PREFACES TO THE DIAPHORA

Rhetorics, Allegory, and the Interpretation of Postmodernity

by

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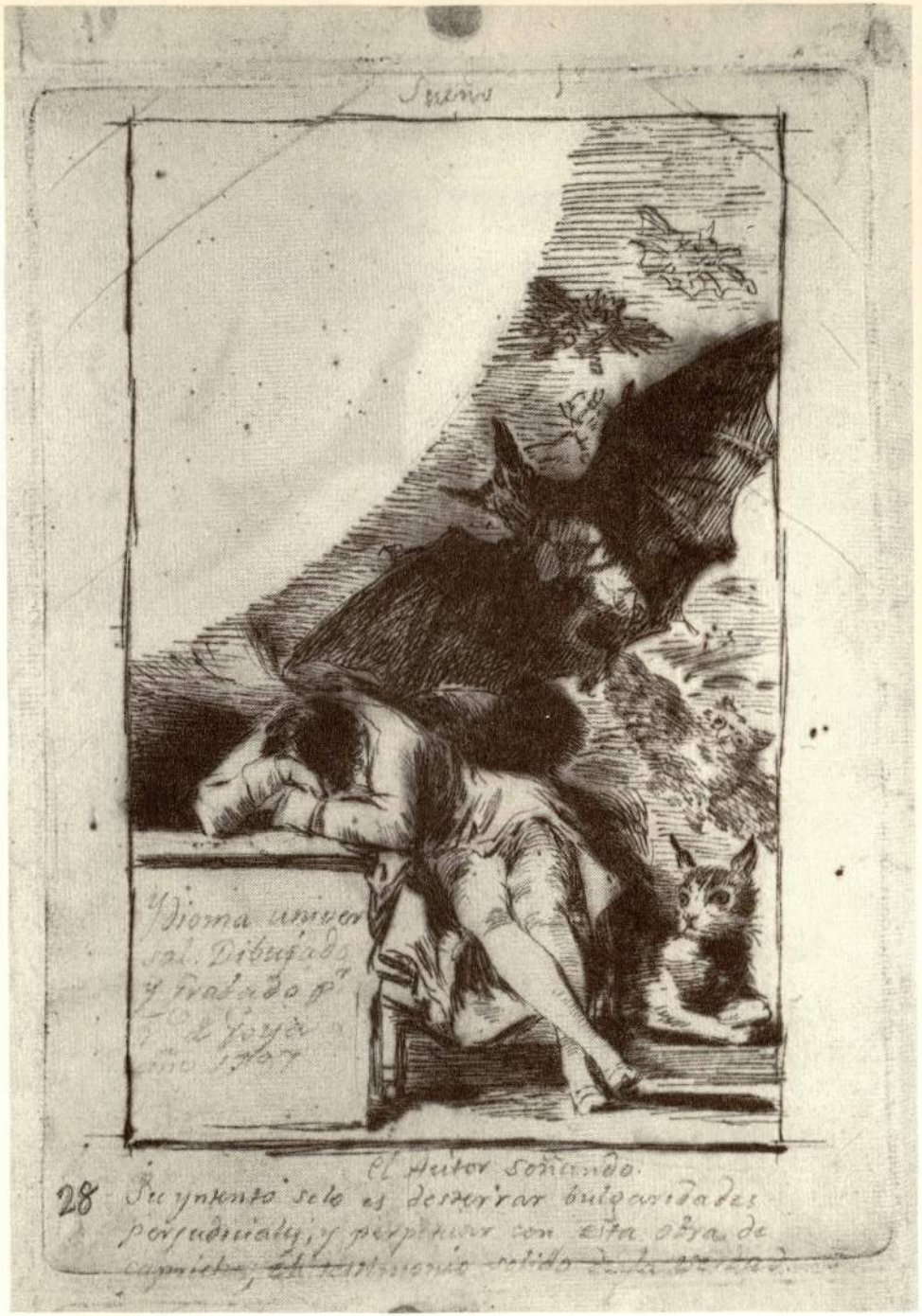

Goya, *Idioma Universal*

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BEFORE ZARATHUSTRA:

Nietzsche through the Rhetoric of the Aphorism

> What returns, what finally comes home to me, is my own self and what of myself has long been in strange lands and scattered among all things and accidents.
>
> *F. Nietzsche*

1. Thesis

Let me begin these remarks in a very un-Nietzschean fashion by stating my guiding thesis, what period and materials I will refer to and what provisional conclusion I am aiming at. The focus is Nietzsche's discovery, use, and temporary abandonment of aphorism in the period that goes from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The thesis is that the aphorism is witness to a fundamental metaphysical alienation between humans and the nature/culture discourse complex such that, insofar as it is a linguistic construct, and from the point of view of (its) rhetoric, the aphorism must and will evolve until, on the threshold of silence, it will efface itself, setting the stage for the emergence of a more primordial form of discourse, namely, allegory (with *Zarathustra*). A further elaboration, presently in progress, will deal with the reasons why Nietzsche reverts to writing aphorisms *after* the Zarathustra book, together with "essays" and even a never completed "organic" or "systematic" opus on Nihilism.[1] My overall aim is moreover to assess Nietzsche's position in the Modern/Postmodern debate, clear the path for an interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,[2] and finally establish his potential contribution to a theory of interpretation understood as *diaphoristics* (see chap. 5).

2. Evidence for the Topic

Let us now be Nietzscheans and begin near the end, so that we may familiarize ourselves with certain key words/concepts we

will use, such as knowledge, language, experience, and limits. In a fragment published posthumously and dated Autumn 1880, Nietzsche writes that our knowledge of and feeling for any thing is like a—one—point in the system, like an eye whose force and visual field grow slowly yet embracing ever larger regions (*FP* 6:368). Moreover, *nothing* changes in the real world, while this constant activity of the eye bestows upon all things unwavering power to grow and overflow. It is we who see within the world our laws and, vice versa, we cannot but understand these laws as the consequence of the action of the world upon us. The starting point is the mirror illusion: "we are living images reflected by the mirror" (ibid.).

Let us stop for a moment. We get a glimpse of some of the arguments of the mature Nietzsche, like the preeminence of the eye, ineluctable perspectivism in reading the world about us, the hardness of surfaces that will have an effect despite their being atomistically distributed; all penned down in assertive tones almost as categorical statements, as if the notetaking were feverishly searching for the axiology with which to pursue ulterior ontological truths. The paragraph immediately following is somewhat long, so I will paraphrase for the sake of brevity. But what is knowledge, then, Nietzsche asks. Its underlying assumption is an erroneous limitation, as if there existed a unit measure for sensation. Wherever one finds a mirror and organs for feeling, there is a sphere. If, by means of thought, we eliminate this limitation, we also do away with knowledge: to conceive of absolute relations is absurd. Therefore it is error, semblance, which is the basis of knowledge.

Now let us recall that Nietzsche's epistemology very often follows an Aristotelean scheme in that Knowledge by and large is what can be gathered through imitation, by means of a mimetic process, as we can read in an aphorism from that same period. Knowledge as constitutive of what is true displays a *verisimilitude* to nature. For Nietzsche, "verisimilitude derives from the comparison of several semblances and therefore from different stages in semblance or appearance. In the same way, language is presupposed and accepted basis of truth" (*D* I) where we can grasp the *analogical thinking* which couched his view of language. This is further elaborated: "Man and animal *first* construct a new world of errors, and *then* sharpen these errors further so that

there's always the possibility of discovering endless contradictions. Thus either the absolute quantity of errors diminishes or else error is exploded, exasperated" (ibid.). As it does not seem likely that the former obtain, it is the latter that makes up the bulk of our history, so much so that, as he states in the very first aphorism of *Daybreak*:

> *Supplemental rationality*. All things that live long are gradually so saturated with reason that their origin in unreason thereby becomes improbable. Does not almost every precise history of an origination impress our feelings as paradoxical and wantonly offensive? Does the good historian not, at bottom, constantly *contradict*?

Here we edge closer to our topics of inquiry. Having forgotten its origin in *unreason* (*D* I:14) the discourse of reason exhibits a paradoxical nature such that what the historian (the critic, the interpreter) does is basically contradict, speak *against* a given, preestablished order of notions and attempt to set a new course of intelligibility.[3] Nietzsche states in no uncertain terms that what is given to us to know is really what we ourselves make up and build, that "truth" can be located in things *invented by man*, for example, "number" (*FP* 6:369). Man can only know what he himself invents, as Vico stated in *The New Science*: "history cannot be more certain than when he who creates the things also narrates them" (349).[4] Likewise, for Nietzsche, "men put something inside [of things, i.e., number, and so on] and then rediscover it: this is the way of human truth." However, taking off immediately on another frequency, namely, the persistent critique of scientific/dialectic thinking, he adds: "the great majority of truths are made up solely of *negative* truths: 'this and that is, the other *is not*' (though for the most part expressed in a positive fashion). This is the spring of *all progress* in knowledge." And here we get another crucial statement representative of the Nietzsche of the middle period: "For us the world is therefore the sum of the relations with respect to a limited sphere of fundamental, erroneous hypotheses" (*FP* 6:369). In other words, given that in existence there are countless loci where a determination can be made, each point retains or is characterized by a sphere or field to which there corresponds an "*amplitude*" and an "*intensity*"

with which these relations are perceived, which is to say "a field of limitation and error" (ibid.). In much the same fashion, Nietzsche goes on to say, "each force has its field, it acts with such a given amplitude and intensity and only with respect to this or that, and not anything else: it acts within a specific limiting sphere." It follows that:

> It is absurd to think of a true knowledge concerning these limitations and fields because then one would have to think of a feeling without relations of "amplitude," "intensity" and "with this and that." Likewise, it is absurd to think of a force *without* limit and at the same time *with* all limitations which would create relations: it would be a force without determinate force. Therefore, "knowledge" is the limitation of force and the continuous placing in relation of this force with respect to another force. *Not* the subject with respect to the object, but something different. The presupposition is an optical illusion of rings which surround us *which do not exist at all*. Knowledge is essentially *semblance*. (*FP* 6:369)

Expressed in a language and in a style with no pretense at rhetorical bravado, these are some of the key terms which will allow for a reading concerning the discovery, exploitation, and refusal of a particular relationship to language. This relationship depends upon the possibility of obtaining knowledge and, as a further need and consequence, the capacity to communicate it to a community, or at the very least to an *other*.

3. Aphorism and Limit

Let us go back to the beginning. As soon as we pick up *The Birth of Tragedy* we notice that it is a composite essay which has already taken leave, structurally and stylistically, from the standard dissertation, the academic treatise, the textbook, and the philological exegetic edition. In the second part—chapters 10–25—it changes tone and objective and becomes a combination of apology and critique, an invective and a programme. We move on, within a year, to more "personalized" polemical forms of expression, with an energy that barely conceals more pressing concerns (Masini) such as *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, the first two *Untimely Meditations* and also what amounts

to a long-wrought *pensée*, namely "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," all of which are written before 1875. Before we even turn to closer stylistic analysis, we can momentarily observe that Nietzsche's relationship with language and genre possibilities becomes more and more concentric, centripetal, a whirlpooling of the discourses that speak progressively more of the (his) self, as well as the historical, institutional, and aesthetic dimension of his thought and research. By the time he is through with the fourth of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche has developed a style that identifies him by antonomasia, namely, the aphoristic writing of *Human, All Too Human* (1876). We are going to call this the beginning of the *second phase* in Nietzsche's thought on the basis of what will be argued in this volume. Ignoring for the most part Nietzsche's actual biography—in keeping with his own assertion, in *Ecce Homo*, that some of his works, in particular *Zarathustra*, were written "in spite of...unfavorable circumstances" (*EH*:297)—we can say that his understanding of life, of his life, and his relationship to family, community, beliefs, and culture in general took place by means of a rhetoric of negation and nondirect communication, an isolationist posture attained after 1875 and refuted in 1883 with the Zarathustra book, which discloses a *third period*, so to speak. As a first critical approximation, we must bear in mind that *aphorism* means, basically, a moral sententia for all and all time, a timeless utterance not too far from the proverb and not too shy either of generic scientific truth statements.[5]

The aphorism is a definition, a de-limiting and thus a circumscribing move, almost a closure of—and on—the thing, the being.[6] Another possible meaning in the original Greek, one which could not have been unknown to Nietzsche, is derived from the verbal form *to aphorize*, which, at least in English, lost out to competing forms and disappeared from the scene. To aphorize means to define in the middle voice, to lay down determinate propositions, ergo to set bounds (from Gr. *horos*, boundary), limits, closing something up. Before we belabor this etymological figura, let us ponder two more things. First, even today in Modern Greek the aphorism is strongly associated with religious language and experience, one of its primary meanings being, in fact, "excommunicated." It will be seen that for a young Nietzsche, who is

concerned not with the ontological but with the anthropological, not the theoretical-philosophical but the pedagogical-cultural (Masini 1978:80), to be potentially ex-communicated is not only the likely prologue to an ineluctable destiny, but at times a proud choice, characterized, over the years and in specific contexts, as the predicament of a hermit, a wanderer, a prophet alone in the desert, a nomad, albeit *in situ* (Deleuze 1985:149), finally a member of the enlightened few souls of the species we find in *Zarathustra*. No doubt here the aloneness is compounded with the aloofness of the *sententiae* which may reveal Zarathustra's declaiming aphoristics to be no more than the apostrophizing of pretentious wisdom, a reading which suited, for instance, the Victorian England of G. B. Shaw, where yet another usage of aphorism referred to the boisterous harangues of petty parliamentary politicking.[7]

It is certainly true that Nietzsche himself often gives misleading clues, as we find for instance in aphorism 35 of *Human, All Too Human*, where he says that "maxims about human nature can help in overcoming life's hard moments." His own maxims do precisely the opposite, bent as they seem on exploding these very hard moments and preventing the fatalistic afflatus of universal wisdom from becoming bourgeois panacea. By confronting the very core of his topoi, in zooming in on the barest linguistic formulation of an accepted or established truth, and in carving it out from under centuries of pseudolegitimizing encrustations, Nietzsche ultimately *states*, utters the case, what at a given point in time either *is* or *is not*. In defining the object of his inquiry, in setting it up for all to see, he begins to move away from both the Hegelian matrix of dialectical resolution as well as from the Kantian heritage of critical discernment. He is on his way towards a "monumental" or "genealogical" conception of understanding, but he is not there yet. At this point he seems preoccupied rather with discarding, with condemning, with expropriating, with screaming: a voice declaiming in the desert.

From this perspective, the aphorismatic speaker does not need an interlocutor, for *the aphorism excludes the possibility of dialogue*. From the rhetorical point of view, the aphorism appears to be the exact antithesis of dialogue, of communicative and persuasive exchange. Nietzsche was not unaware of this.

As it turns out, and in reference to the period of *Human, All Too Human*, we have to wait for 1879 for the almost accidental appearance of a "dialogue," that is, the preface and closing pages of "The Wanderer and His Shadow." Then, we have to wait for Nietzsche to write, better, to live through, two more works, *Daybreak* and *The Gay Science*, before he turns to the Zarathustra book.[8]

But Nietzsche does not write dialogues, and only once will he venture into allegory. The ironical and tragic paradox is that Nietzsche's relationship to language lives through the perceived split or, otherwise said, the rattling duality of language by persisting, for the greater part of his life and works, in employing *a formal structure which is fundamentally alienating, differentiating, a structure of discourse which does not invite interpretation and yet requires it*. If, as one of the most economical ways of expressing oneself, the aphorism mimics the experience of being here and now as an instance of givenness in chaos, how does it come about? What are the implications of its rhetoric vis-à-vis the other forms Nietzsche employed as well as the ones he did not? And is all this in any way related to the various specific topics—the linguistic subjects—he filled his notebooks and books with? For a thinker who was fervently engaged in moral, pedagogical, and social issues, could it have escaped him that, in and by themselves, aphorisms can be wrought to express a thought *and*, simultaneously, its opposite, the negation of that same thought? And could it have escaped him that as both oracle and sententia, or as fragment, as *pensée*, the aphorism, in virtue of the eristic nature of language (Valesio 1980:21–22), is basically concerned with staking out *its own* territory, a delimiting which barely conceals a presencing act and which is exclusive of any other being or alternative utterances? On another level, is the aphorism the linguistic formulation that best allows nihilism to emerge or is it in the nature of nihilism to require that other forms of expression be abandoned in favor of aphoristic writing? Is the aphoristic cipher the appropriate form of mirror writing? Is the fact that knowledge is not just *merely* but *primarily* semblance the reason why with the aphorism Nietzsche does not want to communicate with others? And finally, a challenging hermeneutic problem in Nietzschean scripture, what kind of motivation is

behind his half-annoyed, half-arrogant statement in *Twilight of the Idols*: "Plato is boring"? (*TI* "What I Owe to the Ancients," 2).

