had seen Socrates murdered ...

But Plato's work is not based on the psychological analysis of man, but on the revelation of the structure of mind and spirit. And we must not forget how Plato's world was bounded; he had no such phenomena of resentment and 'love' as Christianity to view. Life still held a little external dignity. Man the moral animal, could not be seen in the relation we now view him, and therefore Plato's misgivings came primarily from another source—from the spectacle of Man the idiot, Man the muddle-headed destroyer, Man the child of chaos; not of Man the fetterer of body and soul with a sickly morality of fear,

\textsuperscript{24} There is no escape from, and only engagement with, the ancients' speculations upon and accounts of their ideas of history, their histories and their relationship to ideas of freedom and the polis: see K.J. Dover, \textit{The Greeks and their Legacy: Collected Papers II} (Oxford, 1988), especially "Thucydides as "History" and as "Literature"" and 'The Freedom of the Intellectual in Greek Society', 53-64 and 135-58. See further, Mogens Herman Hansen (ed.) \textit{The Ancient Greek City-State} (Copenhagen, 1993).

\textsuperscript{25} Lindsay, \textit{Dionysos}, 23-4.
Man the hater of all that is beautiful and strong.

Without entering upon a critique of Plato’s *Republic* or *Laws*, let alone his life’s work, it is worth observing that Plato retains a very much alive contemporary relevance and resonance in this century now drawing to its close, or should that be ‘opening upon an as yet unwritten century’? Of course, this relevance does not provide our contemporary world with a source of unrequited good news. Where does Jack Lindsay fit into this general classical orb? Lindsay well realised that Plato’s Utopian schema (as expressed in the *Republic* and *Laws*) was deeply flawed. After putting forward the essential proposition, ‘Plato submitted to scepticism: he took man seriously ...’ he went on to observe that Plato, ‘built this demented structure of bye-laws, framed on the assumption that it is possible to ticket men with miraculous precision and to govern life from a rigid and aloof throne of judgement ...’ In Jack Lindsay’s eyes, this judgement did not detract from the depth and perception of Plato’s *oeuvre* and its potential to educate and liberate humanity:

... we are only aware of what fluid thought is because he has shown it to us. He freed spirit for its adventure into the unknown. He left Self as the symbol of life.

... He formulated the first principles of a noble self-responsibility: not the base self-mutilation of the Christian enriching life with a new prism of ecstasy, making it enormously a more perilous, strong, giddy, profound, exhilarating thing.

Lindsay’s imaginings of Greek ideas and Greek philosophers’ wellsprings of motivation are just that. Greek history and the history of its

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26 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 24, and generally, 24-6.

27 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 27-8.
What is especially interesting was the then contemporary world of the writer, Jack Lindsay, and the ways in which that world acted subtly, consciously, or otherwise, upon the historian’s interpretative skills and imagination. The aerial power of Hellenic philosophy beckoned to Lindsay. Yet, at the same time as he recognized the fragility of civilization and the destructiveness of the human ‘social animal’ in history, he projected backwards modern European ideas of racial or race characteristics, as ‘explanation’ for historical creativity and success.

The infancy of a democratic idea, namely ‘social justice’ and its dynamic attachment to citizenship, however limited, within its polis world, is ascribed to an idea which has often expressed in pseudo-scientific guise, or otherwise, its hate-filled pure ethnicities during the course of this and the last century: ‘The smallness of the Hellenic states with their racial

28 Always a contentious arena—the connections between ancient and modern worlds and their historical cultures: see Bernard Knox, The Oldest Dead White European Males and other Reflections on the Classics (New York, 1993), 107-30, 35-6, and elsewhere.

29 The same ‘... aerial grace of passion’ which produced Plato’s Symposium and Nietzsche’s Also Sprach Zarathustra: Lindsay, Dionysos, 21.

30 See for example: Lindsay, Dionysos, 37, re the notion of the fragility of civilization; and then note 106 for the destructiveness ‘... of man the social animal, man the civilised creature’. For notable references to ‘race’ and the contradictory forces or problematic power of such related ideas: 24; 49; 53; 63-4.

exclusiveness, made the idea of social justice appear credible'.

Lindsay was always juggling ideas. Exclusivity was certainly a characteristic of the classical poleis’ citizenries, yet its character had more to do with property qualifications, distributions, entitlements, and mythopoetic ancestral lawgivers. Immediately after this anachronistic placement of ‘racial exclusiveness’, Lindsay perceptively observed that Plato’s Utopian polis turned Dystopian and ‘... ended, of course, in the perfectly unreasonable and deadly world of the Laws’. In company with these views, fragility of intellect and the volatility of human emotions are a dual key to Jack Lindsay’s perception of classical Greek civilization as a cradle of Western culture and citizenship:

Plato must return to free Plato. But before this could take place, Plato’s world was destroyed. The Hellenic culture had been concentrated in a few city-states with the rest of mankind excluded as barbarian; but even among themselves no collective effort towards an intelligent social structure was made. Hatred in the forms of commercial rivalry, patriotism, intolerance and war, was as strong then as now. The Hellenic culture broke in a flare of music, and died.

Note references to Platonic idealism (68-9) and Ancient Greece’s relevance to then contemporary, Western and German society (172), and the propagation of hereditarian medicine/social-race hygiene.

32 For the long duration of classical traditions of thought and the historical complexity and challenge of their legacies, see N.A. Morpeth, ‘Eugenics, Orientalism, and Classical Education: the Darker Side of the Western Tradition’ in Czeslaw Majorek, William Bruneau, Erwin V. Johanningmeier and Frank Simon (eds.) Schooling in Changing Societies: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (Ghent, 1998 [= Paedagogica Historica, Supplementary Series IV]), 107-49.

33 Lindsay, Dionysos, 24.

34 Lindsay, Dionysos, 37.
Like an echo of that music Rome arose, trying to make of social organization a reflection of the Hellene’s hardy sense of beauty’s ruthless economy.

This Lindsayean intellectual child, this idea of origins, cultures and the ‘West’, or Western imagination, shared some of the spirit but none of the romance or humour (and only a little of the cheeky and ironic clarity) of Karl Marx’s commentary in the introduction to the Grundrisse upon the character of the Hellenes’ contribution to humanity.35

Ein Mann kann nicht wieder zum Kind werden, oder er wird kindisch. Aber freut ihn die Naivität des Kindes nicht, ... Lebt in der Kindernatur nicht in jeder Epoche ihr eigner Charakter in seiner Naturwahrheit auf? Warum sollte die geschichtliche Kindheit der Menschheit, wo sie am schönsten entfaltet, als eine nie wiederkehrende Stufe nicht ewigen Reiz ausüben? Es gibt ungezogene Kinder und altkluge Kinder. Viele der alten Völker gehören in diese Kategorie. Normale Kinder waren die Griechen.

