The Wreckage of Stars

Nietzsche and the Ecstasy of Poetry

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The poet who can willingly and knowingly lie, can alone tell the truth.

‘Through the Circle of Dionysos Dithyrambs’, poem 103.

‘The wreckage of stars—I built a world from this wreckage,’ Nietzsche expresses in a line of a poem.

He affirms this wreckage, these ruins, errors (as ‘we’ wander from error to error in ‘our’ errancy) through his affirmation of the eternal recurrence of the same - perhaps, the (yet) greatest and most illustrious of errors, truths, lies...

Zarathustra whispers, thus I willed it... Amor Fati...
Nietzsche once predicted that in the future there would be established a Chair (perhaps, of a transfigured philosophy) dedicated to Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Such a prediction could perhaps, as with his very last ‘poems’ and ‘letters’, according to certain, still prevalent attitudes to Nietzsche, be regarded as a symptom of his nascent ‘madness’ (his alleged megalomania). Of course, in other quarters, as with the Surrealists (or, the ever ambiguous Blanchot), such madness was to be celebrated as the epitome of Nietzsche’s philosophy – as a prophet and hero who had already gone over the bridge.

Yet, deep suspicions make themselves felt in the wake of this discourse of/about madness—indeed, in light of the work of Foucault, such a political use of the grammar of ‘madness’ (in the constraints of a discursive ‘truth regime’) is strategically disseminated to limit either access to, or the “legitimacy” of ‘knowledge’ (truth), as in the case of the Lysenko affair, or, one could ponder the tragic and disturbing fate of Wilhelm Reich.

And, indeed, such a strategy of exclusion, of quarantine, bears a family resemblance to the exclusion of poetry (poiesis) from the Canons of philosophy in the Modern period—intensified since the scientistic Twentieth Century. Moreover, a network of hegemonic variants of the ‘logic of science’ has served to exclude differing types and histories of philosophy, many of which subsist, shipwrecked in literature, anthropology, sociology, film or art departments (and interspersed throughout the nexus of popular culture).
Perhaps, *as a dare*, we should take Nietzsche’s prediction seriously, and, ask after its significance with respect to the status and meaning of his philosophy, and of the philosophical significance of his poetry, the most radical exemplar being *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. That which is at stake is the meaning, depth and expressivity of not only Nietzsche’s philosophy, but of philosophy *as such* (and of the possible ‘sanity’ of poetry).

It would not be difficult to trace a genealogical attitude against poetry from the era of Plato, who, in his *Republic*, excluded the poets from the realm of ‘true knowledge’—the rational *polis*—as *they lied too much*. Indeed, it was he, according to Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, who *drew the line*, in alliance with Euripides (in an axis with Socrates *through a glass darkly*)\(^5\), which announced, marked, and eu-logised the “end” of philosophy in the tragic age.\(^6\) It was *there* for Nietzsche, that the restricted economy of ‘mind’ and ‘reason’, i.e., the *theoretical man*, took full wing.

This signature attitude against poetry finds a more recent echo in Carnap’s (1931) polemic against (and ridicule of) Heidegger’s (1929) Freiburg *Inaugural Address*, ‘What is Metaphysics?’ in the blandly titled, ‘The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language.’\(^7\) Late in the essay, Carnap, a Marburg affiliate of the Vienna Circle, cites Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a poetic (and thus, *non-philosophical*) work which expresses a certain ‘attitude toward life’. In this way, it is akin to “metaphysics”, but to Nietzsche’s credit, for Carnap, he has separated this
perhaps necessary poetic expression from his properly philosophic, i.e., ‘scientific’ works. Carnap contends that Nietzsche self-consciously wrote this work of poetry explicitly as something outside of philosophy. He even commends *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, framed in his own light, juxtaposing it to the bad poetry and music of Heidegger’s “metaphysics” of Nothing. Carnap declares that the ‘philosophy’ of Heidegger is meaningless, just as is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Yet, from his criteria, Nietzsche could be at least be absolved, excused, as his work was meant to be so.

It could be suggested, if we wish to continue with our dare, that Nietzsche did in fact seek to find an exit from the narrow horizons of ‘knowledge’, and to, as with the early Wittgenstein (who became a stranger to Carnap, after the latter’s misunderstanding of the *Tractatus*), express, show, that which could not strictly be said (in terms of the ‘proposition’)—as an answer to the theoretical man. Or, in other words, if we wish to criticise Carnap, with his erection of limits to philosophy, we could point out that he must obviously be assuming a tacit knowledge of the limit and the beyond of the limit—which explodes his entire project. In this way, it could be argued that the early Wittgenstein would be prepared to admit poetry as an expression (a showing) of that beyond, of this ecstasy. In this still limited way (in the wake of the later Heidegger and Wittgenstein, not to mention Derrida), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* would be an expression of the mystical. From the perspective of the ‘world’, ‘meaning’ (in this all-too-limited reduction),
however, it would not *speak* in terms of the restricted economy of logic. It would be the ‘unwritten’ philosophy, of voices outside of the net of propositions—an indigenous expression of existence, as poetry (*poiesis*).

And, indeed, Nietzsche, contrary to the opinion of Carnap, meant *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as philosophy—but, not as a mere outside, as that which fights against the limits of language (Zarathustra’s Ape), but as the play of language itself amidst existence—as the artwork of his philosophy (or, as that which is proposed in *The Birth of Tragedy* as the poetic *topos* of the Dionysian to his Apollonian, music to image, voice to word).\(^8\) It is in this way that with the *case* of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche posthumously enters into the conflict between the *theoretical man* (the logical positivists)—and the *ecstatic man*, not only, Heidegger, but also, the early and later Wittgenstein.

