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NIETZSCHE'S LAMENT OF ARIADNE

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Were someone to write a history of the Dionysian movement, tracing the power and eventual exhaustion of the impulse in prose, poetry and visual art from the 1890s down to about 1914, his effort would entail a good bit of self-deception. The Dionysian exuberance was an outlet for an upper-middle class which had struck its colors and which, under the guise of bringing forth its very own definition of 'being alive,' was searching for some means of uplift; memory of this has long since vanished. Who today is familiar with the host of fin-de-siecle dithyramb, masked balls, neo-romantic bacchanalia and ecstatic visions of the future? There remains only the forerunner and instigator of the movement, Nietzsche, asserting himself with ever greater force in our historical awareness as the last prophet of the mad god, a god whose name rose from his lips as madness transported him from the world of our understanding.

What is the authentic nature of the Dionysian in Nietzsche's poetry and philosophy? This question should be posed to his poetry as well as to his philosophy, even rather more to his poetry, since the Dionysian makes its presence felt at the boundary where Nietzsche the poet begins his transformation into Nietzsche the philosopher, or where Nietzsche's philosophizing turns into the Dithyramb—that is, once all his faculties have cohered into a whole, in and through the variousness of their powers depending on, struggling with, mirroring, deceiving, masking, revealing, overpowering, transfiguring one another—in biographical terms, subsequent to Nietzsche's Zarathustra period.

Beginning in the summer of 1877, we find Nietzsche breaking through

* Karl Reinhardt (1886–1958), the author of penetrating analyses of Greek literature and philosophy, is a master of German twentieth-century prose. He unites philological acumen and thoroughness with Nietzschean intensity and flair. To the historicism of the nineteenth century he opposed an awareness of the limitations of method and categorization; he never supposed that he was superior to the authors he brought to life. In an essay on "Nietzsche and History" Reinhardt showed how Nietzsche's forays into history were an essay in self-experience, precious because Nietzsche possessed "the broadness, the depth, the possibilities to make this finding of himself a concern not to himself only but to us." In a much more discreet and gentle manner, Reinhardt's books and essays perform a similar task. Reinhardt never escaped the spell of the antipode of Nietzsche, Wilamowitz, but, as Wolfgang Schadewaldt puts it, "philology, celebrated by Wilamowitz as a goddess who demanded the strictest terms of duty, became for Reinhardt the Ariadne, who at best illuminates Theseus' path, and hands him the thread, as he makes his way into the labyrinth."

Reinhardt's article originally appeared in 1935, in *Die Antike*; it is here translated and reprinted by permission of Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt.

to poetic fulfillment. Not that writing poetry had not always been an avocation; but only now does he cease to invoke goddesses such as Melancholy and Friendship; a "sweetly warbling bird" no longer comforts the "poor wayfaring man" . . . The fetters imposed by his models snap, juvenile tones are cast off, his own melody and rhythm assert themselves; for the first time landscape speaks to him in his own voice, and nature is no longer a mere backdrop from which feelings of loneliness can be evoked; from now on, no "vision" in the "wilderness of rock," no more is heard of "the fog curling around my window," of "sudden lightning flares," nor do we hear the cry "That is what I am." "All this is what I am—with a shudder I rehearse it in my feelings—a butterfly gone astray, a lonely flower . . ." Nature, the things themselves find their voices, raise questions, are silent, tempt and attempt, all in Nietzsche's tongue:

*O Frucht des Baums,
Du zitterst, fällst?
Welch ein Geheimnis lehrte dich
Die Nacht,
Dass eisger Schauder deine Wange,
Die purpurwange deckt?—
Du schweigst, antwortest nicht?
Wer redet noch?—*

(Fruit of the tree, you quiver, fall? What was the lesson of the night, that an icy shuddering should conceal your cheek, the cheek of crimson? Silence? No answer from you? Who still speaks?)

Nonetheless, all that is still latent in this comes to be set free and realized only in the Zarathustra period, after 1883. Nietzsche no longer confronts landscape as the Other to which his inner self poses questions, as something on the outside, set beside or against the questioner; now the constituents of landscape pour into his speech like air into lungs and pores. Nature, the visible, merge with destiny, all things press with a tender insistence towards the image; and the voices of the inner self, instead of announcing, as they did formerly: "we are flowers, birds . . ." truly become these entities. Previously Nietzsche would say: "there is thinking" ("*es denkt*").

*Da überläuft
Es schaudernd, wie
Ein Glitzern, das Gebirg,
Da denkt es rings—
Und schweigt—*

(Like a glimmer of light, a tremulous thrill passes through the mountainous terrain, all around there is thinking—and being silent—)

Exactly what is being thought had not yet passed into the poem. Now, however, man's entire being, on whatever level, sounds, resounds—incorporating everything that he is, the whole of his existence.

Hence Nietzsche's poetry, at the same time it gains in immediacy,

becomes allegorical, philosophical, freighted with a sense of destiny. The Dithyramb in particular are songs of destiny—destiny, however, in an internal rather than an external sense; not death, love, friendship, mastery, in short, those aspects which adhere to our animalian or social being; and not a political destiny or one of divine origin. Rather, insofar as destiny is a unity in duality (or plurality), it signifies here the tragic contradiction of powers which work out and intensify their struggles within the human being, and yet (so Nietzsche would have it) not in any particular case; rather the tragedy is brought about by the multiform I, as it affirms and denies, sacrifices and vanquishes itself, a multiformity as it arises in authentic man, i.e. the entire extent of humanity or in the active man, ever since man existed. It is at this time that the unique and the universal, the most and least personal, merge into one. No longer do we have a single voice; quite spontaneously the poetry becomes many-voiced and dialogical; what had been a prose conversation between the Wayfarer and his shadow turns into a Dithyramb, calling forth, lamenting, cursing blessing. . . . And at the same time, beyond even the plurality of voices, there appears a fundamental tension between the emotional stances, an intrusion, as it were, of a new tempo added to the established one, a play of disguising, submerging, glossing over, transvestism, flickering lights; ambiguity and contradictions between the surface and the depths, an opposing play of movement from below to the surface and, simultaneously, from the surface downwards. Nietzsche not only becomes a many-stringed instrument, but there are, as it turns out, six different way of producing each note, and, accordingly, the tone may be coarser or more gentle, freer or more damped. . . . Around this time Nietzsche's own favorite metaphors for this wealth of variation are, for example, his "spring," or his "ladder": "The ladder of my feelings is a long one, and I'm not shy of sitting on its lowest rung." "While climbing never yet have I counted the number of steps up to myself."