A man cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does he not find joy in the child’s naïveté ... Does not the true character of each epoch come alive, in truth or in reality [Naturwahrheit: in the nature of the reality] in the temperament, the very disposition of its children [Kindernatur]? Why should not the historical childhood of humanity [... die geschichtliche Kindheit der Menschheit], its most beautiful unfolding, as a phase [Stufe: stage or phase]

never to return, exercise an eternal charm \([\text{Reiz: charm, attraction, appeal or fascination}]\)? There are rude children and precocious children. Many of the ancient peoples \([\text{alten Völker}]\) belong in this category \([\text{Kategorie: classification}]\). The Greeks were normal \([\text{Normale: 'standard' in the sense of a peculiarly everyday expression of this phenomenon}]\) children.

The enlightened, humanist ethos embodied in Marx's passage above captures the divisions in understanding (let alone, recognizing) the origins and meanings of modernity. For Marx, these ancient peoples and their small scale but 'sovereign' polis-citizenries represented a special originality and freshness in the history of humanity precisely because these events constituted a metaphorical moment, namely, 'the historical childhood of humanity'. There is a romantic vein in this idea of the Greeks. Johann Winckelmann and the spirit and romance of the eighteenth century Enlightenment's imaginings of Hellas' contribution to the shaping of the West was present here. Equally, Johann Gottfried Herder stood in good company with humanist and liberal nineteenth century and Victorian ideals and ideas. Jack Lindsay shared the general spirit of this imagining with Marx. However, Lindsay's \textit{Dionysos}, in Nietzschean mask, and his peculiar romance with, and interpretation of Plato's ideas, is accompanied by darker forces and leads in another direction.

For Lindsay's passion for the philosophical flight of Nietzsche's ideas had led him away from the very same Hellenic historical environment which had, long ago, thrown together in debates, disputes and writings the much contested ideas of Plato and Aristotle. In its place, came the dark legacy of the second half of the nineteenth century: blood and race. The double-headed historical monster of 'racial exclusiveness' and 'blood' reached back for

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mytho-historical origins.

(i) Nietzsche looked at man, at a scum floating on this tiny pool of matter we call the universe, lighted obscurely by the imageries of art, and asked: What is the common factor to which I can relate all psychological states, whether a god’s delight rings its bells in them, or they fume from the trivial resentments of a clot of mud? How can I relate Dionysos and Jesus, Apollo and Paul?

He said: ‘I can relate them all to the vitality of the blood.’

(ii) Nietzsche then in his capacity as philologist undertook to unravel all the threads of language, to trace every moral valuation to its genesis in the blood.

Lindsay had joined an intellectual and ideological current which in one important respect he did not understand, or rather, wish to accept. Lindsay’s Nietzsche and his ideas of blood and race, and Nietzsche’s own ‘meddling in the people’s tribal affairs,’ could lead not to some enlightened

37 Lindsay, Dionysos, 49; 53 and, for its first expression, 16.

38 Lindsay, Dionysos, 179. Whether or not the Franco-Prussian War formatively shaped Nietzsche, Lindsay has hit on a powerful theme with his use of the expression ‘meddling in the people’s tribal affairs’. War and ideas of people’s yearnings (and/or their peculiar, real and imagined ‘tribal’ histories) as expressed in the German notion ‘Volkphantasie’ were present here. See further, the interesting and reflective remarks of Marx on the origins of Greek expressions of cultural identity and the importance of focussing upon the uniqueness of their social history and their ‘fantastic’, imagined character (‘Volkphantasie’) which arose from Greek historical experience: Marx, Werke XLII, 44, and see n.35 for reference to English translations. See further, for another much contested view of Nietzsche’s ideas on war and peace and their comprehension as philosophical ‘boundaries’ or models of human existence: Karl Jaspers, Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his
transcendent, spirited-man-as-transformed-being but to a material, earthbound inferno.\textsuperscript{39} Ideas have historical lives of their own.\textsuperscript{40} Apollo as Hellenic symbol of reason has always been in contest with unreason. The late nineteenth century witnessed an enormous escalation of these tensions.\textsuperscript{41} Philosophy might (and does) exist outside history but it


\textsuperscript{39} For an early defence of Nietzsche from his appropriation by Nazi ideology and propaganda: see M.P. Nicolas, \textit{From Nietzsche down to Hitler} (New York/London, 1938). See further, the insightful analyses in Robert C. Holub, ‘Nietzsche and the Jewish Question’ \textit{New German Critique} 66 (1995), 94-121; Steven E. Aschheim, ‘Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust’ in Golomb (ed.), \textit{Nietzsche and Jewish Culture}, (as in n.8), 3-20.

\textsuperscript{40} Ideas are neither neutral nor ahistorical entities but they can be arguable, just or unjust, and reasoned or unreasoning: see Isaiah Berlin, ‘The Counter-Enlightenment’ in \textit{The Proper Study of Mankind} (as in n.36), 243-68.

\textsuperscript{41} At the very least, anti-modernist and dangerous stereotypes (anti-Semitic or in combination—antimodernist and market-trader incarnate) surface in Nietzsche’s, \textit{Thus Spake Zarathustra: Zarathustra’s Discourses: 12 (The Flies in the Market Place)}. ‘Flee, my friend, into thy solitude! I see thee deafened with the noise of the great men, and stung all over with the stings of the little ones. Admirably do forest and rock know how to be silent with thee. Resemble again the tree which thou lovest, the broad-branched one—silently and attentively it o’erhangeth the sea. Where solitude endeth, there beginneth the marketplace; and where the market-place beginneth, there beginneth also the noise of the great actors, and the buzzing of the poison-flies.’ See for further attacks, aphorisms, ploys and plays (deadly ironic or otherwise): \textit{The Joyful Wisdom (The Gay Science: Die fröhliche Wissenschaft)} 3.130-41, and for the complexity and perhaps deliberately dangerous and provocative ambiguity of Nietzsche’s ideas: Book 5.347-9.

