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RETHINKING
THE NIETZSCHEAN
CONCEPT
OF 'UNTIMELY'

EDITED BY ANNALISA CAPUTO

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We shall refer to Nietzsche's original text by citing the appropriate volume (and aphorism or page) of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe* [KSA], compiled under the general editorship of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari and based on the complete edition of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW), W. de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1967 ff. References to the print editions of letters published by de Gruyter are cited as *KSB* (*Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*) or *KGB* (*Briefe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*), in this case we will indicate: date, number and recipient of the letter. References to Nietzsche's juvenilia appear in *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Hans Joachim Mette and Karl Schlechta, 9 vols. (C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Munich, 1934–40). We used also the precious *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe* – Digital version of the German critical edition of the complete works of Nietzsche edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari: Nietzsche Source.

ANNALISA CAPUTO
INTRODUCTION
RETHINKING THE NIETZSCHEAN CONCEPT
OF ‘UNTIMELY’

1. *Status quaestionis*

The term ‘*Unzeitgemäss*’ (Untimely) became famous in philosophy thanks to four Nietzschean writings (composed between 1873 and 1876), entitled *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen (Untimely Meditations)*.¹

Nietzsche considered the *Untimely Meditations* as a ‘*Cyclus*’;² a cycle of texts, that, in the original intentions of Professor Nietzsche — who was 29 years old when he began to write them — were supposed to be a total of 13. We have numerous drafts of hypotheses for the title: a book for each subject that, according to Nietzsche, was to be deconstructed:³ culture,

1 *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: KSA, 1.

2 See, e. g.: 1) *KSB-1874, 381 – Brief an Carl von Gersdorff: 26/07/1874*: «Zwar hatte er auch die Nr. 3 wieder angenommen, aber mit dem sauersten und verdriesslichsten Gesicht von der Welt: so dass ich bereits meinen *Cyclus* von *Unzeitgemässen* beschlossen und verpfuscht sah». 2) *KSB-1875, 414 – Brief an Malwida von Meysenbug: 02/01/1875*: «Dabei aber weiss ich gar nicht mehr, wann ich wieder dazu kommen soll, meinen *unzeitgemässen* *Cyclus* fortzusetzen. Mein geheimes aber hoffnungsloses Tichten und Trachten geht auf ein Landgut». 3) *KSB-1874, 378 – Brief an Ernst Schmeitzner: 15/07/1874*: «Noch im August denke ich Ihnen ein Manuscript zuzusenden zu können, ungefähr des Titels: ‘Arthur Schopenhauer’ Darf ich voraussetzen, dass Sie meine zuletzt veröffentlichten Schriften kennen, so werden Sie auch die Frage erlauben: Wären Sie eventuell im Stande, die Fortsetzung meines *Cyclus* von *Unzeitgemässen* *Betrachtungen* zu übernehmen?».

3 See *KSB-1874, 360 – Brief an Carl Fuchs: 28/04/1874*: «Bis dahin muss jeder von uns kräftiglich allein kämpfen: ich habe mir durch meine 13 *Unzeitgemässen*, die ich hinter einander herausgebe, eine gute Waffe geschmiedet, die ich den Leuten um die Köpfe schlage, bis dabei etwas herauskommt. Ich wollte, Sie machten es ebenso und schafften alles, was von Negativem, Polemischem, Hassendem in Ihrer Natur ist, auf diesem Wege aus sich heraus, um dann später Ruhe zu haben und sich durch gar nichts mehr ‘zum Widerspruch’ verleiten zu lassen». See also *KSB-1874, 398 – Brief an Malwida von Meysenbug: 25/10/1874*: «Denn es ist gewiss ein hohes Glück, mit seiner Aufgabe schrittweise vorwärts zu

history, philosophy, philology, art, high schools and universities, religion, the state and war, the press, science, society, people. All things of which — Nietzsche writes in *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* — «our age» [his era, but undoubtedly also ours] «is proud», precisely because they are considered useful, timely... and which, instead, Nietzsche intended to unmask as «disgraces».

As we know, only the first four of these *Untimely Meditations* were published. The 5th (*Wir Philologen*) remains a draft. In the summer of 1876 there was a reconsideration of the plan,⁴ but, when the publisher (Schmeitzner) asked Nietzsche for the 5th Meditation, on January '77, Nietzsche responded (on February 2) wondering whether it would not be better to consider the series completed.⁵ In retrospect, with his usual irony, Nietzsche wrote to Brandes: «thankfully my health has said 'no' to the others».⁶

Nietzsche never wrote the others. Did he never write them? Or did he write them differently? Do not his subsequent texts, although in a different form, perhaps present the content that Nietzsche had initially and programmatically wanted to treat? Are the *Untimely Meditations* a failure? Or is the passage to *Human all too Human* (and to all of his subsequent works: although they undoubtedly represent a 'turning point' in the Nietzschean path) a passage of continuity?

kommen – und jetzt habe ich drei von den 13 Betrachtungen fertig und die vierte spukt im Kopfe; wie wird mir zu Muthe sein, wenn ich erst alles Negative und Empörte, was in mir steckt, aus mir heraus gestellt habe». *NF-1875, 1 [4] – Nachgelassene Fragmente Winter-Frühling*: «800 Seiten in 24 Monaten, 24: 800 72 33, d.h. alle Tage eine Seite, alle drei Monate 1 Unzeitgemässe. 33 Jahre alt bin ich dann mit den *Unzeitgemäßen* fertig».

Instead, regarding the titles hypothesized by Nietzsche for his books, see for example *NF 19 [330], 1872–'73; NF 29 [163–4], 1873; NF 30 [38], 1873–'74; NF 32 [4], 1874; NF 16 [12–15], 1876*. In particular see 16 [12]: «Später: Nachträge zu den unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen (aphoristisch)».

4 See *NF 16 [13], 1876*.

5 *KSB-1877, 593 – Brief an Ernst Schmeitzner: 02/02/1877*: «Wollen wir nicht die *Unzeit<gemässen> Betr<achtungen>* als abgeschlossen betrachten?».

6 *KSB-1888, 1014 – Brief an Georg Brandes: 10/04/1888*: «Die *Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen* zwischen 1872 und Sommer 1875 (es sollten 13 werden: die Gesundheit sagte glücklicher Weise Nein!)». See also *KSB-1888, 997 – Brief an Georg Brandes: 19/02/1888*: «Zwischen den *Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen* und *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* liegt eine Krisis und Häutung. Auch leiblich: ich lebte Jahre lang in der nächsten Nachbarschaft des Todes. Dies war mein größtes Glück: ich vergaß mich, ich überlebte mich... Das gleiche Kunststück habe ich noch einmal gemacht. – So haben wir also einander Geschenke überreicht: ich danke, wie zwei Wanderer, die sich freuen, einander begegnet zu sein?».

This book will ‘also’ try to answer to these questions. However, beyond the judgement Nietzsche himself had on these ‘juvenile’ writings, one fact remains: both the term and the concept of ‘Untimely’ have been great successes, so much so that they are used in a fairly widespread manner even in non-Nietzschean contexts. In the face of this ‘popularity’, it seems ‘strange’ that the issue of ‘Untimeliness’ has been studied very little. In fact, there are very few books — at the international level — that present the issue of ‘Untimely’ in Nietzsche in a really complete way (in antecedents and consequences).

Individually and collectively, the four *Untimely Meditations* are unquestionably among Nietzsche’s most widely neglected works.⁷

The *Untimely Meditations* are some of Nietzsche’s most neglected works. (...) They have attracted relatively little scholarly interest, too.⁸

These are the statements of two scholars who more than others focused their attention on the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: Daniel Brazeale (who edited a precious English translation of the Nietzschean *Meditations*, with a long Introduction) and Duncan Large (who wrote a very interesting essay on the *Untimely Meditations* in *A Companion to Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by P. Bishop). Both, as we read, begin by emphasizing how these Nietzschean works have been ‘neglected’.

If we also want to distinguish between the ‘immediate’ and the ‘posthumous’ reception of the Nietzschean *Meditations*, the *status quaestions* remain the same. Although, in fact, the *First Meditation* on David Strauss, in some ways, attracted his contemporaries of Nietzsche more than the other *Betrachtungen*, and although the *Second Meditation* (On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life) is actually the most read and known today,⁹ in any case the number of texts dedicated to ‘Untimely’ remains very limited, especially when compared to the abundance of books devoted to other Nietzschean themes.

7 D. Brazeale, ‘Introduction’, in F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by D. Brazeale, engl. trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. vii.

8 D. Large, ‘Untimely Meditations’, in *A Companion to Friedrich Nietzsche. Life and Works*, ed. by P. Bishop (Rochester-New York: Camden House, 2012), p. 86.

9 To get an idea of the reception of the *Meditations* in Nietzsche’s time, it is important to consider the book by H. Reich, *Rezensionen und Reaktionen zu Nietzsches Werken: 1872–1889* (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2013). On the *Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen*, see in particular pp. 275 ff.

In fact, apart from the aforementioned essays by Breazeale and Large,¹⁰ to which we can add Richard T. Gray's equally precious *Afterword* to the English translation (edited by himself) of the *Unfashionable Observations* (1998)¹¹ and of course apart from the *Notes* that Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari wrote for the Critical edition of Nietzsche's Works,¹² we must admit that there is a substantial fragmentation and incompleteness of Secondary Literature on the issue of Untimely.

There are only a couple of collective volumes that deal with the issue.

The first one, *Nietzsches Cultuurkritiek in de 'Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen'*, edited by Gerard Visser (Leiden: 2000), collects some essays that address the theme of Nietzsche's criticism of contemporary culture in the four *Untimely Meditations*, according to some particular perspectives (artistic, literary-linguistic, agonistic, and mythical-tragic).¹³

The second one, *Las 'Consideraciones intempestivas' de Friedrich Nietzsche* (Buenos Aires: 2001),¹⁴ presents a research, coordinated by Silvio Juan Maresca. The researchers expand the spectrum of the investigation,

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- 10 D. Large also wrote another precious essay on this issue, in which he links the issue of Untimely to other texts written in Nietzsche's maturity: 'On Unimeliness: Temporal Structures in Nietzsche, or «The Day After Tomorrow Belongs to Me»', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 8 (1994), 33–53.
- 11 R.T. Gray, *Translator's Afterword: F. Nietzsche, Unfashionable Observations I–IV*, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche in 20 Volumes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 395–413.
- 12 G. Colli – M. Montinari, 'La nascita della tragedia' e le 'Considerazioni inattuali I–III nell'Opera di Nietzsche, Postfazione: in *Opere di F. Nietzsche*, by G. Colli and M. Montinari (Milan: Adelphi, 1964 ff.), vol. III, 1, pp. 431–434.
- 13 *Nietzsches Cultuurkritiek in de Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, ed. by Gerard Visser (Leiden: IdPrint, 2000): G. Visser, *De horizon van Bayreuth Een blik in Nietzsches Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, pp. 9–28; B. Biebuyck, *Polypsesten Cultuur en cultuurkritiek in Nietzsches Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen als taal-in-actie*, pp. 29–54; H. Siemens, *Agonale Configuraties in de 'Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen' Duitsers, Grieken en de Übertragung van culturen in het vroege denken van Nietzsche*, pp. 55–84; L. Geijsen, *Dionysus of de mens als verlosser van de natuur De vroege Nietzsche over Bildung*, pp. 85–116.
- 14 S.J. Maresca (et. al.), *Verdad y cultura: Las 'Consideraciones intempestivas' de Friedrich Nietzsche* (Buenos Aires: Alianza, 2001), with essays by S.J. Maresca (*Las consideraciones intempestivas de Friedrich Nietzsche*), S. Raquel Barbosa (*Apatía de la verdad científica*), J. Di Filippo (*De olvidos e ilusiones o actualidad de Nietzsche*), A. Tzveibel (*La cuestión de la verdad en la segunda Intempestiva*), A. Fernández de Mires (*Olvido y recuerdo: verdad de la historia*), M. Ángel Rossi (*Nietzsche y la teología: algunas consideraciones acerca de la modernidad*), R.M. Magliano (*Verdad, razón de Estado y lucha por la cultura*), M. Virasoro (*Arte y verdad en las obras tempranas de Nietzsche*), O. Langellotti (*Esperanza y verdad: Richard Wagner en Bayreuth – 1875–1876*)

moving from the four *Meditations* to other Nietzschean texts and to their legacy. So the authors find a red thread, i.e. the Nietzschean goal of acting ‘untimely’ and ‘critically’ against the foundations of Modernity. This is, in some ways, the only important text on the Untimely in Nietzsche.

In fact, although the ‘term’ Untimely appears in the titles of other miscellanies, these are mostly generic collections of essays that present different perspectives on Nietzsche and the fertility of his posture (without precise references to the *Untimely Meditations*). Among these we can recall the monographic issue of *Fenomenologia e società* (*Nietzsche: attualità di una filosofia inattuale*, 1983),¹⁵ the two volumes by M.B. Cragnolini and G. Kaminsky (*Colección Nietzsche actual e inactual*, 1996),¹⁶ and the two texts by G. Penzo, *Nietzsche: contemporaneo o inattuale?* (1980)¹⁷ and *Destinazioni. Attualità e inattualità del pensiero di Friedrich Nietzsche* (2001).¹⁸

Obviously a historical-biographical contextualization of the *Untimely Meditations* can be found in classical biographical texts, such as that of C.P. Janz and Ch. Andler,¹⁹ as well as in the texts of scholars such as R.J. Hollingdale and R. Hayman,²⁰ in the various Introductions to Nietzschean thought²¹ and in the most recent book by R. Safranski and S. Appel.²² However, these are references and/or analyses related to a general exposition of Nietzsche’s philosophy and life, not specific ‘investigations’.

15 *Fenomenologia e società*, 6, 3 (1983): *Nietzsche: attualità di una filosofia inattuale*.

16 Univ. de Buenos Aires: Oficina de Publ. del C.B.C., 1996.

17 G. Penzo (ed. by), *Nietzsche: contemporaneo o inattuale?* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1980).

18 G. Penzo (ed. by), *Destinazioni. Attualità e inattualità del pensiero di Friedrich Nietzsche* (Bologna: Zona, 2001).

19 C.P. Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Biographie*, 3 voll. (München: Hanser, 1978–1979); Ch. Andler, *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée*, 6 Bände (Paris: Brossard, 1920–1931).

20 R.J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (Baton, Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965); R. Hayman, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

21 In Italian, see M. Montinari, *Che cosa ha detto Nietzsche* (Milan: Adelphi, 1999) and *Su Nietzsche* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1981); G. Colli, *Scritti su Nietzsche* (Milan: Adelphi, 1980); M. Ferraris ed by, *Guida a Nietzsche. Etica, Politica, Filologia, Musica, Teoria dell’interpretazione, Ontologia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1999); G. Vattimo, *Introduzione a Nietzsche* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2001)¹³. In German, see H. Schmid, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, in H. Ottmann (ed. by), *Nietzsche Handbuch, Leben-Werk- Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), pp. 78–86.

22 R. Safranski, *Nietzsche. Biographie seines Denkens* (München, C. Hanser, 2000); S. Appel, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Wanderer und freier Geist. Eine Biographie* (München: Beck, 2011).

There are, then, works on the 'single' *Meditations*, i. e. essays or introductions to the different editions/translations of this Nietzschean book. Little has been written on the first one, more on the second one. On this, by limiting myself to miscellanies and monographs, the now-classic collective volume by D.D. Borchmeyer, '*Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*'. *Nietzsche und die Erinnerung in der Moderne* (1996), which collects theoretical perspectives on the Nietzschean text by Authors as H.-G. Gadamer, H. Lübbe, K. Hübner, H.-D. Kittsteiner, E. Agazzi²³ and the focus on *Der Europäer. Symptomatic aus Politik, Kultur und Wirtschaft Monatsschrift auf Grundlage der Geisteswissenschaft (Nietzsches Aktualität, 2000)*, are interesting because the two authors (T. Meyer and J. Le Rider), starting with the *Second Meditation*, focus on the 'Currency' (*Zeitgemäßheit*) of Nietzschean '*Unzeit-gemäß*', from the point of view of the human sciences and from an existential perspective.²⁴

Among the monographs on the *Second Meditation*, we can mention K. Meyer, *Ästhetik der Historie: Friedrich Nietzsches 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben'* (1998),²⁵ which transversally analyzes the great themes of *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*: from the melancholy of remembrances to the importance of memory, from the question of historicism to the aesthetics of the '*Überzeit*'. Also important is Desirée Rocha de Sá, *Die Geschichte im Geist der Kunst. Untersuchungen zu Nietzsches Historienschrift* (2008), which presents the relationship

23 D. Borchmeyer (ed. by), '*Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*'. *Nietzsche und die Erinnerung in der Moderne* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996), with essays by H.-G. Gadamer (*Präludium: Erinnerung und Geschichte*), H. Lübbe (*Geschichtsinteresse*), K. Hübner (*Vom theoretischen Nachteil und praktischen Nutzen der Historie*), H.-D. Kittsteiner (*Erinnern – Vergessen – Orientieren*), Evandro Agazzi (*Naturwissenschaft in historischer Perspektive*), K. Berger (*Wahrheit und Geschichte*), K.-P. Köpping (*Die Ethnologie als Gedächtnis der 'geschichtslosen Völker*), W. Schluchter (*Zeitgemäße Unzeitgemäße: von Friedrich Nietzsche über Georg Simmel zu Max Weber*), V. Žmegač (*Klassizismus und Geschichtsphilosophie*), W. Hinck (*Kritik und Legitimation der Geschichtsdichtung*), D. Borchmeyer (*Nietzsches zweite 'Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung' und die Ästhetik der Postmoderne*), H. Weinrich (*Postludium: Hat Goethes Faust Nietzsches zweite 'Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung' gelesen?*).

24 *Nietzsches Aktualität. Der Europäer. Symptomatisches aus Politik, Kultur und Wirtschaft Monatsschrift auf Grundlage der Geisteswissenschaft*, Jg. 4, n. 9/10, Juli/August (2000): T. Meyer, *Nietzsches Aktualität vom Gesichtspunkt der Geisteswissenschaft*; J. Le Rider, *Das Leben, die Geschichte und die Erinnerung in Nietzsches zweiter Unzeitgemäßer Betrachtung; Wozu heute Nietzsche lesen?*; T. Meyer, *Nietzsche und Emerson*.

25 Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998.

between history, life and art, starting from Nietzschean criticism to the scientific dimension and from an existential pre-understanding of the Nietzschean text.²⁶ And, above all, we must mention the recent work by A.K. Jensen, *An Interpretation of Nietzsche's 'On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life'* (2016), with a comprehensive analysis of the secondary literature related to the second *Untimely Meditation*.²⁷

It would be rather complicated to indicate the books dealing only with 'Third' or 'Fourth' *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, or on Nietzsche and Wagner), because most scholars have included the *Untimely Meditations* within a wider discussion of the comparison between Nietzsche and his early mentors.

Recently, in parallel with the rediscovery, publication and translation of the lessons (and writings) of the young Nietzsche (as professor in Basel), other scholars have analyzed the relationship between Nietzsche and the Greeks, using the lens of the 'Untimely'. Among these, we can remind Chiara Colli Staude (*Nietzsche filologo, tra inattualità e vita. Il confronto con i Greci*)²⁸ and — with an emphasis on the theme of (anti) heroism — see (already in 1998) G. Campioni, *Leggere Nietzsche. Dall'agonismo inattuale alla critica della 'morale eroica'*.²⁹

My starting observation, therefore, is true:³⁰ the *Unzeitgemässe*

26 Desirée Rocha de Sá, 'Die Geschichte im Geist der Kunst. Untersuchungen zu Nietzsches Historienschrift', in *Europäische Hochschulschriften*, Reihe 20, Philosophie (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2008).

27 New York: Routledge, 2016. Obviously, Heidegger's analysis should be discussed separately. See M. Heidegger, *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemäßer Betrachtung: 'Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben'*, hrsg. von F. Hans-Joachim (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003) and S. Pastorino 'Una poco nota lettura della «Seconda Considerazione Inattuale». Heidegger interprete di Nietzsche', *Logoi*, 7 (2017), 167–175. Among the essays on the Second Meditation, see C. Zuckert, 'Nature, History and the Self: Friedrich Nietzsche's Untimely Considerations', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 5 (1976), 55–82; J. Salaquarda, 'Studien zur zweiten Unzeitgemässen Betrachtung', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 13 (1984), 1–45; C. Bambach, 'History and Ontology. A Reading of Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditations', *Philosophy Today*, 34 (1990), 259–72; J. Le Rider, 'Oubli, mémoire, histoire dans la Deuxième Considération inattuale', *Revue germanique internationale* [En ligne], 11 (1999), mis en ligne le 21 septembre 2011: <http://rgi.revues.org/725>.

28 Pisa: ETS, 2009.

29 In M.C. Fornari – F. Sulpizio (ed. by), *La filosofia e le sue storie* (Lecce: Milella, 1998), pp. 89–98.

30 References to the *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen* are obviously present in other texts by scholars, both in the context of the historical reconstruction of Nietzsche's

Betrachtungen are texts 'neglected' by Scholars and the issue of the 'Untimely' has not been analysed in any monographic work, and only partially in collective texts.

In my essay, published in this volume, I will try to move forward and ask why Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäss* has been studied so little. And I will try to give two possible responses: first, starting from the limited presence of the term itself in Nietzsche's own texts; secondly, questioning the difficulties in translating the term *Unzeitgemäss*. It should suffice to remember that the four complete translations of Nietzsche's works in English employ four different titles in relation to the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. The most classic one is the translation with 'Untimely', which we also choose in this volume.

2. From philology to philosophy. Volume contents

This volume, however, does not want to be so much or just a proposal for a historiographic reconstruction of the question of the 'Untimely' in Nietzsche: this would not be suitable for Nietzschean scholars, instead it proposes to tackle the Untimely head on.

The reader will find essays that primarily address the historical side (within the Nietzschean texts), but also contributions that are resolutely detached from Nietzsche and that, starting with him, move towards a rethinking of the question of the Untimely (beyond Nietzsche himself). So, this is a book that covers a wide range of viewpoints, starting from Nietzsche, but moving on to wider horizons (as Nietzsche himself taught us to do) of research and inquiry beyond the 'master'.

The first essay is by Herman Siemens (University of Leiden – Netherlands; President of the 'Friedrich Nietzsche Society of Great Britain'). He discusses the *Unzeitgemässheit* of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, not by addressing the term or concept *Unzeitgemäss*, but by focusing instead on two other key concepts of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: the concepts of *Betrachtung* and *Übertragung*. Under the rubric '*agonal Betrachtung*', the essay presents what Siemens takes to be the particular style of philosophical thought that characterizes the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. Under the rubric of '*Übertragung*', the response Nietzsche develops in these texts to their central problem: the

thinking, and in prospects of a more theoretical or political nature. We do not mention them here, because they are not 'monographic' texts on the 'Untimely'.

crisis of German culture, and the ground of true culture and cultural identity. Both concepts, according to Siemens, have their sources in Nietzsche's understanding of ancient Greek culture.

Siemens's contribution presents almost a 'platform for access' to the various essays in the book. The issue of 'agon' refers back to Benedetta Zavatta's essay. The Greeks returns in the work of Luca Lupo, Gemma Adesso and Marco Casucci. The philological question around the term '*Unzeitgemäss*' is developed in my essay and in that of Francesco D'Achille. The cultural-educational dimension and the reference to the 'current' time returns in the essays of Ferruccio De Natale and Luca Romano. While the question of the '*demonic Übertragung*' of Wagner's nature becomes the center of Giuliano Campioni's essay.

Obviously, every contribution has its preciousness and specificity, which we will try now briefly to indicate.

Giuliano Campioni (Interuniversitarian Centre 'Colli-Montinari' for Studies on Nietzsche and European Culture – University of Pisa, Italy), in the first part of his essay *Nietzsche's 'Inactual' Untimely as compared with Wagner's 'Actuality'*, shows Nietzsche's ambiguous position towards the term '*Unzeitgemäß*', considered in retrospect to be almost mistake of youth. Questioning the reason for this position, Campioni analyzes the *Untimely Meditations* as a 'metaphysics of culture', through which Nietzsche tries to criticize the cowardice and laziness of his time and, at the same time, to indicate a new type of heroism. Then, pointing out the presence of Schopenhauer in Nietzsche's untimely position (e.g. in the criticism at '*Jetztzeit*' and '*Bildungsphilister*'), in the last part of the essay, Campioni focuses on Wagner. Indeed, the heroic model of this first Nietzschean phase is undoubtedly Wagnerian (just think of Wagner's criticism of '*Zivilisation*'). However, as the title of the essay already says, Campioni does not want to show the '*Unzeitgemäss*' in Wagner (assumed by Nietzsche), but instead to show how Nietzsche gradually becomes aware of the distance between his position and that of Wagner (who remains '*zeitgemäss*' at heart). The redemptive compassion of art in Wagner is likely to become, in fact, a dream dissolution of reality, and therefore risks overturning the striving towards in an illusory annihilation of the present. «Art becomes religion: the revolutionary settles», Nietzsche wrote in 1874, thinking of Wagner. So Nietzsche begins to look for his *Unzeitgemäss* in other ways, far from Schopenhauer and Wagner.

In my essay, I first ask why untimeliness has been so little studied in Nietzsche. After showing the infrequent recurrence of the term *unzeitgemäs** within Nietzschean texts (and after analyzing the most important

recurrences), I also try to present the editorial and translation misfortune of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* in the English, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese translations. Second, I ask what the etymological and historical origin of the Nietzschean concept of Untimely might be, what are the questions, the authors, the plots that converge in the term *Unzeitgemäss* (e.g.: Wagner, Schopenhauer, the Greeks, but also Burckhard, Schiller, August Beger, etc.). Third, I return to the Latin (and the Greek) source, and I follow a line of study that connects the term '*Unzeitgemäß*' with the Latin '*intempestus/intempestivus*' (and with the Greek '*en aoronukti*'). This interpretation allows me to deepen the dimension of 'time' present in the Nietzschean 'Un-timely' and to conclude that '*Un-zeit-gemässheit*' is nothing but a deconstructive 'articulation' of the current time. The untimely man ('in-tempestus' and 'in-tempestivus'), on the one hand is 'out of time' (out of his own current time), not synchronous to it, inappropriate to it; while, on the other hand, however, he is more attentive to his 'actuality' than other superficial readers of the present, and deeply grafted not only in time and history in general, but also in the true dimension of temporality: always 'critical' of the 'data' and leaning toward the future.

Luca Lupo (University of Calabria, Italy) analyzes the figure of the demon in Nietzsche's works, starting from the communication of the Eternal Return in aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* and arriving to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Lupo tries to show how the Nietzschean figure of the demon is rooted in Greek tradition (particularly in the pre-platonic one). In this way, the aphorism 341 would be an expression of the tragic thought (and of the Dionysian vision) and the figure of the demon could be considered a decisive epiphany of the Dionysian and, more generally, of the Tragic as a radical experience of temporality. Then, the question of 'untimely' is, in this essay, rooted in the question of 'time', i. e. in what can be considered the *proprium* of existence itself.

Benedetta Zavatta (Researcher at the 'Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes [CNRS/ENS], École normale supérieure, Paris) in her essay '*To Be Great Is To Be Misunderstood*': *The Untimeliness of the Great Man in Emerson and Nietzsche*, returns to the issue of 'agon', but from the perspective of the great man, that — she argues — is constitutively untimely and so stoically bearing the suffering that results from lack of social recognition. Zavatta emphasizes that the reading of Emerson was decisive for Nietzsche in relation to these issues, so she follows the evolution of the concept of the 'great, untimely man' from the *Untimely Meditations* to Nietzsche's middle-period works and finally, to Nietzsche's mature philosophy, when the great man is characterized by a divine

indifference to ‘mass Man’. Indeed, the superior individual acknowledges only those who are at his level, with whom he relates in the modality of *agon*. So, again we find the centrality of the *agon* issue, in relation to the question of the untimely.

Instead, in the essay by Francesco D’Achille (Rome), again we first find some philological issues, i. e. the reconstruction of the origin and the development of *untimeliness* in Nietzsche’s work, the main occurrences of the word ‘*unzeitgemäß-e-n*’ / ‘*Unzeitgemäßheit*’. Secondly, D’Achille points out the practical implications of this untimely philosophy. For this purpose, he describes genealogy’s practical devices inside which *untimeliness* is experienced. Indeed, according to Achille, by investigating the main stages of the construction of the genealogical method, it is possible to show how the horizon of *untimeliness* is the main point from which we can understand the practical potential of Nietzsche’s thought and the role it can still play in our present.

And this is exactly the purpose of the essay by Ferruccio De Natale (University of Bari, Italy), i.e. to reflect on the ‘untimeliness’ or ‘actuality’ of the thought of Nietzsche. De Natale presents Nietzsche’s criticism to the ‘current’ man, in relation to his and to our present and, therefore, in relation to the questions that this criticism can ask of his and our time. After showing how Nietzsche addresses the issue within the second *Untimely Meditation* and in the conferences *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, the essay carries out a comparison between Nietzsche and two scenarios in some verses seemingly distant (from Nietzsche), but otherwise truly ‘actually’ untimely (perhaps more than Nietzsche himself), such as those of Karl Marx (on the one hand) and John Henry Newman (on the other hand).

Instead, *The Untimely as an Ascesis of Consciousness: Between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* (by Marco Casucci) aims to highlight the relationship between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in the light of the concept of the ‘Ascesis of Consciousness’. Casucci starts from the premise that ‘Ascesis’ in Nietzsche is related to ‘Untimely’, because it represents the first impulse toward an elevation of mind in the direction of an overcoming of temporal finitude. In particular, the idea of an ‘ascesis’ — which borrows from the Greek term the significance of ‘exercise’ and ‘experience’, and from Latin the significance of an elevation (*ascensus*) — is recalled by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as the difference between ordinary experience (as determined by the finitude of temporality) and eternity (that summit upon which the consciousness regains itself in its original dimension).

Gemma Bianca Adesso (Bari, Italy) comes back to the idea that rather than 'theories' the *Untimely Meditations* are 'actions' and, therefore, she analyzes the relationship between action and Untimely, in three Acts. In the first Act, she shows the meaning of 'action' itself, as it appears in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, but, more generally, in the Nietzschean Lesson in Basel. The second Act presents three 'tragic' figures (i.e. Aiace, Prometheus, Oedipus) and their lacerating dialectic between word and action. The theme of tragic failure emerges and, paradoxically, becomes the best 'image' of Nietzsche's (un)timely (in)action. Hence, the final Act (entitled 'Posthumous Ego'): i. e. the 'dissolution' of the Nietzschean subject (and of the subject-Nietzsche). The Conclusion reveals the allusion of the title: *Entr'Acte*, René Clair's film of 1924.

Finally, Luca Romano (Bari, Italy), presents the so-called 'Nietzsche-Mechanism', that, according to Derrida, is an interpretation system not connected to knowledge or to interpretation, but is something to be understood as a hermeneutic work. The Nietzsche-mechanism is an un-thorough relationship, a very practical system that puts into question the present as virtual. In this way, Romano argues that Nietzsche is at the basis of contemporary possibilities, because he helps us to understand the construction of virtuality that creates the most influential part of our existences.

From the un-timely, un-actual Nietzsche... to the current, actual Nietzsche.

3. *The urgency of the Untimely*

All essential questioning in philosophy necessarily remains untimely and this is because (...) philosophizing always remains a kind of knowing that not only does not allow itself to be made timely but, on the contrary, imposes its measure on the times. Philosophy is essentially untimely because it is one of those few things whose fate it remains never to be able to find a direct resonance in their own time, and never to be permitted to find such a resonance. Whenever this seemingly does take place, whenever a philosophy becomes fashion, either there is no actual philosophy or else philosophy is misinterpreted and, according to some intentions alien to it, misused for the needs of the day. Philosophy, then, is not a kind of knowledge which one could acquire directly, like vocational and technical expertise, and which, like economic and professional knowledge in general, one could apply directly and evaluate according to its usefulness in each case. But what is useless can nevertheless be a power — a power in the rightful sense. (...) What is untimely will have its own times (...).

Nietzsche once said: ‘A philosopher: that is a human being who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, dreams extraordinary things’.³¹

We chose this quote for the conclusion of this Introduction because in some way it helps us to illuminate the meaning of the operation behind this text. With Heidegger, in fact, we think that reflecting on the Untimely, is not decisive for Nietzschean historiography only. Indeed, before saying something about Nietzsche, the Untimely tells us something about philosophy. Untimely is philosophy’s way of being. This has always been true, but perhaps now more than ever. Un-timely (*Unfashionable*) because *use-less*, outside of the ‘timely’ (current) logic of utilitarianism. Outside the ‘current’ logic, said Nietzsche, that makes men ‘current’, like current coins.

Philosophy is useless. Unproductive. It is not a technique, a job. Socrates did not even believe it was a trade and refused to be paid. Today, in a different way, in a sad way, we once again see that it is very difficult to ‘work’ in the field of philosophy. Philosophy is useless. It does not attract funds like the technical and scientific disciplines. It has no immediately appreciable utilitarian implications. Yet, in its untimeliness, it remains a power. Why? It is the power, the passion, the demon that — from Socrates to Nietzsche to us — unsettles. And does not satisfy us. It forces us not to be content with the present, the timely, the current, the status quo. It forces us to deconstruct. First of all, ourselves. And to never stop «dreaming extraordinary things»; things for that there is not a fitting time today. And perhaps there never was. And who knows if there ever will be. For this reason they are untimely. And, therefore, ‘we’ are untimely. But proudly untimely. Consciously and deliberately untimely. To paraphrase Nietzsche and applying to ourselves what he says about himself: we must be able to allow ourselves this, because «For I do not what meaning classical philology <and philosophy> would have for our age if not to have an untimely effect within it, that is, to act against the age and so have an effect on the age to the advantage, it is to be hoped, of a coming age».³²

This is the quote that we have chosen as the motto for our book. Both for its power (I would say explosive) and because it is one of the few places where Nietzsche gives us (let’s not say a ‘definition’ of the untimely,

31 M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, new translation by G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 9–13. The quote is from F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §292.

32 F. Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, *Foreword*, trans. by P. Preuss (Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Pub., 1980), p. 8.

because Nietzsche is not a philosopher who defines, as we know), gives us a presentation of the untimely. Which is clearly something that has to do with time, with 'our' time, and with 'education'.

Indeed, Untimely has an ethical and educational urgency (in our opinion); an urgency which becomes 'existential' for those of us who choose to live, and hope to work, with philosophy.

«Why do you amuse yourself with consolatory fables?» – Kublai Khan asks Marco Polo. «I know well that empire is rotting like a corpse in a swamp».

Marco Polo: Yes, the empire is sick, and, what is worse, it is trying to become accustomed to its sores. This is the aim of my explorations: examining the traces of happiness still to be glimpsed, I gauge its short supply. If you want to know how much darkness there is around you, you must sharpen your eyes, peering at the faint lights in the distance. When you know at last the residue of unhappiness for which no precious stone can compensate, you will be able to calculate the exact number of carats toward which that final diamond must strive. The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno...; then make them endure, give them space [Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*]

This is our space. Useless. Untimely... To give space to what we hope, we believe, is not 'inferno'. And to cultivate it. Maybe.

Happy Reading!

HERMAN SIEMENS

NIETZSCHE'S 'AGONALE BETRACHTUNGEN':
ON THE ACTUALITY OF THE GREEKS
IN THE *UNZEITGEMÄSSE BETRACHTUNGEN*¹

In this paper, I will discuss the *Unzeitgemässheit* of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. I will do so, *not* by addressing the term or concept *Unzeitgemäss*, but by focusing instead on two other key concepts of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: the concepts of *Betrachtung* and *Übertragung*. Under the rubric *Agonal Betrachtung* I will present what I take to be the particular style of philosophical thought that characterizes the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*; under the rubric of *Übertragung*, the response Nietzsche develops in these texts to their central problem — the crisis of German culture, and the ground of true culture and cultural identity. Both concepts, I shall argue, have their sources in Nietzsche's understanding of ancient Greek culture. In arguing that Nietzsche reactivates these concepts in his style of thought and in his response to the problem of culture, I will in effect be interrogating the role of the ancient Greek culture in Nietzsche's conception of the *Unzeitgemässe*, or what it means when he writes in the Preface to *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* II, that it is only as a «pupil of older times, especially the Greek» that he has come to «such untimely experiences» of himself as a «child of the present time»; and that the only sense he can make of his profession as a classical philologist in the present is «to act in an untimely manner — that

1 For a longer version of this paper, see: H.W. Siemens, 'Agonal Configurations in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: Identity, Mimesis and the *Übertragung* of Cultures in Nietzsche's Early Thought', *Nietzsche-Studien* 30 (2001), 80–106. For Nietzsche's writings, when not otherwise indicated, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München und de Gruyter, Berlin 1988² [KSA]. For the letters of Nietzsche and his correspondents, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, de Gruyter, herausgegeben von G. Colli und M. Montinari, Berlin 1975 ff. [KGB].

is, counter to our time, thereby acting upon our time and hopefully for the benefit of a time to come».²

1. Nietzsche's 'agonale Betrachtungen'

For the most part, Nietzsche's use of the term *Betrachtung* is conventional and philosophically uninteresting. There are, however, various indications that he also invests in this term attempts to delineate his *own style of thought*. For one, he uses it repeatedly in titles for planned projects or books throughout the early 1870's; up to 1876–7, there are no less than 10 *Betrachtungen* plans, including one «[f]ür die dreissige Jahre meines Lebens».³ And in a letter to Rohde from 1872, Nietzsche refers to his essay *Homer's Wettkampf* as the latest in his tireless efforts at «agonale [...] Betrachtungen».⁴ This essay concerns the signature institution of pre-Socratic Greek culture, the *Wettkampf*, contest or agon; and, as the expression 'agonale Betrachtung' suggests, Nietzsche's ambition here is to *perform* in his style of thought what he thematises in his treatment of Greek culture. This interplay between thematic and performative dimensions of Nietzsche's writing is emblematic of his engagement with the Greeks in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, as a mimetic doubling of the Greek agon which culminates in an overcoming of Greek culture and inaugurates the turn to modernity in *Human All Too Human*.

To begin with, I would like to consider two texts in which the term *Betrachtung* is given exceptional importance. The first is a distinctly 'programmatic' note from 1873, in which Nietzsche asks:

Is my reader familiar with the mood [*Stimmung*] in which the *Betrachtende* lives? Is he able to forget himself, to forget the author and to let things that we consider together [*zusammen betrachten*] wander past in his soul, as it were? Is

2 KSA 1, p. 247, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* [UB] II, Vorwort: «in ihr unzeitgemäss – das heisst gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit – zu wirken».

3 KSA 8, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875*, 5[42]. See also KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869*, 1 [110]; *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1870–71*, 5 [22]; *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1870/71–1872*, 8[51]; *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1871*, 9[93], 9[151]; *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1872/73*, 19[98], 19[274], 19[301], 21[2].

4 «[...] Ich habe einen Entwurf zur nächsten Schrift unter den Händen, genannt 'Homers Wettkampf'. Du magst nur immer lachen über die Unermüdlichkeit meiner agonale Betrachtungen; diesmal kommt etwas heraus.- [...]», KSB 4, nr. 244, Nietzsche to Rohde, 25 July 1872.

he prepared to be carried off from the calm into a choppy play of waves, without losing the mood of the *Betrachtende* in the process? Does he love the blowing of the storm, can he endure the outbreaks of wrath and contempt? And once again: is able, in all of this, to think neither of himself nor of the author? — Well now, believing I have heard a Yes from him, I shall no longer hold myself back from addressing him.⁵

Betrachten is more than theoretical understanding, a *Stimmung*: a 'mood', including sensory responsiveness and affective engagement; but it is also an 'attunement' of powers or faculties (as in *Stimmung der Vermögen*). *Betrachten* is an attunement that is also *interpersonal*, shared with a community of readers (*wir zusammen betrachten*) who can conjugate theory and praxis. It is a detached, contemplative calm (*ruhigen*) and a stormy confrontation with overwhelming forces — maintaining all the while a heroic disregard for subjective interests, indeed for personal identities altogether (*weder an sich noch an den Autor zu denken*).

It is this moment of non-identity that introduces the account of *Betrachten* around three years later, towards the end of Nietzsche's published *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. Only here it is cast as an experience of *self-alienation*⁶ that initiates the process of *Betrachten*:

In succumbing apparently to Wagner's out- and over-flowing nature, the *Betrachtende* has himself partaken of its energy and has become powerful through and against him, so to speak; and everyone who examines himself closely knows that a mysterious antagonism [*Gegnerschaft*] belongs even to *Betrachten*, that of looking towards [*Entgegenschauen*].⁷

5 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1873, 29[159]: «Kennt mein Leser die Stimmung, in der der Betrachtende lebt? Vermag er sich zu vergessen, den Autor zu vergessen und in seine Seele gleichsam Dinge, die wir zusammen betrachten, überwandern zu lassen? Ist er bereit aus dem ruhigen in ein bewegtes Wellenspiel fortgetragen zu werden, ohne die Stimmung des Betrachtenden dabei zu verlieren? Liebt er das Pfeifen des Sturmes und erträgt er die Ausbrüche des Zorns und der Verachtung? Und noch einmal: vermag er es, bei dem allen, weder an sich noch an den Autor zu denken? – Nun wohl, ich glaube von ihm ein Ja gehört zu haben und halte mich nun nicht länger zurück, ihn also anzureden».

6 KSA 1, p. 466, UB IV: «vor seinem eigenen Wesen befremdet [...] sich seinem Wesen entfremdet fühl[en]».

7 Ivi, pp. 466 ff.: «Indem der Betrachtende scheinbar der aus- und überströmenden Natur Wagner's unterliegt, hat er an ihrer Kraft selber Antheil genommen und ist so gleichsam durch ihn gegen ihn mächtig geworden; und Jeder, der sich genau prüft, weiss, dass selbst zum Betrachten eine geheimnissvolle Gegnerschaft, die des Entgegenschauens, gehört». Nietzsche's term «Entgegenschauen» expresses (i) the directiveness of the gaze from a distance (as in: «ich gehe dir entgegen»);

In this passage, the *Betrachtende* begins with the sense of «smallness and frailty» in the face of overwhelming forces (Wagner, in this case). Through the medium of *Betrachten* he is empowered and *emancipated*, culminating in the *Stimmung* of contemplative calm. This trajectory works as a process of «*Hingeben und Annehmen*», a gift-exchange in the domain of communication (*Mittheilung*). What Wagner's overflowing nature *takes* from us, our sense of identity, it *gives back* as the answer to the question of identity. Self-alienation is not just the problem, it is also the *answer* to the question of identity, for with this feeling one «partakes of» (*nimmt Antheil an*) the central “force” of Wagner's nature: its «dämonic transmissibility» (*dämonische Übertragbarkeit*). At an *energetic level* too *Betrachtung* describes a gift-exchange: in «giving» authority (*Verehrung*) to Wagner, you «win» or «gain» energy «against him».

I would like to emphasise *three* moments in this account: The first is the *insight into non-identity* (self-alienation) or extreme depropriation as the key to the problem of identity or proper being. At stake here is an openness or receptivity to alien or foreign (*fremde*) sources at all levels: sensory, affective, theoretical and practical.

The second is a *mimetic capacity of transposition or transmission*, as the key to self-formation in the face of alien forces: what Nietzsche usually calls *Übertragung*, or in Wagner's case a «*dämonische Übertragbarkeit*» that can «communicate itself to others, just as it communicates other beings to itself». ⁸

The third is the *antagonistic character* of this communicative exchange. As a strategy of empowerment and self-formation *through and against* alien forces, it appropriates what is best in them in order to do better than them, to surpass or overcome their achievements.

and (ii) a sense of opposition or confrontation (as in: «dieser Ansicht möchte ich das Folgende entgegen halten»). I am indebted to Gerd Schank for this analysis. From a later perspective in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* on «das Wirken grosser Menschen auf Andere und auf ihre Zeit», this passage looks like wishful thinking: « – gerade mit ihrem Besten, mit dem, was nur sie können, richten sie viele Schwache, Unsichere, werdende, wollende zu Grunde, und sind hierdurch sich selbst schädlich. Ja es kann der Fall vorkommen, dass sie, im Ganzen gerechnet, nur schaden, weil ihr Bestes allein von solchen angenommen und gleichsam aufgetrunken wird, welche an ihm, wie an einem zu starken Getränke, ihren Verstand und ihre Selbstsucht verlieren: sie werden so berauscht, dass sie ihre Glieder auf allenden Irrwegen brechen müssen, wohin sie der Rausch triebt» (KSA 3, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aph. 28).

8 KSA I, UB IV, p. 466: «Welche sich Anderen ebenso mittheilen kann, als sie andere Wesen sich selber mittheilt».

These three moments can be recognized at a personal level in Nietzsche's form of engagement as *Unzeitgemässe Betrachter* with the ideals that dominated his thought until then: Schopenhauer, Wagner, genius, the saint and even — the Greeks; a dynamic of emancipation and overcoming that Nietzsche will later call his «*Loslösung*»⁹ or «*Losmachung*» from them:

To win for myself the *spiritual freedom* and *joy* of being able to create and not to be tyrannized by alien ideals. (At bottom it matters little *what* I had to liberate myself from: my favourite form of liberation was the artistic form: that is, I cast an *image* of that which had hitherto bound me: thus Schopenhauer, Wagner, the Greeks (genius, the saint, metaphysics, all ideals until now, the highest morality) — but also a *tribute of gratitude*.¹⁰

In this light, Nietzsche's portraiture of his ideals in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* belongs to a paradoxical strategy of *mimetic emancipation*, involving a mixture creative activity and mimetic reception, of overcoming and thanks-giving. But these three moments can also be recognized *at a cultural level* in Nietzsche's response to the crisis of the present that appeals to the Greeks in a move that combines the mimetic appropriation and overcoming of Greek culture for the sake of a better future. Moreover all three moments have their source in Nietzsche's understanding of Greek culture, raising the questions:

1 – Why should the Greeks be *binding* on the present? What does Nietzsche hope to find in them as *classical* or *exemplary*, given his interest in overcoming the present? And

2 – *How* are they to be engaged for the sake of a better future? What does it mean to be a pupil (*Zögling*) of the Greeks as classical, to be educated or formed by them (*erzogen, gebildet*)?

In order to tackle these questions, we need clarity on the problem of modern German culture: What exactly is the crisis of the present motivating the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*?

9 KSA 2, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, Vorrede*.

10 KSA 10, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1882–84*, 16 [10]: «Die geistige Freiheit und Freudigkeit mir zu erobern, um schaffen zu können und nicht durch fremde Ideale tyrannisirt zu werden. (Im Grunde kommt wenig darauf an, *wovon* ich mich loszumachen hatte: meine Lieblings-Form der Losmachung aber war die künstlerische: d.h. ich entwarf ein *Bild* dessen, was mich bis dahin gefesselt hatte: so Schopenhauer, Wagner, die Griechen (Genie, der Heilige, die Metaphysik, alle bisherige Ideale, die höchste Moralität) – zugleich ein *Tribut der Dankbarkeit*».

2. Originality, imitation and the problem of German culture

The *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* offer a bewildering variety of perspectives on the present, from the *quasi-aesthetic* critique of «*Stillosigkeit*»; to the *quasi-scientific critique* of «atomistische Chaos»; and the *quasi-medical* diagnosis of sickness, especially historical sickness, coupled with therapeutic prescriptions. But I do not think that Nietzsche's claims become clear or compelling until we penetrate to the *ontological* level (here I follow Lacoue-Labarthe's reading in *History and Mimesis*).¹¹ At this level, the crisis of the present runs deeper than Nietzsche's medical or aesthetic discourses suggest: it is *not* that German culture is already there, living in a chaotic and unhealthy state that needs to be 'cured' or reformed around a new unifying principle. The problem is one of absence: absence of a German style, absence of a «Fundament» for German culture, and so the absence or *non-being* of the German: «You have no culture, not just a bad or degenerate culture, for even it would still have unity of style», Nietzsche writes in a preparatory note. Or again: «The German must first form itself: Formation not on a national basis, but rather formation of the German. The German must be formed: that does not yet exist».¹²

The non-existence of the German qua culture (and qua people or *Volk*)¹³ means that the fundamental problem in Nietzsche's eyes is a problem of origin, of giving being or birth, of an *unprecedented* birth, and a problem of self-formation or *Bildung*.¹⁴ Nietzsche's questions are then: How to give birth (being) to the German (culture, people)? How best to grow, to form oneself as 'properly' German — if not on «national basis»¹⁵?

Turning with these questions to the first two *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, we meet with *negative* answers in the first instance.

1. It is *not* a matter of imitation, of borrowed fashions. Imitating «the forms, colours, products and curiosities of all times and places»,¹⁶ especially of French

11 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *History and Mimesis*. In: Laurens Rickels (ed. by), *Looking After Nietzsche*, Albany 1990, pp. 209–231.

12 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1873, 27[66]: «Ihr habt keine Kultur, nicht etwa eine schlechte oder entartete, sondern auch die würde noch Einheit des Stils haben». *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1872/73, 19[284]: «[...] Das Deutsche muss sich erst bilden: Bildung nicht auf nationaler Grundlage, sondern Bildung des Deutschen. Das Deutsche muss gebildet werden: das noch nicht existiert. [...]». See also 27[65], 19[298]. Also KSA I, UB II, p. 328 on the «Nothwahrheit: dass der Deutsche keine Cultur hat...».

13 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1872/73, 19[278], 19[298], 19[309].

14 Lacoue-Labarthe, *History and Mimesis*, pp. 223, 211, 219.

15 KSA 7, 19[295].

16 KSA1, UB I, p. 163.

culture, has led only to a «chaotic tangle [*Durcheinander*] of all styles» and dependency [*Abhängigkeit*], not to the unified style required for an «original German culture». ¹⁷ In *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* II this critique of mimesis is generalized as a critique of historical knowledge, which culminates in denunciation of cosmetic concept of culture as decoration. Instead, each of us

must organise the chaos within him by thinking back to his authentic needs. His honesty, the strength and truthfulness of his character must at some time or other rebel against a state of things in which he only repeats, re-learns, imitates [*immer nur nachgesprochen, nachgelernt, nachgeahmt werde*]; he will then begin to grasp that culture can be something other than a decoration of life, that is to say at bottom no more than dissimulation and disguise; for all adornment conceals that which is adorned. ¹⁸

In both texts, then, the aesthetic concept of mimesis or imitation (*Nachahmung*) stands for a model of de-formation, chaotic growth and self-alienation.

2. The alternative is not, however to engage in a process of «purification», of closure against «*das Fremde*», so as to concentrate upon the properly German. This isolationism is precisely the attitude of the *Bildungsphilister*, denounced in UB I as a negative or negating being¹⁹ who prides himself on German culture: «We have our culture», he says, «for we have our 'classics'; not only is the foundation there, no, even the edifice itself stands already grounded upon it — we ourselves are this edifice». ²⁰

For Nietzsche there is an ontological fallacy here: the belief that German

17 Ibid.

18 KSA I, UB II, p. 333 ff.: «muss das Chaos in sich organisieren, dadurch dass er sich auf seine ächten Bedürfnisse zurückbesinnt. Seine Ehrlichkeit, sein tüchtiger und wahrhafter Charakter muss sich irgendwann einmal dagegen sträuben, dass immer nur nachgesprochen, nachgelernt, nachgeahmt werde; er beginnt dann zu begreifen, dass Kultur noch etwas Andres sein kann als Dekoration des Lebens, das heisst im Grunde doch immer nur Verstellung und Verhüllung; denn aller Schmuck versteckt das Geschmückte».

19 The philistine «only wards off, negates, closes off, stops his ears, averts his eyes, he is a negative being, even in his hatred and his enmity» (KSA I, UB I, p. 166). The result is «a cohesive group of such negations, a system of non-culture [*Nicht-Kultur*]», a poor approximation to a genuine «unity of style».

20 «Wir haben ja unsere Kultur – denn wir haben ja unsere 'Klassiker', das Fundament ist nicht nur da, nein auch der Bau steht schon auf ihm gegründet – wir selbst sind dieser Bau. Dabei greift der Philister an die eigene Stirn»: KSA I, UB I, p. 167.

culture exists. And his response is to redefine or reverse (*umkehren*)²¹ the German classics from the «finders» (*Findende*) or «foundation» of German culture into «searchers»: *Suchende* who «sought with such perseverance precisely that which the *Bildungsphilister* imagines he possesses: authentic, originary German culture».²² It is *as searchers*, Nietzsche claims, that the Classics²³ are exemplary, essential: honouring them (*ehren*) means «that one continues [*fortfährt*] to search in their spirit and with their courage, and not to grow weary in doing so»;²⁴ Nietzsche also speaks of «nachfolgen»: following, imitating, or succeeding to them in this connection.

It is striking and puzzling that Nietzsche should propose a form of *imitation* as the key to German formation in the light of his critique of mimesis. Clearly, Nietzschean *imitation* or «*Nachfolgen*» will need to be different from both hollow philistine *mimesis* and chaotic, historical *mimesis*. It will need to be *active*, rather than passive; and it will need to be *organised* rather than chaotic. In §III, I shall argue that it names a *techne* of organised growth (*Einordnung*), through *active* (transformative) *assimilation* of what is «past and alien», Greek culture in particular. But first we need to ask: Why this insistence on *imitation*, given that the problem is one of origins?