Evidence for the elemental force of the new dithyrambic mode exists in the fragmentary state of many of the poems (the appendix to *Zarathustra* offers a fine sample). Some of what had been the utterance of a solo singer is recast into Zarathustra's use of simile. As for poems that were completed in the dithyramb form, these Nietzsche himself in 1888, not long before his collapse, assembled for publication in book form under the title he eventually chose, *Dionysos Dithyrambos*. Included were revised versions of poems which had already seen the light in the fourth section of *Zarathustra* as interludes "for singing." At first the title is enigmatic. These songs, viewed with regard to "form and content," appear to lack all the attributes of the genuinely Dionysian. No Dionysian visions, images, metaphors, symbols! No "O Bacchus" rising up from frenzied lips like those of the crazed figure in Hoffmannsthal's *Kleines Welttheater*. There is scarcely anything which would seem to be a less apt candidate for the characterization of "approaching

ancient form." Elsewhere in his poetry Nietzsche likes to remain loyal to the genres: maxim, idyll, song, hymn. . . . But these genres derive from German classicism. Is it then the case that nothing of the Dionysian remains apart from the title? No, for there is an exception, a poem moreover that obviously sets its stamp on the collection, one with Dionysian symbolism—one only, but that one decisive: the "Lament of Ariadne." Yet it seems that one riddle only gives way to another! For the Dionysian symbolism was subsequently, one is almost tempted to say, artificially, affixed to the poem. In its original form the lament appears in the fourth section of *Zarathustra*, as a song delivered by the Nietzschean sorcerer—not even as the lament of a woman, and with no hint of either Dionysos or Ariadne.

Set the texts side by side: The most striking change is that masculine endings are replaced by feminine:

*Kein Hund—dein Wild nur bin ich,
grausamster Jäger
dein stolzester Gefangener*

becomes:

deine stolzeste Gefangene. . .

Similarly:

*gib mir, dem Einsamsten,
den Eis, ach! siebenfaches Eis
nach Feinden selber,
nach Feinden schmachten lehrt,*

becomes:

*gib mir, der Einsamsten,
die. . .*

The case may well be unique in the history of literature. What sort of a drama can this be in which roles are interchanged in such airy fashion?

Besides this change, the distribution of lines is different, and the clauses are jerkier and shorter. Nietzsche carries this to such lengths that it contributes palpably to the dislocation of the dominating, full, haunting tone the song previously had. The earlier version reads:

*—Nein, komm zurück,
Mit allen deinen Mariern!
Zur letzten aller Einsamen
O komm zurück!
All meine Tränen—Bäche laufen
Zu dir den Lauf!
Und meine letzte Herzesflamme—
Dir glüht sie auf!
O komm zurück,
Mein unbekannter Gott! Mein Schmerz!
Mein letztes—Glück!*

(No, with your torments, come back! Come back to the last of all solitary men! All the streams of my tears flow down to you! And the last flame of my heart blazes up for you!. Come back, my unknown god! My pain! My last—happiness!)

Nietzsche felt the tripartite and strophic structure to be too gentle, too rounded; the result is:

*Nein!
Komm zurück!
Mit allen deinen Martern!
Alle meine Tränen laufen
Zur dir den Lauf
und meine letzte Herzensflamme
dir glüht sie auf.
O komm zurück,
mein unbekannter Gott: mein Schmerz!
mein letztes Glück!*

Finally, during revision the “Lament” comes to have appended to it a dramatic epilogue, the epiphany of Dionysos, about which more in a moment.

Consider, what has happened to the meaning? In the former version, we get a mimicing performance. A game, no doubt, but a game whose fascination lies in the something serious that lurks behind it, in the circumstance that the desires and the conscience in it are divided against themselves; that it is not something pure, free, light, but rather the song of the old sorcerer, who is no other than Nietzsche’s (and the higher human being’s) actor—i.e. the personification of the temptation that besets the artist. Appropriate to this idea are the tone of pathos, the play-acting, the surrender of shame, the exaggeration:

*Wer wärmt mich, wer liebt mich noch?
Gebt heisse Hände!
Gebt Herzens-Kohlenbecken!
Hingestreckt, schauernd,
Halbtotem gleich, dem man die Füße wärmt—
Geschüttelt, ach! von unbekanntem Fieber. . .*

(Who still warms, still loves me? Hot hands over here! Braziers of your heart over here! Stretched out, shuddering, as one half out of this life, people warming your feet, convulsed by unheard of fevers. . .)

Finally, the context is uniquely appropriate:

But when he had run up to the spot where the fellow lay on the ground, he found an old man, trembling, eyes staring vacantly; no matter how great an effort Zarathustra made to raise the man and get him back on his feet, there was nothing for it. [Passages like this demand symbolic interpretation]. The unfortunate man seemed [!] not to notice that there was somebody close by; instead he would look around, tossing off pathetic gesticulations, like [!] somebody abandoned by the whole world and left to his own devices. At last, however, after a deal of trembling, twitching, writhing this way and that, he launched into his cry of woe.

Uniquely and exclusively appropriate to this in the "Lament" itself is the whimpering "stretched out . . . as one half out of this life . . . I lie, contorted, writhing . . ." and so on. How could this be taken and placed in the mouth of the "lamenting Ariadne"? The transference would appear enigmatic, bizarre and senseless if it were not possible to establish a link with a broader process, a necessary path of change in Nietzsche's later philosophizing in the period following Zarathustra.