By way of a later and broader contrast note Benjamin’s comment on the impact of World War I upon the men who had fought in it: ‘... Was it not noticeable at
inescapably has history. Nietzsche’s world had historical faces and phantasms—contemporary and antique, and deadly. Reason and unreason stood face-to-face. This confrontation retains its contemporaneity.

Jack Lindsay well realized that violence, sexual violence and unreason, the marks of ‘the savage’, had often triumphed over the spirit of creative activity in civil society. These very same inhuman forces and behaviours were still in triumphant progress, only now the savage was accompanied, or rather, represented in another historical guise: ‘man the social animal, man the civilized creature who destroyed the literature and art of Hellas and Rome and made the war of 1914-1918’.

If this passage signals that ambivalence is (and was) an historical condition of ‘the civilized creature’, then Lindsay’s ideas of the relationships between creative and destructive forces within organized settled humanity require explanation. Not surprisingly, the origins of his ideas stretch back to Hellenic civilization in general and Plato in particular. However, of

the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? ... A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.’ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov’ in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York, 1968). There is an uncanny (if unintended) resemblance here to Lindsay’s remark: ‘The Late War (1914-18) terrified him as no other war has’. (Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 11).

Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 37; and especially 103-6. The currents of unreason run deep in human experience and Lindsay’s answer to an unreasoning human social animal is a ‘return’ to an archetypal pure savage and instinct.

Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 106.
equal importance, Lindsay’s antipathy to Aristotle\textsuperscript{44} remains a key to his skewed and flawed idealization of Plato’s thought and his passionate pursuit of what he perceived as the fraternal, intellectual bonds between Plato and Nietzsche. In turn, Lindsay’s then contemporary hostility to the modern and the modern world, in spite of (and even because of) the ways in which he viewed Nietzsche’s writings, was an equally important intellectual marker and shaper of his world-view of humanity. Lindsay was quite unequivocal, for him, Plato was the centre of creative imagining, the intellectual fountainhead:\textsuperscript{45} ‘all thoughts return to him’.

However, whilst he had relegated Aristotle to a distant intellectual place, he had failed to notice that his oft repeated expression ‘man, the social animal’ and ‘man, the moral animal’ is, at the very least, recognizable as a notion which properly belongs to Aristotle’s dictum:\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{equation*}
\delta\ \alphaνθρωπος\ \phiυ\sigmaει\ \piο\lambdaιτικών\ \zeta\phiον
\end{equation*}

This central observation of Aristotle’s is usually but erroneously translated and understood as ‘man is by nature a political animal’. However, in the context of Jack Lindsay’s romantic revolutionary Platonic-cum-Nietzschean citizen transformer of the world, and a generally better understanding of the philosophical and historical underpinnings of Western ideas of governance and civilization, it would be more accurate to render this

\textsuperscript{44} See for salient examples Lindsay,\textit{ Dionysos}, 33 and 235. Aristotle was, according to Lindsay, tainted with the brush of ‘laborious centuries of rationalistic study’ (235). Unlike the ideas of Plato and Nietzsche, this was ‘... the sterile schemata of rationalism’ (27).

\textsuperscript{45} Lindsay,\textit{ Dionysos}, 27 and directly on to Nietzsche’s ‘Eternal Recurrence’ in section 2.

\textsuperscript{46} Aristotle,\textit{ Politics}, 1253a2-3. For references to ‘man, the social animal’ and ‘man, the moral animal’ and their combinations see Lindsay,\textit{ Dionysos}, 15, 24 and 106 for their prominent usages.
most classical of classical Greek expressions as: 'the human (is) by nature a species-being of the polis ('polis form').

It is not without irony to observe that the very smallness of Hellenic societies, generally speaking, and, more particularly, their limited but intimate and quarrelsome (sometimes violently so) oligarchic, monarchical and democratic polis forms, shaped the very same abstract 'social' and 'moral' man towards whom Jack Lindsay expressed (and felt) critical ambivalence, and from whom he expressed ideological detachment. Further, it is equally significant that whilst Lindsay recognized 'the smallness of the Hellenic states', he did not go on to examine the historical character and the usefulness or otherwise of this metaphor of smallness to a better understanding of Greek societies. Rather than examine the historical character of the polis and its qualities, oddities and constraints which had given rise to Aristotle's and Plato's ideas, 'blood' became Lindsay's pan-metaphor of lyrical explanation. The lyric was strident and dissonant—an assault upon ancient and modern ideologies:

For history became an idea in my blood, not a chronicle of external facts, not a blind mechanism of the Marxian belly, not a dialectical dissipation of God as in Hegel.

All humanising religions, Christianity in chief, are seen to be bleeding houses where the too violent animal has the veins of his savagery tapped by a vampire-deity. When made utterly anaemic, he is no further use to this snuffing God and is slung into the dung-heap of heaven.

Nietzsche looked at this insane business, looked into these abattoirs of God; and amid the stench of this thought he said: Is it the goal of life that a bloody and a ravening organism should

\[47\] Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 24.

\[48\] Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 55.
become a tame and a feeble one?"

This was a dark vision cast in a revolutionary and prophetic voice. Modern and contemporary societies were a potential slaughterhouse of ideologies in contest. Yeats, a contemporary, was more than aesthetically and poetically on target when he observed in *Easter 1916*:49

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces

Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.

Interestingly, if quirkily, there was more than a touch of the millenarian in Jack Lindsay’s clarion call to Nietzsche. In a footnote to the previous quotation from *Dionysos*, Lindsay went on to argue for both Hegel’s originality, or at least, his contribution to an intellectual Renaissance through a revival of ‘Platonic process’ or consciousness, and simultaneously, the negation of Hegel’s vision in Nietzsche’s Zarathustrian arrival:50

I am however aware of the value of Hegel in preparing the way for the restatement of life as a Platonic process by his insistence on the fact that life was continuous, and by his weakening of the symbol of God, flattening it out to a thinness perceptible only to Idealistic Philosophers. He also opened the


50 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 55.
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way to an intelligent aesthetic. But his vision of process is an arid one, sticks and stones and bricks and bones, before the sinister (sic) glorious and passionate vision of Nietzsche's.