4. Methodological Considerations

At this point, in order to even begin answering some of these questions, our inquiry must proceed along two presumably antithetical tracks at the same time. On the one hand, by keeping an eye on the external gaming of the signifier, the actual rhetorical strategy of expression *stricto sensu*, what we alluded to before as a series of genre explorations within which the aphorism seems to constitute the *dominant* mode. On the other, by glossing over Nietzsche's textual statements *about* language, communication, the relation between poetry and philosophy—the Ancient Diaphora!—and how they constitute a "field" or "terrain" of ideas to be interpreted critically. I am aware that this second pathway suggests "unzeitgemäße" critical practices, but I should like to take a moment to remind the reader that Husserl himself—who, according to many critics, has "always already" been *aufgehoben* or *relevé* or at any rate exacerbated till he foundered somewhere between Paris and New Haven—was well aware of the fact that when we employ this type of methodology we are simply, better, primarily, employing *figuras*, we are "making believe" or "presupposing for the sake of argument." In *Ideas* we read that

> there are reasons why, in phenomenology as in all eidetic sciences, representations, or, to speak more accurately, *free fancies*, assume a *privileged position over against perceptions*, and that *even in the phenomenology of perception itself, excepting of course that of the sensory data*. (Husserl 1972:182)

Further down in this important paragraph, Husserl writes:

> Hence, if anyone loves a paradox, he can really say, and say with strict truth if he will allow for the ambiguity, that the *element* which *makes up the life of phenomenology as of all eidetic science* is *"fiction"*. . .

Thus, I consider it consistent with both metaphysical-transcendental phenomenology and post-Heideggerian, non-foundational

thinking to proceed by taking into account *both* the inside, abstract, and unifying threads of Nietzsche's text and the outside, concrete, and disseminating textuality of his rhetoric. I shall belabor this further by saying, provisionally of course, that a dialogic experience, a hermeneutic diaphoristics as is here being attempted, cannot but respect *both* what Nietzsche has actually, textually, said, and what he probably could have been saying, which is somehow imbedded in the text as rhetorical thrust and which several generations of interpreters have attempted to bring out, to ex-pose, to efface.

5. *The Birth of Tragedy*

To return, then, for the third time, to the beginning. The main thesis of *The Birth of Tragedy* is well known. It deals with Nietzsche's discovery of two impulses in pre-Socratic times which were assumed to be the true or original essence of tragedy. That perfect balance between the Dionysian and the Apollonian moments embodied in the chorus allowed Nietzsche to interpret what were otherwise seen as two mutually exclusive entities (with their relative pulsions), the players on the stage and the public as perfectly bonded and authentic within this third locus. Not surprisingly, we find that art is the middle world (*BT* 3), that in the domain of lyric-become-tragedy, willing *and* pure contemplation, the aesthetic and the extra-aesthetic are mingled, a fusion that is partly inscribed within, partly exorbitant from the High Romantic alternation of irreducible contrasts as present, for instance, in most lyrical as well as "Hellenic" poets like Foscolo, Leopardi, Hölderlin, Shelley, and others (but not, just to be clear on this, in Manzoni, Blake, Wordsworth, and Hugo). The historical and linguistic space that existed between the Dionysian lyric of Archilocus and the Apollonian epic of Homer is here represented as being already irretrievably cut off from reality.

Critics have suggested that the thesis concerning the chorus is more a hermeneutic strategy of appropriation than an "objective" discovery. In the twentieth century, and specifically *after* Nietzsche, we do not consider it so scandalous that the interpreter and his/her method are indissolubly correlated in readings of this type, but in 1871–72 it probably represented a disturbing if not altogether revolutionary tug at the philology and the philosophy

of "origins." There is present in the *Birth of Tragedy* a preoccupation with rhetorical modes of expressions. Among these are the beliefs that the lyric is the highest and the most originary, founding language of artistic representation, which would make of Nietzsche a "High Romantic" like Leopardi or Heine, and that man is an aesthetic phenomenon (*BT* 5, 24), which would make him anti-Platonic by definition.

By placing himself in the chorus, by being a "natural" satyr enthralled in song and dance, the word disappears, with the result that some prelinguistic elements like Nature, Sensuality, and Deity are isolated as the simultaneous expressions of power and of a more "truthful" reality (*BT* 8). Contrary to what Cacciari holds on this point (Cacciari 1976:477), Memory seems to disappear, since the Dionysian rupture brings with it a *lethargic* element into which everything swirls (*BT* 7), a historical blackout of Metaphysical Memory which perhaps allows for the unverbalized, the as-yet-to-be-verbalized of the primitive unconscious to gain access to language. This is coherent with Nietzsche's belief, in this book, that poetry is the pure unvarnished expression of truth, uncaring of "mendacious finery of that alleged reality of the man of culture." There is only hard reality, existence, and no essence or thing-in-itself, an early formulation of a principle which will be dealt with at length and in depth in subsequent works. The satyr chorus, perhaps not too distant from Schlegel's "ideal spectator," is a symbol of co-existence of the appearance-essence dyad. The satyr chorus is an archetypal, rhetorical construct which allows Nietzsche to re-construct what is really a *Proto-Tragedy* (*BT* 8), a mirror image in which the Dionysian absence can perceive its desired self. The Dionysian chorus oversees, together with an obedient public (*theōros*, cf. Gadamer 1975:111), the transformations or, more appropriately, the metamorphoses of Dionysus from proto-phenomenon to a masked, chameleonlike figure: Apollo.

Right at this juncture, we get the first important definition of metaphor: "For a genuine poet, a metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept" (*BT* 8). This sets the stage for two developments. On the one hand, an ambivalent if at times mercurial relationship with poets and poetry, because, as he will say in this and in other

works, poets are liars and that, even he himself, insofar as he considers himself a poet, like Zarathustra or Dionysus, could be lying, could be "wrong" about what he is saying. On the other, the possibility seems to subsist that metaphor can be treated as if not rhetorically predetermined, in other words as if *not* resulting from some prior tropological necessity, but as *material image* or icon to be deployed at will. An apparent oxymoron, in terms of latter-day structural linguistics, a *material image* would have to be a sign, textual cipher, or icon whose epistemological value is legitimated by the empirical sciences and whose ontological ground is totally lacking and altogether undesired. A material image is the concrete signifier, that possibility for signification potentially available to everyone in the community, to Nietzsche's real friends and masters and heroes as well as ours. What is worthy of reflection is that for Nietzsche the genuine poet may entertain such a privileged relationship with the signifier *while at the same time* exclude the concept, the rational element of the articulation: "a vicarious image that he actually beholds *in place of* a concept." The dualistic opposition he has worked with all along, Dionysus-Apollo, lyric-epic, reality-discourse, emerges once again as a temporal difference, the image being vicarious, contextual and fleeting, the concept being what can be abstracted from the givenness of the event and deployed manipulatively, as when with Euripides and Socrates reason overtakes art and extra-aesthetic teleology, and "planning" enters fiction to re-present the (now absent) Dionysian experience. This rift will reappear more powerfully in the later works. For the moment, Nietzsche believes that the dithyramb of the chorus changed through generations but, having no intrinsic civil past or social status, it had to beget one, and so it turned into drama, which means dream apparition of an epic nature. The vicarious contact with the gods has thus become a trope, a figura, which is "a timeless servant of this god who lives outside the spheres of society." As the shattering of the individual, unitary fusion with primal being is now irreversible, Dionysian lyric is objectified, let us say, without doing injustice to the text, "stylized" into Apollonian appearances or masks. The clarity of epic ushers a new age, the light of reason will be delivered through the now mediated distance, and the aesthetic experience will exhibit a tension between thing seen and thing as

seen. If Dionysus was the original mask "who appears in a variety of forms," it is Apollo who now comes onto the stage—into the text—as *the linguistic possibility of the mask* (cf. Vattimo 1979).

The tenability of this position requires a revaluation of dance and of rhythm, and Nietzsche is very certain of his conceptual/hermeneutic conquest: the myth of Oedipus, he says, means that Dionysian wisdom is an unnatural abomination, in fact, "wisdom is a crime against nature" (*BT* 9). Yet in the same breath he also observes that the very first philosophical problem produces a painful and unresolvable contradiction between Man and God. Though the Dionysian impulse is ever present to make sure that what Apollo ordains does not turn into cold, rigid "Egyptian form," it is nevertheless Apollo who emerges as the sole legislator of language and knowledge, of aesthetics as well as philosophy. As he explains in chapter 10, Dionysus (and his rhyzomatic offshoots: Prometheus, Oedipus, and so on) "is the god who talks and acts so as to resemble an *erring*, striving, suffering individual. . . [that he] *appears* with such epic precision and clarity is the work of the dream interpreter Apollo." Dionysian truth in short would be archaic, mythic, and as art it constitutes the originary oneness. With Euripides, however, we are already working with copies, according to Nietzsche, we are witnesses to a dying myth.

Nietzsche does not seem too happy with his own discoveries. The meaning of Euripides—whom he addresses in the second person at one point!—and of the rise of the new Attic Comedy is that an element of distance, and with it the possibility of judgment, enters the realm of art: the spectator in fact now sees and hears his double, he becomes aware of the fiction, so that the oscillating duality which used to be present within the tragedy and made visible or communicable through the chorus is now transferred to the outsider, the passive spectator who feels *and* knows he is feeling, creating the context for an obscure, ominous *other*. According to Nietzsche, Euripides

> observed an incommensurable in every feature and in every line, a certain deceptive distinctness and at the same time an enigmatic depth, indeed an infinitude, in the background. Even the clearest figure always had a comet's tail attached to it which seemed to suggest the uncertain, that which could never be illuminated. (*BT* 9)

A similar twilight shrouded the structure of the drama, especially with reference to the possible significance of the now altered chorus. In the alleged clarity of the epic, however, there seems to loom a disturbing otherness, an "overreaching darkness which blankets the light with the sfumato contours that make of the difference between entities a special interregnum, a conceptual limbo." It will be argued further down that this is the region from which allegory arises as the primary expression of culture, as the most naturally cohesive function of language in a social context, the *other-speaking* which permitted, in Vico's sense of the notion, the rise of nations. For the time being, however, we can see that Nietzsche was indeed aware of this slippery, undefinable zone, but also that he preferred—whether consciously or unconsciously is not at issue here—to understate, if not to underestimate, its importance until he could work out more pressing problems, like the status of philosophical discourse in the tragic age and the meaning of history.

Before turning to the subsequent works, let us note in passing that Apollo himself, as the condition for harmony in aesthetic-meaningful expression, is wont to chart definite boundaries and circumscribable experiences. Let me recall that in Ancient Greek the words for law and property are related to the word for knowledge—as *nomos* (Deleuze 1968)—and that, though Nietzsche obviously perceived that knowledge implied a sort of alienation, a cutting oneself off from the true aesthetic experience, I do not believe he had clearly seen the implications of this connection because he was overly concerned with the question of Socratic "naturalism" and therefore was engaged on the terrain of opposition, of unreconcilable, non-dialectical couples. For the anthropological thinker this means that an either/or perspective is opened up which challenges the very possibility of the harmonic, Apollonian moment to come into being. With Socrates the new aesthetic principle requires that the beautiful be intelligible such that it represents the good, a novel position which in effect closes the logical circle by stating what will become the leading idea in Plato, namely, that knowledge is virtue, that pathos is more important than action, that indeed there is *something else before* actual existence on whose principles real life and action can be measured, judged, programmed. This something else is the realm

of essences, Immutables, the eternal laws of reason, the as yet indistinct relation between knowing and being, epistemology and ontology, method and theory or, closer yet to our line of inquiry, method and rhetoric. This *diaphora*, or *differentia*, or in more traditional terms this quarrel between poetry and philosophy is best visualized as the contrast between Orpheus and Socrates, two archetypes whose adventures in poetry and philosophy lead to death the moment they are confronted with the ultimate desire, or impossibility: eternal life for the poet, eternal knowledge for the philosopher.

6. Platonic Anxieties

In chapter 14 of *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche observes that, like tragedy,

> [Platonic Dialogue] is a mixture of all extant styles and forms, [it] hovers midway between narrative, lyric and drama, between prose and poetry, and so has also broken the strict old law of the unity of linguistic forms, . . .

a rupture responsible for the creation of a "raving Socrates." We should ask ourselves whether Nietzsche may not be unconsciously falling into the same trap he will later say must be avoided at all costs, namely the belief in Unity, in Being, in Totality, because what else is the critique of Platonic dialogue in terms of their being an in-between, a mixture, a non-unitary discourse, but a critical insight legitimated by a subterranean a priori, the rather Modern, Kantian, Romantic view of artistic unity and ultimately "clear and distinct ideas?" The only other possible alternative to this position is that, perhaps, he is seeking an immanent time-space modeled upon the pre-Socratics. As the next text we will examine bears out the latter hypothesis, it should not surprise if Nietzsche has often been interpreted according to the former one.[9] For the moment, in part betraying his critical-metaphysical convictions, as will become evident, Nietzsche goes on to say that Platonic dialogue is a

> barge on which the shipwrecked ancient poetry saved herself with all her children: crowded into narrow space and timidly submitting to the simple pilot, Socrates, they now sailed into

> a new world which never tired of looking at the fantastic spectacle of this *procession*.

Blitzing right through history, Nietzsche asserts that Plato gave posterity a new art form, the *novel*, an infinitely enhanced Aesopian fable in which poetry holds the same rank in relation to dialectical philosophy as philosophy held for many centuries in relation to theology: namely, the status of *ancilla* (*BT* 14). Nietzsche appears to think of dialogue as a linguistic chassis, a skeleton, a conceptual model upon which to stick on words in order to justify, to legitimate, or at any rate to serve as a messenger for, as *ars explicandi*, something higher, something with which he will ultimately disagree but which nevertheless claims to be above its own linguistic, rhetorical necessity. It is an ironic twist that Platonic dialogue is here given its most complex and stimulating characterization and yet is presented in almost disapproving terms, with a quasi-Aristotelean posture.[10] At this point, instead, Nietzsche seems rather to believe that philosophic thought outgrows art and compels it to cling close to the trunk of dialectic. The Apollonian tendency has withdrawn within the cocoon of logical schematism. As dialectic is ultimately an optimistic mode of knowledge gathering, the virtuous man must strive to be a dialectician. This coincides with the decline of the chorus, the flight of music from tragedy, and the birth of syllogistic reasoning.

7. The Tragedy of Thought

A look at a book from the same period, but which Nietzsche did not intend for publication, namely *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*—it came out posthumously in 1903 (Heidegger 1984:13)—perhaps can help in reconstructing the conceptual coordinates which paved the way for the aphorism. A manual and summa, this brief and brilliant synthesis of pre-Socratic philosophy constitutes Nietzsche's almost definitive view on the key philosophers of the Tragic Age, as later references will attest.[11] In it, I would like to point out those references which, much more than justifying the aesthetic of *The Birth of Tragedy*, foreshadow certain closed avenues of interpretation, especially as regards the rhetoric of the two genres which stand at the opposite end of wherever one will find the aphorism, namely dialogue and allegory.

It can be said that Nietzsche's view of Platonic dialogue as a "barge" and his persistent exclusion of myth from philosophy and history rest upon his predilection, among pre-Socratic philosophers, for Heraclitus and Anaxagoras. Nietzsche begins his inquiry by observing that to seek the "beginnings" of philosophy is an "idle" pursuit, for "everywhere in all beginnings we find only the crude, the unformed, the empty and the ugly" (*PTAG* 1), and that what matters in all things is the "higher" levels. In part contradicting the critics who see this period as basically informed by an anthropological interest (Masini), Nietzsche finds that what the Greeks invented was "*the archetypes of philosophic thought*" (my emphasis), that their thinking and their character, related by the strictest of "necessity," had no inclination towards "conventionality": "all of them, in magnificent solitude, were the only ones of their time whose lives were devoted to insight alone" (*PTAG* 1). Consciously describing his study as the resolve "to tell the story" of this conversation of lofty spirits among the "dwarfs that creep beneath them" "through the desolate intervals of time," our author will consider the pre-Socratics as singular and homogeneous in style and autonomy of will—despite great differentiation among them—whereas Plato and all philosophers since are characterized as mixed types:

> from Plato onward there is something essentially amiss with philosophers when one compares them to that republic of creative minds from Thales to Socrates. . . Plato himself is the first mixed type on a grand scale. . . Socratic, Pythagorean and Heraclitic elements are all combined in his doctrine of ideas. . . the mixed types were founders of sects, and. . . sectarianism with its institutions and counter institutions was opposed to Hellenic culture and its previous unity of style. Such philosophers too sought salvation in their own way, but only for the individual or for a small inside group of friends and disciples. The activity of the older philosophers, on the other hand (though they were quite unconscious of it) tended toward the healing and the purification of the whole. . . beginning with Plato, philosophers became exiles, conspiring against their fatherland. (*PTAG* 2)

The consequences of this historical situation are manifold and suggest all types of interpretations, not least being the fact that

once again what Nietzsche imputes to the so-called sectarian philosophers may also apply to his clearly aristocratic view. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that from Plato onward philosophers are considered to be in "exile." It stands to reason to suppose that with his distinction between a "high" and a "low" culture this exile refers to the possible "outside" of an as yet untheorized "unified whole," an existing amidst the deceiving "high general level of liberal education," which of course entails fragmentation, strife, and the constant betraying of the very principles one is purported to uphold. But this will come later on. What are, in effect, some of the "high points" in pre-Socratic philosophy?