Scrutinizing only the images and motifs of the "Lament," one will find little—though it may be spoken in a different tone, used or introduced in a different way—which does not recur throughout Nietzsche's work. Of the poems, the most closely related Dithyramb is "Between Birds of Prey." At no great distance either is the second song of the Sorcerer, familiar also from the Dithyramb "Only a fool, only a poet." For example, the former poem takes up the images of the sick man, the cold man, the dead man:

*An jedem Froste kalt . . .
Ein Kranker nun,
Der an Schlangengift krank ist . . .
Ein Leichnam . . .*

(No frost but you're cold . . . diseased now, diseased from snakes' venom . . . a corpse)
so in the "Lament":

*Halbtotem gleich . . .
Zitternd vor spitzen Frostpfeilen . . .*

(As one half-dead . . . trembling at sharp, icy darts of freezing cold)
There recurs the picture of the prisoner:

*ein Gefangener nur,
der das harteste Los zog:
in eigener Schachte
gebückt arbeitend . . .*

(a prisoner, now, one who drew the harshest lot: laboring stooped over in the mine-shaft of himself)
so in the "Lament":

*Deine stolzeste Gefangene . . .
Wie?
Lösegeld . . .*

(Your proudest prisoner . . . What? A ransom . . .)
The images of the hunter, the prey, the executioner, recur:

*Von dir selber gejagt,
deine eigene Beute . . .
in eignen Stricken gewürgt,
Selbstkenner!
Selbsthenker!*

(You hunted yourself down, turned into your own prey . . . throttled in nets of your own devising, you self-knower! self-executioner!)
so in the "Lament":

*du Folterer,
du Henker-gott. . .
dein Wild nur bin ich,
grausamster Jäger!*

(you tormenter, you headsman-god . . . your game, only yours am I,
most savage of hunters!)
The image of stealing in in the first poem:

*Was schleichts du dich ein
in dich—in dich? . . .*

(Why the stealthy entry into yourself—into yourself? . . .)
is repeated in the "Lament":

*du schleichst heran
bei solcher Mitternacht? . . .
Wozu die Leiter?
Willst du hinein,
ins Herz, einsteigen. . .*

(on a midnight like this you stealthily creep in? . . . What is the ladder for? Do you want to climb inside, into the heart . . .)

There remains, notwithstanding, a decisive difference: in the first poem, "Between Birds of Prey," a self appears; in the second, the god makes his entrance. A transfer of roles has taken place: In the first poem it is an active, an overpowering being, a self, which—whether it is imposing itself or joining in— is suffering; in the second, we are in the presence of a passive, overpowered being. At the close of the "Lament" there is a sea-change from torment and hate to love and longing; in "Between Birds of Prey" the change has already taken place, but as a change in the active self, which hurls itself down from its heights, rather than as a change in the one who receives, accepts, wards off:

*Und jüngst noch so stolz,
auf allen Stelzen deines Stolzes!
Jüngst noch der Einsiedler ohne Gott,
der Zweisiedler mit dem Teufel,
du scharlachner Prinz jedes Übermuts!*

(And just now still so proud, on all the stilts of your pride! Just now the solitary without God, you made a twosome with the Devil, scarlet-hued prince of insolence!)

Now it is not true to say that what in the one case was called self has here acquired the name God. It is also incorrect to say, as does

Klages, that the two halves correspond to the opposition of spirit to soul (*Geist-Seele*).* Yet in both poems there takes place an analogous type of dramatic movement:

*Jungst Jäger noch Gottes,
das Fangnetz aller Tugend,
du Pfeil des Bösen!
Jetzt—
von dir selber erjagt,
deine eigene Beute,
in dich selber eingebohrt . . .*

(Just now still hunter of god, the trap-net of every virtue, the arrow [shot at] evil! Now—you are hunted by yourself, your own prey, piercing into your very self . . .)

Here, truly, knowledge becomes tragedy: the plunge from hubris to despair, together with the plunge from appearance to Truth—as in Sophocles' Oedipus, only here being endured in his own self!

*Zwiesam im eigenen Wissen
zwischen hundert Spiegeln
vor dir selber falsch . . .
ein Wissender!
Ein Selbsterkenner!
der weise Zarathustra! . . .
Du suchtest die schwerste Last:
da fandst du dich—
du wirfst dich nicht ab von dir . . .*

(The knowledge of yourself a thing divided, in the midst of a hundred mirrors, false to yourself . . . a man of knowledge! who knows himself! Zarathustra the wise! You sought the heaviest burden: yourself you found; no casting off the burden of yourself . . .)

A drama, then—but one inhabited by a cast of two? And not, rather, three? Doesn't the voice of the scornful bird, doesn't the landscape too have a place?

*tust der Tanne es gleich?
Die schlägt Wurzeln, wo
der Fels selbst schauernd
zur Tiefe blickt—*

(are you vying with the pine-tree? It strikes roots where the cliff itself gasps as it gazes down into the deep—)

Is it possible for the spectator, for the contemptuous figure, to be absent as the third in the cast? Granted the force of this question, what might soul or spirit mean? Is not the instinct towards truth, insofar as it must conquer, must overpower things,—soul as much as anything

* *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* (1926), 114 f.

else? (In this case, something which makes its attempt on truth, but at other times, on other kinds of prey?) And the victim—perhaps man himself at the abyss? And that derisive figure, as voice of the γνῶθι σαυτόν, would behave under these circumstance like the oracle—the injunction of the daemon under whose watchful eye a single destiny is created from both—from that which overpowers and from that which is overpowered.

Taking this as a point of comparison, how are the roles distributed in the “Lament”? It is true that the scornful eye, that Thought, are present:

*Von dir gejagt, Gedanke!
darniedergeblitzt von dir,
du höhnisch Auge, das mich aus dunklem anblickt.*

(Hunted by you, thought! brought down by your lightning, you scornful eye, gazing at me from dark depths).

Yet what is acting violently here is the god: “not tired of beholding human suffering.” The conquering force and the spectator merge into the figure of the unknown, who chooses the human being as his victim at the very moment that he conveys his demands to him.