Lindsay’s anti-modernist aesthetic is one way to account for his ‘see-saw’ philosophical and historical arguments, opinions and assertions with regard to the legacy and potential of Nietzsche in the then contemporary context of a world contorted by the continuing ruptures of World War I. However, by itself it is not enough. After having made his earlier remarks on ‘blood’ and ‘racial exclusiveness’, Lindsay attempted to place Nietzsche on another plane at a remove from the earthly ‘chatter about Race’. However, even if Nietzsche’s philosophical raison d’être was of a quite different order to the ideological and political pressures bubbling up to the surface of a new Germany, Lindsay’s comment upon Nietzsche’s aims was replete with ambiguity and open-ended danger: ‘But Nietzsche’s analysis of race and history are directed to one end only—to show that man’s course lies quite outside the spiritual area of the lonely creator.’

As symbol, Apollonian reason was surrounded by ruthless and dark forces, whether or not these forces can be reasonably labelled as Dionysian. Again, Platonic dreams and distant hopes of a far more innocent Hellenic writer (even if Plato had been subjected to the experiences of city-states’ brutal Realpolitik) were drowned in a sea of early twentieth century despair.

51 See note 30, and note Lindsay’s unsound attempt to throw off the attack on Nietzsche: ‘Such blunderers collect and collate Nietzsche’s remarks on trial-marriages or racial characteristics, almost all of which are thrown out casually or in explication of some larger thesis ...’ Lindsay added, as a further defence of Nietzsche’s writings: ‘I must confess that Nietzsche is partly responsible for this by the way in which, at times, he lays himself open to such rationalistic tampering. That is why I write this book.’ (Dionysos, 63-4).

52 Lindsay, Dionysos, 64.
and pessimism: 53

He (Nietzsche) wants the fact of the Imperium Romanum.

This leads him to a still worse lapse. Having turned to the imperator, he begins to find significance in War ...

Strife, we have sufficiently seen, is the essence of a dualistic universe of Nietzsche's eternity ...

Surely he must have seen that War, being merely a physical and social disruption, destroyed, or at least interrupted, the action of the profounder conflict. Even apart from the vile fact that it slays youth, War is a valueless uproar ...

This is no humanitarian argument. If man is such a beast or such a fool as to go to a war, he deserves to get his guts ripped open or his face burned off. But war has grown to such a size now that it is impossible for anyone to evade its dangers. Man must face the fact of the unutterable inefficiency of his present organization and of his own uncontrollable lusts, or the next war will be another Atlantean cataclysm.

I do not expect that he will be able to arrive at such a discipline. One is therefore consoled by the thought that by the next century the whole of our civilization will be wiped out. It is less undignified to be writing a book like this when one is aware that the task is hopeless and that before long one's effort will only exist beyond the moon.

Lindsay's Dionysos has prophetic and millenarian moments and these above-quoted views express such sentiments. A Renaissance, a transvaluation of the old classical ideas (and ideals), was a forlorn hope. In a real sense, the impact of the battle of Sedan, the Franco-Prussian War and

53 Lindsay, Dionysos, 160-1.
the rise of Prussia-as-Germany had as irrevocable an impact upon Nietzsche as the blood-letting and carnage of 1914-18 had upon Lindsay.\(^5^4\) This is the ideological whirlpool in which Lindsay can be spotted, if not easily secured. Whilst Lindsay turned humanity’s experiences of history into, on the one hand, a metaphorical struggle (‘History is the game of Dionysos and Apollo’), on the other, he argued for and proclaimed that ‘Apollo and Dionysos are the symbols that unite to produce the creative act.’\(^5^5\) Apollo symbolised and provided the intellect, and Dionysos was the force and passion in this universal creative process.

Once again, much more is going on here than the revival of two classical symbols to account for the human creative process in society. First, Lindsay was flirting with, on the one hand, humanism and anti-humanism, and on the other, the forges of the nation-state and nationality which produced the world which, in turn, produced World War I. Second, he identified himself and Nietzsche with particular scientists, in the most encompassing sense of that term, as giants of creative energy, intellect and spirited venturers who shaped new universes of meanings and thereby transformed the worlds which had preceded them: ‘No artist, poet, or musician who has contact with the ideas of Einstein or Freud can create his forms in exactly the same way as he did before—supposing, of course, that his creative sensibility has not dried up.’\(^5^6\)

\(^5^4\) Lindsay, *Dionysos*. See for a contemporary and revealing ‘Australian’ view during 1914-18: the Hon. W.A. Holman, Premier of New South Wales, *Our Debt to France, an address to the Sydney University Union, Friday, 24th September, 1915* (Sydney, 1915). For added complexity of this period, see further John Burnet, ‘“Kulturn”’ in *Essays and Addresses* (London, 1929; first published 1917), 169-93.

\(^5^5\) Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 129, 133.

\(^5^6\) Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 153-4, and note Lindsay’s earlier assertions and arguments (66).
Simultaneously, within this context, Lindsay stood opposed to science as, in a real sense, being the ‘prime mover’ in processes of cold abstraction, rationalism and reasoned acts of the intellect. Within this context, it needs to be recognized that Lindsay rejected evolutionary humanism and potentially the Western traditions of intellectual argument and inquiry (the rigours of hypothesis and theory) as laboured, arrogant and, in the end, complacent. Lindsay wanted his creative spirit, his human-as-‘genie’. However, there was nothing to prevent this ‘genie’ from presenting as demon. First, let us hear Lindsay’s dissonant voices on humanism:\textsuperscript{57}

Voice 1:

There have been other cases of minds of the highest quality born closely together in time, and even in the same society. Rubens and Rembrandt constitute the most important case. Certainly there also the effect of the stronger mind is disruptive upon the weaker. Rubens’ proud and heroic bodies depressed Rembrandt with resentment, and sent him to the Ghetto of humanism.

Voice 2

One sees the growing tide of rebellion ... It begins with Blake ... and Voltaire, the revolting humanism of intellectual laughter.

There remains an apparent, and sometimes simultaneous, ambivalence and antagonism in Jack Lindsay’s views towards much of the Western, humanist driven (or become) philosophical and scientific traditions. The creative world which Lindsay wished to become reality was other:\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{57} Lindsay, \textit{Dionysos}, 169-70; 241.