The mimetic exigency derives from one of the key presuppositions of the UB: the finitude of human existence as a «never to be completed imperfect tense»;²⁵ that is the historicity of human existence and culture, our ineluctable openness in the present via memory to what is past and alien. In cultural terms, the thesis is that modern culture is ineluctably epigonal, so that in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen II*²⁶ Nietzsche can write «that we Germans

21 See Matthias Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte? Deutsche Literatur im Urteil Nietzsches*, Berlin, 1989, pp. 227 ff. Also: Matthias Politycki, *Der frühe Nietzsche und die deutsche Klassik*, München 1981, pp. 64 ff.

22 KSA 1, UB I, p. 167: «eben das inbrünstig und mit ernster Beharrlichkeit suchten, was der Bildungsphilister zu besitzen wähnt: die ächte ursprüngliche deutsche Kultur». See KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1873, 27[65]. The «Suchen» of the German Classics has a special reference to Greece for Nietzsche: see KSA 1, Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungs-Anstalten, p. 691 and note 43 below.

23 See Nietzsche's remarks on the «klassisches exemplum» as «Vermittler zwischen uns und der Idee» (KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1869, 1[50]). In *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, aph. 125 (KSA 2, p. 607) Nietzsche famously denies the epithet *classisch* to German authors *because* they were *Suchende* or «Anpflanzer», returning to the traditional notion of *Klassiker* as «Vollender» or *Findende*. On this see Politycki, *Umwertung*, p. 227.

24 KSA 1, UB II, p. 168.

25 KSA 1, UB II, p. 249.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

[...] must always be mere 'descendants' [or 'latecomers': 'Nachkommen'], because we can be only this», and, quoting Wackernagel: «We Germans» are but «followers [*Nachfolger*] of the ancient world», fated to breathe «the immortal spirit of classical culture» next to the spirit of Christianity: «were someone to succeed in excising [...] these two elements from his life-breath, there would not be much left over on which to continue nourishing a spiritual life».²⁷ The relation to the Greeks is *constitutional* (an «innermost dependency»)²⁸ so that excising them from the German leaves nothing German. Accordingly, Nietzsche goes on to distinguish two kinds of *mimesis* or succession: to remain eternal «students [*Zöglinge*] of declining antiquity», i.e. «Alexandrian-Roman culture»; or the «mightier task» of «striving to get behind and beyond this Alexandrian world and boldly to seek our models [*Vorbilder*] in the originary ancient Greek world of the great, the natural and the human».²⁹ Under inescapable epigonal conditions, then, German culture can only be born of a transformed relation to antiquity, an overcoming of Alexandrian-Roman culture in favour of the pre-Socratic world.

So what is it in pre-Socratic culture that can redeem our epigonal condition, and how are we to engage with it in a way that can give birth to German culture?

The simplest answer lies in Nietzsche's appeal to the «*essentially unhistorical formation* [unhistorische Bildung]» of the Greeks, the answer given by Lacoue-Labarthe when he writes of «a non-historical relation to the being, itself unhistorical, of the Greeks»:³⁰ But if this is Nietzsche's only response, we can say that it fails on his own terms. For is this anything but the philistine gesture of closure projected onto the Greeks, a «Finding» that *negates* the historicity of human existence, a closure of memory, an escape from the endless mediation of pasts in the immediacy of nature?

Without doubt, there is a longing for closure in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, a temptation on Nietzsche's part to sidestep the problem of history by appealing to the natural immediacy of feeling or a notion of *being* that gives respite from *becoming*. But there is also a line of thought far more fruitful and interesting, an approach to the Greeks in which history — or rather *HISTORIA* — is at the centre of their supposedly «unhistorical

27 Ibid.: «Gelänge es Einem, aus der Lebensluft [...] diese zwei Elemente auszuscheiden, so würde nicht viel übrig bleiben, um noch ein geistiges Leben damit zu fristen».

28 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 97.

29 KSA 1, UB II, pp. 306 ff.

30 Lacoue-Labarthe, *History and Mimesis*, p. 223.

Bildung». Towards the end of *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen II*, Nietzsche writes: the Greeks

never lived in proud immaculacy: their «formation» was rather for a long time a chaos of foreign, Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian Egyptian forms and concepts and their religion a true struggle of the gods from the entire Orient; somewhat as «German formation» and religion is now a chaotic struggle amongst all foreign [cultures], all past ages.³¹

Any simple sense of closure or natural immediacy is dissolved by these lines. Within a thoroughly historicised picture of human existence, Nietzsche draws before our eyes an uncanny doubling of the German predicament in the epigonal condition of the Greeks. In this context, what is «classical» in the Greeks is their capacity to deal with the historicity of human existence: it is their ability to assimilate and transform what is past and alien (non-Greek, barbarian), to *organise this chaos*, that is at once unique and binding on the Germans: they offer a *model (Muster) of searching and learning*.

With the focus on learning, the effort to isolate and succeed to (*Nachfolgen*) what is «classical» in the Greeks undergoes a subtle, but decisive change: for what *distinguishes* the Greeks from barbarians — that is, their «classical» ability to learn — is now inseparable from their alien sources, and the effort to «place the life of civilised peoples in connection with that of the savages and barbarians».³² It is this approach to Greek religion that Nietzsche will develop in his *Gottesdienst* lectures of 1875. As Orsucci has shown, Nietzsche draws on various unorthodox sources to undermine the classicist dogmas of Greek isolation and national unity,³³ and to relativise their unique classical value for German culture,³⁴ so that by 1878, Nietzsche can write: «National is the after-effect of a past culture in a completely changed culture resting on different basis. Thus, the

31 KSA I, UB II, p. 333: «Niemals haben sie [die Griechen – HS] in stolzer Unberührbarkeit gelebt: ihre 'Bildung' war vielmehr lange Zeit ein Chaos von ausländischen, semitischen, babylonischen, lydischen aegyptischen Formen und Begriffen und ihre Religion ein wahrer Götterkampf des ganzen Orients: ähnlich etwa wie jetzt die 'deutsche Bildung' und Religion ein in sich kämpfendes Chaos des gesammten Auslandes, der gesammten Vorzeit ist».

32 From E.B.Tyler's definition of anthropology, quoted by Orsucci: *Orient – Occident* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 1996), p 48.

33 E.g. Preller, H.D. Müller.

34 Orsucci, *Orient – Occident*, pp. 28–29, 42 ff.

logical contradictoriness in the life of a people»³⁵ — and in this sense: «To be a good German means [demands] that one de-Germanify oneself».³⁶ But the approach is already at work in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. In what follows I will argue that Nietzsche's insight into non-identity, self-alienation or depropriation as the answer to the question of identity is born of his engagement with the Greeks as classical models of learning. To paraphrase Nietzsche on Wagner: it is only *through and against* what was past and alien that Greek culture was born and formed. And it is *through and against* the Greeks, *as past and alien*, that German culture can be born: «Thus the Germans may yet achieve what the Greeks achieved in relation to the Orient — coming only then to find what 'German' is».³⁷

The questions of origin and identity, I shall argue, devolve into a matter of antagonistic exchange or 'agonal mimesis' with a past and alien culture. At stake is the concept of transposition or *Übertragung*, as the key to the fundamental problem of culture, as Nietzsche puts it in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* IV: «whether an alien culture can at all be transposed».³⁸

3. Learning from the Greeks and the question of *Übertragung*

So how, in Nietzsche's view, should the Greeks be engaged as classical models of learning, so as to give being to the German? In order to address this question, we need to know how Nietzsche understood the Greeks as learners. The condition for learning or the *Übertragung* of alien cultures is a free and unconstrained intercourse with one's own past, a highly supple form of memory. What I earlier called *self-alienation* as the condition for identity is described by Nietzsche as the «the freely poeticising way in

35 KSA 8, NF 1878, 30[70]: «National ist das Nachwirken einer vergangenen Cultur in einer ganz veränderten, auf anderen Grundlagen gestützten Cultur. Also das logisch Widerspruchsvolle im Leben eines Volkes».

36 KSA 2, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*, VM 323, p. 511: «Gut deutsch sein heisst sich entdeutschen[...]».

37 KSA 7, NF 1873, 29[191]: «So gelingt vielleicht den Deutschen noch, was den Griechen in Betreff des Orients gelang – und so das, was 'deutsch' ist, erst zu finden».

38 KSA 1, UB IV, p. 446: «ob eine fremde Cultur sich überhaupt übertragen lasse». The word *Übertragung* is ubiquitous in Nietzsche's writings of the early 1870's, and highly polysemic. Depending on the context, it can mean: metaphor, untruth, deception or veiling; imitation or play; spiritualisation, idealisation, or sublimation; the exploitation, harnessing or mastery of destructive energies; and their regulation, codification or measured discharge.

which the Greeks treated their gods»³⁹ and the absence of a normative theology in Greek religion.⁴⁰ This unconstrained and creative relation to one's own heritage (past) allows for *an agonal play of perspectives* and is the key condition for learning from alien peoples.⁴¹ For Nietzsche it stands in sharp contrast with the rigidity of modern empirical methods, on one side, where concepts serve to isolate impressions and block the processes of *Übertragung*;⁴² it also contrasts, on the other side, with the rigidity of one-sided perspectives that comes from close bonds to a «proper», unified tradition — as desired, for instance, by the modern German *Bildungsphilister*.

In this vein, Nietzsche insists that the Greeks «in no way deny what comes from without and is non-originary», in a note which begins with the remark:

The Greeks as the only genial people of world history; this they are also as learners, they understand this the best and know how not just to decorate and dress up with what they borrow: as the Romans do. The constitution of the *polis* is a Phoenecian invention: even this the Hellenes imitated [*nachgemacht*]. For a long time they learned from everything around them as happy dilettants, just as Aphrodite is Phoenecian [...]⁴³

39 KSA 7, NF 1872/73, 19[40].

40 «Die alten Griechen ohne normative Theologie. Jeder hat das Recht zu dichten and zu glauben, was er will»: *Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, herausgegeben von G. Colli and M. Montinari, de Gruyter, Berlin 1967 sgg. [KGW], *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen*, II 4, p. 215, footnote 5.

41 Orsucci, *Orient – Occident*, p. 125.

42 KSA 7, NF 1872/73, 19[228]: «Das Nachahmen ist darin der Gegensatz des Erkennens, daß das Erkennen eben keine Übertragung gelten lassen will, sondern ohne Metapher den Eindruck festhalten will und ohne Konsequenzen. Zu diesem Behufe wird er petrificirt: der Eindruck durch Begriffe eingefangen und abgegränzt, dann getödtet, gehäutet und als Begriff mumisirt und aufbewahrt [...]».

43 KSA 8, NF 1875, 5[65]: «Die Griechen als das einzig geniale Volk der Weltgeschichte; auch als Lernende sind sie dies, sie verstehen dies am besten und wissen nicht bloß zu schmücken und zu putzen mit dem Entlehnten: wie es die Römer thun. Die Constitution der Polis ist eine phönizische Erfindung: selbst dies haben die Hellenen nachgemacht. Sie haben lange Zeit wie freudige Dilettanten an allem herum gelernt; wie auch die Aphrodite phönizisch ist. Sie leugnen auch gar nicht das Eingewanderte und Nicht-Ursprüngliche ab». The archetype of the «Fremde» or «Eingewanderte» is, of course, Dionysos: «ein fremder Gott»: *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur* I, in GrossoktavAusgabe [GOA], C.G. Naumann, Lipsia, 1894 sgg., vol. 18, p. 42. On the Greeks as *dilettanti*, see *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur* III, GOA 18, pp. 164 ff.

A similar passage from the beginning of *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, gives us our first clue to how the Greeks ought to be engaged as models of learning:

Nothing is more foolish than to ascribe to the Greeks an autochthonous formation [*Bildung*]; on the contrary, they all absorbed the living culture of other peoples. The reason they got so far is precisely that they understood how to pick up and throw the spear further from the point where others left it. They are worthy of admiration [*bewunderungswürdig*] in the art of fruitful learning: and we ought [*sollen*] just like them, to learn from our neighbours, for the sake of life and not learned knowledge, using everything learnt as a support for swinging high and higher than the neighbour.⁴⁴

Nietzsche here declares how, as author of the text, he proposes to engage the Greek philosophers: by aligning himself with their «art of fruitful learning», their will «to live what they learned, at once»,⁴⁵ *against* modern Wissenschaft. In this polemical move, two moments stand out:

- a) a mimetic moment;
- b) the antagonistic moment of swinging higher than the neighbour.

In the first mimetic moment (a) Nietzsche appeals to the binding classical status of Greeks in the imperative form: we ought (*sollen*), like them, to learn from our neighbours for the sake of life (*zum Leben*). No doubt, Nietzsche is thinking of the Germans and their neighbours here. But he also has a *problem of method* in mind. To the question: how best to learn from the Greeks? he responds with a *doubling-back* of Greek exemplarity on the very method we use to understand them: our method and the discoveries we make should fertilise each other; whatever is valuable in the Greeks *ought* to be used to form and inform

44 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, p. 806). See Nachlass 1872/73, KSA 7, 19[196]: «Wir sollen so lernen, wie die Griechen von ihren Vergangenheiten und Nachbarn lernten – zum Leben, also mit größter Auswahl und alles Erlernte sofort als Stütze benutzend, auf der man sich hoch und höher als alle Nachbarn schwingt. Also nicht gelehrtenhaft! Was nicht zum Leben taugt, ist keine wahre Historie...». See also *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen* (KGW II 4, p. 212), where Nietzsche responds to the view that Greek philosophy was «nur [...] ein importirtes Gewächs» not through denial, but by stressing their «Erfindsamkeit» in creating «Philosophentypen»: «Die Erfindsamkeit hierin zeichnet die Griechen vor allen Völkern aus».

45 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, p. 807.

our very engagement with them.⁴⁶ As a method, this mimetic imperative is clarified by Nietzsche in a note to *Wir Philologen*:

The measure for study lies here: whatever provokes imitation [*zur Nachahmung reizt*], whatever is grasped with love and demands continued begetting [*fortzuzeugen*], ought to be studied. That would be the most correct: an advancing canon of the exemplary.⁴⁷

In the preamble to *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* itself, speak of «Nachschaffen», a term that brings out a creative moment (*-schaffen*) next to the mimetic (*nach-*) moment:

[...] it is a beginning towards the recovery and re-creation [*nachschaffen*] of those natures by way of comparison, so that the polyphony of the Greek nature may at long last resound once more: the task is to bring to light what we must always love and honour, and what no subsequent knowledge can steal: the great human being.⁴⁸

46 Thus in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, Nietzsche demands that in studying the pre-Socratic philosophers we apply the very restraint (Bändigung des Wissenstriebes) that distinguishes them from contemporary Wissenschaft (PHG, KSA 1, pp. 806–807). In Nietzsche's text, the methodological imperative of restraint takes the form of a philosophical portaiture (see note 60): his account restricts itself to the interface between the pre-Socratics' personalities and their teachings. This contrasts with the unrestrained attempts by some of his contemporaries to trace Greek philosophy back as far as possible, via «the more original» Persian and Egyptian philosophies, to its very beginnings. This, however, leads only to «Barbarism»; for «the beginnings are always raw, unformed, empty and ugly» (ibid.).

47 KSA 8, NF 1875, 5[171]: «Das Maaß des Studiums liegt darin: nur was zur Nachahmung reizt, was mit Liebe ergriffen wird und fortzuzeugen verlangt, soll studirt werden. Da wäre das Richtigste: ein fortschreitender Kanon des Vorbildlichen [...]».

48 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, pp. 801 ff. For *Nachschaffen* see also KSA 8, NF 1875, 6[48]: «[...] Wer diese Möglichkeiten des Lebens wieder entdecken könnte! Dichter und Historiker sollten über diese Aufgabe brüten: denn solche Menschen sind zu selten, dass man sie laufen lassen könnte. Vielmehr sollte man sich gar nicht eher Ruhe geben bis man ihre Bilder nachgeschaffen und sie hundertfach an die Wand gemalt hat – und ist man so weit, – dann freilich wird man sich erst recht nicht Ruhe geben». Also: KSA 8, Nachlass 1875, 6[10]: «[...] Hinter solchen Menschen muss man her sein, bis sie wieder von einem Dichter nachgeschaffen sind: die ergänzende Phantasie Vieler muss hier arbeiten [...]». And *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen* (KGW II 4, p. 214.): «Jetzt müssen wir wesentlich die Bilder jener Ph. und ihrer Lehren nachschaffend ergänzen...». The other, imitative component of Nietzschean «nachschaffen» is brought out in the Vorstufe to 6[48] above,

But the creative moment is also an *antagonistic* moment (b) in Nietzsche's alliance with the art of fruitful learning: it is, Nietzsche says, «for the sake of life» (*zum Leben*) that we should, like the Greeks, learn from our neighbours, «using everything learnt in order to swing high and higher than» them.⁴⁹ But how exactly are we to understand this antagonistic-creative moment? As learners — philosophers, wanderers, discoverers, historians, geographers⁵⁰ — the Greeks were not out to

where the pre-Socratics are described as «nachahmungswürdig»: worthy of imitation (KSA 14, p. 566). Cf. also KSA 7, NF 1872/73, 21[6] on «lebendig nachempfinden». Although the word «Nachschaffen» was not coined by Nietzsche nor unique to him (it is to be found in, e.g., D. Sanders, *Handwörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* of 1878), its use was much less common than «Nachahmen». Nietzsche's repetitive use of «Nachschaffen» instead of «Nachahmen» in the relation to the Greeks, as shown in the above texts, is therefore unusual, and it supports the claim that «Nachschaffen» serves him to name his own, unique conception of mimesis.

49 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, p. 806.

50 «Die griechische Aufklärung: durch Reisen. Herodot: wie viel hat er gesehen! Reconstruction des ihm zeitgenössischen Dramas und Lebens aus seinen Vergleichen»: KSA 7, NF 1869/70, 3[69]. (The Greek Enlightenment: through journeys. Herodotus: how much he saw! Reconstruction of the drama and life of his time from his comparisons.) See KSA 7, Nachlass 1869/70, 3[73] under the heading: «Staatslehre, Gesetze, Volksbildung [...]. Herodot über das Ausland. Das Wandern. Die hellenischen Wahnvorstellungen. Rache und Recht. Die Griechen als Eroberer und Überwinder barbarischer Zustände (Dionysoskult). Das erwachte Individuum». (Doctrine of the state, laws, popular education [formation] [...] Herodotus on foreign countries. The wandering. The Hellenic delusions. Revenge and right. The Greeks as conquerors and overcomers of barbaric conditions (Dionysos cult). The awakened individual. Also: KSA 7, NF 1872/73, 19[42]: «Die Griechen als Entdecker und Reisende und Kolonisatoren. Sie verstehen zu lernen: ungeheure Aneignungskraft. Unsrer Zeit soll nicht glauben, in ihrem Wissenstriebe so viel höher zu stehen: nur wurde bei den Griechen alles Leben! Bei uns bleibt es Erkenntniß!» (The Greeks as discoverers and travellers and colonisers. They understand how to learn: monstrous power of assimilation. Our time should not believe that in its drive to knowledge it stands so much higher: only, with the Greeks everything became life!). And KSA 7, NF 1871/72, 16[25]: «2. Die wandernden Hellenen. Sie sind Eroberer von Natur». (2. The wandering Hellenes. They are conquerors of nature.). And GOA 18, *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur*, p. 95 on the oldest Greek historians: «Nicht in der Studirstube wuchsen sie; es sind weitgereiste Männer, die zu hören und zu sehen und zu fragen verstanden und ihr ganzes Leben hindurch sich im Erzählen und im Erzählen-hören geübt haben. Das ist eben Historia». (They grew not in the study-room; these are well-travelled men who knew how to hear [listen], to see and to ask, and throughout

exclude or subjugate other peoples. When Nietzsche speaks of them as «conquerors of nature» or «overcomers of barbaric conditions», he is thinking of their «monstrous power to assimilate», to take up and re-order, to transpose (*Übertragen*) the elements of the other; that is, «to make use of [*benutzen*] what they learn» so as to «fulfill, to intensify, to elevate» Greek life,⁵¹ *not* to impoverish the other. As a feature of *agonal* culture, then, the antagonistic or competitive element of Greek learning («to swing [...] higher than the neighbour») signifies *not* a divisive logic of exclusion, but a *techne* of appropriation through contention, premised on a plurality of active forces: they learned *through and against* the other, by *using it as a stimulus to posit a contending claim, to create their own gods, types, world-views, and values.*

4) *Overcoming the Greeks*

If it is as agonal learners that the Greeks are exemplary, then they are to be engaged through a doubling-back of that very agonal *techne* of learning onto our method for engaging them. This mimetic-agonal doubling has two important implications:

1. In the first place, it evacuates any sense of origin or identity from the concept of *mimesis*, replacing any stable point of reference with a differential dynamic of surpassing or overcoming. To duplicate the «art of fruitful learning» in our very relation to the Greeks means *to learn from them, as a past and alien culture, how to learn from cultures past and alien.* In this formulation, the concept of learning that is to provide the point of reference for *mimesis*, is itself referred to what is alien or other, twice-over: it is because their style of learning is *alien* to ours that the Greeks are worth imitating; and what we should imitate in turn is their capacity to learn *from what is alien.* There can be no question of isolating Greek culture as a self-sufficient good, an originary plenitude or a natural talent. This brings us to the second implication:

2. Since learning cannot be divorced from its sources, following Greek precedent means following them as wanderers into alien, «barbaric» cultures and assimilators of them. It is therefore *with full consequence* that Nietzsche goes beyond (or overcomes) Greek culture to investigate its

their whole lives practised telling [narrating] and listening to tales. Precisely that is *Historia*.)

51 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, p. 807.

sources and comes to *relativise* their value as classical models: «A culture that runs after Greek culture can create nothing. The creator can certainly *borrow from everywhere* so as to nourish himself. Thus we will, as creators alone, also be able to have something from the Greeks».⁵²

At this point, following the Greeks as assimilators has spilled over into a generalised programme of assimilation (überall her entlehnen und sich nähren) in which the Greeks are but one player. For a «very precise thinking-back [*Zurückdenken*] leads to the insight that we are a multiplication of many pasts».⁵³ Thus, to *acknowledge* the Greeks as classical models of learning leads inevitably to an *overcoming* of the Greeks as a unique and incomparable source of Western civilisation.

We see, then, how an antagonistic or *agonal* style of engagement leads Nietzsche to advocate an overcoming of the Greeks as a *consequence*, not a rejection, of Greek classicity. This consequence is drawn in full at the end of *Wir Philologen* and marks the end point of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, at the interface with *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*.

52 KSA 8, NF 1875, 7[1]: «[...]Eine Kultur, welche der griechischen nachläuft, kann nichts erzeugen. Wohl kann der Schaffende überall her entlehnen und sich nähren. Und so werden wir auch nur als Schaffende etwas von den Griechen haben können [...]».

53 KSA 8, NF 1875, 3[69].

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NIETZSCHE'S 'INACTUAL' UNTIMELY AS COMPARED WITH WAGNER'S 'ACTUALITY'¹

In Nietzsche's self-criticism (1886) about his youthful writing, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, an «impossible» romantic book, «arrogant and exalted», a compromise with Wagnerism and modernity, among the central points to be rescued and valorized, and what comes to the foreground, is his having bravely questioned science in relation to life and having set the task of «*die Wissenschaft unter der Optik des Künstlers zu sehn, die Kunst aber unter der des Lebens...*»² (*GT, Versuch einer Selbstkritik*, 2). And in *Ecce homo*, also referring to the *Second Untimely Meditation* on history, Nietzsche writes, «Die zweite Unzeitgemässe (1874) bringt das Gefährliche, das Leben-Annagende und -Vergiftende in unsrer Art des Wissenschafts-Betriebs an's Licht – : das Leben krank an diesem entmenschten Räderwerk und Mechanismus, an der 'Unpersönlichkeit' des Arbeiters, an der falschen Ökonomie der 'Theilung der Arbeit'. Der Zweck geht verloren, die Cultur: – das Mittel, der moderne Wissenschafts-Betrieb, barbarisirt...».³

Nietzsche wrote this in his last period while, on the other hand, totally vindicating the value of the courage of knowledge and scientific probity,

1 Translated from Italian by Sara Donahue. We have tried to keep in English, where possible, the Italian play on words between the terms 'attuale' (actual) and 'inattuale' (inactual).

For Nietzsche's writings, when not otherwise indicated, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München und de Gruyter, Berlin 1988² [KSA]. For the letters of Nietzsche and his correspondents, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, de Gruyter, herausgegeben von G. Colli und M. Montinari, Berlin 1975 ff. [KGB]. References are given, using, for Nietzsche's writings, the title of the text followed by the number of the aphorism or the section, the fragment number with the corresponding year and identifying the letters by the date and the name of the correspondents.

2 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie, Versuch einer Selbstkritik*, § 2.

3 KSA 6, *Ecce homo*, p. 316.

the importance of method and patience, reaffirming a theme present as far back as *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*: «Deshalb sollte jetzt Jedermann mindestens eine Wissenschaft von Grund aus kennen gelernt haben: dann weiss er doch, was Methode heisst und wie nöthig die äusserste Besonnenheit ist».⁴ The same Nietzsche who returned to a central theme of his youthful writings now entrusted extreme experimentation to the 'new philosophers', the free spirits that in the times dominated by tradition were considered much more than 'inactual': «enemies of God», insulters of truth, «obsessed»:

Alle Methoden, alle Voraussetzungen unsrer jetzigen Wissenschaftlichkeit haben Jahrtausende lang die tiefste Verachtung gegen sich gehabt, auf sie hin war man aus dem Verkehre mit «honnetten» Menschen ausgeschlossen. [...] Als wissenschaftlicher Charakter war man Tschandala... Wir haben das ganze Pathos der Menschheit gegen uns gehabt.⁵

There is a substantial consensus in the definition of Nietzsche as an 'inactual'/untimely philosopher. This is certainly valid if useful in highlighting his critical distance from 'gregarious morality', continuity and fidelity to a position, affirmation of the 'free spirit' against restricted spirits, his opposition to the narrow-mindedness and anguish of the Germanic nationalism that demanded 'great politics', the miseries of anti-Semitism, the 'actual'/current servilism of science. Certainly, free spirits, new philosophers, in their experimentation have against them the community that considers them a danger and a threat: we must, however, point out that the term '*Unzeitgemäss*' almost disappears from Nietzsche's vocabulary after his early period (it is resumed in *Götzen-Dämmerung* as the title of a section: *Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen*), but the expression never appears in the text) and Nietzsche, although he reprinted *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, never published the four *Untimely Meditations*. In fact, he saw, in the 'untimely' attitude, in that form of agonism against his own time, an expression of youth, of inexperience, but also of real weakness: «Wenn ich einstmals das Wort '*unzeitgemäss*' auf meine Bücher geschrieben habe, wie viel Jugend, Unerfahrenheit, Winkel drückt sich in diesem Worte aus! Heute begreife ich, daß mit dieser Art Klage Begeisterung und Unzufriedenheit ich eben damit zu den Modernsten der Modernen gehörte»⁶ — he wrote in a Fragment from 1885–1886. And he expressed himself in the same way

4 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, aph. 635.

5 KSA 6, *Der Antichrist*, aph. 13

6 KSA, 12, *NF 1885–1886*, 12, 2 [201].

in a letter in March 1882 to an admirer, Elise Fincke, from Baltimore, who had declared *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen* passionate.

Jene *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen* rechne ich als Jugendschriften: Da machte ich eine vorläufige Abrechnung mit dem was mich am meisten bis dahin im Leben gehemmt und gefördert hatte, da versuchte ich von Einigem loszukommen, dadurch dass ich es verunglimpfte oder verherrlichte wie es die Art der Jugend ist – : Ach die Dankbarkeit im Guten und Bösen hat mir immer viel zu schaffen gemacht!⁷

«So habe ich keinen Grund mehr, in jener früheren Manier ‘beredt’ zu sein; heute» - he writes in a note in the summer of 1885.⁸

The metaphysics of the *Untimely Meditations* is ‘the metaphysics of culture’ which is also a metaphysics of youth which we trust to be capable of a new heroism (the model is Wagner’s innocent Siegfried who does not know fear and who is able to free the gods of their guilt): the situation of culture is judged on the basis of the solitary, great heroes of an era and their relationship with the people. All of Nietzsche’s action (and the *Untimely Meditations* claim to be action against the cowardice and laziness of the era) presents itself as sacrifice and dedication to the realization of genius. It is not so much the critical attitude, which will actually be strengthened in the struggle against the domination of convention and of the ‘actual’ up to the proclamation of the *Umwertung*, so much as the use of the Schopenhauerian term which Nietzsche seems to no longer accept: the struggle against *Jetztzeit*. For the weak, epigonean ‘actual’/current society, the historical disease is another reason for disintegration: the craving for knowledge of the past without a dominant force capable of transforming into higher life the motives contained therein. *Impotentia* is the characteristic of the modern personality. Schopenhauer already characterized ‘Actuality’ (*Jetztzeit*) as being ‘spiritually impotent’ with the absurd pretension — Hegelian — of being «the actuality for which only the other actualities existed», the ultimate purpose of the world.⁹ In his work *Über die Universitäts-Philosophie*, Schopenhauer strongly argues against the *Jetztzeit* that limits «thought to the present moment», «one cannot afford to look at the time that will come and will judge».¹⁰ ‘Actuality’ (present era) is «spoiled,

7 1882, 212 – *Brief an Elise Fincke*: 20/03/1882.

8 KSA, 12, *NF 1885–1886*, 37 [5].

9 A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena, Sämtliche Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), Bd. V, pp. 337–38; 529–30.

10 See *ivi*, Bd. IV, pp. 213–14.

miserable, and has a purely material mentality that dares to set aside the lesson of the ancients». ¹¹ Even the deterioration of language, of the noble German language — close to Greek and Latin — is seen as an inevitable character of the *Jetztzeit* that Schopenhauer combines with the «genius raised on the breast milk of Hegelian philosophy!». «The life of the *present era* is enormous *galloping*: in literature it is manifested as extremely labile and superficial», «miserable jargon». Schopenhauer uses sarcasm against the optimism of the *Jetztzeit*, that of the demagogues of Christianity, for whom the «world is its own purpose». ¹²

For the crisis of instinctive vitality, under the weight of historical knowledge, for the untimely/inactual Nietzsche there are no longer men, only «pure abstractions and shadows»: «keiner wagt mehr seine Person daran, sondern maskirt sich als gebildeter Mann, als Gelehrter, als Dichter, als Politiker». ¹³ There is nothing left behind the masks. The reason for the stiff mask in the representation, meaningless, of social existence is Schopenhauerian. The Philistine dominates: he who is «devoid of any spiritual need», and, more generally and more appropriately, the man who is continually busy «in the most serious way around a reality that is not such»: ¹⁴ there is no possibility for the authentic man. The meaning of social identity is lost: it dominates the profession, behind each mask are the 'speculators'. Of this colossal masquerade the philosopher, who stands apart, knows the motive, the thrust: money, that is, the desire for happiness in *abstracto* since in practical terms it is impossible to obtain it. ¹⁵ In Schopenhauer the ontological thickness of this motif of the mask is in the foreground: in Nietzsche it becomes an element of criticism and struggle against society and the culture of his time and his people. History has relativized and destroyed the ancient values: the naked struggle for existence is the truth that removes any guarantee of stability from the social fabric. At the cultural level, the masks offered by history are no longer the expression or defense of an inaccessible interiority, but the constant search for an identity and a meaning that does not upset, but confirms, the substantial uniformity and emptiness of Bourgeois existence. Or the search for strong feelings appears as a compensation for and an illusory stimulus to the day-to-day existence of the Philistine. There is still, in all the *Untimley Meditations*, the need to reconstitute strong individuality (the 'genius')

11 Ivi, Bd. 5, p. 478.

12 Ivi, Bd. V, pp. 636, 642, 658, 306.

13 KSA 1, *Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, § 5.

14 Schopenhauer, Bd. IV, p. 410.

15 Ivi, Bd. V, pp. 249–250; see also pp. 68–69; p. 689.

with everything in a «tense and vigorous bond»¹⁶ in the perspective of the 'artist's metaphysics' that remains in the background. The superior genius is characterized by the relationship with the mythical unity of the people: there are more than a few Wagnerian and Schopenhauerian suggestions on meditation which are the backdrop to the vigorous polemical commitment to 'actuality'. The figure dominating 'actuality' is that of the Philistine.

During *Zarathustra* there is a resumption of the characterizations of the Philistine with the theme of the small virtue of the last man: «Und Andre giebt es, die sind gleich Alltags-Uhren, die aufgezogen wurden; sie machen ihr Tiktak und wollen, dass man Tiktak – Tugend heisse».¹⁷ This is true for the learned: «Gute Uhrwerke sind sie: nur Sorge man, sie richtig aufzuziehn! Dann zeigen sie ohne Falsch die Stunde an und machen einen bescheidenen Lärm dabei».¹⁸ This image refers directly to Schopenhauer as the main source of Nietzsche's characterization of the Philistine: in which the historical reality is entirely reduced to forms of automaticism to which, for those who know how to penetrate the internal mechanisms, all the wealth of human life is reduced:

Sie gleichen Uhrwerken, welche aufgezogen werden und gehen, ohne zu wissen warum: und jedes Mal, daß ein Mensch gezeugt und geboren worden, ist die Uhr des Menschenlebens aufs Neue aufgezogen, um jetzt ihr schon zahllose Male abgspieltes Leierstück abermals zu wiederholen, Satz vor Satz und Takt vor Takt, mit unbedeutenden Variationen.¹⁹

The same analysis of types and passions historicizes with emphasis the scattering of social characters through the theme of the domain of abstraction. The whole spectrum of types, the «colossal masquerade» of modern civilization, revolves around the abstraction par excellence of money, «human happiness in abstracto», so that «here we meet knights, parsons, soldiers, doctors, barristers, priests, philosophers, and the rest. But they are not what they represent themselves to be; they are mere masks beneath which as a rule moneymakers are hidden».²⁰

Only the 'genius' is allowed to escape the world of goods and the principle of performance that dominates it entirely, so being useless

16 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, p. 804.

17 KSA IV, *Also sprach Zarathustra II: Von den Tugendhaften*, p. 121.

18 Ivi, *Von den Gelehrten*, p. 161.

19 A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, § 58, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. I, p. 441.

20 Schopenhauer, *Parerga*, SW, Bd. V, pp. 249–250.

belongs to the character of the works of genius: it is their license of nobility. In a youthful writing in October 1861, dedicated to Hölderlin's defense against widespread prejudice, Nietzsche pointed out the strong critical significance of the figure and the work of the poet (in particular of *Hyperion*) against German 'barbarisms'. In German, the poet hated the *Fachmensch*, the Philistine.²¹ The specialist, the Philistine, were already subjected to criticism by Nietzsche, even before reading Schopenhauer, which would confirm this direction in a decisively aristocratic sense with the genius-philistine comparison (mass).

Der Intellekt des Normalmenschen, streng an den Dienst seines Willens gebunden, mithin eigentlich bloß mit der Aufnahme der Motive beschäftigt, läßt sich ansehen als der Komplex von Drahtfäden, womit jede dieser Puppen auf dem Welttheater in Bewegung gesetzt wird. [...] Dagegen könnte man das Genie, mit seinem entfesselten Intellekt, einem unter den großen Drahtpuppen des berühmten Mailändischen Puppentheaters mitspielenden, lebendigen Menschen vergleichen, der unter ihnen der Einzige wäre, welcher Alles wahrnehme und daher gern sich von der Bühne auf eine Weile losmache, um aus den Logen das Schauspiel zu genießen: – das ist die geniale Besonnenheit.²²

Schopenhauer used the image of the puppet more than once to characterize the dependence established by the command of the will. 'Brain' and 'nerves' are the threads and mechanisms that transmit orders into a complete heteronomy. A 'short rope' binds intellect and will in man. This applies to the man of the masses but also to the 'talent', in which the intellect is at the service of the developed civilization and able to address «the needs of the era»: «Die bloßen Talentmänner kommen stets zu rechter Zeit: denn, wie sie vom Geiste ihrer Zeit angeregt und vom Bedürfniß derselben hervorgerufen werden, so sind sie auch gerade nur fähig diesem zu genießen».²³

In modern civilization, the man who is slave to specialization (a profession) is 'classified' and 'treated commercially': a page of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* institutes the antithesis between serenity of the genius with a disinterested and quiet look on things, and the «always meaningful spectacle of life in all its scenes» and the common man, «wholesale goods of nature», whose will drives him to pursue the instrumental version of the world, in whose eye «wenn er nicht, wie meistens, stumpf oder nüchtern

21 See F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Aufzeichnungen* Herbst 1858-Herbst 1862, KGW I/2, p. 340.

22 Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Kap. 31; SW Bd. II, p. 498.

23 Ivi, p. 504.

ist, leicht der wahre Gegensatz der Kontemplation sichtbar, das Spähen».²⁴ This very enjoyment becomes an aspect of addiction: «a kind of forced labor», imposed by fashion or authority.²⁵

The 'relative freedom' of the intervention of reason and concepts, which create the illusion of freedom of will, is drastically reconfirmed as a *necessity* of the same nature as that which dominates in animals. So, in the end, the fate of the Philistine is to be grouped in, as a 'severe beast', with the animal in the inability to laugh. Seriousness is the attitude appropriate to the complete subsumption of the world in the network of concepts. The animal does not laugh because he is devoid of concept, the serious man because this thing has disappeared in the instrumental deformation of relationships: where laughing is the crisis of subsumption and the revenge of the thing against the dominion of the abstract. In Schopenhauer laughter is always connected to the appearance of the thing in its intuitive fullness. So, in paragraph 21 of the *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde*, the radiant smile of children announces the transition from the state of astonishment, of immersion in the indistinct chaos of sensation, to the recognition of the object in intellectual intuition.²⁶

Schopenhauer had written that «the genius encounters his time as a comet does the orbits of the planets, whose well-ordered and easily calculated position is extraneous to its wholly eccentric trajectory».²⁷ This was his destiny: the relationship with the masses was necessarily extraneous, his work was a solitary fruition of value, unattainable and not functionalized by the market. Nietzsche repropose the image of the comet, but argues that only in the modern world of civilization «is the philosopher an unpredictable comet, which therefore causes fear», whereas in the case of a model-civilization like the Greek one in which the genius is capable of restoring a bond with the people, redeeming the masses by giving a higher meaning to his «hard service», «he shines in the solar system of civilization, as a star of the greatest magnitude».²⁸ The miracle 'genius' will then be the subject of a decomposition that removes false immediacy and unity, showing it to be a simulacrum and a construction, postulated by romantic weaknesses: «Das Genie thut auch Nichts, als dass es erst

24 Ivi, p. 268.

25 Ivi, *Parerga*, Bd. IV, p. 411.

26 A. Schopenhauer, *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, hrsgb. v. A. Hübscher, Wiesbaden 1972³, vol. I, p. 72.

27 Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, § 31, SW, Bd. II, p. 504.

28 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, p. 809.

Steine setzen, dann bauen lernt, dass es immer nach Stoff sucht und immer an ihm herumformt. Jede Thätigkeit des Menschen ist zum Verwundern complicirt, nicht nur die des Genie's: aber keine ist ein 'Wunder'». ²⁹

The *hero* of the false modern culture (actual, current 'hero') is for Nietzsche the *Bildungsphilister*: not already, as the word 'Philistine' which indicated in student jargon, «the opposite of the son of the Muse, of the artist, of the true man of culture», but, worse, he who «deludes himself to be the son of the Muse and a man of culture». This new philistinism is systematic, in the sense that it finds «the uniform imprint of itself everywhere»; but such a system is not culture «and not even bad culture, but always and only the opposite of it, that is, barbarities, which are firmly founded». ³⁰

The term philistinism is widespread in German culture: Nietzsche combined terms that seemed irreconcilable: culture (false) with the classical definition of the Philistine. The *hero* of this false culture, the most appropriate expression of cultural philistinism, is incarnated, for Schopenhauer, in the Hegelian philosopher. Hegelism appears to be «the ultimate end of human existence», «a methodical, complete, pleasure-seeking and comfortable philistinism». ³¹

The man without any spiritual need is called with an expression from the student life, a Philistine. That is and remains the ἄμουσος *aner*-. I would now be tempted to determine the definition of a Philistine from a higher point, indicating with that term the individuals constantly gripped in the most serious way around a reality that is not such. ³²

In a fragment from spring/autumn 1873 (27 [56]) Nietzsche resumes the definition in Greek: ἄμουσος. ³³

And this point is enhanced by Nietzsche: there is, however, the assumption of an authentic dimension, criticism is directed toward those who serve false appearances, living in the phenomenal.

A heroic life — defined by Schopenhauer himself in 1822 — cannot be appraised «with a Philistine meter or with a shopkeeper's cubino, not with a measure proportionate to ordinary people, who lives no other existence except the individual, limited to a short period of time. That is why I do

29 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches I*, aph. 162 I

30 KSA 1, *David Strauss*, pp. 165–166.

31 Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, § 47, SW, Bd. II, p. 756.

32 Schopenhauer, *Parerga*, SW, Bd. IV, p. 410.

33 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1873*, 27 [56].

not have to worry about what I miss what is part of the regular life of the individual: office, home, social life, wife and offspring. The existence of common human beings is resolved in this».

The character of the cultured Philistine had been repeatedly pointed out by Wagner, which is undoubtedly the continuous reference point in that it represents the artistic genius that gives meaning to the hard service for higher culture. Wagner had spoken about the *Staatsphilister*, a bon vivant of art reduced to entertainment for the tired beast and in general sees in the Philistine who claims art, the real danger of the rebirth of the musical drama, of the communal tragedy. Nietzsche speaks of a «great Philistine audience, with a thousand nodding heads [...] cheerful from dead eyes, seeking distractions and in need of excitement».³⁴

Wagner in *Über das Dirigieren* (1869) argues against the 'professional' German musician and, above all, against the «new style of elegant musicians, who emerged especially in northern Germany from the Mendelssohn School» bearers of a 'pseudo-culture' (*Gebildetheit*) as compared to the authentic culture that is «true freedom of spirit, freedom in an absolute sense».

In an astute agreement with the Philistine of our time, there is a completely new concept of classicism, for which, in the other artistic fields, the Greeks are also brought into the discussion, where, of course, clear, transparent serenity was the norm! And this superficial liquidation of all the serious and tremendous problems of reality is promoted to the modern and systematic world view, where our 'cultured' heroes of contemporary music find their undisputed place of honor.³⁵

And in the following pages, Wagner, criticizing the execution by a friend of Mendelssohn of a piece by Bach on the harpsichord, speaks, far from any «gothic German gloom» of such a «Greek serenity» suitable for a «neo-Hellenic synagogue». The theme of *Heiterkeit*, of Greek serenity, is fought by Wagner, who compares Philistinism to the will of convenience, of looking no further. In a letter of 2 October 1850 to Liszt: the enemy is the lazy philistine of the public and the asininity of the critics, the pseudo-connoisseurs of art. But even the final pages of *Oper und Drama* identify in the Philistine the true danger to art (and in a paradox) the Philistine will often assume, because of Wagner's anti-Semitism, the characteristics attributed to the Jew. The Philistine, «the most insensitive and vile product of our

34 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1870–71*, 7 [127].

35 R. Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, Leipzig, 1911, Bd. VIII, pp. 312; 314.

civilization, is the most capricious and lurid dispenser of bread to artists» is «the master who orders and pays», «vile and ordinary» who «prohibits anything that might remind him that he must be a *man* — both in the sense of beauty and courage». A world dominated by the 'modern Philistine of the State', the result of civilization, with which Wagner does not want to come to terms, believing that he already feels «in the air the terrible and pale mugginess that forewarns of the shock of an earthquake. [...] It will only destroy the ruins and prepare for the spring the bed of the river where we will see its vital waves flow».³⁶ This metaphor is present several times in the young Nietzsche. Only a superior force is able to accommodate the dread of an existence in which there are no longer any constants. In *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, the metaphor is used for Heraclitus:

as ewige und alleinige Werden, die gänzliche Unbeständigkeit alles Wirklichen, das fortwährend nur wirkt und wird und nicht ist, wie dies Heraklit lehrt, ist eine furchtbare und betäubende Vorstellung und in ihrem Einflusse am nächsten der Empfindung verwandt, mit der Jemand, bei einem *Erdbeben*, das Zutrauen zu der festgegründeten Erde verliert. Es gehörte eine erstaunliche Kraft dazu, diese Wirkung in das Entgegengesetzte, in das Erhabne und das beglückte Erstaunen zu übertragen.³⁷

Even the event that is at the beginning of the hard path of the 'free spirit', the 'great separation', comes to the spirit constrained by veneration and custom:

Die grosse Loslösung kommt für solchermaassen Gebundene plötzlich, wie ein Erdstoss: die junge Seele wird mit Einem Male erschüttert, losgerissen, herausgerissen, – sie selbst versteht nicht, was sich begiebt. Ein Antrieb und Andrang waltet und wird über sie Herr wie ein Befehl; ein Wille und Wunsch erwacht, fortzugehen, irgend wohin, um jeden Preis; eine heftige gefährliche Neugierde nach einer unentdeckten Welt flammt und flackert in allen ihren Sinnen. «Lieber sterben als hier leben» – so klingt die gebieterische Stimme und Verführung: und dies «hier», dies «zu Hause» ist Alles, was sie bis dahin geliebt hatte!³⁸

And the metaphor returns in *Zarathustra* and in *Ecce homo*.

Many of Wagner's themes were drawn up by Nietzsche in the *Untimely*

36 R. Wagner, *Oper und Drama*, hrsg. u. kommentiert von K. Kropfing (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984), pp. 390–391.

37 KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, pp. 824–25. See also KGW II, 4, p. 272.

38 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches I, Vorrede*, 3.

Meditations, even to the letter, while the musician was gradually betraying his youthful positions to adapt to the new 'actuality', to the Germanism of the Reich. The philosopher's struggle is against the various masks of Philistinism and the vanity that makes use of past greatness to oppose the construction of a new culture and the possibility of new geniuses. The Philistines, hidden behind the reassuring 'us' and stiffened masks in social roles, «worried about common comedy and not at all about themselves», have as their password: «we no longer have to search».³⁹ Even in this case Nietzsche's reference is, precisely, to Wagner who speaks of the gift made to those born by the youngest of the Nornes, so that everyone can one day become a genius: «The spirit never satisfied and always looking for something new».⁴⁰

Again it is the German spirit that seeks «with serious perseverance what the cultured Philistine brags of possessing, that is, the genuine, original German culture».⁴¹ The danger of analysis is underlined again: life cannot be subjected to scientific observation without disturbing and killing the aspect of immediate productivity and totality, which is expressed in the work of art. The Schopenhauerian controversy against the practice of vivisection becomes in Wagner the metaphor of a *hybris* against nature, against organic immediacy which — romantically — cannot be dismembered, proper to the conspiracy between the scientific-analytical attitude and the disintegrated and mechanical atomism of *Zivilisation*. The Wagnerian connection between science and *Zivilisation* is, therefore, certainly present in Nietzsche's connotation on the «barbarizing effects of science», where the latter is significantly related, in its Alexandrian dispersion, to the *laissez faire* economic model:

Allmählich verliert die Philosophie die Zügel der Wissenschaft aus den Händen. [...] Die allgemeine Wohlfahrt will wieder eine Bändigung und dadurch zugleich Erhebung und Concentration. Das *laissez aller* unserer Wissenschaft, wie bei gewissen nationalökonomischen Dogmen: man glaubt an einen unbedingt heilsamen Erfolg. [...] Jetzt begreifen wir die merkwürdige Erscheinung Schopenhauer's: er sammelt alle Elemente, die zur Beherrschung der Wissenschaft noch taugen. Er kommt auf die tiefsten Urprobleme der Ethik und der Kunst, er wirft die Frage vom Werthe des Daseins auf. Wunderbare Einheit Wagner's und Schopenhauer's! Sie entstammen dem gleichen Triebe.

39 KSA 1, *David Strauss*, p. 168.

40 R. Wagner, *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde*, in *Dichtungen und Schriften*, 10 voll., ed. by D. Borchmeyer, Frankfurt a. Main, 1983, vol. VI, p. 221.

41 KSA 1, *David Strauss*, § 2.

Die tiefsten Eigenschaften des germanischen Geistes rüsten sich hier zum Kampfe: wie bei den Griechen.⁴²

The bond between science and the triumph of the servile world, as indicated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* with the figure of Socrates, is expanded into the *Untimely Meditations* in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, where the controversy against the practical twisting of science results in an analogy between scientific work and factory work:

Glaubt es mir: wenn die Menschen in der wissenschaftlichen Fabrik arbeiten und nutzbar werden sollen, bevor sie reif sind, so ist in Kurzem die Wissenschaft ebenso ruinirt, wie die allzeitig in dieser Fabrik verwendeten Slaven. Ich bedaure, dass man schon nöthig hat, sich des sprachlichen Jargons der Slavenhalter und Arbeitgeber zur Bezeichnung solcher Verhältnisse zu bedienen, die an sich frei von Utilitäten, enthoben der Lebensnoth gedacht werden sollten: aber unwillkürlich drängen sich die Worte «Fabrik, Arbeitsmarkt, Angebot, Nutzbarmachung» – und wie all die Hilfszeitwörter des Egoismus lauten – auf die Lippen, wenn man die jüngste Generation der Gelehrten schildern will.⁴³

However, there is not a full coincidence with the Wagnerian solution: Nietzsche does not erase the value of science with a gesture that mythically mitigates the whole of life. His attack is mainly directed at the civilizing degradation, devoid of a core, of the figure of the scientist.

Experimentation is still linked, in Nietzsche, to the weakness of modern man, a Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian concretion of artificial needs, a colorful mask that hides the void. Modern man's request of science is to satisfy, in a Faustian degradation, the multiple and generated needs that still confirm it in the given reality (hence a search that results in Philistinism and the museum): hence the senseless movement of experimentation. The situation is similar in the field of history (which Nietzsche likens to science), in which the modern man is looking for a form and a way of life, and because of inner weakness undergoes the excess of stimuli that pushes from the past, but which, actually, reflects the disrupted chaos of the current situation. But the final pages of the *Untimely Meditation* on history are full of a characteristic tension, on the one hand between the destructive *pathos* of the truth that emerges as a result of science, expressing the dynamic force of *Zivilisation* – the earthquake that disrupts the steadfastness of our points of reference, «das Fundament aller seiner Sicherheit und Ruhe,

42 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1872, 19 [28].

43 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, § 7.

den Glauben an das Beharrliche und Ewige»⁴⁴ — and which fascinates Nietzsche, and, on the other, the reiterated will to remain faithful to the Wagnerian project of establishing the organicity of *Kultur* on the basis of anti-historical and supra-historical forces, the oblivion that leads to the limitation of the horizon and «the powers that turn the gaze away from becoming, turning it to what gives existence the character of the eternal and immutable, *art* and *religion*». ⁴⁵ Science instead «hasst das Vergessen, den Tod des Wissens, als sie alle Horizont-Umschränkungen aufzuheben sucht und den Menschen in ein unendlich-unbegrenztes Lichtwellen-Meer des erkannten Werdens hineinwirft». ⁴⁶

And Nietzsche asks: «Soll nun das Leben über das Erkennen, über die Wissenschaft, soll das Erkennen über das Leben herrschen?»⁴⁷ and he perceives the danger of the dominion of «die Lehren vom souverainen Werden, von der Flüssigkeit aller Begriffe, Typen und Arten, von dem Mangel aller cardinalen Verschiedenheit zwischen Mensch und Thier – Lehren, die ich für wahr, aber für tödtlich halte». ⁴⁸ Darwin's theory is 'true':⁴⁹ during the period of the *Untimely Meditations* it assumes the role of the symbol of science, understood as a force of its devastating and nihilistic effects on the mythical consistencies and the immediacy of the ideal, therefore as a damaging truth for the necessary illusion. Once the subject of illusion and the ideal as a therapeutic of life is abandoned, this nature of science stays firm and is even strengthened: Darwin then appears, next to Hegel, as one who affirms an integral science of becoming, without making mythological recourse to being.

Strauss's attempt, in *Old and New Faith*, to recompose the conflicting aspects of historical development in the justification of a progressive 'cosmodicean' (where the struggle for existence, according to naturalistic modules typical of social Darwinism, is the mechanism that sanctions progress and produces results useful for the enhancement of the *generic* element of the human species) was attacked by Nietzsche as an apologetic deformation of true Darwinism. Because in Strauss the destructive character of the certainties and values of purely historical science, is overturned by the ideology of security, success and progress guaranteed by the German Philistine after Sedan. Faced with the sanctification of military victory,

44 Ivi, § 10, p. 330.

45 Ivi.

46 Ivi.

47 Ivi.

48 Ivi, § 9, p. 319.

49 See KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1872*, 19 [132].

Nietzsche expressed the need to remain cold and critical in the midst of 'general drunkenness'. For now, Nietzsche's criticism is mainly directed at the outward appearance of the apologia: Strauss's *New faith*, which, by combining Hegelism and science, is the spokesman of the flattest and most materialistic German philistinism. This controversy is still in consonance with Wagner's fight for Bayreuth against *Zivilisation*. But the first reasons for detachment from Wagner are already implicit in his different attitude towards victory. Nationalism is a danger, a form of retreat that threatens to sanctify and sublimate an element of the 'actual' in opposition to the 'coming nature' of the aesthetic community. Burckhardt acts on Nietzsche as a counterweight to Wagner's Germanic ideology: the two Basel professors see a threatening danger for culture in the 'zoological' war between nations. «Der Sieger wird meistens dumm, der Besiegte boshaft. Der Krieg simplifizirt. Er ist ein Winterschlaf der Cultur»⁵⁰ (32[62] 1874). It is no coincidence that Nietzsche will resume, to the letter, this judgment in an aphorism in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* (aph. 444).