Evidently the roles, as in a theater which relies on stock roles, can remain similar or identical in their dynamic core, yet mutate as regards costume, content, destiny, success or abject failure. This goes to explain why, though once again we view the role of the subjugator celebrating his triumph, brought low by his hubris, struck by evil glances from a stark landscape, hissed at by scornful voices,—nonetheless, a different instinct can appear. So in “*Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!*”

(Only a fool! Only a poet!):

*Der Wahrheit Freier—du? so höhnen sie—
nein! nur ein Dichter!
ein Tier, ein listiges, raubendes, schleichendes,
das lügen muss,
das wissentlich, willentlich lügen muss,
Nach Beute lüstern,
bunt verlarvt,
sich selbst zur Beute,
das-der Wahrheit Freier? . . .*

(The truth’s suitor—you? scornfully they chant—no! only a poet! a beast, a sly, rapacious, crawling thing, that needs must lie, must lie knowingly and willingly, coveting prey, in gay disguise, a prey for yourself, which—the truth’s suitor? . . .)

Here too, as previously, rapine, prey, one’s own self! But the tragic initiative, that which demands the victim, is here the contrary of what it is in “*Between Birds of Prey*”: the poetic instinct, the instinct towards the lie! And still, how eagle-like:

*Dann
plötzlich
geraden Flugs
gezückten Zugs
auf Lämmer stossen,
jach hinab . . .*

(Then, suddenly, diving abruptly straight down, quivering in flight, to strike the lambs. . .)

The peripety of the drama of the *Gottesrufer*, the god-invoker, the reversal from No to Yes: No! Come back! appears a few years earlier, in the identical words, though intentionally more superficial, trivial, in jest, in "*Rimus remedium, oder wie kranke Dichter sich trösten*" (Rhyme's the remedy, or, how the sick poet comforts himself). It is true that the cry of longing, No! Come back! is directed at a being of considerably lower rank, at the fever. And yet here, too, something of the same inner discord is present, only it still remains within the bounds of self-irony, still within the domain of poetry. . . .

A search in Nietzsche's writings for the origin and progress of his inner tragedy would have to begin at an early point. As early as "Thoughts out of Season," there is no dearth of prophetic passages: here, for example, one from "On the Benefits and Drawbacks of History," dating from 1873: "The fact that he [the upright man] now resembles that daemon [of knowledge], though he never was anything other than a puny human being and, that above all, at each moment he is forced to pay with his own substance the penalty of being human, and that he consumes himself at the fire of an impossible virtue—all this sets him apart on a solitary height." In hindsight, the passionate description in the fourth of the "Thoughts out of Season" of the inner destiny and process whereby there originates the greatest sorcerer and benefactor of mankind, the "dithyrambic dramatist," (here still conceived of in the person of Wagner), reads like a self-characterization: although "engaged in combat with a recalcitrant world," this combat, however, "is so frightful and uncanny for him only. . . because he hears this world, this hostile temptress, speaking out of his own self and because there dwells within himself a mighty daemon of recalcitrance." Later Nietzsche will interpret his own struggle with decadence in identical terms. Clearly such an inner tragedy, beginning early, growing ever more intense, furnishes him with the explosive force he then turns outward.

But it is only during the period in which Zarathustra was gestating that Nietzsche seems to have become aware of this as being no longer his personal destiny, no longer the agony, victory and triumph of his personal Yes, but rather the ultimate drama of Being itself. Reaching over the whole of his sceptical period back to the "artist's metaphysics" of his earliest work, its sermonizing, its glorification of the Dionysian, Nietzsche from now on is at work on a type he introduces at this time

and on whom he bestows the name of his god: the type of the Dionysian philosopher. At the same time, the drama of overpowering and of being overpowered begins to be acted out in his prose too, sometimes covertly between the lines, at other times surfacing in the text. The "will to power" would bring about its own death from lack of nourishment were it not to spring forth at its prey. Let it make its entrance in the form or mask of psychological, historical, biological or whatever insights, what Nietzsche predicates of every instinct holds for *the* instinct: "Each instinct seeks to gain mastery, and as such attempts to philosophize."

Listen to the psychologist:

The entire previous history of the soul and of its still unexhausted possibilities: for the born psychologist and friend of the 'big hunt,' the preordained hunting preserve. . . . The trouble with sending forth scholars is that they become useless precisely at the point where the 'big hunt,' and the big danger, begins.

Listen to the genealogist of morals:

This covert act of self-violence, this artists' savagery, this joy taken in endowing one's own heavy, resistant, enduring matter with Form, in branding in a will, a critical stance, a contradiction, contempt, a 'No'—this eery and awful-pleasurable labor of the soul that wills to be in discord with itself, which brings itself to suffer from the joy it takes in bringing about suffering, this whole energetic "bad conscience" has finally, as—try to guess it—as the authentic womb of ideal and imaginative acts brought to light an abundance of novel and unconventional beauty and yea-saying and, perhaps for the first time, beauty itself. . . . (*Gen. of Morals*, 2, 18).

Or listen to the legislator:

In man creature and creator are joined: in man there is matter, fragmentation, overflow, clay, mud, meaninglessness, chaos; but in man there is also creator, sculptor, hammer-hardness, spectator-divinity and the seventh-day—do you grasp the contradiction? And grasp the fact that your compassion should reach out to the "creator in man," that which demands to be formed, smashed, forged, torn in pieces, burned, tempered, refined—to that which of necessity must suffer and ought to suffer. (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 225).

Or hear the unmasker of knowledge:

At the least one ought to reflect that the seeker after knowledge, in forcing his mind—against the mind's inclination and often enough against the heart's wishes—to pursue knowledge, forcing it to say No when he would like to say Yes, like to love and to worship—that he is acting as an artist, one who transfigures cruelty; every effort at depth and thoroughness amounts in itself to an act of violence, to a desire to do hurt to the fundamental desire of a mind that tends incessantly to the appearance and surface of things—mingled within every desiring-to-know is a drop of cruelty (*Beyond*, 229).

Or the interpreter of *Geist* as "homo Natura":

. . . that continual pressure and craving of a productive, creative, mutable force: in this the mind takes pleasure in the variety of masks at its disposal, in its

cunning . . . Against this will to appearance, to simplification, to the mask, to the cloak, in short, to the surface—for every surface is a cloak—there is at work that sublime thrust of the seeker after knowledge, which grasps and desires to grasp things in a deep, a complicated and thorough way: as a kind of ruthlessness of the intellectual conscience. . . (*Beyond*, 230).