\textsuperscript{58} Lindsay, \textit{Dionysos}, 235. Georg Simmel, \textit{The Philosophy of Money}\textsuperscript{2} (London, 1990), 446, 484, and then see 289-90. Simmel well understood the pressures
But Darwin is merely the cornerstone of laborious centuries of rationalistic study—a method beginning with Aristotle and at last arriving at an analysis of physical process in the nineteenth century of Christ-Darwin in one corner, Hegel in another, Marx in another. Progress, process, history, development, become words suddenly flaming with immense meaning, for the most part optimistic and complacent. Milleniums are in the palms of every dreamer. Progress is steaming off to the Garden of Eden—the rumbles of the proletariat are not yet audible though the shout ‘You have nothing to lose but your chains’ is mingling with the whistles and clatter ...

It is into the midst of this that Nietzsche strides ... Man has smugly raised the banner of Truth, Nietzsche gives him more truth than he had bargained for.

The world needed elemental change, but not the change produced by humanist ideas and science. History is the active recorder and interpreter of human eventfulness. As the Polish writer Kazimierz Brandys observed in a far more difficult historical current:59

In the end, I told him that most likely that issue [the question of why people behave and act the way they do in a particular moment or period of history] will remain an enigma, generated by vast social and economic change, and the rise and reasons for dangerous levels of acute anxiety, helplessness, and what could be termed anti-modern rebellion. Simmel reflected upon the possible reasons for so much misunderstanding and irrational assaults upon modernizing political, economic, socio-religious and intellectual forces which were transforming the worlds of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See further, Jürgen Habermas, The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate (ed. and trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson, Oxford, 1989).

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one of the enigmas of the past. There are many secrets and questions in the past, in history, for which there are no answers. Usually, years later, people attempt to solve those problems through the use of intelligence or imagination. Those attempts are the consequences of those enigmas, and they also create a nation’s culture. Culture does not only arise from what is unambiguous; its current often flows from dark and damaged places, from the imagination, intuitions.

However, in Jack Lindsay’s Dionysos, history’s skeptical citizen companions, irony and his bedfellow, grim irony, were ever present (if uninvited) in the above comment by Lindsay: ‘Nietzsche gives him [Man] more truth than he had bargained for.’

Lindsay’s educative environment, his classical education, drove him into conflict with modernity. He was crusading for a Renaissance rather than a retreat to a classically moulded past. Yet, the deep and long-embattled history of waves of human reason and skeptical inquiry were to be cast aside for an elemental world based upon blood and instinct and passion and sinew. These waves of intense human speculation and inquisitiveness which had helped generate the now-characterized classical traditions of thought embodied in Greek history, philosophy and science and then led to their Renaissance were the spent forces of history. Lindsay’s faith was of a different order and (once again) grimly, if ironically, linked to the very same national chauvinism he had sought to reject.

How might one consider further the depth and extent of the hostility expressed towards evolutionary humanism and democratic learning humanism in Dionysos? Such an exploration must also take into account an appreciation of the depth of violent feelings and the intellectualized violence rhetorically hurled at the onset of modernity. Moreover, for a more complete exploration of Lindsay’s place in early twentieth century Western thought, an historian needs to explore the conjunction between hostility and ambivalence towards modernism and modernity. Lindsay’s world-view had elemental, chthonian forms securely fastened onto its Renaissance-like vision for Western cultural and artistic renewal. Its origins stemmed
directly from his perceptions of Hellenic civilization and Nietzsche's violent opposition to 'Pauline' Christianity and the rise and rise of Science in the modern and then-contemporary world. It is well worth the reader's time to regard and listen to the voices speaking in the chapter entitled 'Napoleon' in *Dionysos*.  

Whenever Nietzsche speaks as a poet, he is true to the metaphysical implications of the idea of Eternal Recurrence. When he rationalises, he often contradicts that metaphysic. Thus, we find in his work a twofold attitude towards Science: one of scorn, and one in which he shows the usual rationalistic position ...  

As if the Hellene's subtle knowledge that Man is the measure of all things had any connection with the Christian's megalomaniac assumption of the terrific importance of his miserable ha'penny-worth of salvation!  

Not indeed that Nietzsche made his deeper attack on Christianity merely because it was damaging to the species and fostered the botched by a parasitic morality. He attacked it because it fostered the evil, the frightened, the hating elements of himself, of me.  

Therefore he had no more sympathy with the scientist's desire to see the universe abstractly than he had with the Christian's to see it eschatologically. He detects in the scientist the same terror of the concrete problems of life. He sees that to withdraw into a scientific hypothesis (whether it be of evolution, determinism, behaviourism, vitalism, or spiritualism) is as barren a conclusion as to withdraw into the categorical imperative, and expresses an equal inability to face the immediate realities of experience.  

Listen to the Conscientious One reproaching Zarathustra:  

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*Lindsay, Dionysos, 152-3.*
To-day when everything is shaken and the whole earth tumbleth ... ye seek more insecurity.

More shuddering, more danger, more earthquakes ... Ye long after the evilest, most dangerous life, that causeth me the most fear, after the lives of wild beasts, after forests, caves, steep mountains and labyrinthine abysses.

And ye are not pleased best by those who lead you out of a danger, but by those who lead you away from all paths, by seducers, but if such a longing is truth in you, it nevertheless seemeth unto me impossible.

But fear—that is man's hereditary and fundamental feeling. By fear everything is explained, original sin and original virtue. Out of fear hath grown my virtue, which is called Science.

But the fear of wild beasts hath been bred in man for the longest time, including the beast he containeth and feareth in himself. Zarathustra calleth it 'the beast inside'.

Such long, old fear, at last become refined, spiritual, intellectual, to-day, me thinketh, is called Science.

But Zarathustra threw a handful of roses at him and mocked him, saying that out of courage has come all in man which moves toward Zarathustra.

What had occurred in this section of Jack Lindsay's *Dionysos*? 'Man' remained the key focus; the message, however, had turned from 'the Hellene's subtle knowledge' (which will be returned to later) to a world of human beings fixated, perhaps even mesmerized, by evil and fear. According to Lindsay, Nietzsche's attack against Christianity was particularly aimed at its ideology, which 'fostered the evil, the frightened, the hating elements of himself [that is, Nietzsche] of me [that is,
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Significantly, Lindsay left open as a lesser motivation for Nietzsche's attack upon Christianity the proposition that, "... it was damaging to the species and fostered the botched by a parasitic morality". Although Jack Lindsay had qualified this paragraph by "Not indeed", and "merely", it would appear that this lesser proposition was, at the least, worthy of a secondary level of importance in Lindsay's assessment of Nietzsche's Weltanschauung. At the very least, this idea stood in second place after 'the evil, the frightened, the hating elements' in the argument within Lindsay's Dionysos.

