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Apollonian and Dionysian Forms

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In my present paper, the main topic is a discussion of the two major fields of form in speech eurythmy – the Dionysian and the Apollonian forms. My paper also describes how rhythm appears in a eurythmy performance and what the significance of short and long syllables is.

In an iambic poem, human will and intention are central, whereas a trochaic verse places the emphasis on the impulse coming from the spiritual world, driving humanity forward on its path. Apollo and Dionysus, the Greek gods after whom these fields of form are named, are both described. This may aid the reader in understanding the forms and their characteristics on another level. The paper includes a table, demonstrating the contrast between the Apollonian and Dionysian quality. Both Apollonian and Dionysian forms are presented in the discussion, and examples are applied to show possible uses of these forms in actual artistic presentation of poetry.

Dionysian forms represent the inner characteristics of the ‘I’ – they express what makes the soul move. Apollonian, on the other hand, “talks to us” about the wisdom of the spirit, as an impulse arriving from outside of us. In Apollonian forms, the laws of nature are in the forefront, creating the foundation for outer structures and forms of nature.

In my paper, I emphasise that when creating a piece of speech eurythmy, one must connect to the quality most innate to the specific poem – relying on the presented categories but not clinging to them in an inflexible manner. Thus, the eurythmist may invite the audience to experience what genuinely is present in a poem. Most poems cannot be labelled as one or the other –when reading poetry, we mostly find both qualities in a piece – so to say, we cannot imagine Apollo without the existence of Dionysus. As Rudolf Steiner emphasised, eurythmy must stay in balance between the two poles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.