But precisely the tormented 'inactual' marks the end of the metaphysical illusion for Wagner: Nietzsche's letter to Wagner that accompanied the two luxurious volumes presented doubts and reticence, the sense of having «questioned something about my personal situation» («about things done, horror grips me»). Nietzsche allusively compared himself, for having dared to publish the text, to the «Knight of Lake Constance», who gallops across the frozen surface of the lake without noticing it, but then dies for the horror and fright of the risk he has taken. Wagner responded enthusiastically to Nietzsche's letter: «Friend! Your book is immense! How do you know me like that?» (13 July). In 1877 the French translation of *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* was published and Nietzsche wrote to the publisher laconically showing his discouragement: «We hope that 'Europe' is more well-disposed than Germany» (February 2, 1877). Nietzsche had lived through the heavy disappointment of the days of the Wagnerian Festival that had confirmed his highly critical judgments towards the musician, previously expressed with clarity and energy in the notes of 1874, and which had pragmatically shown the irreducible distance between the real Wagner and the ideal Wagner, which, with *Wagner in Bayreuth*, was consciously revived, trying to push the musician down a road he had long since abandoned. This text polemically pushes towards 'actuality' (*Aktualität*) those hopes of cultural rebirth present in the energetic *Appeal to the Germans* for enterprise, rejected by the patrons of Bayreuth for being

50 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1874, 32 [62].

too pessimistic: «The Committees do not feel they have the right to employ this bold tone and who, besides them, could sign this appeal?» (31 oct. 1873, Cosima Wagner).

Not by chance Nietzsche saw in his work «im Hintergrunde eine Huldigung und Dankbarkeit gegen ein Stück Vergangenheit von mir, gegen die schönste, auch gefährlichste Meeresstille meiner Fahrt... und thatsächlich eine Loslösung, ein Abschiednehmen», seeing here and there in the text a revelation of distance.⁵¹ But it is also an expression of «inactuality» against the «actual» Wagner who had moved away from the radical youthful positions Nietzsche was referring to. And in *Ecce homo*, he would say that the text simply spoke about himself: «Die Schrift *Wagner in Bayreuth* ist eine Vision meiner Zukunft».⁵² A note from 1882–1883 was even more radical; in it Nietzsche wrote: «There was a period during which I felt nausea for what I was: summer 1876» and he saw the danger of a «bad scientific conscience for the interference of metaphysics» with «the sense of exaggeration» accompanying it and the consequent desire to «restore reason and to try to live in the utmost sobriety, without metaphysical assumptions. 'Free Spirit' — above and beyond *myself!*»⁵³ In a fragment from 1876, Nietzsche claimed to have left open in the *Untimely Meditations*, «here and there, security exits». This presupposes the awareness of the limits of his position: speaking, as he would later, of «narcotics», «opium», «false consolation», «bad conscience of metaphysics», and «Jesuitism», confirms the initial voluntary attitude of affirmation of the illusion understood as pragmatic force. In the *Meditation* on Wagner, his bonding (submission, one could almost say) to the musician is no longer unconditional: the 'metaphysical superstition' of the genius is clearly in crisis. *Wagner in Bayreuth*, marks the radical crisis of the metaphysical centrality of art seen now as «the activity of he who rests»: «The objects that tragic heroes aspire to are by no means the most worthy of being desired». A work of art is valued only in that it simplifies the problems and the solutions: for this reason, it belongs to the restorative dream that precedes the heroic battle of the individual against 'power', the law, conventions. «Art is certainly not a teacher and an educator for immediate action; the artist is never in this sense an educator and an advisor». For those who have become «seers in the face of reality», art represents, in its simplification of the «real struggles of life» and of the

51 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches II, Vorrede*, 1.

52 KSA 6, *Ecce homo, Die Unzeitgemässen*, § 3.

53 KSA 9, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1882*, 4 [111].

«infinitely complicated calculus of human action and will», a momentary refreshment. The immediate escape from chaos, promised by tragic art and related to the redemptive death of the hero («The most beautiful way for individuals to live is to prepare for death and immolation in the struggle for justice and love»), belongs to momentary consolation. «*Because the bow does not break*, therefore art exists». ⁵⁴ In the Wagnerian 'simplification' of the world, the danger of lethargy is already felt. In the background there is always the danger, voluntarily exorcised, that such simplification makes art «a drug or a narcotic, with which all the other miseries of existence can be eliminated». ⁵⁵

The theme of 'simplification' is central to the whole development of the *Untimely Meditations*: Wagner is presented as the Anti-Alexander, that is, as the force capable of unifying, concentrating, linking together the elements of the 'presently' dispersed, fragmented culture, but, as such, Wagner is a «*world simplifier*». ⁵⁶ The great Alexander's task was to render the world more Greek, but he also had the negative aspect of the 'orientalisation' of Greekness. Nietzsche still seems to attribute to Wagner the real ability to unify, an effective force that goes beyond momentary restoration, beyond the illusion of art. The reason for the Anti-Alexander also includes the controversy against the orientalizing of the modern world: the struggle is no longer against the Alexanderism of science, as in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, but, even more so, in the postmodern material, already against the religious elements and especially Christians, who brought corruption to the Greek world. Art and religion are in opposition in this work, while already in the posthumous fragments of the period, Nietzsche understands the affinity in the 'lethargic' element; here, however, he tends to consider the artist as essentially irreligious. Undoubtedly, the philosopher also had in mind the *The Ring of the Nibelung* in his own particular interpretation: therefore, the poet reveals himself as the one who forewarns the end of religion, 'the twilight of the gods'. Certainly the myth seems necessary for the artist, but it is a different consideration than that of religions. Making poetry through myths is a way of 'thinking in visible and sensitive processes'. Wagner, in this weak defense (already the elements irreducibly hostile to the 'new' Nietzsche have come to light), would be alien to the religious significance of the myths to which he refers. Even in this would be similar to Aeschylus. «Aeschylus, like all poets, is irreligious». ⁵⁷

54 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 4.

55 Ivi.

56 Ivi, § 5.

57 KSA 8, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875*, 8 [6].

Nietzsche, in his impetus of veneration and under the perspective outlined by the theoretical works of the musician, considered Wagner to be similar to the tragic Greek poet. The broad category of 'education' develops in opposition to these dangers in art. Next to an immutable and tragic foundation of existence, there is the recognition of a field of mobility which, freed from metaphysical structures, can be shaped by an ordinating human activity, by actual power over things. Philosophy must establish «to what extent things are of an invariable nature and form, and then proceed with the most uncompromising courage to the *improvement of the part of the world that is recognized as mutable*»,⁵⁸ and it should not serve, as is the case in the 'present'/'actual' world, to adapt to the given reality. Education is defined as «first of all a doctrine of the *necessary*, and later a doctrine of what is *transformed* and *changeable*».⁵⁹ Nietzsche argues against the modern (German) practice of history that continues to be a «disguised Christian theodicean» and which is «an opium against every element of revolution and renewal» (modifying Feuerbach, cited by Wagner, who evoked the assertion of philosophy as a 'camouflaged theology'). Nietzsche seems to take Wagner's intentions and the philosophical character of his statements completely seriously. In particular, he values the *Ring of the Nibelungo* as an «*immense system of thought*» expressed in a «visible and sensitive form».⁶⁰ The musician was able to deduce the agonistic element from the philosophies: «Greater courage and decision, no narcotic juice». «Wagner is a philosopher above all where he is more resolute in action and heroic».⁶¹ But besides Wagner, who, mythically, «thinks in visible and sensitive facts, not concepts», Nietzsche thought of a new philosopher who «could possibly offer him something not at all corresponding» without images, which speaks only through ideas: in this way the same thing could be presented to the theoretic man who is the opposite of the populace. The idea is clear and emancipatory even though Nietzsche did not develop it. The philosopher tried to liberate Wagner himself from the perspective of a 'religion of art':

Für uns bedeutet Bayreuth die Morgen-Weihe am Tage des Kampfes. Man könnte uns nicht mehr Unrecht thun, als wenn man annähme, es sei uns um die

58 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 3.

59 KSA 8, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875*, 5 [64]

60 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 9.

61 Ivi, § 3.

Kunst allein zu thun: als ob sie wie ein Heil- und Betäubungsmittel zu gelten hätte, mit dem man alle übrigen elenden Zustände von sich abthun könnte.⁶²

Emphasis should be placed on this issue that materializes the distance from the 'metaphysics of the artist' which centered on the art of Greek tragedy as 'redemption' and, for the modern world, the art of the new tragedy: Wagnerian drama. Particularly important to understanding the direction of Nietzschean thinking is the limitation of the concept of populace. Recapturing Wagner's definition of the populace as «unity of those who suffer in common», Nietzsche restricts the scope of this affirmation and sees the reality in which he must have faith in the few who are able to understand the music of the master in its true meaning. Not even all 'friends' are able to understand: many are dangerous and tend to dogmatize Wagner. Nietzsche, after having characterized the early works of the musician as an attempt to engage the spectator with his approach to the 'traditional form' or the '*great work*' and the force of the 'effects', sees his mature musical dramas as intended for the few. «Some individuals felt the effect he wanted, and these were for Wagner, from now on, the public».

All of the *Untimely Meditations* lives by highlighting Wagner's energy, which challenges and prepares for the future the new art. His energy manifests itself in writing, precisely that of «*he who speaks before enemies*»,⁶³ although «as a *writer* Wagner shows the constraint of a valiant man whose right hand is fractured and so he fights with the left». His demonic communicability does not belong — as it will soon — to the decadent play-actor of modernity but to the 'dithyrambic playwright' who fights against the misery of the present. In *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* what is developed is the problem of 'communication' to which Wagner seems to give an answer: the modern crisis finds its expression, and partly its cause, in the 'monstrous illness' of language that, moving away from feeling, weighs on all human development. His strength is exhausted, sufferers can no longer understand each other about the most elementary afflictions of life: «die Sprache ist überall eine Gewalt für sich geworden, welche nun wie mit Gespensterarmen die Menschen fasst und schiebt, wohin sie eigentlich nicht wollen. [...] So nimmt die Menschheit zu allen ihren Leiden auch noch das Leiden der Convention hinzu, das heisst des Uebereinkommens in Worten und Handlungen ohne ein Uebereinkommen des Gefühls».⁶⁴

62 Ivi, § 4.

63 Ivi, § 10.

64 Ivi, § 5.

The words and concepts in which power has been reinforced dominate the intentions of the men who are pushed far away from their highest destination (the community). The music of the great German masters, in particular Beethoven and Wagner, is the enemy language of every convention and of every «artificial estrangement and incomprehensiveness between man and man». Music is, on the one hand, a return to nature (that is, to a postulated unity), on the other, a purification and transformation of nature through *love*. The problem of language and communication is central to all of Nietzsche's subsequent reflection, but in this work to the false (impossible) communication of the word, he still wants to counteract, as a remedy, Wagner's music and theater. The theme is faithful to the musician (even in the expressions that can be found again in *Oper und Drama*): The battle against the conventionality of modern language is only one aspect of the wider polemic against a society based on abstraction and 'fashion', which represses the necessary needs that correspond to the 'generic' essence of man: in the modern world the demon of *luxury*, a need without *real* need, dominates.

But already in the fragments from 1874, Nietzsche had undertaken the work of demythization; after the fall of the visionary unity of music and drama, the unity of the total work of art was then seen as the submission of irreducible artistic expressions to the legislative violence of an 'actor' nature that then results in 'theaterocracy'. The conjunction that the fragments establish between 'simplification' and tyranny shows how Nietzsche uses the Burckhardtian connotation of 'Caesarism' (modern Caesars as «*terribles simplifiedurs*») to define Wagner's affirmation as a power related to the false ordinal capacity of chaos. Using Burckhardt's own words, Nietzsche will not hesitate to compare the musician to the 'tyrant' described in *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*: «The tyrant does not allow other individualities to be affirmed, besides his own and that of his intimates». Being in all ways a 'modern man', with a dominant nature, without «moderation and limitations» who «only believes in himself», who aspires to a «legitimacy» that has no tradition, he compares Wagner in the critical/polemical paradox, to that very Renaissance world with which he did not want to have anything to do.⁶⁵

65 Nietzsche uses for Wagner the same words that Jacob Burckhardt reserves for the 'tyrant' as described in *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, where there is talk of 'false omnipotence' and the lack of a right of succession: «Where everything was illegitimate, not even a legitimate right of inheritance could be constituted». «Illegitimacy, surrounded by continual dangers, isolates the tyrant: the most honorable alliance he can establish is that with the higher intelligences [...]. With the

Again *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, with the underlying ambiguity of the apologia that characterizes this text, shows the irreducible contrast between Wagner who has faith in the German spirit and in the people of the Reformation and «the Renaissance culture that had hitherto enveloped we men modern in its light and in its shadow».⁶⁶

In a tormented and ambiguous text, like *Wagner in Bayreuth*, already full of antagonism towards Wagner (because of the need to 'guard against'), Nietzsche re-established the constellation of ideas linked to Wagnerian ideology (especially the young Wagner) from which he was removing himself and from which Wagner was clearly detached. Functionality to life, the active character of compassion, remained central, but now Nietzsche also saw the character of falsification which is implicit in the passage through the tragic myth and the visionary *Zauber* of the dramatic musician, as a more immediate way out offered in comparison with the agonizing complication of reality. The tragic man, who has experienced the healthy effect of the dithyrambic playwright, is no longer he who has a privileged contact with the vital foundation but he who, restored by the simplifying dream, returns to the daily struggle where in contrast to the necessity and uniqueness of the tragic dream, to the only path of redemption traveled by the hero, is the precariousness of the multiple paths of research, «strangely isolated fragments of those total experiences whose conscience frightens us». The danger is that «the dream seems to be almost more true than wakefulness, than reality». Wagner appears for the «demonic *transmissibility*» of his nature, as the dithyrambic playwright, the «great magician and the bearer of happiness among mortals». But as the fragments from the spring of '74 show, precisely in this communicative spell, which appears as redemptive compassion, Wagner's strong will of domination, based on the dreamlike dissolution of reality, is implicit. The outcome of implied escape as a risk in artistic 'simplification' is here clearly attributed to Wagner, whose purpose no longer appears to be an 'improvement on reality but «the annihilation or illusion» of it. Art becomes religion: the revolutionary resigns himself to it.⁶⁷ His art becomes 'actual'.

poet and the wise he feels he is on a new ground, and almost in possession of a new legitimacy». «The tyrants did not permit the existence and affirmation of personalities other than their own and that of their closest servants». See the German text here: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/die-kultur-der-renaissance-in-italien-4970/1>

66 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 10.

67 See KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1874*, 32 [44] and KSA 14, p. 92.

ANNALISA CAPUTO

THE UNTIMELY AS ‘*INTEMPESTIVUM TEMPUS*’.
A PHILOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION
AND A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION
OF THE NIETZSCHEAN ‘*UNZEITGEMÄSS*’

This essay will be articulated in four parts. In the first, with reference to the *status quaestionis* of the secondary literature on the subject (presented in the Introduction to this volume), we will investigate the reasons why Nietzschean criticism has paid substantially ‘little’ attention to the theme of the Untimely. In the second and third sections we will look at the etymological and historical origins of Nietzsche’s choice (invention?) of this concept. Finally, we will follow a trail that links the term *Unzeitgemäss* to the Latin ‘*intempestivus*’ and we will ask what scenarios this hypothesis (coupled with the others) presents, both on the level of translational yield and on that of scenarios of interpretation.

1. *The Untimely: decisive issue or of little interest?*

In the *Status quaestionis* of the Introduction (to which I refer) I have already pointed out that the term ‘*Unzeitgemäss*’, introduced in philosophical use by the Nietzschean essays (composed between 1873 and 1876), under the title of *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*,¹ has also been successful in contexts not specifically Nietzschean. My research starts from this fact, which appears seemingly incomprehensible: despite

1 I shall refer to Nietzsche’s original text by citing the appropriate volume (and aphorism or page) of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe [KSA]*, compiled under the general editorship of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari and based on the complete edition of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe [KGW]* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1967ff). References to the print editions of letters published by de Gruyter are cited as *KSB (Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe)* or *KGB (Briefe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe)*, in this case I will indicate: date, number and recipient of the letter. References to Nietzsche’s juvenilia appear in *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Hans Joachim Mette and Karl Schlechta, 9 vols. (Munich: C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934–40). I used also the precious *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe* – Digital version of the German critical edition of the complete works of Nietzsche edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari: Nietzsche Source). *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: KSA, I (UB)

this 'popularity', there is little interest on the part of critics in the theme of the Untimely. The *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* are 'neglected' texts and the question of the Untimely has not been thoroughly studied in any monographic work (and only partially in collective texts).

Therefore, we want to ask why the Untimely has been so little studied in Nietzsche.

I will try to give two possible lines of response:

1.1 Infrequent recurrence within Nietzschean texts

In truth, in view of the centrality of this issue and the success that, after Nietzsche, this term had, in effect the term '*Unzeitgemäss*' is not used very often even by Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche knows how to hide his most precious treasures well. Think of the theme of eternal return, which, as we know, appears very few times explicitly in his published writings. It is a bit the same thing for untimely. If we search the precious *Nietzsche Source* — the web site where all Nietzschean texts have been put online, accessible, free of charge, and you can search them by 'word' by entering a keyword — we can see the occurrences of *Unzeitgemäss* and related terms. They are really few. *Unzeit** = 138 occurrences. Exactly: *unzeitgemässe* = 37; *unzeitgemäßen* = 23; *unzeitgemäss* = 9; *Unzeitgemäß* = 9; *unzeitgem.* = 8; *Unzeit* = 6; *Unzeitgemäße* = 4; *Unzeitgemässheit* = 3; *unzeitige* = 3.

If from this number, you eliminate the repetitions and all the times where Nietzsche is simply quoting the 'title' of his *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (which are, therefore, not passages in which he is talking about the untimely), and if we eliminate a series of occurrences which are simply contextual, or in passing, the significant occurrences of the term '*unzeitgemäss*' in Nietzsche are very few.²

So, a first reason for little attention having been paid to the issue may lie in the infrequent use of the term by Nietzsche himself; he not only interrupts the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, but in a Fragment from 1885–86 (12, 2 [201]), seems to actually distance himself from the term '*Unzeitgemäss*'.³

2 I will not dwell on 'all' of these occurrences. Some of the essays contained in this volume will do so, at least in part. I refer the reader to them. I will quote, from time to time, the passages that seem most meaningful to me.

3 KSA, 12, *NF 1885–1886* (12, 2 [201]): «Wenn ich einstmals das Wort '*unzeitgemäß*' auf meine Bücher geschrieben habe, wie viel Jugend, Unerfahrenheit, Winkel drückt sich in diesem Worte aus! Heute begreife ich, daß mit dieser Art Klage Begeisterung und Unzufriedenheit ich eben damit zu den Modernsten der Modernen gehörte».

«If one day I wrote the word 'untimely' in my books, well, how much youth, inexperience, narrowness is expressed in this word!»⁴

Nietzsche himself seems to consider the term *Unzeitgemäss* to be untimely (in a negative sense), and thus he self-interprets it as dated and obsolete: almost a youthful mistake.⁵ But then, in those same years, he writes, «I am in this still today what I was before: 'untimely'».⁶ And he return to using the term in his letters⁷ or photos: it is interesting a photo which Nietzsche signs with the self-attributed '*Unzeitgemässe*' instead of

4 The fragment continues as follows: «Heute begreife ich, daß mit dieser Art Klage Begeisterung und Unzufriedenheit ich eben damit zu den Modernsten der Modernen gehörte». This is interesting because it shows that what Nietzsche seems to reject of his 'early' way of defining the Untimely is specifically its excessive link with modernity. R. Wissler, *Vom Weg-Charakter philosophischen Denkens: geschichtliche Kontexte und menschliche Kontakte* (Würzburg: Neumann, 1998), p. 94, specifically mentioning this passage, he notes that, although Nietzsche apparently rejected the term *Unzeitgemäss*, he then continued to use it, but with a different emphasis and meaning: «nicht als nicht mehr 'zeitgemäß' (...), sondern als schon damals noch nicht 'zeitgemäß'».

5 See also the letter to Elise Fincke, in which Nietzsche once again devalued the UBs as 'youthful writings': 212 – *Brief an Elise Fincke: 20/03/1882*: «Jene *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen* rechne ich als Jugendschriften: Da machte ich eine vorläufige Abrechnung mit dem was mich am meisten bis dahin im Leben gehemmt und gefördert hatte, da versuchte ich von Einigem loszukommen, dadurch dass ich es verunglimpfte oder verherrlichte wie es die Art der Jugend ist –: Ach die Dankbarkeit im Guten und Bösen hat mir immer viel zu schaffen gemacht!». See also the letter to Knortz, in which again Nietzsche, on the one hand, speaks of the UBs «in a certain sense as youthful writings», but then adds that they are of great importance for the understanding of his subsequent development [1050 – *Brief an Karl Knortz: 21/06/1888*: «Die '*Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen*', Jugendschriften in gewissem Sinne, verdienen die höchste Beachtung für meine Entwicklung»].

6 KSA, 11, NF 1885, 36[17]. By the way, reading this aphorism in its entirety, Nietzsche seems to associate the experience of the Untimely with that of the free spirit. An issue that would be interesting to look into. «Ich bin darin auch heute noch, was ich war – '*unzeitgemäß*'. Wir neuen Philosophen aber: wir beginnen nicht nur mit der Darstellung der thatsächlichen Rangordnung und Werth-Verschiedenheit der Menschen, sondern wir wollen auch gerade das Gegentheil einer Anähnlichung, einer Ausgleichung: wir lehren die Entfremdung in jedem Sinne, wir reißen Klüfte auf, wie es noch keine gegeben hat, wir wollen, daß der Mensch böser werde als er je war».

7 See e. g. 1886,680 – *Brief an Heinrich Köselitz: 27/03/1886*: «Im Zeitalter der 'Operette' und des choreographischen Poëms (heiße es nun Amore oder Parsifal) gehöre ich wahrscheinlich unter die '*Unzeitgemässen*'. Offenbar will man heute im Theater etwas ganz Andres als im vorigen Jahrhundert, – und 'die Oper' scheint mir überlebt. – Es fällt mir ein, daß die Wiener ein neues Operetten-Talent haben, Hrn». See also 1873, 326. *An G. Krug, 14/11/1873*.

his surname: Friedrich der *Unzeitgemässe*.⁸ And Nietzsche return to using the term 'untimely' in his last writings, not only to refer to himself, but also as the title of an important section of *Götzen-Dämmerung* (*Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen*).⁹

So, actually, Nietzsche never freed himself of the word and its meaning;¹⁰ obviously, he simply gave it new meaning over the years.¹¹

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- 8 See D. Brazeale, *Introduction* – F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditation*, ed. by D. Brazeale, engl. trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 1997), p. xxix: «There is a familiar and frequently reproduced photograph of Nietzsche, taken at Basel around 1874, which bears the inscription, 'Friedrich the Untimely One'. Nothing testifies more poignantly to his rapidly growing awareness of his own, distinctive 'task' than this presumptuous inscription; for when he wrote these books and signed this photograph Nietzsche was still an 'academic labourer', a Professor of Classical Philology».
- 9 KSA, 6. Nietzsche himself discusses this section in a letter to Köselitz. See 1888, 1105 – *Brief an Heinrich Köselitz: 12/09/1888*: «Der letzte Abschnitt heißt *Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen*; der erste Sprüche und Pfeile. Im Ganzen sehr heiter, trotz sehr strengem Urtheile (– es scheint mir, unter uns, daß ich erst in diesem Jahre deutsch – will sagen französisch – schreiben gelernt habe)». See also 1888, 1121 – *Brief an Constantin Georg Naumann: 18/09/1888*: «(– den Schluß bilden die *Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen*) Wir wollen dem Aufsatz den Titel geben: Was den Deutschen abgeht. Er hat jetzt, mit seiner Verlängerung, die ich Ihnen heute übersende, im Ganzen 7 kleine Abschnitte. Entsprechend muß auch in der Inhalts-Angabe dieser Titel eingetragen werden».
- 10 See Brazeale, p. VII: «The *UB* contain important, early discussions of such essential 'Nietzschean' subjects as the relationship between life, art and philosophy; the character and cultivation of the 'true self'; education (and its vital erotic dimension), and the difference between genuine wisdom and mere knowledge (or 'science'). Moreover, these four short works — especially the last two — always retained a special, deeply personal significance for their author, who considered them to be key documents for understanding his development as a philosopher».
- 11 N.J. Nix, in his Thesis (*Nietzsche's Historiography: History and Culture in the Second Untimely Meditation*, a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2008), points out — and I agree — how the critics of the *Untimely Meditations* can be divided by distinguishing them from those who emphasize the continuity between the Second Meditation (but we may say, in general, between the *Meditations*) and the rest of Nietzschean production and those that show the discontinuity between these youthful works and the rest of the production. They are for the 'continuity' between the *Untimely Meditations* and the 'late' Nietzsche (in particular as regards the relationship with the Greeks, on one hand, and modernity on the other), P. Berkowitz, 'Nietzsche's Ethics of History', *Review of Politics*, 56, 1, Winter (1994), reprinted in *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1995) and L. Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1993), pp. 281–298. For example, one who insists on discontinuity is J. Brober, 'Nietzsche's View of the Value of Historical Studies and Methods', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 65, 2, April 2004.

1.2 *The retrospective re-appropriation of the term Unzeitgemäss*

This is evident, for example, in Nietzsche's retrospective 're-appropriation' of the Untimely in *Ecce homo*, where what emerges in this presentation's attack is the polemic/agonistic posture of these «youthful» writings (a posture that the mature Nietzsche certainly does not deny).¹²

Die vier *Unzeitgemässen* sind durchaus kriegerisch. Sie beweisen, daß ich kein 'Hans der Träumer' war, daß es mir Vergnügen macht, den Degen zu ziehn – vielleicht auch, daß ich das Handgelenk gefährlich frei habe. Der *erste* Angriff (1873) galt der deutschen Bildung, auf die ich damals schon mit schonungsloser Verachtung hinabblickte. Ohne Sinn, ohne Substanz, ohne Ziel: eine bloße 'öffentliche Meinung'. [...] Die *zweite* Unzeitgemässe (1874) bringt das Gefährliche, das Leben-Annagende und -Vergiftende in unsrer Art des Wissenschafts-Betriebs ans Licht –: das Leben *krank* an diesem entmenschten Räderwerk und Mechanismus, an der 'Unpersönlichkeit' des Arbeiters, an der falschen Ökonomie der 'Teilung der Arbeit'. Der *Zweck* geht verloren, die Kultur – das Mittel, der moderne Wissenschafts-Betrieb, *barbarisiert*... In dieser Abhandlung wurde der 'historische Sinn', auf den dies Jahrhundert stolz ist, zum erstenmal als Krankheit erkannt, als typisches Zeichen des Verfalls. – In der *dritten* und *vierten* Unzeitgemässen werden, als Fingerzeige zu einem *höheren* Begriff der Kultur, zur Wiederherstellung des Begriffs 'Kultur', zwei Bilder der härtesten *Sebtsucht*, *Selbstzucht* dagegen aufgestellt, unzeitgemässe Typen *par excellence*, voll souveräner Verachtung gegen alles, was um sie herum 'Reich', 'Bildung', 'Christentum', 'Bismarck', 'Erfolg' hieß – Schopenhauer und Wagner *oder*; mit *einem* Wort, Nietzsche...¹³

So, the untimely man is a polemic agonist¹⁴ compared to the culture of the present and, as the end of the passage just quoted says, the Untimely is a way of being not so much typical of Schopenhauer and Wagner but of Nietzsche himself.¹⁵

12 See the essay by H. Siemens in this volume.

13 KSA, 6, *Ecce homo, Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe, Die Unzeitgemässen*, §1.

14 See also 1875, 412, *Brief an Hans von Bülow in London*, 02/09/1875: «Die nächsten 5 Jahre habe ich festgesetzt, um in ihnen die übrigen 10 Unzeitgemässen auszuarbeiten und um damit die Seele von all dem polemisch-leidenschaftlichen Wüste möglichst zu säubern». And 1874, 398, *Brief an Malwinda von Meysenbug*, 25/10/1874: «Denn es ist gewiss ein hohes Glück, mit seiner Aufgabe schrittweise vorwärts zu kommen – und jetzt habe ich drei von den 13 Betrachtungen fertig und die vierte spukt im Kopfe; wie wird mir zu Muthe sein, wenn ich erst alles Negative und Empörte, was in mir steckt, aus mir heraus gestellt habe, und doch darf ich hoffen, in 5 Jahren ungefähr diesem herrlichen Ziele nahe zu sein!».

15 As is again evident in the ending of *Ecce homo, Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe, Die Unzeitgemässen* (§3): «Uns große gerechnet nahm ich zwei berühmte und ganz und gar noch unfestgestellte Typen beim Schopf, wie man eine Gelegenheit beim Schopf nimmt, um etwas auszusprechen, um ein paar Formeln, Zeichen, Sprachmittel

On the Nietzschean re-appropriation (in the untimely sense) of his youthful considerations, it is also interesting to re-read two posthumous fragments from 1885, in some ways even clearer than *Ecce homo*. The first is the NF 41 [2], and it is entitled: *Neue unzeitgemässe Betrachtung*.

Was ich selber einstmals, in meinen 'jungen Jahren', über Schopenhauer und Richard Wagner schrieb und weniger schrieb als *malte* – vielleicht in einem allzuverwegenen übermüthigen überjugendlichen al fresco – das will ich am wenigsten heute auf 'wahr' und 'falsch' hin ins Einzelne prüfen. Gesetzt aber, ich hätte mich damals geirrt: mein Irrthum gereicht zum Mindesten weder den Genannten, noch mir selber zur Unehre! Es ist etwas, sich so zu irren; es ist auch etwas, gerade mich dergestalt zum Irrthume zu verführen. Auch war es mir in jedem Falle eine unschätzbare Wohlthat, damals als ich 'den Philosophen' und 'den Künstler' und gleichsam meinen eigenen 'kategorischen Imperativ' zu malen beschloß, – meine neuen Farben nicht ganz in's Unwirkliche hinein, sondern gleichsam auf vorgezeichnete Gestalten aufmalen zu können. Ohne daß ich es wußte, sprach ich nur für mich, ja im Grunde nur von mir.¹⁶

The other is the NF 35 [48], also from 1885, which begins in a similar way and then continues as follows:

Meine vier ersten U<nzeitgemäßen> B<etrachtungen>, denen ich nunmehr, nach zehn Jahren, eine fünfte, sechste und siebente zugeselle, waren Versuche, die Art Menschen an mich heranzulocken, welche zu mir gehören: also Angelruthen, ausgeworfen nach 'Meines-Gleichen'. Damals war ich jung genug, um mit ungeduldiger Hoffnung auf einen solchen Fischfang zu gehen. Heute – nach hundert Jahren, wenn ich die Zeit nach meinem Maaße messen darf! – bin ich immer noch nicht alt genug, um jede Hoffnung, jede Geduld verloren zu haben.¹⁷

mehr in der Hand zu haben. (...) Dergestalt hat sich Plato des Sokrates bedient, als einer Semiotik für Plato. – Jetzt, wo ich aus einiger Ferne auf jene Zustände zurückblicke, deren Zeugnis diese Schriften sind, möchte ich nicht verleugnen, daß sie im Grunde bloß von mir reden. Die Schrift 'Wagner in Bayreuth' ist eine Vision meiner Zukunft; dagegen ist in 'Schopenhauer als Erzieher' meine innerste Geschichte, mein *Werden* eingeschrieben. Vor allem mein *Gelöbnis!*...».

See also 1181 – *Brief an Heinrich Köselitz: 09/12/1888*: «Über die dritte und vierte *Unzeitgemässe* werden Sie in *Ecce homo* eine Entdeckung lesen, daß Ihnen die Haare zu Berge stehn – mir standen sie auch zu Berge. Beide reden nur von mir, *anticipando* ... Weder Wagner, noch Schopenhauer kamen psychologisch drin vor ... Ich habe beide Schriften erst seit 14 Tagen verstanden. – Zeichen und Wunder!».

16 KSA, 11, *NF 1885*, 41 [2], 2. There are those who hypothesize that this and the other fragment that we have indicated below was were attempts to write a preface to the re-issue of the *UBs*.

17 KSA, 11, *NF 1885*, 35 [48].

This clearly shows not only how Nietzsche also intended his subsequent works as 'untimely' to some extent, but also how he considered legitimate and important a retrospective re-appropriation of the 'meaning' of those early works, work that in his eyes, in their posture, could not be considered as only something chronologically 'youthful' (and belonging to the past), because as they were 'untimely' they exceeded and exceed the reasons of Nietzsche's own biographical-linear time. A Nietzsche who in the 80s does not feel so old as not to be able to attract young people (disciples, *Jünger*). He does not yet feel so old as to be no longer an untimely prophet.¹⁸ And he thinks he can still measure time on himself and on his measure (*die Zeit nach meinem Maaße messen*) and not on the linearity of the historical present.

From this point of view it is interesting to note that in Nietzsche's eyes the untimely (of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*) always remains in some way a promise: in the double sense (1) of a commitment (of coherence) that he has endeavored to maintain;¹⁹ and (2) a task so large and high that it is inevitably unattainable in the course of a lifetime. Maybe even in the course of many lives. Perhaps always and only a (utopian) promise for Humans. Which can only be promised.

*Brief an Unbekannt: August 1885: M<eine> Unzeitgemäßen bedeuten für mich Versprechungen: was sie für Andre sind, weiß ich nicht. Glauben Sie, daß ich längst nicht mehr leben würde, wenn ich diesen Versprechungen nur um Einen Schritt breit ausgewichen wäre! Vielleicht kommt noch ein Mensch, der entdeckt, daß von M<enschliches,> A<llzumenschliches> an ich nichts gethan habe als meine Versprechen erfüllen. Das, was ich freilich jetzt die Wahrheit nenne, ist etwas ganz Furchtbares und Abstoßendes: und ich habe viel Kunst nöthig, um schrittweise die M<enschen> zu einer völligen Umdrehung ihrer höchsten Werthschätzungen zu überreden».*²⁰

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- 18 Proof might also be the *NF 1885*, 37 [5]: «meine *Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen* richtete ich als junger Mensch an junge Menschen, welchen ich von meinen Erlebnissen und Gelöbnissen sprach, um sie in meine Labyrinth zu locken, – an deutsche Jünglinge: aber man überredet mich zu glauben, daß die deutschen Jünglinge ausgestorben seien»: youth as a style, as a model of labyrinthine attraction. And, on the other hand, Zarathustra, when he looks for his 'disciples' (*Jünger/ Jüngers* – youngs), does he not really seek literally 'young people'?
- 19 On this topic, see D. Breazeale, *Introduction to F. Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations* (pp. XXV ff.). On the idea that the Untimely is a 'promise', also see the retrospective self-interpretation of *Ecce homo* (with which I will conclude the essay).
- 20 617 – *Brief an Unbekannt: August 1885*. See also 1014. *Brief an Georg Brandes in Kopenhagen*, 10/04/1888: «Was Sie über *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* sagen, macht mir große Freude. Diese kleine Schrift dient mir als Erkennungszeichen: wem sie nichts Persönliches erzählt, der hat wahrscheinlich auch sonst nichts mit

But while admitting all this, the fact that we began with remains; that is, the fact that the theme of the untimely does not recur like other large themes and, statistically, the term is not used very much. And this may have favored the lack of attention and/or disinterest on the part of the critics.

A second reason for the lack of attention in the secondary literature to the topic of the untimely can be found in the editorial misfortune of these writings.

1.3 Editorial and translation misfortune

Nietzsche republished the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* in 1886, but exceptionally without a retrospective preface, leaving them as they were.²¹

We all know the complicated events related to the edition of the Nietzschean texts (and their Nazification and de-Nazification). As we also know how 'lucky' we are (not only in Italy) to have the work of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, who edited the critical edition of the works of Nietzsche, starting in the 1960s.²² And certainly also in Italy we were doubly lucky. Because this critical edition set a precedent and so we quickly learned to appreciate these works and to call them 'Inattuali': although Colli, for example, already considered them «a work of transition and training», «missing» a real «style», and in the eyes of Nietzsche himself, still too 'attuali' ('timely', modern).²³

What we want to point out, however, is the fact that in Italian, rendering *Unzeitgemäss* as 'inattuale' ('in-actual') literally highlights, first of all, its opposition to contemporaneity (modernity, 'actuality'). The rendering of the term *Unzeitgemäss* does not lean in this direction in all languages (and translations) however, nor is it always clear and unambiguous.

mir zu thun. Im Grunde steht das Schema darin, nach dem ich bisher gelebt habe: sie ist ein strenges Versprechen».

- 21 The above-mentioned Breazeale focuses on this 'strangeness', also pointing out how criticism is divided on this. There are those who think it is a sign of Nietzsche's lack of interest in these texts; there are those who, instead (considering that the same happens with Zarathustra), believe that it is a sign that for Nietzsche the UBs did not need any further comment. On this issue, see 740. *An Ernst Wilhelm Fritsch in Leipzig – Sils-Maria, Oberengadin – Schweiz. 29 Aug. <bis 1. September> 86*, a letter in which Nietzsche speaks of the 'premise' pages of his texts in the republications.
- 22 See G. Campioni, *Leggere Nietzsche. Alle origini dell'edizione Colli-Montinari* (Pisa: ETS, 1992) and S. Barbera, P. D'Iorio, J. Ulbricht ed. by, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Rezeption und Kultus* (Pisa: ETS, 2004).
- 23 See G. Colli, *Scritti su Nietzsche* (Milan: Adelphi, 1980), p. 20. On the issue of the 'style' in the UBs, see R.J. Ackermann, *Nietzsche: A Frenzied Look* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990).

In France, since 1907 there has been the French edition by H. Albert, entitled *Considérations inactuelles*.²⁴ However, soon there was also the proposal by M. Andler, who in his text *Vie de Nietzsche*, indicates the Nietzschean writings with the expression

Considérations intempestives and interprets the term *Unzeitgemässe/intempestives* in the sense of something that wants to take the spirit of the present back in time to transvaluate it.²⁵

Since then, somehow, critics in France seem to be divided on the version/translation of '*Unzeitgemäss*','²⁶ and there is a 20th century current

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- 24 *Considérations inactuelles*, Tome I, traduit par H. Albert (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1907). Henri Abert writes: «Nietzsche emploie pour la première fois l'expression 'inactuel' dans une lettre qu'il écrivit, au cours de l'été, en 1869. Il y décrit Wagner (...) Mais c'est seulement quand Nietzsche revint de Bayreuth, au commencement de mai 1873, profondément chagriné et indigné par l'indifférence des Allemands à l'égard de l'art wagnérien et de l'entreprise de Bayreuth, que ce mot devint une sorte d'enseigne déployée. Le philosophe voulut soulager son cœur et manifester son indignation en écrivant les *Considérations inactuelles*. (...) En mars 1874, après l'apparition de la seconde *Considération inactuelle*, Nietzsche écrivit: 'Je sais bien que mes effusions sont celles d'un dilettante qui manque quelque peu de maturité, mais, pour moi, il importe avant tout d'amener au jour tout ce qui a un caractère polémique et négatif. Je veux commencer par parcourir toute l'échelle de mes inimitiés, de haut en bas, et d'une façon assez excessive pour que la voûte en retentisse. Plus tard, dans cinq ans, je jetterai loin de moi toute polémique et je songerai à une *bonne œuvre*. Aujourd'hui j'ai la poitrine trop oppressée par la répugnance et l'affliction. Il faut que cela sorte, bon gré, mal gré; pourvu que cela soit définitif. J'ai encore à chanter onze de ces mélodies'. (...) Nietzsche semble avoir songé à changer le titre de cette *Considération*; il la désigne du moins, dans la liste de ses ouvrages, publiée sur la couverture de la *Généalogie de la morale*, en 1877, de la façon suivante: *David Strauss et autres philistins*. Le terme 'philistin de la culture', créé par le philosophe, était devenu d'un usage si courant qu'il était généralement considéré comme le mot type de l'ouvrage, ce que Nietzsche eût peut-être voulu indiquer dans le titre même (...). La première édition de la *Généalogie de la morale* (1887) indique, sur sa couverture, la deuxième *Considération inactuelle* sous la forme suivante: *Nous autres historiens. Contribution à la pathogénie de l'âme moderne*».
- 25 Cfr. M. Andler, *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée* [1920 ff.] (Paris: Gallimard, 1958). It is also interesting to see how Andler interpreted the meaning of the word Untimely, chosen, in his view, by Nietzsche to indicate the desire to «take back in time the public spirit of the present and to attempt for the first time what he then called the transvaluation of all values» (p. 498).
- 26 There are, in fact, translations that have preferred the translation '*intempestives*'; remember that of Geneviève Bianquis, *Considérations intempestives, III-IV* (Paris: Aubier, 1954). Even today, single editions of the single UBs make this choice. An interesting fact, for example, is that in one of the re-editions of the UBs (*Considérations inactuelles: Nouvelle édition augmentée*, Arvensa ed, 2015) there is a note appended to the text by H. Albert who unexpectedly chooses the translation '*intempestives*', pp. 144-45.

(more theoretical than historical-philological)²⁷ that deliberately chooses to render *Unzeitgemäss* as 'intempestif' rather than with 'inactuel' — think, for example, of Gilles Deleuze²⁸ or, more recently, Philippe Sollers.²⁹

27 And, for this reason, it seems even more interesting to emphasize how in a classicist context M. Dubuisson, *La vie quotidienne à Rome. Considérations intempestives* (Liège: Pomœrium, 2000), in an essay (that is not on Nietzsche but which evokes him for the term *Unzeitgemäss* right at the beginning of the article), writes: «ses *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, des 'considérations' non pas 'inactuelles', comme on a parfois traduit à tort, mais bien 'inopportunes' ou mieux 'intempestives', c'est-à-dire, d'après l'Académie, 'qui ne sont pas faites à propos ou qu'il n'est pas à propos de faire pour le moment'...»

28 G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1962): «la philosophie, toujours intempestive, intempestive à chaque époque». On Nietzsche and Deleuze see F. Massari Luceri, 'Il pensiero inattuale', *Logoi*, 7 (2017), 160–166 and cfr. E. Grossman – P. Marrati, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une pensée intempestive? (De Deleuze à Lynch)', *Rue Descartes*, 1, 59 (2008), 2–5 (rue-descartes-2008-1-page-2.htm), essay/presentation in which we find interesting indications on what can be understood by inactual/untimely (which will be useful later) that it is a good idea to include: «'Intempestif': du latin *intempestivus*, hors de saison; qui est fait à contretemps, se produit mal à propos ou apparaît comme *inconvenant* (déplacé, inopportun, malvenu). Tous ces termes, justement, *conviennent* à Deleuze et à sa philosophie. Ce désajointement, il le revendiquait. En ce sens, il n'y a *pas d'actualité* de Deleuze, pas d'application immédiatement possible de sa philosophie y compris et surtout dans les champs qu'il a si souvent explorés (...). Ce qui signifie aussi, et ce n'est pas le moindre paradoxe auquel il nous invite, que des usages singuliers de sa pensée peuvent et doivent constamment être proposés, réinventés. 'Intempestif' au sens de l'*unzeitgemäss* nietzschéen ('contre son temps', 'inactuel'), autrement dit l'impératif d'être à contretemps, décalé, pour ouvrir un avenir à la pensée. C'est cette idée que reprend Deleuze dans son *Nietzsche et la philosophie*: 'C'est pourquoi la philosophie a, avec le temps, un rapport essentiel: toujours contre son temps, critique du monde actuel, le philosophe forme des concepts qui ne sont ni éternels ni historiques, mais intempestifs et inactuels. [...] Et dans l'intempestif, il y a des vérités plus durables que les vérités historiques et éternelles réunies: les vérités du temps à venir. Penser activement, c'est 'agir d'une façon inactuelle (*unzeitgemäss*), donc contre le temps, et par là même sur le temps, en faveur (je l'espère) d'un temps à venir' (Nietzsche, *Considérations inactuelles*). L'intempestif, soulignait déjà *Différence et Répétition*, est plus profond que le temps et l'éternité et, par là, la philosophie ne doit être ni philosophie de l'histoire, ni philosophie de l'éternel. Alors le mot dérive et se décline: tempête, impétueux, incessante variation bergsonienne, nouvelle dimension du temps et du sujet de l'Histoire, élément singulier de trouble, dit Deleuze. Les maîtres selon Nietzsche, ce sont les *Intempestifs*, rappelle-t-il, 'ceux qui créent, et qui détruisent pour créer, pas pour conserver. Nietzsche dit que, sous les gros événements bruyants, il y a les petits événements silencieux, qui sont comme la formation de nouveaux mondes; là encore c'est la présence du poétique sous l'historique' (*L'éclat de rire de Nietzsche*, 1967)».

29 P. Sollers, in a dialogue with F. Joignot on the topic of Untimely in Nietzsche, chooses the French term *intempestif*. And beyond the linguistic choice, what is striking is the interpretation of the question, set in terms of an '*actualité inactuelle*'. In short:

The translation of *Unzeitgemäss* as 'intempestiv*' can also be found in Spanish: *Consideraciones Intempestivas*³⁰ and in Portuguese *Considerações Intempestivas* (although in Portuguese they also use *Considerações Extemporâneas*).³¹

So, we begin to see that the term 'inattuale' is very connotative in Italian, less so in other languages, in which the dimension of '*intempestivum*' emerges, which we shall return to; in any case it is clearly already an expression from the Latin (*in/tempestivum*, that is, something that contains a *non-tempus*), literally closer to the German *un-zeit-gemäß*.

If we look at the English context, on the one hand the issue is clearer, while on the other it is even more complex. As Duncan Large notes in *A Companion to F. Nietzsche: Life and Works*, «the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* have attracted the attentions of translators less often than most of other books (...).³² Walter Kaufmann, the doyen of postwar American Nietzsche translators, never got round to translating them» and even suggested translating them after all the other texts.³³ And «they are omitted from the canon established by Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen Higgins in their *Reading Nietzsche*,³⁴ while the term 'untimeliness' has routinely been passed over in Nietzsche dictionaries». ³⁵ Again Large points out that the German term has been «quite resistant to English translation», so much so that the four different complete translations of Nietzsche's

according to Sollers, Nietzsche's goal is precisely that (current) of understanding his own time; and the inactual/untimely posture in reality tends toward this: distancing oneself from the flow of information about the present that prevents us from fully understanding it. «Nous sommes pris dans un vertige d'actualité (...) On retrouve bien là ce que Nietzsche a pressenti, qu'il a vécu comme vertige, cette question abyssale qu'il a posée... 'Est-ce que notre époque pense encore ?'»: F. Joignot, 'Nietzsche l'intempestif toujours d'actualité. Un entretien avec Philippe Sollers', *Le Monde*, 30 juin 2011 (<http://fredericjoignot.blog.lemonde.fr/2011/06/30/366/>).

30 Trans. by Andrés Sánchez Pascual (Madrid: Alianza, 1988).

31 Trans. by Lemos de Azevedo (Lisbon: Editorial Presença – Martins Fontes, 1976). Instead, the translation '*Considerações Extemporâneas*' is in *Obras incompletas* (seleção de textos de Gérard Lebrun), trans. by Rubens (São Paulo: Rodrigues Torres Filho, Editora Nova Cultural, 1999).

32 D. Large, *Untimely Meditations*, in P. Bishop (ed. by), *A Companion to Friedrich Nietzsche. Life and Works* (Rochester/New York: Camden House, 2012), p. 86.

33 W. Kaufman, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 488.

34 Robert C. Solomon – Kathleen M. Higgins (ed. by), *Reading Nietzsche* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

35 Large, p. 86 quotes P.R. Sedgwick, *Nietzsche: the Key Concepts* (London-New York: Routledge, 2009); and C. Niemeier (ed. by), *Nietzsche-Lexikon* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009).

works have different titles.³⁶ And beyond Large, we can notice that other translations (albeit less officially) have joined these. We have, then:

- *Untimely Meditations*³⁷
- *Unfashionable Observations*³⁸

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- 36 Large, p. 87: «It could perhaps be translated most straightforwardly as 'not in accordance with one's time'. In the course of these essays Nietzsche gives the distinct impression that, to speak with Shakespeare's Hamlet (as he often does), his time is out of joint, with the corollary that it is incumbent on him to think and write in an oppositional, 'untimely' fashion at odds with the *Zeitgeist*». See also R.T. Gray, *Translator's Afterword: Friedrich Nietzsche, Unfashionable Observations I–IV*, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche in 20 Volumes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 396: «the adjective *unzeitgemäss* in Nietzsche's title, whose meaning can be broadly circumscribed in English by the phrase 'out of keeping with the tendencies of the present time', alludes to the authors' critical stance vis-à-vis this new developments». And J. Tambling, *Becoming Posthumous: Life and Death in Literary and Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Pr., 2001), p. 93: «what is *zeitgemässe* is appropriate to the time, up to date, in fashion, or modern. What is untimely can never fit in with its time, it will never be opportune; if it is not modern, it may be postmodern. Or posthumous».
- 37 It is the most classic translation, which we find from the time of the already mentioned Kaufman to the latest version by R.J. Hollingdale: F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1997). Breazeale writes (p. xlv): «'Die Zeit' is a noun meaning both 'time' and 'the time' (as in 'the times', 'the age' or 'the era'); '*gemaess*' is either an adjective that means 'appropriate' or 'fitting', or a preposition that means 'in accordance with' or 'in compliance with'. Accordingly, something is '*zeitgemass*' when it is 'timely', not in the sense of being 'punctual' or 'opportune', but rather in the sense of being 'appropriate to the time' or, more figuratively, 'up to date', 'in fashion' or 'modern'». There are those who have kept the adjective 'untimely', but changed the English noun to render *Betrachtung* (the translation of which should be discussed separately); so, we also have the *Untimely Considerations* (Werner J. Dannhauer e C. Zuckert): see R.J. Hollingdale, p. xlv.
- 38 *Unfashionable Observations*, ed. and trans. by R.T. Gray, *The Complete Works of F. Nietzsche*, vol. 2 (Stanford – CA: Stanford UP, 1998). Gray writes in his *Afterword*: «Because it is impossible to render the myriad implications and polyvalencies of this title in English, it is easy for this cultural-critical focus to be obscured» (p. 395). Gray continues by showing how the noun *Betrachtung* should be linked to *betrachten* (and thus *observe*, hence the possible translation with *Observations*); but the term is also traditionally linked to reflection, meditation. It is well-known that Walter Kaufmann thinks here of a confrontation with Descartes' *Meditations*, while Gray does not agree; and, hence, the alternate translation proposal. In his opinion, this is a true gaze on the actual, on the socio-political reality as well, and, therefore, on the condition of German culture and education after the victory over France in 1871; and is a criticism of the posture (arrogant) assumed by Germany. Here Untimely means, notes Gray, unpopular; awareness of belonging to a minority (pp. 396–97). So: «it is apt to translate the word *unzeitgemäss* as 'unfashionable'; if

- *Unmodern Observations*³⁹
- *Thoughts Out of Season*⁴⁰
- *Unconventional Observations*⁴¹
- *Inopportune Speculations, o Essay in Sham-Smashing*⁴²

Here a number of observations are possible. The first confirms the question with which we started: in the Anglo-American area even more than

fashion is taken to designate those things that achieve popular appeal and dominate public taste in any particular epoch, the nit is precisely an unfashionable crusade against these fashions that fueled Nietzsche's polemical fire. This opposition to all that is fashionable and popular is the lowest common denominator of these essays (...). This rendering of *unzeitgemäß* as 'unfashionable' can draw further support, moreover, from the fact that the concept of fashionableness itself figures centrally in Nietzsche's critique of contemporary life» (p. 398)

- 39 Trans. by W. Arrowsmith (Yale Univ. Press: New Aver and London, 1990). He writes in his *Foreword* (pp. xi–xx): «Nietzsche chose his tides with scrupulous care, and these programmatic essays untranslatably entitled *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* are no exception. *Unzeitgemässe* because they contain an explicit disavowal of the *Zeit*, the age, above all the present, *now*. They are not untimely, which means inopportune, nor unseasonable, nor out of season, which means little more than untimely. *Unfashionable*, *uncontemporary*, indeed defiantly *unmodern*, they are not therefore reactionary or merely antimodern. They aim at transcending the present, at superseding conventional notions of past, present, and future».
- 40 Trans. by A.M. Ludovici and A. Collins, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London: Foulis Press, 1909).
- 41 W.H. Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Pr., 1995), p. 31: «*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* is one of the most difficult of Nietzsche's book titles to render into English. I have used my own translation here. (...) My personal favorite is Mencken's '*Inopportune Speculations*' or more clearly '*Essays in Sham-Smashing*' (Mencken 1908, pp. 29–30)». And also: «I have rejected 'untimely' as translitterally correct but failing to capture the original German meaning. '*Zeit*' is a tremendously pregnant word which conveys in one instant the entire essence of 'The Times'. In English, the full force of the proactive word '*Unzeitgemässe*' might best be rendered as 'against the times'. The aggressive stance (...) is completely lost in the English 'untimely', which means 'inopportune' or 'unseasonable'. Because of this, I think Arrowsmith was going in the right direction with his 'unmodern', although I find this translation both confusing and inaccurate: is it premodern, postmodern, antimodern, or something else entirely? There is no perfect English equivalent for *Unzeitgemässe*, but the full flavor and meaning of the word is better conveyed into English by 'inconventional' or 'unfashionable' (...)».
- 42 H.L. Mencken, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* [1908] (Boston: Luce and Company, 1913), pp. 29–30: «he planned a series of twenty four pamphlets and decided to call them '*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, which may be translated as '*Inopportune Speculations*', or more clearly, '*Essays in Sham-Smashing*'. In looking about for a head to smash in essay number one, his eye, naturally enough, alighted upon that of David Strauss, the favorite philosopher and fashionable iconoclast of the day».

in other historical-linguistic areas, the terminological/lexical confusion and the multiplicity of translations go hand in hand with the criticism's lack of interest in these Nietzschean works.