The line "... damaging to the species and fostered the botched by a parasitic morality" would have found comfortable support in then-modern and contemporary hereditarian thought. Nietzsche an hereditarian? It is rather easier to assert that such-and-such a view can be squared away in Nietzsche's vast court of ideas rather than argue more directly that what we encounter here are the edges, the sharp edges, of Lindsay's impatience with, and hostility towards, what he perceived as the inherent weakness of Christianity as an ideology for the perpetuation of the species. Lindsay did not pretend to be other than a hostile witness—a lyrical philosopher as combatant with fire in his eyes.

Once again, the question should be posed: 'what is happening here'? One key to Jack Lindsay's thinking is to focus upon his reliance and insistence upon energy and drive as creative, human forces. This idea of human behaviour and whatever constitutes 'a human psyche' is composed of more than a taste, or an edge, of vitalism and a surge of violence—a

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Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 152.

Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 152.

For examples of this see Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 152-6; 48-55. This lyrical philosopher was at once as much combatant as he was polemicist. See further, Jack Lindsay, *Marxism and Contemporary Science or the Fullness of Life* (London, 1949).
dangerous love affair, if you will, with alleged instinctive human behaviours or actions and their absolute primacy in life. In one sense, Lindsay’s work prefigured the work of E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and The Irrational*, and argued for an anti-rational and essentially Dionysian interpretation of Hellenic civilisation:  

The Hellenic, it seems to me, while finding indeed many moral implications in the divine ordinations, yet saw them pre-eminently as manifestations of beautiful and irrational energy. He could delight in the Dionysian travelling of earth with no thought of the Christian’s universe of moral uniformity.

Lindsay was convinced that ‘energy’ was the key to Hellenic religiosity. The Hellenic world was not so much characterized by a sea of favours as by a sea of emotions. This was a world which was complexed by ecstasy, ‘blind energy’—a physical essentiality. Such a view of Greek polis societies is flawed, not because Hellenes could and did behave ‘irrationally’, but precisely because their constituted societies had ways of seeing and understanding their own worlds which had, and still have, the ability to provide us with possible logical and argumentative explanations which shed light upon, and reveal the darknesses within, their own reasons-for-being.

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64 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 239-40.

65 Apollonian reason was both Lindsay’s false prophet and an idol which must be smashed. In this sense, any wished-for return to a classical tradition of thought and its association with Greek philosophical debates must be as heavily qualified as one should qualify the legacy (or legacies) Nietzsche’s writings bequeathed to the twentieth century: see the thoughtful introduction in Werner J. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche’s View of Socrates* (Ithaca, 1974), 13-41.

66 Lindsay’s views as expressed in note 63 above require careful qualification. It should be a truism to remind the reader that religious, cultic and spiritual behaviours in Hellenic societies must not be seen as irrational activities or expressions. Lindsay had rejected anthropology and history and sought instead
Further, human societies, whether or not these societies recognized themselves and their actions as having historical character or not, simultaneously presented themselves to their own worlds and those of later and unimaginable societies, in ways which might be recognizably similar or like and manifestly dissimilar or unlike. Of course, contemporary historians of ideas might account for these societies by way of much later defined and evolving historical, religious, anthropological, economic and sociological characters and arguments. However, what matters equally is that these societies reasoned and argued in their own right. History is exciting (and Lindsay's philosophical ideas are certainly excitable) but seeking after historical explanations for Hellenic societies' behaviours can be a rather more mundane, dogged quest. The would-be historical (or even ahistorical) model that has been drawn by Lindsay was premised on a notion of a disjunction, that is, an intellectual chasm rather than a break, between the pre-Judaean-Christian Hellenic world and its imperial Christian successor. This was Lindsay's early twentieth-century and then contemporary Western historical caricature of ancient worlds, their beliefs and ideologies. Rather than being confronted by an historical model or paradigm of civilizations in contact, conflict and fusion, we stand face-to-face with a form of partisan and myopic historicism. This is the realm of the history of ideas, and it is here that useful argument can shed light upon the historical and philosophical notions (and fantasies) which drove the intellectual life of Jack Lindsay. The life of this writer was lived as a declamatory, intellectual activist both in his period as Platonist inspired and Nietzschean bound philosopher (with or without his father, Norman Lindsay's influence) and, for the rest of his life, as a Marxist and member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.⁶⁷

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⁶⁷ See further, Neil Morpeth, 'Jack Lindsay as Pilgrim', Overland 101 (December, 1985), 99-102, a review of Lindsay's Festschrift, Bernard Smith (ed.) Culture and History: Essays presented to Jack Lindsay (Melbourne, 1985). See also, the partisan and often naïve or idealizing papers in Robert Mackie (ed.), Jack
Of critical significance to such a view of Lindsay’s wellsprings of reasoning is an appreciation of the interconnectedness of philosophical advocacy and an explicit attachment to prophetic utterance in Dionysos. This is the junction at which Lindsay’s idea of ‘Dionysos’ found intellectual and polemical company as well as identity in Nietzschean-like immanence. In short, this is an idea which had as its driving force a belief in a pantheistic, nature-centred, creative principle. Whatever one makes of such a universalist metaphysic, it did not and could not rest with late-nineteenth century humanist science, evolutionary theory, Darwin and the political ideals and forces associated with, or attached, to these Western traditions of thought and their kindred humane educational goals and ideals.68 Science, with its focus upon rationality and hypothesis, was ‘other’ in Lindsay’s eyes and he argued that Nietzsche viewed it, the process of science, as an intellectual position which led one ‘... to withdraw into a scientific hypothesis’. This was a position which expressed a ‘... terror of the concrete problems of life’.69 On the other hand, the seeming, dark prescience of Nietzsche’s prophetic utterances for German and European history speak for themselves: ‘And ye are not pleased best by those who lead you out of a danger, but by those who lead you away from all paths, by seducers/misleaders: Verführer.’70 These darkly charismatic seducers-as-misleaders (Nietzsche’s Verführer) were simultaneously prophets of a new world and harbingers of chaos.