In each instance there is an active element (though, to be sure, not always one seeking knowledge) and a passive one, always “this eery and awful-pleasurable work of the soul that wills to be in discord with itself.” It would be a mistake to assign purely negative predicates to the overpowered, passive part: “the extent of ‘progress’ is measured even by the dimensions of all that had to be sacrificed to it” (*Gen. Morals*). And what gardens in bloom, concealing their readiness for self-sacrifice, what islands of the blessed there are included in the tally!

The way Nietzsche has of experiencing himself as an inner drama determines already the nature of his heroism. It may be convenient to use the conventional reductive tactics and resolve this enigmatic duality by tracing it back either to his Protestant heritage or to his psychological makeup, and so on. But how much will this explain? Enough—the inner drama begins with his perception of being one with the drama of the world and of Being.

From the first page of *Beyond Good and Evil* speaks a seductive voice, allusively, covertly, one that doesn't let itself go; it speaks in mysterious and hallowed tones, such as have not previously been heard, even from Nietzsche, of a “new desire,” of “hopes which haven't yet a name,” of a “new will,” “new currents”—more and more it speaks in the accents of one who is preparing for the appearance of a god; indeed the next-to-last section (295) amounts virtually to a *Hymnos kletikos*; though it does not begin with the name of the god who is being invoked, it offers instead an all the more curious assortment of attributes: from “the genie of the heart” to the point where the speech breaks off:

Who is it of whom I'm speaking to you? Did I so far forget myself as not even to reveal his name? Well, perhaps you've already guessed by yourselves who this most curious spirit and god, who wishes his praises to be sung in this manner, is . . . no less than the god Dionysus, that mighty god who is an enigma, the tempter-god, to whom, as you know, I once brought my first-born as an offering. . .

Yet how transformed in appearance is he since the “Birth.” What novel names he sports! the “Tempter,” “Philosopher,” “Discoverer”! “The very fact that Dionysus is a philosopher, with its corollary that gods too philosophize, seems to me to be a novel teaching, one not without its subtle dangers. . .”

From the Dionysos of the “Birth” there had been altogether lacking the distinctive feature of the new one: Dionysian activity! Pleasure and suffering were the exclusive determinants of the earlier figure, and in this there is no change right down to the drunken song of the Zara-

thustra period. "Dionysian art seeks to persuade us of the uninterrupted pleasure of existence. . . . The raging prods of these agonies pierce us through and through at the very moment in which we have become as one with the boundless ultimate pleasure in existence, and in which, through the Dionysian ecstasy, we are made aware that this pleasure is imperishable and eternal." How differently the god now expresses himself:

Once he said: "Given the proper circumstances I like human beings"—an allusion to Ariadne, who happened to be present: "in my eyes man is an endearing, courageous, inventive animal who has not his equal on earth, one that can find his bearings in any labyrinth whatever. I'm well-disposed towards him; I often reflect on how I can impel him forwards and make him stronger, more evil, deeper than he is." "Stronger, more evil, deeper?" I asked terror-stricken. "Yes," he said once more, "stronger, more evil, deeper; more beautiful, too!"—at which the tempter-god smiled.

But can this still be right? Does not this deification of the ultimate instinct come down to a dramatization of the Ass's Litany of the Fourth Part of Zarathustra? How vigorously Nietzsche once kept at arm's length the possibility of such deifications (1882)!

*Weltspiel das herrische
Mischt Sein und Schein—
Das Ewig-Närrische
Mischt uns hinein! . . .*

(The imperious world-drama confounds Being and Appearance—the Eternally-Foolish mixes us—right in!)

And that would seem to be Nietzsche's last word, right down to the posthumous Fifth Book of the "Gay Science" of 1886 (374):

Once more we shudder—but who would want again to go right out and, in approved ancient fashion, deify this monstrous piece of unknown world? And, I suppose, from now on to worship *that* which is unknown in the guise of "*him* who is unknown?" There are too many ungodlike possibilities of interpretation set down in the account of this unknown, too much interpretative devilry, stupidity, folly, our every own human, all-too-human interpretation, which we do know. . . .

Yet the "desire," here still held at arm's length, proves ever more enticing. To be sure, his Zarathustra remains an atheist: "Zarathustra himself, I admit, is nothing but an old atheist; he believes neither in gods old or new. Zarathustra says he would—but Zarathustra won't. . . . You must understand him correctly. . . . (*Will to Power*, 1038). But how contemptuously, and from hindsight, does the remark "is nothing but" come. And, on the other hand, how attractive-sounding this is: "And how many new gods are still possible! For me, in whom the religious, that is, god-forming instinct now and then—sometimes at the wrong time—takes on life. . . ."

This formulation of the "Gay Science" (370, in 1886) still holds for the aesthetic domain: "The demand for destruction, change, becoming can be an expression of burgeoning power, pregnant with the future (as you know, my term for this is the word 'Dionysian')," but at the very time that Nietzsche speaks in this way, he is already passing beyond the boundaries of the aesthetic: "I name that pessimism of the future—Dionysian pessimism." And siren-like is the voice of the *Will to Power* (1036): "You all are afraid of the line of reasoning: 'from the world we know might be proved the existence of an entirely different god—one not humanitarian'." Would this god differ at all from the one who wishes to make men "more evil," "deeper," "more beautiful"? And more and more that "World-drama," that "Eternally-foolish" becomes the ultimate tragedy and comedy of the god! "Around the hero all becomes tragedy, around the demigod all becomes satyr-play; and around the god all becomes—what? perhaps 'world'" (*Beyond*, 150). "On the day, however, when with all our hearts we cry 'forward! our old morality also belongs to comedy!' we shall have discovered a new complication and possibility for the Dionysian drama of the 'destiny of the soul' and, you may depend on it, he will be right there to make use of it, the great old eternal poet of the comedy of our existence" (Preface to *Genealogy*, July 1887).