On the other hand, a second observation and question, separate from the considerations with which we started, inevitably pushes us to ask ourselves which of these multiple translations is the most appropriate; this is especially true for English, but, if you will, also for Italian.

We know that even in Italian there are other translation possibilities, more similar to those made by the Spanish, Portuguese and some French schools, i.e. '*Considerazioni intempestive*'. This was, for example, the very old choice of Pellegrini, for the translation in the 1944 (Bompiani editore);⁴³ and it is today, for example, the choice of Giorgio Agamben in *Che cos'è il contemporaneo*?⁴⁴

This scenario, starting right from what has been said (and even to try to understand what is at stake), pushes us *back to the German sense of the term*. In fact, it is evident that the more we understand why Nietzsche chose and used it, the more contemplated the translative choice can be. Always considering that every translation is a betrayal and that every choice can only be limited/limiting and does not correspond to the richness of the original. Indeed, all the different proposals 'say' something to us about the way in which Nietzsche intended the untimely; they say it and they hide it, obviously, because every translation is an interpretation.

So we come to the second section of our essay. What does *Unzeitgemäss* mean in German and what did Nietzsche mean when he used and/or coined this term?

43 Transl. by A. Pellegrini (Milan: Bompiani, 1944). See also F. Orestano, *Le idee fondamentali di Federico Nietzsche nel loro progressivo svolgimento* (Palermo: A Reber, 1903): «la traduzione da altri fatta della parola con 'importuno' o 'inopportuno' è da ritenersi, a mio credere, erronea. Nietzsche voleva contrapporre le sue idee a quelle correnti come premature, perché troppo progredite, e quindi come 'non consentanee al tempo, all'epoca' e ciò significa appunto la parola '*unzeitgemäss*' anche etimologicamente considerata. (...) Traduce bene il francese *inactuelles*» (p. 120).

44 G. Agamben, *Che cos'è il Contemporaneo* (Rome: Ed. Nottetempo, 2008). Clearly, Agamben's choice is in connection with the French current already evoked that, in the specific case, dates back to R. Barthes. See p. 8: «Una prima, provvisoria, indicazione per orientare la nostra ricerca ci viene da Nietzsche. In un appunto dei suoi corsi al Collège de France, Roland Barthes la compendia in questo modo: 'Il contemporaneo è l'intempestivo'».

2. Philological questions: the meaning and the origin of the term *Unzeitgemäss* in Nietzsche

The internal breakdown of the German term is quite clear in itself. *Un/zeit/gemäß*. *Un-* (which in German means the 'not', like the Greek alpha privative); *Zeit* (the time at the center); *gemäß* (appropriate, suitable, in agreement with; a term related to measuring (*messen*) and measure (*das Maß*)).⁴⁵

But what did the term mean at the time of Nietzsche?

2.1 *The German term at the time of Nietzsche*

For a basic and general orientation, it is useful to start with the Dictionary of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*),⁴⁶ which is the classic German etymological dictionary.

Here, a first discovery is interesting. In fact, under the entry *unzeitgemäss* (*nicht zeitgemäss*), first of all, there are some meanings of the term, including:

- (a) something inappropriate and not fit for the circumstances (of time)
[*den (zeit)umständen nicht angemessen, unangebracht adv.*]
- (b) in particular (b) from the political point of view, and then
- (c) something anachronistic,
- (d) which is lagging behind with regards to culture and society
[*Rückständig in Cultur und Civilisation*].

Then, the Grimm cites the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and points out that, in this case, the term is used «*als 'subjectiver Neologismus'*

45 See Breazeale, p. xlv: «'Die 'Zeit' is a noun meaning both 'time' and 'the time' (as in 'the times', 'the age' or 'the era'); 'gemäß' is either an adjective that means 'appropriate' or 'fitting', or a preposition that means 'in accordance with' or 'in compliance with'. Accordingly, something is 'zeitgemäss' when it is 'timely', not in the sense of being 'punctual' or 'opportune', but rather in the sense of being 'appropriate to the time' or, more figuratively, 'up to date', 'in fashion' or 'modern'». See also R. Wisser, *Vom Weg-Charakter philosophischen Denkens: geschichtliche Kontexte und menschliche Kontakte* (Würzburg: Neumann, 1998), in particular pp. 93 ff. (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen über die Zeit?*). In Nietzsche, according to Wisser, the UBs stand against what is *Zeitgemässen* and therefore the emphasis is on the 'Un-'. Wisser also points out that paradoxically, those who live as contemporaries have no time; even Zarathustra's contemporaries (*Zeitgenosse*) have no time, neither for themselves nor for Zarathustra. While the untimely person is the one who has and gives himself time.

46 *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, 16 Bde. in 32 Teilbänden, Leipzig 1854–1961: <http://dwb.uni-trier.de/de/>

Nietzsches, als Schlagwort, Forderung eines entschiedenen Widerspruchs gegen die Tyrannei des 'Zeitgemäßen'» (as a Nietzschean 'subjective neologism', as a keyword, necessary for a strong opposition to the tyranny of 'zeitgemäß') as supported — according to Grimm — by R.M. Meyer in *Nietzsche Wort-Bildungen* (1914).⁴⁷

Here we must first make a hermeneutic-textual stop, and then take a second critical-theoretical break.

Textual clarification. Is it really true that *unzeitgemäß* is a neologism attributable to Nietzsche, as Meyer says and Grimm repeats? Yes and no. It is obviously true, if you put the emphasis on the 'subjective' ('*subjectiver Neologismus*'); it is not true if you put the emphasis on the neologism. That is, the term is not a Nietzschean coinage, while the special meaning that Nietzsche gives it is 'new' and, hence, his philosophical paternity: that is, it was he who used it as a key concept of philosophy, therefore, gave it philosophical dignity.

Theoretical observation. In effect, Nietzsche in some way absorbs and gives new meaning to the socio-political nuance of the term *unzeitgemäß* highlighted in Grimm. In fact, he emphasizes the *un* in *unzeitgemäß* (Meyer rightly says that it is one of Nietzsche's many words-of-denial) and, in doing so, Nietzsche distances himself from (his) present time, culture, society, from the politics of his time. But this, in Nietzsche's view, does not mean — as Grimm's 'classic' nuance seems to suggest — being anachronistic or being left behind. Nietzschean *unzeitgemäß* is not 'untimely' in the sense of 'out of date' or 'late'. Nor is it the untimely of those who are disinterested in what is 'present'. On the contrary.⁴⁸ This is

47 See R.M. Meyer, 'Nietzsche Wort-Bildungen', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Wortforschung*, 15 (1914), 98–146. If you read the text directly, you see how Meyer places the term *Unzeitgemäß* in the second section of his work, that of neologisms. After showing a first neologism ('philistine of culture'), Meyer points out how in this second case Nietzsche himself characterizes the birth of this other neologism in a 'psychological' sense. He cites the NF of 1885–1886 (12, 2 [201]), which we have quoted. Then Meyer writes: «Es ist neu als Schlagwort: als Forderung eines entschiedenen Widerspruchs gegen die Tyrannei des 'Zeitgemäßen'. Es gehört in die große Gruppe von Nietzsches 'Verneinungsworten'; und er hat es mit vollem Recht als ein Symptom seines eigenen Wesens angesehen, daß er es zum Schlagworte machte. Aber auch da steht er in historischem Zusammenhang: es braucht nur an Schopenhauers wilde Empörung über 'Jetztzeit' erinnert zu werden (...)».

48 This is strongly claimed by Nietzsche in *Ecce homo* [KSA, 6], when, speaking of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (§1) Nietzsche writes: «Mit einiger Neutralität in die Hand genommen, sieht die 'Geburt der Tragödie' sehr *unzeitgemäß* aus: man

demonstrated very well by a passage in the *Preface to Second Untimely Meditation*, which should be reclaimed in this context.

This meditation is untimely (*unzeitgemäss*), because I am here attempting to look afresh at something of which our time (*die Zeit*) is rightly proud — its cultivation of history as being injurious to it, a defect and deficiency in it (*die Zeit*). (...) I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time (*in unserer Zeit*), if they were not untimely (*unzeitgemäss*): — that is to say, acting counter to our time (*gegen die Zeit*), and thereby acting on our time (*auf die Zeit*) and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come. (*zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit*).⁴⁹

It is clear that this is not only a description of *Unzeitgemäss*, but a strong reference to the etymological root of the term: *die Zeit*. A root that Nietzsche ‘articulates’ through various prepositions, because only in this dis/articulation and re/articulation it is possible (according to Nietzsche) also to dis/re-articulate the ‘current’ meaning of the present, in order to re-create a different vision: antichronological and antihistoricist.

2.2 *The term unzeitgemäss in Nietzsche's texts*

In this quote Nietzsche ‘plays’ with articulating the prepositions ‘around’ time: and, articulating it, he upsets it. From the present time, linear, present-past-future, which crushes us (like the *Es war* boulder in Zarathustra), to a time that can be deconstructed and rethought in an untimely way: namely:

- *in unserer Zeit*, ‘in our age’ (not in an abstractly metaphysical or romantic eternity); and this is the premise for untimeliness; it is never disconnected from the actual.
- But also: ‘in opposition to the age’ (*gegen die Zeit*), against time, as it is commonly understood, lived and, most of all, as it ordinarily ‘behaves’ (because for Nietzsche the untimely is never only a way of thinking, but, first and foremost, a different way of behaving).
- And thus ‘on the age’ (*auf die Zeit*): which is less common expression in German and is used only six times in Nietzsche, two in this *Second*

würde sich nicht träumen lassen, dass sie unter den Donnern der Schlacht bei Wörth begonnen wurde. Ich habe diese Probleme vor den Mauern von Metz, in kalten September-Nächten, mitten im Dienste der Krankenpflege, durchgedacht; man könnte eher schon glauben, dass die Schrift fünfzig Jahre älter sei.

49 Transl. engl. by R.J. Hollingdale, p. 60.

Untimely Meditation,⁵⁰ in general it is used to indicate precisely the possibility of working on time, to create *an effect*, to exert *an action* on time, a possible *change*. We are in time, but we do not take it as it is, we take it 'on', on us... to change it.

- And we work this way 'for the benefit of a coming time' (*zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit*) – and this expression is a *hapax* in Nietzsche; it appears only here. We are in favor of a 'coming time'. We are 'future'. Looking ahead.

Then: *Un/zeit/gemäß* is a time not *gemäß*, related to measure (*das Maß*) of 'current' time: not measured by, not suited to, not in accordance with,

50 Using Nietzsche Source, you can see where Nietzsche uses this expression:

- *Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben: § 10*: «Diese Zweifler *auf die Zeit*, die alles an's Licht bringt, verweisend, wende ich mich zum Schluss an jene Gesellschaft der Hoffenden, um ihnen den Gang und Verlauf ihrer Heilung, ihrer Errettung von der historischen Krankheit und damit ihre eigne Geschichte bis zu dem Zeitpunkt durch ein Gleichniß zu erzählen, wo sie wieder gesund genug sein werden, von Neuem Historie zu treiben und sich der Vergangenheit unter der Herrschaft des Lebens, in jenem dreifachen Sinne, nämlich monumental oder antiquarisch oder kritisch, zu bedienen».
- 1874, 404 – *Brief an Carl von Gersdorff: 16/11/1874*: «Seufzen behalte ich mir vor, *auf die Zeit*, wo ich dazu Zeit haben werde. Heute ist des muthigen Freundes und Bruders Overbeck Geburtstag; er ist 37 Jahre geworden. – Wie glücklich waren wir alle zusammen bei Deinem Hiersein!».
- KSA, 8, *NF-1875, 12[26]* – *Nachgelassene Fragmente Sommer–Ende September 1875*: «(...) ja ich glaube sogar, erst dadurch, daß man in dem Künstler gerade etwas Überzeitliches verehrt, wird man sich gegen das Gefährliche, was in seiner direkten Wirkung *auf die Zeit* liegt, einigermaßen schützen können. Ich will in diesem Zusammenhange darauf aufmerksam machen, daß es überaus nahe liegt und deshalb gefährlich ist, Wagner nicht als Künstler zu verstehen oder anders ausgedrückt: aus seinen Kunstwerken bestimmte Winke über die Gestaltung des Lebens entnehmen zu wollen».
- KSA, 9, *NF-1881, 11[263]* – *Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr–Herbst 1881*: «Wichtig ist jedenfalls, daß die anreizende Kraft eines Menschen nach seinem Tode übrig bleiben kann, durch seine Werke oder durch die Fabel, die von seinem Leben sich bildet: darauf sollen die denken, welche *auf die Zeit* keinen 'Reiz' üben. Zuletzt: wir irren ebenso über die Dinge, weil wir sie nach den Wirkungen in uns beurtheilen: wie verschieden scheint uns Blau und Roth, und es handelt sich um etwas mehr oder weniger Länge des Nerven!
- *NF-1881, 11[297]* – *Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr–Herbst 1881*: «So bereitest du dich *auf die Zeit* vor, wo du sprechen muß! Vielleicht daß du dich dann des Sprechens schämst, wie du dich mitunter des Schreibens geschämt hast, daß es noch nöthig ist, sich zu interpretiren, daß Handlungen und Nicht-Handlungen nicht genügen, dich mitzutheilen».

not crushed by the way of living our relationship with the present, with society.

Far from being nostalgically turned to the past or perhaps arriving late (almost like an owl of Minerva), exactly the opposite, the untimely man is rooted in his own time and draws strength from the past to distance himself from everything about the present that must be criticized, in favor of a coming time (*zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit*).⁵¹

51 Here we should open a new long footnote on the history of criticism and show how literature has always divided itself between those who considered Nietzsche (and hence his inactual posture) to be a critic/opponent of his times and, even more particularly, of modernity, and those who, on the other hand, strongly signaled how the separation from his own time meant precisely a strong will to be in his time (in short, to be authentically 'actual', 'contemporary').

On the first front, it is enough to remember the now classic R. Steiner, *Friedrich Nietzsche, ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit*, Verlag von E. Felber, Weimar, 1895. But also: F. Desideri, *Introduzione a F. Nietzsche, Considerazioni inattuali* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1997); S. Moravia, *Introduzione a F. Nietzsche, Sull'utilità e il danno della storia per la vita* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1978).

In a more historical-political key, see Ch.J. Emden, 'Toward a Critical Historicism: History and Politics in Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation', *Modern Intellectual History*, 3, 1 (2006), p. 2: «Nietzsche reacts to rather specific developments within his contemporary intellectual context; the establishment of specific historical foundation myths for a new German nation state, exemplified by the public monuments and commemorations of the 1870s, play a crucial role in this context as does the effect of such foundation myths of the political imagination of historical scholarship».

A special nuance can be found in G. Visser, *Inleiding – Nietzsches Cultuurkritiek in de Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, Gerard Visser (ed. by), p. 4, which points out that Nietzschean Untimely ultimately leads to a sort of alienation from its own time («Het eerste dat de lezer van Nietzsches *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* moet opvallen en een blijvend ontzag afdwingt, is de kracht en onbevangenheid waarmee hij stem geeft aan een alles overheersend gevoel van vervreemding ten aanzien van zijn tijd. Een tijdsgevoel is zo ongrijpbaar dat de articulatie ervan lijkt voorbehouden aan de literator»).

Decidedly original, beyond the overall interpretation, is the vision of D. Astor, *La détresse du présent* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014), which puts in dialectical tension Nietzsche's actuality and inactuality and the relationship between Ancient/Modern. These, in his opinion, should not be opposed because they are «une tension fondamentale entre deux types de forces» (p. 177). «Nietzche cherche une conscience historique non moderne de la modernité» (p. 174). In this context, the untimely man himself lives a situation of '*détresse critique*', which renews the question of the future. This *détresse* is «le signe positif de ceux qui se sentent inactuels dans le présent» e anche un «symptôme général de la modernité» (p. 191). In a dialectical way (though with a different perspective) there is also V. Morfino, 'Sul non contemporaneo: Marx, Bloch, Althusser', *Bollettino filosofico*, 27 (2011–2012), pp. 413–443. Finally, in all its simplicity, it is worth remembering

Of course, in this, the use of the term *Unzeitgemäss* is so 'subjective' that it really looks like a 'neologism'. Indeed for Nietzsche the untimely man is more actual/contemporary (and not less actual/contemporary) than the others.

Der Philosoph als der wahre Widersacher der Verweltlichung, als der Zerstörer jedes scheinbaren und verführerischen Glücks und alles dessen, was ein solches Glück verspricht, (...) dieser Philosoph muss, zum Heile von uns Allen, noch unendliche Male wiedergeboren werden. (...) Gewiss sind noch viele andersartige Offenbarungen derselben *weltfeindlichen* und *unzeitgemässen* (...).⁵²

Nietzsche does not oppose 'actuality'/contemporaneity understood as 'the present era' (and how could this be so?). But he is opposed to *actuality* understood as 'worldization' (*Verweltlichung*), apparent happiness, superficiality of the day, loss of the individual in the utilitarian rush of the 'actual'/current, in the pursuit at all costs of an adaptation to the 'actual/current opinions' (*zeitgemässe Meinungen*), of the majority.⁵³

By transvaluating Plato, Nietzsche seems to oppose the actuality/umbratility of the homologated *doxa* to the (prometeic) inactuality of those who try to free themselves from the chains of factuality, looking for a 'different' truth. That is why the term 'untimely' can not be separated from 'Meditations'. Because it is the very attitude of those who 'consider', who think, who are critical. It is philosophy itself that is untimely (as we said in the Introduction).

Nietzsche says it very well, lapidarily, in a Posthumous Fragment from 1876 (17 [41]): «Die Schätzung des *contemplativen* Lebens hat abgenommen. – Deshalb ist meine Betrachtung *unzeitgemäß*».⁵⁴ The

the famous expression of K. Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer verlag, 1969), p. 209: «Weil Nietzsche in seinem Verhältnis zur Zeit und zur zeitgenössischen Philosophie ein 'Unzeitgemäßer' war und nzeitgemäß auch geliebt ist, war er und ist er auch 'zeitgemäß', ein philosophischer Maßstab der Zeit». From a more historical-descriptive point of view, also see the latest volumes by B. Neymeyr – A. Urs Sommers, *Nietzsche als Philosoph der Moderne* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012) and C. Gentili, V. Gerhardt, A. Ventutelli (ed. by), *Nietzsche. Illuminismo modernità* (Firenze: Olschki, 2003).

52 KSA, 7, NF-1874,35[12] – *Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr–Sommer 1874*.

53 See also 1874, 409 – *Brief an Theodor Opitz: 21/12/1874*: «Darauf nämlich kommt es an, wirklich glauben zu können, daß man mehr Recht hat mit seinen *unzeitgemässen* Meinungen als die ganze Zeit mit ihren zeitgemässen: da steckt das Hochmüthige, von dem ich sprach, da aber auch das Bescheidene. Denn es ist gar kein Verdienst dabei von einer grünen Thür zu sagen sie sei grün und von der Wahrheit, sie sei wahr».

54 KSA, 12, NF-1876, 17[41] – *Nachgelassene Fragmente Sommer 1876*: «Die Schätzung des *contemplativen* Lebens hat abgenommen. – Deshalb ist meine

Nietzschean '*Betrachtung*' would not be against time and against the present, if the present time were not contrary to thought, reflective consideration, and a philosophical-critical posture.

In this sense, the ending of the First Untimely Meditation is 'strong' and clear when Nietzsche sustains (making his 'confession of faith' in the value of the present), that paradoxically the objective of the Untimely is to disappear as Untimely: that is, to work toward making what is 'really' actual, urgent, and necessary emerge and put down roots. Therefore, we are called to be untimely only «for the moment».

Einstweilen! So lange nämlich das noch als unzeitgemäss gilt, was immer an der Zeit war und jetzt mehr als je an der Zeit ist und Noth thut – die Wahrheit zu sagen»: for the time being! That is to say, for as long as that for which it is always time, and which the present time has more need of than ever, continues to count as untimely – I mean: telling the truth.⁵⁵

In fact, for Nietzsche the truth of the untimely is not a 'content' to be known, but a 'style', as can be clearly understood from reading another of the few passages in which Nietzsche almost seems to 'explain' the meaning he wants to give to the term *unzeitgemäss*. And, not by chance, the passage is taken from one of the first pages of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, in which Nietzsche presents his ideal philosopher (an educator).

It was thus truly roving through wishes to imagine I might discover a true philosopher as, an educator who could raise me above my insufficiencies insofar as these originated in the age and teach me again to be simple and honest in thought and life, that is to say to be untimely, that word understood in the profoundest sense; for men have now become so complex and many-sided they are bound to become dishonest whenever they speak at all, make assertions and try to act in accordance with them.⁵⁶

This is a passage that should be commented on point by point, in which the connections we have set forth up to now appear again synthetically: the untimely man (in the deepest sense of the term) is he who is capable of a simple and honest truth (*einfach und ehrlich*). It is he who (unlike what happens

Betrachtung unzeitgemäß. Ehemals waren der Geistliche und der esprit fort Gegensätze, beide innerhalb des contemplativen Lebens».

55 KSA 1, UB I, D. Strauss, § 12.

56 Tr. engl. by R.J. Hollingdale: F Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditation*, ed. by D. Brazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 1997, p. 133).

today, *jetzt*) does not thrive on complications, stratifications, multiplicity, and insincerity. The Parmenide *brotoi*, two-headed men, who are incapable of unity in thought, speech, acting, being, come to mind. On the contrary, the true philosopher (*wahrer Philosoph*), who is also Platonically the 'true' educator, he is also the first inactual man, called to form untimely men, pointing out the path of unification of word-thought-action, a unification that is never a 'given' (in the conforming 'actuality') because the untimely path is always new, every time, and different for each one of us.

In his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so strangely variegated an assortment as he is: he knows it but he hides it like a bad conscience why? From fear of his neighbour, who demands conventionality and cloaks himself with it.⁵⁷

Zeitgemäss is the flock of sheep that we become, out of fear. *Unzeitgemäss* is «the unique miracle that every man is».⁵⁸ *Zeitgemäss* is «an era which sees its salvation in public opinion». 'Great' and *unzeitgemäss* are «those who do not feel themselves to be citizens of this time; (...) — while their desire is rather to awaken their time to life and so live on themselves in this awakened life».⁵⁹

In short: only in the eyes (blind) of the person who lives an existence fully immersed in what is 'actual' can the Nietzschean proposal seem 'inactual'/untimely. Only in the false opinion of the masses «als unzeitgemässe Menschen empfunden werden: sie haben anderswo ihre

57 Ivi, p. 127

58 And also: «The man who does not wish to belong to the mass needs only to cease taking himself easily; let him follow his conscience, which calls to him: 'Be your self! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself'» (ivi, p. 127).

59 Ivi, p. 128. The reflection could continue in an interesting way by reading another passage by *Schopenhauer as Educator* in which the term 'actual' existence (*zeitgemässes Leben*) appears, a passage in which Nietzsche considers 'actual' men to be those unable to say 'yes' to life, and, therefore, by contrast, we could say that the untimely man is precisely he who 'affirms' life. «He knew well that there is something higher and purer to be found and attained on this earth than the life of his own time, and that he who knows existence only in this ugly shape, and assesses it accordingly, does it a grave injustice. No, genius itself is now summoned, so that one may hear whether genius, the highest fruit of life, can perhaps justify life as such; the glorious, creative human being is now to answer the question: 'Do you affirm this existence in the depths of your heart? Is it sufficient for you? Would you be its advocate, its redeemer? For you have only to pronounce a single heartfelt Yes!'» (ivi, p. 146).

Heimath als in der Zeit und finden *anderwärts* sowohl ihre Erklärung als ihre Rechtfertigung».⁶⁰

And, ultimately, in this idea, Nietzsche always remains untimely. For this reason, it is no coincidence that one of the most interesting occurrences of the term '*unzeitgemäß*' in mature Nietzsche, one of the rare occurrences, is in *The Gay Science*, in the aphorism called *Wir Heimatlosen*. The without-time person (*un-zeit-gemäß*), who is outside the measure of time, is also without space, without land, without a homeland:⁶¹ always searching for time, space, truth, homeland...

(...) Wir Kinder der Zukunft, wie vermöchten wir in diesem Heute zu Hause zu sein! Wir sind allen Idealen abgünstig, auf welche hin Einer sich sogar in dieser zerbrechlichen zerbrochenen Uebergangszeit noch heimisch fühlen könnte. (...) Wir 'conserviren' Nichts, wir wollen auch in keine Vergangenheit zurück, wir sind durchaus nicht 'liberal', wir arbeiten nicht für den 'Fortschritt', wir brauchen unser Ohr nicht erst gegen die Zukunfts-Sirenen des Marktes zu verstopfen (...) Wir ziehen es bei Weitem vor, auf Bergen zu leben, abseits, 'unzeitgemäss', in vergangen oder kommenden Jahrhunderten, nur damit wir uns die stille Wuth ersparen, zu der wir uns verurtheilt wüssten als Augenzeugen einer (...) kleine Politik [*We greatly prefer to live on the mountains, apart 'as untimely', in centuries past or imminent, just to spare ourselves the mute rage we would be condemned to as eyewitnesses of a politics that... is, moreover, a small politics*]. (...) Wir Heimatlosen, wir sind der Rasse und Abkunft nach zu vielfach und gemischt, als 'moderne Menschen', (...) Wir sind, mit Einem Worte – und es soll unser Ehrenwort sein! – gute Europäer [*We without a homeland are by race and origin too multiform and hybrid, as 'modern men'*]. (...) *We are, in a word – and this must be our word of honor – good Europeans*.⁶² But with this we may have gone too far ahead. And although the line of inquiry that links (in 1881) Untimely to the great politics of the good Europe is certainly fascinating,⁶³ it is better to stop and return to the issues from which we started, i.e.: for certainly this is a 'subjective' use that Nietzsche makes of the term *unzeitgemäss*. And it was not present in the 'typical' use of the word in his day.

60 KSA, 1, F. Nietzsche, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 1.

61 D. Large, p. 88, after recalling the opposition of the UBs against Prussian triumphalism (and its catastrophically short-sighted *Grundzeit*), notes how the isolated position of Nietzsche, even geographically, (in a corner of Switzerland) became for him «a sort of unspacely and untimely Archimedean point», to tell Germany things that it did not want to hear.

62 KSA 3, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aph. 377.

63 On the topic of '*der gute Europäer*' see P. Gori – P. Stellino, 'Il buon europeo di Nietzsche. Oltre nichilismo e morale cristiana', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 1 (2016), 98–124.

Let's go back then to Grimm.

And let's try again to understand the threads (first and foremost linguistic) from which Nietzsche may have composed this particular meaning.

In addition to German etymology (to which we have already abundantly referred), could there have been some other philological reference that may have helped the young professor of classical philology to 'thicken' the sense of *unzeitgemäss*?

2.3 From German to Latin

If we read an overview of the different entries in Grimm — *Unzeit*, *Unzeitig* e *Unzeitlich* — we note the reference to the four Latin semantic areas: *intempestus/intempestivus*, *importunus*, *immaturus*, *praematurus*.⁶⁴

In the development of the meanings, depending on whether 'Zeit' mean one's time (historical) or a section of time (of a day or a year,⁶⁵ or of an individual life), it seems to us that the most obvious semantic areas revolve around the sense of:

- untimely/
- out of season / unfashionable / unmodern
- Premature
- aborted
- beyond time
- Inopportune, inconvenient (even rash, iniquitous, illicit).

Which brings us to the various proposals for the translation of *Unzeitgemäss*.

Among other things, it would be interesting to see how in some contexts, especially 'before' the writing of the *Untimely Meditations*, many of these 'classical' meanings are present in Nietzsche. For example, in some cases we find *unzeitgemäss* associated with the idea of premature death,⁶⁶ or premature

64 *Intempestus*, *immaturus*, *praematurus* are clearly referenced in *Unzeitig*; *immaturus*, *intempestivus*, *importunus* are referenced in *Unzeitlich*; *intempesta (nocte)* is, instead, referenced in *Unzeit*.

65 Also related to atmospheric states.

66 See 1866, 514 – *Brief an Friederike Daechsel: August 1866*: «Gern hätte ich mündlich Dir meinen Schmerz über das zwar nicht *unzeitige* aber doch unerwartete Hinscheiden unser<er> lieben Julie ausgedrückt; leider aber kann ich nicht so schnell wie ich wohl wünschte nach Naumburg kommen und bin hier noch eine Reihe von Tagen durch Arbeiten, die beendet sein wollen zurückgehalten». 1869, 612 – *Brief an Wilhelm Vischer (-Bilfinger): 01/02/1869*: «Als aber der *unzeitige* Tod meines Vaters eine neue Heimat zu suchen nöthigte, war es Naumburg, auf das die Wahl meiner Mutter fiel. Hier bin ich in einem Privatinstitut für das

aging.⁶⁷ Sometimes we find the term also linked to the metaphor of a fruit that arrives before its 'normal' season. Interesting from this point of view, for example, is the letter to Carl von Gersdorff of December 24, 1874, where Nietzsche writes: «In the last few months many things have gone through my mind and I have been fertilized again and again and again (*ich bin mehrfach wieder unzeitgemäß befruchtet worden*)».⁶⁸ The expression is truly untranslatable because more than a fertilization it is a fruitification. (1) It is as if Nietzsche spoke of (and blessed) the fact that many untimely thoughts have come into his mind, and these thoughts are like premature, off-season fruits, waiting for the time (always little) to be written. In fact, in the days when he wrote the letter, Nietzsche was trying to end the *Fourth Meditation*. (2) However, these are also 'unzeitgemäß' thoughts in the sense that they wait for the right time to be understood: because they always come, in fact (as opposed to those of the Hegelian Owl of Minerva) too soon. Untimely (*intempestivum*) as premature: waiting for eyes that can read and ears that can hear. Prophetic thoughts, like early fruits, like almond blossoms, that announce spring while it is still winter for others.

Even Zarathustra, then, perhaps (in one of the few passages where the root *unzeit** appears in the text) will use the term '*Unzeit*' in this sense: «Willig zu meinem tiefsten Schmerze stehe ich hier: – zur *Unzeit* kamst du! Hinweg mit dir, du selige Stunde! Lieber nimm Herberge dort – bei meinen Kindern! Eile! und segne sie vor Abend noch mit meinem Glücke!».⁶⁹

So maybe for Nietzsche *Unzeitgemäss* means 'premature' rather than 'untimely'? It's too early to say. However, we can anticipate that, in our view, all the semantic nuances of the Latin terms quoted in Grimm (and recalled above), i.e. *intempestus*, *intempestivus*, *importunus*, *immaturus*, *praematurus*, obviously together with the root *un/zeit* are present in the explosive concoction that Nietzsche pours into his idea of *Unzeitgemäss*.

However, if we remain on this merely etymological level, we risk running aground.

To take a few steps forward, we must bear in mind the most significant passages in which Nietzsche uses the term *Unzeitgemäss* (or in any case in which he speaks of *Un/zeit*) — many of which we have already cited. And, above all, we must — with these textual premises — try to make specific

Domgymnasium desselben Ortes vorgebildet worden, doch ohne diesem später dauernd anzugehören».

67 See KSA, 3, *Morgenröte*, aph. 409: «Unter Krankheit ist zu verstehen: eine unzeitige Annäherung des Alters».

68 1874, 411 – *Brief an Carl von Gersdorff*. 24/12/1874

69 KSA, 4, *Also sprach Zarathustra III: Von der Seligkeit wider Willen*.

hypotheses about Nietzsche's possible 'sources' in relation to the use of the term *Unzeitgemäss*. These are obviously only lines of inquiry, which it is not possible to examine in depth in the space of an essay, but can only be indicated. But we are not exempt from inquiring into them.

We ask, therefore: *where* did Nietzsche find the meaning of the term *Unzeitgemäss*? If not in the dictionary, in which contexts (philosophical or not)? Who are the authors and the texts that convinced Nietzsche to choose this term for his 'Meditations' and to give them the value he gave them?

3. Possible sources of Nietzschean *Unzeitgemäss*

3.1 Wagner

Giuliano Campioni (on various occasions,⁷⁰ not least the essay contained in this volume) and F. D'Achille (in this same volume) underline the inevitable relationship with Wagner.⁷¹

Among others, H. Albert,⁷² R. Gray and D. Breazeale noticed that the first occurrence of the adjective is in a letter from Nietzsche to Erwin Rohde (17/08/1869):

Dafür will ich Dir noch etwas von meinem Juppiter erzählen, von R. Wagner. (...) Ein fruchtbares, reiches, erschütterndes Leben, ganz abweichend und unerhört unter mittleren Sterblichen! Dafür steht er auch da, festgewurzelt durch eigne Kraft, mit seinem Blick immer drüber hinweg über alles Ephemere, und unzeitgemäß im schönsten Sinne.⁷³

Unzeitgemäss indicates Wagner in an appreciative manner, his uniqueness compared to 'common mortals', his 'strength', which enabled him to rise above time and all that is ephemeral', and his untimely in the most beautiful sense: which makes us think that for Nietzsche there was

70 Not least the essay contained in this volume. But see: S. Barbera – G. Campioni, *Il genio tiranno. Ragione e dominio nell'ideologia dell'Ottocento. Wagner, Nietzsche, Renan* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1983).

71 On the Fourth Untimely Meditation, see F.C. Love, *The Young Nietzsche and the Wagnerian Experience* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963) and R. Hollinrake, *Nietzsche, Wagner and the Philosophy of Pessimism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).

72 H. Albert, *Note*, Now republished in F. Nietzsche, *Considérations inactuelles: Nouvelle édition augmentée* (Arvensa ed, 2015), p. 214.

73 1869, 22, *Brief an Erwin Rohde, 17/08/1869*

also a less beautiful and less effective meaning than the term 'untimely'; therefore, he was aware of the risks and ambiguity hidden in this adjective.

Nietzsche returns to this in a Posthumous Fragment from 1875 (11 [19]), in which he not only 'justifies' his 'consideration' (meditation) of Wagner as untimely (beyond or above his time), but also — with this justification — reiterates the meaning of the title of his *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*.

Wagner's Kunst gehört nicht zur jetzigen Kunst: er ist weit voraus oder darüber. Man soll seine Existenz nicht unserm Zeitalter zum Verdienst anrechnen, zumal es alles gethan hat um seine Existenz zu verhindern. (...): darunter als Gegenstück Meyerbeer anzuführen, der seinen Tages- und Zeiterfolg auf das Künstlichste in Scene setzte. Wagner hat immer das Gegentheil gethan. (...) Meine Betrachtung Wagner's bleibt als «unzeitgemäße» gerechtfertigt. Denn alle sonstige Kunst und Wissenschaft, die Musiker und Musikgelehrten dazu, haben ihm den Weg verlegen wollen. (...) Wie ich es verstehe, zeige aber der Titel, daß ich diese Betrachtung unzeitgemäß nenne.⁷⁴

So, Wagner's art is beyond, beyond that of his time and it opposes current and ephemeral art, so Wagner is untimely. And, therefore, Nietzsche chooses the expression '*unzeitgemäss*' for his '*Betrachtungen*'.

In this context it is clear — as R. Gray already claimed — that Nietzsche (in the term 'untimely') makes the (critical) attitude to time, typical of Wagner, his own,⁷⁵ so much so that still in 1878 he can, in a posthumous fragment,⁷⁶ speak of Wagner's 'untimely greatness':

74 KSA, 8, *NF-1875*, 11 [19]

75 Gray insists that the writing of the first UB coincides with Nietzsche's Wagnerian period and hence that the Nietzschean concept of *Unzeitgemässheit* (understood as an *un-fashion*, critical of fashion) is related to the way he was reading the art of Wagner, an art that for Nietzsche revived the essence of Greek tragedy. It is, therefore, essential for Gray to connect the sense of the Untimely to the Nietzschean recovery of the spirit of tragedy (the spirit with which it opposes the 'spiritual poverty of its era'). From here, then, Nietzsche's gradual path, which will end up with him identifying himself in this untimely man. See also Breazeale, p. XII: «the first Untimely Meditation was devoted to Strauss was, in fact, something of an accident and directly reflects several conversations and letters exchanged between Nietzsche and the Wagners in the immediately preceding months, in which Wagner had expressed to Nietzsche his deepseated personal animus against the aging Strauss (with whom Wagner had previously engaged in several vitriolic public disputes)». On the *First Untimely* see also J.C. de Souza, 'Consideração tempestiva I: Nietzsche como jovem hegeliano e maître-à-penser', *Cadernos Nietzsche*, 2013 (32), 73–108.

76 KSA, 8, *NF-1878*, 27 [27]

Wagner gegen die Klugen, die Kalten, die Zufriednen – hier seine Grösse – *unzeitgemäss* – gegen die Frivolen und Eleganten, – aber auch gegen die Gerechten, Mässigen, an der Welt Sich-freunden (wie Goethe), gegen die Mildern, Anmuthigen, wissenschaftlichen Menschen – hier seine Kehrseite.

And here, we can clearly also see the need Nietzsche had to distance himself from his first mentor/master, and thus also from his way of thinking and living — too 'actual' —, as Campioni magisterially shows in his essay, to which we refer the reader.⁷⁷

However, we cannot forget the other mentor of this Nietzschean phase: Schopenhauer.

3.2 Schopenhauer

Among others, again Gray argues that the term *Unzeitgemäss* is but a different way of expressing criticism of Schopenhauer's Today (*Jetztzeit*).

Nietzsche expresses this overriding hostility to contemporary developments in Germany in a letter to Ervin Rohde dated 18 October 1873, in which he categorically states: 'Everything that is new is horrible'. Of course, this antipathy for the modern derived in part from Nietzsche's role as a classical philologist. (...) Moreover, this hostility (...) was certainly conditioned by Nietzsche's great philosophical mentor, Schopenhauer, whose scathing attacks on what he called the *Jetztzeit*, the Today, are picked up and intensified in the *Unfashionable Observations*. Indeed, it is likely that Nietzsche formulated the concept of *Unzeitgemässheit* in analogy to and amplification on Schopenhauer's term *Jetztzeit*. To be *unzeitgemäss* in Nietzsche's sense is to stand outside or above all the cultural movements that attained currency in his time.⁷⁸

77 However, this idea of the supra-temporality typical of the genius still remains in the fourth UB. See for example *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, §5: «es mag da an Begabung wachsen, was da wolle, es kommt zu spät oder zu früh und jedenfalls zur *Unzeit*, denn es ist überflüssig und wirkungslos, da ja selbst das Vollkommene und Höchste früherer Zeiten, das Vorbild der jetzigen Bildner, überflüssig und fast wirkungslos ist und kaum noch einen Stein auf den anderen setzt».

78 Gray, p. 397. See also Breazeale, pp. XII–XII: «The real subject of the first Untimely Meditation is not David Strauss at all, but the smug and false complacency of the 'cultivated' German bourgeoisie in the aftermath of Prussia's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent establishment of the second German Reich. Nietzsche's David Strauss was meant as a direct rebuke and challenge to the hoard of uncultivated chauvinists who interpreted Prussia's military victory as a clear sign of the superiority of their own popular culture and received ideas. Upon these self-satisfied newspaper readers and consumers of culture Nietzsche bestowed the fitting name Bildungsphilister or 'cultivated philistines'».

So, the concept of untimely is nothing but a Nietzschean 'amplification' of Schopenhauer's critique of *Jetztzeit*.⁷⁹ On the other hand, we have already mentioned several interesting occurrences of the term *unzeitgemäß* present in the *Third Untimely* (*Schopenhauer als Erzieher*), where Nietzsche presented his kind of ideal philosopher/educator (set against the multiplicity and complexity of 'modern' life).

Schopenhauer is untimely as opposed to the time-hour (time overcome by the hour). But Nietzsche is perhaps even more untimely than his 'master'.⁸⁰

Nietzsche himself wrote in December 1882 (in what must have been a note accompanying a copy of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, given as a gift to Lou von Salomé): «this book is my *Grundgesinnung*».

So, after several years, that text continues in Nietzsche's eyes to be decisive (*Grund*), because it expresses his 'fundamental (*Grund*) feeling'.⁸¹ And what kind of *Grundgesinnung* is this? Nietzsche explains

79 In particular, on the Third UB see R. Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 153 ff (*Nietzsche's First Manifesto: On 'Schopenhauer as Educator'*). And more in general see: G. Campioni, L. Pica Ciamarra, M. Segale (ed. by), *Goethe Schopenhauer Nietzsche. Saggi in memoria di Sandro Barbera* (Pisa: ETS, 2012).

80 Although I am pointing out that Schopenhauer's scenario is to some degree untimely, I do not want to emphasize Schopenhauer's content-philosophical influence on the UBs. On the contrary, I agree with the many critics who have pointed out the paradox of a quasi-absence of Schopenhauer's philosophy in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, in the Third UB, is important as an example of untimely 'educator', and hence a philosopher who undertakes the project of an untimely education (and is not important as a philosopher who gives thought 'contents'). This is also apparent in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*: for Nietzsche, thinkers are more important for their testament to a philosophical life than for their proposals; more for their untimely individuality than for their philosophy. An untimely teacher educates, among other things, inevitably leading his pupils to distance themselves from him. Even the Greeks, as we know and will come back to see, for Nietzsche are 'models' exactly for their in/imitability. See Breazeale, p. xlivi: «as noted in section 3 of the third Meditation, an original thinker such as Empedocles or Schopenhauer is always 'untimely', inasmuch as this is a necessary consequence of striving to become who one is. If one is to strive to overcome oneself, then one must also strive to overcome all those merely, 'timely' elements that one discovers to have been falsely grafted on to one's own 'untimeliness'».

81 1882, 352. *An Lou von Salomé vermutlich in Berlin (Entwurf)* – <Rapallo, vor Mitte Dezember 1882>: «Ich mache Ihnen heute nichts zum Vorwurf als daß Sie nicht zur rechten Zeit über sich gegen mich aufrichtig gewesen sind. Ich gab Ihnen in Luzern meine Schr<ift> über Sch<openhauer> – ich sagte Ihnen daß da

it in the *Posthumous Fragment* 35 [12] from 1874 that we have already quoted (and that we will now take a closer look at), the only one in which — except for the letter to Lou Salomé — the term *Grundgesinnung* appears.

Der Philosoph als der wahre Widersacher der Verweltlichung, als der Zerstörer jedes scheinbaren und verführerischen Glücks und alles dessen, was ein solches Glück verspricht, der Staaten, Revolutionen, Reichthümer, Ehren, Wissenschaften, Kirchen unter den Menschen — dieser Philosoph muss, zum Heile von uns Allen, noch unendliche Male wiedergeboren werden; mit der Einen gebrechlichen Erscheinung desselben in Schopenhauer ist es nicht gethan. Aber er bleibt für alle kommenden Zeiten Eins:

der bedeutendste Erzieher und Erleichterer jener nicht zahlreichen Menschen, welchen, bis zu irgend einem Grade, jener heroische Sinn der Wahrhaftigkeit und zugleich, als Werkzeug dafür, Scharfsinn und Weitblick eingeboren ist. Gewiss sind noch viele andersartige Offenbarungen derselben weltfeindlichen und unzeitgemässen Grundgesinnung möglich (...).⁸²

The 'basic feeling' Nietzsche speaks of is 'agonistic': it fights false happiness (of current time) and 'heroically' struggles for truth, that is, to look for a new, wider, more acute vision. The untimely, then, is not just a thought, but a feeling: a fundamental feeling, fundamentally agonizing, in opposition to the present world/time. Therefore, the connection Nietzsche makes between the adjectives in this fragment is significant: *welt-feindlich* and *un-zeitgemäss*.

Unzeitgemäss is the *Grundgesinnung* which Nietzsche has found in the opposition/destruction presented by Schopenhauer. Untimely is the fundamental feeling that Nietzsche will present in his work, realizing all the limits of the 'defective appearance' of Schopenhauer's *Grundgesinnung*, and realizing that other manifestations (*Erscheinungen*) of 'feeling untimely' were (and are) possible.⁸³

meine Grundgesinnungen drin stünden und daß ich glaube, es würden auch die Ihrigen sein. Damals hätten Sie lesen und Nein! sagen sollen».

82 KSA, 7, NF-1874,35[12] – Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr–Sommer 1874.

83 Perhaps not by chance, in retrospect (for this, too) Nietzsche will read Zarathustra as the fulfillment of the 'promises' of the Third UB and as 'text' for which, paradoxically, the 'commentary' was written 'first'. We are referring to the letter of April 21, 1883, that Breazeale (p. XXVIII) erroneously claims was addressed to Peter Gast and which instead was addressed to Köselitz, in which Nietzsche writes: «Es ist ein curiosum: ich habe den Commentar früher geschrieben als den Text. Versprochen ist Alles schon in 'Schop<enhauer> als Erz<ieher>» (405. *An Heinrich Köselitz in Venedig*. <Genua, 21. April 1883>)

However, for Nietzsche, the Untimely is not 'just' the Wagnerian way of being 'over'/against time nor the Schopenhauerian way of distancing himself from *Jetztzeit*.

And therefore, without wanting to diminish the contribution that these two first mentors may have given (and undoubtedly gave) to the coining of the Nietzschean meaning of the term *unzeitgemäss*, it is also possible to consider other Nietzschean sources, alongside them.

3.3 *The Greeks*

It is almost too obvious, but we cannot not say it: Nietzsche's Untimely links with all the attention that the professor of classical philology in Basel dedicates to Greeks: an unattainable model, a model in its being an anti-model, in its being 'anti-' with respect to the way in which modernity intends models.⁸⁴

And, on the other hand, the most well-known passage in which Nietzsche uses the term 'untimely' (which we have already quoted several times), says it explicitly.

This meditation too is untimely, because I am here attempting to look afresh at something of which our time (*Zeit*) is rightly proud — its cultivation of history as being injurious to it, a defect and deficiency in it (*Zeit*). [...] Only to the extent that I am a pupil of earlier times, especially the Hellenic, that though a child of

See 1884, 524. *An Franz Overbeck in Basel*, <*Sils-Maria, Anfang August 1884*>: «Beim Durchlesen meiner 'Litteratur', die ich jetzt wieder einmal beisammen sehe, fand ich mit Vergnügen, daß ich noch alle starken Willens-Impulse, die in ihr zu Worte kommen, in mir habe und daß auch in dieser Hinsicht kein Grund zu Entmuthigung da ist. Übrigens habe ich so gelebt, wie ich es mir selber (namentlich in 'Schopenhauer als Erzieher'); vorgezeichnet habe. Falls Du den Zarath<ustra> mit in Deine Mußezeit nehmen solltest, nimm, der Vergleichung halber, doch die eben genannte Schrift mit hinzu (ihr Fehler ist, daß eigentlich in ihr nicht von Schopenhauer, sondern fast nur von mir die Rede ist – aber das wußte ich selber nicht, als ich sie machte.)».

84 The theme is too broad to be even just mentioned here. On this and, in general, on the relationship between Nietzsche and the Greeks in the lessons of Basel, I refer to C. Santini, *The History of Literature as an Issue: Nietzsche's Attempt to Represent Antiquity*, in A.K. Jensen – H. Heit (ed. by), *Nietzsche as a Scholar of Antiquity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 159–181. Santini underlines how in *Encyklopädie der klassischen Philologie* (KGW, II, 3) Nietzsche presents the philologist as the one who places himself on the boundary between the two (temporal) worlds of the ancient and the modern (remaining both foreign and familiar), a modality that in some way refers to what will be the definition of untimely given in the *Second UB*.

the present time (*als ein Kind dieser jetzigen Zeit*) I was able to acquire such untimely experiences (*zu so unzeitgemässen Erfahrungen komme*). That much, however, I must concede to myself on account of my profession (*Beruf*), as a classicist: for I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely — that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.⁸⁵

In order to distance itself from the present and prefigure the future, the untimely man must look to the past: obviously not monumentally, archaeologically or critically, but in a philological-philosophical way — as Nietzsche understands this 'way': as a 'profession' that is also a 'vocation' (*Beruf*).⁸⁶

Son of the modern era, son of his time and his present, Nietzsche, however, claims an even more distant paternity (which is the same as his present). There is a father of the father: because the modern era is in turn a child and a student of the past eras.

It is not historicism. It is a consciousness that experiences «come» (*kommen*) to us. And it is up to us to discern them.⁸⁷ And the historical illness of the Nietzschean era (and of philologism and philistineism) does not allow for this discernment; it does not allow us 'to see' Greek culture, as a model for creating models;⁸⁸ as an ideal of the future and not of the past.⁸⁹

Also for this reason Nietzsche remained isolated from the scholars of Greek culture of his time and environment.⁹⁰

85 Tr. engl. by R.J. Hollingdale, p. 60.

86 On this topic, see PhD Thesis by G.B. Adesso, 2016, Università degli Studi di Bari, *Le lezioni di Nietzsche a Basilea. 'Philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit'*.

87 See A. Orsucci, *Nietzsche's Cultura Criticism and his Historical Methodology*, in M. Dries (ed. by), *Nietzsche on Time and History* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

88 See KSA, 7, NF 1872, 19 [6] «Die Alten waren sehr viel tugendhafter als wir, weil sie so viel weniger Mode hatten. Die tugendhafte Energie ihrer Künstler!». Gray (p. 398) sees an echo of *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* in the Nietzschean posture here.

89 I would like to add the hypothesis of a reference to Johann Balthasar Schupp (quoted by Grimm – *Unzeit*). In *Schupp's Schriften* (von Johann Balthasar Schupp, Anton Meno Schupp, 1663). At a certain point he speaks of the *Unzeitig* characteristic of the 'philosophy of the Greeks' [*untüchtig und unzeitig zum gebären*]. And although he does so in critical terms, it seems an interesting thing to emphasize, especially related to the metaphor of the Greeks seen as children.

90 That, on the other hand, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the UBs should be read together, Nietzsche himself reminds us in *Vorrede zu Menschliches Allzumenschliches II*: «Meine Schriften reden nur von meinen Ueberwindungen: 'ich' bin darin, mit Allem, was mir feind war. (...) Insofern sind alle meine Schriften, mit einer einzigen,

A Posthumous Fragment from 1875 makes us think and smile in this direction: «Statut der Gesellschaft der *Unzeitgemässen*. Jeder hat vierteljährlich einen schriftlichen Bericht über seine Thätigkeit einzusenden. O.R.G.B.N.»

It is a 'unique' Fragment in its genre and in its illusion, which clearly vanished even before it was conceived, in which Nietzsche imagines a 'Society of Inactuals', which could even have had activities, a Statute, a quarterly report. It is named for four comrades, whom he supposedly wanted to found it: O.R.G.B.N.

Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, in the critical edition of Nietzsche's *Works*, say that they might be the initials of Overbeck, Rohde, Gersdorff, Burckhardt (or Baumgartner?) and Nietzsche himself.⁹¹

Let us recall this little madness (which Nietzsche clearly no longer followed or valued) just because it is in some way a sign, on the one hand, of Nietzsche's desire to 'concretize' the experience of the Untimely and, on the other hand, is a sign of the laceration typical of this Nietzschean phase: a Nietzsche seeking untimely companions with whom to build his own educational project but who, at the same time, is forced to deal with his inevitable loneliness; because it is precisely his way of understanding Greekness (and its educational value) which is different from that of his colleagues.

In a clear manner, in a Posthumous Fragment from 1875 (5 [31]), paradoxically up-to-date, Nietzsche writes that behind the rejection of a critical-untimely vision of what we now call Human sciences there is, unfortunately, a specific interest on the part of the ruling classes and a mortifying intent against the true mission of the teacher:

Es ist also ein Standesinteresse, reinere Einsichten über das Alterthum nicht aufkommen zu lassen: zumal die Einsicht, daß das Alterthum im tiefsten Sinne *unzeitgemäß* macht. Es ist zweitens ein Standesinteresse der Philologen, keine

allerdings wesentlichen Ausnahme, zurück zu datieren – sie reden immer von einem 'Hinter-mir' – : einige sogar, wie die drei ersten *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen*, noch zurück hinter die Entstehungs- und Erlebniszeit eines vorher herausgegebenen Buches (der *Geburt der Tragödie* im gegebenen Falle: wie es einem feineren Beobachter und Vergleicher nicht verborgen bleiben darf). Jener zornige Ausbruch gegen die Deutschthümelei, Behäbigkeit und Sprach-Verlumpung des alt gewordenen David Strauss, der Inhalt der ersten *Unzeitgemässen*, machte Stimmungen Luft, mit denen ich lange vorher, als Student, inmitten deutscher Bildung und Bildungphilisterei gesessen hatte (ich mache Anspruch auf die Vaterschaft des jetzt viel gebrauchten und missbrauchten Wortes 'Bildungsphilister' –); und was ich gegen die 'historische Krankheit' gesagt habe, das sagte ich als Einer, der von ihr langsam, mühsam genesen lernte und ganz und gar nicht Willens war, fürderhin auf 'Historie' zu verzichten, weil er einstmals in ihr gelitten hatte».