In this way, we have been thrown into an old meta-philosophical question by Nietzsche: what is philosophy? Are there limits of thought, *why*, *how* is thought, how is thought articulated, expressed? Are there differing regions of thought, differing languages of truth, each expressive of a specific domain of existence? Or, does existence not perhaps express itself?

It is *logistical* ‘philosophy’, since Plato and Aristotle, which seems to preclude any *communication* with poetry (and music, considered in its Dionysian, and hence, *mytho-poetic* significance). The restricted economy (as with Bataille’s *Accursed Share* and *Theory of Religion*), of *logicism* (elements, syntax and truth conditions of an ideal grammar), *scientism* (representational-
propositional ‘knowledge’), and *politicism* (politico-juridical enforcement of the ‘limit situation’, of contradiction) tragically repeats the anti-poetic legacy in the *trauma* of the Vienna Circle (Logical Positivism and its offspring, Analytic philosophy), as the grandfather of the prevailing *theoretical man.*

Perhaps the question of the *earlier* and *later* Wittgenstein and poetry are *one,* from a ‘certain’ perspective. In the early work, poetry could be an expression of the mystical, but only as a showing, not saying in the strict sense of knowledge, not as a *propositional sign.* In the *later* work, poetry would perhaps lose its *mystique* (as would the entire early post-neo-kantian edifice) as it would either be synonymous with expression *per se* (using words), before and amid the games, as a *topos* or field for their play, as the self-expression of life (Dilthey) or existence (Heidegger)—or, it could be described as just another language game (though still not ‘philosophy’ as this is an illness).

Since Plato and Aristotle have been erected, with the aid of each of the monotheistic religions, as the hegemonic icons of philosophy, it has been logic and *propositional grammar* which has served as the squared or triangled *mesh* (*Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.341), of rules for philosophical questioning in the West. Long forgotten is the poetic language of the early Greek thinkers and poets, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles, among myriad others (or, of any of the marginal figures, such as Dante of the “Renaissance”, or, the ‘romantic’ Goethe, in the interim, who have resisted the hegemonic ‘regime’, or, of poets and artists of ‘other cultures etc.’). At the
very least, philosophical questioning is reluctantly contained within this regime, as it was with the logical positivists and their myriad echoes of deficient similarity. Indeed, most of what counts as philosophy is restricted to the activity of exclusion of that which will not fit into some unquestioned formal criteria of ‘objectivity’, ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’—as the repetition of an unconscious picture amid the repetition of their language—in this sense, the image that comes to mind is that of an echo chamber. All other voices are silenced with respect to or excluded from the game.

The continuity between The Birth of Tragedy and Thus Spoke Zarathustra, lies in Nietzsche’s typology of the ‘theoretical (last) man,’ of the historicity of nihilism and its overcoming. In this light, Thus Spoke Zarathustra is an attempt to overcome the nihilism of the Last Man, that progeny of the theoretical optimism of Socrates, amid an affirmation of tragic existence.

In light of this perspective, we will be compelled to re-cast the trajectory of the dominant strand of Western philosophy articulated through Plato—and, this tainted trajectory includes philosophers, such as Leibniz, Kant, and Schopenhauer, each of whom serves as a significant condition for the emergence of the ‘philosophy’ of Nietzsche—as players in the ‘history’ of nihilism—the protracted extermination of the Dionysian.

Hence the riddle: the conditions for the emergence of Nietzsche (and, most notably, Thus Spoke Zarathustra) are at once what he must destroy if he is to articulate his own philosophy. He must, it may seem, with the ‘early’
Wittgenstein, throw down the ladder. Perhaps, though, this may be a bad metaphor, as Nietzsche’s own ‘picture’ was that of the thread of Ariadne out of the Labyrinth (philosophy is swallowed by its mother, *muthos*, and in a way that is not reducible to mere ideology, “myth”, as in Jean Luc-Nancy).⁠¹⁰

A detour will thus be necessary as we must retrieve the thread of a differing *topos* of emergence for Nietzsche’s philosophy-poetry from out of his near suffocation in the confines of the ‘philosophy’ of his own *timely* existence. In order to explore the significance of poetry for the philosophy of Nietzsche, and of the meaning of *poetry as philosophy*, it will be necessary to embark upon a rather *crooked*, backward and forward journey.

In one direction, we will retrocursively trace (*retrieve*) the emergence of this strand of Nietzsche from out of its own genealogical context, from that of *modern* philosophy from Leibniz to Schopenhauer, in light of the principle of *individuation*—and, in some cases, its *other*. In this way, we will lay out the philosophical pre-conditions for *The Birth of Tragedy* in which the principle of *individuation* and its *other* is expressed as the kinship and sibling rivalry of Apollo and Dionysus. It will be upon this *muthos* that Nietzsche will attempt to sculpt a situation in which he can express the possibility of a transfigured expression of existence, the fruit of which will be *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

In the other direction, we will *prospectively* project the philosophical disclosures of *The Birth of Tragedy* to cast its *unhistorical* (*Untimely Meditations*) *creativity* back upon its own conditions of emergence, excavating the root of
nihilism in Plato’s Socrates, of the ‘theoretical man’, and his theatrical surrogate, Euripides (not to mention, the Socrates of Xenophon). The crime was the suspension of suspense, a [bracketing] of the uncertainty of existence.\textsuperscript{11}

The unspoken invitation of \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} is for one to trace the genealogy of its own emergence with respect to its orientation within the constellations of European philosophy (amid the \textit{topos} of nihilism). This is not to diminish Nietzsche’s other influences, sources, but is concerned to disclose the significance of [\textit{transcendental}] philosophy as a \textit{site} of departure. The ‘theoretical optimism’ and eventual pessimism of ‘modern philosophy’ will be disclosed through its genealogy amidst the nihilism of post-platonic philosophy.\textsuperscript{12}

These disclosures (re-valuations and transfigurations) of \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} compel us to re-think the tradition of modern philosophy and its relation to Nietzsche. It is here that \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra} is cast into relief (and intimated by \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}) as a departure from the \textit{polis} - as a liberation and affirmation of the \textit{outside} of ‘logic’ (that is still on the \textit{inside} of philosophy, as philosophical expression), in its poetic ecstasy. Indeed, it is, in one sense, clear that this work concerns the \textit{convalescence} of the ‘theoretical’ or ‘higher’ man—this would indeed be a fruitful interpretation. Yet, it can be only a single thread in the tapestry of retrieval and \textit{indigenous} expression.