With Thales we discover that what brings philosophic thinking to its desired end is not calculation, but an "alien, illogical power—the power of creative imagination. Lifted by it, it leaps from possibility to possibility, using each one as a temporary resting place" (*PTAG* 3). But this insight, if it can lend support to the later conception of thinking as erring, as a non-public, non-sociable linguistic expression—the rhetoric of the aphorism, in short—can also be understood by Nietzsche as a defense against the mythical intrusions into thinking: "The thought of Thales—even after the realization that it is unprovable—has its value precisely in the fact that it was meant non-mythically and non-allegorically." Here we could open a parenthesis on what exactly Nietzsche understood by "mythical" and "allegorical," placing as he does the two notions on the same level quite uncritically. The suspicion arises that, at least at this juncture in his intellectual adventure, he is very much the product of his age; that is, myth is understood as what stands in the way of reason and history as a negative, if not negating, force, so to speak, and the allegorical is conceived in the way of a Hugo or a Wagner, that is to say, basically another "barge" or scaffolding upon which to load a discourse. The passage just quoted continues thus:

> The Greeks, among whom Thales stood out so suddenly, were the very opposite of realists, in that they believed only in the reality of men and gods, looking upon all of nature as but a disguise, a masquerade, or a metamorphosis of these god-men. Man for them was the truth and the core of all things: everything else was but semblance and the play of illusion. (*PTAG* 3)

However, the very next line does away with what might seem like a careless anthropomorphism, insofar as for Thales, "not man, but water is the reality of all things." Above and beyond what Thales actually believed, what emerges as a constant of Nietzschean thought is this emphasis on semblance, on the mask behind which nothing is to be found (Vattimo 1979). Granted that in this he is very much an anti-transcendental thinker, nevertheless there just might be something which is transcendent with respect to the mask or its semblance. Nietzsche insists that concepts, the product of Platonic and post-Platonic thinking, were alien to these early philosophers, who saw abstraction and related it immediately to a person, and not the other way around. But this does not mean that behind the mask there must be either nothing or the concept. Once again it appears to me that Nietzsche comes extremely close to a radical understanding of what allegory may constitute in this either/or situation, though he will have to wait ten years to set it in motion. Right here, he is adamant in his condemnation of what is not whole, as when he states, with obvious reservations, that

> the highly conspicuous Orphics perhaps had the capacity of comprehending and thinking abstractions without concrete aids to an even greater degree than Thales did. *But they succeeded in expressing it only in allegorical form*. Pherecydes of Syros, too, who is chronologically and in several empirical concepts close to Thales, hovers with his utterances in the middle region in which *mythology and allegory are wedded*. He dares, for example, to compare the earth with a winged oak which hangs high in the air with wide-spread pinions and which Zeus, after his conquest of Chronos, covers with the magnificent robe of honor on which he himself embroidered all the lands and waters and rivers of earth. Compared with such obscure *allegorical philosophizing*, barely translatable into the realm of visibility, Thales is a creative master who began to see into the depth of nature without the help of fantastic fable. (*PTAG* 3) (my emphasis)

Nietzsche appears to be alternatively very close to Vico, as when he observes that all beginnings recede in crude and barbarous times, and very far from him, as in this passage where he clearly devalues the role of fable and the "untranslatability" of allegory.

And like Vico before and Heidegger after him, Nietzsche occasionally resorts to etymology for philosophical understanding. In this same chapter we read the first of two important figural reconstructions, one concerning the word/concept *sage*, the other appearing in chapter 11, the word *being*. Says Nietzsche,

> The Greek word designating "sage" is etymologically related to *sapio*, I taste, *sapiens*, he who tastes, *sisyphos*, the man of keenest taste. A sharp savoring and selecting, a meaningful discriminating, in other words, makes out the peculiar art of the philosopher, in the eyes of the people. (*PTAG* 3)

The philosopher about whom Nietzsche is talking is "not a man of intellect," in the sense in which with this faculty he would be a calculative, perhaps even a pragmatic individual who does things in order to attain a desired end. Rather, the philosopher he is describing will turn out to be an artist of sorts, as can be surmised from the following passage:

> Philosophy is distinguished from science by its selectivity and its discrimination of the unusual, the astonishing, the difficult and the divine, just as it is distinguished from intellectual cleverness by its emphasis on the useless. (*PTAG* 3)

If we pause for a moment, two thoughts come to mind. The first concerns the critique of science by positing the capacity to choose and select discriminately, that is, with an awareness of other—let us say contingent, extra-philosophical—values and determinations, a position which bears the seed of a future critique of the Platonic Socrates striving to distill the undifferentiated, atemporal, eternal True. On this score, also, a scaling down of the human intellect to an instrumental, practical, potentially conniving capacity, quite unrelated to wisdom. If we think for a moment that in this same book Nietzsche spells out very clearly that aesthetics is the first, the grounding discipline of human endeavors, then he is also making a case for a philosophy which is not just *like* art, but that *is*, or that it *be*, art.

The second thought is an elaboration of the first in that Nietzsche insists on conferring a special status to *personality*, to one's single experience *in actu*, which conflates the capacity for name-giving, for seeking what is great and worthy without being

blinded by suprahistorical concepts, in short, for instancing the world and the immanentist vision of the cosmos. Reference to the etymology of being, *esse*, in this context, bears out his conviction that there is nothing greater than the sentient individual, for being is "mere metaphor," and he adds, it means "to breathe." The person, then, the existing one can be, at the same time, both sides of the equation, so to speak, philosopher and poet: it is ultimately a question of (language) function: "what verse is for the poet, dialectical thinking is for the philosopher," says Nietzsche, where the analogy rests on the most time-honored correspondence theory of truth. Of course, dialectical thinking here is not dialectics as we have come to know it in recent historical memory. Dialectics in fact was originally the rhetorical dimension of the logos, the earliest dialogue which permitted an exchange between the language of the gods and the language of men (cf. Colli 1978; Sichirollo 1983), and I would argue that Nietzsche understood it in this sense when he compares it with the verse of the poet. It is not the dialectics of the deductive, syllogistic reasoning which comes *after* Socrates. Nietzsche's description of the "ideal" philosopher is worthy of extensive quotation to illustrate how very much like a lyric, Apollonian poet he represents it:

> The philosopher seeks to hear within himself the echoes of the world symphony and to re-project them in the form of concepts. While he is contemplative-perceptive like the artist, compassionate like the religious, a seeker of purposes and causalities like the scientist, even while he feels himself swelling into a macrocosm, he all the while retains a certain self-possession, a way of viewing himself coldly as a mirror of the world. This is the same sense of self-possession which characterizes the dramatic artist who transforms himself into alien bodies and talks with their alien tongues and yet can project this transformation into written verse that exist in the outside world on its own. . . . And just as for the dramatist words and verse are but the stammering of an alien tongue, needed to tell what he has seen and lived, what he could utter directly only through music or gesture, just so every profound philosophic intuition expressed through dialectic and through scientific reflection is the only means for a philosopher to communicate what he has seen. (*PTAG* 3)

Indeed! there is a phantasm out there that means to speak, that wants to tell us something, an alien, hidden meaning which assumes the concreteness of an immediate reaction-reflection—stammerings, music, gesture—but if anything more, if anything else is to be granted to the alien power, if the philosopher who is not a dramatist is incapable of being this other, then he must meet up with the challenge of language head on: in order to communicate, he has but "sad means," says Nietzsche in concluding the above passage, "basically a metaphoric and entirely unfaithful translation into a totally different sphere and speech. Thus Thales had seen the unity of all that is, but when he went to communicate it, he found himself talking about water!" (ibid.). So near, yet so far from a diaphoristic understanding of language, of rhetoric, and of the allegorical foundation of human communication.

Nietzsche's interpretation of Anaximander and Parmenides would become central to an understanding of Ancient Metaphysics from a Heideggerian perspective, but is less relevant to our itinerary through his ideas about language. Nevertheless, here again we find some key statements. Foremost, the distinction, of Schopenhauerian inspiration, between reality as *Realität* and reality as *Wirklichkeit*. The immanentist Dionysian impulse at work in Nietzsche's reconstruction freely exploits an awareness of the dimensionless and the durationless borderline between past and future as *effect*, as a series of *Wirkungen* in an entirely relative flux. In the light of Heraclitus, the polarities of coming-to-be and passing-away are understood as representative of an *agōn* which is no more than a guiding-idea, an abstract apperception of the struggle which may transcend the moment of its givenness: though the one is the many, the other is neither a phantomatic supersensible entity nor a Platonic eternal Being (Heidegger 1979:173), but, rather, it is the instancing of the world-game which Zeus plays, it is the game fire plays with itself. In this context, the danger derives from conceiving the world as *hubris*, a situation to be allayed, according to Nietzsche, if we stop seeking the intuitive mind and locate instead a con-tuitive mind, that is to say, a capacity to sense the relatedness and the contradictions as constitutive of a harmony invisible to the human eye. Heraclitus' fragment 93 concerning a nature which loves to hide comes to

mind at this point. Here, the other, Apollonian, half of Nietzsche's soul comes to the fore: the "compromise" between irreconcilables can best be understood as the intra-worldly experience of the child or the artist, for whom the playful fire represents a flux which precedes any moral or social distinctions: how else, we might ask, account for the fact that in playing one "constructs and destroys, all in pure innocence"?[12] In general, and coherently with the Tragic-Dionysian element present in artistic realization, it can be said that for Nietzsche—as for Zarathustra—pleasure and pain are not mutually exclusive nor are they logically opposite one another. But to return to our analysis, what is of significance is that Nietzsche puts the finger on what *The Birth of Tragedy* had merely announced as an interpretive necessity, namely, that the aesthetic dimension is the grounding of all possible discourses, philosophy foremost. It is the aesthetic which enables human beings to be contemplatively *above* and yet actively *within* the work, and which, in effecting a relation, "makes" reality. In later works we will see that all human beings possess this capacity, the "lower" spirits being able to perceive it only during heightened states of consciousness like dreaming and intoxication, the artist living it constantly (*WTP* 798).

It is tempting to schematize this position and find Nietzsche searching for a "middling" ground between opposite impulses, but it is a different kind of arrangement which the author seeks. We saw above that this would lead to "mere" allegory. It is nonetheless a sequential order, one which begins with the physiological, we might even say the "physics" (Heidegger 1979:126), which entails seeing man as fundamentally a *necessity* down to his last fibre, echoing Heraclitus once again. Man therefore does not inhabit a privileged higher sphere in the cosmos: it is more important to know why he is fire rather than water and earth than why he is so silly and wicked. In an early antianthropomorphic insight, Nietzsche upholds the philosopher who limits himself to describing the relation earth-world without ever dreaming up an ethic or a morality grounded upon the commandment: "Thou shalt." In this he is consistent with what we said above concerning the pre-Platonic notion of dialectics, which reads the logos as the struggle for wisdom. What will be found lacking, here and for most of the writings of the early period, is an awareness of rhetoric as

the struggle for power (Colli 1978:102). In view of what in the post-Zarathustra period will emerge as "The Will to Power as art," we can make a case for a pre-1875 Nietzsche essentially concerned with a *nostalgia for wisdom*, a nostalgia grounded upon an existential absence or, said differently, upon an intellectual re-calling of that which does not necessarily want to be recalled: Heraclitus needs not the world, says he at one point, though the world cannot do without Heraclitus.

And it is precisely Heraclitus who emerges as the oracular master, the idealized speaker of the unchanging *essentia homini*. Praising his terse and quick style, Nietzsche attributes the charges of "obscurity" traditionally leveled against Heraclitus to the dim-witted and lazy interpreters who do not ponder enough the wealth of his sententiae. The distinction between those who can understand him and those who cannot is explicated, significantly enough, on the analogy with style, as when he quotes Jean Paul, who wrote:

> Generally speaking, it is quite right if great things—things of much sense for men of rare sense—are expressed but briefly and (hence) darkly, so that barren minds will declare it to be nonsense, rather than translate it into a nonsense that they can comprehend. For mean, vulgar minds have an ugly facility for seeing in the profoundest and most pregnant utterances only their own everyday opinion. (*PTAG* 7)

The great mind, the great philosopher, is he who walks alone along deserted streets, as suits his nature (ibid.). And if he speaks in a terse, oracular, essentializing language, that is because in listening to the immortal Delphic dictum, "Know thyself," he took it upon himself to explore this enigmatic wisdom, "forever to be reinterpreted, of unlimited effectiveness upon far distant times." Obviously we are not dealing with the Socratic adaptation of the maxim. "What he [Heraclitus] saw," says Nietzsche, "the teaching of the law in becoming and of play in necessity, must be seen from now on in all eternity."

Finally, Nietzsche turns to the crucial role played by Anaxagoras in tying up some threads left hanging by Heraclitus and improperly knotted by Parmenides. The first key discovery is that everything originates from everything (*PTAG* 16); the second is that the

primal impulse to movement, located in chaos, is the *causa sui* of the *nous* (*Geist*), which at one point in time turns independent and self-moving. Nietzsche takes care to explain that this principle is anything but a *Deus ex machina*; rather

> Once Anaxagoras' circle is moved, once *nous* has started it on its revolutions, all order, all conformity to law and all beauty of the world are but the natural consequences of that first impulse to move. (*PTAG* 17)

Again, we see how all miraculous interventions, anthropomorphisms and mythologies are disposed of. The movement of the cosmos is the result of an oscillating which is necessary and predictable, whose effects coincide with the highest, the wisest calculations of reason and the utmost planning of purposiveness, yet "without being them" (*PTAG* 17). Here again the idea of violence emerges because the *nous* gets going frightfully fast, as a swirl of concentric circles which sets in motion the entire infinite (*apeiron, das Unbestimmte*, from Anaximander) world, but it does so as a voluntary act, an act of will, an *agere* which is marked by the quality of being larger in circumference than the radius of the original point (*PTAG* 18). But if this violence, this force is quite "natural," so will be the interim space between the point and the line, the center and the circumference. And this space is really a determination of the *nous* without being the *nous*; in other words, it is a range of possibilities which "have been" as Mind/Spirit but which are provisionally empty. Concerning the *nous* itself, Anaxagoras "would say":

> *Nous* has the privilege of free random choice; it may start at random; it depends only on itself, whereas all other things are determined by something outside themselves. *Nous* has no duty and hence no purpose or goal which it would be forced to pursue. Having once started with its motion, and thus having set itself a goal, it would be. . . To complete this sentence is difficult. Heraclitus did; he said, ". . . a game." (*PTAG* 19)

Here, then, the final assessment of pre-Socratic philosophy: with Anaxagoras we get the creative artist, a person for whom "coming-to-be" (*genesis, Werden*) is not a moral but an aesthetic phenomenon, an individual who makes of free thinking the highest value, assuming a distance, to be sure, from the *profanum vulgus*, but that is because it is the game that counts, and not the others. Only the "philosopher of tragic insight [*Erkenntnis*]" can look at "the metaphysical ground as a tragic event" and not be able to "find a satisfying compensation for it in the motley spiralling of the sciences," the philosopher who "must willingly accept even illusion—therein lies the tragedy!" (cited in Cowan 1962:16). This passage from posthumous notes of the same year also bears his slogan: *Los vom Mythos*, away from myth, and in the concluding pages of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* the only concession to "popular" mythology refers to its being a

> symbolic language. Among them [the noblest Athenian society], all the myths, all the gods, all the heroes, were taken to be but hieroglyphics of nature-interpretation. Even the Homeric epic was to be the canonical song of the rule of *nous* and of the battles and laws of *phýsis*. (*PTAG* 19)

Yet in identifying this highest stage of Greek thought with the age of Pericles, celebrating what has come to be known as the Olympian, Nietzsche's own descriptive metaphors of his ideal are telltale signs of his posture for years to come:

> When he stood before his people as public orator, calmly wrapped in his mantle, its draperies unmoved, his countenance without change of expression, without smile, his strong voice powerfully even—when, totally different from Demosthenes, he spoke in his "Periclean" manner, thundering, flashing, destroying, redeeming—then he represented the very image of the Anaxagorian cosmos, the image of the *nous* itself that has built for itself a most beautiful and worthy mansion. Pericles represented the visible human realization of the constructive, moving, distinguishing, ordering, reviewing, planning, artistically creative, self-determining power of the spirit. (*PTAG* 19)

Above and beyond tempting scholars to go exhume similar texts on and by Pericles and Demosthenes in order to gauge the validity of this characterization, the description of the oratorical style of the Athenian statesman can well be transposed into a manual of rhetoric or oratory to illustrate what happens, or what ought to

happen, during a properly, i.e.: "artistically," executed speech. But my aim is not to deconstruct or betray Nietzsche when his enthusiasm takes ahold of him. Though I will insist that here once again he missed the opportunity to develop his insight into the actual experience of language as that founding relation between I and Thou, between and among humans. The continued analogy between Anaxagoras' *nous* and Pericles bears this out, especially when the speech of the latter, progressing, like the *nous*, through spirals with "terrifying force," reaches its end "by having re-formed the entire nation into a pattern of order and distinction." It may be a social or political or metaphysical notion that subtends this observation, but it can also be inferred, indeed observed, that a speech is typically directed at an audience, that it talks about things "out there" and that its final scope is precisely that of re-arranging and ordering, and so that of making distinctions. Nietzsche is hardly on his way to nihilism at this stage; perhaps it would be appropriate and more accurate to say that he is actually trying *not* to address the issue by backtracking to the terrain where the question of values and metaphysical, illusory, ideological constructs *cannot* be posited, because in the age of wisdom, it is more relevant to question why there is a center and a circumference than to philosophize about why there is good and evil. He is seeking a world-model long bygone which, while he re-constructs and re-aligns it according to the moods and personality of some of its leading figures, he realizes is totally different from his own, and that compels the decision whether he is willing to pay the great price of separateness, distancing, whether he can endure the pain of *not* wanting to view and think about illusion. The empathy with Anaxagoras is significant, for it will contribute to his courage, in later years, to say no, to enhance the act of free, arbitrary anti-choice in a world governed by the strictest determinism. Later philosophers, says Nietzsche, Plato foremost, have misunderstood Anaxagoras' *nous* in that they would have required of him to explain that each thing "in its own fashion and its own place is most beautifully, best, and usefully situated." That is a great mistake, Nietzsche asserts, for they all

> failed to recognize the meaning of Anaxagoras' renunciation, which has been the outcome of his truly pure scientific method, the method which in all cases and above all else asks not to what end something arises [*causa finalis*] but how something arises [*causa efficiens*]. (*PTAG* 19)

Well, Aristotle, too, remarked that this perspective makes no distinction between *noēsis* and *aisthēsis* and that, moreover, the operations of the *nous*—later understood as *psychē*—were very mechanical and would not properly allow for the differentiation brought by error (*De Anima* III:427a; *Metaphysics* 1009b), but this may be precisely what Nietzsche found exciting in Anaxagoras, and in general in the Milesian thinkers. The search for an ordering principle—which had to be, however, independent from mythology—ended up with an *archē* which is ultimately *unexplainable* as to origin—for that would mean the logical impossibility of a first motion which splits time into a motionless before and a forever determined motion after—but which resides most convincingly in the idea of *spirit* possessing "free, arbitrary choice" in a universe controlled by rigid necessity. Out and away from chaos, then, what we have are effects without causes or ends, a free, undetermined Mind or Spirit dependent upon itself alone. It is unfortunate that Nietzsche made nothing of the fact that in Plato this cosmic *nous* emerges in the *Philebus* (26e–27c) as *dēmiourgos*, the maker or "cause of the mixture" that is the world of *genesis*, and again in the *Timaeus* (47e; 30b), where it is called divine. But then again, Plato is that same thinker who throughout his philosophic career essayed constantly to restrain the manic, erotic aspects of the aesthetic till he confined them to a subaltern role as controllable mimetic representation (cf. Murdoch, Rosen 1988).