Lindsay had heard the siren call. For Lindsay, Science was the shaman


68 Lindsay, Dionysos, 152-4, and see further, 53; 63, 234-6.

69 Lindsay, Dionysos, 152.

70 Lindsay, Dionysos, 153. Note also Steven E. Aschheim, The Nietzsche Legacy In Germany (California, 1992). See further, n.78 below.
which produced 'the inert dogmatism of science's abstractions' with the signal exceptions of Einstein and Freud, as noted earlier. Yet again, what has manifested itself here was a profound anti-Modernism, a hostility to modernity with a simultaneous attachment to the ecstatic, the prophetic and the Utopian ideas and yearnings of Plato and Nietzsche. It was almost as if Lindsay preferred and trusted the intellectual companionship of charismatic-like, outsized combatants with ideas, rather than their more mundane worlds of theory, practice and experiment in which they studied and from which they subsequently sprang.

By way of contrast and in the interest of further explication of Lindsay's sources of, and lifelong engagement with, ideas, an examination of the extent of the distance, the remove of Jack Lindsay from the currents of Western modernity, past and present, is required. Aristotle as the engaged, ruminating philosopher of settled human existence surfaces here, as does the oppositional model of Plato's Utopianism with which Lindsay had aligned himself. Why link the ideas of modernity and the political and philosophical writings of Aristotle at this point and in this context? It is important to reinforce further the general argument that Lindsay attached his passionate intellectual star to Plato's writings and used Plato as an Hellenic battering ram to assault modernity and promote a Nietzsche-like Dionysian world. A further related and important observation needs to be made. Plato's writings provided a Utopian and metaphysical platform of an exceptionally polished quality from which Lindsay could lyrically advocate and announce the arrival of Dionysos in the twentieth century.

Even given that Jack Lindsay was quite aware that Plato's life was tempered by a series of dark, hard experiences of political life, his open preference for Plato's engagement with the human mind and 'spirit' does not in itself account for his philosophical outlook. Moreover, his preoccupation with elements of Plato's Utopian aesthetic is only one side of

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71 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 153-4 for his outright hostility to Futurism, abstract art and his linkage of 'All theories of abstract form in art = homo-sexuality': 138. This was another manifestation of intolerance, even hate.
this intellectual coin. The other side of Lindsay’s philosophical and political aesthetic was his deep opposition to Aristotle and Aristotle’s intellectual legacy which was bequeathed to the Western classical traditions of thought. It was a two-pronged assault.

First, Plato’s enemies, the agents who collapsed his metaphysic and Utopian aesthetic, were those very same intellectual opponents who had gathered subsequently around neo-Platonism and Plotinus, according to Lindsay. An apparently rational critique had undermined Plato’s Utopian preoccupation with an aesthetic based upon the humane mind and spirit. The rational critique had to be opposed vigorously. Unsurprisingly, Lindsay mounted an immediate lyrical and polemical assault upon Platonic and neo-Platonic academic rationality. The philosophical legacies of Plato’s enemies from within were under attack: ‘Plato must come back to save Plato. For left to men to decipher, Plato can only be read through the subtle philological malformation of the Neo-Platonists.’

Second, the long waves of rational intellectual thought, the millennia of intellectual work which stretched from Aristotle to Darwin (as observed earlier) had to be opposed and rejected. Modernity’s origins were antique and Lindsay’s opposition to it was as all-encompassing and extensive as it was intense. In a fundamental sense, the longing for a Renaissance centred upon the rise of a ‘new’ classical ideal of ‘man’ had turned Lindsay away from a recognition of the essential historicity of humanity qua humanity. Von Laue’s comment on Leopold Ranke’s idea of history (itself peculiarly German Protestant, idealist and Romantic) is apposite: ‘Knowing and

72 Lindsay, Dionysos, 33-4.

73 Lindsay, Dionysos, 33-4, and see 37 for a similar tone and sentiment.

74 Rationality, ‘Industrialism’ and the forces and ideas (ideologies) which promoted or produced this modernity, world of machines, machine-like actions and mechanism would be opposed in its entirety: see for example, Lindsay, Dionysos, 11 and 235.
worshipping were one and the same experience.  

The ideas of rationality and reason and their direct associations with the rise of scientific thought and practise confronted, consciously and unconsciously, the almost mystical processes of understanding the world represented by a Platonic-inspired metaphysic of the human mind and spirit. Jack Lindsay viewed Aristotle as an elemental link in the long rise and growth of scientific reason and humanist rationality. These Western traditions of humanist and scientific reason stood over against the more exclusively, lyrical, metaphysical and transcendent ideas of humanity. Within and between these traditions stood the historical religions of Judaism and its progeny, Christianity, and in close company with them came the wonderful diversity of the legacies of wisdom and lawful conduct, and Helleno-Roman traditions of thought. Lindsay’s opposition to Aristotle and humanism-as-reason is (and was) more than lyrical and rhetorical, it was fundamental. Jack Lindsay’s aesthetic doubted to the point of entire rejection the beliefs in, and arguments for, material, developmental, historical and evolutionary perspectives upon the human being-in-the-world. This was a rejection of the very materiality, the substantiality of his then contemporary world and the centuries of humanism and reason which had helped forge it.  

Progress, process, history, development, become words suddenly flaming with immense meaning, for the most part optimistic and complacent ... Even where ‘Faith’ is lost, the


76 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 234-6. See further, Isaiah Berlin, ‘The Divorce between the Sciences and the Humanities’ in *The Proper Study of Mankind* (as in n.36), 326-8. Even though Lindsay admired Einstein and Freud there is a real element of pathological opposition to Science, Newtonian science and technology present in this work. There is, not surprisingly, a combination of misunderstanding and admiration of Einstein and Freud present in Lindsay’s *Dionysos*: see 66 and 153-4.
Jack Lindsay, Dionysos and Nietzsche

Rationalist is so proud of his newly discovered Veracity that his chest pouts farther than the bishops'.

Progress, although announced and proclaimed everywhere, was a vainglorious turn-of-the-century technology- and science-driven chimera.

For Lindsay, acts of making human existence more intellectually certain and, in particular, materially meaningful must be rejected. 'Faith', whether born of religious belief or scientific discovery as reasoned belief, was blind to the essentiality of human experience. Religious faith and scientific reason were apparently antithetical acts of rationality, yet in reality they acted, whether in concert or separately, as temperers, in the senses of modifiers and moderators, of the dark essentiality of a humanity driven by fear—'the beast inside'. To Lindsay, 'Man' was primacy: the species was driven by characteristic emotion and human generated and inspired cosmogonic forces. Nietzsche was elemental, on target, and Lindsay announced that he stood shoulder-to-shoulder with him: 'In contradiction, then, of all the tendencies of his age, he proclaims: There is no change, there is no evolution, there is only love and hate, creation and destruction.'