\textit{Detour: The Principle of Reason and its ‘Other’}
We begin with Leibniz and his untimely *mathesis*—as a ‘context’ of ‘order’ which, as Foucault contends in *The Order of Things*, was the primary *epistemic* feature of ‘early modern’ philosophy. From this perspective, *mathesis* does not connote ‘form’ as opposed to ‘matter’, nor does it refer to the *mathematicization* of nature. Instead, in the first instance, it intimates an ‘order of simple substances’, or, in other words, a context for the apprehension of an articulated ‘whole’. In this way, *mathesis* is expressed, from a differing perspective, as the principle of individuation. In his doctoral dissertation, *On the Principle of Individuation*, Leibniz contends that the ‘identity’ of any individual must include everything, even the most contingent fact, that is associated with it—as *amidst* the ‘totality’ of the entity. In a limited manner, such a conception compels us to consider ‘identity’ in the sense of an complex event of individuation, as *acts* disclosive of myriad aspects or contours.¹³

Such a discourse on Leibniz already exceeds the mere reduction of his philosophy to the catchphrases of ‘analytic judgement’ and the ‘principle of reason’, which were used synonymously in the erection of Leibniz as the godfather of Analytic philosophy. But, it would be well to delve into this misunderstanding further and deeper as it will inexorably coax into relief the depth of ‘Leibniz’ and of its tenuous credentials to be an *analytic* philosophy. Of course, it may well be possible that we will find the true strength of Leibniz in a consideration which does not focus upon this pedigree.
If we can resist the current for a moment, it becomes clear that Leibniz is not seeking a logical and mathematical philosophy in the manner of Russell (although it is arguable that Frege saw that ‘other’ aspect). For Leibniz, the doctrine of the monad was that of a simple substance, and as with all simple substances, it dwells within a mathesis, a context, of order—an event of order, or individuation—of an ‘identity’ that is only accessible to the ‘divine’. In this light, analytic and synthetic judgments must be seen in a differing light—at least, in regards to the characterisation of these in 20th Century philosophy. The contingency of synthetic propositions becomes a ‘real’ reason for their exclusion from the island of rigorous knowledge, in the manner of the logical positivists and their contemporary descendents in the Analytic, post-analytic, etc. strands.

In fact, Leibniz, it will be objected, contends that contingent existence is capable of full analysis—that all contingent propositions may be traced to analytic judgments. This may give some heart to this type of Analytic philosopher. What is not considered, after Russell et al., however, is an appropriate consideration of the epistemic conditions for actual analytic judgments, not simply as the simple logical rules with which we play, of identity, contradiction, excluded middle, but, as I have suggested, an analytic understanding of each and every contingent event, act and duration. Although there is a possibility for such an understanding, its actuality exceeds the perspectival situation of the monad as a windowless substance in the City
of God (Augustine), or, as Heidegger would suggest, of finite existence. In this way, even as Leibniz is intimating an analytic knowledge of the ‘total being’ in the principle of individuation, the only possibility and actuality for such analytic ‘knowledge’ abides with the ‘infinite’, with the supreme monad, with [God]. Even the interactions between the windowless monads are facilitated by [God]. From the perspective of Leibniz, those who throw off their own theological and metaphysical garments expose themselves to the nakedness of their own hubris, as the ones who sought to replace ‘God’. It is clear from Leibniz that we are certain of our knowledge and of our existence only in [God]. The principle of reason constructs a system in which each is determined by [God]—the supreme monad.¹⁵

Hume (Cratylus) put a lie to all that, as he denied, not only any certainty amid contingency, but also, all of our rationalist and idealist strivings for necessity with his radical empiricist, passivist criticism (though with Leibniz he did allow for a promiscuous role for the reproductive imagination). What becomes of the principle of individuation, and thus, of the principle of reason, in Hume? Indeed, it has withdrawn, but in a way which leaves being as a mere ‘bundle of impressions’, percepta. That which is denied, cast into darkness, as the unacknowledged prior,¹⁶ is not only the ground of the situation, but also, the principle of sufficient reason itself—but, all the time, in the language of ‘reason’. The ‘empiricism’ of Hume is formally ‘logical’, as set
out in its general or practical character. Essentially, it is passive, receptive, empiricism.

As Hamann\(^17\) contends, Hume’s project was essentially destructive with respect to what he left as the *broken hegemony* of rationalism. Such destruction, however, would allow a differing questioning and project to emerge, that of the limitation of reason. This destruction would thus have creative, though fateful, and still *undecided* consequences.