Why, if philosophy is the "most spiritual will to power," the will to "the creation of the world," to the "*causa prima*" (*Beyond*, 9), is not the "Dionysian" philosopher provided with a warrant by the "philosophizing" god? There is no room for doubt: Dionysos as philosopher is the foretaste of a new myth, one which replaces, surpasses and sublates the "over-man" Zarathustra. For even if Zarathustra, according to the extant notes on his death, changes more and more from being a tragic figure who perishes to a blessed figure who passes into the beyond, nevertheless he remains too much the man who has overcome himself, too little the god who can announce the Dionysian world, the Dionysian philosophy or the philosophizing Dionysos—unless one were to re-interpret his sufferings so that they became those of a god. But now—is there any quarter from which the god does not set out to entice those who denied him? For instance, in the hierarchy of philosophers above the domain of anything which had previously existed, there appears the god with a hint that he is the completion of the upper part of the line:

I would even permit myself a hierarchy of the philosophers, arranging them with an eye to the reach of their laughter—up to those who are capable of the golden laughter. And, supposing that gods too philosophize, a conclusion to which quite a few reasons have driven me—, I have no doubt but that they will be laughing in a more-than-human and novel way—one to be drawn on the account of all the earnest things! (*Beyond*, 294).

The ladder which leads upwards beyond man at the same time leads back, downwards to the fundamental *données* of man. Dionysos, the

god who philosophizes, becomes the epiphany which points to the future of the ancient god of tragedy and comedy: "To be able to remove the hidden, undiscovered, unwitnessed suffering from the world and genuinely negate it, one was virtually compelled at that time to invent gods and intermediate beings of every height and depth, in short, what has its haunts in secret places, that sees in the dark too and is unlikely to let an interestingly painful performance slip away from it . . ." Every kind of trouble the sight of which affords satisfaction to a god is justified: "such was the prehistoric—indeed, not only the prehistoric—logic of the feelings. The gods conceived of as partial to savage dramatic performances—how far this ancient idea intrudes still into our civilized European existence." (*Genealogy of Morals* II, 7). But is anything lacking from this performance to give us—the "Lament of Ariadne"? Doesn't the Ariadne-drama, the drama of the spectator-god and his victim, become a piece of secret, ancient, and then again futuristic theology—a species of mystery play? Is not every component of the "Lament" ready at hand to round out the play—save for its driving force, the god? Rounded and filled out at least for one who "desires to have it again and again as it is and was, to all eternity," for one "who is calling *da capo* insatiably, not only to himself, but to the play as a whole, and not only to a play, but rather *au fond* to one who needs precisely this drama—and who makes it necessary: because he continues to need himself—and makes himself necessary—What? and this would not be—*circulus vitiosus deus*." (*Beyond*, 56)

The seducer-voice of the seducer-god—what does it mean? Is this god genuinely a god? or a poetic symbol? or what is known as a high-flown simile? or no more than a witty *façon de parler*? Notes left by Nietzsche allow no doubt as to the intention of the god's prophet: "The refutation of God:—in truth only the god of morality is refuted" (XIII, p. 75, from 1886). "You call it the disintegration of God:—he is only sloughing off his moral skin. And soon you'll meet him again—beyond good and evil" (XII, 329, of uncertain date). Indeed, is this Dionysian world not directed towards a god of precisely this nature, as the Christian world is directed towards a Christian deity?

This Dionysian world of mine, a world in which the self is eternally creating and eternally destroying itself, this mystery-world of ambiguous desires, this my "beyond good and evil" . . . would you like a name for this world? A solution to all your riddles? A light for you, too, you who are hidden most deeply, the strongest, the least timid, most nearly creatures of midnight?—this world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are this will to power—and nothing besides! (*Will to Power*, end.)

That, to be sure, is the formulation of the Will to Power. But is not the will to power, taken as the lone subject on to which all these predicates shower not a thing too reduced, too stripped? If "world-mystery" and the secret consciousness of the nature of those "hidden most deeply" turn out to be identical, is this unity, or better: The assurance, what

is external to me as that in which I have my being and which causes me to shudder—is this not something to which no Greek, no pupil of Empedocles or Heraclitus, would have hesitated to give the name of god? For is not the relation of the Dionysian in the realm of art to the Dionysian of the world comparable to that which the pre-Socratics conceived to exist between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic? “The phenomenon ‘artist’ is still the easiest to see through—from there to turn one’s gaze to the fundamental instincts of power, of nature, etc! of religion and morality, too!” (*Will to Power*, 797) In the myth of the mystery-religion, Dionysus is dismembered by the Titans; according to Nietzsche, he destroys and renews himself, becoming the symbol not only of the new human being, but in the literal sense the god of the future—“promise,” “justification of suffering” (*Will to Power*, 1052). Forgotten is the deed of the Titans (the ultimate ancestors of men) who devoured the god as a sacrifice, forgotten as well the preservation of the god’s heart by Zeus and Athena—in short, the tension between the forces of preservation and those of destruction. . . . As regards his reflexive character, Nietzsche’s god is not the god of the ancient myth; perhaps he recalls more the speculative re-interpretation undertaken as early as the Stoics, and later by the neo-Platonists. Late antiquity interpreted Zagreus as the world-soul, engaged first in dismembering, then piecing himself back together to wholeness: *nihil aliud Bacchum quam animam mundi intellegendum asserentes; quae ut ferunt philosophi quamvis quasi membratim per mundi corpora dividatur, semper tamen se redintegrare videtur, corporibus emergens et se formans* (O. Kern, *Orphicorum* fragm. 213). (asserting that Bacchus is to be understood as none other than the world-soul; which, according to the philosophers, though it be divided limb by limb, as it were, through the bodies that compose the world, is nevertheless recomposing itself unceasingly, emerging from bodies and endowing itself with form.) Or might there possibly be a second being apart from the god? And does the mysterious allusion of the *Ecce*: “Who apart from me knows what Ariadne is” hint at such a riddle?