Lindsay's 'man as the measure' is reckoned upon the sea of emotions and a recognition that this sea, with an extension of this metaphorical image, is directed by the breezes and winds of love and creation and the whirlwinds of hate and cyclonic destruction.

Where do such ideas place Jack Lindsay in a history of ideas focused

77 Lindsay, Dionysos, 152-3.

78 Lindsay, Dionysos, 235—and note the stark idea of obliteration expressed in Lindsay's and Nietzsche's (or rather Lindsay's view of Nietzsche's) use of 'History' and 'Biology' and the absolute primacy of '... the values of creative love and destructive hate' (236). Worthy of revisiting and a fresh historical examination, see the work of the Marxist scholar Georg Lukacs, The Destruction of Reason (London, 1980). Unquestionably time worn by the twentieth century and important precisely because of that process of historical time.
upon Utopias or Utopias as Dystopias? For Lindsay’s ideas in *Dionysos* were a manifesto for, and a creed founded upon, a spontaneous, elemental and instinctive species-being. However, Lindsay’s spontaneous creature as human being should not be disassociated from his keen interest in ‘the Hellene’s subtle knowledge that Man is the measure of all things ...’ Nor must ‘the Hellene’s subtle knowledge’ be examined without careful reference to Lindsay’s ‘man the moral animal’ and ‘man the social animal’.79 Here we are confronted by the clash between reason and unreason and the antiquity of the embattled ideas which compose this intellectual divide. For Lindsay, the antiquity of these primal, energy-based and spontaneous practices of humanity were not in doubt. This was not an archetypal representation of Hellenic antiquity, rather these ancient practices directly reflected their (the ancients’) essentialist views of existence. This was something more than vitalism, this was something more than the primacy of sex. In a real sense, this was a ‘cosmology’ built upon a universe of human behaviours driven and ruled by the absolute, creative presence of naturalism and energy:80

I see the Hellenic Mysteries as a worshipping of the generative principle which the simple soul did not seek to comprehend more than as something which fed him with blood and pleasure and food, and with which he had somehow to establish harmonious relations. What Plato saw in it all the Symposium is there to tell us ... all dynamic thought is religious, since it seeks to realise an actual harmony between individual desire and blind energy. All thought which is not religious, in this sense, is in the same category as timetables and grocers’ bills.

This instinctive species-being ‘... fed with blood and pleasure and food’ stands in perilous relation to Plato’s Thespian Socrates (in the sense of

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79 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 152, and see also n.46.

80 Lindsay, *Dionysos*, 240.
dramatic player and actor) and his pronouncement of Protagoras’ dictum that ‘man is the measure of all things’:

πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον εἶναι ἄνθρωπον

This dictum when rendered into its literal form, namely, ‘the human being to be the measure of all things’ succinctly and surely expressed an anthropocentrism born of powerful cultural and political (in the broadest and deepest senses of these terms) identity and confidence in the Hellenic cosmos of the poleis. Aristotle and Plato shared broad spectrum views of humanity (with all their flaws and qualifications—whether born of cultural world-views or otherwise) based upon conscious or sensible intellectual process. Their courses (or paths) were shaped by dialogue and thoughtfulness. These intellectual patterns remain in stark contrast to Lindsay’s belief in the primacy of elemental and instinctive behaviours amongst the ‘mass’ of Hellenes in antiquity. Lindsay did not draw ready borders between historical reasoning and Utopian or visionary, would-be, and longed-for, worlds. Moreover, Lindsay sought to turn upside-down the reasoned confidence in ‘the human being to be the measure of all things’ towards a world-view governed by primal and instinctual behaviours. The worlds of ‘individual desire’ and ‘blind energy’ battled with one another, alternately directed and, in turn, accounted for the simultaneous antiquity and contemporaneity of human actions as expressions of energy in the world.

Within this context, Jack Lindsay should be viewed as a Romantic revolutionary who during this period of his life was still passing through a

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Plato, *Cratylus* 385e and passim. Note further, Aristotle *Politics* 1253a29-39, for what can be viewed as a corrective or balancing statement (a model or paradigm) which humanely extends the idea of the human being as a measuring-stick or mark-stone dependent upon either a human predisposition towards just or unjust actions (justice or injustice). Put another way, this was, in terms of human conduct, a preference for either the use of heavy arms (weapons) or ideally the use of the human being’s ‘true’ heavy weapons—namely ‘understanding’ (practical intelligence or wisdom) and excellence: 1253a 33-35.
phase of high and excited experimentation with 'radical ideas' with the inchoate but striking presence of the 1917 Russian Revolution simultaneously overlaying and challenging his idealism. In Lindsay’s case, Romantic idealism, or rather, his form or concept of it, stretched back in time through an idealized association with Greco-Roman antiquity, its aesthetic forms and practices, and then continued and found renewal in the Renaissance as well as the ‘idea’ of the Renaissance. The Marxist Jack Lindsay was, as yet, unborn. For Lindsay 1936-7 were pivotal, formative years in his political life, perhaps even more significant than his formal joining of the Party in 1941, after his call-up to Signals in the British Army, and the invasion of the Soviet Union by its former partner and signatory to the Nazi-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression.82

However, Lindsay the writer and lover of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean was here to stay. Moreover, Jack Lindsay was very much the youthful writer who personified a form of naïve, romantic dissent-as-revolt against the authority and orderliness of Empire and Dominion. In a biographical sense, the life of Jack Lindsay should be characterized as having constituted a lifelong childhood play with ideas. His faith was the intellectual life lived as ‘Passion Play’ in society. Joys and dangers were inherent to his life-long play. In this sense, the idea of childhood is certainly made, but not necessarily by children. Intellectual hopes located around faith and reason resided uneasily and clashed in a world of rising and stridently fundamental belief. The phenomenal rise of twentieth century fanaticism was at hand.

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82 A wide-ranging, in-depth research study needs to be undertaken on the dynamics of Jack Lindsay’s lifelong immersion in Greco-Roman and Mediterranean antiquity, his Marxism and political life in England and Europe. As Lindsay might have put it in the nineteen-twenties: life awaits the venturer and nothing awaits the complacent. See further, Lindsay, *Life Rarely Tells*, 773-4.