Kant, awakened from his dogmatic slumber by Hume, sought to provide a transcendental grounding to the insights of radical empiricism, and thereby to dispel them. Yet, the principle of sufficient reason/individuation undergoes a distinct modification, especially in comparison to the rationalist theodicy of Leibniz. Kant contends that there is a differentiation within reason itself with respect to its regions of operation. Individuation, in this way, is itself differentiated in meaning in regards to its domain of relevance, which is either that of the phenomenon or noumenon. It is in the former domain that the rationalist tendency maintains its significant hold, and in this way, the principle of individuation becomes that process by which the ‘object’ is constituted by the synthetic unification (via imagination) of pure intuition and understanding. It is only in this *theoretical* domain, that of the phenomenon, that there is to be strict, universal and necessary knowledge—in other words, strict identity from the standpoint of theoretical reason.\(^18\)
That which this sentiment indicates is the restriction of the jurisdiction of theoretical reason to the domain of the phenomenon. But, this is only one of the Janus faces of reason in the Kantian perspective. The other face is that of practical reason, a countenance which transcends the limits of knowledge and the principle of individuation (at least in its theoretical meaning). The place of practical reason is the noumenal domain, a topos which, as Kant relates, can only be thought and not known—and, the place where rationalism has its most direct impact upon ‘pragmatic’ existence. As for Kant, practical existence is still within the horizons of reason, even if ‘one’ differentiated into heterogeneous domains, and there will thus still be some sense in which the principle of sufficient reason (and thus, the principle of individuation) will be operative in the noumenal domain. It will be in this way that the ideas of reason will describe the spiritual population of practical existence. Against the backdrop of supersensible freedom, an autonomy distinct (however, strangely amidst) the heteronomy of the phenomenal domain, there emerges into relief a kingdom of ends whose subjects are persons, who, according to the Law of this realm, are to be regarded as ends in themselves, as self-determining beings entitled to respect. These words emerging in the context of practical reason are not concepts in the sense of quantity, quality, relation or modality, but as noumenal intimations, exceed the conditions of space, time and causality.

These intimations cannot be considered to exist in a phenomenal sense, but are ideals of reason thought amid our doubled-headed existence (as a
fractured poiesis of the world, still ‘unconscious’). As sublimations of the principle of reason in the domain of the practical, these intimations are expressed as ethical precepts articulating the [supersensible] intentionality of existence. Freedom, immortality, and God are not meant to convey theoretical concepts or objects, but are the intimations of the practical, noumenal domain and its Moral Law, in which these are posited to ground such an act of ‘obedience’. In both the theoretical and practical realms [of Being?], the principle of reason is operative, but in differing ways, in the former as the understanding in its ‘objectivity’ against a self-given ‘manifold’, the empirical object, and in the latter as reason, withholding itself amid its constellation of ideals (with it unfulfilled, but persistent desires).

An arbitration between the radical divide between theoretical and practical reason occurs in the third Critique, in which Kant intimates the regulative capacity of the imagination to make manifest the ruse of reason (Hegel) in art and nature. Once again, we are not speaking of theoretical reason, or knowledge, of a ‘set of statements’, posited by ‘reason’ without apodeictic necessity, but as ‘concepts’ of [reason] in its aesthetical, regulative ‘use’. Yet, it is never authoritatively said how these precepts should be expressed outside ‘science’ and ‘morality’. Perhaps, it will take a differing perspective to deal with this question.

Schopenhauer follows, in his own manner, Kant’s aufhebung (Hegel) of the dispute between the rationalists and empiricists, but duly contests the
Kantian identification of the noumenon with *practical* reason. In his view, the [principle of individuation] held no quarter in the *noumenal* dimension. Indeed, this aspect discloses the radicality of Schopenhauer, in that the *noumenal* dimension of the Will, lies beyond the principle of sufficient reason itself, beyond time, space (intuition) and causation, etc. (concept)—in other words, it is non-rational in both senses in the Kantian jargon, neither theoretical nor practical. For Schopenhauer, the world, that which *is*, is disclosed in two primary aspects, as representation and Will, one that is said and one that is shown, much in the same way as the ‘early’ Wittgenstein (if we would still wish to reduce possibility to this schema). Schopenhauer keeps the lexicon of the phenomenon and noumenon only as a referential bridge to Kant. Yet, reason, understanding, determination only apply to the phenomenon, and this means that the intuitions of space and time, and the concepts of the understanding/reason, such as causality, cannot have any relevance to the dimension of Will (cf. Wittgenstein’s ‘Lectures on Ethics’). In this way, there is a further step risked, after Kant, *before, behind and beyond* the totalistic systems of either reason, understanding, or, the ‘empirical manifold’—each of which betrays its ‘metaphysical’ status. Kant perhaps suggests that we may introduce new dimensions into the rules of our game, while, it seems clear, Schopenhauer sought to play a different game altogether. Or, a game leading to a different *way of play*—from the principle
of reason, individuation to that of Will—as disclosed in the event of this ‘body’, ‘X’.

Yet, this is not a merely indeterminate ‘X’ as it was with Kant. Once Schopenhauer disrupts Kant’s hegemony, authority, of reason, but without conceding pre-Kantian empiricism (but learning from its unsaid), it is possible to disclose an active intentionality of existence, of the Will. One is free to indicate a peculiar experience which, in its resistance to rational determination (reason), intimates a dimension beyond the dominion of individuation, reason, and understanding. This domain of alterity is only an ‘other’ from the standpoint of the rationalist/empiricist determination and reduction of existence, of the “world”. In truth, it is our most intimate be-ing.