8. Intermezzo

On the basis of the exposition of Nietzsche's pre-Socratic position, much of what we find in the four *Untimely Meditations* can be read as an elaboration, through critique, and an application of the key notion of *archē* as non-origin, absolute relativity between free will and determinism, unbridgeable difference between the wisdom of the oracle and the knowledge of philosophy, concluding finally with the reassessment of the grounding immanence of the aesthetic dimension which stands as an obstacle *against*

any discursive development, be it philosophy, science, or history. The essay "On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), for example, is an analysis and criticism of a highly developed, sophisticated, and overbearing historiographical sense, a condition represented by the proclivity towards repetition of the Same which is cut off from both life and the Other (*UM* II:60–66). Here Nietzsche reaches his conclusions discursively, persuading himself and his readers of his insights in categorical terms, proclaiming the final *verbum*: "there's a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture" (*UM* II:62). *Di storia si muore*, one might say in Italian: too much history kills (or: one can die from history). The determination "living thing" is coherent with his position in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and no doubt specifying "man or a people or a culture" is merely a "rhetorical," expository move. But then again, the organicist and vitalist views which were popular in Nietzsche's day may have played a certain—if limited—role in the shaping of his views. How diffuse that metaphysic was can be gathered from Hans Vaihinger's *The Philosophy of 'As If'*, a work which, if it demonstrates how beautifully Nietzsche's thought can be cut to size on the procrustean bed of a method determined a priori, it also introduces premonitory notions on the fictive, rhetorical nature of language in philosophy and more specifically in critical philosophy.[13]

But Nietzsche, of course, was no *mere* vitalist or organicist, and he did not believe for a moment that the natural life could replace or supplant the historiographic, cultural life: it was more a question of proportion, of emphasis, perhaps the beginning of what can be called his nihilist parabola. Undoubtedly here once again one may be led to think that Nietzsche is seeking some sort of mediation, an integrating constant or locus which is not altogether free of an unconcious Hegelianism (Vattimo 1980:20). Proof may be adduced by noticing that, unmindful of disciplinary distinctions, he deploys a rhetorical category to express a philosophic need, and comes up with the notion of *style*, or "the unity of artistic style" which may conjoin the Modern "contrast of an interior to which no exterior corresponds," and the Ancient surface, exteriority "to which no inside corresponds." For Gianni Vattimo, despite Nietzsche's desire to the contrary, the second of the *Untimely Meditations* attains a reconfiguration of the ancient opposition—we might even say, the Ancient Diaphora—between Dionysus and Apollo-turned-Socrates, opposition which only art can seal into a coherent, harmonious unity (ibid.). This stylistic unity is not, strictly speaking, representative of a dialectical synthesis—as Deleuze has argued (1978:32–35)—but, rather, it is a vector or indication towards what might be termed the "anti-historical" if not altogether the "trans-historical," provided of course that we flush out of this term all Kantian and Hegelian resonances. In the wake of the essay on the pre-Socratics, it becomes the force above the permanent struggle. In this way a horizon is constituted which is stable enough for action to occur (Vattimo 1980:22). Now it is a question of how to understand this "action" and whether language itself can be conceived as the possibility for this action. Nietzsche's conclusion that art and religion are "eternizing" modes of existence only bears out a *resistance* to accepting anything less than an absolutist position vis-à-vis certain cultural phenomena. It is unfortunate, says Vattimo, that for the most part twentieth-century ontological hermeneutics has read the second of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* as implying a "net opposition" between culture and nature. In reality this is merely a *stage* during which a claim is made for what cannot be historicized or is not predetermined by history, namely, natural impulse. I would add to this what was said above concerning Nietzsche's pre-Socratic stance against teleology, mythologizing, and anthropomorphism. The Nietzsche who takes a second look at history and the one who ought to be consulted, says Vattimo, is the one of *Human, All Too Human* and the writings up to and including the Zarathustra book, texts which introduce the notion of re-calling (*An-denken*) as necessary to dialogue.

Yet the "dialogue" sought by Vattimo, as also by K. Higgins and Alderman, and perhaps misread by ontological hermeneutics, is *not* the one Nietzsche himself never cared to explore. Perhaps because to entertain a dialogue with the past is literally impossible, or, more to the point, is possible only literally, that is, *as literature*, and is not a real existential possibility (save of course in con-

sciousness). And have we not already seen Nietzsche denying the Parmenidean *logos* (*PTAG* 10, 11), preferring instead the solitary Heraclitus walking alone and ruminating the Delphic oracle? Nietzsche was certainly aware that to interrogate the text meant ultimately to respond to one's own questions about what is and what is not within the larger view of what is once and for all. Thus, just before the essay on history, he carefully studies a historical text which made certain post-Platonic claims on faith. The first of the *Untimely Meditations* emerges as a masterpiece of exegetical bile, a trenchant and pitiless expurgation of a self-styled pseudo-religion in which the interpreter's pungent observations are coinvolved in the agonistics between words and sentences such that it could have theoretically gone on for much longer, stomping on David Strauss at every stroke of the pen. What Nietzsche did with Strauss we can easily imagine him doing to a host of other texts. There was no dialogue to be entertained by any stretch of the imagination. Yet I submit that it was this type of exercise that made Nietzsche aware of the fact that ultimately it really is too *easy* to "pick on" a text, strap it to the surgical bed, and bleed it to death with the knife of philology, the implements of ideology, the instruments of psychology, and the categories of aesthetics and finally on the basis of one's own personal view of Christ and faith. Accordingly, Nietzsche will never again perform such microscopic textual biopsies.

It is the conception of language as fundamentally a *technē* that guides Nietzsche during these early years, though of its concurrent and equiprimordial nature as *dynamis* (Sini 1978:112) he is not really aware, not at least until much later, for instance, in "The Wanderer and His Shadow." What I mean is that though Nietzsche had addressed, in the interim from *The Birth of Tragedy* to the *Book of the Philosopher* and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, the issue of the infidelity of (philosophic) language, its being an analogy with something not given (Lacou-Labarthe 1972:914), he is still very much concerned with the *possibility* of expressing the Truth above and beyond the problematic of the reasons for this Truth and for whom and/or to whom one might want to verbalize it. If the *dynamis* contains an active and a passive capacity, we can say that Nietzsche explored the one and the other separately, but of the fact that in each expression or

utterance both may coexist he does not yet give sign. As there is no escaping the rhetorical destiny of humankind, it is only by degrees that Nietzsche becomes aware of the bifurcate, duplicitous nature of language: because language constantly poses as meta-language, a potential taxonomy at the service of historical man, and *at the same time* it concretizes itself as performative, irreversible formulation. At this juncture in his life he resolutely opts for the second possibility, or the utterance as *technē*, what he perceives as the necessary, empirical concretization of the being of language, the saying of the earliest possible knowledge which was likely to conceal a truth, perhaps the truth. This entails paying particular attention to the high priests of reason and their decayed—and at times decadent—epigones who thought themselves endowed with the ability to read riddles and oracles, encompassing the philosophical as well as the mythical, the historical as well as the personal, what is timeless and what is merely circumstantial, in other words, any and every thing and its opposite provided it made a claim to existing, to real life, to being alive. Thus, in the tradition of the moralists and the unsystematic philosophers, which is to say, with a particular penchant for essayists and writers of fragments, epigrams, thoughts (i.e.: *pensées*), he pens down his own perception of certain issues by avoiding the schemata of scholarship and the categories of scientists and historians, and gets right to the point, so to speak. Between 1873 and 1876 he produces several short essays which resemble acts of self-confession, long and tightly argued personal notes. Especially if these were not slated for publication. Among these, and to continue with our analysis of his views on language, the important piece "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," also dating from 1873.

9. The Truth Is a Lie

In this long fragment we read that "the intellect—unfolds its chief powers in simulation"; that, moreover, "man permits himself to be lied to at night, his life long, when he dreams, and his moral sense never even tries to prevent this"; and, finally, the much-quoted passage about language and, obliquely, ontology:

> Men do not flee from being deceived as much as from being damaged by deception . . . in a similarly limited way man

> wants truth: he desires the agreeable life-preserving consequences of truth, but he is indifferent to pure knowledge, which has no consequences. . . Only through forgetfulness can man achieve the illusion of possessing a "truth" in the sense just designated. If he does not wish to be satisfied with truth in the form of a tautology—that is, with empty shells—then he will forever buy illusions for truth ("TLES" 45)

Though we perceive the desire for a redeeming Dionysian possibility to cast alongside a wry assessment of an almost Darwinian condition, Nietzsche quite self-assuredly declares that "pure knowledge" makes *no difference* and therefore bears no worthwhile consequences. Above and beyond the question whether pure knowledge is possible to begin with, it appears—especially in the wake of the text on the tragic age of the Greeks—that humans may actually *not want* such a knowledge, unless, we are taken to infer, it is knowledge which bears immediate fruit or consequences, that is to say, an instrumental, empirical, we could even say pragmatic knowledge, one which assures survival foremost. Knowledge is teleologic, in short, it is impure, it is not given in and by itself and what Nietzsche does not spell out, though he seems to imply it, is that *it depends upon a context or a host of real life possibilities mediated by language, which is to say that knowledge is rhetorical, existentially relational*. If man does not want to be deceived by self-imposed, circumscribed explications, which are devoid of content and which we know by now include also history and, generally, post-Platonic philosophy—the passage *does* deal, after all, with the question of truth—if he does not want to rest on "empty shells," then he *must* pursue the road of the illusory, that *same* language of images and metaphors which may involve the risk of being held "in place of a concept" (see above, sec. 5; *BT* 8). It is a clear symptom of what later on will be acknowledged as the impossibility of Truth and the unavoidable risk one must take in interpretation, given that all we can do is to interpret "Versions" of reality and/or being. The rest of the passage points in fact forward to some slight modifications concerning the nature of language:

> What is a word? The image of a nerve stimulus in sounds. But to infer from the nerve stimulus a cause outside us, that is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the principle of reason. . . The different languages, set side by side, show that what matters with words is never the truth, never an adequate expression; else there would not be so many languages. *One designates only the relations of things to man*, and to express them one calls on the boldest metaphors. A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image—first metaphor. The image, in turn, imitated by a sound—second metaphor. ("TLES" 45–46) (emphasis mine)

Nietzsche seems to take metaphor quite literally, so to speak, according to a modern, general dictionary definition of the word, while at the same time fully exploiting its etymon, relying on the continuous trans-posing from one position, one locus, to another. That there may be several of these involved in communication and *not* to problematize them means that for Nietzsche there is no first and second level of language—as there is, for instance, in Plato, when he holds that poets with their images and metaphors take reality, already one step removed from the Idea, one step further out—but instead there are many layers and that, moreover, the real problem may actually be that of determining the meaning of a word when one stops it at any one point along this relational and sequential chain. For, as he says in the fragment just quoted,

> every word immediately becomes a concept, inasmuch as it is not intended to serve as a reminder of the unique and wholly individualized original experience to which it owes its birth, but must at the same time fit innumerable, more or less similar cases—which means, strictly speaking, never equal—in other words, a lot of unequal cases. Every concept originates through our equating what is unequal. ("TLES" 46)

It follows then that if we take a word—by chance, arbitrarily, or by an act of free will—from a sentence or utterance and examine it we find that we are dealing with a concept which is constitutively, irremediably different from any other word/concept present in the same sentence or utterance because at any one time each and every word is a metaphor of something else, either an earlier stimulus/image or a later, subsequent metaphysical construct. Communication appears to be a truly impossible task! How, one might ask, do we ever move on to convention, to stable signifieds,

to continuity, to the possibility of a "meaningful" discourse? The answer is we do not—though we stubbornly try to. Close in spirit to Heraclitus, Nietzsche places everything on the same level: words, concepts, metaphors, therefore history, therefore human values: the conclusion is yet another inroad into the fiction of existence, for there is no identity of the sort A=A: "every concept originates through our equating what is unequal." No leaf ever wholly equals another, and the very same concept "leaf" is formed through an arbitrary abstraction from these individual, unrepeatable, distinguishable differences, in fact, it is formed by "forgetting" the distinctions, by repeating the differences we might say. No doubt "forgetting" as Nietzsche uses it here means also being "ignorant of" because, as he states in the following sentence, from this we infer some sort of paradigm, "original form," after which "all leaves have been woven, marked, copied, colored, curled, and painted, but by unskilled hands, so that no copy turned out to be correct, reliable, and faithful image of the original form" ("TLES" 46). Later, in *Beyond Good and Evil* he will say that every quest for knowledge entails a willful forgetting, a conscious self-denial of what is the case, namely, that we are always dealing with non-truth, with lies, whether of the scientific or artistic kind (*BGE* 192).

It is easy to understand how Nietzsche became the precursor of deconstruction and of the theory of discursive formations[14] at the same time. The "arbitrary formations" in fact can be opened up both with reference to their own linguisticality, for instance, by focusing on instances of catachresis, and in terms of the not-so-innocent power play which subtends all epistemological claims. My point here is that Nietzsche continues to take metaphor at face value fully aware that he is at the same time dealing with an expressive mode which, in absolute terms, represents the *enabling modality* of language. Though metaphor is partial, incomplete, revealing a "lack," in relational terms it is utterly committed, overflowing, representing the "manifold." Thus meanings always hark back or forward to something else, yet and at the same time *they travel*, and can be situated at any one point in time, *with the concepts, prejudices*, and *descriptions* of experience which effected them. This makes Nietzsche a precursor, also, of modern hermeneutics. How could he have even dreamt of being systematic?

He would have had to believe in the assumptions of the various Socrates, employing dialectics as a neutral instrument, which is impossible. Once again we can see looming on the horizon the impossibility of gaining a language mode which could convey direct meanings to others. And Nietzsche could not fall back on the materiality of the signifier—as Mallarmé, the avant-gardes, and deconstruction have done since—because that would entail betraying his own very philosophic insights concerning the relatedness of it all; that is to say, since language is constitutively metaphorical, and *nous* constant flux, at any one point in time there is also a signified lurking somewhere, a meaningful gesture waiting to be spoken. So what is the use of playing with phonemes, graphemes, and the like?

Owing to, or perhaps in spite of, this situation, ignoring both a primordial I-Thou relation—the basis of a communal "we" (Gadamer 1973:79)—as well as the speaking of the Other—allegory as "other-speaking" (Rollinson 1981:17)—Nietzsche continues to belabor various other hypotheses in reference to the authors and the relative thematics that had such a crucial influence on him, mainly Schopenhauer and Wagner. The issues of education, politics, history, aesthetics, and critical discourse keep on being addressed in ever broader formulations, enveloping as much as possible, that is to say, without much concern with what any other specific reader/listener may have to say, unless, of course, it was the author to whom he was responding in the first place. The object of these writings seems to be aimed at making the "qualitas occulta" of things (thoughts, ideas, criticism) come into view, eventually to speak by itself. The tempting analogy at this point is one with the Delphic oracle, the voice which speaks the ultimate truth—even if it concerns the untenability of truth—without *explaining it*. Yet the road ahead points to a Nietzsche who will speak *as if* he were the truth, as will become evident in *Human, All Too Human*. His idea of truth in 1873 will remain unchanged until 1876, tied as it is to his conception of metaphor and to a notion of rhetoric as basically a *technē* which does not allow the *dynamis* to emerge fully:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human

> relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. ("TLES" 47)

Having discovered, among other things, that existence precedes essence, and that the essence represented by a metaphor is only a forgotten existence, Nietzsche sets out to forge his own currency, circulate his own capital, and exchange his own coins.