The enigma posed by Nietzsche’s renaming of the sorcerer’s lament, so that it became the “Lament of Ariadne,” if not completely solved by the consideration of this last turn in his thinking, does become considerably less obscure. The renaming belongs together with the mysterious, retrospective self-interpretations which abound in this, his last period. Why, in this very last *Ecce*-period even the apostate Zarathustra is transfigured utterly by the light of the new god! “So does a god, a Dionysos, suffer. The answer to such a dithyramb of the sun’s isolation in the light would be Ariadne. . . . Apart from me who knows what Ariadne is. . . . Nobody before this had the solution to riddles like this; I doubt whether anybody here even noticed that riddles existed.” Yet for this very reason the differences come as so much more of a shock! In Zarathustra, the reply of the master to the false singer is a cudgelling: “At

this Zarathustra could restrain himself no longer; taking up his staff he struck out with all his force at the groaning man." In the Dithyramb there appears in his stead the god, to the accompaniment of lightning flashes, in "smaragd-like" beauty! Instead of earning a beating, the suppliant who invokes the god is heard! Yet heard, saved, not through any encounter of the body, or through divine epiphanies, or songs, or myths, but rather—through a re-interpretation! A masculine ending comes to be replaced by a feminine. Here too, the change of roles has a lengthy pre-history: "Assuming that truth is a woman—" (Preface to *Beyond*), that is, false, vain, fond of appearances, of the mask—and for that very reason so alluring. "Her great art is the lie, her most urgent concern appearance and beauty" (*Beyond*, 232). Whence the destiny of the seeker after truth: "Never does a labyrinthine man seek the truth, only his Ariadne—whatever he may tell us" (XII, p. 259). That is to say, though he calls it his truth, it is what surrenders to him, what he desires, what seduces him and leads him astray. . . . Then again, Nietzsche likes to think of "life" as the female of the species, taking it (as in the case of truth) as the passive with respect to the active—Nietzsche's conception of the *vita femina*. "Yet perhaps we have here life's most powerful allure: over it lies a veil, shot through with gold, a veil of beautiful possibilities, promising, resisting, bashful, jesting, compassionate, seductive. Yes, life is the female" (*Gay Science*, 339, from 1886). And already in *Zarathustra* something similar (II, "The Song of the Dance"). Of special importance is the sketch of an Ariadne-allegory dating from 1887 or '88—a satyr-play, in which the god, Dionysos, triumphs over the hero, Theseus, where a Dionysos calmly assured in his love confronts a Theseus bewildered, destined for his doom. For the hero, Ariadne becomes a labyrinth, for the god, she becomes his beloved, yet loved "without jealousy. . ." To repeat, there is no dearth of passages which prepare for the exchange of roles in the "Lament of Ariadne." And yet, the behavior demanded by the new role is oddly inappropriate to the model of the feminine, understood as one recognized, comprehended, loved, sacrificed by the god. For the female, the being who invokes the god, becomes genuine because her appearance has its roots in a deeper level, one wholly distinct from that of the sorcerer. The alternative would be that this possibility might reveal a faint glimmer of Nietzsche's ambiguity—that the blows of Zarathustra's cudgel strike Nietzsche's own truth! And that Zarathustra's denial of deity was merely the suppression of a hidden, and therewith all the more passionately longing entreaty.

Yet almost stranger than all this are the words of the saviour-god. Dithyramb signifies a powerful eruption and flow of words. The setting of the dithyramb—according to the stage-directions—is the epiphany: "A lightning-flash; Dionysos becomes visible in smaragd-like beauty"—what an imposition on the audience, who are meant to get a feeling of something like this from the words of the poem. This is the case even

if we concede that in contrast to the Christian god, this god must speak "inhumanly," "without shame," and as a "seducer." Yet his words are no more than abbreviations of Nietzsche's own paths of thought. What a contrast they form to the pathetic gestures of Ariadne!

*Sei klug, Ariadne! . . .
Du hast kleine Ohren, du hast meine Ohren:
Steck ein kluges Wort hinein!—
Muss man sich nicht erst hassen,
wenn man sich lieben soll? . . .
Ich bin dein Labyrinth . . .*

(Be wise, Ariadne! . . . You have tiny ears, you have my ears: set a wise word in them!—Must one not first hate, before one can love? . . . I am your labyrinth. . .)

"Be wise . . . you have tiny ears" is a rejection of the "Ass's Litany": "What hidden wisdom has he, that he sports long ears. . . ?" in *Zarathustra*, IV; and in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 8: "In every philosophy there arrives a moment where the 'conviction' of the philosopher strides on to the stage; or, to put it in the words of the ancient mystery:

*adventatit asinus
pulcher et fortissimus."*

"Why, I venture to assert that I have the tiniest ears. . . I am the anti-ass par excellence, and therewith a world-historical prodigy" (*Ecce*). Nonetheless, for the god Ariadne's ears are at times—but enough: another version may be found in "The Twilight of the Idols": "Man believes that the world is overflowing with beauty—he forgets that he is the cause. . . who knows how he would fare in the eyes of a nobler judge of taste?" "O Dionysos, why do you, a god, keep tugging at my ears?" Ariadne asked her philosophical lover during one of those famous *tête-à-têtes* on Naxos. 'I find something comical in your ears, Ariadne; why aren't they even longer?'"

To make them speak forth and convey their message would require a complete commentary on Dionysos' statements about hate and about love. If Christ brings love, Dionysos brings love out of hate, that is, hate as the ground out of which love first grows. "I believe that the man who has divined something of the most fundamental conditions of all growth in love will understand how Dante came to write over the gate of his *Inferno*: 'I too was created by eternal love.'" (*Will to Power*, II, 1030). Or: "That however, is truly *the* event: from the trunk of that tree of vengeance and hate, Jewish hate—the deepest and most sublime hate, which generates ideals, destroys and re-creates 'values,' the like of which had never yet appeared on earth—there grew something equally incomparable, a new love, the deepest and most sublime of any kind of love—and? I ask, out of what other trunk could it have grown? (*Genealogy of Morals*, I, 8) To be sure, in other respects too the love

offered by Dionysos is different from Christian love in that it has more about it of *amor fati*: "The highest condition to which a philosopher can attain: to assume towards existence a Dionysian stance— my formula for this is *amor fati* (*Will to Power*, 1041). Above all, to comprehend Nietzsche's "love" it would be necessary to uncover its hidden relationship to Nietzsche's "affirmation," which is similar to the connection between Nietzsche's "hate" and his "denial." Nietzsche's Yes also almost always carries the day from a previously given No; his Yes is always the cry of victory. . . .