It is amidst the event of intense pleasure and pain that Schopenhauer discovers (or as Nietzsche might say, invents) the Will. In this way, he re-interprets ‘empiricism’ (phenomenology) as not merely negative resistance (Locke) and passive perception (Hume), but as an event that opens up a pathway to a most peculiar transcendence. We are no longer on the outside of things, wandering across the unlimited externality, surface, of res extensa, of representation—this is an “outside”, as even inner sense, time in Kant’s sense, remains on the “outside”. The event of pleasure and pain awakens the Will—it is discovered as the inner truth of externalised perception, representation. Yet, this inner truth, inside, remains ‘outside’, but is individuated, sublimated in the nexus of the principle of sufficient reason. In this way, the authentic
‘outside’ (as the inner truth of Schopenhauer) indicates a topos which is thought amid body, and the panorama of flesh, of song, dance, eroticism, art in its myriad expressions. It is through the conduit of intense pleasure and pain that the true inside (which is ‘outside’, ecstasy, in relation to ‘reason’) is disclosed—it is immediate as Will, not subject to the mediation of representation (principle of sufficient reason, or the ‘inside’ of Descartes).

In this light, Schopenhauer moves away from Kant, from subjectivity (and ‘metaphysics’ rooted in the positing of [consciousness]), from transcendental apperception, from reason, to the world as Will and representation, each given its differing aspects and depths. Schopenhauer is extremely dismissive of the realm of reason (which includes empiricism), and has, in a very novel manner, disclosed our relations with the Will, this transcendens that ungulates at the heart of being, as a desire that is never satisfied, or brought to harmony (a masking of uncertainty). From this topos, it is possible that thought need not put the question of existence, being, aside, through a therapy by which the question is dissolved, etc. (One is made to feel calm, docile, etc. in the manner of Foucault’s Discipline and Punish. Heidegger calls us to ‘stay within the question’, to ‘go all the way to the end’ in the manner of Heraclitus and Nietzsche.)

Yet, strangely, Schopenhauer, having discovered the Will through long explorations, denies the Will as futile, and [evil]—and enacts this denial via a renunciation of desire (though not his will-to-live, his concern)—and via the
assent to a quasi-Buddhistic and, in many cases, a Hinduistic (and even, a Christian), denial of existence—his opening to a particular ‘Nothing’. (And, this is echoed in the ‘therapy’ of the later Wittgenstein, in which philosophical questions are a ‘confusion and misunderstanding of language’).

*Nietzsche and the End of Modern Philosophy*

Nietzsche attempts to take, seduce us beyond the epochal truth regime of good and evil toward a topos of radical freedom, innocence—not a simple matter, outside/inside, beyond, beneath “theoretical optimism”, nihilism—resisting, playing amid systematic determination, beyond, before Zoroaster.

It has become strangely routine to assume that Nietzsche’s earliest writings were fatally influenced by the philosophy of Schopenhauer—indeed, that these writings were/are a mere footnote to the Master—as if Nietzsche was already (with his timely friend Wagner) an initiate, disciple—as if he had no perspective(s) with which to swallow or transfigure Schopenhauer.

Of course, there is Nietzsche’s yarn about finding him in a second hand bookstore—but, it would be difficult to ever intimately fathom any precise meaning or sense from this confession. Indeed, this yarn (written quite late) tells of an event that took place at least six years before he seriously began to prepare *The Birth of Tragedy* for publication.20

Yet, upon this hegemonic/homogenous terrain, in the eclipse of other voices, there arises a discourse of an ‘early’ and ‘later’ Nietzsche, a distinction
founded upon the contention that he had liberated himself from a pessimism of the Will—or, from Schopenhauer and the German metaphysical tradition—but, only after The Birth of Tragedy and his other works of this ‘period’. In this strange ‘picture’, Nietzsche’s only “real philosophy” is weakly derivative of Schopenhauer—the rest of his writings are described as mere random commentaries, his Thus Spoke Zarathustra, an expression of a poetic, quasi-metaphysical attitude, a feeling for life—yet, very far from the necessary confines of a true, scientific philosophy (Carnap).

It should be remembered, that despite the extensive literature on Nietzsche since Kaufmann’s Nietzsche, he and his works have never been accepted ‘within’ the theatre of the philosophical ‘establishment’, except perhaps as a ‘typical’ forerunner to the positivists, existentialists or post-modernists. Some would like to see the back of him. Others would like to see him get his due as a poet and philosopher. It is along this roadmap that Nietzsche, however, lacking a will to a system, has been systematically downgraded as a philosopher (e.g., he is just a writer).21

While it is simple to detect resemblances between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and specific diffusions from the former to the latter, it becomes ever more clear through closer readings of The Birth of Tragedy that Nietzsche, even at this so-called ‘early’ stage, was seeking to overthrow not only the Platonic idols (Ideas) of Schopenhauer, but also the philosophical protocols of the European modernist tradition. Such a ‘tradition’ was, after all, the topos of
emergence for the repetition of the pseudo-platonist denial and suppression
of the Dionysian, of music and poetry, at the hands of the suffocating
rationality of logic and logistics, of the ‘theoretical man’.\textsuperscript{22}

It is amidst his \textit{early} overthrow of the Ideas of Schopenhauer that we
can attempt to understand Nietzsche’s intensification of his poetic activity
after (and during, especially with the \textit{Gay Science}) his brief pseudo-positivist
(\textit{Human All Too Human, Daybreak}) tangent, reaching a climax in his \textit{Thus Spoke
Zarathustra} and in his poems of this time, such as \textit{Wanderer and his Shadow}.

In this light, we can also better understand Nietzsche’s ‘Attempt at
Self-Criticism’ (1886) in which he laments that he did not write \textit{The Birth of
Tragedy} as a poem. His critics would have surely loved such a poetic work\textit{ even less} than their initial reception of his ‘Schopenhauerian’ work in 1872-3.