10. Rhetorical Frames

A second stage in the development of Nietzsche's thought begins in 1876, a year in which he begins to demolish some of his aesthetic notions and enters a "crisis" marked primarily by his growing dissatisfaction with abandoning Schopenhauer and Wagner (Sini 1978:116–19) and, above all, by the emergence of the aphorism as the most effective, and "natural," way of expressing himself. Indeed it appears that the free will derived from Heraclitus-Anaxagoras begins its descent from the plateaus of the *nous* onto the plains of what can be considered *human psyche* (or *anima*) above and beyond the specific determinations assigned to it by science, history, philosophy, even aesthetics. There is a sense of wanting to clear the ground, a desire to grasp all beliefs and fallacies in their intimate essentia and bare them to the winds and to the dogs, a turbulent process which we know will culminate with *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. During this period, Nietzsche's conception and use of language undergo subtle transformations.

A philosopher, he had written in "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," must first of all be a human being, a person whose humanness we can all claim to possess—though that does not mean he stopped seeking the ontological essence of the idea of man or of human being. It was more a question of locating, in the confrontation between Artist and Philosopher, the instances where certain traits and specific effects gave shape to what can be called human *without* at the same time making a claim for its universality or transcendence. In going through first and last things, moral life,

religious conceptions, different cultures and their manifestations, women and child and artists and so on, including, of course, his own life, the language mode of *Human, All Too Human* must be such that it prevents slipping into the traps he had so studiously explored and refused between 1872 and 1876; in short, the rhetoric of his project called for the aphorism.

To break through the barriers, the customs, the world of habitus and at the same time to pinpoint without drawing lines and circles, to destroy without erecting new castles from the debris, to synthesize without systematizing, to speak up one's view without following up on what should be done as a result, to locate without mapping, to place without giving bearings of the broader horizon, to "text" without contextualizing: this is what the aphorism will allow Nietzsche to carry out—what Vattimo in a different context but with a felicitous word has called *sfondamento*,[15] de-grounding (breaking-through [-the-bottom-of-a-container], as it were)—a process which achieves white-hot intensity in *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Many pages of the earlier books, I mean *Human, All Too Human*—the first volume of which was Nietzsche's second published text in 1878, despite the "volumes" written in the interim—announce this: they contain little tracts and compressed analyses, synopses and abstracts, which can be interpreted as representative of a tendency *away from* the essay form of *The Birth of Tragedy* (in itself already a revolution in scholarly style) to the aphoristics we identify Nietzsche by. There is no doubt Nietzsche's writing is getting "smaller," so to speak, that he is restricting the potential *kinēsis* of his hermeneutic, that he is avoiding the *dynamis* mentioned by Sini, exfoliating his language to the barest, beginning ever anew, conceptually trying to break ever new boundaries yet stylistically conscious of, and bent on, avoiding any delimiting and prejudicial influences (Stern 1978:23). It appears he is seeking the locus where the definition, where the saying *of* something first occurs, where the parting begins: "It may be conjectured that the decisive event for a spirit in whom the type of the free spirit is one day to ripen to sweet perfection has been *great separation [Loslösung]*" (*HATH* I, Pref. 3). Especially if before this event he was in fetters, spirit "forever" chained "to his corner, to his post." Is Nietzsche talking about a historically existing subject, about a people, about a certain type

of individual? Is he talking about himself? Is it re-construction or pro-jection, or, worse, day dreaming? But these not-so-otiose questions may be countered, Nietzschean style, by asking: Does it matter? No doubt *impersonality* and *anonymity* will constitute a trait of this type of rhetoric. And it is up to us as interpreters to register the symptoms, to identify the threads; perhaps to respond to the questions. The great separation will inevitably call to mind the idea of *nomadism*, which under Deleuze's pen has given already important insights (Deleuze 1985:142–48). What will the spirit do once it is off? "He wanders about savagely with an unsatisfied lust; his booty must atone for the dangerous tension of his pride; he rips apart what attracts him" (ibid.). Let us underscore and bear in mind that the nomad spirit is intrinsically "restless," and "aimless, as in a desert." If all values must be overturned—and Nietzsche repeatedly asks the question, "rhetorically"—cannot all values be overturned? And is God perhaps Evil? And God only an invention? And so on—they must be dealt with personally, individually, annotating and as it were nailing them to the blank page before they leave the mind on their way to oblivion, to forgetfulness. It is an *eidetic* discipline, this early phase of the aphoristics, an *idea-logy* different from that of Marx and that of Husserl because it never matures into a true phenomenology, since he had previously established that the language of "rational" or "rhetorical" (i.e.: systematic, principled) exposition was fraught with preestablished meanings, historically biased towards dialectics and, in view of its inescapable metaphoricity, potentially false, inauthentic, untrue. How, might we ask, could he even dream of addressing *real* people? How could he even try to sound the language of mores and traditions and patterns of belief *and, at the same time,* attempt, with undisguised arrogance, to tell about it to others, to the *other*, the other pole of a dialogic situation (ideal readers notwithstanding)? It seems rather evident to me that a continuous stream of *essential* statements, a recording the "natural perceptions" of things, and the skillful avoidance of both Kantian analytic judgments and Hegelian syntheses, requires the adoption of a rhetorical mode or scheme which is intimately suited to the question of estrangement, isolation, meditation, self-reflection, we might even say confession (as practiced by Augustine, Pascal, Rousseau, Leopardi). Rhetorical estrangement will exhibit, as *docere dimostrativo* (*probationes*, in short) a preference for the tropes and figures of paradox, hyperbole, and of course irony (understood in its broadest sense, as master trope under which we can provisionally group satire, sarcasm, and utterances of diffidence, resentment, critique) (Lausberg 1969:62). The rhetoric of this isolationist posture legitimates a tacit but no less tenacious *anti*-social bent, a willingness to ignore circumstantial situations in order to permit the untrammeled voicing of that which has been hidden, or forgotten, or partakes of desire: "No longer chained down by hatred and love, one lives without Yes, without No, voluntarily near, voluntarily far, most preferably slipping away, avoiding, fluttering on, gone again, flying upward again" (*HATH* I:3). The fragmented autobiography of this yearning and volatile yet earnest spirit sounds somewhat Romantic, for he is not completely rid of that either. Nevertheless, this movement *away from* society, from history, from himself, and the adoption of a mode of discourse bordering on the grandiloquent and the pseudopoetic permit our author to speak *as if* to no one in particular, *as if* to all of humankind, employing, as he does, a devious strategy, as we would call it today, but in reality revealing a condition that *precedes* the strategy. Therefore he must decide what his position will be vis-à-vis the potential, real reader. Aphorism 185 says: "*The paradoxes of an author*. The so-called paradoxes of an author, which the reader objects to, are often not at all in the author's book but rather in the reader's head."[16] This is consistent with his subliminal perception that communication is a total rupture, that there are so many "translatio" going on in discourse that—short of believing in the various Grand myths of science and morality, which he obviously does not and, moreover, does not seem to care for those who do—it is not really worth the effort to consider the option of letting language speak to the actual, local, specific memory of *others*.[17] His many remarks on style, plus an evolving awareness of his "artistic" tendency—which means, of course, that he knows he is "lying," so what is the use!—will indeed put his soul to rest concerning any "democratic" value to truth. What seems inescapable, however, is that by amplifying, magnifying his perception of the world he is also and necessarily articulating the ideas *of* the world; thus the other or the others of a dialogical situation

at times lie in wait just below the surface, at times even surface, *malgré lui*.

11. The Veil of Language, The Wall of Irony

Let us consider some of the issues dealt with in *Human, All Too Human*, the section "From the Soul of Artists and Writers." The artist possesses a weaker morality than the thinker when it comes to recognizing knowledge, but that is owed to his desire to not deprive himself of brilliant, profound interpretations, preferring rather the "most effective presupposition for his art, that is, the fantastic, the mythic, the uncertain, extreme feeling for the symbolic, overestimation of the individual, belief in something miraculous about genius" (*HATH* I:145). It will be an ironical twist in Nietzsche's destiny that he will have to resort to precisely these factors, to art, in order to concretize his vision, to bring about the *overman*. Nietzsche seems to be re-discovering the mythic, the uncertain, though he is still ambivalent about their actual value, dangling between the *nous* (Ancient) and the *psychē* (Modern). Yet to artists as persons he is hardly kind: they are mere entertainers, conjurors of the dead and forever looking backwards.[18] Poets are epigones, and necessarily so, says the philosopher in aphorism 148, and in 150 he conceives of art as a highly synthetic by-product of religion, though because of its powerful capacity to illuminate, it instills diffidence with regards to religion and actually lets one suppose that there might be real ghosts to be afraid of. In 151 we read that meter places a veil over reality by causing a certain artificiality in diction and impurity in thinking, which breaks away from what he had said earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy* concerning the melic aspirations of language. He says at this juncture that "art renders the sight of life bearable by laying over it the gauze of impure thinking." Yet for the time being this may not be an evil, and Nietzsche introduces here a new interpretation: art could serve the function of providing relief from fear and tedium. In this context, Homer's lightness and looseness were necessary to subdue temporarily the extremely passionate intelligence of the Greeks. When the intellect speaks, he says, the Greeks see life as bitter and horrible. They in fact did not deceive themselves, preferring rather to

> deliberately play over life with lies; Simonides advised his countrymen to take life as a game; they were too familiar with life in the form of pain (indeed, man's misery is the theme that the gods so love to hear sung about), and they knew that only through art could even misery become a pleasure.

But as always with Nietzsche, there is a twist to the story, a hidden side which demands to be taken into consideration, though he will do this only slowly and by degrees:

> As a punishment for this insight, however, they were so plagued by the wish to invent tales that in everyday life it became hard for them to keep free of falsehood and deceit, just as all poetic people have this delight in lying, and, what is more, an innocence in it. That must sometimes have driven their neighboring nations to despair. (*HATH* I:154)

The last sentence requires that we return to the problem of irony, because occasionally it colors with too strong a hue the Nietzschean chameleon. He will say later on in *Daybreak*, a central text of this second stage, that "irony is the great contemporary trope of Europeans," in fact they treat all great intellectual pursuits with irony "because one is so busy in their service one has no time to take them seriously" (*D* III:162). In this regard, Hayden White is correct in holding that

> Nietzsche's purpose as a philosopher was to transcend Irony by freeing consciousness from all Metonymical apprehensions of the world (which bred the doctrines of mechanical causality and a dehumanizing science) on the one hand and all Synecdochic sublimations of the world (which bred the doctrines of "higher" causes, gods, spirits, and morality) on the other, and to return consciousness to the enjoyment of its Metaphorical powers, its capacity to "frolic in images," to entertain the world of pure phenomena, and to liberate, thereby, man's poetic consciousness to an activity more pure, for being more self-conscious, than the naive Metaphor of primitive man. (White 1980:334)

However, White's interest being explicitly that of the rhetoric of history, it is no accident that his analyses are based on the least

aphoristic of Nietzsche's texts, primarily *The Birth of Tragedy* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The fact remains that, Nietzsche's "intentions" notwithstanding, the aphorism *does* evidence a *tendency* to the ironic especially when it coincides with another trait of Nietzsche's, that of being a Sophist, which surfaces when he deploys his virtuoso and razor-sharp style as invective or polemic in order to impart his newly gained understanding.

The word *sophist* originally meant "one who is able to speak well" (from Gr. *sophizesthai*), and in the fifth century B.C., that same period Nietzsche studied so intensely, it designated the new educators who made their learning available to the "democractic" middle class—stretching the meaning of these words a tad—and included the likes of Protagoras, Gorgias, Hyppia, and others. After Plato, the word assumed a negative connotation. Irony, on the other hand, etymologically means "to speak by interrogating" with the implicit sense of placing the interlocutor in difficulty, and in Aristophanes it is associated to the word for "chatter" or someone who rants (Pagliaro 1970: 10–13). With Plato it becomes a two-edged weapon: it is condemned because it entails "having ulterior motives" (*Apology* 38a) or "pretending not to know" (*Symposium* 216e), yet it also becomes the formidable trope of Socratic dialectic. Vico was the first major thinker of the Modern Age to point out that irony could not partake of the original attributes of language-use because it developed very late, during the age of men, when philosophy had already succeeded religion, poetry, and historical narration in the course of the lives of nations: "[irony] is fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of truth" (*NS* II:408). As "civilized" trope (Vico) as well as *forma mentis*, irony can hardly be avoided when confronted with the language of Modernity. Thus, whereas Hayden White quite persuasively argues that Nietzsche's relationship to history, myth, and truth was ultimately legitimated under the aegis of the Metaphoric mode, the irony of these translations is undermining constantly the Nietzschean text, especially during this "second period." If we bear in mind the traits of aphoristic writing as we have been illustrating them up to this point, then irony becomes one more obstacle to remove before a truly non-Modern(ist) philosophical poem could be written.[19]

To return to our passage, it becomes easier to understand how the related problem of lying often moves Nietzsche to condemn it vehemently—on "moral" grounds—and yet to accept irony as unavoidable, indeed as quintessentially human in certain other, mostly later, passages. The early research into the aesthetic dimension of existence certainly favors this position. The fact that he recalls the notion of play may be interpreted as an exhortation to consider that each and every time we deal with a meaning, a determination about life, we are exposing ourselves to what might be the case—say: pain, misery, death—*as well as* to what might not be the case—say: a delectation or dance or story telling which nevertheless is imbued with potentially dichotomous meanings: fullness versus void, eternal youth versus forgetting death: it does not really matter, once again. We are dealing with what Vico calls the fantastic, a capacity which in everyday life could take off on the wings of the not so evident or demonstrable, and the Dionysian Nietzsche certainly saw a correlation between play and inventing stories.

In aphorism 160 he states that "a real man is something completely necessary. . . the invented man"; on the other hand, "the phantasm claims to signify something necessary," and it should not be so, we seem to hear Nietzsche mumbling, because this "claim to signify" which stands to represent the whole is "inauthentic." Yet for a world destined to become a fable, as we will read later on in *Twilight of the Idols* (40), it is precisely this phantasm who will enlist (in) "the army of metaphors" we read about above (in "TLES"). And it is with *discursive time*, with the *rhetoric of temporality* and its *contextual legitimization* that he will have to come to grips if Zarathustra is to come down from the mountain, Zarathustra, a conscious fiction, a willed ghost.

Another problematic assertion concerning art will be found in fragment 162, where he writes that "the complete (or fulfilled) art of representation wards off all thought of its evolution; it tyrannizes as present perfection." There is no doubt that Nietzsche is saying, by means of a synecdoche, that the lyrical poetry of tragic drama is perfection, the model for all art, which knows no before and no after but simply is or exists in the duration of its presencing. Now we can open this up and recall that lyric poetry is the primal song, "the highest peak attainable by human dis-

course" Leopardi would write (*Zibaldone* 245), an author Nietzsche regarded as one of the four master stylists of the century. Elsewhere Leopardi observes that "the true lyric poet is the man inflamed by the craziest fire, in total disorder in a state of extraordinary and feverish vigor, [who is] capable of unveiling and manifesting the loftiest truths. . .[lyric poetry is the] first and eternal and universal [language] proper to man of all times and in all places" (ibid. 4234 and 4476). Yet Nietzsche also commits the poetological blunder of saying, in *HATH* II:202, that insofar as they are stylistic forms, the lyric can be learned through exercises and, even before that, in aphorism 171, "the forms of a work of art, which expresses its ideas and therefore its way of speaking, always have something inessential, like every sort of language." In general, however, he quite openly cherishes the lyric as the highest form, the lyric of the original chorus, the musical exaltation, the absolute form of art. But then, why does he go on to say that there is always "something inessential" in a work which also *means to* convey ideas? Does that not sound like an old-fashioned, idealistic notion of the lyric as pure inspiration, with all other forms of art being somewhat inferior because they also express or represent ideas? It is one leading strand of the Romantic view (See Heine 1–127; Lamartine; Hugo), engaged later by idealist aesthetics and now in part discredited. The same statement can also be looked at from a structuralist perspective, in which art equals language equals natural language and therefore as in any communicative string we always find something superfluous, 'inessential," chaff in the wheat, noise in the circuit. On the other hand, in aphorism 199 Nietzsche states that

> incompleteness is often more effective than completeness, especially in eulogies. For such purposes, one needs precisely a stimulating incompleteness as an irrational element that simulates a sea for the listener's imagination, and, like fog, hides its opposite shore, that is, the limitation of the subject being praised.