91 KSA, 8, *NF-1875*, 5 [97].

höhere Anschauung über den Lehrerberuf aufkommen zu lassen als die, welcher sie entsprechen können.⁹²

In any case, returning to the thread of our discourse, it is evident that Nietzsche was (became) untimely in part, and perhaps above all, because of his attendance to Greekness. And that he learned from the Greeks how to live his time without being absorbed by the current present; to live his time actively (against what is to be modified and to the benefit of what is to be valued). And it is evident that he lived all this as an educational-political mission.⁹³ On this we refer to Herman Siemens's essay.

We want to conclude this section by recalling, for the sake of completeness, other hypotheses of Nietzschean 'sources' of the Untimely carried out by other scholars.

3.4 Humanism, Renaissance, Romanticism

For example, Glenn W. Most⁹⁴ — working on the *Second Untimely Meditation* and its title — critically recalls humboldtian humanism and purposefully the Renaissance (through Burckhardt⁹⁵): and therefore *De commodis litterarum atque incommodis* (1428) by Leon Battista Alberti.⁹⁶

92 KSA, 8, *NF-1875*, 5 [31].

93 Interestingly, retrospectively, in a Posthumous Fragment considered by the curators as a probable sketch of a single Preface to the *Inactuals* (but never written), Nietzsche writes: «*Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*. Ich habe zusammengebunden und gesammelt, was Individuen groß und selbstständig macht, und auch die Gesichtspunkte, auf welche hin sie sich verbünden können. Ich sehe, wir sind im Aufsteigen: wir werden der Hort der ganzen Cultur in Kürze sein»: KSA, 8, *NF-1876*, 17 [22].

94 Glenn W. Most, 'On the Use and Abuse of Ancient Greece for Life', *Cultura tedesca*, 20 (2002), 31–50.

95 On the topic Nietzsche and Burckhardt, see E. Salin, *Jacob Burckhardt und Nietzsche* (Basel: 1937) and A. Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt. Zwei geistige Welten im Dialog* (München: 1940), among the most recent works, we will only list, for a comparison on the subject of historicism, E. Schulin, 'Zeitgemässe Historie um 1870: zu Nietzsche, Burckhardt und zum Historismus', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 2005 (281, 1), 33–58; and for a reconstruction of the spirit of Basel in an untimely key L. Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt. A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Pr., 2000). He writes: «for a good part of the nineteenth century, the 'anachronistic' city-republic of Basel was a place where those whose ideas were 'unzeitgemäss' — untimely or unseasonable — could feel, to some degree, at home» (p. 8).

96 Also A.K. Jensen, *An Interpretation of Nietzsche's On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 10–11 recalls Alberti. Then he also hypothesizes another possible source, that is Henry St. John Bolingbroke

Martin Nicholas has mentioned other possible sources of the Nietzschean untimely, like Schiller and his concept of '*ausser der Zeit*' which is very clear in his *Aesthetische Briefe*. Comparing the Letters of Schiller with the *Birth of the Tragedy*, Nicholas writes:

in the present context, the term 'untimely' has at least four connotations. First, both projects were untimely, in the sense that they were deliberately out of step with their times. (...) Secondly both Nietzsche and Schiller characterize the alleged remedial properties of art as untimely. They are borrowed from another time, or are said to be out of time altogether. A third way of understanding the untimeliness of their projects is that they may have been before their time. Last, though not least, it may be considered untimely to regard aesthetic education as a remedy for what appear to be socio-political ills.⁹⁷

3.5 *The Educational Issue and August Beger (Berger?)*

Lastly, it is clear that the *Untimely Meditations* should be read together with the *Conferences On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* and, therefore, with the project/dream of reforming educational institutions conducted by Nietzsche. Untimely begins with and at the Schools. And Schools can only become incisive by becoming untimely.

(1678–1751), *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (1735). The second letter is, moreover, entitled '*Concerning the true use and advantages of it [History]*'.

On these topics, there are those who, in particular in relation to the Second UB, have instead stressed a possible influence by Franz Grillparzer; see in particular J. Salaquarda, '*Er is fast immer einer der Unserigen*'. *Nietzsche und Grillparzer*, in Tilman Borsche, Federico Gerratana and Aldo Venturelli (ed. by) '*Centauren Geburten*': *Wissenschaft, Kunst und Philosophie beim jungen Nietzsche* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 234–56 and W. Seitter, '*Franz Grillparzer und Friedrich Nietzsche. Ihre Stellung zueinander*', *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft*, 3, 8 (1970), 87–107. See also W. Seitter, *Unzeitgemäße Aufklärung. Franz Grillparzers Philosophie* (Wien: Turia & Kant, 1991).

97 M. Nicholas, *Nietzsche and Schiller: Untimely Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 10–11.

Others who indicate a possible reference by Nietzsche to Schiller in the UB include Large, p. 85; G. Brown, *Introduction to Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, in F. Nietzsche, *Unmodern Observations*, ed. by W. Arrowsmith, pp. 229–252; in particular pp. 233–34. More in general, on the relationship between Nietzsche and Schiller, see A. Venturelli, '*Das Klassische als Vollendung des Sentimentalischen. Der junge Nietzsche als Leser des Briefwechsels zwischen Schiller und Goethe*', *Nietzsche Studien*, 18 (1989), 182–202 and K. Ansell-Pearson, '*Holding to the Sublime*': *On Nietzsche's Early «Unfashionable» Project*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, K. Gemes – J. Richardson ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Pr.), 2013, pp. 226–251.

From this perspective, it might be interesting to take an in-depth look at an annotation by D. Breazeale.⁹⁸

In order to understand what this title meant to Nietzsche himself, (...) a clue is provided by the title of one of the books Nietzsche checked out of the University of Basel library in January 1872, that is, just a few months prior to beginning work on the first *Untimely Meditation*, and then borrowed again in April, after he had already started work on Strauss. The book, which he apparently consulted in preparation for his lectures 'On the Future of Our Educational Institution', was a work by August Berger entitled *Die Idee des Realgymnasium für Freunde und Beförder hohrer und zeitgemässer Jugendbildung dargestellt* (1845), that is, *The Idea of a Practical/Technical High School* [there is no real English equivalent for the German term Realgymnasium], *Expounded for Friends and Supporters of Higher and Up-To-Date [zeitgemässer] Secondary Education*. It seems quite likely that Nietzsche's use of *Unzeitgemässe* in his series was intended at least in part ironically, as a parody of the quite common use of the term *zeitgemässe* that he had most recently encountered in Berger's title. Here, Nietzsche's title announces, one will encounter an author with the courage to thumb his nose at what is 'in fashion' among 'up-to-date' people.

Actually there is a misunderstanding. This is not Berger, but August Beger.⁹⁹ However the rest is correct and interesting. The text (*Die Idee des Realgymnasium für Freunde und Beförder hohrer und zeitgemässer Jugendbildung dargestellt*), as Breazeale points out, it was probably used by Nietzsche to think about and write (by contrast) the conferences *Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*.

According to Breazeale, therefore, Nietzsche would have ironically and parodically resumed the common use of the word 'Untimely' encouraged by Beger's title. And, instead of a 'current' (*zeitgemäss*) education, in step with the times (and crushed upon them), Nietzsche would begin to think of an *un-zeitgemäss* education (and then, in general, to think of *Betrachtungen* with an 'untimely' posture).

Jörg Schneider works in a similar direction,¹⁰⁰ despite not being interested in the question of *Unzeitgemäss*. And so, he shows the contrasting connection (clear, in his opinion) between the efficient idea (actualizing, we could say) of Beger's own education (a training that tends to identify man with his social function and hence aims at subjecting the individual

98 Breazeale, p. xlv.

99 See online: <https://archive.org/details/dieideedesrealg00begeogoo>

100 Jörg Schneider, 'Nietzsches Basler Vorträge 'Lieber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten' im Lichte seiner Lektüre pädagogischer Schriften', *Nietzsche Studien*, 21, 1 (1992), 308–325.

to the state and to economic interests) and the criticism of this (actual) education present at the Nietzschean Conferences *Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*.¹⁰¹

We will conclude by returning to the Latin (and the Greek), with a final suggestion, which we find particularly fascinating and for which we are in debt to Luca Lupo,¹⁰² who along with other authors has already referred to some passages in which Nietzsche writes about the 'suspension of time', quoting Sophocles and his '*intempestiva nocte*'.¹⁰³

4. Another point still to be traced: Unzeitgemäss (also) from Intempestivus

Es giebt einen Theil der Nacht, von dem ich sage 'hier hört die Zeitauf!' Nach allen Nachtwachen, namentlich nach nächtlichen Fahrten und Wanderungen hat man in Bezug auf diesen Zeitraum ein wunderliches Gefühl: er war immer viel zu kurz oder viel zu lang, unsere Zeitempfindung fühlt eine Anomalie. Es mag sein, daß wir es auch im Wachen zu büßen haben, daß wir jene Zeit gewöhnlich im Zeitenchaos des Traums zubringen! genug, Nachts von 1 – 3 Uhr haben wir die Uhr nicht mehr im Kopf. Mir scheint, daß eben dies auch die Alten ausdrückten, mit *intempestiva nocte* und ἐν ἄωρονυκτί (Aeschylus) 'da in der Nacht, wo es keine Zeit giebt'; und auch ein dunkles Wort Homers zur Bezeichnung des tiefsten stillsten Theils der Nacht lege ich mir etymologisch auf diesen Gedanken hin zurecht: mögen die Übersetzer es

101 For that matter, Jörg Schneider, as well as Beger, also refers to Nietzsche's clash, on the same themes, with K.L. Roth and recalls those passages of the Conferences in which «für Nietzsche 'steht [...] fest, daß die zahlreichen Veränderungen, die sich die Gegenwart an diesen Bildungsanstalten erlaubte', geschahen, 'um sie zeitgemäß zu machen' (KSA 1, p. 645). (...) Wie Roth die Motivation zur Bildung mit Ehre und Lohn umschreibt, ist es für Nietzsche der 'Nutzen' (ivi, p. 667), der den Inhalt der, bzw. die Motivation zur zeitgemäßen Bildung ausmacht, wodurch möglichst 'courante' Menschen (ivi) das Ergebnis dieser Bildung seien. Zu den Bildungsinhalten und den Bildungsmethoden heißt es bei Roth», ivi, p. 315. A comparison between UB and Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten is also in T. Schmidt-Millard, *Nietzsches Basler Vorträge 'Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten', die Aporie der Bildungstheorie des 'Genius' und ihre Überwindung in den 'Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen'*, Köln, Univ., Dissertation, 1981.

102 L. Lupo, *Intempesta nocte. Eterno ritorno e tempo soggettivo*, in M.C. Fornari (ed. by), *La trama del testo. Su alcune letture di Nietzsche*, Milella, Lecce, 2000, pp. 113–122.

103 See also D. Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, trans. engl. by B. Bergo, P. Farah (Evanston – Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Pr., 2012), in particular p. 239 and A. Giugliano, *Apparenza e tempo. Nietzsche e la parafenomenologia arcontica della vita*, in P. Di Giovanni (ed. by), *Nietzsche e la civiltà occidentale* (Palermo: Antepima edizioni, 2004), pp. 117–132.

immerhin mit 'Zeit der Nachtmelke' wiedergeben – wo in aller Welt hat man je die Kühe Nachts um Ein Uhr gemolken! Wo war man dermaßen thöricht! (NF 1881, 11 [260]).

The expression ἐν ἀορονηκτί (*en aoronykti*) was already emphasized by Nietzsche in his first course in Basel, a course on Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers*. And in the Lecture Notes we find a connection between Greek and Latin: «ἀωρόνηκτον, *intempestiva nocte, in tiefer Nacht*».¹⁰⁴ The same connection we find in the above-mentioned Posthumous Fragment from 1881.

If, besides what Nietzsche himself says, we take the text of Aeschylus, it can be noted (as Luca Lupo points out) that, at that specific passage of *The Libation Bearers* [vv. 32 ff.], it is Apollo, who «with breath of wrath in sleep, at dead of night (*en aoronykti*) uttered a cry for terror from the inmost chamber».

It is certainly hard not to think about the topic of the deep night when «the loneliest of thoughts come» and the particular time of the eternal return.¹⁰⁵ But we wish to emphasize something else. Indeed, although the recurrence of the expression *intempestiva nocte* is not frequent, his incisiveness seems meaningful. We find the expression only five times:

- in the citation of *The Libation Bearers* in Lessons,
- in the aforementioned fragment, that Nietzsche wrote in 1881 and then

104 As is well known, in the Lessons, Nietzsche does not give broad interpretations of the text, but often emphasizes some expressions that, in his opinion, are important and require attention in translation and interpretation. Specifically, this emphasis can be found in *Prolegomena zu den Choephoren des Aeschilus mit Kommentar*, in KGW, = *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, hrsg. von Colli und M. Montinari, weitergeführt von W. Müller-Lauter und K. Pestalozzi, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1967 ff., II, 2, p. 322.

105 In particular, on this connection between the time of untimely and the eternal return see S. Venezia, 'Inattualità dell'eterno ritorno: eterno ritorno dell'inattualità', *Logoi*, 7 (2017), 149–159 and S. Cuisin Boujac, *Nietzsche et l'écriture de l'éternel retour: une analyse à l'articulation de la philosophie et de la psychanalyse*, Publibook / Société écrivains, 2012 [p. 95: untimely is «la possibilité d'unifier les trois sortes d'histoire confère à sa possibilité même la présence du présent, instant décisif, critique. (...) Il est présent éternel. C'est ce en quoi il est inactuel (...) ou intempestif: (...) est instantané»]. See also M. De Launay, 'Nietzsche et le prophétisme', *Les Études philosophiques*, 73 (2005), pp. 183–192, who, having connected this 'night' to the experience of the eternal return, notes how the 'midi' then indicates the «temporalité intempestive que Nietzsche a implicitement présupposée pour être en mesure d'objectiver la loi de la temporalité même».

- repeats almost literally in a fragment from 1886,¹⁰⁶
- and with a slightly different specification in another fragment in 1881,¹⁰⁷ where the «Nox intemp <esta>» (or «Nox intemp <estiva>») becomes one in which «it seems that there is no longer a connection between cause and effect and that at any moment something can arise from nothing».

Only a few occurrences, but very interesting for our question, because we believe that readers will not miss how the Greek ἀνορονκτον, and even more the Latin '*intempestivus/intempestus*' are in some way (etymologically and radically) connected to Nietzschean *un-zeit-gemäss*. The proof is the fifth passage in which the term *intempest** appears in Nietzsche, which we have not yet mentioned. It is a letter to his sister (19.04.1875), in which Nietzsche signs as: «Dein Bruder Fridericus *Intempestivus*».¹⁰⁸ Just as he did in a letter to Krug on 1873, signing as der *Unzeitgemässe*: «Friedrich der *Unzeitgemässe*».¹⁰⁹

It is, of course, only a signature, but in our view it is an indirect confirmation of the fact that Nietzsche considered the two terms '*Intempestivus*' and '*Der Unzeitgemässe*' more than synonyms: he considered them essentially identical in 'meaning', albeit different in the formulation of the two languages.

In this direction, then perhaps we could say that *Unzeitgemäss* also (not only, but also) might be a translation/interpretation of *intempestivus* (and, going back even farther, of ἀνορονκτον). And this could be sustained starting from the Greek/German Dictionaries that were undoubtedly known at the time of Nietzsche.

106 *NF, Anfang 1886-Frühjahr 1886*, 4 [5]: «Es giebt einen Theil der Nacht, von welchem ein Einsiedler sagen wird: 'horch' jetzt hört die Zeit auf! Bei allen Nachtwachen, insbesondere, wenn man sich auf ungewöhnlichen nächtlichen Fahrten und Wanderungen befindet, hat man in Bezug auf diesen Theil der Nacht (ich meine die Stunden von Eins bis Drei) ein wunderliches erstauntes Gefühl, eine Art von 'Viel zu kurz!' oder 'Viel zu lang!', kurz den Eindruck einer Zeit-Anomalie. Sollten wir es in jenen Stunden, als ausnahmsweise Wachende, abzubüßen haben, daß wir für gewöhnlich um jene Zeit uns in dem Zeit-Chaos der Traumwelt befinden? Genug, Nachts von Eins bis Drei haben wir 'keine Uhr im Kopfe'. Mich dünkt, daß eben dies auch die Alten ausdrückten mit '*intempestiva nocte*' und '*en aoronykti*' (Aeschylus [*Choephoren*]), also 'da in der Nacht, wo es keine Zeit giebt'».

107 *NF, 1881*, 12 [37]: «nox intemp <esta> wo Ursache und Wirkung aus den Fugen gekommen zu sein scheinen und jeden Augenblick etwas aus dem Nichts entstehen kann. (Richard Wagner hat es in 'Hagens Wacht' in Musik gesetzt)»; nella versione italiana è *Frammenti postumi 1881-1882*, V, 2, fr. 12 [199].

108 1875, 440. *Brief an Elisabeth Nietzsche in Naumburg*: 19/4/1875

109 1873, 326. *An Gustav Krug in Bonn (Rückseite einer Photographie)*: 14/11/1873

See, for example, F. Passow, *Greichischen Sprache* 1831 (4^o ed) or Wilhelm Pape, *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache* (1842), which connect ἄορι to *intempesta nocte* (around midnight) and render ἄορια with *Unzeit*¹¹⁰ [*bes... zu frühe Zeit*]: so, not only timeless, but too early in time, or too late [*zu spät*], in any case in an inappropriate time [*zur unrechen Zeit*]: untimely, precisely. Then, in these Dictionaries, the ἄ-ωρος recalls the theme of the formless, the negative, the bad, the false, misunderstanding and the misunderstood (as is evident in Plato¹¹¹). And at heart, '*intempestivum*' tells us also this: something awkward, someone who is always out of synch, too early or too late.¹¹² The *intempestivus* always errs; he is a posthumous¹¹³ and premature man at the same time, an anti-hero. And, on the other hand, it is interesting how the observation of R. Small (*Time and Becoming in Nietzsche's Thought*): he recalls that, in Latin, the expression '*intempesta nocte*' also referred to those who have to go home early to sleep and implies that these people are not very well...; or, in any case, implies feeling abnormal. Small, then, connects this feeling to convalesce and to Zarathustra's song: *Das Trunkene Lied*.¹¹⁴

Then, we could do the same research with the Latin/German Dictionaries, and then verify the various authors who use the expression *intempesta nocte*: for example Sallustio, invoked by Nietzsche as a master of style in *Götzen-Dämmerung*;¹¹⁵ or, for example, Cicero (to whom 'Professor'

110 And even in this case the reference is to the *Coefore* of Aeschylus, as well as other classics.

111 The reference is, among others, to Plato, *Republic* IX, 574; *Symposium*, 8, 21.

112 See F. Passow, *Greichischen Sprache*, I, a-k, Leipzig, 1831 (4^o ed): *aoria*: «unzeit, unrechte Zeit»; in relation with the summer: «unzeitiger, zu fruher sommer»; or «mitternacht, nox intempesta»; and also *arioian ekein*: «zu spät kommen»

113 See KSA, 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Sprüche und Pfeile, 15 «Posthume Menschen – ich zum Beispiel – werden schlechter verstanden als zeitgemässe, aber besser gehört. Strenger: wir werden nie verstanden – und daherunsre Autorität».

114 R. Small, *Time and Becoming in Nietzsche's Thought* (London/New York: Continuum, 2010).

115 KSA, 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, *Was ich den Alten verdanke*, 1: «Zum Schluss ein Wort über jene Welt, zu der ich Zugänge gesucht, zu der ich vielleicht einen neuen Zugang gefunden habe – die alte Welt. Mein Geschmack, der der Gegensatz eines duldsamen Geschmacks sein mag, ist auch hier fern davon, in Bausch und Bogen Ja zu sagen: er sagt überhaupt nicht gern Ja, lieber noch Nein, am allerliebsten gar nichts... Das gilt von ganzen Culturen, das gilt von Büchern, – es gilt auch von Orten und Landschaften. Im Grunde ist es eine ganz kleine Anzahl antiker Bücher, die in meinem Leben mitzählen; die berühmtesten sind nicht darunter. Mein Sinn für Stil, für das Epigramm als Stil erwachte fast augenblicklich bei der Berührung mit Sallust». In *De coniuratione Catilinae* by Sallustio, in a passage recalled by all

Nietzsche dedicated several courses).¹¹⁶ And we could continue. But all of this goes beyond the limited space of an essay.

We conclude by pointing to a small philological dilemma, related to the use of *intempesta* and/or *intempesta*. Luca Lupo writes:

in the fragments from 1881 and 1886, Nietzsche uses the form '*intempesta nocte*'. I found it appropriate to consider valid for both fragments the correction '*intempesta*' formulated by publishers for the fragment 12 [37].¹¹⁷ The editors of the Italian edition, in the notes to Fragment 11 [260],¹¹⁸ point out the original writing '*intempesta*' as compared to the form '*intempesta*' used in the translation, but they do not explain the reason for the correction. The same problem exists for the German edition notes. There is no clarification of the need for the correction of the fragment in group 12.

The reason for the correction can be clarified only if the marked difference of meaning between '*intempesta*' and '*intempesta*' is clarified. *Intempesta* usually refers to an event out of time, that is, not synchronous, inappropriate. *Intempesta* instead generally means in 'timeless', and in the *exempla* of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* of Stephanus, there is the entry *nox intempesta*, i.e. the adjective *intempesta* referring to *nox*. Here for *intempesta* the meaning is the deepest part of the night, of such a depth that even time seems to vanish until it disappears. The *Thesaurus* also adds that the expression is a Latinization of the Greek ἀωρονυκτον which Nietzsche himself refers to in the fragments in question.¹¹⁹

We certainly agree with the 'correct' cross-reference to the Latin expression, which in its occurrences, as we have pointed out, is *intempesta nocte* and not *intempesta nocte*. Yet it seems important to us to ask whether it is really (and only) a misunderstanding by Nietzsche: a misunderstanding that the former professor of philology made in the fragments of both 1881 and 1886, and also in the Lessons on the *Coefore*, where Nietzsche (philologist) clearly notes and translates: «ἀωρονυκτον, *intempesta nocte*, in tiefer Nacht». And if it was not by mistake that Nietzsche rendered the *intempesta (nocte)* of the Latin texts with *intempesta*? If

the German/Latin dictionaries in relation to the term *intempesta*, we find: «Postremo ubi multa agitant nihil procedit, rursus intempesta nocte coniurationis principes...»

116 See Cicerone, *Phil*, I, 3, 8: «quumque intempesta nox esset»; *Catil*, I, 4 e *pro Sull*, 18: «nocte ea, quae consecuta est posterum diem Nonar. Nov.»: passages which in German are rendered with '*unzeitig*', or something that happens at an '*unrech*', not '*schicklich*' time.

117 See the Italian edition and translation of Nietzsche's *Work*, by Colli and Montinari: *Opere*, V, II, p. 469.

118 Ivi, p. 266.

119 Lupo, p. 119.

there was a precise lexical choice by Nietzsche, who — from Greek to Latin — preferred to render ἀπορονκτον with *intempestivus* rather than with *intempestus*?

And, in any case, all the more so if it is a misunderstanding or a mistake (or a Freudian slip), it might be interesting not to amend it, as a sign of how, 'in' Nietzsche (beyond the Latin 'letter') in truth the two terms *intempesta* and *intempesta* were overlapping/overlappable.¹²⁰

Indeed, the Nietzschean Untimely is precisely this: together 'in/tempestus' and 'in/tempestivus':

- *out of the time* of his era,
- *not synchronous* with it,
- *inappropriate* with respect to the present,
- *timeless* (without linear time),
- sitting 'on the threshold of the moment',
- full of that untimely depth for which — to refer to the words of Lupo — ordinary time *seems to vanish until it disappears*.

It is basically what, in the Preface of the *Second Untimely Meditation*, the prepositions make 'around' the Zeit: *in-un-gegen-auf-zu/Gunsten*: in a time that disappears and has a new meaning at the same time, in a non-timely manner (*intempesta*, untimely).

Let philologists answer the philological question. In any case, we find this line of inquiry particularly fascinating, which brings us back to the Andler's version in French (*Considérations intempestives*) and the Spanish and Portuguese translation: *Consideraciones Intempestivas / Considerações Intempestivas*.

We say this not to propose also in Italian the choice of the translation 'intempestivo', instead of 'inattuale', but to point out that in Nietzsche 'untimely' there is probably also this — nocturnal, deep, erratic, and stumbling — echo of the *intempesta/intempesta nocte*. And to remind, if it were ever necessary, how much philology and digging there is behind every word and expression chosen by Nietzsche, so much so that we could apply to them what he says (perhaps not coincidentally) about the Latin language, that it is a 'mosaic of words': «Mosaik von Worten, wo jedes Wort als Klang, als

120 Which, among other things, is in part also found in Grimm's Dictionary, which although in connection with 'nox' always use *intempesta*, and in the explanation of *unzeitig* among other things writes: *intempestus, immaturus, praematurus*; while at the entry *unzeitlich* writes *immaturus, intempestivus, importunus*. And certainly also *unzeitig* and *unzeitlich* are not identical; but can we not think that they both merge in the Nietzschean *unzeitgemäss*?

Ort, als Begriff, nach rechts und links und über das Ganze hin seine Kraft ausströmt».¹²¹

That's it: the *Unzeitgemäss*. The Untimely is one of these mosaic words, and with this essay we wanted to try to study the tiles: some of the tiles. Not to carry out a historical-archaeological, or historical-monumental study of Nietzsche, which would not be suitable for Nietzschean scholars, but to avoid the risks of a merely historical-critical study, unable to recognize their own roots: roots that for Nietzsche are, however, historical, and linguistic, and Greek and Latin.

What I am today, where I am today — at a height where I no longer speak with words but with lightning bolts — , oh, how far I still was from this back then! — But I sighted land — I did not deceive myself for a moment about path, sea, peril — and success! The great tranquility in the promising, the happy looking-out on a future which shall not remain only a promise! — Here every word is experienced, profound, inward; it is not lacking in what is most painful, there are words in it that are actually bleeding. But a wind of great freedom blows through it all; wounds themselves make for no objection. — The way I understand the philosopher, as a terrible explosive before which all is in danger, the way I separate my concept of «the philosopher» miles and miles from a concept which still includes even a Kant, not to speak of academic 'ruminants' and other professors of philosophy: this essay gives an invaluable lesson therein, even granted that what is basically expressed here is not 'Schopenhauer as Educator', but rather its opposite, 'Nietzsche as Educator'. Considering that at that time my trade was that of a scholar and that perhaps I also knew my trade, the harsh piece of scholarly psychology which appears suddenly in this essay in not without significance: it expresses the feeling of distance, the profound certainty about what my task would be and what would simply be means, interlude, and side-work. It is my wisdom to have been many things and many places in order to be able to be one thing — in order to be able to come to one thing. For a time I also had to be a scholar. — [*Ecce homo, Untimely Meditations, 3*]

121 KSA, 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung, Was ich den Alten verdanke*, 1:

LUCA LUPO
NIETZSCHE AND THE DEMON OF TIME¹

Introduction

The figure of the demon plays a significant role in the work of Nietzsche.² Nietzsche entrusts to this figure the first, most important and explicit communication of the Eternal Return in the aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science*.³ What could be the sense of the eternal return revelation entrusted to a demon? When you consider the usual Nietzschean accuracy in the construction of texts and of their texture, it is to rule out the possibility of a simply ornamental use of a literary *topos*, especially when you consider how crucial this text is. Although this aspect has already been effectively highlighted,⁴ it is worth returning on our first question about the nature of the demon, starting from its origin and its function in Nietzsche and in the traditions which Nietzsche draws on and to which he refers.

These include in particular the Greek tradition.⁵ I will try to show how the figure of this demon in the aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* refers, above all, to this tradition, particularly to the pre-platonic one. The reference to the Greeks constitutes the background and the main theme of the context in which the eternal return revelation appears in *The Gay Science*, as it is proved by the succession of the last three aphorisms of the fourth book, where the aphorism 341 occupies a central and strategic position in the textual architecture.

1 Translated from Italian by prof. Vincenzo Continanza.

2 See the term «Dämon» in Paul van Tongeren, Gerd Schank and Herman Siemens (ed. by), *Nietzsche Wörterbuch*, Bd. 1 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2005), pp. 553–572. In this text it's possible to find a detailed map of the occurrences of the term «demon» in Nietzsche's works and of the relative themes connected to it.

3 See KSA 3, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (FW)*, aph 341.

4 On the problem of the demon in this text see Jörg Salaquarda, 'Der Ungeheure Augenblick', *Nietzsche Studien*, 17 (1988), 317–337. The complete text of the aphorism can be found *infra* at 2.3.

5 Van Tongeren et al., p. 522.

A survey of occurrences makes it plausible that the «epiphany» of the demon in the aphorism 341 can be in continuity with and related to other epiphanies that date back to the period of *The Birth of Tragedy*. These can therefore be read as anticipations of the text contained in *The Gay Science*. In this sense, a further aim of my contribution is to show how the main ideas of the aphorism 341 are rooted in the period of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Considering these anticipations, the aphorism 341 would be an expression of the tragic thought and of the Dionysian vision and the figure of the demon appearing in this text could be considered a decisive epiphany of the Dionysian and, more generally, of the Tragic. The essential reason for the presence of the demon in the aphorism 341 would be closely linked to the more archaic semantics of the word «demon» and the experience described in the text would have something to do with the experience of the Tragic as a radical experience of temporality and hence of what can be considered the *proprium* of existence itself.

1. *The demon in the Greek preplatonic tradition*

The etymology of *dàimon* refers to the terms *dàiomai*⁶ and *dàis* which respectively indicate the act of making the parts, divide, distribute, and the assigned portion of food, the meal. From this area which recalls daily practices — significantly nourishment, something essential for the preservation of life, synecdoche of life itself, at a later time the term *dàimon* took over the meaning of «distribution power». What the demon distributes will be our fate, the part that each man is assigned to in general, but also the particular fate that concerns us at any given moment.

In Homer the term indicates an «impersonal divine power», the god of fate. *Dàimon* belongs to the semantic family of terms like *meros*, *mereo*, *mèiromai*, *moira* (part of a territory or part of your life) summing up the sense of «distribution», «fate» and «divinity».

The main orientation of the Greek etymological science links the semantics of *dàimon* to the sanskrit *bhaga* (part, destiny, master). In the Vedic tradition, *bhaga* is the «attributor» and «distributor» god, the

6 Cfr. Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, t. 1 (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1968); Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bd. 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1960). Similarly to Frisk, see Giovanni Semerano, *Le origini della cultura europea*, vol. II, *Dizionari etimologici, basi semitiche delle lingue indeuropee*, *Dizionario della lingua greca* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994).

analogue of the Greek *dàimones* meaning those who do and assign the parts.

«The whole Greek tradition uses them to distinguish between the happy and the unhappy man», the one who is supported by the demon and those who are not. In the Archaic and Classical Eras, the demon is thus often related «to the sphere of the gods of fate, unless he represents himself the happy or unhappy fate».⁷

In its very etymology the *demonic* reveals an inner ambivalence. You can record a series of ambivalences, «if not ambiguities» concerning «the register of actions attributed to the *daimon*, actions that can be placed at the same time outside or within the individual: as an indefinite power» actually, «the *dàimon* can make the wind blow onto the sea or inspire irrational thoughts».⁸

The demon itself can be imagined both outside and inside of an individual and it is «at the same time an objectified figure and the effect of the actions that it is believed to be able to accomplish: it is a regulatory deity who punishes all *hybris* and alternatively distributes to men fortune and misfortune, but it is also fate itself, favorable or unfavorable: the avenger genius, but, at the same time, its own victim who declares to be ‘possessed by the daemon’».⁹

More generally, a semantic recon of the literary and philosophical preplatonic lexicon reveals five different uses of the term «demon». The word can mean a specific deity (e.g. Aphrodite, Apollo or Zeus), more often an undetermined divine power, an avenging spirit, the souls of the dead, the tutelary deities, but, to a largely predominant extent, a divinity of fate, the destiny, considered as a «constitutive idea for the notion of *dàimon*».¹⁰

In Theognis «no man can be considered happy, poor, bad, good without the intervention of a *daimon*»¹¹ while, according to Pindar, «success does

7 Andrei Timotin, *La démonologie platonicienne. Histoire de la notion de daimon de Platon aux derniers néoplatoniciens* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012) p. 15. For an up to date review of the preplatonic notion of *daimon*, albeit only propedeutic and introductory to the study of platonic demonology, which is the main object of the essay, I refer to the recent work by Timotin; but it doesn't seem he adds anything really new on the preplatonic notion of *daimon* with respect to Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1951).

8 Timotin, p. 35

9 Ivi.

10 Ivi, p. 19.

11 Teognide, *Eulogies*, l. 166, cit. in Timotin, p. 19.

not depend on men. It is the demon who bestows it. He will elevate one and his hand will knock way down the other».¹² Pindar and Theognis yet, highlight, respectively, both the element of «genealogical» destiny and the individual character of the demon: Pindar speaks of a *daimon ghenéthlios*, the «guardian angel» of the family, «an hereditary angel who oversees the birth and fate of descendants»,¹³ while in Theognis is certified, even if in a confused way, the identity of «the figure of the personal genius with the idea of individual destiny».¹⁴

These brief considerations leads us to notice how it cannot be of little importance and cannot remain without effect Nietzsche's familiarity with Theognis and Pindar, known and investigated in depth by the young Nietzsche, authors who definitely direct the semantics of the term towards this direction.

Being able to adapt to adverse circumstances, being able to welcome the good fortune, to be aware of the ephemeral nature of human affairs are invariable characteristics of the morality in the classical era. In that context, the figure of the demon appears, «not only as a regulator deity who implacably punishes the *hybris* of mortals but also as the personification of fate, the deliverer of misfortunes and prosperity unpredictably alternating each other».¹⁵ In tragedy the idea of the demon is often used «as a regulatory deity punishing the excesses and allows a fair alternation between good and bad luck».¹⁶

More generally it can be said that the idea of *dàimon* in preplatonic Greek literature turns around «the concept of a 'distribution'» (of destiny, of good and evil, of justice). It is particularly interesting for our discussion to note the idea of the *daimon* indicating the assignment of a destiny to be understood as *the time allotted and the direction of its use*: the etymological science that relates *dàimon* to *dàiomai* (to share, to separate) and to *datèomai* (to portion out, to divide, to distribute), suggests a semantic contiguity with the ancient Indian term *dati* (to cut) joined to an ending that recalls the Armenian '*ti*', meaning 'time'. This conjecture suggests an etymology of *dàimon* linked to terms that indicate the act of cutting the time, or assigning chunks of time.

12 Pindar, *Pythians*, VIII, ll. 76–77 cit. in Timotin, p. 20.

13 Timotin, p. 22.

14 Ivi.

15 Ivi, p. 21.

16 Ivi, p. 20.

In philosophy¹⁷ the ambivalence of the demonic can be traced back to Empedocles, in the sense of the idea, rather widespread in ancient times, that two demons, one good and one evil, accompany the destiny of each man from his birth on;¹⁸ more generally, from a purely cosmological point of view, the idea of *dàimon* as «the *physis* and *eimarméne* that governs the transformations occurring in the world of becoming [changing forms]». Similarly Parmenides called the *dàimon* the *anánche* that «he places ‘at the heart of the world’ and ‘that governs all things’», and is «the source of all painful birth and every union pushing the female to join with the male and again, conversely, the male to join with the female».¹⁹ *Dàimon* is identified by Parmenides with the «principle of becoming that regulates and limits all that exists, and that Parmenides also called *Dike*».²⁰

The demon then, has to do with time in many respects: with regard to the transformations and becoming, as we have just seen, as an entity that assigns time (presiding over birth and death and thus establishing inviolable boundaries to our existence); because it determines its quality and inclination (happy and unhappy); because his work and his influence is not limited to the individual but involves the generations. In this sense, his nature is transindividual and transgenerational, and represents a connecting element between the generations: it connects the actions of the fathers with the actions of the children; it is the thread along which the time line unfolds and it makes sure that the fate of the latter draws nourishment and strength from the fate of the former; for better or for worse. Finally, the demon has to do with the punctual, instantaneous form of time; it has to do with time also in the way in which it manifests and presents himself, since when he does, he does so in a sudden way.²¹ In the Homeric tradition the demon bursts suddenly in, influencing and directing the actions of humans. It «manifests himself mainly with spontaneous, unforeseeable actions»;²² because of this specific tract he has been called «*Augenblicksgott*», the god of the moment.²³

17 Timotin quite rightly observes how the philosophical use of the term *dàimon* doesn't start with Plato and is not limited to him but it dates back to Heraclitus, Empedocles and Parmenides; this notion is also to be considered at the crossroad between the religious and the philosophical world (cfr. Ivi, p. 36).

18 Ivi, p. 23.

19 Parmenides, fr. B 12 DK cit. in Timotin, p. 21.

20 Timotin, p. 21.

21 Ivi, p. 16.

22 Ivi, p. 17 and relative footnote.

23 Ivi. The definition belongs to Hermann Usener.

2. Epiphanies of the demon in Nietzsche

2.1. First epiphany: Silenus

The aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* is certainly among the most important for its reference to the demon. Here in fact a demon is not just mentioned or only an object of reflection, but it takes an active part to communicate for the first time the idea of eternal return. This is an exceptional circumstance but not entirely new, when the demon speaks in the works of Nietzsche: it is necessary to go back to the time of *The Birth of Tragedy* to hear his voice for the first time: in this work and in the first of the five *Prefaces to unwritten books*, dedicated to the «Pathos of truth». We'll see how the comparison between these texts and the aphorism 341 in *The Gay Science* brings into the open a network of pivotal references and shows a certain thematic continuity. In *The Birth of Tragedy* the demon took the floor for the first time²⁴ in the form of the wise Silenus:

An ancient legend recounts how King Midas hunted long in the forest for the wise Silenus, companion of Dionysos, but failed to catch him. When Silenus has finally fallen into his hands, the King asks what is the best and most excellent thing for human beings. Stiff and unmoving, the daemon remains silent until, forced by the King to speak, he finally breaks out in shrill laughter [*unter gellem Lachen*] and says: 'Wretched, ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation,²⁵ why do you force me to tell you the very thing which it would be most profitable for you not to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing [*nichts zu sein*]. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.'²⁶

24 In a published work: a previous version of the passage, not too different from the one in KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (GT), can be found in *Die Geburt des tragischen Gedanken*, KSA 1, GG, § 2. The Silenus here is not referred to as *demon*.

25 About this exclamation see next footnote.

26 GT, § 3: *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. By Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For an analytical commentary and for the genesis of this passage see Barbara von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche 'Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik' (Kapitel 1–12)* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler Verlag, 1992), p. 127 and ff. Differently from what happens in the first version of the myth in *Die Geburt der Tragischen Gedanken*, 2, Nietzsche here doesn't quote Aristotle, but the whole passage is almost a literal paraphrase from him. The dialogue is taken from the *Eudemos* which is available only in a fragmentary form. (Ref. to Valentin Rose, *Aristotelis Fragmenta* (Lipsia: Teubner 1870), fr. 44 and Olof Gigon, *Aristotelis Opera* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter 1987), fr. 65, pp. 294–295). In the Aristotle version of the myth, Silenus addresses

Midas demands an answer to his radical question, he wants to achieve an ultimate truth, the one concerning the very meaning of life and for that reason he hunts in the forest for the wise Silenus. The king chasing after the wise Silenus provides, in its plasticity, the paradigmatic image of a will to truth that seems to obey a deep, irrevocable, ontological necessity; a will that, as the narrative let us forecast, must be fulfilled at any cost, even the possible self-destruction of the chaser. It's the case, for instance, of Oedipus.²⁷ Midas runs after Silenus to find out something that it would be better for him not to know.

We find here a critical feature of the tragic wisdom: that of handling a truth which should rather remain hidden, because the life of those who look for it is at stake. Through the wise Silenus, a sort of double or *mask* of Dionysus [of which is a follower], the god is indirectly present on the scene. At first the wise god is reluctant, as if he wanted to protect the king from the foolishness of his own quest, his will to know: and at this point, suspended for a moment in between silence and the fatal word, Silenus is called a *demon* and, pressed by his pursuer, finally speaks and reveals the tragic truth.²⁸ A truth whose terrible nature is already contained in the description of the sinister and sarcastic tone used by the demon with the distorted voice he uses to respond to Midas' question.

Addressing Midas, Silenus speaks to everyman whose birth is marked by suffering and transience, to say that this double original condition is unavoidable. The birth, the abandonment of the condition of non-individuation appears as a failure with no way out except through death: in fact, it would be better «to die soon».

In the words of the demon, life seems to be reduced to its essential elements or just to a certain span of time limited by a beginning and an end. The tragedy is exactly in the emotional situation that stems from

Midas saying «you, seed of an evil genius and precarious offspring of hard fortune» [*dàimonos epipònu kai tyches chalepès efèmeron spèrma*]. For Nietzsche's translation see the passage from *GT* quoted above.

Nietzsche is early attracted by the myth of Silenus, a paradigm of Greek pessimism, and as a young philologist, he deals with the *topos*, of which he reconstructs the tradition in his essay *The Florentine Treatise on Homer and Hesiod, their History and their Certamen*, now in KGW, II.1, pp. 271–337. See also the Spanish edition of the text in F. Nietzsche, *Obras Completas* by Diego Sanchez Meca, vol. II, *Escritos filològicos* (Madrid: Tecnos 2013), 233–289 and in particular pp. 245–254.

27 See the footnote *infra*, the reference to the note 19 [131] in KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869–1874*.

28 Silenus is a satyr, and as it is well known, the tragic choir is originally composed of satyrs.

the experience of life as reduced to such elements. But it is above all in knowing as a fact that birth is irreversible and eludes any freedom of choice: the best option, never to be born, is «absolutely unattainable». It is with *this* truth, with this fact that we must come to term. With life as a phenomenon that, from its very beginning, originates and has its zero point in a *non-choice*.²⁹

The figure of the demon tells the truth³⁰ and the truth appears here as «what would be best not to hear». ³¹ It's all about birth and death, the two ends marking the limits within which human lifetime is enclosed. This is therefore a truth about the foundation of such time. Yet; the demonic truth concerns an impossibility: not being born for those who already are. Where, however, «not to be born» and «to be nothing» does not mean the same thing as «not to be». The Silenus response, as a follower of Dionysus, does not refer to annihilation, but to the impossibility of escaping the *principium individuationis* once man has obeyed this principle by being born. The fact that being nothing does not mean the same thing as not to be, as we shall see, leaves the door open to the hope of a return. «Being nothing» therefore alludes rather to not being individuated.

The Apollonian Greek reaction against Silenus truth is known: they reverse this truth through illusion, artistic and mythological creation. Theogony, the representation of a world of gods, concealing the tragic truth, transforms the experience of life, filtering it through the lens of fantasy and changing it into something that is worth living and which is not entirely subject to transience: a partial compensation, a sublimation for men who really have no chance to escape their fate and no choice at all.

In the background of the Apollonian illusion and in a paradoxical continuity with it, Silenus' truth remains and behind his truth the Dionysian way to overcoming the principle of individuation, a way that passes through the direct experience of taking on oneself the tragic laceration of this tragic truth, in view of a return to the original unity of death and rebirth. From Dionysus' anguished smile «the Olympian gods were born,

29 It's so difficult to accept that life starts with a non-choice that humans build up their mythologies about the choice anticipating life as for the case of the Myth of Er in book X of Plato's *Republic*.

30 Not differently from the chorus of Greek tragedy made up of satyrs, that «sees in its vision its lord and master Dionysos [...] and therefore speaks in its enthusiasm [...] oracular and wise words; the chorus which *shares in suffering* is also the wise chorus which proclaims the truth from the heart of the world. This gives rise to that fantastical and seemingly distasteful figure of the wise and enthusiastic satyr who is at the same time 'the foolish man' [...]» (*GT*, § 8).

31 As for the case of Oedipus.

from his tears human beings». Laughter and tears, life and death: in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche describes Dionysus in his ambivalence of «cruel, savage demon» and «mild, gentle ruler»; and in his rebirth «Epopts' hope» rested; a rebirth to foresee as «the end of individuation». «Only in the hope of this» Nietzsche continues «a gleam of joy on the countenance of a world torn apart and shattered into individuals; myth symbolizes this in the image of Demeter, sunk in eternal mourning, who knows no happiness until she is told that she can give birth to Dionysos again³² [*noch einmal*]».³³

2.2. Second epiphany: the insensitive demon

In the first pages of the *Five Prefaces to five unwritten books* entitled *On the pathos of truth* Nietzsche wonders what would a demon say about what we call «with a superb metaphor, 'world history' and 'truth' and 'glory'». ³⁴ And the figure of the demon takes the floor again. Here an insensitive [*gefühlloser*] demon speaks, a demon whose disillusioned sarcasm reminds us of the wise Silenus.³⁵ The demon took the floor to describe through a sort of sceptical meditation, an edifying parable turned upside down, the fate of the human animals as intelligent animals who have discovered knowledge:

In some remote corner of the universe, which has been poured out glimmering in countless solar systems, there was once a planet [*Gestirn*] on which clever animals invented *the gaining of knowledge* [*das Erkennen*]. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of world history; but indeed it was only a minute. After nature had taken breath awhile, the planet froze and the clever animals had to die. And it was time for this to happen. For although they boasted of having gained much knowledge, in the end they have discovered to their great chagrin that all their knowledge was false. They died, and in dying they cursed the truth. That was the nature of these desperate animals that had invented knowledge.³⁶

The parable appears as a kind of meditation on the contrast between

32 The italics is mine.

33 *GT*, § 10.

34 *On the Pathos of Truth*, § 1: Translation by Bruce Armstrong, in F. Nietzsche, *Philosophical Writings*, Reinhold Grimm and Caroline Molina y Vedia (ed. by) (New York: Continuum, 1997), pp. 86–87.

35 A demon without feeling, disillusioned, cold [*gefühlloser*]: the affinity to the wise Silenus who answers with cold sarcasm to Midas' question is to be noted.

36 *On the Pathos of Truth*, § 1. It is notorious that a part of this text will be recalled by Nietzsche as the incipit of *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*.

the cosmic infinity and the limits of terrestrial and human perspective which is unredeemably marked by a transience; this impermanence is made even more tragic and grotesque by comparison with the vast extent of outer space. The human lifespan is nothing compared to the length of world history and this is, in turn, insignificant if compared to the duration of cosmic time. Transience — simply another name for time viewed from the perspective of human life — exposes human knowledge in all its vanity. Humans are intelligent animals but desperate ones: the spatial and temporal infinity they are surrounded by condemns their knowledge as being of very little worth. The final moment proves crucial in letting them become aware of that vanity and to curse the truth is their extreme, useless act.³⁷ The truth here man curses is «the truth to be eternally condemned to untruth [*ewig zur Unwahrheit verdammt*]» since «only faith [*Glaube*] in an accessible truth [*erreichbar*] suits» men. But a truth that can be reached is nothing but «an illusion [*Illusion*] which you can approach with confidence [*zutrauenvoll*]».

In stating the vanity of the human search for truth, as Silenus does in the text from the *Birth of Tragedy*, the demon speaks the truth for the second time. The truth of transience and meaninglessness of human glory. But it is a demon who denies the possibility for rational knowledge to compensate for the lack of meaning of existence. This is not a demon who, like the Socratic demon, denies it moralistically. What humans discovered next to the truth of being condemned to the untruth is their submission to the necessity of time; a double submission: to the endless time of the infinite cosmos and to the limited time of their own existence.

The truth of the demon is actually a truth that returns after being forgotten. As «a vanished dream, blown away», that once someone had 'dreamed', a dream that now the demon forces you to remember. A long passage dedicated to Heraclitus is the premise to his own appearance and to his words. Here we find out that the truth revealed by the demon, «exalted madness of a god!» was already well known to Heraclitus, significantly called «tragic mask [*Tragische Larvae*]», «among men [...] incredible man [*unglaublich*]» incarnation of the Apollonian side of tragic thought.

Heraclitus speaks «as if in himself and in no one else the Delphic principle 'know thyself' had really come true». Paying attention «to the games of noisy children» Heraclitus «actually thought about what other mortals had never thought in such occasions — that is to play the game

37 See *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869 – 1874*, III, 3/2/ *KSA* 7, 19[131], in footnote *infra*.

of the great cosmic child Zeus and the eternal joke of the destruction and rebirth of the world». ³⁸ Nietzsche's allusion is to the known fragment in which Heraclitus identifies our lifetime [*aiòn*] with a child playing *pessèia* [*Pais pàizon pessèuon*], with the reign of a child [*paidòs è basileie*]. ³⁹ What Heraclitus has contemplated is the «supreme performance» on which he has «raised the curtain»; this is the reason why «the immortality

38 *On the Pathos of Truth*, § 1.

39 Heraclitus, fr. 22B52 in Herman Diels, Walter Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1903, and fr. 14 [A18] (Colli numeration) in *La sapienza greca* vol. III *Eraclito*, pp. 34–35, G. Colli (ed. by) (Milan: Adelphi, 1980). Nietzsche repeatedly refers, more or less literally, to this fragment, starting with his writings of philology: [cfr. GOA, vol XIX (= Philologica vol.3), Otto Crusius and Wilhelm Nestle ed by, Lipsia 1913, pag.184: «Das ewig lebendige Feuer, der aiòn, spielt, baut auf und zerstört: der Polemos, jenes Gegeneinander der verschiedenen Eigenschaften, geleitet von der Dike ist nur als künstlerisches Phänomen zu erfassen». This text is based on a lesson Nietzsche taught at the University of Basel for the summer semester of 1872 whose title was *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen*]. Apart from the passage of *On the Pathos of Truth* § 1 contained in the text, the reference to fragment 22 B 52 comes back with an emphasis on the repetitive aspect of the becoming in KSA 1, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, § 7: «And as children and artists play, so plays the ever living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down. From time to time it starts the game anew»; (F. Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, translation by Marianne Cowan (Washington: Regnery Publishing Inc, 1998) and, in the published works, in KSA 5, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, II, § 16 where Nietzsche refers to the «große Kind des Heraklit, heisse es Zeus oder Zufall». If in *On the Pathos of Truth* § 1 Nietzsche identifies the *aiòn/pàis* with Zeus and in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, § 7 personifies [*Aeon*] the concept of time [*aiòn*] expressed in the fragment, identifying it, later on, with fire which turning into earth and water creates and destroys with complete innocence, [*in ewig gleicher Unschuld*], in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, II, § 16, the *aiòn/pàis* is indifferently assimilated to Zeus or to Fate [*Zufall*].

On Nietzschean reception of Heraclitus see e. g. Jackson Hershbell, Stephen Nimis, 'Nietzsche and Heraclitus', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 8 (1979) and Giuliano Campioni, *Studia Nietzscheana* (2014), <http://www.nietzschesource.org/SN/g-campioni-2014>. For an interpretation of Heraclitus fragment see at least Bruno Snell, 'Die Sprache Heraclits', *Hermes* (1926), p. 373n, Clemence Ramnoux, *Vocabulaire et structures du pensée arcaïque chez Heraclite*, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1959); Marcel Conche (ed. by), *Héraclite. Fragments* (Paris: Puf, 1986). For the meaning of the term *aiòn* and for the evolution of its use see Santo Mazzarino *Il pensiero storico classico*, 3 voll., (Laterza: Bari Rome, 1990, 1965–66¹), vol. 3, pp.451 ff.

of mankind needs him», and it's not him «needing the immortality of the man Heraclitus». It is «*the doctrine of the law of becoming and of the game of necessity*».

At the centre of the Heraclitean fragment we find the term «*aiòn*» which means «life in his length», «the time of life that flows like honey», «life in its entirety (Hesiod, Theognis)», «our part [*Moirà*] of life (Pindar)», «the life span determined by fate» but also «death, that is, where the time relentlessly leads to»; «the power man depends on, in a condition of complete impotence». ⁴⁰ The term «*aiòn*» accumulates along the literary tradition, from Heraclitus to Euripides, passing through Pindar, a plurality of existential meanings: «life, duration of life [...], death, fate [...]. This is time, but to the extent that it leads inexorably to the end of life, a time which means fate [...], as well as fate bearer» ⁴¹ something that carries the weight of destiny; ⁴² the «greatest weight», one might dare say. The game that the child-time is playing is a war game, a siege that finally wears us out, where life appears surrounded by death, from all sides. A life that sooner or later will have to capitulate but will vigorously defend its position, until the very end, putting up a fierce struggle. ⁴³ It is still to see if it will do so joyfully or in anguish.

If you think back to the quick survey on the semantics of the word *daimon* in the pre-Platonic tradition offered in the previous pages, there is a clear contiguity if not a coincidence between the words *aiòn* and *dàimon* at the level of the temporality of destiny. Perhaps the juxtaposition of the two terms opens the way to a better understanding of the meaning of the third and most important manifestation of the demon in the works of Nietzsche.