It is clear that \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} is not simply an application of
Schopenhauer’s ‘metaphysics of the will’ to the phenomenon of Attic tragedy.
Instead, in this, his earliest book, he has already overthrown his ‘teacher’ and
his pseudo-tragic pessimism.\textsuperscript{23} (The denial of the Will is a farce). Of course, it
is illuminating to read \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} in tandem with \textit{The World as Will
and Representation}. And, we could readily divine the basic \textit{metaphysical}
contours of the latter in the former. Yet, this would not disclose in itself the
profound philosophical significance of his transfiguration and re-valuation of
Schopenhauerian ‘metaphysics’ and ‘ethics’—and thus, the meaning of
Nietzsche’s ‘philosophy’ as such. Nor, will it allow us to more clearly
comprehend the relation of Nietzsche to factual, historical philosophy, and specifically of the relation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and, to foreshadow, poetry, to philosophy *as such*—especially if *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is to be read, in this instance, as a *work of philosophy*. What if poetry was Nietzsche’s only option, if he wished to overcome nihilism in philosophy?

Nietzsche intensifies and explodes Schopenhauer’s denials into an explicit affirmation of life, expressed amidst *life* through music, poetry and *transfigured* prose. It is in this way that traces, hints of a genealogy of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are intimated in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Indeed, the former text comes to replace Wagner as the *epitome* of tragic Art.

I am not making the claim that there is a ‘poetic turn’ in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Indeed, he wrote poetry at least from the age of fourteen until shortly before (and after) his collapse at the age of forty-five. There is no acknowledged poetry or writing from his last ‘poetic’ letters until his death eleven years later in 1900. Poetry had always been there, however, and much of it was included or woven into his published works (many of his aphorisms were originally poems written in his many notebooks, cf. Wittgenstein)—in some cases as explicit word for word ‘translations’. Not to mention his aphoristic style which could be interpreted as a *morphé* of poetry.

What I am claiming instead is that Nietzsche exists as a thinker upon a poetic *topos* that serves as his *topos* of expression, his dwelling—a constellation of horizons—rendering the supposed necessity of a ‘system’ unnecessary.
But, there is more to the story than this—Nietzsche seeks to re-value poetry in the face of the millennial pressure of Platonic metaphysics, of the radical suppression of the Dionysian (and with him, his brother Apollo, as they are displaced by the ‘naturalist’ and ‘rationalist’ schemas of body and mind). And, as we have seen, Schopenhauer enacts the apophasis of nihilism in his own denial of Will—thus, announcing the end of ‘modern’ philosophy.24

A significant difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in the first instance is that constellation into which each is tapping. We have already seen that Schopenhauer taps into the East. Nietzsche plumbs the “Greeks”, but not just any Greeks, but the early Greek thinkers, the poets, epic, lyric and Tragic which he explored in the context of his Birth of Tragedy and Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks.

Tragedy, indicates, for Nietzsche, a deep phenomenon of existence—as for Chirico (and his brother Savinio), the uncertainty of the poet. The Dionysian effervescence of musical existence, of love/hate (Empedocles) becomes expressed in the fluxuating image, in our words, our thoughts, in this ‘our’, in the discrete individual and of the tenuousness of dreams. For Schopenhauer, it was at first that the Will which seemed to hold all the truth—to the exclusion of the Principle. Then, he denies the Will—what are we to think of this exclusion in this light? Are we not already beyond the principle, arche?

Nietzsche seems to be in a transfigured place, as if the two dimensions (as with Leibniz, Kant and Schopenhauer) are maintained, but upon a space
which is other than reason (or, philosophy in the restricted economy) in its pseudo-traditional sense (similar to an imaginary ‘Wittgenstein’ who had given up his narrow logically positivistic conception of philosophy). For Nietzsche, the ‘game’ is different, but for him, it is still ‘philosophy’, and must be as he expresses the honesty of existence, our youngest virtue.

For Nietzsche, the principle of individuation becomes that of the Apollonian, the plastic expression of the underlying Dionysian, itself an analogue of the ‘Will’, fermenting in the underground beneath this principle of order, of individuation and dreams. Yet, for Nietzsche, the significance of the Schopenhaurian position(s) is/are radically altered as the Apollonian becomes a realm of redemption, or temporary escape from the inexorable communion of the Dionysian—‘individuation’ is no longer seen as that which is determined by the principle of individuation under the principle of reason, but as the fruition of the novel sublimation of the Dionysian amidst expressive (Apollonian) existence. We still have two ‘things’, as Aristotle would say, but these two things in Nietzsche have a distinct kinship that affirms existence amid the ‘act’ and, as it is this event that is the root of the ‘two’.

Dionysus comes ‘historically’ before Apollo, but it is not until the latter that we witness his birth, demise and rebirth, amid music, dance, drama—in the emergence of the tragic hero—the one who must die before our eyes—in the disclosure of the truth, the radical uncertainty, temporality, of existence.
That which is most significant is the status and trajectory of Nietzsche’s genealogies. *The Birth of Tragedy* is not a mere commentary upon ‘Greek’ tragedy as an *art form*, but is a philosophical statement upon existence *as such*. In this context, we can understand Nietzsche’s criticism of Socrates (Plato, especially in his *Twilight of the Idols*) and the New Attic comedy of Euripides, in its preference for a theoretical premise and a *performative moralism* in which the Dionysian, uncertainty, is suspended, in uncertainty, instead of being the heart of existence. Feeling is made into a disease and un-ease that can be cured, as if by therapy (Wittgenstein in his later works, Socrates in his sacrifice to Asclepius for the long sickness of life, and Schopenhauer’s denial of the Will). In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche contends that this theoretical optimism is in its face a symptom of decline, as it has cut itself off from its roots in existence, amid the Dionysian. Such nihilistic ‘optimism’ reaches its apex in Plato, but for Nietzsche such a height is irrevocably wedded to the depths—the dismissal and suppression of the Dionysian was the decline of the Greece into the pedestrian *theoria* of Plato in a divided world.25

But, what is modernity other than the *fleur du mal* of ‘theoretical man’? Our states are not even our own, but mimic, Plato’s *polis*—for ‘us’, it is police, politician-lawyers, businessmen, and scientists, who are the actors of the comic theatre of the ‘theoretical man’, the *last men* of nihilism. Amid the *topos* of the comedy of nihilism, that which is most significant philosophically is the trajectory of the principle of individuation, and its ‘other’, in its many
transmutations from a principle of god, to a bundle, to a double-headed thing, to a will and representation---and finally to the Dionysian and Apollonian.26 But it is the ‘theoretical man’ and the counter insurgency against tragedy, the cultural cleansing against mortality and the dramatic event of uncertainty, suspense—and of its inclusion in ‘philosophy’—that is the background of prohibition, taboo of poetry—and, of the transgressions that will come.