Notice that this time the question of the listener is posited with a concern as to how he or she might receive and grasp the message. Moreover, there is an awareness that in this transaction a certain amount of suspense, of yearning is to be created, so that the

story (even if it be of praise, or a hymn) might continue and at that *with interest*. Despite the apparent contradiction with the earlier statement—but then, why not see the inessential in a work of art and the incompleteness theorem as site of contact with the non-aesthetic?—I believe that what we are witness to here is *the subterranean pulsion towards the narrative style, the exigencies of a voice which as much as it intends to simply speak its wisdom, may also desire to speak to someone or to speak about something to someone else*. These are ingredients that are fundamental to dialogue as well as to allegory. The incompleteness theorem is further elaborated in aphorism 207, where we are entreated to appreciate unfinished thoughts, and to reconsider the relation between poet and philosopher, while the thought "flutters past over our heads, showing the loveliest butterfly wings—and yet slips away from us." In 211 another symptom that the mythic must be revisited, that fiction may be at least as important as reality; here in fact we read that Achilles "has life, feelings," whereas Homer merely describes them. Nietzsche's bout with separation and dualism is slowly beginning to reach a halt. For throughout this book as in subsequent ones, the drive towards isolation, aloneness, and a language mode that is temporally undetermined is countered by a just as powerful though silent force to return to the pen, to rejoin the tribe. At one point, he critiques Aristotle's theory of catharsis and finds himself siding with Plato's view on the tragic poets. The effect of a performance may alleviate tension, he reasons, but it may also strengthen certain compulsions or render one more anxious. However, he does not question Plato's judgment that, if this is the case, then one possible result may be licentiousness and extravagance. In 216 a rather simplified theory on the origin of language, which begins in gesture, moves on to sound and gesture, and finally to a symbolism of the gesture. Two consequences of this are that, on the one hand, we cannot recover pure music, which is an absolute symbolic act, on the other that in our culture today our ears have become intellectualized and as a result we have lost all naturalness, in a sense echoing similar conclusions reached in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*. Today, he says, we automatically seek the reasons behind a work—in this specific instance, of music, but the same thing can be said of painting. The greater

the capacity of thought loaded into every sight and every sensation of sound, the closer these draw to their limits, becoming insensitive. *The more we move away from the natural world, the more we are inclined to specify what it means*. Thus in aphorism 218 we read that today a stone is more stone than before: once, everything in a Greek or Christian building meant something, in a play of relations and infinite signification as an "atmosphere of inexhaustible meaningfulness hung around the building like a magic veil. Beauty entered the system only secondarily, impairing the basic feeling of uncanny sublimity, of sanctification by magic or the god's nearness." Today, he concludes, the beauty of a building is like that of a "witless woman," "something masklike." Clearly the target is Kantian aesthetics and the entreaty is to (re)consider the aesthetic of perception/sensation as founding and elementary, with no need of intellectualization of any sort. On the other hand, they also sound like discounted views on some undetermined and nostalgic "good old times."

It is pointless to state that certain aphorisms "contradict" certain others: after all, a not-so-distant relative of the aphorism, the proverb, and the slightly more composite moral tale or parable, are also very often caught in apparent contradiction, but then again we can say that each applies to *specific contexts*, or is buffered in precise moments, is *topical*, in short, and, moreover, each actually is looking at a phenomenon from a different point of view. Though we cannot go into parallel examples here, suffice to say that each aphorism dealing with art and aesthetics is making a re-newed, necessarily different claim, on what we by convention call "the same thing." But if we now look back, in the spirit of our itinerary, we can say that Nietzsche had already explored ancient Greek aesthetics and found it to lack a word/concept for beauty as something added on, because beauty was intrinsic to the experience, and the feeling of horror typically went hand in hand with the sensation of bliss. But this is already the realm of the sublime. The distinction, then, is intellectual, a historically derived logical separation, but is not given in the actual experience.

There is also a most compact critical compendium of the history of poetry within the three pages of aphorism 221—where clearly to call it aphorism is stretching it a bit—which would deserve a line-by-line comment. Let us recall that, for Nietzsche, two great

poets of Modernity are Voltaire and Lord Byron, two grand allegorists despite their more satirical or grotesque inclinations, and that with Goethe, Nietzsche claims, we had a chance to regain the tradition of art and instead we buried it under the more strident demands of the age (which I take can be identified with Romanticism and Symbolism). Perhaps, Nietzsche says, Goethe's real illuminations have not even begun to shine upon posterity, and if we are too weak to continue in his path, constantly in the midst of poetic revolutions which were related directly to unearthing buried treasures, we should "attribute with the eye's imagination at least the old perfection and completeness to the remaining ruins and porticos of the temple." It is clearly an invitation to invest in one's projections of the other, the unsayable, perhaps the unsaid, which in Goethe coincides with the tradition. Thus Nietzsche: "so he lived in art as in the memory of true art: his poetry was an aid to his memory, to his understanding of old, long since vanished art periods." Need we remind ourselves that in antiquity poetry was, among things, a melic and mnemonic art, and that Goethe was—with the exception of Hölderlin—the most "Greek" of German poets?

The crucial role played by Goethe as a privileged interlocutor between the Greeks and Schopenhauer/Wagner could lead to relevant insights for our study, among which I will mention a recent study by Giangiorgio Pasqualotto in which he demonstrates how much Nietzsche's *Übermensch* owes to Goethe's complex characterization of the ideal *Mensch*.[20] But for the time being it is important to recall that, according to Walter Benjamin, a modern critique and eventual rejection of allegory started precisely with Goethe, especially his earlier pre-romantic and romantic work, and continued on through to the twentieth century, particularly under the influence of idealist and Marxist criticism (Benjamin 1977). Nietzsche of course knew his *Faust* by heart, but his explicit references to it—and they are scattered everywhere—are usually meant to energize certain *exemplary concepts*, to set off a "rhetorical" effect, or else to exemplify the tragic and lyric aspects of the Faust legend. He hardly seems to concentrate on the narrative, persuasive, time-bound *discursive modes* of the play. Yet in this very same cryptoessay he pronounces a compassionate and melancholy prose song to the great Olympian

himself which shows further signs of what I perceive as a gradual shift in his understanding of language modes and of rhetoric:

> Not individuals, but more or less ideal masks, not reality but an allegorical generality; historical characters and local color made mythical and moderated almost to invisibility; contemporary feeling and the problems of contemporary society compressed to the simplest forms, stripped of their stimulating, suspenseful, pathological qualities, made *ineffective* in all but the artistic sense; no new subjects and characters, but rather the old long-familiar ones, in ever enduring reanimation and reformation: that is art as Goethe later *understood* it, as the Greeks and even the French *practiced* it. (*HATH* I, 221)

12. The Turn

It would be interesting to study the actual length of the aphorisms to see whether there is a relationship between the amount of space each occupies and the topics or themes dealt with. It cannot escape notice, for instance, that the sections titled "Of First and Last Things," "Religious Life," and "A Look at the State" contain rather lengthy passages, sometimes several pages long, whereas the entries under "Woman and Child," "Man Alone with Himself," and parts of "Man in Society" are by contrast relatively short. But the results would bear more on a psychological or thematic approach to the Nietzschean text than on his relationship to language in general. In fact, the one encompassing statement that can safely be made with regard to the aphoristics he has now undertaken is that his *style* becomes taut and tense, that his *tone* is more and more peremptory, *and* self-effacing, as if some ultimate truth were pronounced each time.

This can be seen in the second volume of *Human, All Too Human*, whose first part bears the title "Mixed Opinions and Maxims" and basically belabors and deepens some of the themes of the first volume, that "monologue of a book"[21] which started Nietzsche on the way to becoming a "free spirit." The second volume concludes, as is well known, with what became a "fourth part" in the 1886 edition, titled "The Wanderer and His Shadow," written in 1879 and published in 1880. In the 1886 preface to the

entire *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche is speaking from the vantage point of the *aftermath* of the Zarathustra experience, and ineluctably he autobiographizes his itinerary, expressing what with some slight modifications we will find in *Ecce Homo*, namely, that this was a book—and a corresponding period in his life—in which he took leave of a handful of notions which had literally enslaved human thinking, among which we recall idealism, romanticism, metaphysical truths, religious beliefs, and what in present day metalingo we might tag suprahistorical ideological aberrations. At that time, Nietzsche writes in 1886, "I learned to speak as a hermit, like one who in his taciturn ways needs no witness and is rather indifferent to them," though he seems to speak for the pleasure of it, to ward off silence itself (*HATH*, II:v). The taking leave of all truth-related values meant personal detachment as well as further inner soul searching; but this is done without personal references, without the aid of a fictitious *ich* (*EH* 2:289). In this light, Nietzsche is still, on the surface at least, highly critical of any visionary disclosures of the truth, that is, of any allegorizing (*HATH* II, 6), and he seems to equate these with allegedly scientific metaphysical constructs, which fall apart the minute we remove the hidden knapsack of Pharisaic pride (*HATH* II, 12). Here again the question rotates about the stern refusal to allow any type of otherness, any external support to lend credence if not viability to assertions about human nature which can be taken to be free, vital, and authentic.

Yet in this same book Nietzsche also seems to bring forth certain inevitable situations of the thinking-being which continue to swell and undermine his radical critique and blur the insights of his oracular pronouncements. In aphorism 20 he observes that faith in truth begins with doubting all other hitherto believed truths. In aphorism 24 he seems to hark back to *The Birth of Tragedy* while at the same time he points forward to an altered perception of what rhetoric is all about, as we will see presently. Nietzsche says that a friendly smile and beaconing glance are what constitute the ultimate grand applause to the comedy of life and existence, but this entails also accepting the comedy within the comedy, the play for which we ultimately want the spectator to say *plaudite amici*. Now in pre-Socratic rhetoric this coincides with the eristic and apotropaic moment whereby human speech above all is a

becoming aware of the other, a positioning vis-à-vis the other even before any (semantic) transaction can be carried out. Nietzsche seems more at home, in fact, when he addresses the condition of the thinking being, as in aphorism 26 when he postulates that the most difficult thing for man is to conceive of entities *impersonally*, without seeing oneself implicated in the thought that is being thought, without pride, without an ego investment. But there once again we notice that the thinking being without the "givenness" of the thought-entity being thought is impossible, and that perhaps in due time this correlation, this relationship will have to be addressed in a way which is *different from* the Heraclitean-Anaxagorian model.

By way of further meditation on the notion of "real reality," (*HATH* II, 32), the desire to be "right" and "judge" at the same time (*HATH* II, 33), the trickery of love (*HATH* II, 37 and 75), and the mirror of nature (*HATH* II, 49), we reach another crucial point concerning the non-isolated, socialized individual. This appears in aphorism 89, in which Nietzsche observes that the origin of custom or tradition derives from two main thoughts: first, *the community is more important than the individual*, and second, *a lasting advantage is to be preferred to a momentary one*.[22] Though the author is still fundamentally interested in exposing and perhaps reconstituting an ideal free individual, a free spirit above and beyond the harnessing and subjugating which history, beliefs, tradition, and so on impose constantly, here it becomes evident that he is not contesting, nor even critiquing, the fact that this is the way things are, and have always been, insofar as the nexus between society and the individual is concerned. Another Viconian insight which harks back to primitive cultures and tribal behavior, Nietzsche states it only to belabor the fact that the individual as such is always a "minority" and a "victim" whose voice is forever belated and whose panacea is the morality of self-righteous individualism. Though this condition is deprecable and the object of some violent criticism elsewhere, especially when this same individual erects political and racial and philosophical castles on the resentment of being a victim, it serves the purpose of opening up this same individual to the necessariness of being-with-others, to use a twentieth-century existentialist formulation. In this light, the poets who developed this awareness and consider

themselves prophets—for instance, we can think of Hugo, Byron, Wagner, Tennyson, Carducci, Goethe himself—should avoid the fatal lure of thinking themselves above history and beyond the constrictions of the epoch (though of course in order to really portray "the beautiful and grand soul" of the future they must elevate the past by means of an apparently disinterested passion, by locating a plateau where knowledge and art could be rejoined in a new unity).[23] The delicate differences of the ideal made flesh can exist against the golden background of a true painting: the ever changing human loftiness. Beginning with Goethe, once again! Though that is something to come, as we saw above, and as he reiterates in aphorism 172, where poets are no longer masters and teachers.

Nietzsche spends some of his energy on the question of limit and excess, both of which are related to the issue of language and rhetorical modes of expression. In aphorism 113 he discusses Sterne and the unique, unclassifiable "freedom" he experienced and experimented with as a writer. Sterne seemed to be on this and that side of the ideal membrane of style simultaneously, inimitable, chameleonlike, equivocal, excessive, great only because there is one of him, elusive even to Diderot. Immediately after this rare panegyric in the Nietzsche canon, in aphorism 114 Nietzsche muses on the reality of choosing, on the need to be selective, on the responsibility of the writer—the writer of the future—to represent only what is real, "prescinding from all fantastical, superstitious, halfway honest and decayed subjects which were the power of bygone artists. Only reality, and *not each* reality, but rather *a chosen* reality" (my emphasis). This can be linked to another assertion, aphorism 122, in which he states that often one does not become a thinker because he has too strong a memory, implying perhaps that to attempt to account for all that one remembers can prevent the mind from exercising its creative freedom. To know everything, to remember everything is typically to assume an omniscient, omnipotent posture, a *theoretical* vision in which everything must fall into its proper place. One way to avoid this is to begin to forget what has been deemed irrelevant, pernicious, untenable, fantastical, decadent, or worse. More to the point, the circle must be closed. As we read in aphorism 125, whoever follows a philosophy or an artistic style

from beginning to end and has traveled through its passageways and byways should understand why posterior thinkers and artists have turned away, often with disdain, towards new horizons: "The circle must be closed yet the individual, even the greatest one, holds on fast to his post in the outskirts, with an inexorable expression of thickheadedness, as if the circle could actually never be closed." The implications of this observation will reverberate in later writings on the impossibility of any absolutes, on the ineluctable influx of other's ideas, on the necessity to reinterpret any and every text, on the subterranean relation between limit and excess, finally on the external location of the being vis-à-vis that apparently elusive centeredness of the other which must be out there as a given to be perceived, to enter in linguistic relation with. The reflection on language at this point tends to be rather self-deconstructing. First of all, brevity is no longer seen as an indication of an underdeveloped thought (aphorism 127); furthermore, and belaboring this apologia, the worst readers of maxims and sententiae are the author's own friends, in a way suggesting the actual *need* for a reader (friend) across time, across the distance. Then a reflection on a topic which he apparently had abandoned since the mid-seventies, in aphorism 131, on Greek eloquence. Nietzsche observes that the history of oratorical eloquence, from teacher to teacher, evidences an ever-increasing concern for internal moderation in order to respect a corpus of laws and self-imposed limitations both ancient and modern which in the end bring a painful tension: "one understands why the bow had to break and why one day the so-called inorganic composition, covered and masked with the most stupefying expressive means [in this case, the Baroque style of Orientalism] became a necessity and almost a gift." Could it be that Nietzsche was there waiting, once the circle of eloquence had been closed and made sclerotic through self-imposed limitation and, we might add, repetition, could it be that he was there waiting for the bow to break? Does that not mean that, on the one hand, he accepts the historical presence of certain excesses, and on the other that he legitimates the counterpresence of a stark, unmediated, unselfconscious limiting expression? Again, he is clearly defending *his* style, but he seems ever more open to an "objective"—if the term be allowed, when speaking of Nietzsche—evaluation of other possibilities of

discourse. Yet in this vein, he is still very much against the "mixed styles" he found so deplorable in Plato and his heritage, as in aphorism 139 where he asserts that such a profusion of voices and genres reflects the author's distrust for his own efforts: "he searches for allies, lawyers, hideouts: thus the poet summons to his help philosophy, the musician calls for the drama, and the philosopher calls upon rhetoric."

13. Disclosing Otherness

In *Human, All Too Human* (1879), Nietzsche writes:

> A good aphorism is too hard for the teeth of time and is not consumed through the centuries although it serves every time for nourishment: thus it is the great paradox of literature the intransitory amid the changing, the food that always remains esteemed like salt, and never loses its savor, as even that does. (*HATH* II, 168)

Coherently with his perception that his is a book into which one just peeks from time to time and comes away stunned, and for which no "continuity" is required or even desired, he is here theorizing expressive form in terms of its timelessness, barely hiding the preoccupation with Eternity and Infinity which in other parts of the book he takes issue with directly, and which will peak in *Zarathustra*. But it also betrays a calm or even resigned musing over the seductive power of the brilliant sentence, that terrifying brief illumination, the one moment which stands for the all of the experience of the cosmos. He will speak of the power and value of brevity as late as the conclusion to *The Gay Science* (381), though this is symptomatically titled: "On the Question of Being Understandable." In *Human, All Too Human* (II, 219), we read praise for the laconic epigram of Simonides. Yet these metacritical remarks emphasize even more how, despite its pointedness and precision and timelessness, the aphorism is still a rhetorical construct which stands in, or doubles, for something else *which is what wants to be said.*

Like Prometheus seeking the perfect balance between Dionysus and Apollo, self-assured in ambivalent arrogance (*authadeia, Superbia*), certain of the "importance" of his saying, which cannot go wrong and needs not persuasive maneuvers—or so he be-

lieves—sole listener/reader in ecstasy, Nietzsche will soon be compelled to search for an expressive mode which would permit the useful actualization of all the styles, or better, kinds of utterances, appropriate to the ever-changing situations of the existent.

The Ancient Quarrel between poetry and philosophy is reenacted as the apparently contrasting claims made on reality by art and knowledge. Art has a high point in music, which is entirely sensual and devoid of concept: pure *signifier*, we might say (if it should aspire to "idea," then it turns "decadent"; cf. *CW* 10). Knowledge achieves its end, signification, through logic, or the identity principle, and the creation of however miscast *signifieds*. But we know that the passions and the body speak and signify even before the distinction is posited, and moreover, both poetry and philosophy need, in varying degrees, yet constitutively, *signifiant* AND *signifié*, and that in order *to be*: it has never been a question of one *or* the other. It did not escape Nietzsche that the opposition Dionysus-Apollo[24] was not pre-emptive of other possible spaces of interaction (for instance, Prometheus, Orpheus, Ariadne, Zoroaster, Christ), that sequence and distribution can exist outside of Cartesian paradigms,[25] and that by claiming its own autonomy, *language itself becomes a third co-founding term linked with—and linking—reality and ideality, body and soul.* This in itself is reason enough to explain Nietzsche's self-deconstructing, parodistic style, in that in and by themselves the aphorisms speak, utter sentences against the backdrop of an Eternity which is simultaneously the here and now, or the moment of becoming itself: the aphorism harks to a totality which is either gone or unachievable, and turns into the ultimate simulacrum of Western thinking, of metaphysics. Of course the aphorisms themselves need to be interpreted, but is it ever exactly clear whom they are speaking to, for whom they are pronounced?[26] Let us recall that, insofar as the aphorism is the rhetorical mode of expression of Nietzsche the thinker who has already abandoned most established forms of discourse, it can be contradicted, and negated, from within, so to speak, though once again it shows no need of interlocutor: "*Positive and negative*. The thinker needs nobody to refute him: for that he suffices himself" (*HATH* II, 249).