2.3. *Third epiphany: the demon of eternal return*

To better understand the meaning of the third epiphany of the demon in connection with the first two, you should read the aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* in the crucial middle position it occupies between the previous and the next aphorism which concludes the fourth book. In aphorism 340 Nietzsche reflects on Socrates' death. The theme of death as a limit situation, as a fatal moment that allows the manifestation of truth, returns here; it is a moment of truth because it is when the

40 Conche, p. 446.

41 Ivi, p. 447.

42 Ivi.

43 See ivi, p. 448.

masks fall off.⁴⁴ It is at the point of death that, with his last words in which he reminds Crito he «owes Asclepius a rooster», Socrates openly admits that life is a disease: a thought Socrates always had, but always kept hidden. If behind the Socratic wisdom such radical pessimism lies and such a spirit of revenge towards life and if the Greeks will be identified with such wisdom, then we understand why Nietzsche closes the aphorism with this wish: «O friends! We must overcome even the Greeks!». This wish is one of the two crucial points creating a red line among the last three aphorisms of the fourth book of *The Gay Science*. The other is the title, *Incipit tragoedia*, in aphorism 342, following 341, where the demon communicates the thought of eternal return. A careful reading will not miss the theoretical importance of this inverted sequence of ideas: after advocating the need to overcome the Greeks, he announces the beginning of a tragedy. But tragedy is, for Nietzsche, just the highest expression of the Greek spirit and the idea of overcoming it does not mean, therefore, an abandonment of the tragic thought, but rather a return to it. It is a sort of paradoxical movement: to go forward, to overcome the *decadence* represented by Socrates, moving backwards to regain, in a new form, with Zarathustra — and thus through a figure who is external, foreign to the Greek tradition, like the god of Thrace — the spirit of the tragic thought which was lost with Socratism.

Nietzsche's thought on the Eternal Return proclaimed by the demon is therefore introduced and followed by decisive references to Greek culture: Socrates and the tragedy. The textual architecture of the last three aphorisms of the fourth book shows how the tragic Greek spirit is not just the frame but also the transcendental background, so to speak, in which this idea and the figure of the demon are set. What's more, the architecture of the texts seems to show how this tragic Greek spirit fills them both. In this context, Socrates' figure stands as to make a quite clear reference to the demonic sphere, although for contrast: the Socratic demon has in fact, as we will shortly explain, very different characteristics from the demon who speaks in aphorism 341.

An overall view on the last aphorisms of the fourth book of *The Gay Science* should shed some light on the reasons why the voice we hear in aphorism 341 belongs to the same demon who spoke almost ten years before and that we met in the previous epiphanies, in the philosophical period of

44 Cfr. *FW* § 36 and, again the *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869–1874*, III, 3/2, *KSA* 7, 19[131].

the *Birth of Tragedy*: Silenus, Heraclitus,⁴⁵ but especially Dionysus speak up again with him.⁴⁶

45 See the passage in *Ecce Homo (EH)*, Die Geburt der Tragödie, § 3 (F. Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, Aaron Ridley, Judith Norman (ed. by), trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), where Nietzsche claims he can be considered «*the first tragic philosopher*» because he can transpose «the Dionysian into a philosophical pathos». Nietzsche suggests that Heraclitus is his only possible predecessor. He writes «I generally feel warmer and in better spirits in his company than anywhere else». «The affirmation of passing away and destruction that is crucial for a Dionysian philosophy, saying yes to opposition and war, becoming along with a radical rejection of the very concept of 'being' [...] The doctrine of the 'eternal return', which is to say the unconditional and infinitely repeated cycle of all things — this is Zarathustra's doctrine, but ultimately it is nothing Heraclitus couldn't have said too» (*EH*, Die Geburt der Tragödie, § 3). The fact that this reference is made in that part of *EH* dedicated to *GT* seems to validate our argument.

46 On the connection between *FW* § 341 and the concept of Dionysus in his mature writings see the illuminating work by Günter Figal, 'Nietzsches Dionysos', *Nietzsche Studien*, 37 (2008), 51–61. A further element confirming the hypothesis that *FW* § 341 is rooted in the period of *GT*, comes from a fragment (in this case Nietzsche refers to this note explicitly as a *Fragment*) which can be dated in between the summer 1872 and the beginning of 1873, a fragment that has not received, so far, the attention it deserves (with the exception of some cursory references, e.g. Graham Parkes *Composing the Soul. Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 276 and Vasti Roodt, 'Nietzsche and/or Arendt?' in Herman W. Siemans, Vasti Roodt (ed. by), *Nietzsche, Power and Politics. Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 423–424. For more references cfr. van Tongeren, Schank and Siemans, p. 534. Apart from *FW*, § 341, it's only in this early text that we find the expression «loneliest loneliness» [*einsamste Einsamkeit*] and the subject of this note seems to echo themes and atmospheres of the second epiphany of the demon in *On the Pathos of Truth*, § 1. This fragment appears therefore as a hidden link between *On the Pathos of Truth* §1 and *FW*, § 341. Likewise, it's very important the reference to Oedipus as a paradigm of the tragic hero looking for truth, a figure where tragic heroism and philosophy merge.

The «fragment» which is part of the preparatory notes for the project of a *Philosophenbuch* which was later abandoned (see Mario Carpitella and Federico Gerratana in the section dedicated to News and Notes in *KGS*, III/2, pp. 464 and ff.), has the title of: «Oedipus. Soliloquies of the Last Philosopher. A Fragment from a History of Posterity». And he continues: «I call myself the last philosopher because I am the last human being. I myself am the only one who speaks with me, and my voice comes to me as the voice of someone who is dying. Let me commune with you for just one hour, beloved voice, with you, the last trace of memory of all human happiness; with your help I will deceive myself about my loneliness and lie my way into community and love; for my heart refuses to believe that love is

To the Socratic demon Nietzsche opposes the tragic demon who becomes here a medium for the transmutation of the «Dionysian element in the philosophical pathos». ⁴⁷ The tragic demon responds to the denial of life with his statement, through «*the concept of Dionysus himself*» ⁴⁸ which involves «the eternal yes to all things», the «‘the incredible, boundless yes-saying, amen-saying’» of the one «who carries everything that is most difficult about fate», «someone with the hardest, the most terrible insight into reality», and despite having thought «the most abysmal thought», ⁴⁹ nevertheless does not see «an objection to existence, not even to its eternal return», ⁵⁰ already guaranteed to the Greeks by the mysteries, «the triumphant yes to life beyond death and transmutation». ⁵¹

Overcoming Socratism implies the communication of the thought of return, an idea that the demon still proposes in conjectural terms and puts forward as an abysmal possibility, before it pervades with its symbolism the beginning of the zarathustrian tragedy: the sun, guaranteeing and being the

dead; it cannot bear the shudder of the loneliest loneliness [*einsamsten Einsamkeit*] and it forces me to speak as if I were two persons. Do I still hear you, my voice? You whisper when you curse? Do I still hear you, my voice? You whisper when you curse? And yet your curse should cause the bowels of this world to burst! But it continues to live and merely stares at me all the more brilliantly and coldly with its pitiless stars [*Sternen*]; it continues to live, as dumb and blind as ever, and the only thing that dies is — the human being. — And yet! I still hear you, beloved voice! Someone other than I, the last human being, is dying in this universe: the last sigh, *your* sigh, dies with me, the drawn out Woe! Woe! [*das hingezogene Wehe! Wehe!*] sighing around me, Oedipus, the last of the woeful human beings [*der Wehemenschen letzten, Oedipus*]: *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869–1874*, KSA 7, 19[131] in F. Nietzsche, *The Complete Works* vol. 11, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, translation by Richard Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

47 *EH*, Die Geburt der Tragödie, § 3.

48 As Figal quite rightly maintains, the fact that Nietzsche refers to Dionysius with regard to his deepest thought is «anything but a regression or a mythical game. The name corresponds to an experience and, in this sense and only in this sense, we can speak of a «concept of Dionysius» (*EH*, Also sprach Zarathustra, § 6). According to Figal it is a non-christian religious experience. «The name of Dionysus means a philosophical intuition that leads us out of the limiting general validity of the theoretical rationality: cfr. KSA 5, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, § 36»: see Figal, p. 60.

49 And therefore having thought about *time* in the most abysmal way.

50 *EH*, Also sprach Zarathustra, § 6.

51 KSA 13, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1888–1889*, 24[1], § 9.

image of the cyclicity and the sunset announcing a later dawn: metaphors of the repetition of the identical.⁵²

Unlike the Socratic demon, the demon of the aphorism 341 *doesn't say no*. It is not a nihilist, decadent and neurotic demon, who denies or tries to brake the action. It is not an inner voice, a gnawing worm, but rather, an outside voice,⁵³ a voice from the world. It does not seek revenge and does not curse. It is, in its immanence, a transcendental force, an expression of necessity.⁵⁴ Here the demon says how things are in relation to time; It describes the relationship between being and time and the subordination of being to time. Here, then, the demon reveals itself as *dàimon* in the etymological sense already described: distributing power of portions of existence and *ananche*. It is time itself, as a representation of temporality in action on life, that here speaks and reveals its nature; thus the demon as an epiphany of time, *dàimon/aiòn* playing the eternal game of death and rebirth.⁵⁵ Time that in order to become accessible to humans can only speak in the intermediate, ambivalent form,⁵⁶ half divine and half human, that the classical preplatonic tradition teaches us to be characteristic of the demon and that makes the event of its manifestation possible.

The heaviest weight. — What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' 'Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.' 'If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing,

52 The metaphor must not be taken literally, thinking about a naïve identification of the thought of eternal recurrence with the cycles of nature.

53 See Figal, p. 57.

54 The thought of the eternal recurrence can be feared only if one «wants to be different from what one is» (Figal, p. 57).

55 Heraclitus, DK 22B52.

56 Between the divine and/or non-human animal and the human: if the Socratic demon is in the middle between the human and the divine, the Dionysian demon is in between the non-human animal and the human world, according to the hybrid nature of the Silenus.

‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?⁵⁷

The *Augenblicksgott*, a demon which *suddenly* manifests itself, comes back here and talks with him, «the Dionysiac wisdom of tragedy»:⁵⁸ as in the origins of the tragedy the chorus of satyrs used to do, the demon of the aphorism reminds the recipient of a fatal truth. The moment of revelation is ambivalent; a Magritte-like, in transit, crepuscular and, at the same time, auroral kind of time. The effect of the words of the demon is ambivalent: it can break down or glorify. The demon can be *kakodàimon* or *eudaimon*: *eudaimonìa* implies having found a reconciliation with necessity, with the lifetime understood in the extreme and Dionysian form of the eternal return and *kakodaimonìa* is the absence of this reconciliation.⁵⁹

The entire aphorism contains the basic elements of tragedy and can be thought of as a sort of paradigmatic condensation of the tragedy itself: the stake is to accept life as it is, in its truth made of contrasts and tensions, in the paroxysmal amplification that its repetition implies.

The communication of the eternal return takes place in a dreamlike atmosphere, somehow suspended between sleep and wakefulness,⁶⁰ revealing in this way an Apollonian element, while its possible effect on the recipient oscillates between curse and blessing, two contrasting, opposing states, to which one might react with tears or with laughter, in a tension which recalls the game of opposites that characterizes the Dionysian element. The possible truth of the revelation of the demon can only produce extreme effects: it can lift up or break down, boost or crush; kill or vivify. Under no circumstances does it provide for any intermediate solutions, while the acceptance of the eternal return would require a superhuman sort of acceptance of opposites and of their belonging together.⁶¹

57 *FW*, § 341: *The Gay Science*, Bernard Williams (ed. by), transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

58 *GT*, § 7.

59 In the light of this interpretation, it doesn't seem particularly appropriate to associate, as Figal does, the evil aspect of the demon and the Cartesian evil genius (cfr. Figal, p. 57).

60 Cfr. Luca Lupo, *Intempesta nocte. Eterno ritorno e tempo soggettivo* in Maria Cristina Fornari (ed. by), *La trama del testo* (Lecce: Milella, 2000), pp. 113–121.

61 Cfr. KSA 12, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, 12, 2 [110], and Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Italian translation by Franco Volpi (Milan: Adelphi, 1994), p. 237.

The words of the demon encourage to take a decision, in the etymological sense they operate a cut: dividing the lives of those who experience them in two separate parts, the one before and the one after them. This cut is a peculiar experience of time: it's the moment of the revelation of the return, which allows you to turn the curse into a blessing, the saying no into saying yes, the demon in a god, Silenus in Dionysus. This thought can turn into the heaviest burden unless you love life as it is, in its contradictory essence. Just like the Apollonian dream and the Dionysian euphoria, the moment of revelation breaks through ordinary temporality and a vertigo takes hold of the recipient, suspended over the abyss that opens up beneath him, the abyss opened by the suspension of the *principium individuationis*; he is enraptured, terrified and delighted in front of the vision of the need for a double connection: of events, of parts of our individual lives; of our lives with the lives, the events and the experiences of the world, back and forth, endlessly, in their unshakable contradictions and variety. The awareness of this double connection, lived in the moment, can lead to the overcoming of the *principium individuationis* but also to the shipwreck of those who live it.

The three different epiphanies of the demon we have examined can therefore be thought of as three different representations of the tragic thought. In each representation is a configuration of the truth that is expressed: the truth is that we are subject to the need, we cannot choose, that we are separate from the source, that the separation from the source is the greatest evil, and that the best thing would be to go back to origin as soon as possible (Silenus truth); that we are superseded; we are not the centre of the universe (the truth of the insensitive demon); that the same returns and we are embedded in necessity. And the return of the identical implies the great fundamental return, the return to the same original condition of not being, and therefore of not being anything identified.

What about the demon in every epiphany? The demon always tells the truth, or rather, his saying has always something to do with the truth; and the truth about what? About the existence and its forms. But to tell the truth about the existence means telling the truth about time and its forms: the first epiphany about being born and dying; the second epiphany on the transience and the fact that abstract knowledge, knowledge alone separated from experience, is impotent toward transience itself; the third epiphany about the eternal return that redeems birth and death and is presented as an overcoming of transience. When the demon manifests himself he expresses the truth of time, and the moment of its manifestation is a time of truth, an apocalyptic time of revelation.

BENEDETTA ZAVATTA

«TO BE GREAT IS TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD»:
THE UNTIMELINESS OF THE GREAT MAN IN
EMERSON AND NIETZSCHE

«To be great is to be misunderstood»:¹ this succinct remark of Emerson's was copied by Nietzsche into a notebook he maintained during 1878, the year when, abandoning his professorship at Basel and his circle of Wagnerian friends, he decided to set out on the difficult path which would carry him toward «becoming what he was» — that is to say, toward developing an original philosophy. He had been a reader of Emerson since his schooldays at Schulpforta and had taken up his works again during the composition of the *Untimely Meditations*. But in this new period of growing solitude and independence Emerson became still more important to him. He found consolation in the pages of the American writer for the rigours of that life as a *fugitivus errans* for which he had now opted: «Emerson, with his *Essays*, has always been a good friend to me and has cheered me even in my darkest moments», notes Nietzsche in 1888.² Emerson's *Essays* are indeed a kind of breviary of «self-reliance», conceived as an aid and consolation to whomever resolves to no longer conform with the mass of mankind but rather to cultivate a distinctive individuality of their own. «He that writes to himself writes to an eternal public», asserted Emerson, urging his readers to rise above the judgment of others.³ And it was «to himself» that Nietzsche began to write from 1876 on. He proudly states as much — «*mihi ipsi scripsi*» — in the letter that he sent in 1882, accompanying a copy of his *Gay Science*,

1 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in: *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, *CW*), 2, p. 34. See KSA 8, *Nachlass* 1878 30 [104], p. 540. Nietzsche in fact slightly mis-cites the German edition of Emerson's *Essays*, namely *Versuche*, translated by Fabricius, Hannover 1858. Fabricius's translation reads «gross sein ist misverstanden sein» (p. 43); Nietzsche's note reads «Gross sein ist missverstanden werden».

2 KSA 14, pp. 476–477.

3 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in *CW* 2, p. 89. See KGW I/4, *Nachlass* 1867–1868 58[60], p. 501: «Emerson, p. 114. He who writes for himself writes for an immortal public».

to his old friend Erwin Rohde.⁴ The years between these two dates are the darkest years of Nietzsche's life: years in which he was wracked by illness and abandoned not only by the reading public but even by his closest friends.

Already in the winter of 1870–1871 Nietzsche had come to understand that his true vocation was not philology but rather philosophy and had applied for the Basel chair in this latter discipline that was left vacant by Teichmüller's departure. His application, however, was rejected, just as his first book — *The Birth of Tragedy*, written to support the cultural project of Wagnerianism — had been rejected by his academic colleagues and by the reading public. But Nietzsche continued to cultivate his passion for philosophy in private, preparing a second lengthy book on Greek culture. This time Nietzsche wanted to write about the birth of philosophy, which had carried Greece out of the sphere of mythical thinking and in the direction of science.⁵ Wagner, however, dissuaded him from this new project and convinced him rather to contribute to the Bayreuth project by addressing contemporary cultural issues. Nietzsche, consequently, wrote the series of public lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* and drew up a plan for some thirteen *Untimely Meditations*, beginning with an attack on «cultural Philistinism» as personified by David Strauss. But after the first Bayreuth festival of 1876, which struck Nietzsche as no more than a farce, he came to understand that the direction taken by Wagner and the Wagnerians was one profoundly in conflict with his own ideals. He entered a deep existential crisis. The chronic illness that now befell him was a way out of this crisis, obliging him as it did to request an extended sabbatical for health reasons. He spent this sabbatical in Sorrento with Paul Rée and other friends, where he composed the *Sorrento Notebooks* that formed the initial nucleus of his book *Human, All Too Human*.

«Were it not for the feeling I have of the great fruits that my new philosophy will surely bear», wrote Nietzsche to his friend Malwida von Meysenbug, who had been his host in Sorrento, «I might well feel frightfully alone».⁶ But the illness and the solitude that Nietzsche experienced in this period were just a small taste of what awaited him in the years ahead. The publication of *Human, All Too Human* in May 1878 created a kind of void around Nietzsche. The publisher spoke of a «terrible failure»: of the 1000

4 KSB 6, p. 226.

5 See Paolo D'Iorio, *Le voyage de Nietzsche à Sorrente* (Paris: CNRS Éditions 1994), p. 12, and Benedetta Zavatta, *L'impossibile alleanza tra filosofia e arte*, in: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Su verità e menzogna in senso extramorale* (Milan: Adelphi, 2015), pp. 37–57.

6 KSB 5, p. 331.

copies printed only 120 were sold.⁷ Not even his friends understood what he was trying to achieve with this book. Only Malwida von Meysenbug kept a kind of faith with him; even she did so, however, in the hope that he would pull himself together and retrace his steps. Nietzsche, though, refused to back down and continued to write books in this new vein and spirit: the second volume of *Human, All Too Human* followed by *Daybreak* and *The Gay Science*. Very few were capable of appreciating the worth of the philosophy expounded in these books and of meeting Nietzsche on his own intellectual level. In these years of isolation he drew comfort almost daily, on the difficult path he was following, from the works of his beloved American author. «When the gods come among men, they are not known», said Emerson to Nietzsche through the pages of the *Essays*. «Jesus was not; Socrates and Shakespeare were not».⁸ During the summer of 1881 Nietzsche took a copy of the *Essays* with him on his long vigorous walks through the Engadine, filling its margins with notes. «I have never», he confessed, «felt so at home in a book — felt so much, indeed, as if the home were my own.... I cannot praise it, for it is too close to me».⁹ During the following autumn Nietzsche filled an entire notebook with extracts from the *Essays*. These mainly concern that path of liberation which leads the individual to «become what he is», that is to say, to cultivate his own authentic nature and to defend this nature against all external interference. To do this one must become indifferent to praise or blame and make oneself rather one's own judge and lawgiver. But even more than it served to free him from the judgment of others, Nietzsche's reading of Emerson served to relieve him of the suffering that others' hostile judgments of him had initially caused him. The teaching that underlies all Emerson's philosophy is that a great man is able to make a virtue of necessity, that is to say, to draw advantage from every circumstance. The key to doing so is to place all seemingly adverse events in a different perspective — one which throws light upon aspects of these events that we may not yet have considered and thus allows a different interpretation of these latter. In the case in point, reading Emerson allowed Nietzsche to understand that, since the time he lived in was characterized by mediocrity and conformism, the «untimeliness» evidenced by his isolation and by the lack of response to his books could be interpreted as a sign of high moral and intellectual stature. Thus, suffering is transformed into joy: «Have we ever complained about being misunderstood, misjudged, misidentified,

7 KSB 5, p. 419.

8 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in *CW* 2, p. 18; see KSA 9 *Nachlass* 1882 17[17], p. 668.

9 KSA 9 *Nachlass* 1881 12[68], p. 588.

defamed, misheard and ignored?» asks Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, and goes on, in proud and arrogant tone: «This is precisely our lot... and also our distinction; we wouldn't honour ourselves enough if we wanted it otherwise». ¹⁰ The «terrible failure» with the reading public of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* was matched only by the failure of Nietzsche's new great project, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This time, however, the lack of public reaction awoke in Nietzsche no longer trepidation but rather a sense of triumph: «Every word of my *Zarathustra* is victorious scorn, and more than scorn, for the ideals of this age», he wrote to his sister in 1883. «It is absolutely *necessary* that I be misunderstood; indeed, I must myself see to it that I am *badly* understood and *despised*». ¹¹ To this course, then, described by Nietzsche's own life — leading from pain, through the stoic bearing of pain, to arrive in the end at affirming joy — there corresponds a theoretical itinerary in which the focus is placed on the relation between the great man and the age he lives in. That sustained reading of Emerson which was so essential to Nietzsche as regards his own spiritual development was no less necessary to him, on the theoretical plane, as a way of exploring and analysing this key topic.

1. *Man As Individual vs. «Mass Man»*

In terms of philosophical conceptions dominant during the first half of the 19th Century the «great man» was seen as an expression of the «Spirit of the Age» and thus as guide for the era into which he was born. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel spoke of «world-historical individuals» who

desired and brought to being not any object of their own imagination or opinion but rather a just and necessary reality: those who know, having had their own inward revelation of it, what is henceforth the bent of Time and of Necessity. ¹²

Since the discoveries and exploits of history's heroes work to the benefit of humanity as a whole, these heroes become the objects of gratitude or —

10 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) § 371, p. 236.

11 KSB 6, p. 439.

12 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 83.

as in the work of another intellectual luminary of the first half of the 19th Century, Carlyle — even of veneration. In his successful lecture-series published in 1841 as *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, Carlyle described, in terms of six distinct types, that figure of the «hero» who, Carlyle argued, has consistently acted, thanks to his superior energy and powers of intuition, as the motive force of human historical progress. To such heroes, he went on, the «common man» owes the tribute of veneration and a trusting submission to their will. Carlyle's hope, then, in essence, was that there would arise a new aristocracy of talent: an ordering of society whereby the less gifted would sacrifice themselves to smooth the path of the more gifted, which latter would then guide and govern the world in ways that would benefit all.

A noticeable feature of philosophies of the latter half of the 19th Century, however, is the hero's loss of organic connection with his community. He no longer either anticipates or accelerates historical development but rather presents himself more and more as a force resistant to that general tendency of the age which consists in a significant levelling down, toward the «lowest common denominator», of human energies and capacities. Representative here is Schopenhauer's conception of the genius as the custodian of a truth which is inaccessible to other people. The genius is distinguished by a superior power of intuition which enables him, as if by a miracle, to enter into contact with the world's very essence. It was this deeply aristocratic Schopenhauerian conception of the genius that inspired Wagner's project. His «music dramas», Wagner believed, being a force that gave birth to new myths, would be able to put a check on the dangerous individualism of the society of his day and to make a spiritual whole once again of a society threatened by disaggregation and disintegration. He envisaged the formation, around his theatre in Bayreuth, of a community of disciples who would in turn act as the animating nucleus for cultural reform on a much larger scale.

Although Nietzsche shared this idea of the genius as a force of resistance against all those currents in modern society which were contributing to the «levelling» of humanity down to the standard of the «common man», he still reacted strongly against Wagner's project and against the metaphysical conception of genius on which it was founded. In the *Untimely Meditations*, ostensibly written in support of the great composer, Nietzsche in fact attacked him, citing against him Emerson's arguments defending the value of individualism. One of the things that most attracted Nietzsche in Emerson's *Essays* was precisely the mistrust that is often displayed in these texts with regard to any collective action wherein individuals receive their

aims and goals from others and with regard to that conception of genius as a «special gift» upon which such ideologies implicitly rely. Emerson believed rather that a general reform of culture could issue only from a reinforcement of individuality, from a multiplication of different opinions, and from each individual's cultivation of his or her own specific talent, which was not to be given up for any reason. He responded to Carlyle's book on the figure of the hero with a series of lectures published under the title *Representative Men*. This choice of the adjective «representative» clearly bespeaks the fundamental difference between Emerson's vision and Carlyle's. Whereas the greatness of the figure whom Carlyle calls the «hero» consists in his being more than human — i.e. in being, at bottom, something «inhuman» — the greatness of Emerson's «great man» consists precisely in his being *fully* human, that is to say, representative of that power to which any human being can aspire, provided he or she express all the potentialities that inhere within them. The «great man», when reconceived as «representative man», becomes both a warning and an encouragement to the so-called «common man». «Great men exist that there may be greater men»,¹³ stated Emerson very clearly in the first, synoptic lecture of the seven that make up *Representative Men*. In short, for Emerson great men serve to remind us that our potential is much greater than the powers which we presently display. «We but half express ourselves and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents», wrote Emerson in his essay *Self-Reliance*.¹⁴ The hero, then, is not the one who effortlessly accomplishes extraordinary achievements but rather the one who, trusting in his or her own individual worth, decides to set out on that hard path of self-perfection which will eventually lead him or her to the full expression of their own distinct individuality. This path is a hard one not only because it involves commitment, concentration and frustrations but also, and above all, because it draws the individual into conflict with society. In Emerson's vision «society» tends always to conformity; it thus represents, by definition, an offence to, and an assault on, human dignity, since this latter consists in being able to express one's own being in an autonomous and original way.

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members... The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion... Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist.¹⁵

13 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*, in: *CW* 4, p. 20

14 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in: *CW* 2, p. 28.

15 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in: *CW* 2, p. 29.

Society opposes the independent thinker because it sees in him or her a threat to its own existence. «Beware», says Emerson in the passage from his essay *Circles* quoted by Nietzsche in the third of the *Untimely Meditations*,

when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration has broken out in a great city and no man knows what is safe or where it will end. There is not a piece of science but its flank may be turned tomorrow; there is not any literary reputation, not the so-called eternal names of fame, that may not be revised and condemned... the things which are dear to men at this hour are so on account of the ideas which have emerged on their mental horizon and which cause the present order of things as a tree bears its apples. *A new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits.*¹⁶

To live as an individual means to feel the need to rethink for one's own self everything that is usually taken for granted. There is nothing so sacred that such an individual does not feel want to put it into question and to subject it to the scrutiny of his or her own judgment. Clearly, such a person is extremely dangerous for the society's existence which, for its part, is founded upon the one value of stability. «People wish to be settled;» writes Emerson in the essay *Circles*, «only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them».¹⁷ For Emerson, in the end, whoever aspires to live as an individual must be prepared to become «untimely», indeed to be forced to struggle against his or her times. At present, Emerson complains, the few thinking minds are confined to the margins and «society» is mostly composed of men who live like animals, i.e. without awareness of their own distinct individuality. Democracy seems to favour «the quadruped interest» since these latter «have the advantage of numbers» and it is this that counts.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Emerson was confident that «mass Man» was capable of being educated into individuality.¹⁹ It is for just this reason that that individual who has succeeded

16 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: second series*, in *CW III*, pp. 183–184. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, in: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 193. Nietzsche proceeded without due philological care in his citing of this passage from Emerson's essay *Circles*. The passage cited is in fact a fusion of *two* passages from Emerson's essay that lie, in the original text, more than a dozen lines apart.

17 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in: *CW 2*, p. 189.

18 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*, in: *CW 6*, p. 134.

19 Emerson wrote: «Masses are rude, lame, unmade, pernicious in their demands and influence, and need not to be flattered but to be schooled. I wish not to concede anything to them but to tame, drill, divide and break them up, and draw individuals out of them». (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*, in: *CW 6*, p. 132).

in bringing his own personality to maturity should not withdraw from society but remain within it; simply by being him- or herself, such a true individual indirectly promotes the diffusion of the culture of individuality.

In the *Untimely Meditations*, ostensibly written in support of Wagner's cultural project, Nietzsche in fact endorses Emerson's vision and opposes it to the theoretical presuppositions of Wagner's project, i.e. the special status of artistic genius and his authority over the masses. Following Emerson, indeed, Nietzsche pursues the aim of a reinforcement of individuality and exhorts his readers to lead their lives according to a measure and a law of their own choosing. In *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche supports a «monumental» attitude to history, i.e. he invites his readers to focus on the biographies of great men. Monumental history can instill courage into human beings but needed, for just this reason, to be supplemented by the «critical» attitude. In other words, the «great man» should be considered — as Emerson suggested — as «representative». Nietzsche emphasizes the degree of falsification that is always required in order to make an historical figure appear «great»; a veil has to be cast over much, and many rough edges smoothed away, because no man was ever perfect. The notion of the «great man» is just a fiction of historyography and serves to awaken, in the so called common man, his own faith in himself:

Of what use, then, is the monumentalistic conception of the past, engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times, to the man of the present? He learns from it that the greatness that once existed was, in any event, once *possible* and may thus be possible again; he goes his way with more cheerful step, for the doubt which assailed him in weaker moments, whether he was not perhaps desiring the impossible, has now been banished.²⁰

In the third of the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche completes his attack on the «cult of the hero» by demolishing the metaphysical conception of «genius» on which it rests. Drawing again on the philosophy of Emerson, Nietzsche outlines the figure of «Schopenhauer as educator» as a figure contraposed to the real historical Schopenhauer. Nietzsche assigns to his «Schopenhauer as educator» the role of provoking a process of liberation in other individuals. Not, indeed, a liberation *from* desire, as might accurately have been said of the real-historical Schopenhauer but rather, on the contrary, a liberation *through* desire. Like the «self-reliant» individual of Emerson, Nietzsche's «Schopenhauer as educator» liberates people

20 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, in: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 69.

by inspiring them to pursue their own most deeply-rooted aspirations. In contrast to the aristocratic attitude of the real historical Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's «Schopenhauer as educator» has the function of drawing into the light the fact that every person is endowed with a core of productive uniqueness and can aspire to live as, today, only artists live: in a manner that is completely original. Nietzsche's Schopenhauer, by the way in which he conducts himself, says implicitly to all who behold him: «Be your self! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself!» That is to say, he invites each person to express their own distinct individuality and to refuse to live as if in a herd of sheep.²¹ In a passage from the *Essays* that Nietzsche summarizes in his notebook of 1882, Emerson affirms «In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty».²² In other words, each time we behold a genius we think that we could ourselves have been that genius. The observation of a great man, writes Nietzsche, «bestow(s) on the soul not only a clear, discriminating and self-contemptuous view of itself but also a desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet still concealed from it».²³ Nietzsche presents this psychological dynamic as something very similar to that productive envy (*Eris*) that lay at the root of the Greek *agon*, in which the strength and virtue of our adversary stimulates us to perform better ourselves. But clearly, such a «productive envy» will only come into play when the individual feels that his adversary is someone he might reasonably rival and compete with. If the great man we see before us is viewed as a being *qualitatively* different from ourselves, this urge to vie with him is suffocated right from the start. «Only if we think of him as being very remote from us, as a *miraculum*, does he not aggrieve us.... To call someone 'divine' means 'here there is no need for us to compete».²⁴ This is why Nietzsche considers the metaphysics and cult of genius as the greatest danger for culture.²⁵

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as educator*, in: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 127.

22 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in: *CW 2*, p. 27.

23 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as educator*, in: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 163.

24 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human. A Book for free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), vol. 1, § 162, p. 86.

25 The psychological dynamic that is set in motion when we behold someone displaying some excellence emerges very clearly in an aphorism from *The Wanderer and His Shadow* entitled *Recognition of Talent*. Nietzsche tells here of how, passing through a village, he observed a boy cracking a whip in a way that showed «he had already advanced far in this art». «I threw him a glance of recognition», writes

Essentially, then, the positions taken by Emerson and Nietzsche with regard to the relationship between the «great man» and the time he lives in are in accord with the other visions dominating the latter half of the 19th Century as regards the notion of a fundamental conflict between the values and truths for which the «great man» is the standard-bearer and those which are defended by the society around him. Nevertheless, these positions prove distinct from the dominating visions of the era by virtue of two closely related characteristics: 1. the anti-metaphysical notion of «genius» as the unique bundle of talents which set off an individual from other individuals and which must be brought to perfection by means of a committed self-discipline; 2. the educative role of the «great man», who unintentionally — i.e. simply by pursuing his own aim of living authentically — becomes the animating nucleus of a regeneration of culture insofar as his very being inspires in others a wish to emulate him. Consequently, whereas in conceptions like those of Schopenhauer or Renan the divide between the «great man» and society is a constitutive and unbridgeable one, since it is due to a substantial difference in nature between the former and the latter, in the visions of Emerson and Nietzsche this divide can, in principle, be bridged. In other words, the «great man» as conceived by Emerson and Nietzsche acts counter to his time and thereby acts on his time «for the benefit of a time to come»²⁶ in which this activity of opposition will no longer be necessary.

2. Forgetting the Ego

In the second of the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche explains that what tends to prevent «mass Man» from recognizing a man of greatness is a sort of moral indolence. The «little man» ought to recognize the «great man» as different from, *but also similar to*, himself and consequently set out on

Nietzsche. «In my heart, however, I found it *very painful*». (Friedrich Nietzsche, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human. A Book for free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), vol. 2 Part two, § 172, p. 351). Having to recognize the merits of others can be borne only by he who rids himself of the initial bitter envy by beginning a serious self-cultivation. The «cult of the hero» is, in fact, just a further case of refusal of recognition. The «great man» is seen as great by reason of a natural gift which makes it possible for him to accomplish, apparently effortlessly, extraordinary things. But this means not recognizing the effort that the «great man» must have invested in developing his talent to the level of excellence.

26 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, in: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 60.

the same course of self-improvement as the latter. Most, however, retreat in the face of the «inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them».²⁷ What are these «inconveniences»? At bottom, they consist in the suffering caused by a lack of recognition of one's own value and even, in extreme cases, of one's very existence. The masses will always impose on the non-conformist the price of disapproval and isolation. The figure of «Schopenhauer as educator» as delineated by Nietzsche assumes superhuman proportions precisely because he is able to stoically bear this suffering, uncomplaining but unyielding. The teaching that Schopenhauer implicitly conveys is that being oneself is worth paying any price for. Nietzsche exhorts his readers to follow this teaching:

There exists in the world a single path along which no one can go except you: whither does it lead? Do not ask, go along it. Who was it who said: 'A man never rises so high as when he knows not whither he is going'?²⁸

The words are actually Oliver Cromwell's, at least as cited by Emerson in his essay *Circles*, to which Nietzsche here alludes: «Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful. It is by abandonment. 'A man — said Oliver Cromwell — never rises so high as when he knows not whither he is going'».²⁹ History's great revolutions, according to Emerson, were brought about when the individual abandoned himself to «enthusiasm». But this means something completely different from what one might initially think. «Enthusiasm», for Emerson, means: a transcendence of one's own restricted way of looking at things, conditioned by the ego and its false needs, and a raising of oneself to a vision of the world in terms of universal principles. As is taught both by the Neo-Platonic and by the Vedic tradition — traditions to which Emerson's thought owed a more or less equal debt — it is only «the man who renounces himself (that) comes to himself».³⁰ The more fully one puts aside one's ego — that is to say, one's own social image — the more one realizes one's own true self.³¹ Nietzsche interpreted

27 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, in: *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 127.

28 Ivi, p. 129.

29 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in: *CW 2*, p. 190.

30 Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism & Asian Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993), p. 67.

31 Emerson had a profound knowledge of the sacred scriptures of the East which indeed, above all in the latter phase of his life, became his principal source of inspiration. Another important source for Emerson's notion of «the Over-Soul» was the Neo-Platonic tradition, with which he was familiarized by his Harvard classmate Sampson

the passage from Emerson correctly, as is demonstrated by a private note from 1883: «Zarathustra — I have unlearned sympathy with myself. / To forget the ego. Emerson p. 237».³² It is on page 237 of Nietzsche's German edition of Emerson's *Essays* that the above-quoted words of Cromwell appear. To forget the ego or «unlearn sympathy with oneself» means to act without thinking about the social consequences of one's action. In other words, not to allow one's actions to be conditioned by the desire to be recognized and appreciated. As Nietzsche had explained already in *Human, All Too Human*, vanity is just a distorted form of «self-love».³³ But true «self-love» consists rather in pursuing one's own «higher self», that is to say in perfecting oneself, which implies renouncing all vanity and stoically putting up with solitude. Ultimately, for Nietzsche, in an initial phase of his thought, the «great man» is doubtless that man who, eliminating within himself the human, all too human desire for others' recognition, succeeds in refusing the social mask being urged on him and in leading an authentic life.

This initial position, however, is later revised. In a second stage of Nietzsche's thought this lack of recognition no longer causes suffering but rather becomes grounds for pride and self-satisfaction. How is this achieved, this overcoming first of the suffering arising from the desire for recognition's being frustrated and then of the very desire for recognition itself? It is achieved through the true individual's refusing, in his turn, to accord recognition to «mass Man». This occurs in two stages: the individual first withdraws from «mass Man» all recognition of this latter's value, and then goes on to refuse to recognize his very existence. In other words, the individual first takes his distance from the values of «mass Man» and criticizes these values; then, in a second stage, these values and the «men of the mass» who bear them become matters of complete indifference to the individual. This two-stage progression is first sketched out through the excerpts from Emerson's *Essays* that Nietzsche noted down in 1882 and then fully articulated in *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra

Reed. In his renowned «Oration on Genius» delivered in August 1821 Reed raised the question of how genius — that is, an original and revolutionary spiritual force — comes into being. While emphasizing the irreducible uniqueness of each individual, Reed nonetheless held that genius is the capacity to attain to a universal, trans-personal dimension: «The intellectual eye of man is formed to see the light, not to make it» (Sampson Reed, *Oration on Genius*, quoted in R. D. Richardson, *Emerson. The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 17. Notes on this oration are to be found in Emerson's journals).

32 KSA 10, *Nachlass* 1883 15[27], p. 486.

33 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human. A Book for free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), vol. 1, § 162, p. 86.

himself expounds this progression in the first of his speeches: that *On the Three Metamorphoses*. The first «metamorphosis» represents the stage of traditional morality, wherein the individual takes upon himself, like a camel, those values which have been handed down to him by tradition. In the second «metamorphosis» the individual adopts a stance opposed to this tradition. With a lion-like roar, he says his «no» to all that which he had formerly passively accepted, demanding the right to moral autonomy. But the lion is not yet able to create values of his own. This role is assigned by Nietzsche only to the third metamorphosis: namely, into a «child»: «The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying».³⁴ The metamorphosis from lion into child is no less important and delicate than that from camel into lion. It corresponds to the transition from a notion of «negative liberty» (that is, of a mere «freedom from») to one of «positive liberty» (that is, of a «freedom to» realize one's own potential). Zarathustra speaks to a young man who finds himself at the second stage of this moral progression — i.e. that of merely negative opposition to society and its values — as follows:

You call yourself free? Your dominating thought I want to hear, and not that you escaped from a yoke...

Free from what? What does Zarathustra care? But brightly your eyes should signal to me: free *for what?*³⁵

In the stage of «negative liberty» the individual is not really free because his actions still originate from that which he wished to struggle against and oppose. He is not really acting but rather just reacting. But in the stage of positive liberty the individual attains to a divine indifference: all that is around him disappears; he becomes completely concentrated on himself. In a passage from the essay *Self-Reliance* which Nietzsche summarizes in his 1882 notebook Emerson observes that children offer a marvelous example of the freedom that, really, each true individual ought to possess. Children do not conform to others' expectations, nor do they fear the consequences of their own actions:

That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, [these things children] have not... When we look in their faces, we are disconcerted. Infancy

34 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Part 1, *On the Three Metamorphoses*, pp. 16–17.

35 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Part 1, *On the way of the creator*, p. 46.

conforms to nobody; all conform to it. [The child] cumpers himself never about consequences or about interests... You must court him; he does not court you.³⁶

Whoever is indifferent to the judgments of others will feel neither resentment nor a sense of guilt toward these others. These reactive feelings cannot draw energy away from him; he himself retains the highest power. In a passage from the essay *Character*, to which Nietzsche adds the marginal note «herrlich!» («magnificent!»), Emerson writes:

The wise man not only leaves out of his thought the many, but leaves out the few. Fountains, fountains, the self-moved, the absorbed... they are good, for these announce the instant presence of supreme power.³⁷

He who is truly indifferent to the judgments and expectations of others is like a fountain: his actions and his thoughts gush forth from his own inward depths. Nietzsche's image of a «wheel» expresses this same idea, being described as a «first movement», a wheel not rolled by anyone else but rather «rolling out of itself».³⁸ From yet another extract that Nietzsche made from *Self-Reliance* it emerges that the virtue required to conquer this state of divine indifference is magnanimity:

When the poor and the ignorant get agitated, when the unintelligent animal mass [*thierische Masse*] contorts its face and snarls — then magnanimity [*größer Seele*] is needed to shove it aside, in a godly fashion and like a trifle. NB.³⁹

Magnanimity here has nothing to do with Christian compassion. It is not a matter of forgiving those who oppose us or of finding excuses for their actions. The magnanimity to which Emerson, and Nietzsche with him, refer is rather «magnanimity» as it is conceived in the ethics of pagan antiquity.

36 KSA 9, *Nachlass* 1882 17 [24], p. 567.

37 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: Second Series*, in: *CW* 3, p. 59.

38 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Part 1, *On the Three Metamorphoses*, p. 17.

39 KSA 9, *Nachlass* 1882 17[28], p. 670. Nietzsche's entry in his 1882 notebook diverges in at least two notable respects from Emerson's original English text and Fabricius's faithful German translation of this latter. Firstly, Nietzsche replaces Fabricius's *thierische Macht* (a faithful rendering of Emerson's «brute force») with *thierische Masse* («brutal mass»). Secondly, he curtails Fabricius's *so bedarf es eines grossen Fonds von Seelengroesse und Religiositaet* (again a faithful rendering of Emerson's «it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion») to a simple «da bedarf es grosser Seele», eliminating the reference to religion altogether. See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: first series*, in *CW* 2, p. 33.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle describes as follows the magnanimity (literally: «greatness of soul») that distinguishes the noble man:

Greatness of soul (*megalopsuchia*), as the word itself implies, seems to be related to great objects (*peri megala*).... The great-souled, or magnanimous, man seems to be the man who considers himself capable of great things and is in fact so.⁴⁰

The magnanimous man does not react against those who oppose him because he does not want to uselessly expend time and energy. This is exactly what Zarathustra recommends to the furious madman whom he encounters in the city. This madman is furious because he is full of resentment and disgust. He spends all his time lamenting about the state of society, which is compared to shifting sands sucking down all great thoughts and aspirations. Zarathustra shares the madman's disapproval of society but, like Aristotle's *megalopsychos*, he prefers to preserve his energies by concentrating on his own affairs. Zarathustra thus overcomes the temptation to yield to rage and, as he advises the «madman» also to do, decides simply to «pass on by».⁴¹

3. Recognition Between Peers

But simply to refuse recognition to «mass Man» is a solution with which Nietzsche cannot rest satisfied in the long term. The individual, indeed, can overcome in this way the suffering caused by a lack of recognition and thus make himself capable of acting without his action's being determined by a fear of suffering still more. But the fact remains that intersubjectivity is fundamental to the construction of all individuality and not even the «great man» can disregard with impunity this essential dimension of human experience. Already Socrates is recorded as saying to Alcibiades that, just as the eye cannot see itself but needs, in order to do this, to be reflected in the eyes of another person, so too does the individual, if he is really to know himself, need the images of his own being that he receives from those around him.⁴² To enter into relations with others is indispensable not only in order to gain an objective view of oneself but also in order to develop certain important character traits, which can be designated as «relational

40 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, Chapter III, 1123a 34 – 1125a.

41 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Part 3, *On Passing By*, p. 142.

42 Plato, *Alcibiades I* 132 D.

qualities». These are qualities that one can refine and perfect only through interaction with others.

Nietzsche noted that, where an individual was not recognized, he could sometimes turn, by recourse to a potent rhetorical strategy, this very lack of recognition into a consoling sign of personal distinction. In aphorism 567 of *Human, All Too Human*, entitled «*Advantageous Enmity*», he writes:

People unable to make the world see them at their true worth seek to arouse violent enmity toward themselves. They then have the consolation of thinking that this enmity is standing between their true worth and the recognition of it — and that many others suppose the same: which is very advantageous for their reputation.⁴³

This is not the case for Nietzsche, nor for the great individual. The point is that, since non-recognition by «society» is not something unique to great individuals but is an experience met with also by such possibly really unworthy individuals as Nietzsche alludes to in the passage cited above, the former cannot derive from this experience any positive proof of their own worth. It can, in substance, be said that, in a second stage of development of his thought, Nietzsche reaffirmed the necessity of recognition by others as an element in the construction of one's own individuality. The conclusions arrived at in the *Untimely Meditations* are not, however, repudiated; Nietzsche does not now adopt the position that the individual wishes, after all, for recognition by «mass Man»; rather, this latter wishes to be recognized only by those to whom he, for his part, has first granted recognition. To understand who Nietzsche is alluding to here we must first acquire a better understanding of just what it is that one wants to be recognized whenever one wishes for recognition by others. We learn from a note of 1881 that Nietzsche considered the issue here to be one of the recognition of one's own power. Nietzsche asks himself:

- a) How much do I need in order to live healthily and pleasantly for myself alone?
- b) How am I to acquire this in such a way that the acquiring shall itself be healthy and pleasurable and shall be useful to my mind and spirit, especially as a convalescence?
- c) How must I think of others in order to think as well as possible of my own self and to grow in a sense of my own power?
- d) How am I to bring other people to recognize my power?

43 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human. A Book for free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), vol. 1, § 567, p. 86.

- e) How is the new nobility to organize itself as the class holding power? How is this new nobility to draw a boundary between itself and the others without thereby turning these latter into enemies and adversaries?⁴⁴

The «sense of power» to which Nietzsche alludes here is that sense which arises from the coordination of the instincts into a solid hierarchical structure under the command of one dominating instinct. The individual then perceives himself as an acting subject and makes, upon those around him, the impression of being able to autonomously determine his own goals and pursue them and of being resilient in the face of obstacles and opposing forces. Basically, whenever we wish to see recognition given to our «power», the specific thing we wish to see recognized is just this: our capacity for, and our right to, self-determination. Conversely, those whose existence and whose value we ourselves accord recognition to are those organisms that are endowed with a certain degree of power, that is to say, those that live their lives as individuals. These people are called «friends».

The notion of a «friend» is construed by Nietzsche in the sense that is suggested by Emerson in his essay *Friendship*, i.e. not as a mere companion or fellow. The «friend», for Nietzsche, is not someone who shares our needs or our values, our tastes and our habits, or our day-to-day life. The «friend» is rather someone who, like ourselves, strives to express his or her own distinctive individuality. This involves the possibility of friends' coming into discord or even into conflict with one another. Such conflict, however, is a sign of the highest form of love because it demonstrates respect for oneself and recognition of the other as a being distinct and different from oneself. This mode of relation between two individualities is summed up in a word that played a key role in the culture of the ancient Greeks: *agon*. As Christa Acampora has pointed out, the *agon* (or «struggle for excellence», which Nietzsche sometimes renders into German as *Wettkampf*) is distinguished from the «struggle to the death» (*Vernichtungskampf*) by the fact that he who engages in the former does not aspire to destroy his adversary but rather to overcome him by performing better.⁴⁵ This kind of «struggle», then, does not give rise to destructive forms of behaviour but rather to productive ones. Indeed, it is precisely in the context of the *agon* that individuals give the best of themselves. At the same time, it is only in and through such an *agon* that they give and receive recognition. «A will to power can express itself only

44 KSA 9, *Nachlass* 1881 11 [11], pp. 444–445.

45 Christa Davis Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 15–49.

against *resistances*»,⁴⁶ writes Nietzsche in a note from 1887. Encountering the resistance of another individuality is fundamental to understanding who we ourselves are and measuring our own worth. Moreover, in the «agonistic» relation the individual accords, in his turn, recognition to his antagonist: this latter is struggled and competed against precisely because his vision of things is *recognized* to be different from our own. In other words: implicit in the recognition of difference and in the expression of discord is a confirmation of identity and a recognition of existence and of the right to exist.

When we look at the writings of Nietzsche's maturity the picture that emerges is no longer that of the great individual locked in struggle with his own age — that is to say, isolated from society and implicitly hostile to it. Rather, the mature Nietzsche envisages a multiplicity of virtue-pursuing individuals who simply withdraw from all forms of sterile conflict with people in whom they recognize no value in order to cultivate, instead, an open and sincere confrontation with all those who live for the same ideal. Being «untimely», then, although it still counts, even for the mature Nietzsche, among the characteristics of the great individual, is no longer portrayed as a source of suffering for this latter, nor even as a source of pride. This great individual is now completely focussed upon himself and upon those who, being at his level, are capable of productively interacting with him.

46 KSA 12, Nachlass 1887 9[151], p. 424.

FRANCESCO D'ACHILLE
NIETZSCHE. PRACTICE OF *UNTIMELINESS*

We will try to describe, through the reconstruction of the origin and the development of *untimeliness* inside Nietzsche's work, the practical implications of his philosophy. For this purpose, the first part of the essay will focus on the main occurrences of the word «untimely/untimeliness» ('*unzeitgemäß-e-n*'/'*Unzeitgemäßheit*', '*Unzeitgemäss-e-n*'/'*Unzeitgemässheit*'), during the period between the writing of *The Birth of Tragedy* and of *Untimely Meditations* (1869–1876), trying to understand its meaning and the original context. The second part, instead, will describe genealogy's practical devices inside which *untimeliness* is experienced. In order to clearly understand the changing horizon of '*Unzeitgemäßheit*' inside Nietzsche's work, it is necessary to analyse the semantic oscillations that it undergoes when shifting from the 'metaphysics of art' (which is highly influenced by Richard Wagner's theories) to the preparation of the genealogic machinery (typical of Nietzsche's mature work between *Human, All Too Human* and the writing of 1888). It will be, therefore, very important to enlighten the link between the thematic development of *untimeliness* and the construction of the genealogical method, in order to understand the meaning of this oscillation. By investigating the main stages of the construction of the genealogical method, it is possible to show how the horizon of *untimeliness* — far from belonging only to first Nietzsche's works — are not only his work's «spine», but also the main point from which we can understand the practical potential of his thought and the role it can still play in our present. In a posthumous fragment of the summer of 1886, Nietzsche writes about his previous works:

Vorreden und Nachreden. Insofern sind alle meine Schriften, mit einer einzigen, allerdings sehr wesentlichen Ausnahme zurückdatirt. Manche sogar wie die ersten Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen, sogar hinter die Entstehungs- und Erlebniszzeit eines früher herausgegebenen Buches, der «Geburt der Tragödie»: wie es einem feineren Beobachter und Vergleicher nicht verborgen bleiben wird.¹

1 KSA 12, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1886, 6[4].

In order to define the context of the creation of the *Untimely Meditations* it seems necessary, in fact, to start from the writing of *The Birth of Tragedy*. The word 'untimely' ('*unzeitgemäß*') occurs for the first time inside a letter from Nietzsche to Erwin Rohde in 8/17/1869:

Dafür will ich Dir noch etwas von meinem Juppiter erzählen, von R. Wagner, [...]. Das Menschenkind hat noch keinen Orden und jetzt eben die erste Auszeichnung bekommen, nämlich die Ehrenmitgliedschaft der Berliner Akademie der Künste. Ein fruchtbares, reiches, erschütterndes Leben, ganz abweichend und unerhört unter mittleren Sterblichen! Dafür steht er auch da, festgewurzelt durch eigne Kraft, mit seinem Blick immer drüber hinweg über alles Ephemere, und unzeitgemäß im schönsten Sinne.²

This first occurrence is very meaningful. The adjective 'untimely' is used, in fact, in order to describe Richard Wagner. In the letter context it seems to have the meaning of «a-temporal», «supra-historical», «outside of time». Nietzsche, by saying that Wagner is «his own Zeus», describes him as a divinity who, from the heights of his Olympian distance, directs his gaze to the mortals and to every ephemeral thing. We consider this occurrence meaningful because in this few lines it is already clear the main reason that allows us to define the analysis of our subject: the relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner. The context of the creation and change of the horizon of *untimeliness* seems to be caused by the relationship between the philosopher and the musician to such an extent that, in order to describe it, it is necessary to describe the reasons and the steps of Nietzsche's gradual detaching from the musician's theoretical opinions in *Beethoven* and in general in the Schopenhauerian metaphysics of art. The fact that Wagner was important is clear both since the outline of the Foreword to *The Birth of Tragedy* dedicated to Richard Wagner and in the very text of *The Birth of Tragedy*:

Von Ihnen weiß ich es, mein verehrter Freund, von Ihnen allein, daß Sie mit mir einen wahren und einen falschen Begriff der «griechischen Heiterkeit» unterscheiden und den letzteren – den falschen – im Zustande ungefährdeten Behagens auf allen Wegen und Stegen antreffen; von Ihnen weiß ich gleichfalls, daß Sie es für unmöglich halten, von jenem falschen Heiterkeitsbegriffe aus zur Einsicht in das Wesen der Tragoedie zu kommen.[...]. Uns hat die griechische Kunst gelehrt, daß es keine wahrhaft schöne Fläche ohne eine schreckliche

2 KGB 1869, n.22. Brief an Erwin Rohde.

Tiefe giebt; wer indeß nach jener Kunst der reinen Fläche sucht, der sei ein- für allemal auf die Gegenwart.³

By distinguishing a true concept and a false one of «Greek serenity», it is possible, therefore, to find one of the first characteristics of Nietzsche's untimely drive. In this distinction, the classical Hellenic model is definitely the opposite of that of the theoretical view of the world (analysed in *The Birth of Tragedy*):

Und wenn jetzt überhaupt noch von «griechischer Heiterkeit» die Rede sein darf, so ist es die Heiterkeit des Slaven, der nichts Schweres zu verantworten, nichts Grosses zu erstreben, nichts Vergangenes oder Zukünftiges höher zu schätzen weiss als das Gegenwärtige.⁴

In the classical philologist's point of view, this idea represents the inability of the German culture — victim of an erudition that is an end in itself and of an unjustified optimism — of «aiming at great tasks» toward the future and of finding in the past a guiding path, an authentic model. Only the one who can distinguish a false concept from a true one of the «Greek serenity» and thus understand the true concept of the 'griechische Heiterkeit', can work at the «imminent rebirth of the ancient times, at the German rebirth of the Greek world». This seems to be the inaugural message both of the friendship between Nietzsche and Wagner and of the cultural battle they fight together against the spirit of their age. This position is quite the same during the period in which Nietzsche starts to write *Untimely Meditations*, whose first outlines date back to the posthumous fragments of 1873. The strong link between the project of the Wagnerian cultural reform and the first project of *Untimely* is witnessed by a Nietzsche's letter to Wagner written during the Spring of the same year:

Es ist wahr, ich werde täglich melancholischer, wenn ich so recht fühle, wie gern ich Ihnen irgendwie helfen, nützen möchte und wie ganz und gar unfähig ich dazu bin, so dass ich nicht einmal etwas zu Ihrer Zerstreuung und Erheiterung beitragen kann. Oder vielleicht doch einmal, wenn ich das ausgeführt habe, was ich jetzt unter den Händen habe, nämlich ein Schriftstück gegen den berühmten Schriftsteller David Strauss.⁵

The first of *Untimely Meditations*, *David Strauss: the Confessor and*

3 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1871, 11[1].