It is obvious that Thus Spoke Zarathustra, as a poetic expression of existence, demonstrates its own possibility—in that it is. However, this work is also the fulfilment of a promise in The Birth of Tragedy of the re-birth of Dionysian existence and art. In this way, Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a poetic topos, the place of the unhistorical, of creativity (Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life) where poetry expresses and affirms the uncertainty of existence prior to the antiquarian, monumental, and critical senses of ‘history’. In this way, Thus Spoke Zarathustra is the untimely resistance of the Dionysian, as the creative destruction of the household, polis, property, ousia. Apollo, moreover, is not abandoned by Zarathustra, but diversifies in its plastic artworks of poiesis and the dream world amid the work itself. It is in this sense that Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a retrieval of tragedy, as it is the articulation of a radical affirmation of life, existence, amid the poetic necessity of expression and affirmation amid death, destruction, decay and radical ‘untruth’—most primordially, in the call of music and poetry…

‘The wreckage of stars—I built a world from this wreckage’27
It is amid this wreckage that Zarathustra stands in the *gateway of the moment*. He forgets the abyss of infinities so as to affirm existence amid this moment of vision. He affirms existence in the intimacy of his *this-worldly* existence, and expresses this affirmation in a way other than that of the logical syntax, reason, and ‘grammar’ of ‘God’. Zarathustra seeks to disclose the meaning to the earth—amid a *philosophy* that expresses the *truth* and *lies* of this existence. It is through poetry that he is able to plumb the depths of existence, and to express this intimacy of existence. In this way, poetry is the ecstasy of self-expression amid the general economy of life, *prior* to the principle of reason. The re-emergence of poetry announces the *incipient tragedy* of the theoretical, nihilist man and his restricted economy of the principle.

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2 Ibid., p. 106.

3 There have been a few significant works in the English speaking ‘world’ which have begun to regard *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a ‘philosophical’ work, such as those of Lampert’s *Nietzsche’s Teaching* and Higgins’ *Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, for instance. Such a consideration does not even begin to address, however, the significance of Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*, Bataille’s *On Nietzsche*, Blanchot’s *The Step Not Beyond*, etc. In light of the work that has been and is being done on *Zarathustra*, we may wish to suspend, bracket the preceding and questionable diagnosis so as to allow for differing perspectives to emerge. Indeed, in light of Foucault, even this seeming iron clad *concept* of ‘madness’ has become problematic... as are all concepts, intuitions and names, which for Heraclitus and Derrida, are, each and all, in flux.
The question could be asked if such a *method of madness* is not the mere *negative* image of the logicist suppression of madness (and poetry), as the Jester to the King, (or, the *children of impotent revolt* as outlined in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, who merely defaced *simulacrum* of power (Baudrillard).

It would be illuminating, in this context, to refer to the *Memoirs of Socrates* of Xenophon, and his differing portrayal of Socrates.

It is interesting that with the Renaissance, often associated with neo-Platonism, in the wake of the Islamic diffusion, it was *hard times* for poets. It would be interesting to explore the traces of the European subjugation of free poetic expression (in terms of knowledge) and the Islamic codification and regulation of the Arabic language from the 7th and 8th centuries (with the intention that the Qu’ran would be able to be read and understand for all times). Yet, such an identification of the future necessitates a regimentation of language, and a proscription of differing languages as these would, so to speak, introduce temporality into the eternal language of the Qu’ran. In light of his analyses in *Arabic Poetics*, Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said Asbar) allows us to understand the background of the precise determination of Arabic that was enacted after the Islamic conquest (Bataille, *Accursed Share*, Vol. 1). In this way, we can, for instance, fathom the reasons for the proscription and marginalisation of the Sufis, for instance. At the same time, we must trace these genealogies (in a similar way as Nietzsche and Foucault) as indications of the effects of power in language, and language as an effect of power – but in the context of the operations of language in the reinforcement of power in the Western political economic and cultural zone of events.


In the wake of Carnap’s error to attempt to *say* the limits of philosophy (which would imply that he could be on *this* and that side of the limit in a “philosophical” way), we have happened upon the site, as Nietzsche had already done, of the questions of meta-philosophy. This is one that speaks to us, in the current period, amid the waning hegemony of Analytic philosophy and the uncertainty of Continental philosophy – and of the relevance of each of these ‘traditions’ as they stand in separation. Perhaps, all of this, however, will be blown
away once we open our eyes to the myriad forms of philosophy in the New Europe, the Middle East, China, the Americas, Africa – the world.

9 It is highly significant that Wittgenstein eventually rejected not only Logical Positivism, but also, in a certain way, his early philosophy as articulated in his *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*. His main criticism of Carnap, for instance, which is even problematic in terms of the latter early work, was that his criteria of application sought to say that which could not be said. Indeed, the very possibility of limiting the ways of expression in philosophy is questionable, especially, once such a work is produced, as for instance *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, its own possibility as philosophical expression is *shown*. It is also interesting in this regard that Wittgenstein, when he did attend the meetings of the Vienna Circle, sat with his back to the circle and read poetry.