Now if we consider Nietzsche's own statements about language, time, and thinking, as we have done thus far, and place them in relation to observed "external" shifts in his rhetorical strategy from the time of *The Birth of Tragedy* to the writing, in quick succession, of *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, and finally think the meaning of these changes in the broader context of Nietzsche's "ideas" and "topics" he had in mind during the same ten years, we have to agree with Heidegger that we are witness to the high point, the culmination of Western Metaphysics. Thinking has been confined to the language of entities, reified concepts, self-legitimating notions that stand clear of articulating Being. And Being, Nietzsche was trying to say, is actually Becoming[27] (cf. his pages on Parmenides in *PTAG*). Could it be that language itself was involved in this absence, this forgetfulness? When the free spirit begins to see the glow of dawn, and his language has reached the pointedness, the economical and quintessential consistency of a quick timeless sentence, he is at a crossroads, and he can decide to do either of two things: stop and silence himself before the rising sun (among his contemporaries, Rimbaud chose this path); or he can react by creating yet again a global alternative (or rearrangement) to Western thinking and values (it would be the case of Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, Milton; think of Blake's famous phrase: "I must create my own System, or be enslaved by another man's"). Obviously Nietzsche chose the second path.

However, his vision cannot be couched in the systematic, highly semioticizable allegory, such as Virgil's or Dante's, or in utopistic hyperspace, such as we find in the chivalric epic, but must be that very condition of language, the speaking of the otherness that partakes of one's being and of which all we know is that it is constantly changing, becoming. *The language of becoming must of necessity be fluid, temporally marked, continuous, an interplay of voices and positions, metamorphoses of signification.* And even in terms of his social and political ideas, it would "make sense" to want to share them with the greatest possible number of people. Besides the inner difficulty of dealing with meaning and existence, there is pressure from an outside, so to speak, from a collectivity which cannot be spoken to directly and which must be given the freedom to choose whether to listen or not: the great book itself

will in fact be written "for all or no one." But whereas for the aphorisms certain generalized topics can be recognized and grouped, so much so that philosophers in general tend to ignore *Zarathustra* in order to discuss his more "traditional" writings (see the overview in K. Higgins 1987:ix–xxi), the mode and structure of a highly emblematic literary narration make it that much more elusive, an "open work"[28] that responds to one's reading but defies any One Reading. For, in the case of his *Hauptwerk*, Nietzsche presaged that some day "a few chairs will be established for the interpretation of *Zarathustra*" (*EH* "Books," 1). Humble as usual!

Nietzsche had discovered, as we read in *The Will to Power* (727), that an infinite process cannot at all be thought of otherwise than as being periodical, something that returns and thus institutes a memory, sketches a range within which to re-call the experience of Being in conjunction with the absolute givenness of the world, the existentialia present each and every moment. But this entails facing up to the "reality" of a constitutive indirectness that shrouds human communication, and the fact that when something is told it is amidst a plurality, having all forms of the personal pronoun interact. Accordingly, when humans communicate, they must, like Zarathustra, invent symbols for moods, desires, and dreams; transcribe designs of the prophet; and announce one's philosophy as story in progress (Alderman), "dramatic narrative" (Lampert 1986:4), tragedy, parody, even *Bildungsroman* (K. Higgins), and certainly as a fable of something which could not easily be put into words: the eternal recurrence of the same and the will to power.

Let us recall in *Daybreak* Nietzsche had observed:

> Words lie in our way. Whenever primitive mankind set up a word, they believed they had made a discovery. How different the truth is!—they had touched on a problem, and by supposing they had *solved* it they had created a hindrance to its solution.—Now with every piece of knowledge one has to stumble over dead, petrified words, and one will sooner break a leg than a word. (*D* I, 47)

This belabors thoughts already expressed in *HATH* II, "The Wanderer and His Shadow," aphorism 33, and again in aphorism 13, where he notes that it is a good idea to express oneself twice in order to give our thoughts both a left and a right leg: for though it is possible for truth to stand on only one of its legs, it is with both that it will walk and journey the world.

In the context of *HATH* II we find nearly side by side several philosophical resolutions which again point towards the overcoming of the aphoristic style. We can quickly mention the fact that part 2 of book II begins with a dialogue, which is significant. The characters are a "Wanderer," the same who will subscribe to the aphoristics of "to err is human," and his Shadow, who makes a pitch for a non-agonistical rhetoric of dialogue.[29] Paraphrasing: the Shadow asserts that it is a good thing if, in responding to a question which a person might not have understood, the other person does not leap up to handcuff him, because if the interlocutor really does not know how to respond, all that is needed and opportune is to simply say something, anything. Here we can make a case for an equality principle which is predicated upon a will that pushes beyond what the rhetorical element in natural language does not permit one to do, to be *not* persuasive. But there is more in this little dialogue. We learn of the necessity to give the other the possibility to speak, that is, admitting, letting the other utterances be, *and* rejoice or at least be glad for this fact: a suggestion which is coherent with what Nietzsche elsewhere says concerning the willingness to choose not to do something, the heroic stoicism one must bring along every single day, and the acceptance of the masks we cannot but wear.[30] The Wanderer remarks on the copresence and coexistence of light and dark, and the Shadow responds, apparently on "a different level," by saying he is what follows man while man searches eternally for knowledge. The Wanderer retorts that "he thinks" he understands, even though the Shadow expressed itself "in shaded" ways. The dry humor brings the author back to his authorial intention, for immediately after the above exchange, the Wanderer is shocked at having so much as talked to a Shadow. But now look what, better, who, reappears: "May Heaven help me against long and ruminating written dialogues. If Plato had taken less to ruminating, his readers would take more to Plato." Before exiting, the Shadow is finally reassured that on something they at least agree, namely, that people will understand only the opinions of the

Wanderer, but never, despite glorious attempts to the contrary, those of the Shadow.

It is easy to metaphorize on the shadow, and we can take it as a critical figure to draw some concluding observations. If facts are isolated entities and totally unrelated to the freedom of the will, how does one deal with this unreconcilable duality or dualism within the "idea of a constant, homogeneous, undivided and indivisible flux" (aph. 11)? Concerning the aesthetic aspect of becoming, Nietzsche will write in aphorism 105 that the poet's thoughts are veiled "like the Egyptians: only the deep *eye* of thought looks unimpeded beyond the veil," suggesting an acceptance of the patina or film that stands between existent and beings (entities as well as ideas), and an awareness that, because of it, meaning will be veiled, shaded, if not altogether shadowy.

Shadow (or darkness) is to light what silence is to music. Let us recall Nietzsche's constant interest in music, which is found to be nearly antithetical to discussion because music, like number, expresses "unclear thoughts and the veneration of unsayable things," and partakes of silence, whereas discussion merely puts up with music, for it ultimately leads to dialectics, we might say, to en*light*enment.[31] Finally, the fact that communication must always involve more than one being means that the speaking to the issues and the persons behind them must be equally represented, that is to say, mimed, translated, transfigured. It is a necessity which Nietzsche expresses openly when, already planning the Zarathustra book, he points to the need to account for the "several sublime states which I have lived through" (*KSA* IX:495–96). A close look at the unpublished manuscripts from the time he was writing *Daybreak* reveals that Nietzsche was also "consciously" looking for a new form of writing (Venturelli 1983:25–50). This is not inconsistent with aphorism 93 in book II of *The Gay Science*, where to the question "But why do you write?"—which, incidentally, is cast as a micro-dialogue between A and B, as we occasionally find in his other books of this period—there is the answer "so far, I have not discovered any other way of getting rid of my thoughts." The fact that A confirms, in the end, "Why I want to? Do I want to? I must," reflects the growing preoccupation that having shattered and discarded all the encrustations of history and morality—process encrypted in

the sentence "God is dead" (*GS* 108)—in short, of metaphysical constructs, the time was ripe to articulate *his* understanding of things. No need to belabor the details from his biography that speak to the stupor, wonder, fever, and enthusiasm he felt at Sils Maria. In *The Gay Science* we read: "*Only as creators*!—This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important that what they are" (*GS* II, 58).

To be able to name the difference: is it possible? To dance and speak between poetry and philosophy: can it be done? Perhaps not, but certainly not fully: vision brings shadows along. And when what we typically call "the vision" doth appear, it is already veiled and unnameable. Recall the three allusions to the thought of the eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science*, and at its cautious gestation and maturation within the text of *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche can no longer begin his fragments and paragraphs in the third person, use category, class, and generic names to refer to things, pour sardonic bile over the self-condescending truths that flowed from his pen. Especially if seen against the background of his obsession with Wagner, opera, and theater. If aphorism 124 in book III of *The Gay Science* speaks of a (another) major turn in Nietzsche's thought, with figurative reference to Homer and possibly to Dante concerning the having "embarked" there being "no longer any 'land'," aphorism 342 of book IV announces its next stage as "tragedy": it will in fact be carried over to double as the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Among Nietzsche scholars, almost no one took the rhetorical structure of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* seriously enough to see in it anything more than a "strategy," or a tropological shift vis-à-vis his aphoristic style, and at worst a deployment of an allegorical subframe upon which to collage a long, prophetic poem. But in reality we are witness to a fundamental and radical refusal of the language modes and the ideologies of Modernity. It is perhaps owed to the cultural (and institutional) critical preference for the autonomous, transcendental signifier, that even allegory has been understood as a Composition 101 principle of organized storytelling. The very word *allegory* seems to be studiously avoided by Alderman, Lampert, Magnus, K. Higgins, Venturelli; even Pasqualotto fails to problematize it. Masini was tempted to se-

mioticize and came up with the notion of "semantic fields" (Masini 1978: 279–320). Yet on the basis of other, more explicitly theoretical works on allegory, as well as by having traced the different ways in which Nietzsche himself grapples with the problem of unavoidable figuration, we can say that the aphorism stands in antithetical relation to it. The aphorism coincides metaphorically with the Orphic appeal of translucent totality, with crystal clear truths removed or alienated from the concourse of real, living human beings, whereas allegory may permit a yet symbolic, stylized but nevertheless predicated, socially shared recovery of the myriad of instants and now-points of experience in the flux of the cosmos.

14. Provisional Theoretical Considerations

If Paul de Man demonstrated with convincing deconstructive brushstrokes that allegory is intrinsically temporal, that its grounding linguistic moment is primordially a temporal sequence and, especially when compared to irony, engenders a non-analytical, non-self-reflexive ontological construct (de Man 1983:187–228), Walter Benjamin had already brought out its duplicitous exemplariness to full critical development. Allegory entails both, *convention* and *expression*, whereas the aphorism has shown itself to be purely expressive and rather uncaring of any conventionality; in fact, it may even disclose a certain elitist, anti-social, and negative or contemptuous attitude towards the listener/reader, or the other(s). As a point in chaos, the text of the aphorism floats atomistically, which is to say, randomly, and at any given point that it encounters the gaze/ear of the other, it quickly expresses its ambivalence, its being a metaphor (transposition) or image (we are only reflected images, says Nietzsche) that can be interpreted endlessly, but also aimlessly . . . unless it is frozen in signifying space by an outside intervention (i.e.: the reader's critical method). Though from the author's standpoint this appears to be, coherently with his philosophy of constant becoming, the only way to proceed, yielding the "interminable hermeneutics" of the recurring of existence (Pasqualotto 1988:9–52), it becomes a problem when random sense wants to achieve some sort of *consensus*. The rhetorical structure of the aphorism shuns lengthy explanations, abhors projections, and denies response; in brief, it avoids the invitation to dialogue, conversation, preventing *convictions* (agreements on what is known) from turning into meaningful exchange, or *persuasions* (acting on what is believed) (cf. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971:26–31). As embodiment or cipher of a thought, an utterance meant to persist over time (or Eternity), we can say of the aphorism what Agamben observed concerning "thinking," namely, that it is somehow suspended, that "something hangs in language" (Agamben 1986:57). In a first approximation, allegory retrieves the aphorism from its interstellar suspension and compounds it with more circumscribed, localized, real (or "closer" to the real) recognizable linguistic situations.

In terms of genre theory, it cannot be denied that there is indeed—and at the very least has been, historically, at least from Dante through Tennyson (not to mention Scripture studies)—something "abstract" about allegory, making it a conceptual schema or "architectural" scaffolding with which to erect and orchestrate the various subdeterminations. From their antithetical positions, both Croce and Lukács understood allegory as an explicit "rational" act, foreign to the more fundamental process of intuition-expression or coincidence of essence and phenomena. Northrop Frye, also, within his theory of modes describes allegory as a "Formal Phase" of the process of symbolization, thus limiting it to what is at bottom a semiotic principle: "A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying 'by this I *also (allos)* mean that'," (Frye 1973:90), not too removed from the *aliquid stat pro aliquo* notion of the sign that undergirds modern semiotics (Eco 1975). We must add, however, that in placing allegory (whether as "commentary" or "naive") within Ethical Criticism, Frye appears to be sensitive to the mimetic, extra-aesthetic element that characterizes allegories. But in concert with neo-Kantian poetics, Frye discounts this interface between the aesthetic and the ethic, whereas it is here that, I submit, we ought to reopen the discussion on allegory.

Allegory regards convention in that it considers the thing-in-itself (the word, the image, the notion, that inconsequential "true" of things Nietzsche decanted in "TLES") while making it a thing-for-us, an "other" something which may represent whatever it is we wish to communicate or to understand. This explains my

continual reference to Vico, who in *The New Science* posited allegories as the earliest form—rhetorical mode, we might say—of tribal, communal linguistic interaction, necessarily superstitious, or theological. The world of extra-ordinary events, the dynamics of certain crucial phenomena, the structure of behavior were given a configuration, a sense, a coherent or effective order and thus lay the basis for communication and recognition, exchange linguistic and material. Vico's ontological anthropology finds support in Freud, Monod, and Geertz. The stories of origins and battles and sacrifices through an ever-changing, and culturally determined, process of figuration (the various myths in themselves) were not only or primarily hidden wisdom—this happens when we get monotheism—but also a code and guide to intra-wordly understanding, and finally a potential disclosure of unnameables: we can infer from the use of *divinari* that the *fabule* double as the interpretation of omens and the like in search of unknown causes (the past) and unforeseeable events (the future). Of course, historically allegory has undergone evolution and transformations which have made of it a genre, a style, finally a disposable type (cf. Fletcher), in philosophical terms, a "method." The history of this mutation from Dante through Milton, Spenser, Hugo is in itself a major chapter in the hermeneutics of literary-philosophical Post-Modernity, and deserves further inquiry. Suffice to say that it is intimately connected with the evolution and transformations of the idea of language, especially since the beginning of the Humanist period, and the encroachment of (scientific, philosophical) method in discourse at the expense of rhetoric (cf. Ong, Apel).

We saw that Nietzsche wanted to imitate, or mimic, the lyrical tragedy of the gods, in a sense trying to speak the originary *verbum*. As stilled in the aphorism, however, it can only be an utterance of a thought, a *pensée*. With *Human, All Too Human* he begins to perceive that a certain degree of irony and potential self-parody is constantly undermining his thinking, and at one point he understands his entire existence, and his activity, as an echo, a mirror image, a distillation of a greater overarching whole. But he is producing formulae, names, generalizations, or individual impressions cast in "abstract" and isolated situations. An "escape" valve may have been provided by his increased attempts

at expressing himself "poetically," so much so that by the time we get to *The Gay Science*, he publishes the book with a *Prelude in German Rhymes*, and eventually an *Appendix of Songs*. We must recall, however, that the lyric—the dithyramb in particular—being the highest or quintessential form of poetic expression, is also the language mode most suited to the song of the Grand Themes, the Great Immutables such as Love, Death, Time, Birth, Fortune, God, and so on. In European culture these poetic forms with their "topical" themes have freed an immanentist, monist, often solipsistic afflatus, a fatalistic Saying decayed to foregone conclusions about life. As lyric, it survives today owing mostly to the infinite metamorphoses of Stylistic Forms, but it is shot with metaphysics through and through.

The lyric is to poetry what the aphorism is to philosophical discourse. The aphorism de-fines, instances, pins down, as trace glyph or flash, a given thought in the most economical, immediate, radical manner possible, but it is at the same time *general* and *indifferent*. There does not seem to be any apparent linguistic necessity in the aphorism (and now I take it in the broad sense, including subvariants such as notes, fragments, impressions, and divagations) to articulate and correlate its semantics with anything outside of itself, to act out a rhetorical posture, to let anyone else actually pay attention to its purported wisdom, to coax the reader/listener into a participatory environment. Not unlike the epitaphs sculpted in marble: no one need respond: they simply state.

The aphorism reveals itself, if not mainly as oracle, then as dazzling paradox, if not as an enigma, then as a mysterious utterance towards its revelation, if not a pearl of scleroticized knowledge, then as the simplicity of the pearl. On the basis of Nietzsche's views on the dream of pure knowledge, the rhetoric of the aphorism turns anthropophagically on itself: the pure simulacrum of wisdom is devoid of consequence, in and by itself it is everything, in appearance, therefore nothing, in essence: nihilism.