4 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, § 11.

5 KGB 1873, n.304. Brief an Richard Wagner.

the Writer — as it is clear even from this short reference — is thought and written by Nietzsche as an active contribution for the benefit of the Bayreuth cause. The critics against the «erudite workers caste» are critics against those who considered as a value the stiffening typical of the theoretical view of the world: the erudite workers caste instead of working for the development of the cohesive forces of the community, tends to hide behind a grey and chaotic equalisation. This is the first enemy of every fresh movement of people and for this reason we need to fight against it with every means. The context of the battle fought inside *The Birth of the Tragedy* is quite the same in this *first untimely*, the aim is still that of the renewal of Germany starting from the rebirth of the tragic spirit, «essentially» carried on throughout Wagnerian music and theatre. But the horizon of *untimeliness* that starts with the *II Untimely* seems to show the first important differences:

Auch soll zu meiner Entlastung nicht verschwiegen werden, dass ich die Erfahrungen, die mir jene quälenden Empfindungen erregten, meistens aus mir selbst und nur zur Vergleichung aus Anderen entnommen habe, und dass ich nur sofern ich Zögling älterer Zeiten, zumal der griechischen bin, über mich als ein Kind dieser jetzigen Zeit zu so unzeitgemässen Erfahrungen komme. So viel muss ich mir aber selbst von Berufs wegen als classischer Philologe zugestehen dürfen: denn ich wüsste nicht, was die classische Philologie in unserer Zeit für einen Sinn hätte, wenn nicht den, in ihr unzeitgemäss – das heisst gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit – zu wirken.⁶

In this passage of the foreword to the *II Untimely: On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, it is possible to find a first detachment from the positions of *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *I Untimely*. If previously the meaning of *untimeliness* seems to be completely focused on the German rebirth of the classical Hellenism made possible through Wagner's art, now, in this peremptory excerpts, *untimeliness* seems to outline — even if still ambiguously — new means and new goals. In the description of the utility (and not in that of the «damage») of history for the action and for life, you can immediately see the purpose and the importance that Nietzsche gives to the study and the teaching of history for the cultural renewal: the study of history has to aim at life and action, and in Nietzsche's opinion life and action are the main means for the German spiritual renewal. Wagner's art seems to start loosing the absolute record in the Nietzschean horizon

6 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben. Vorwort.*

of *untimeliness*. The non-historical and supra-temporal powers of art and religion are not sufficient alone. In order to renew the German culture it is fundamental «to nurture a historical sense» that would not be defined by a hypertrophic link with the past, but that, on the contrary, would be developed to such an extent that could allow a right relationship with its own time (with its double meaning of «age» and «temporality»):

Je stärkere Wurzeln die innerste Natur eines Menschen hat, um so mehr wird er auch von der Vergangenheit sich aneignen oder anzuwingen; [...] alles Vergangene, eigenes und fremdestes, würde sie an sich heran, in sich hineinziehen und gleichsam zu Blut umschaffen. [...] Die Heiterkeit, das gute Gewissen, die frohe That, das Vertrauen auf das Kommende – alles das hängt, bei dem Einzelnen wie bei dem Volke, davon ab, dass es eine Linie giebt, die das Uebersehbare, Helle von dem Unaufhellbaren und Dunkeln scheidet, davon dass man eben so gut zur rechten Zeit zu vergessen weiss, als man sich zur rechten Zeit erinnert, davon dass man mit kräftigem Instincte herausfühlt, wann es nöthig ist, historisch, wann unhistorisch zu empfinden. Dies gerade ist der Satz, zu dessen Betrachtung der Leser eingeladen ist: *das Unhistorische und das Historische ist gleichermaassen für die Gesundheit eines Einzelnen, eines Volkes und einer Cultur nöthig.*⁷

This excerpt of the *II Untimely* is important: we can see, in fact, how it is important in Nietzsche's opinion the leading role played by an authentic behaviour toward temporality in the horizon of *untimeliness*. In these passages, Nietzsche asserts the fundamental importance for «a person, a people, a civilization» of educating themselves on a right relationship with time, that would allow an integration of the highest experiences of the past toward a communication and transformation of them that would be fruitful for the future. We can affirm that it is this very behaviour that will resist to the turning point of *Human, All Too Human* and will find its best fulfilment in the methodological machinery of genealogy. In fact, it is exactly in this *second untimely* that we find, for the first time, a concept that will be very important inside mature Nietzsche's work and that will play a main role in the preparation of the genealogic method, that is to say the concept of *incorporation* ('*Einverleibung*'):

Um diesen Grad und durch ihn dann die Grenze zu bestimmen, an der das Vergangene vergessen werden muss, wenn es nicht zum Todtengräber des Gegenwärtigen werden soll, müsste man genau wissen, wie gross die *plastische Kraft* eines Menschen, eines Volkes, einer Cultur ist, ich meine jene Kraft, aus

7 Ivi, § 1.

sich heraus eigenartig zu wachsen, Vergangenes und Fremdes umzubilden und einzuverleiben, Wunden auszuheilen, Verlorenes zu ersetzen, zerbrochene Formen aus sich nachzuformen.⁸

It is this very *plastic force* — which dates back to Nietzsche's first letters inside Emerson's essays (above all the *History* essay) — that definitely establishes the Nietzschean behaviour toward learning and knowledge. Authentic culture and erudition can be founded only through this absorbing ability. Without the «confines» set by this ability, learning and knowledge could become dangerous forces for life, forces that paralyse and stiffen the past. Every culture that wants to be founded on authentic erudition and education has to aim at developing an erudition and a knowledge that have as their immanent purpose the development of this *plastic force*. This drive toward the development of an «organising force» — which would work on the changing and wider field of history — seems to be, therefore, one of the first contrasting elements against the supra-temporal and atemporal powers of Wagner's music and theatre emphasised in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The *III Untimely: Schopenhauer as Educator* is a turning point, a *Wendepunkt*, and it particularly criticises those figures that, by imposing themselves, do not allow a real cultural freedom:

Denn es giebt eine Art von missgebrauchter und in Dienste genommener Kultur – man sehe sich nur um! Und gerade die Gewalten, welche jetzt am thätigsten die Kultur fördern, haben dabei Nebengedanken und verkehren mit ihr nicht in reiner und uneigennütziger Gesinnung. Da ist erstens die Selbstsucht der Erwerbenden, welche der Beihülfe der Kultur bedarf, und ihr zum Danke dafür wieder hilft, aber dabei freilich zugleich Ziel und Maass vorschreiben möchte. [...]. Da ist zweitens die Selbstsucht des Staates, welcher ebenfalls nach möglichster Ausbreitung und Verallgemeinerung der Kultur begehrt und die wirksamsten Werkzeuge in den Händen hat, um seine Wünsche zu befriedigen. Vorausgesetzt, dass er sich stark genug weiss, um nicht nur entfesseln, sondern zur rechten Zeit in's Joch spannen zu können [...] Jenes Entbinden ist zugleich und noch viel mehr ein in Fesseln Schlagen.⁹

Nietzsche's harshness against the selfishness of the moneymakers and the Government is a clear sign of his mature ideas toward the institutions of his age. They show a drastic disapproval that is not only directed toward the institutions of his present time, but will be soon focused on the historical-cultural conditions that made these institutions so strong and powerful, that

8 Ivi.

9 KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, §6.

is to say not only Germany's key values but those of the whole West. Even if it could seem paradoxical, it is the *fourth Untimely: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* that sets the biggest distance (at least for what concerns Basle writings) between the philosopher's convictions and the musician's ones. Inside this text we can find the most authentic critics in which there is a clear disagreement about the expectations, the purposes, the means of two battles that at that point are become different. Compared to the horizon of untimeliness typical of *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *I Untimely*, the scene is completely different: what is surprising is the role Nietzsche assigns to art (in particular, in this text, to Wagner's art) in its fight for culture:

die Kunst ist nicht für den Kampf selber da, sondern für die Ruhepausen vorher und inmitten desselben, für jene Minuten, da man zurückblickend und vorahnd das Symbolische versteht, da mit dem Gefühl einer leisen Müdigkeit ein erquickender Traum uns naht. Der Tag und der Kampf bricht gleich an, die heiligen Schatten verschweben und die Kunst ist wieder ferne von uns; aber ihre Tröstung liegt über dem Menschen von der Frühstunde her.¹⁰

Nietzsche does not more assign to art a main role in its fight against the culture of his age: it becomes, instead, necessary in the moments this battle is interrupted. Its function, now, is that of a «beauty rest». Art's power consists in the «simplification» of the real experience of life, no more in the manifestation of its deep essence. But if it is no more art that has a main role in Nietzsche's cultural battle, what are the authentic forces, the real powers, through which it is possible to change the culture and to erase the barbarity that characterises it?

Wäre die Historie nicht immer noch eine verkappte christliche Theodicee, wäre sie mit mehr Gerechtigkeit und Inbrunst des Mitgefühls geschrieben, so würde sie wahrhaftig am wenigsten gerade als Das Dienste leisten können, als was sie jetzt dient: als Opiat gegen alles Umwälzende und Erneuernde. Aehnlich steht es mit der Philosophie: aus welcher ja die Meisten nichts Anderes lernen wollen, als die Dinge ungefähr – sehr ungefähr! – verstehen, um sich dann in sie zu schicken. [...] Mir scheint dagegen die wichtigste Frage aller Philosophie zu sein, wie weit die Dinge eine unabänderliche Artung und Gestalt haben: um dann, wenn diese Frage beantwortet ist, mit der rücksichtslosesten Tapferkeit auf die Verbesserung der als veränderlich erkannten Seite der Welt loszugehen.¹¹

10 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, §3.

11 Ivi

If history «instead of being a disguised theology» would be considered with a view to life, it could foster the renewal elements, instead of anaesthetising them. Philosophy, in the same way, instead of being considered as something useful to comprehend thing in order to adapt to them, could have a more drastic function, that of changing the earthly elements considered changeable. This is a formative and drastic approach toward history and time, that faces them with a view to life and action and not with that to mere knowledge and the «authentically philosophic» exemplary life (without showing interest in business or government things): these are the powers Nietzsche chooses in order to carry on his battle against his age. In this context, the Nietzschean cultural project — arisen from a critics of German culture's present time — gets its most drastic untimely form and directs its critical potential against a wider field, both spatially and temporally. The Germany's *Kulturkritik* of the second half of XIX century starts to gradually become a wider and more complex form of *Gegenbewegung* against the Western culture's dominant values. While in the first part of the essay we tried to outline the urgency of the horizon of untimeliness, in this second part we will try to describe the change and the developments as they establish themselves starting from *Human, All Too Human*. In a draft of a letter dated August 1885 (unknown recipient), Nietzsche writes:

M<eine> «*Unzeitgemäßen*» bedeuten für mich Versprechungen: was sie für Andre sind, weiß ich nicht. Glauben Sie, daß ich längst nicht mehr leben würde, wenn ich diesen Versprechungen nur um Einen Schritt breit ausgewichen wäre! Vielleicht kommt noch ein Mensch, der entdeckt, daß von M<enschliches,> A<llzumenschliches> an ich nichts gethan habe als meine Versprechen erfüllen. Das, was ich freilich jetzt die Wahrheit nenne, ist etwas ganz Furchtbares und Abstoßendes: und ich habe viel Kunst nöthig, um schrittweise die M<enschen> zu einer völligen Umdrehung ihrer höchsten Werthschätzungen zu überreden.¹²

It is difficult to confirm a real continuity from the horizon of *Untimely Meditations* to Nietzsche's mature work. Yet the draft of this letter Nietzsche shows that he considers the *Untimely Meditations* some «promises» that he thinks to have kept. Our task is that to understand and explain how he kept this promise. The last lines of the letter somehow help us: «I need a lot of art in order to persuade people to completely overturn their highest values systems». This statement emphasises a strong connection between

12 KGB 1885, n.617. Brief an Unbekannt.

the keeping of the «promises» made in the *Untimely* and the «overturning of the highest values systems».

Jener zornige Ausbruch gegen die Deutschthümelei, Behäbigkeit und Selbstbewunderung des alten David Strauß machte Stimmungen Luft, mit denen ich als Student inmitten deutscher Bildung und Bildungs-Philisterei gesessen hatte; und was ich gegen die «historische Krankheit» gesagt habe, das sagte ich als Einer, der von ihr genesen lernte und welcher ganz und gar nicht Willens war, fürderhin auf «Historie» zu verzichten. (Quod demonstratum est –)¹³

We can therefore easily recognise the continuity from the *Untimely* to Nietzsche's mature in the refusal «to forego history», or better in the possibility of overturning through it the highest values systems. It is through the development of the «historical sense» and, with it, through the construction and the implementation of the genealogic method, that Nietzsche seems to have kept the promises made in his youth. «Quod demonstratum est». But in what does the genealogic method consist? And where and how is it possible to find its importance inside Nietzsche's work? To answer this question means to describe the *practice of untimeliness* typical of the adult Nietzsche. The guidelines of this method are necessarily to be found in the themes that were very important during the gradual detachment from the Wagnerian ideology. We tried to trace the origins of these themes in the importance Nietzsche gave to the *plastische Kraft*, the plastic force of the *incorporation* ('*Einverleibung*') and to the development of the historical sense ('*der historische Sinn*') that is closely connected with it. History must be faced in all its complexity, its «multiple forces», its energies must be assimilated and integrated into a field that could have wider purposes. If with the *II Untimely* Nietzsche, by referring to the *plastic force of incorporation* and to the concept of history, wanted to express his critical opinions against historicism and science, after the turning point represented by *Human, All Too Human*, his opinion toward science completely changes. His new great interest and ardent curiosity toward science made him analytically and methodologically change his own concept of «plastic force». In the *II Untimely*, and precisely in the thematisation of the «utility of history for life» it has been possible to find some elements that positively defined an approach toward the past and the traditional knowledge. In an authentic relationship with past, memory and time, it has been possible to find a relationship with history that was no more a mere and impersonal narration of facts. This «active» idea of the

13 KSA 12, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1886, 6[4].

study of history and past seems also to describe the horizon in which the new Nietzschean idea of the relationship with temporality arises. In the aphorism 16 in *Human, All Too Human* there are all the crucial themes that describe the paradigmatic role Nietzsche gave to this «active» relationship with history. The «strict science» has an emblematic and meaningful purpose in the new method:

Das, was wir jetzt die Welt nennen, ist das Resultat einer Menge von Irrthümern und Phantasien, welche in der gesammten Entwicklung der organischen Wesen allmählich entstanden, in einander verwachsen < sind > und uns jetzt *als* aufgesammelter Schatz der ganzen Vergangenheit vererbt werden, – *als* Schatz: denn der Werth unseres Menschenthums ruht darauf. Von dieser *Welt* der *Vorstellung* vermag uns die strenge Wissenschaft thatsächlich nur in geringem Maasse zu lösen – wie es auch gar nicht zu wünschen ist – , insofern sie die Gewalt uralter Gewohnheiten der Empfindung nicht wesentlich zu brechen vermag: aber sie kann die Geschichte der Entstehung jener Welt als *Vorstellung* ganz allmählich und schrittweise aufhellen – und uns wenigstens für Augenblicke über den ganzen Vorgang hinausheben.¹⁴

The most surprising thing is the role Nietzsche gave to the scientific behaviour: it cannot be considered neither simply as a truth bearing action nor as a mere epistemic task. According to Nietzsche's new methodological view, science's function must be a «historical» function. If, then, science must become «history» and show the path along which the treasure incorporated by humanity has been created, history, for her part, must become «science» and restore its experiences in the view of individual life. Natural science makes it possible to understand the creation of the world of representation, while the «historical sense» allows to restore the scientific contents on the level of individual life. Nietzsche's new confident opinion toward the study of natural science broadens the practical and theoretical field of what is worth to be incorporated. If in the *Untimely* the fertile relationship with the past had above all the purpose to assimilate the exemplarity of those «men capable of an intimate depth and of a pure dedication to the genius» — that is to say to metabolise the experiences thought by the «great figures of the past» — when Nietzsche began to write the first drafts of *Human, All Too Human*, he starts to understand that the assimilation «in one's own soul of several points of view» needs also a relationship and a fruitful debate with everything is historical, even natural science. This position is the main characteristic that shows the birth of the genealogical method.

14 KSA 1, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* I, aph.16.

Now, we must explain the ways through which some scientific contents had been integrated and made fruitful; this explanation becomes, then, the focus of our analysis. Following Müller-Lauter's analysis, it is possible to understand the background of this specific methodological practice:

Man kann gegen Nietzsches Verfahren der ‚Übertragung‘ von Problem- und Sachzusammenhängen aus bestimmten Bereichen in, ganz andere viele einwenden. Die Einwände treffen jedoch nur Vordergründiges und bleiben unzulänglich, wenn nicht der Nietzsches Methodik leitende Gedanke der gleichartigen Strukturiertheit allen – selbst des verschiedenartigsten – «Geschehens» in den Blick gebracht wird. Dessen grundlegende Strukturen sind Nietzsche zufolge zumeist verdeckt: je nach der Besonderheit des jeweiligen Wirklichen auf unterschiedliche Art. Die wechselweise vollzogene Applikation von Einsichten aus einem Wirklichkeitsbereich auf einen anderen soll das, was im Grunde geschieht, durchsichtiger machen können. Insofern Nietzsches Beschäftigung mit naturwissenschaftlichen Schriften hauptsächlich auf die Herausarbeitung von Grundstrukturen zielt, tritt die fachspezifische Bedeutung der Forschungen, von denen er Kenntnis erhält, zurück. Sie ist ihm oft auch aus Gründen der Sachunkundigkeit unzugänglich. [...] Nietzsche bleibt nicht bei deren Aufweis stehen; im reflektierenden Durchgang durch sie sucht er hinter sie zu gelangen: zum fundamental Strukturierenden.¹⁵

Nietzsche's approach to natural science is, therefore, based on what Müller-Lauter defines as one of the «guiding-ideas of the Nietzschean method», that is to say a real movement of problematic complexes from some fields to completely different others.

Every event, even the most different ones, has an «analogous structure»: this is the structure — with all its background elements — that Nietzsche tries to find inside scientific materials and the necessary condition for the possibility of making these materials «fruitful» for his philosophy. The circularity among the contents of the science of spirit and natural science depends on this essential assumption, on this fundamental guiding-idea. What natural science must find and incorporate of its materials — and that, after all, allow to «look at what happens at the bottom of reality itself» — are the events that exist inside them. This movement, defined by Müller-Lauter, allows us to see the practical-theoretical place from which Nietzsche can make the interaction between the fields and the contents of the science of spirit and those of natural science possible: in this interaction it is possible to see not only the development of the genealogical method but

15 Müller-Lauter W., 'Der Organismus als innerer Kampf. Der Einfluss von Wilhelm Roux auf Friedrich Nietzsche', *Nietzsche-Studien* 7, 1978, pp.190–191.

also the perspective from which the Nietzschean idea of incorporation is expanded and integrated into the field of natural science. This extension allowed Nietzsche to find a plastic force of the *incorporation* not only inside the «historical-spiritual» field typical of «men, people, civilisations», but also inside the biological and natural field of the organic life.

Das befehlerische Etwas, das vom Volke «der Geist» genannt wird [...] es hat den Willen aus der Vielheit zur Einfachheit, einen zusammenschnürenden, bändigenden, herrschsüchtigen und wirklich herrschaftlichen Willen. Seine Bedürfnisse und Vermögen sind hierin die selben, wie sie die Physiologen für Alles, was lebt, wächst und sich vermehrt, aufstellen. Die Kraft des Geistes, Fremdes sich anzueignen, offenbart sich in einem starken Hange, das Neue dem Alten anzuähnlichen, das Mannichfaltige zu vereinfachen, das gänzlich Widersprechende zu übersehen oder wegzustossen: ebenso wie er bestimmte Züge und Linien am Fremden, an jedem Stück «Aussenwelt» willkürlich stärker unterstreicht, heraushebt, sich zurecht fälscht. Seine Absicht geht dabei auf Einverleibung neuer «Erfahrungen», auf Einreihung neuer Dinge unter alte Reihen, – auf Wachstum also; bestimmter noch, auf das Gefühl des Wachsthum, auf das Gefühl der vermehrten Kraft.¹⁶

This passage shows — even if roughly — the methodological change underlying genealogy: the plastic force of incorporation — as now conceived by Nietzsche — is a force that makes *natural science's* objects (organic life) and those of the science of spirit (the spirit itself and the appropriative force that defines it) analogous, by following a way that starts from the living organisms and arrives to the last elements of the body of culture, the values.

Alle Menschen gleich handeln, vielmehr dürften im Interesse ökumenischer Ziele für ganze Strecken der Menschheit specielle [...] Jedenfalls muss, wenn die Menschheit sich nicht durch eine solche bewusste Gesamtregierung zu Grunde richten soll, vorher eine alle bisherigen Grade übersteigende Kenntniss der Bedingungen der Cultur [...]. Hierin liegt die ungeheure Aufgabe der grossen Geister des nächsten Jahrhunderts.¹⁷

This «enormous task» — task carried on by genealogy itself — has in the «knowledge of the conditions of civilisation that is higher than every reached level» its necessary and unavoidable condition and it is inconceivable without the *incorporation* of these latter. The genealogical analysis, in order to make a real counter movement, has to be able to incorporate the events that have formed our culture and assimilate

16 KSA 5, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §230.

17 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliche*, § 25.

Eastern humanity's past values. Therefore, according to genealogy, *incorporation's* essential power is a «retention» of the events that establish the fundamental values of our tradition, but what it has to do with these events is not, and cannot be, to simply preserve them: it has to act in such a way that the «step of the becoming closer to us», the one of our age, could be passed. The power that makes this passing possible is a power of assimilation able to find in traditional experience and events what can and must be transformed. The device of incorporation is therefore the genealogy's device that makes the transformation of past events possible through the critical unification between traditional experiences and future goals. *Incorporation* becomes then the sense of a device that presides over the passing of present and current times, becoming, at the same time, the means of continuity with the heritage of the cultural body. It is, then, thanks to this device that the Nietzschean untimeliness is no more a mere ideal horizon but becomes a *genealogical practice*. This practice — since can be no more practiced in *present time*, in the German *Jetztzeit* — gradually becomes an analysis that studies the creation of European and Western values that will be later transformed. We can see signs of this drastic practice already in the writings of early 80s, above all in *The Dawn* and in *The Gay Science*, but it is from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards that we can see the clear consequences of the changed methodological view of Nietzsche's thought. In his «anti-Gospel» Nietzsche emphasises the thing that becomes the evaluation criterion of values: the «physopsychological» definition of cultural factors. The traditional values are mean (or base), stiffened and crystallized, unhistorical and supra-historical, defined by a basic inability of having an authentic relationship with history and time. By means of this new evaluative criterion — that probably derives from natural science — Nietzsche uses one of the most important genealogy's critical tool. In the typological antithesis between «slave morality» and «master morality» we can see how this criterion reaches also the historical level: the distinction between «noble values/mean values», already introduced since *Zarathustra*, is specified and analysed in *Beyond Good and Evil*. In this book, Nietzsche describes real historical figures like the Church, Christianity and the «religions of suffering» as those who bear the «mean and base values» of Western tradition while he considers the Occitan poets-knights of *Gay Saber* and the ancient Hellenic ones as those who own the «high and noble values». The historically-genealogically characterisation of these figures will be clearly described in the theoretical context of *On Genealogy of Morality* and *The Antichrist*. In the three treatises about Christianity in

On the Genealogy of Morality, Nietzsche describes the role it played in the nihilist parable of Western values: Christianity clearly becomes the «propagator» of *décadence* values. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, genealogy reveals the decadence's nihilist logic that lies in every cultural field: inside religion, philosophy and science. In the *III Treatise*, focused on the meaning of the ascetic ideals, the historical characterisation of *décadence* values — both of Judaism and of Christianity — wants to show how the ascetic ideals belong not only to the history of Western man but also, and more crucially, to his life, his existence. The exposure, thanks to genealogy, of decadence and nihilism typical of our culture's value-related structure, can be seen, then, as a first example of an *untimely* practice able to define a transformation process both of Western culture's values and of the individual lives guided by them.

FERRUCCIO DE NATALE

ACTUALITY, CURRENCY, UNTIMELY.
THE CRITIQUE OF THE YOUNG NIETZSCHE
TO 'CURRENT HUMAN BEINGS'

1. *Preamble*

The purpose of these considerations is to reflect on not-currency or currency (actuality and inactuality) about the critique of the young Nietzsche to 'current human beings' in relation to his and our time and, therefore, about the questions can asked to his and to our times.

As a necessary preamble, I believe, yet, it should be specified that I'm not certainly a specialist scholar of Nietzsche: not being a 'specialist', I might, rather say, I'm an 'amateur' — in the Latin etymological sense of one who «try delight» into something and that doesn't do something for a living.

I prefer, however, consider me a 'profane' than the scholars of Nietzsche: profane is, even from the Latin, «one who is outside the Temple» and I consider myself, indeed, outside of the «temple» of scholars of Nietzsche, outside the temple to those who are able to administer, deciding the membership, dating, correspondence, coherence of nietzscheans texts.

Of course, this clarification puts to me — but not only me — a first problem: I am a student of Giuseppe Semerari, a Master who was certainly an international scholar of Spinoza, Schelling, Marx, Husserl, scholar of contemporary Italian philosophy, but not equally known Scholar of Nietzsche.

Hitherto, by the same Master derived Nicola Massimo de Feo, who, in 1965, published the book *Analytic and dialectic in Nietzsche*,¹ which formed in those years, more or less at once of the Royaumont Convention, one of

1 N.M. de Feo, *Analitica e dialettica in Nietzsche* (Bari: Adriatica, 1965). It is cited, among others, by Vattimo, which puts him alongside F. Masini, M. Cacciari, C. Sini, E. Mazzarella, V. Vitiello and himself as editor of an «italian portrait» of Nietzsche in G. Vattimo, *Dialogo con Nietzsche. Saggi 1961–2000* (Milan: Garzanti, 2000), p. 275 and note.

the landmarks in Italy to study a Nietzsche released from encumbrance of «right» culture.

For my part, I can also say that I've been involved in Nietzsche two times: when I followed, as professor tutor, the PhD thesis of Rita Casale on *The Heidegger's Nietzsche*² (1992–95) and when I followed the thesis of Annalisa Caputo on *Nietzsche: Subject and Truth* (1993).

This situation poses a first question: what kind of University was the one where a Master like Giuseppe Semerari could come out a scholar of Nietzsche as de Feo and by an apprentice of philosophy like me, could come out two experts of Nietzsche like Professor Caputo and Professor Casale, which is now *Full Professor* in Wuppertal?

Is still there this kind of university organization in Italy? Or is it extinct due to an increasingly extreme specialism, which inhibits the chance of diversity in a school of studies? Does it make sense to talk about schools and masters in the University of triumphant specialism and quantitatively countable?

2. *The relationship present/past and its reversion*

This preamble is not abstract from the topic that I intend to treat, because, as a matter of fact, about University, academic education, teaching we must occupy in speaking of 'currency' and 'not-currency' theorized by Nietzsche critic of his time.

These terms ('currency' and 'not-currency', Time and Untimely) lay at once as part of a precise temporal delimitation and, that is to say, that time span of years between 1873 and 1876, which it is published four *Untimely Meditations* of Nietzsche: the first, 1873: *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*; the second and the third, both in 1874, entitled respectively: *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* and *Schopenhauer as educator*; the last, in 1876: *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*.

The «meditations» pose, therefore, within a specific context, which is that of the youth Nietzsche not yet thirty, Professor in Basel.

Indeed, the contrast between these terms can be found also in aphorism 377 *The Gay science*: the book is of 1882 and the aphorism very hard is titled *We who are homeless*.

Here Nietzsche, after speaking to the inconvenience he lives in his own

2 R. Casale, *Heideggers Nietzsche. Geschichte einer Obsession*, trans. by Catrin Dingler (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag: 2010).

time who is «children of the future», mocks the «religion of compassion» to «hysterical little men» and women that «(...) need just this religion as a veil and finery!» and says that «(...) we far prefer to live on mountains, apart, ‘untimely’».³

This is a very harsh aphorism in which, moreover, is exalted German spirit of the past than that of their own time.

But let's put aside this 1882 perspective and let's go back to Basel.

It is absolutely, in the second of the *Untimely Meditations* that Nietzsche offers the well-known definition of what it means to be «untimely». In the end of the *Preface* to the *Second Meditations*, Nietzsche precisely writes: «[...] I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely — that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come».⁴

And, therefore, the definition that Nietzsche offers about the term ‘untimely’ is tied to an action that modifies the traditional relationship between past, present and future, an action in which the present is lived and acted in the perspective of a future that may, indeed, represent a complete upheaval about something that currently is and about what is considered to be the result of the past.

Not a passive quieten, merely adapting to the present, accepting their roots in the past, but a showing into the future, according to a planning that changes the present upsetting even the legacy of the past.

It is thus the nexus past/present/future what constitutes, in its revolution, the not currency, being «untimely».

A little later, Nietzsche will affirm the need to overcome what is the devouring «historical fever» that is considered a hypertrophic virtue and that is, indeed, characteristic of this historical present where he places himself.

And if it is the present-past connection that needs to be changed, overturned in relation to the «historical fever» devouring and dominant, the subject of the *Second Meditation* is the criticism of the three models of historiography in each and each of which the present dies because of defined in a relationship with the past that Nietzsche consider an unacceptable connection.

What happens, indeed, in each of the three models of historiography that Nietzsche takes into consideration? Into the past we get lost or we lose the past.

Into the model of «antiquarian history» we get lost in the past, we

3 KSA 3, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aph. 377, trans. by B. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 241–242.

4 KSA 1, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II, Vorrede*, trans. by D. Breazele, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 60.

get lost in reconstructing the roots of a tree as it happens to those that, exactly, dedicating themselves to the reconstruction of characteristic and local histories.

In the «monumental history» extolling the past — such as that of ancient Rome — we get lost equally, not for philological purposes, but to draw from that past examples, warnings, ending to annihilate the present, by making the actual man incapable to design your own future.

In historiographical model, as «critical history», finally, the past is cruelly deleted. Nietzsche advises that the process of rescission of relations with the past operated in critical historiography is a dangerous process for life itself:

[...] men and ages which serve life by judging and destroying a past are always dangerous and endangered men and ages. For since we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain.⁵

Thus, it is not severing all ties with the past that we can establish a constructive relationship that makes current a project moment of diversity, that doesn't result in the mere acceptance of the currency itself.

It is, rather, to establish a new way to regulate the relationship present-past, the relation between what is taking place, what is current and what was the source of this currency.

This new way to regulate the relationship between present-past is affirmed by Nietzsche very clearly when he says: «[...] only when you put forth your noblest qualities in all their strength will you divine what is worth knowing and preserving in the past. Like to like! Otherwise you will draw the past down to you».⁶

And so, at this time it is revealed the logic on which the relationship between present-past it is not seen in the perspective of cut off the past, or to draw warnings or getting lost to trace the roots of the present: it is from the present and with its strength that we need to look to the past and interpreting it.

Someone — i. e. Marx in the *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie* — writes, in 1857, to clarify the method of his critique of classical political economy: «Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the

5 Ivi, trans. p. 76.

6 Ivi, trans. p. 94.

subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known».⁷

The upside down of the relationship between present-past is typical of those who contest historical, historicism and idealistic type considerations forms.

This is, certainly, the first characteristic that emerges in the work by Nietzsche: the modification of the relationship between present-past intended as *first place of the present* to the past. But Nietzsche studies in depth this his assertion as follows:

When the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it. The extraordinary degree and extent of the influence exercised by Delphi is nowadays explained principally by the fact that the Delphic priests had an exact knowledge of the past; now it would be right to say that only he who constructs the future has a right to judge the past.⁸

It's not only with the reversal of the relationship present-past, establishing the primacy of the present to the past, that exceeds the «historical fever», the virtue that becomes a «hypertrophic vice»: it needs that the strength of the present is imposed as the one who looks to the past is projected to build his own future.

Only those who, precisely, build, design their future can look at and interpret the past not getting lost in it, or severing relationships which constitute them, too, but seizing what the past can offer the material to build their project.

Also, here is significant, to me, that Nietzsche uses the metaphor of an architect; a metaphor that, in the Italian philosophical culture, in 1976, some Italian physicists, including Marcello Cini, placed under the title of their work published by Feltrinelli and titled *The Bee and the Architect (L'ape e l'architetto)*.⁹

These authors, get again a passage in the First book of Marx's *Capital* where Marx establishes the difference between the bee and the architect because the bee realize its own purpose in the natural element while the architect has built his structure in his head.¹⁰

7 K. Marx, *Grundrisse – Foundation of the Critique of Political Economy*, translated by M. Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 38.

8 *Untimely Meditations*, p. 94.

9 G. Ciccotti, M. Cini, M. de Maria, G. Jona-Lasinio, *L'Ape e l'Architetto. Paradigmi scientifici e materialismo storico* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976).

10 See K. Marx, *Capital* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 127.

It is therefore significant this combination that establishes how the present and the future have prevalence towards the past, right if you want to be 'untimely' men and not quiet men in accepting the present as it is.

But let's go back to the young Nietzsche.¹¹ If that's the way we have to see the contrast between future, present and past, this same way to pass the contrast undermines the opposition life and history, which is a typical Schopenhauerian opposition, representing the author to whom Nietzsche, in those same years, is particularly close.

Setting up in these terms the nexus present-past means reducing or begin to weak Schopenhauer.

If we stop in this moment, there are a few things to consider.

The first is provided by the editor of this Italian Edition, Giorgio Colli, that underlines the «pessimism» that Nietzsche addresses to his present — pessimism that derives from the observation that the present is dominated by men devoured by the «historical fever», living the relationship present-past in a humiliating way — causes an imbalance: if, indeed, the historical impulse moves away from life why, then, do we need history for action?¹²

Beyond the issues of Schopenhauerian consistency or inconsistency of young professor in Basel, is, at this level of our «secular» analysis, another question. We speak of Nietzsche, we discuss about works and about a thought from the past: now, if we are not infected by the «fever» of which Nietzsche is ruthlessly critical, if we want to follow the Nietzsche «untimely», what future do we want to build and talking to the works written in a so remote paste?

In other words: which project moves forwards to retrieve the problem of «not currency» considering works by 150 years ago? We can be historicists, infected by a «fever» that is not fade away forever and then we produce antiquarian or monumental historiography, or we have a drawing of what

11 Moreover, it must be said, that even in a text more or less contemporary, of 1872, Nietzsche takes up the metaphor of the bee: see F. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, in *The Nietzsche Reader*, Ed., Keith Ansell Perason, Duncan Large, Malden, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006, p. 118: «As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax that he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture from himself».

12 See G. Colli, *Introductive Note* in F. Nietzsche, *Sull'utilità e il danno della storia per la vita*, it. tr. S. Giametta, (Milan: Adelphi, 1979); from *Opere di F. Nietzsche*, vol. III, Tomo I, it. ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari, pp. XIII/XIV.

is today the «untimely» and because of this it turns to look at Friedrich Nietzsche to build a different project than the present.

3. *Building the future by schools*

There is at least a second work, more or less contemporary to *Meditations*, on which we can stand to look into the connection present/past in the young Nietzsche: it is the book that collects the five conferences that Nietzsche, in 1872, held in Basel academic society, — Swiss University that called him as Full Professor of Classical Philology — addressing the issue of the future of educational institutions.¹³

To overcome the relationship present-past in his historicist declination, Nietzsche requires to review the way in which the past is taught, the way in which this bond is to be established within the school structure, the University structure.

Already in the second *Untimely* Nietzsche is very clear when he says that it is «(...) to flee from that paralyzing upbringing of the present age which sees its advantage in preventing your growth so as to rule and exploit you to the full while you are still immature».¹⁴

There is a kind of awareness in Basel's conferences, critical reflection and self-criticism of those who plays the role of educator, teacher, professor, wondering what he's doing while teaching, what is the structure in which he operates and what he can do for escaping the crippling charm of «historical fever».

Yet the same curator of Italian and German critical edition, Colli, defines in very hard terms these conferences that «[...] appear in the most orthodox and torpid sphere of academic communication».¹⁵

It's a kind of presentation, self-presentation to the flow and cultured audience in Basel by the young professor Nietzsche and it is, as Colli says, a presentation that never formal.

It's strange this contradiction of a young teacher and already Full Professor who speaks against the institution of which he himself was called to be a member.

13 F. Nietzsche, *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, translated by J.M. Kennedy, Vol. Three, Morrison & Gibb Limited, Edinburgh 2009.

14 F. Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, in *Untimely Meditations*, p. 95.

15 G. Colli, *Introductory Note* in F. Nietzsche, *Sull'avvenire delle nostre scuole*, ed. by G. Colli (Milan: Adelphi, 1973) from *Opere di F. Nietzsche*, vol. III, Tomo II, p. XIII. Our translation.

More generally, as it's known, it can be said that these five conferences, as Colli reminds, return into the very close relationship between Nietzsche and Burckhardt and concern the conflict between culture and State.

Nietzsche pronounces these conferences precisely because it is meant to emphasize how culture and teaching should be emancipated from State control and his speech is immediately clear.

Nietzsche has as his reference point always what eventually will be themed in the four *Meditations* under the term of not currency and, as a matter of fact, what are we talking about?

Nietzsche says:

He who feels in complete harmony with the present state of affairs and who acquiesces in it «*as something selbstverständliches*», excites our envy neither in regard to his faith nor in regard to that egregious word «*selbstverständlich*», so frequently heard in fashionable circles. He, however, who holds the opposite view and is therefore in despair, does not need to fight any longer: all he requires is to give himself up to solitude in order soon to be alone. Albeit, between those who take everything for granted and these anchorites, there stand the *fighters* — that is to say, those who still have hope.¹⁶

It is the present, the relationship with it what's necessary for the future of the schools, in the same mission of the educator, the university Professor: we cannot nor give into the present, saying there is no problem — because, of course, the present becomes clear, it justifies itself by itself — or despair: we must fight.

It is significant as Nietzsche qualifies this fight, which is a «fight full of hope» and, therefore, is opening to the future: only those who hope not lie in the present, nor, in a masochistic way, lonely, onanistic, despair about and in the present itself.

The man who «fights full of hope» does not conform to current events nor despairs deeming can't edit it: he has a special relationship with time because he can't get used to establish the value of everything based on saving or loosing time; he is the one *who has time*; who has time to read, who has time to reflect on something, who has time to think, which can think and write for the time that is needed. Only someone who is not a slave to time can «fight full of hope».¹⁷

Those who *measure* everything in time and saving time or get adapted, believing that everything is self-explained, that we have to accept what it is

16 *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, p. 11.

17 See *ivi*, p. 5.

imposed by this logic, or they despair because can't «find» time to answer to what is asked.

Build your own time, your own future, your own hope and fight in accordance to this against the present: this is the purpose.

Ere long Nietzsche identifies two '*currents*' — he calls them exactly in this way — that, in his view, they represent the destruction of schools in the world of German culture: the two elements, complements each other, are the extension of the culture and the impulse to detract from it and to weak it.

The extension of the culture turns around the exploitation of culture by the State, that Nietzsche puts in a terrific evidence: «The all too frequent exploitation of youth by the State, for its own purposes — that is to say, so that it may rear useful officials as quickly as possible and guarantee their unconditional obedience to it by means of excessively severe examinations — had remained quite foreign to our education».¹⁸

The exploitation of the State forges men who use to respond to extremely laborious tests and get surrender to what is the culture State device and it places the culture itself at the service of the State.

This expansion belongs to the most beloved of the dogmas of modern political economy. As much knowledge and education as possible; therefore the greatest possible supply and demand — hence as much happiness as possible: — that is the formula. In this case utility is made the object and goal of education, — utility in the sense of gain — the greatest possible pecuniary gain.¹⁹

The subordination of culture, education, school to the State is the subordination of culture, education, school to profits and money: therefore, we will support cultural addresses generating profits, producing money, that is to say we will support development of that type of human cultural production that aims to gain.

It is in this context that Nietzsche uses an extremely sarcastic word, and for this reason especially spellbuilding, when he writes: «The goal would then be to create as many current human beings as possible, in the sense in which one speaks of a coin as being current».²⁰

The extension of the culture creates 'current human beings', the current human beings have the same *facies* of current coins.

18 Ivi, p. 31.

19 Ivi, p. 36.

20 See *Untimely Meditations*, p. 164.

In coeval *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, Nietzsche speaks of truth as coins which have lost their coinage, that are so used to have lost their coinage:²¹ how the concepts have lost their even if metaphorical relationship with sensitivity, with the experimental reality at perceptual level, in this way, in lectures in Basel, the «current» man is the man who has lost his carnality, his individuality, he is depersonalized and he is exactly as good coin on all occasions as long as aimed at profit and gain.

In this current of extension of culture is combined, in lectures in Basel, with the inclination towards weakening of the culture that is characterized essentially by three aspects: the first aspect is the *specialism*, that is defined by Nietzsche as an effect of the division of labor that modifies even the man of science in a workman:

‘Fidelity in small things’, ‘dogged faithfulness’, become expressions of highest eulogy, and the lack of culture outside the speciality is flaunted abroad as a sign of noble sufficiency. [...] the exploitation of a man for the purpose of science is accepted everywhere without the slightest scruple.²²

Nietzsche, in these pages, shows the science as «a vampire who consumes his minions» just because the man of science is becoming increasingly tied to the particular.

Nietzsche shows himself, therefore, extremely conscious of the parceling of work that, in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, begins to grow in the organization of production in factory, as what tends to dominate the production of culture, too.

The specialism is the first aspect of the weakening of the culture: there is no longer the cultured man, but there is the man who is a specialist in certain areas, in certain sectors, which knows only certain «details» and he has not an overview of the problems of reality.

The second aspect of this weakening of culture is the *slavery of the present* that Nietzsche identifies in journalism: «In the newspaper the peculiar educational aims of the present culminate, just as the journalist, the servant of the moment, has stepped into the place of the genius, of the leader for all time, of the deliverer from the tyranny of the moment».²³

21 F. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, in *The Nietzsche Reader*, p. 117.

22 *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, p. 40.

23 *Ivi*, p. 41.

The journalist has become the authority, according to Nietzsche in 1872: one who «is valid», before we can imagine, evidently, the mass media of today.

The journalist is the «reference point», but the journalist, for the term itself that expresses it, that it recalls of the day, he is *slave* of the day, and he replaces the cultured man.

And, finally, the weakening of culture is represented, as the third element, the *condition of the student*.

In the last of the five conferences of Basel, it's pleasant to read the passage in which Nietzsche enhances the Greeks as a veritable «ladder to ascend to culture»:

Take away the Greeks, together with philosophy and art, and what ladder have you still remaining by which to ascend to culture? [...] if you attempt to clamber up the ladder without these helps, you must permit me to inform you that all your learning will lie like a heavy burden on your shoulders rather than furnishing you with wings and bearing you aloft.²⁴

It is clear here the love of Greek culture that Nietzsche, as a Professor of classical philology, lives intensely and tries to impart to his lucky students: with the same amount obviousness, however, already in the organization of studies of the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, is revealed a tendency to marginalize classical culture.

The student is, therefore, the third moment of this weakening of culture because Nietzsche writes: «[...] when he is apparently the only free man in a crowd of servants and officials, he atones for this huge illusion of freedom by ever-growing inner doubts and convictions».²⁵ And, a little further on, on the same page we read: «[...] his helplessness and the want of a leader towards culture drive him from one form of life into another: but doubt, elevation, worry, hope, despair — everything flings him hither and thither as a proof that all the stars above him by which he could have guided his ship have set».²⁶

These Nietzsche's words are beautiful, that count in 1872 in Basel, but seem to also apply to us in 2016.

The apparent freedom of the student, not an employee nor a servant, actually, translates, in Colli's Italian translation, into «uncertainty» in its

24 Ivi, p. 131.

25 Ivi, p. 132.

26 Ivi, p. 133.

sway without having a project before, without having the chance to fight for a hope to achieve.

In this manner, this student's condition, which in the name of a culture based on the profit lacks a real cultural guide, weakens the culture itself: this state of swaying, abandonment to the different currents in the present pushing him on one side and on the other, is what weakens culture because if the student drags on in this state, there is no future for the schools of the time of Nietzsche on 1872, and maybe not even for our schools of the 21st century.

Here Nietzsche shows himself, once again, attentive to the cultural situation that is proper to the moment he is living, the one of the second industrial revolution, extremely attentive to aspects of standardization, depersonalization, loss of identity and commodification that occur in his time.

In this situation, he seems to be extremely close to us, that is tied to our times: it seems he's speaking about us to us. And, even more, this «proximity» seems to be consolidated when the Basel Professor delights to taunt the method of the teaching of philosophy in University.

The teachings are imparted according to an «acroamatic method», that is a method that takes place only through the ear:

The student hears. When he speaks, when he sees, when he is in the company of his companions when he takes up some branch of art: in short, when he *lives* he is independent, *i.e.* not dependent upon the educational institution. The student very often writes down something while he hears [...] The teacher, however, speaks to these listening students. Whatever else he may think and do is cut off from the student's perception by an immense gap. The professor often reads when he is speaking.²⁷

And this gap between the student and the Professor, Nietzsche continues, is also a gap between the teaching world and life itself.

But to the complaint and the demolition of all this school and cultural system, what type of juxtaposition Nietzsche sets?

Nietzsche affirms the need to reconsider the past and to reconsider, especially, that moment of German culture, at the end of the Napoleonic wars, when University students found real masters, who were masters of life, not only of erudition: he proposes, therefore, a return backwards, remember the «indignant youths» as student movement that linked teaching and life.

27 Ivi, p. 125.

4. *Historicize the anti-historicism?*

To this point, therefore, Nietzsche.

But it is difficult, in my opinion, to not remember what Colli writes in *Premise* to the second *Untimely Meditations*: it is his observations to have moved these «profane» reflections about the conflict between currency and not currency proposed by the young Nietzsche. Colli writes:

Canon of anti-historicism, this *Consideration* deserves, if nothing else, not to be subject to a historical criticism. Investigate why Nietzsche, in the development of his person or in the history of his time, has come precisely to such a script, under what conditions and what plans has he obeyed, it would be hubris of method.²⁸

What, however, we want to try to ask ourselves is: what happens if you do what Colli refuses to realize? That is, what becomes of this struggle of Nietzsche against the «current human beings» against the lay back in the present, when you submit Nietzsche, if not exactly a criticism, to a simple, trivial «historical framing»?

It seemed beautiful, for example, Nietzsche's criticism to the «acroamatic method» of university education, it was significant and conforming to our time the description of the condition of the student, tossed about the waves of a present failing to dominate because it lacks a horizon to spread out its sail.

However, if you compare what Nietzsche writes in the five conferences *On the Future of our Educational Institutions* and to some extent in the second *Untimely Meditation* with what a cardinal, John Henry Newman, in a book which is titled *The Idea of a University* and it is precisely of 1872, you can easily capture the paradoxical elements of reflection.²⁹

We soon realize that Newman, in fact, with all the limitations that he has in comparison with the elegance and vividness of Nietzsche's writing, he doesn't just present a critique of scholarly teaching model of University of the time, but he also offers precise, reasoned and articulated alternatives.

28 Colli, p. XI. Our translation.

29 See J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University defined and illustrated, I. University teaching considered in nine discourses*, in *Scritti sull'università*, by M. Marchetto, Italian edition with English text at front (Milan: Bompiani, 2008).

He supports a form of «self-education» for students,³⁰ the relationship of culture not only with the intellect but with the whole person of the student,³¹ he organizes courses, he founds a University, that is the English Catholic University.

It is a project, that one of Newman, who starts with the same needs of Nietzsche,³² but that continues and is committed to building the future and is not restricted to a criticism that looks to the past as a «monument» to draw from.

We wonder, as profanes: when Nietzsche rightly protest against the «acroamatic method», how many are his students at the University of Basel? What kind of social status they represent in Switzerland of 1872? And what is his alternative? Returning to the students and to the relationship student-teacher of post Napoleonic war German cultural world?

What Newman says in the same years? He says: we have to build a different kind of University.

Between the two who is the most revolutionary? Who is the most «untimely»? Is it so risky to lean towards the cardinal?

And there is, finally, another text, published in 1871: a text in which a reporter of the *Evening standard* describes the consequences of a mass shooting by the French at the end of the experience of the Paris Commune: he portrays the image of a hand that moves a day after the body was buried. These are crudeness extreme lines that Marx refers talking in *The civil war in France*, the book that he writes, in fact, about the commune of Paris.³³

30 Ivi, p. 300: «(...) When a multitude of young men, keen, minded, open-hearted, sympathetic, and observant, as young men are, come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn one from another, even if be no one to teach them (...)» and, furthermore, p. 302: «(...) that knowledge is something more than a sort of passive reception of scraps and details; it is something, and it does a something, which never will issue from the most strenuous efforts of a set of teachers, with no mutual sympathies and no inter-communion, of a set of examiners with no opinions which they dare profess, and with no common principles, who are teaching or questioning with a set of youths who do not know them, and do not know each other, on a large number of subjects (...)».

31 Ivi, p. 278: The cultural enlargement requires an action that «(...) reducing to order and meaning the matter of our acquirements; it is a making the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own (...)».

32 See ivi, p. 270 against the culture understood as an accumulation of acquirements: p. 284 against the specialism: «(...) Men, whose minds are possessed with some one object, take exaggerated views of its importance, are feverish in the pursuit of it, make it the measure of things which are utterly foreign to it, and are startled and despond if it happens to fail them».

33 K. Marx, *The Civil War in France, Introduction by F. Engels* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 102: «In the daytime the roar of the busy

What kind of position took Nietzsche against that historical present, 1871, when he writes *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, when he holds his lectures at the University of Basel?

It is known that Nietzsche leaves the University of Basel because he seeks to serve the Prussian Army in the war against the French, not as military — because a fall from a horse has already stop him becoming Prussian official — but as a simple volunteer male nurse, as recalled by biographies.

Let's leave this particular: he could not be a male nurse because he fell ill with diphtheria.

But about his present, what cognition has professor Friedrich Nietzsche, as well as to overcome the «historicist fever» to return to the relationship teacher-pupil post Napoleonic wars?

This is what we turn to consider Nietzsche, we should perhaps ask ourselves.

Who is «untimely»? It's «untimely» Nietzsche with his conception of the overturning of the link present/past/future, but it is «untimely», perhaps, even the workman who shoots to watches during the Commune in France, because he lives the time as work time, time of factory, time of Capital and, therefore, of the owner.

And, then, it is necessary to consider, in my opinion, certainly the charming, fascinating, anticipating aspects of our present that are in the writings of Nietzsche in which he talks about the not currency: more, we must highlight the necessity about not currency as constitutive requirement of philosophy since it is size of critical reflection of the present and not its mere acceptance, nor its mere estimate (for which sciences in all their forms are sufficient and a lot more effective).

But we must also consider the danger that it may be considered to be «untimely» only by remaining into philosophy, only by remaining *inside* the dimension of teaching, in the size of the school or within the same purely and simply «cultural» dimension.

streets prevented any notice being taken; but in the stillness of the night the inhabitants of the houses in the neighborhood were roused by distant moans, and in the morning a clenched hand was seen protruding through the soil. [...] many wounded have been buried alive I have not the slightest doubt. One case I can vouch for. When Brunel was shot with his mistress on the 24th ult. in the courtyard of a house in the place Vendôme, the bodies lay there until the afternoon of the 27th. When the burial party came to remove the corpses, they found the woman still living, and took her to an ambulance. Though she had received four bullets she is now out of danger. Paris Correspondent, Evening Standard, June 8».