10 Nietzsche, as with Heidegger, is not seeking an exit from Plato’s cave into the unambiguous light (just another metaphor, transference, picture), and it is plausible to suggest that the later Wittgenstein, in this event, comes into agreement with each of these. Yet, Heidegger would still assert the *ontological difference* as the last word on the matter cannot be the in-authenticity of the ‘they’, of *mere* generic use of the Anyone (Das Man). But, obverse to the perspective of the resolute Self, there is the affirmation that the Self is the self-expression, the destining of Being. For Heidegger, the Self is now own-ly in it being claimed by being, and in his articulation of the ‘truth’ of Being, his building on the house of Being. Perhaps comparisons between Derrida, the *early* and *later* Wittgenstein and Heidegger may be traced in this context, like the patterns drawn out in the Cave. Yet, it is not comparisons/contrasts that we need - we must instead *enter into the question itself* – a ‘thought’ that can be detected in Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.

11 This could be compared to the relationship between Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the former seeking to stay within the question, the latter wishing to put the questions aside, to be relieved of them, seeing in them only confusion, unmasking the picture animating the question, psychoanalytically.

12 Though this may begin with Anaxagoras and his Mind (*nous*); in truth, he is the initiator of the discursive formation: “Philosophy of Mind”. As the teacher of Socrates, one would expect more notice of this seminal philosopher. Yet, he, as with the other so-called “pre-
socratics” have suffered a long beating since Plato and Aristotle until the footnote Whitehead et al. – It is in the German tradition that the early Greek thinkers have been most studied.

13 Of course, we already know this much from the Physics of Aristotle, in his ‘Four Causes’, and in his ‘entelechy’, the motive force of actuality.

14 Of course, Quine, very early on, sought to break down the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, despite his trivialisation of language in his reduction of all discourse to statements of ‘and’ and ‘or’. And, this is not even to raise the question of Wittgenstein, despite the fact that this question is always open.


18 Yet, the question of the imagination (especially of the transcendental imagination) unMASKs Kant’s work as yet another suppression of the domain of existence, temporality (which is perhaps characteristic of all philosophers since Anaxagoras). In each of these names, imagination either intimates primordial powers of the soul, but only in darkness, in the allusions in their writings to the ‘unknown’. It is never the ‘first’, except in theology, but then, it is ‘God’…

19 Is it significant that Schopenhauer never had a ‘family’, a situation of a will to live? This is despite the fact of his deep misogyny, which is grounded upon the idea that woman as the giver of birth is, in at once and in truth, the giver of death. Schopenhauer denies the Will (Woman), but life goes on… for others - and he admitted this as such, as the will to live, as he guides us elsewhere toward the truth of the beautiful and sublime through an aesthetic phenomenology of existence. Yet, at the end of the day, he denies the Will (woman, truth) for good reason.
At the same time, it is always forgotten that Nietzsche undertook extensive work upon the early Greek thinkers (the so-called pre-socratics, but including Theognis, Homer, Archilochus, Hesiod, Sappho, Aeschylus, Sophocles, et al.; and, it should be said, Schopenhauer had no overwhelming preference for ‘Early Greek’ thinking, as he had a decided preference for the Hindu and Buddhist traditions). Nietzsche’s alleged preference for ‘Greece’ (a terribly ambiguous name) also underpins the supposed severance of an ‘early’ and ‘later’ Nietzsche. But, to delve into the topos which is repeatedly articulated as ‘Greece’, we could state that Nietzsche diagnosed the sickness of ‘Greece’, and, described its death as a descent from tragedy to dialogue to farce.

His later aphorisms have been set forth as evidence of the ‘pulverised Kantianism’ (Richard Bernstein) - of a non-philosopher. These are the fragments of ruined promises – a failed, still-born, philosopher (who perhaps may still keep us honest, as did Lichtenburg and La Rochefoucauld).

The Birth of Tragedy must not be regarded as a work of juvenilia (or, as a work which he later rejected, a failed philosophy), but should be read as a sophisticated criticism and proposed displacement of nearly two and a half millennia of the hegemony of Platonist-Aristotelian-Judeo-Christian-Islamist-Modernist ‘theoretical’ order of ‘things’, of ‘metaphysics’.

Yet, it would be possible to not register this overthrow, if we fail to come to terms with the poetry of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, as an attempt to overcome the ‘grammar’ of post-platonic philosophy, of metaphysics, nihilism – in other words, the language of reason and the ‘theoretical man’.

It is not Nietzsche’s quest, however, to merely let neutered poets back into the polis, but instead to strengthen the poets on the ‘outside’ (and upon the ‘inside’), on the streets and in the towers, with the wish to subvert the polis-economy, and its sprawling homogeneity.

There has never been a true ‘renaissance’ – one not under the thumb of some monotheism - Judaism, Christianity, Islam – in its “totality”, a dysfunctional, violent, polytheism, with no hope of inclusivity as they worship the principle of the One, and practise the eschatology of order. For Nietzsche, Plato was the publicist of the theoretical man, who like Paul, after his event on the ‘road to Damascus’ sought to proselytize the masses – or, as Nietzsche contends, Christianity is ‘Platonism for the people’. 
After the apocalyptic Augustine (Pagan then Christian neo-platonism) and the Aristotelianism of Aquinas, it seems that Descartes has resurrected a form of Platonism, even if strategically against the Schoolmen, of which he was in no way part (but, maintained most of its dogma). Not only does Descartes diminish the body to res extensa, but the very acceptance of his regime immediately forbids questions of existence and of the ecstatic possibilities of the soul and body within this makeshift context.


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