15. Coda

Thus spoke Zarathustra:

> I and me are always too deep in conversation: How could one stand that if there were no friend? For the hermit is

always the third person: the third is the cork that prevents the conversation of the two from sinking into the depths. Alas, there are too many depths for all hermits; therefore they long so for a friend and his height. (I, "On the Friend")

Thus the body goes through history, becoming and fighting. And the spirit—what is that to the body? The herald of its fights and victories, companion and echo.

All names of good and evil are parables: they do not define, they merely hint. A fool is he who wants knowledge of them!

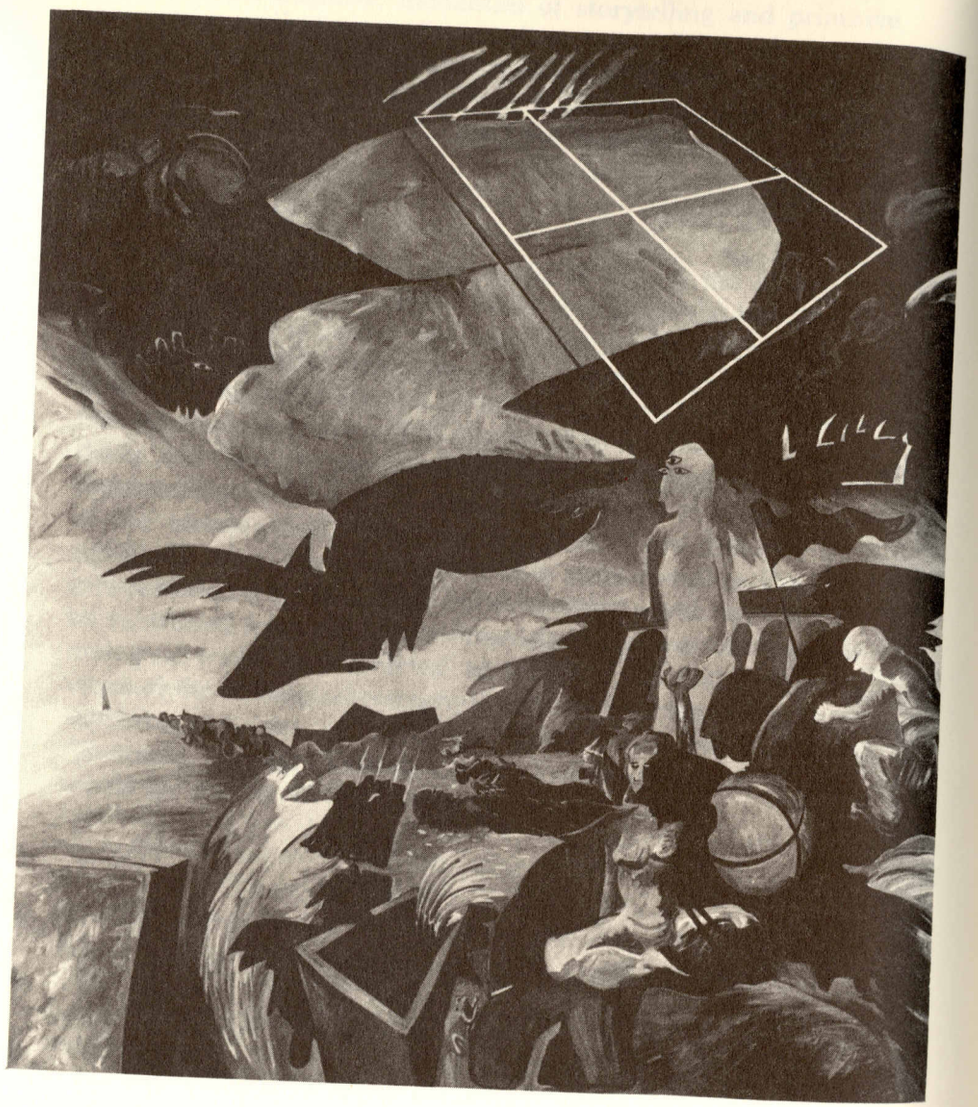
Watch for every hour, my brothers, in which your spirit wants to speak in parables: there lies the origin of your virtue. There your body is elevated and resurrected; with its rapture it delights the spirit so that it turns creator and esteemer and lover and benefactor of all things. (I, "On the Gift-Giving Virtue," 1)

"...O Zarathustra, I know it, of how you want to leave me soon."

"Yes," I answered hesitantly, "but you also know—" and I whispered something into her ear, right through her tangled yellow foolish tresses.

"You *know* that, O Zarathustra? Nobody knows that."

And we looked at each other and gazed on the green meadow over which the cool evening was running just then, and we wept together. But then life was dearer to me than all my wisdom ever was. (III, "The Other Dancing Song," 2)



Lucio Pozzi, *The Migration,* 1981

1. *BEFORE* ZARATHUSTRA

1. See Kaufmann's introduction to *The Will to Power*. In this and the following chapters, references to Nietzsche's works (cf. the Bibliography) will be incorporated into the text by means of the following abbreviations: *Birth of Tragedy* = *BT*; *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* = *PTAG*; "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" = "TLES"; *Untimely Meditations* = *UM* I–IV; *Human, All Too Human* = *HATH* I and II; *Daybreak* = *D* I and II; *The Gay Science* = *GS*; *Beyond Good and Evil* = *BGE*; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* = *Z*; *Frammenti Postumi* = *FP*; *The Will to Power* = *WTP*; *The Case of Wagner* = *CW*; *On the Genealogy of Morals* = *GM*; *Twilight of the Idols* = *TI*; *Ecce Homo* = *EH*. In general, references are to the aphorism or paragraph as numbered in the English editions used, but where appropriate the page number follows. For *BIT, PTAG,* and *GM,* reference is made to the chapter. Further references to the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (*KSA*) are to volume and page number.

2. Because I am inquiring into Nietzsche's use and theory of language before the writing of the Zarathustra book, I do not, in this study, engage in extensive comment on and critique of recent monographs on *Z*, such as we have by Alderman, K. Higgins, Lampert, Pasqualotto 1985, and Shapiro 1989. The itinerary I sketch points necessarily to different conclusions.

3. From Galileo to Descartes to Spinoza to Leibniz, this is by now a well-known trait of rational and scientific thought: knowledge is arrived at by exclusion, by saying primarily what something is not. On the systematic, "willed" removal by Knowledge of its origin in unreason, see "Cogito and the History of Madness" in Derrida 1978:31–63.

4. References to Vico's *The New Science*, hereinafter *NS*, are to the English edition by Bergin and Fisch, followed by paragraph number.

5. In Nietzsche we find, alternatively, besides *Aphorismus, Kurzer Lehr, Denkspruch, Urspruch,* and *Ausspruch*. They are all connected, if not at the morphosyntactic level, then certainly at the semantic and conceptual level, as a closer look at the lexemes will show. Looking at a period authority, Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig 1854–60), at the entry /Denkspruch/ we read: "Memorabilis sententia, auch symbolum wahlspruch; franz. *devise*." For /Lehrspruch/, a maxim, an adage, we read: "Spruch der eine lehre enthält: leerspruch . . . ein gülden wort." Curiously enough, the word /Aphorismus/ is not registered, and is not to be found either in the Littré, Meyer-Lübke, Troubners (Berlin 1939), or F. K. Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (Berlin 1960). It finally appears in *Der Große Duden* (Mannheim 1964–70): "knapp formulierter, geistreicher Gedanke," and "Gedankensplitter, kurz hingeworfener, inhaltsreicher Gedanke (als selbständige Prosaform)." Here its general sense is not too far from *Ausspruch*, which means dictum, saying, verdict.

It is interesting and perhaps useful to review reconstructions of the lexeme in other languages in light of its conceptual and figural developments throughout

European culture. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the meaning and use of the lexeme /aphorism/ in the English-language literary and philosophical heritage is derived from the Greek noun *aphorismos*, which etymologically means "a distinction, a definition," in the sense of "to cut up"—and implicitly "to dispose of"—at any rate implying an act of discernment and control by means of separation. Such is the sense in Bacon's usage around 1605 and thereafter.

The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1962) reports, for /Sententia/: "from *sentio*, a way of thinking, opinion, judgment, sentiment; a purpose, determination, decision . . . In Cicero: 'sententia et opinio mea;' . . . in Terence: 'de diis immortalibus habere non errantem et vagam, sed stabilem certanque sententiam.'"

The embedded tendency to serve as a guide to art or science is present in the description found in the *Diccionario Histórico de la Lengua Española* (Madrid 1933): "/Aforismo/ (Del lat. *aphorismus*, y este del gr. ἀφορισμος de ἀπό, *de*, y ὀρίζω, *limitar*); m. sentencia breve y doctrinal que se propone como principio o regla de alguna ciencia o arte."

The traits of the proverb (and its being available for possible abuse) are present in the description found in the *Grande Dicionario Etimológico-Prosódico da Língua Portuguêsa* (São Paulo 1963): "/Aforismo/: s.m. sentença, ditado, provérbio, definição . . . /aforistico/ adj. Que tem a forma de aforismo, de sentença, sentencioso."

6. The notion of precision and the relationship to definition in the scientific sense is emphasized by the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Torino 1961): "/Aforisma/, s.m. Sentenza, massima; proposizione che esprime con concisa esattezza il frutto di una lunga esperienza (di vita, di osservazione, di analisi . . .)." This certainly applies to Nietzsche the "physiologist." In this dictionary we read also from Isidor of Seville: "Aphorismus est sermo brevis, integrum sensum propositae rei scribens."

7. This aspect is captured already in Dante, where the abuse of moralizing sententiae for personal gain is decried in *Paradiso* II (interestingly enough, in association with the equally abused "logical" syllogisms): "O insensata cura de' mortali / quanti son difettivi sillogismi / quei che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali / Chi dietro a iura, e chi ad aforismi / sen giva, e chi seguendo sacerdozio." The etymological and historical reconstruction of aphorism in the above and other dictionaries reports of course its parallel meaning and use in medicine (in fact, aphorism also refers to a "precetto di medicina"), which does not interest us here.

8. I am not mentioning *BGE* because, by his own admission, this major effort of the mature Nietzsche was actually written during the "off hours" of the Zarathustra vision.

9. See for instance Vaihinger, Olafson, and, implicitly, Aiken, in Solomon 83–104, 194–201, and 114–30, respectively.

10. As Gary Shapiro (1981) persuasively argues, we have to wait until the Zarathustra book for a radical subversion of Aristotelean metaphor.

11. We are neither testing nor contesting Nietzsche's "accuracy" in his reading of the pre-Socratics in light of what modern philology and historiography hold on those philosophers. Rather, the idea is to see how he isolates certain tenets which will guide his thought in subsequent reflection.

12. The correspondence, the equation, between the artist and the child is, as is well known, a complex topic, one which can be tackled from a psychological as well as from a historiographic and cultural perspective: one need only think of the fortune of the image of the child-poet in Romantic poetry, from Wordsworth to Pascoli and on through the twentieth century, where it turned into a poetological and critical commonplace. In Nietzsche we find it as late as 1886. Cf. *WTP* 853, 797 et infra.

13. Vaihinger's book, in fact, can be read as a precursor of both phenomenology and (post)deconstructive approaches to reading in that it predicates logically the necessity of critical fictions, resting on the hypothetical but nevertheless discoursively enabling *als ob*.

14. I am referring primarily to the work of Derrida and Foucault; this lineage has proved very fertile during the past twenty years, above and beyond the intrinsic differences between the two schools of thought.

15. See chapter 6, sec. 4.

16. It can be said that the history and practice of interpretation from Schleiermacher to our day has been written in good part to explore and perhaps resolve this problem.

17. We know he later changed his mind, as we can deduce from the preface to *EH*: "Above all, do not mistake me for someone else."

18. We might incidentally recall that Dante also had diviners and sorcerers with their heads twisted backwards in *Inferno* XX, though of course to respect the *contrappasso* they also walked backwards, since they could no longer see what was in front of them.

19. Too many of Nietzsche's contemporary exegetes emphasize this ironic strand in his thought and style. But if one juxtaposes the observations made by, for instance, Jankélévitch, to those by Paul de Man in *Blindness and Insight*, it will be seen that, in the last analysis, irony is the trope of a defeatist, supercilious, uncommitting posture, an instrument of devastating critique, but hardly suited to an aesthetic or a philosophy concerned with ethical and social possibility, and planning or any "constructive" effort. On irony, besides the observations in this and other chapters, see also Carravetta 1989.

20. See Pasqualotto 1988:87–100. For a discussion on the myth of Faust and its emblematic metamorphoses in the Modern (but mostly Romantic) period, see Berman 1982:37–86.

21. That is what Nietzsche wrote on the back of the title page of the first, May 1878, edition; cf. *HATH* I:xvi.

22. I have not checked the great majority of "political" writings on Nietzsche, but it stands to reason that, coherently with our reading which will see the demise of the aphorism, it is this communitarian or at any rate social preoccupation which elbows him further along the path to allegorical and dialogical writing. As to what type of community he will envision, in terms of the categories of interpretation available, the debate is far from being resolved, and we cannot even begin to take it up here. Sometimes the distinctions are very subtle, and as the past recedes, they become even more blurred. For the political fate of the Nietzschean overman in Germany through 1945, see the excellent expository and critical book by Penzo.

23. The "new unity" between art and science is once again pointing to myth and mythic modes of saying as the most viable solution.

24. Allen Weiss reminds us, in his psychoanalytical-rhetorical reading of Bataille-and-Nietzsche, that to think the image (or notion) of Dionysius solely as a conceptual opposite of Apollo neglects the very crucial fact that there were *two* possible senses Nietzsche could have meant, each rooted in a different mytheme, *Dionysius Katharsios* and *Dionysius Baccheios* (9–11), which in turn are figuras for catharsis and madness. This can be adapted to our reading in the following way: Zarathustra goes the way of mythic, cultural catharsis (through allegory), the author Nietzsche goes the way of philosophical (and real) madness.

25. The once popular and dismissive belief that Nietzsche was an "irrational" philosopher only serves to confirm, once again, that in his writings the project of pure reason, and with it the arrogance of the Enlightenment, tragically founder. On this see Rosen 1980:209 et infra.

26. Later, in the *Genealogy* (pref. 8), he states that the aphorism requires profound exegesis, which means: "rumination." In a less farcical vein, in *The Case of Wagner* (pref.), he writes: "What does a philosopher demand of himself first and last? To overcome his time in himself, to become 'timeless'." It becomes clear how the existential temporalness of Zarathustra is no longer possible, exemplified, even sayable: the philosopher is he or she who speaks for the whole, who listens for and intends to explicate the Being or the being of being, what applies in all cases or totality: it follows therefore that time—already theorized as the *Augenblick*—must coincide with eternity.

If we bear in mind the other *topics* of concern to the Nietzsche of this period (on the eve of that August 1881 when he first conceived of the eternal return of the same), which are all related to the question of knowledge (that is, the question of the language of knowledge, or knowledge as language), the status of science and their import for *living*, for existence, we can see that certain elements he had explored earlier "return," so to speak. Among these, the unbreakable bond between poetry and thinking, music and drama, philosophy and rhetoric. These had in part been examined in 1875 in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, especially chapter 9, in which *myth* is characterized as a thinking "through visible and sensible facts, for there is no underlying thought in myth; . . . it is itself a way of thinking; it expresses a world view but through a succession of facts, actions, suffering. The *Ring of the Nibelungen* is an enormous system of thought without the conceptual form of thought." It should be recalled that what he most appreciated in Wagner was his capacity to give triple clarification to his work by elevating simultaneously the word, the gesture, and the music.

27. On Nietzsche's development of the idea of becoming, I have profited much from Pasqualotto 1988:53–86, Vattimo 1979:249–81, and Negri 1984: 227–84.

28. In the sense of Eco 1989:1–23.

29. The possibility of a non-agonistic notion of language exchange is to be found in Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking?*, Lectures I and II. This will be developed in another context with specific reference to the rhetorical dynamics of dialogue.

30. Which may, but does not have to, coincide with Nietzsche's alleged view of life as *amor fati*.

31. Here Nietzsche's notion of "discussion" is that of rational philosophy, of science, or utterances that speak the truth. It must not be forgotten that he is simultaneously waging a war against systematic philosophy and ("organized") religion.

2. FROM ULYSSES TO ZARATHUSTRA TO HERMES

1. For *Maia* I reproduce the Andreoli-Lorenzini text (D'Annunzio 1984), though I have also consulted Palmieri. I do not refer to the *Edizione Nazionale* because, as we read in and know from Gibellini, the entire Vittoriale archive is presently undergoing philological revision aimed at a definitive critical edition. I made no attempt at citing available English translations of D'Annunzio because they are generally imprecise and at times downright censorious (cf. Woodhouse's brief but significant reconstruction of D'Annunzio in England). All translations from the Italian are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2. Cf. Mutterle 1982, Gullace 1987, Piga. A brief excursion through *Primo vere* (1879) and *Intermezzo* (1883) will reveal the affinity of spirit and common topics of interest with Nietzsche, the major difference being that one is poet, the other a philologist-philosopher. This very fact, however coincidental and extrinsic, is given critical-figural relevance in the present essay.

3. The text of this article—"The Beast That Wills" in *Il Mattino* (Naples), 25–26 September, 1892—appears now in a translation with commentary by Jeff Schnapp in Harrison 1988:265–77.

4. The frontispiece of the book bears aphorism 30 from *Beyond Good and Evil*, whereas the dedication to his friend Michetti ends with the announcement of the "coming of the *Übermensch*, the Overman." In books IV and V he "quotes" freely from Nietzsche's works.