A hint more furtive still occurs in the god's final word, in which he bears self-witness: "I am your labyrinth." Might we say that this contradicts the Johannine "I am the truth"? Perhaps contradicting also the last words of the last of the Dithyrambs: "I am your truth." Still, what does that mean? One would have to gain admittance to Nietzsche's labyrinth merely to make the dark visible as dark. To be sure, here too hints are not lacking, for instance, Beyond 29: "He [the man who, without having to be so, is independent] thereby enters a labyrinth, he multiplies a thousandfold the dangers which life by itself brings with it; not the least danger is that nobody sees plainly how and where he has taken the false step, become isolated, and is in a way of being torn apart limb by limb by some cave-dwelling minotaur of conscience." But, to put it in neo-Platonic terms, the labyrinth of the "Lament" stands in the same relation to this as does the ultimate ground of Being to Appearance. One would be constrained to go into the teaching of the "great danger," of the "courage for the forbidden," of "the predestination to the labyrinth" (Preface to *Antichrist*); beyond this into the whole intricate Ariadne-problem of the mask which beholds itself as mask, of the text which interprets itself as interpretation, of the thread which winds out into one's own hand; in short, in order to decipher the meaning of the mystery, one would have to unravel the whole late problem of the "*circulus vitiosus deus*." But no less telling is the halt Nietzsche makes at this hint, the fact that it is inadmissible to invoke the new myth. The lament of Ariadne ends on a gnostic note. In contrast to the myths of Plato, whose origins too lie in philosophic problems, there open up no marvellous new fields of vision.

Yet does this observation not bring us to the destiny of Nietzsche's final Dionysian visions? Speech is inadequate. Where the hymn seeks to break loose, the word is silenced. We are left with mysterious allusions or exclamations: "Dionysos is a judge!—Do you understand me?" or "Dionysos against the crucified one. . . ." The Greek cult too is transformed into a Nietzschean mystery: "To this entire light and color ladder of happiness the Greeks—not without the grateful shudder of those who have been initiated into a mystery, not without due caution and pious silence—gave the name of a god: Dionysos" (*Will to Power*, 1051). In place of the "Dionysian power of the German soul," in place of "the earthquake, with a primal force pent up for ages, at

long last breaks forth" (*Gay Science*, 370), at the end what an astonishing show! How unvisionary the visionary is! What a *tone* for a god to assume! "Hey, you rat-catcher, what are you up to? You demi-Jesuit and minstrel—almost a German!" (Prefatory material, 1885–88). Nietzsche converses in the style of the satyr-play, of uncouth people, about things which rightfully should require the language of myth. He speaks in the manner of a literary gossip, almost in that of the "*Journal des Goncourts*": Ariadne can't endure it any longer:—"the events here related took place during my first visit to Naxos: 'My dear sir,' she said, 'you speak German like a pig!' 'Leave the pig out of it, my dear goddess! You underestimate the difficulty of uttering subtleties in German!' 'Subtleties!' cried an outraged Ariadne. . . . Where is all this going to end?"—as she impatiently toyed with the renowned thread which once guided Theseus through the labyrinth. Thus it came to light that Ariadne was two thousand years behind in her philosophic education" (XIII, p. 250). Ariadne two thousand years behind! Yet does this not amount to an explication of her destiny for the present age? The destiny, namely, that she herself, as the myth which she must be, has arrived on the scene late by two thousand years?

Of his Zarathustra period Nietzsche could say: "Incidentally, I have remained a poet up to the very limits of the notion, even though I have been industrious in tyrannizing myself with the contrary of all poetizing." At this time, his destiny would seem to have been sealed with the words of Zarathustra: "Ah, my soul. . . that I bade you sing, behold, that was my last deed!" (*Zarathustra*, III). Nonetheless, the last four years of his lucid life brought no burst of song. The *Ecce*-impulse, which dammed itself up in him with ever greater force, the eruption of his legislative and destructive talents, his mounting impatience to hurl challenges at the time from behind his post of time beyond time, to assault it, to constrain it to face necessary decisions, the attitude of the hammer and the assassinations, not least the contradictions between the end and his means, between prophecy and publicity—all this comes more and more to displace in him the poet in favor of his rival, the legislator. It is enlightening that not a single one of the Dithyrambs, no, nor one of the poems, was composed in his last years. Even the poem usually displayed as evidence of a final flight into song: "Venice, on the Bridge" had been composed earlier (proof for this would carry us too far afield). The levels of meaning, the charm, terror, the manifestations of sorrow and of happiness grounded in a securely ensconced diversity vanish behind a more and more topical will to intervene and to display power; save for an afterglow of reminiscences, the language itself turns tempestuous and unequivocal, foregoing the play of glancing light and tremulous color, becomes tough, and, calling out in drastic, cynical, defamatory, commanding tones bears witness to a master of the stark lighting effect. . . . Euphoria drives him to the *Ecce*, elevates him to self-deification, but ceases to regenerate itself in images

and songs. So Ariadne too remains his secret. Instead of a new myth, we get only a re-interpretation, a late transfiguration intelligible to him alone. In revenge, the act of renaming becomes symbolic, the renamer himself becomes a myth, but one he himself no longer composes.

Nietzsche philology and Nietzsche dilettantism have appropriated the riddle of Ariadne and used their methods to solve it. As evidence they have stepped forward with a couple of incoherent notes written by an already benighted man. Ariadne is revealed to be Cosima, Dionysos as Nietzsche himself, Theseus as Wagner. But is this not precisely the sign of disease, when thinking gives up its symbolic functions, when meaning and person are no longer kept distinct, when association takes the place of inferences? The dimensions of a sense of hearing for which such madness rings forth as the deepest voice of revelation cannot stand in comparison even with the largest ears about which Nietzsche ventured to dream. Within Nietzsche's realm even fools and asses go out to do combat with gods and devils. But here? Were these interpreters to prove correct, then Nietzsche would have worn his god's mask amid the procession of masks of his time. This essay has attempted to demonstrate that his god means more than this.