The present, the present of Nietzsche, its relevance is not only that of its privileged students at the University of Basel, nor his relationship with Schopenhauer: the present is, on the one hand, the not currency of a cardinal who founds a new model of University and designs what is still effective for many around the world and, on the other hand, the not currency of who dies in the way the English *Evening Standard* reporter tells of executions of combatants of the Commune.

MARCO CASUCCI

THE UNTIMELY AS AN ASCESIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: BETWEEN SCHOPENHAUER AND NIETZSCHE

The aim of this contribution is to highlight the possibility to investigate the relationship between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in the light of the concept of the «Ascesis of Consciousness». Beyond the differences and the quarrels which animated the relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer — a great passion which ended in very strong criticism — it is in fact possible to underline how the idea of an ascetical philosophy is very strong for both of them, even if determined by different declinations. In particular, in this contribution, the idea of an «ascesis of consciousness» will be related to the concept of the «untimely», which represents, in the horizon of Nietzschean philosophy, the first impulse to an elevation of mind in the direction of an overcoming of temporal finitude. As will be made clear, both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were strongly orientated towards an elevation of thought in its experiential dimension, as it was able to grasp the essence of that eternity which lies beyond the finitude of the empirical and, thus, temporal experience.

In this sense, the expression «ascesis of thought» — coined by the Italian philosopher Moretti-Costanzi — is what makes it possible to find the *fil rouge* which links Schopenhauer to Nietzsche in an over-historical way. In particular, the idea of an «ascesis», which borrows from the Greek term the significance of «exercise» and «experience», and from Latin the significance of an elevation (*ascensus*), is recalled by both thinkers here considered as the deep need they had to indicate a difference between ordinary experience, as determined by the finitude of temporality, and the eternity as that summit in which the consciousness regains itself in its original dimension.

The experience of the ascesis of consciousness, therefore, will bring us to take into account the possibility to re-read the relationship between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as animated by the same horizon of sense, by virtue of which the elevation of the experience of thought will lead to the definition of two different states of mind, or «levels». These levels of consciousness are defined by the movement of the ascesis itself in its bringing the consciousness from time into eternity. As a result these levels of consciousness can be thus determined: one as the level of temporality and finitude, and the other as the level of eternity,

where everything is transfigured in the concrete experience of the genius. The figure of the genius, therefore, will be the critical point of this contribution, as the major heritage of Schopenhauerism that can be found in the determination of the Nietzschean untimely, and which will also remain in the other summits reached by Nietzsche in his meditation, such as in that other fundamental figure of the Nietzschean thought: the *Übermensch*.

From this perspective, the present contribution aims to highlight the following elements: after a delineation of the figure of the Genius in Schopenhauer's masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation* as the level of the «authenticity» of consciousness, the Nietzschean reception of the doctrine of the genius in the *Untimely Meditations* will be analysed, in order to examine, in the final section, the doctrine of the «levels of consciousness» in both thinkers, as described in Schopenhauer's *Early Manuscripts*, and recalled in the further directions of Nietzschean thought.

1. *The Schopenhauerian Doctrine of the Genius in 'The World as Will and Representation'*

As is well known, the doctrine of the genius is presented by Schopenhauer in the third book of *The World*. Here, after having illustrated, in the first two books, the dimension of the representation along the principle of sufficient reason, and that of the will as the «thing in itself» as it emerges on the limits of the knowledge, the hermit of Frankfurt proceeds to investigate the dimension of «pure» knowledge, as long as it is freed from the forms of the principle of sufficient reason and from the dominion of the will. For Schopenhauer, the object of this pure knowledge is the «Platonic idea», the true correlate of the vision of the «pure subject of knowledge», as freed from the dominion of time and will. If the world of representation, founded on the principle of sufficient reason, is oriented to the kaleidoscopic multiplicity of the objects in its fragmentation, by contrast, the will, conceived by Schopenhauer as the Kantian «*an sich*» which is disclosed beyond the «veil of Maya», can be considered as its correlative negation. The knowledge of the idea is characterized by a double detachment, accomplished by the «pure» subject of knowledge regarding the representation as much as the will as its negative condition and background, on which the objective world is projected in the multiplicity of its forms.

The idea can be grasped as a «pure object» only if it is offered outside the conditioning elements which transform the «thing in itself» into something which is «for us». Thus, the «object» should be freed from all those forms which enclose the object in the horizon of a limited representation. «Representing»,

for Schopenhauer, means no more than annihilating the «pure» object by reducing it to a mere scheme of relationships of subjective illusions. Time, in particular, is the form through which the consciousness reduces the object into the sum of the changes of its states, by exchanging its duration for the abstractness of the concept. The subject of the representation is completely dominated by the temporality at its roots, and neither can it completely free itself when, practicing its higher intellectual operations, the subject itself is deceived to detach from the «fundamental bass» of the temporality. Undoubtedly, the entire analysis developed by Schopenhauer in the first two books of *The World* is no more than a reduction of the gnosiological dimension of consciousness to basilar temporality as the playground of all its representations. The result of this reduction is an implosion of knowledge, by virtue of which the world is mined at its roots, and it manifests itself as «a dream without a dreamer». As Schopenhauer himself states:

Wie in ihr jeder Augenblick nur ist, sofern er den vorhergehenden, seinem Vater, vertilgt hat, um selbst wieder eben so schnell vertilgt zu werden; wie Vergangenheit und Zukunft [...] so nichtig als irgend ein Traum sind, [...] eben so werden wir die selber Nichtigkeit auch in alle andere Gestalten des Satzes vom Grunde wiedererkennen.¹

This is thus the condition of the transcendental subject submerged in its temporality, for which the whole world is a kaleidoscopic confusion of determinations in which permanence in the flux of time can only be gained by the abstractness of the concept. That determination of time as a basilar element of the gnoseological consciousness can be considered as the starting point from which arises the Schopenhauerian doctrine about the inconsistency of the world, which finally results in the negativity expressed by the «will», which is the negative «noumenon», disclosed beyond the forms of representation. In this sense, the first two books of *The World* are finalized to open the space, so that the real target of the work can be achieved. A target which, paradoxically, is not given by the mere opposition between «representation» and «will», as the title of the book itself would indicate, but rather by the necessity to introduce a soteriological doctrine which is destined to end in the *Noluntas*, the negation of the «will» as a thing in itself.²

1 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bd. 1, hrsg. von Arthur Hbscher, (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus 1972), §3, p. 8.

2 The interpretation of the Schopenhauerian philosophy has a huge bibliography. Here I want to recall some title of Italian interpreters who oriented my inquiry:

Therefore, while time takes a step back and is deconstructed in its relativizing power, it is given the space for the manifestation of a different level of sense, in which there is a possibility to re-build the fragmented mosaic of the representation:

Die Zeit ist bloß die vertheilte und zerstückelte Ansicht, welche ein individuelles Wesen von den Ideen hat, die außer der Zeit, mithin ewig sind: daher sagt Plato, die Zeit sei das bewegte Bild der Ewigkeit: αἰῶνος εἰκὼν κινήτη ὁ χρόνος.³

The Platonic quote leaves Schopenhauer's inspiration in no doubt. The contemplation of reality beyond the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and thus beyond the «will to live», frees the space for the manifestation of the idea as the true «thing in itself». Rather than the multiple variety of objects which find only a partial unity in the abstract concept, the idea brings in itself the presence of a concrete unity that can be found in an integral experience that allows the dispersive rays of knowledge to gather into a single focus. The idea is the vision of the things from a non-temporal point of view. The sense of this contemplation, rather than being scattered into pale abstract forms, is capable to manifest the real essence of the world. As Schopenhauer will state in the *Parerga*, recalling the experience in the visual arts:

Die Auffassung einer solchen [Ideen] aber erfordert, daß ich, bei Betrachtung eines Objekts, wirklich von seiner Stelle, in Zeit und Raum, und dadurch von seiner Individualität, abstrahire. Denn diese, allemal durch das Gesetz der Kausalität bestimmte *Stelle* ist es, die jenes Objekt zu mir, als Individuo, in irgend ein Verhältnis setzt: daher wird nur unter Beseitigung jener Stelle das Objekt zur *Idee* und eben damit ich zum reinen Subjekt des Erkennens. Deshalb giebt jedes Gemälde, schon dadurch, dass es den flüchtigen Augenblick für immer fixirt und so aus der *Zeit* herausreißt, nicht das Individuelle, sondern die *Idee*, das Dauernde in allem Wechsel.⁴

The task of art, and of the genius as its pro-ducer, is to allow the idea to be shown as the thing in itself, outside the relativizing relationships acted

Piero Martinetti, *Schopenhauer*, ed. by Mirko Fontemaggi, (Genova: Il melangolo, 2005); Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi, *Schopenhauer*, in Id., *Opere*, ed. by Edoardo Mirri and Marco Moschini (Milan: Bompiani, 2009); Giuseppe Faggin, *Schopenhauer, il mistico senza Dio* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1951); Leonardo Casini, *Schopenhauer. Il silenzio del sacro* (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 2004).

3 *Die Welt I*, §32, p. 207.

4 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Bd. 2, hrsg. von Arthur Hübscher (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1974) §206, p. 444.

by the representation. This is why, in the Schopenhauerian definitions of «pure» subject and «pure» object, which are used in the third book of *The World*, the accent should be stressed on the adjective «pure», rather than on the expressions of «subject» and «object» which have already been compromised by the speculative language of modernity. The adjective «pure» in this context refers to a different level of consciousness in which the relationship between the two terms is transfigured into something completely different from the usual gnosiological use. Art, in this sense, is capable of reawakening a radically different experience, in which things can shine in a different way, and are not clouded by the shadows of becoming. Art and genius can elevate the world and consciousness into a level of truth in which the true essence of things can be manifested in its eternity, in a qualitative vision whose intemporality is the sign of its purity.

A genius, for Schopenhauer, is one who can accomplish this elevation of consciousness by achieving an ulterior dimension, where everything shines in a different light. That is why the genius cannot share the point of view of the common man, of that «wholesale merchandise of nature» that fills the market square satisfied with its crass philistinism: «Zu diesem Allen kommt noch, dass das Genie wesentlich einsam lebt. Es ist zu selten, als daß es leicht auf seines Gleichen treffen könnte, und zu verschieden von den Uebrigen, um ihr Geselle zu sehn. Bei ihnen ist das Wollen, bei ihm ist das Erkennen Vorwaltenden».⁵ The third book of *The World* is completely permeated by the exaltation of the difference typical of the genius, as can be highlighted by the quotation given by Schopenhauer from The Gospel of St. John, which clearly presents the untimely dimension of genius itself: «Ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς οὐπω πάρεστιν, ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὁ ὑμέτερος πάντοτέ ἐστιν ἕτοιμος».⁶

Eternity, for the genius, is untimely, and cannot be commensurate with the day-to-day becoming of time that always flows identically for the man born to die. As will be made clear, this is precisely the position taken by Nietzsche in the second *Meditation*. For Schopenhauer, the experience of the untimely dimension of the idea is rooted in the eternity of a vision, conceived as a liberation that elevates the mind into an original openness of reality. This is the fundamental sense of art, as revealed by Schopenhauer in his masterpiece:

Wenn man, durch die Kraft des Geistes gehoben, die gewöhnliche Betrachtungsart der Dinge fahren läßt, aufhört, nur ihren Relationen zu

5 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bd. 2, hrsg. von A. Übscher (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1972), p. 446.

6 *Jo.*, 7:6; *Die Welt 2*, p. 447.

einander, deren letztes Ziel immer die Relation zum eigenen Willen ist, am Leitfaden der Gestaltungen des Satzes vom Grunde, nachzugehn, also nicht mehr das Wo, das Wann, das Warum und das Wozu an den Dingen Betrachtet; sondern einzig und allein das Was; auch nicht das abstrakte Denken, die Begriffe der Vernunft, das Bewußtseyn einnehmen läßt; sondern, statt allen diesen, die ganze Macht seines Geistes der Anschauung hingiebt, sich ganz in diese versenkt und das ganze Bewußtseyn ausfüllen läßt durch die ruhige Kontemplation des gerade gegenwärtigen natürlichen Gegenstandes, sei es eine Landschaft, ein Baum, ein Fels, ein Gebäude oder was auch immer [...], wenn also solchermaßen das Objekt aus aller Relation zu etwas außer ihm, das Subjekt aus aller Relation zum Willen getreten ist: dann ist, was also erkannt wird, nicht mehr das einzelne Ding als solches, sondern es ist die Idee, die ewige Form [...]: und eben dadurch ist zugleich der in dieser Anschauung Begriffene nicht mehr Individuum: denn das Individuum hat sich eben in solche Anschauung verloren: sondern ist *reines*, willenloses, schmerzloses, zeitloses *Subjekt der Erkenntniß*.⁷

The genius, as a «pure subject of knowledge», is at the same time beyond time and will. He manifests the peculiar mood of abandon typical of the consciousness devoted to the contemplation of the eternal truth. The consciousness leaves behind the frivolous curiosity typical of the gnosiological attitude, in order to open itself to the idea, where the thirst for knowledge is suppressed by the manifestation of the truth itself. The genius is thus someone that can contemplate everything «*sub specie aeternitatis*»⁸ by freeing himself and the world in a single transfiguring glimpse. In this liberation inside the essential bond of eternity, the genius contemplates the world, elevating himself to a level of consciousness in which all things change their significance by acquiring their own deepest truth. Also nature, which for Schopenhauer is normally identified as something negative, can be assumed in the vision of art as something beautiful; up to the point, that in the *Supplements to The World*, Schopenhauer cannot contain his enthusiasm, exclaiming: «Wie ästhetisch ist doch die Natur!»⁹ This expression sounds strange in the pessimistic context of the Schopenhauerian masterpiece, but finds its deepest meaning in the unassailable possibility of the vision of the genius that transfigures, in a work of art, nature itself in its beauty.

This is a struggle, that would animate the entire oeuvre of the hermit of Frankfurt: a conflict between the discovery of the negativity of the world,

7 *Die Welt 1*, §34, p. 210.

8 Here Schopenhauer quotes directly the Spinoza's *Ethics*: «*mens aeterna est, quatenus res sub aeternitatis specie concipit*» (B. Spinoza, *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*, V, prop. 31, schol.; *Die Welt 1*, §34, p. 211).

9 *Die Welt 2*, p. 462.

as attested by the unconcealment of the will as the thing in itself beyond the illusions of the representation, and the raising of the beauty of the world in the contemplation of the genius and in the work of art. If, on the one hand, the world remains limited by its finitude and mortality, as is strongly expressed by the reduction of the world to the negativity of the will, on the other, the centrality of art and aesthetics in Schopenhauerian thought cannot be denied.

This struggle is what leads the reader of *The World* to its aporetic conclusion, which states the need for a complete negation of the world in the *noluntas*, as an announcement of an «epiphilosophy» which is destined to remain unconcluded. In the final chapter of the *Supplements of The World*, Schopenhauer criticizes the Spinozistic doctrine of a divinized world, or better, of a world which results as an expression of the glory of God, as if the last theoretical act of Schopenhauer was addressed to avoid the temptation of collusion between the transcendent perfection of what lies beyond the world and the world itself. The outcome of this struggle is consumed in the flesh of the genius himself, as the beauty which is manifested by his contemplation is submitted to an irreconcilable polarity. The genius is put in a tragic situation, inasmuch as the conflict between the pain and the beauty of the world, between the will and «pure» intellection, is acted out within him:

Im Ganzen und Allgemeine jedoch beruht die dem Genie beigegebene Melancholie darauf, daß der Wille zum Leben, von je hellerem Intellekt er sich beleuchtet findet, desto deutlicher das Elend seines Zustandes wahrnimmt. — Die so häufig bemerkte trübe Stimmung hochbegabter Geister hat ihr Sinnbild am Montblanc, dessen Gipfel meistens bewölkt ist: aber wann bisweilen, zumal früh Morgens, der Wolkenschleier reißt und nun der Berg vom Sonnenlichte roth, aus seiner Himmelshöhe über den Wolken, auf Chamouni herabsieht; dann ist es ein Anblick, bei welchem Jeden das Herz im tiefsten Grunde aufgeht. So zeigt auch das meistens melancholische Genie zwischendurch die schon oben geschilderte, nur ihm mögliche, aus der vollkommensten Objektivität des Geistes entspringende, eigenthümliche Heiterkeit, die wie ein Lichtglanz auf seiner hohen Stirne schwebt: *in tristitia hilaris, in hilaritate tristis*.¹⁰

The image of Mont Blanc which is exposed to the light only in «rare moments» after days of gloomy weather, can lead us to the experience proper of the genius, which Schopenhauer himself would have experienced in his own life. That «rarity» which sometimes emerges over the pain of

10 *Die Welt* 2, pp. 438–439. Schopenhauer, in the third book of the first volume also recalls the verses of Byron, in order to underline the deep participation of the genius to the nature: «I live not in myself, but I become /Portion of that around me; and to me /High mountains are a feeling» (*Die Welt* 1, §51, p. 296).

existence is in fact typical of the genius. The summit of the mountain, lit by the morning sun, testifies to the possibility of a different state of mind, in which everything becomes light, by losing the weight of finitude, and inspiring a renewed feeling of the world.

However this gesture of the genius, the ease in which his art is given as a gift to the world, arises from the same pain that, for Schopenhauer, is present in the world as its unmoving condition, and that can only be eliminated with the whole world itself. It is as if Schopenhauer could not suffer the burden of existence faced by that lightness of the candid and pure summit of the mountain. A grace for the world does not descend from this summit, only the underlining of its constitutive mistake. That is why, in the end, the «play» of art is revealed as a trick, as a diversion for young and enthusiastic minds, that should be left aside, by breaking the bonds with the world with a complete renunciation.

The ascesis of consciousness in *The World* thus ends with a complete negation which should eliminate every tension between time and eternity, finite and infinite — because those tensions are painful, and pain is a mistake that must be eliminated from the world: «*pues el delito mayor per l'hombre es haber nacido*».¹¹

2. *The Presence of the Schopenhauerian Genius in Nietzsche's 'Untimely Meditations'*

The tension highlighted in the philosophy of Schopenhauer was probably assumed by Nietzsche in his early meditation. The unsolved struggle between being and existence is the fulcrum of Nietzschean reflection, evolving itself into the meditation concerning the overman and the eternal return.

So it is not a coincidence if the early Nietzschean reflection was oriented to the theme of tragedy, not only because of his philological studies, but also because of the Schopenhauerian inspiration received by the reading of *The World*. The theoretical question proposed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, also confirmed by the coeval writings on the same subject, concerns the problem of the relationship between the noumenal and phenomenal dimensions of art, in which the artistic «play» is permeated by a metaphysical sense as needed for the conciliation of being and existence: «Apollo konnte nicht ohne Dionysus leben! Das 'Titanische' und das 'Barbarische' war zuletzt eine eben solche Notwendigkeit wie das

11 P. Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño*, I act, scene I; *Die Welt 1*, §51, p. 300.

Apollinische!»,¹² This can happen because the Apollonian dimension of the mask, otherwise the tragic hero, is necessary in order to catch a glimpse of the terrible aspect of nature, like luminous spots to heal the eye offended by the horrible night.¹³

The Greek genius which represents itself in the Attic tragedy is nourished by the possibility of that *harmonia praestabilita* between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, so that it becomes possible for Nietzsche to say that «nur als *aesthetisches* Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertig*».¹⁴ This statement is fundamental to understanding the profound sense of the text, as Nietzsche himself recalls in the *Attempt at Self-Criticism*, written as an introduction to a further edition. Here it is possible to find the answer given by Nietzsche to the struggle experienced by Schopenhauer between «art» and «truth». Schopenhauer diverted his attention from art precisely when he needed it the most. So the demand for art remained something fundamentally undisclosed in its full potential. On the contrary, Nietzsche reconsidered the importance of art, starting from the same metaphysical need presented by Schopenhauer: that problematic tension between the horror and the beauty of the world, as it is given in a cognitive sight, or as transfigured by the «illusion» of art. In this sense — as this contribution aims to show — the philosophy of Schopenhauer represented for Nietzsche, rather than a «subject of study», an *exemplum* whose betrayal was no more than a supreme act of fidelity to his «educator». For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer thus represented that figure of «genius» which he himself wanted to become. The hermit of Frankfurt was able to put the radical question concerning the «world» and «life» in all its dramatic dimension, as a fundamental question for the authenticity of the consciousness.

There is no doubt that, in the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, the figure of Schopenhauer is manifested as an example for Nietzsche, not as much as for the doctrine of the will — here almost not considered — but more

12 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 40. For Nietzsche's writings, when not otherwise indicated, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München und de Gruyter, Berlin 1988² [KSA]. For the letters of Nietzsche and his correspondents, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, de Gruyter, herausgegeben von G. Colli und M. Montinari, Berlin 1975 ff. [KGB].

13 Cfr. KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 65.

14 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 47.

for the deep yearning towards truth, typical of his philosophy.¹⁵ It becomes immediately clear that the significance of *Schopenhauer as Educator* is to highlight the «vital» aspect of the Schopenhauerian philosophy, for a life eminently devoted towards becoming eternal. The Nietzschean sense of debt to his master can be grasped in the same need for eternity, that both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche had as a fundamental element of their respective meditations, in order to rediscover their most authentic essence, beyond the limits of time and death.¹⁶

As Nietzsche says in the third *Untimely*, asking himself about the demand for a rediscovery of the self, beyond the depressing human condition: «Wie finden wir uns selbst wieder? Wie kann sich der Mensch kennen? Er ist eine dunkle und Verhüllte Sache».¹⁷ He concludes:

Dein wahres Wesen liegt nicht tief verborgen in dir, sondern unermesslich hoch über dir oder wenigstens über dem, was du gewöhnlich als dein Ich nimmst. Deine wahren Erzieher und Bildner verrathen dir, was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist, etwas durchaus Unerziehbares und Unbildbares, aber jedenfalls schwer Zugängliches, Gebundenes, Gelähmtes: deine Erzieher vermögen nichts zu sein als deine Befreier.¹⁸

Thus Schopenhauer as «educator» is for Nietzsche the symbol of all this: he is the liberator, the hammer beat that sketches out the unique form of the self that lies at the height of eternity as its unshakeable kernel beyond every time and will. It was in this sense that there arose the possibility to develop a relationship between the two philosophers that went beyond the explicit «saying», towards a deeper sharing of a common experience, rooted in that eternity which is always far beyond every historical position taken by the two thinkers.¹⁹

15 As a testimony of that it can be recalled the Nietzschean works *Ueber das Pathos der Wahrheit* and *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, both in KSA 1, pp. 756–760 and pp. 875–890. Those writings are focused on the relationship between illusion and truth with a clear appreciation of the illusion and its power of disclosure of the truth, specifically in the work of art.

16 We are lead on this path by Nietzsche himself as in *Ecce homo* recalls, for what concerns the *Meditation* on Schopenhauer, that he didn't want to give an historical portrait of his master but the untimely sense of his work. Cfr. KSA 6, *Ecce homo*, pp. 320–321.

17 KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, p. 340.

18 KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, pp. 340–341.

19 For what concerns that continuity between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche from an esoteric point of view see in particular: Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi, *Sul prologo di Zarathustra (Nietzsche-Schopenhauer)*, in *Opere*, ed. by Edoardo Mirri and Marco

The only reasonable basis on which to establish a comparison between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is the yearning towards eternity that can be considered as the common root of their thoughts. This yearning is clearly expressed by the tension they both felt towards the summit, considered as the height of an ascesis of consciousness from which every contemplation finds its final significance. This is what they both lived for and philosophized: their philosophies, beyond the differences and the critique that Nietzsche addressed on Schopenhauer, both concern the search for the truth, which is substantiated by a deep intimate experience of the eternity: an eternity that dissolves the fog of human historicity, in which man involves himself in the vain attempt of «evolution» or «progress».

The dialectic between time and eternity is the basilar element which creates a continuity between the two thinkers. In Nietzsche this element is developed for the first time in a clear way in the second *Untimely Meditation*. Here Nietzsche, precisely like Schopenhauer, criticizes the historical education of his times as something dead — thus incapable of creating a real movement of transformation of the ended existence towards the eternity: the only real and significant movement that life can create in itself. As it is clearly stated at the beginning of the second *Untimely*:

Wer sich nicht auf der Schwelle des Augenblicks, alle Vergangenheiten vergessend, niederlassen kann, wer nicht auf einem Punkte wie eine Siegesgöttin ohne Schwindel und Furcht zu stehen vermag, der wird nie wissen, was Glück ist und noch schlimmer: er wird nie etwas thun, was Andere glücklich macht.²⁰

The entire sense of this Nietzschean work is determined by a basilar concept, that beyond the different ways man is used to carrying the burden of the historical memory, what is really important is the capacity of rare human exemplars to reach the different level of the over-historic. This dimension is the only significant perspective in which history is overcome and finds its fundament: «*Das Unhistorische und das Historische ist gleichermaassen für die Gesundheit eines Einzelnen, eines Volkes und*

Moschini, (Milan: Bompiani, 2009), pp. 2705–2716; Id. *Ancora sul prologo di Zarathustra: Nietzsche e Schopenhauer*, in *ivi*, pp. 2717–2744, and Edoardo Mirri, *La metafisica nel Nietzsche* (Bologna: Alfa, 1961); Id. *Considerazioni sulla figura del superuomo*, in Pietro Ciaravolo (ed.), *Nietzsche-Stirner*, (Rome: B. M. Italiana, 1985) pp. 15–34, also in Id., *Pensare il Medesimo*, pp. 319–335; Id., *Storia ed eternità nel Nietzsche*, in L. Rossetti-O. Bellini (ed.), *Tempo e storia*, (Naples: ESI, 1984) also in Id., *Pensare il Medesimo*, pp. 337–366.

20 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 250.

einer Cultur nöthig»,²¹ says Nietzsche, but «das Unhistorisches ist einer umhüllenden Atmosphäre ähnlich, in der sich Leben allein erzeugt, um mit der Vernichtung dieser Atmosphäre wieder zu verschwinden».²²

Therefore, for Nietzsche, it is necessary that the field of historical memory and time, where finitude infinitely repeats itself as a wheel that continuously turns around itself, should be permeated by a «non historical atmosphere», as the only condition which make it possible for the greatest events to happen. In other words, it is impossible for Nietzsche to consider history without thinking of what is not historical, because only what is not historical and is thus «untimely» can be the condition that ensures that history «happens» and becomes effective as an event. There cannot be true historical action if it is only conceived as a mere reproduction of the historical becoming.

As Schopenhauer had already stated, without the contribution of the eternal atmosphere of the over-historic, history would be as in the «Gozzi's dramas», where nothing really changes and the masks always remain the same, for «Pantalone nicht behender oder freigeibiger, Tartaglia nicht gewissenhafter, Brighella nicht beherzter und Kolombine nicht sittsamer geworden».²³

That is why Nietzsche, following his master, is allowed to say his «No!» to the historical culture of his time: «Mit dem Nein des überhistorischen Menschen, der nicht im Prozesse das Heil sieht, für den vielmehr die Welt in jedem einzelnen Augenblicke fertig ist und ihr Ende erreicht».²⁴ The over-historical man is the individual who is able to overcome the historical becoming, being fully conscious that there is no salvation inside the «process», inasmuch as it is only a dispersion and an empty repetition of what has always been: «Das Vergangene und das Gegenwärtige ist Eines und dasselbe, nämlich in aller Mannichfaltigkeit typisch gleich und als Allgegenwart unvergänglicher Typen ein stillstehendes Gebilde von unverändertem Werthe und ewig gleicher Bedeutung».²⁵

The substance of history is always the same, and every Caesar and Napoleon only repeats the tragic farce as a performance which is always renewed in the same way. Thus, even if a historical education would be possible, it should never be forgotten, for Nietzsche, that

21 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 252.

22 *Ibidem*.

23 *Die Welt 1*, §35, p. 216.

24 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 255.

25 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 256.

Die Historie, sofern sie im Dienste des Lebens steht, steht im Dienste einer unhistorischen Macht und wird deshalb nie, in dieser Unterordnung, reine Wissenschaft, etwa wie die Mathematik es ist werden können und sollen. [...]. Denn bei einem gewissen Uebermaass derselben zerbröckelt und entartet das Leben und zuletzt auch wieder, durch diese Entartung, selbst die Historie.²⁶

It is therefore no coincidence that Nietzsche, at the end of the second *Untimely*, returns to the over-historical as a conclusion of his meditation. The over-historical is considered as a remedy against the threat of the illness of historical science: «Das Uebermaass von Historie hat die plastische Kraft des Lebens angegriffen, es versteht nicht mehr, sich der Vergangenheit wie einer kräftigen Nahrung zu bedienen».²⁷ For Nietzsche, the remedies to the historical illness are the anti-historical and the over-historical, the only two forces that make it possible to give a new sense to the culture, starting from eternity as the unique point of view from which a real elevation over the finitude of existence and the historical being becomes possible:

Mit dem Worte ‘das Unhistorische’ bezeichne ich die Kunst und Kraft *vergessen* zu können und sich in einem begrenzten *Horizont* einzuschliessen; ‘überhistorisch’ nenne ich die Mächte, die den Blick von dem Werden ablenken, hin zu dem, was dem Dasein den Charakter des Ewigen und Gleichbedeutungen giebt, zu *Kunst* und *Religion*.²⁸

Art and religion thus become the figures of that elevation of consciousness which make it possible for the genius and the saint to overcome historical finitude and to achieve a different level in which everything is transfigured in its own proper sense. It is therefore possible to say that the impulse to an ascesis of thought is strongly present, not only in Schopenhauer’s masterpiece, but also in Nietzsche’s meditation on the «untimely». This is a nearness that becomes more significant, as it will be shown that the young Schopenhauer elaborated a doctrine of the level of consciousness that fits, in an impressive manner, the deepest theoretical needs of Nietzschean meditation.

26 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 257.

27 Ivi, p. 329.

28 Ivi, p. 330.

3. *On Highest Mountains: Experiencing the Levels of Consciousness between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*

As has been highlighted, Nietzsche was able to read between the lines of the Schopenhauerian text, and to rediscover a thread which had already been developed by the young Schopenhauer. This is the distinction between «better consciousness» and «empirical consciousness»: two levels of consciousness on which the young Schopenhauer elaborated his early writings. In this distinction Schopenhauer established a difference between the level of the appearance, dominated by the time and the other forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and the level of truth and authenticity defined by the vision of the eternal ideas:

Jenes Bewußtseyn unendlicher Vergangenheit; dies Verwundern über das, was allein ich keinen Augenblick aus dem Auge verlieren kann, die Gegenwart; beydes ist Täuschung: aber vielmehr ist es zeitlicher Ausdruck meines überzeitlichen Seyns.²⁹

In this very early note from Schopenhauer there emerges the distinction between the temporal and over-temporal dimension of the consciousness and the dialectic relationship between the negativity of the first and the substantiality of the second. The meditation of the young Schopenhauer is in fact oriented towards the criticism and overcoming of temporality, in search of a clarification of that experience of eternity as the fundament of consciousness itself.

In the early writings of Schopenhauer the concept of will is rarely mentioned, only in connection with the empirical and limited dimension of consciousness. The will here does not assume the characteristics of the «thing in itself», as would happen in *The World*.³⁰ Instead of the distinction between «will» and «representation», the difference between «better» and

29 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß. Frühe Manuskripte (1804–1818)*, hrsg. von Arthur Hübscher, (Frankfurt a. M.: Kramer, 1966), n. 22, p. 15.

30 Cfr. Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, n. 86, pp. 62–63. Nietzsche became critic of the Schopenhauerian concept of «will» after reading Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*, (Iserlohn: 1866). In his critique, however, Nietzsche rediscovered in an unconscious way the doctrine of the young Schopenhauer, where the will was only an aspect of the finitude of consciousness. For what concerns Nietzsche, Lange and the critique to Schopenhauer cfr. Jörg Salaquarda, 'Nietzsche und Lange', *Nietzsche Studien*, 7 (1978), and Benedetta Zavatta, *La sfida del carattere. Nietzsche lettore di Emerson*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2006) p. 130, note 2.

«empirical» consciousness strongly highlights the distinction between time and eternity. What is in fact at stake in the notes of the young Schopenhauer is the idea of an ascesis that attempts to individuate the authentic dimension of a truth that can be declined in a personal way, beyond the limits of the empirical.

The thesis of this contribution specifically concerns the fact that the Nietzschean concept of «untimely» can be theoretically related to the ascetical dimension as shown by Schopenhauer in the distinction between «empirical» and «better» consciousness. Nietzsche glimpsed this element in his interpretation of Schopenhauerism, as he comprehended that Schopenhauer could become an example, an «educator», for future generations.

As a confirmation of the proximity between the two thinkers, their profound experience of the mountain can also be recalled, intended as a cypher of that height their thoughts were addressed to. As has already been suggested by a quote from the *Supplements to The World*, Schopenhauer connects the experience of the genius to the experience of altitude as the mark of its originality and authenticity. For Schopenhauer, the Alpine experience was inspired by his voyage through Europe in his younger years. This was immediately associated as a figure of philosophy:

Die Philosophie ist eine hohe Alpenstraße, zu ihr führt nur rein steiler Pfad über spitze Steine und stechende Dornen: er ist einsam und wird immer öder, je höher man kommt, und wer ihn geht, darf kein Grausen kennen, sondern muß alles hinter sich lassen und sich getrost im kalten Schnee seinen Weg selbst bahnen. Oft steht er plötzlich am Abgrund und sieht unten das grüne Thal: dahin zieht ihn der Schwindel gewaltsam hinab; aber er muß sich halten und sollte er mit dem eigenen Blut die Sohlen an den Felsen kleben. Dafür sieht er bald die Welt unter sich, ihre Sandwüsten und Moräste verschwinden, ihre Unebenheiten gleichen sich aus, ihre Mißtöne dringen nicht hinauf, ihre Rundung offenbart sich. Er selbst steht immer in reiner, kühler Alpenluft und sieht schon die Sonne, wenn unten noch schwarze Nacht liegt.³¹

31 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, n. 20, p. 14. A strong correspondence can be found in a Nietzschean note from 1874: «Denn vor nichts warnt uns die Schopenhauerische Philosophie mehr als vor dem Verkleinern und Vernebeln jener tauben unbarmherzigen, ja bösen Urbeschaffenheit des Daseins: durch nichts erregt sie das schauernde Gefühl des Erhabenen mehr, als dass sie uns in die höchste und reinste Alpen — und Eisluft trägt, um uns in den granitnen Urschriftzügen der Natur lesen zu lassen. Wer es hier aushält und wem die Kniee zittern, der mag nur schnell wieder in die Weichlichkeit seiner Verklärungsbildung hinabflüchten» (KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 34[21], p. 798).

The *pendant* of this citation is the note n. 277 where Schopenhauer says: «Auf den Höhen muß es freilich einsam seyn».³² Mountains thus become for Schopenhauer the metaphor of an ascesis where genius appears in all its significance: as a painstaking research of the truth that culminates in the apical and vertical experience of altitude. The mountain is thus the place where the pure vision of the «better consciousness» becomes possible in its attitude to overcome what is beyond time and its relativity. The «summit», in its standing out against the valleys, with its atmosphere qualitatively different from the «lower» places populated by every day man, by the philistine, becomes the symbol of the rarity of an emersion that cannot be silenced but rather asks to be explicated without compromise, in its wholeness, even if it cannot be comprehended by the majority.³³

That experience, which is basilar in the elaboration of the doctrine of the levels of consciousness for the young Schopenhauer, can be also considered of great importance for Nietzsche, who was devoted to altitude too, as a central element of his meditation. The theme of high mountains brings us directly to the second *Untimely Meditation*, where they are recalled as the image of the over-historical as it is announced by monumental history:

Dass die grossen Momente im Kampfe der Einzelnen eine Kette bilden, dass in ihnen ein Höhenzug der Menschheit durch Jahrtausende hin sich verbinde, dass für mich das Höchste eines solchen längst vergangenen Momentes noch lebendig, hell und gross sei – das ist der Grundgedanke im Glauben an die Humanität, der sich in der Forderung einer *monumentalischen* Historie ausspricht.³⁴

That aspect is also present in the Nietzschean *Nachlass*. In a fragment from late 1870 or early 1871, Nietzsche, criticizing von Hartmann's

32 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, n. 277, p. 169.

33 Very important is in this sense a note wrote by Schopenhauer on the diary of the refuge on the Schneekoppe, a summit in the Sudetenland: «Who can climb / and remain silent?». Who tasted the highness of a summit cannot remain the same, as signed by a verticality reached by the soul that Schopenhauer experienced as a testimony of a philosophy in its deepest essence. Among the climb of the Schneekoppe Schopenhauer climbed two many peaks during his travels around the Europe: the climb of the Mont Chapeau (Mont Blanc — Chamonix) and the climb of the Pilatus near Luzern. Cfr. Rüdiger Safranski, *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy*, ed. by Ewald Osers, (Cambridge (Ma): Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 49–51; David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: a Biography* (Cambridge (Ma): Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 79–81.

34 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 259.

idea of historical progress in the process of liberation from the will, writes: «Die Menschheit ist nicht ihretwegen da, in ihren Spitzen, den großen Heiligen und Künstler liegt das Ziel, also weder vor noch hinter uns».³⁵ Genius is here conceived as he who stands in the verticality of an experience that makes him someone unique, as the owner of a rare experience that cannot be confused in the repeatability of time that flows indifferently identical in every instant of its becoming. The fundamental idea that can be deduced from this quote is that there cannot be any salvation in the flux of time, because there is no redemption that can come from progress, but only in something that arising from the flux, that does not pass away.

In the same way, the task of philosophy should be to keep the mountain range of greatness intact, as can be read in another note from 1872: «Die Philosophie soll den *geistigen Höhenzug* durch die Jahrhunderte festhalten: damit die ewige Fruchtbarkeit alles Großen».³⁶ Once again it is possible to note that fundamental element of verticality, which is one of the most important figures of the rarity of genius, and of the eternal truth he is able to manifest.

The loneliness and rarity of the genius are recurrent themes in all the preliminary notes written by Nietzsche before the *Untimely Meditations*: in particular the notes preceding the II and the III *Meditation*, which underline the emersion of the ingenious in the eternal dimension typical of the level of consciousness reached in a stronger fashion. The eternity that is linked to genius is associated with the mountain peaks: the first one emerges from the flux of time, exactly as the summit of the mountain is elevated and illuminated over the foggy valleys. That fundamental experience of an emersion is the summit point from which the genius can project his light on the world and «make» history as a place in which the event stands in its exemplarity beyond time and space.

35 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 7[100], p. 161. This note is recalled in the second *Untimely Meditation* where Nietzsche states, always in quarrel with von Hartmann, that «das Ziel der Menschheit kann nicht am Ende liegen, sondern nur in ihren höchsten Exemplaren» (KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 317). A further indication on this theme can be also found in a note from 1874, after the publication of the 2nd *Untimely Meditation*: «Die großen Genien sind gewöhnlich in Fehde dagegen. Man denke an Goethe und die Gelehrten, Wagner und die Staatstheater. Schopenhauer und die Universitäten: es wird offenbar nicht zugegeben, daß die großen Menschen die Spitze sind, derentwegen alles andre ist» (KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 34 [15], p. 796).

36 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 19[33], p. 426.

The genius stands on the threshold of the instant, where everything is transfigured, realizing the possibility to see the world from a different point of view, in a verticality that makes it possible to understand all *sub specie aeternitatis*.³⁷ This is something that is at the higher level of every self, which can be disclosed, or remain a pure possibility.

This element, as we have seen, was also a problem for Schopenhauer in his early writings, as he delineated the figure of the aesthetical genius — a figure to which he was strongly attracted, up to the point of considering his own philosophy as an art, more so than a science.

The problem at stake here is the ontological possibility of a resurrection or transfiguration which is typical of an aesthetical approach to the world: how is it possible that in this world, in which finitude seems to be the last word of everything, in which everything is an illusion that must end in death, there can also be «beauty»? As has already been stated, Schopenhauer's answer to the problem is to renounce the «game» of art, in order to return to «serious things»,³⁸ by moving towards the negation of the will as the result of the ascetical course.

For Nietzsche, on the contrary, the direction to be taken is that of a deeper and more passionate affirmation of the aesthetical dimension: the beauty of the world cannot be put aside, but rather should be considered in all its tragic and contradictory value. As it happens for the beauty of the world, thus also the genius and the singularity of his experience cannot be abandoned to a mere *cupio dissolvi*: what is at stake here is the possibility of an authentication of the singularity that finds in the genius its exemplar figure.

Starting from this point, the theme of the summit of eternity is qualified as an affirmation of the self that overcomes the limits of finitude, becoming something different, like the «better consciousness» highlighted by the young Schopenhauer. This level of consciousness, even if it can be still linked with the idea of a speculative subject, as it is described by German idealism, cannot be understood without the exemplar names of those who revealed it to the world in its vivid concreteness, so that Schopenhauer could not absolve himself from indicating those exemplars with the names

37 As it has already been highlighted, this statement returns in *Die Welt I* (§34, p. 264) with reference to the genius. Nietzsche himself in the second *Meditation* defines Raphael as a *natura naturans*, comparing him to a divine nature as in Spinoza was the eternal fundament of the world (cfr. KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 410).

38 See *Die Welt I*, §52, p. 316.

of Shakespeare, Raphael, Goethe, Byron, St. Francis, Marguerite Porete, Thomas More — to name but a few.

That is why, for Nietzsche, as a deep reader of Schopenhauer, what must emerge as the sense of every existence is the «monogram»³⁹ of a singular and concrete experience that is elevated over speculative knowledge, in order to return to experiencing ipseity in his own uniqueness.

39 «Und doch erwachen immer wieder Einige, die sich im Hinblick auf das vergangene Grosse und gestärkt durch seine Betrachtung so beseligt fühlen, als ob das Menschenleben eine herrliche Sache sei, und als ob es gar die schönste Frucht dieses bitteren Gewächses sei, zu wissen, dass früher einmal Einer stolz und stark durch dieses Dasein gegangen ist, ein Anderen mit Tiefsinn, ein Dritter mit Erbarmen und hülfreich – alle aber Eine Lehre hinterlassend, dass der am schönste lebt, der das Dasein nicht achtet. Wenn der gemeine Mensch diese Spanne Zeit so trübsinnig ernst und begehrllich nimmt, wussten jene, auf ihrem Wege zur Unsterblichkeit und zur monumentalen Historie, es zu einem olympischen Lachen oder mindestens zu einem erhabenen Hohne zu bringen; oft stiegen sie mit Ironie in ihr Grab – den was war an ihnen zu begraben! Doch nur das, was sie als Schlacke, Unrath, Eitelkeit, Thierheit immer bedrückt hatte und was jetzt der Vergessenheit anheim fällt, nachdem es längst ihrer Verachtung preisgegeben war. Aber Eines wird leben, das Monogramm ihres eigensten Wesens, ein Werk, eine That, eine seltene Erleuchtung, eine Schöpfung: es wird leben, weil keine Nachwelt es entbehren kann» (KSA I, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, pp. 259–260).

GEMMA BIANCA ADESSO

*ENTR'ACTE: REFLECTIONS IN THREE ACTS
ON SOME UNTIMELY FIGURES*¹

More than the true meaning of the term *inattuale* (anachronistic, outside time) used in the Italian translation of *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, we would like to reflect on what the word suggests in the breakdown (or disappearance) of its two parts, the hyphen or apostrophe having the function of separation rather than connection. *In-attuale: in-atto: entr'acte*, in other words, that which is not immediately visible in a representation or which takes place during the interval, as a distraction, a pause, an omission of the main text.

In Italian, *in-atto* is an action that happens as one speaks; the exact opposite, therefore, of the real meaning of the term *inattuale*. But what remains of the time that is named and of the actions that happen as they are spoken, if not their omission from a supposedly linear and finite unfolding?

German has more ways of saying that which, according to Goethe's *Faust*, is the word in the beginning (*Im Anfang war die Tat!*). Nietzsche uses above all these two: *Tat* and *Wirkung*.

'Action' is also the first word of cinema (even before the advent of the 'talkie'): 'Action!' precedes and composes the 'raw footage', the reel that starts over again in order to slow down the disappearance of something that is no longer alive but not yet dead, something that eludes the definitions of ancient and modern, but has had an active beginning.

In short, *Action* is the directed, overseen word, an imperative, or perhaps, simply, an image that is *always* dynamic and hence anachronistic, outside time: *untimely*.

Act I. The Active Error

Nietzsche's untimely gesture of rupture during his years in Basel (1869–1879), usually taken to be a long formative 'interval', actually consists in

1 Translated from Italian by Lisa Adams.

an extreme reflection on language between philology and philosophy. The centrality of this interval is instead so decisive in the process of inversion between the known and the inconceivable, parenthesis and content, that it actively shows the scene precipitating in an unpredictable alternation between fullness and void: fragments, notes and final letters make up the preliminary score, the *entr'acte* of published works, as in a great laboratory of that book *in progress* on music, which is his entire opus. If philology becomes consciously a tool for questioning classical antiquity — its men before its texts — and hence for interpreting the present, with its texts and its men, then philosophy pursues the word as it consumes itself and disappears. In such a reading, we find ourselves facing a paradox: it would seem that the true lesson Nietzsche learnt from the ancients was the impossibility of listening.

A thorough perusal of the Basel lectures lets us note an important initial distinction between orality (in the attention Nietzsche dedicates to rhetoric, rhyme and tragedy) and writing (especially the courses on literature, history, and Plato's *Dialogues*). Already in these years the different levels — philological and philosophical, written and oral, visual and aural — intertwine to allow the disharmony, anti-heroism and 'error' of human experience to emerge. The performative aspect of language, in particular, manifests itself in the different modalities (silence, secrecy, enigma) of three figures that have experienced, as we shall see, a visual dysfunction: «Eigentlich ist alles Figuration, was man gewöhnliche Rede nennt».²

Entr'Acte: Untimely Meditations (1873–1876)

During the decade in which he was teaching, Nietzsche planned the ambitious project of *Untimely Meditations*, which was to be a collection of thirteen critical essays on modernity: «Mein Ziel ist: volle *Feindschaft* zwischen unserer jetzigen 'Cultur' und dem Alterthum zu erzeugen. Wer der ersten dienen will, muss das letztere hassen».³ As we know, the overall result was four essays plus a posthumous publication.⁴

In its intrinsic incompleteness, in the unwritten essays, and in the fatigue experienced after the exertion of composing his portrait of Wagner (actually, the portrait was just a few rapid touches, traces of the tense

2 KGS, II, 4, *Darstellung der antiken Rhetorik*, II, 4, p. 427.

3 KSA 8, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1875, 3 [68]

4 KSA 1, *David Strauß* (1873), *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1874), *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876), *Wir Philologen*, published posthumously. 1873 is also the date of the text *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn*.

atmosphere in the air in Bayreuth at that time: the 'first stone' for Nietzsche would also be the last, and the portrait of Wagner would be composed more of self-critical physiognomic features than eulogies to the master) we can read a declaration of intent rather than a surrender to the impossibility of intervening in «magnificent and progressive destinies». It should be recalled that the period from 1875 to 1877 would be taken up with the conception and drafting, in the midst of his personal isolation,⁵ [the Wagners' departure and the arduous teaching activity that would last for another two years] of that event of the 'free spirit', *Human, all too Human*.⁶

It would be Nietzsche himself who gave a lucid *a posteriori* reading, in the two intervals which are the *Preface* to the second volume (1887), and the part dedicated to *Untimely Meditations* in *Ecce homo* (1888). «Man soll nur reden, wo man nicht schweigen darf; und nur von dem reden, was man überwunden hat, – alles Andere ist Geschwätz, 'Litteratur', Mangel an Zucht».⁷ The first sentence of the *Preface* is already a leap in the dark, resonant with a thousand voices: «'ich' bin darin, mit Allem, was mir feind war».⁸

5 At the beginning of May 1879, Nietzsche asked to be dismissed from the university, and in a little under three months wrote *The Voyager and his Shadow*. In the letter accompanying the manuscript, addressed to Peter Gast, we can read one of the more accurate descriptions of his timely/untimely being: aware of living 'in the middle' and of having a dead man's vision of the middle. «Ich bin am Ende des 35sten Lebensjahres; die 'Mitte des Lebens', sagte man anderthalb Jahrtausende lang von dieser Zeit; *Dante* hatte da seine Vision und spricht in den ersten Worten seines Gedichts davon. Nun bin ich in der Mitte des Lebens so 'vom Tod umgeben', daß er mich stündlich fassen kann; bei der Art meines Leidens muß ich an einen plötzlichen Tod, durch Krämpfe, denken (obwohl ich einen langsamen klarsinnigen, bei dem man noch mit seinen Freunden reden kann, hundertmal vorziehen würde, selbst wenn er schmerzhafter wäre)». *Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, herausgegeben von G. Colli und M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975 ff.) [KGB]. 1879, 880: *an Heinrich Köselitz*, 11/09/1879

6 Montinari provides a useful note to reading the work. In the introduction to the publication of the second volume for Adelphi paperbacks, he writes: «the unity of enterprise, in which the event of the 'free spirit' — or of the Nietzschean liberation of the spirit — begins and ends, mustn't make us forget that the three works were composed in different periods: *Human, all too Human* in 1878 as the first unprecedented announcement of the programme of liberation, the *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* as a further in-depth reflection on the themes of the first book, and finally *The Voyager and his Shadow* as a calm and collected epilogue». M. Montinari, *Nota introduttiva* to F. Nietzsche, *Umano, troppo umano II* (Milan: Adelphi, 2006), p. XI.

7 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches II*: Vorrede, § 1.

8 Ivi.

Untimeliness is not a concept: outside the field of theory, the notion becomes practice, concrete experience of being in the world, and in the real exercise of writing, the method of backdating works. If we suspend the chronological order, it is licit to consider *Untimely Meditations* anterior to *The Birth of Tragedy*, even though it was written a year later: «Insofern sind alle meine Schriften, mit einer einzigen, allerdings wesentlichen Ausnahme, zurück zu datieren – sie reden immer von einem ‘Hinter-mir’ – : einige sogar, wie die drei ersten *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen*, noch zurück hinter die Entstehungs- und Erlebniszeit eines vorher herausgegebenen Buches (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*)».⁹

Time is an inextricable tangle in Nietzsche's writings, and it is likely that his reflection on the abyss begins here, in the attempt to stage a disappearance prior to the representation itself; prior, as 'behind the scenes' is prior, the ideal space in which the actor plays out his fears and learns painfully to heal from the illness of history: «und was ich gegen die ‘historische Krankheit’ gesagt habe, das sagte ich als Einer, der von ihr langsam, mühsam genesen lernte und ganz und gar nicht Willens war, fürderhin auf ‘Historie’ zu verzichten, weil er einstmals an ihr gelitten hatte».¹⁰ Not the least painful posture, which Nietzsche learned in order not to renounce history, is distance, which he calls '*Entgegenschauen*', and this opposition is practised against his most necessary historical link, Richard Wagner:

Jeder, der sich genau prüft, weiss, dass selbst zum Betrachten eine geheimnisvolle Gegnerschaft, die des Entgegenschauens, gehört. Lässt uns seine Kunst alles Das erleben, was eine Seele erfährt, die auf Wanderschaft geht, an anderen Seelen und ihrem Loose Theil nimmt, aus *vielen Augen* in die Welt blicken lernt, so vermögen wir nun auch, aus solcher Entfremdung und Entlegenheit, ihn selbst zu sehen, nachdem wir ihn selbst erlebt haben.¹¹

A necessary precondition of the gaze *at* something is an examination of oneself. In this 'mysterious opposition' between the self and the world one learns to evaluate distance 'with many eyes'. Nietzsche's gaze is closely linked to the capacity for speech (and, above all, for silence): speak when it is not licit to remain silent, avoid chatter, insist on 'overcoming' as a declaration of war. 'Looking against' is the position of one who is against their own epoch, and all that is pre-recorded in it, including the Ancients,

9 Ivi.

10 Ivi.

11 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 7.

Schopenhauer and oneself too. The act of the untimely word is a full-blown attack without exception.

In *Ecce homo*, Nietzsche writes: «Die vier Unzeitgemässen sind durchaus kriegerisch. Sie beweisen, dass ich kein 'Hans der Träumer' war, dass es mir Vergnügen macht, den Degen zu ziehn, [...] Der erste Angriff (1873) galt der deutschen Bildung».¹² *Against* the impersonality and dehumanisation of science, *against* cultural Philistinism and an archivist's knowledge, Nietzsche defends life, defends flesh and blood («*was* Wunders, wenn, bei einer so spitzen *und* kitzlichen Arbeit, gelegentlich auch etwas Blut fliesst, wenn der Psychologe Blut dabei *an* den *Fingern und nicht immer nur – an den Fingern hat?*»).¹³

In three of the four *Meditations* there are precise names: David Strauss, Arthur Schopenhauer, Richard Wagner. While Strauss is the target, sacrificed as the proxy for contemporary culture, which uses the works of the masters for the sheer relish of an aesthetic opinion («Der Straussische Philister haust in den Werken unserer grossen Dichter und Musiker wie ein Gewürm, welches lebt, indem es zerstört, bewundert, indem es frisst, anbetet, indem es verdaut»),¹⁴ Schopenhauer and Wagner are the opposing response; the former is an educator and the 'stepchild of his time', the latter is «der Wiederhersteller einer Ein- und Gesammtheit des künstlerischen Vermögens, welche gar nicht errathen und erschlossen, sondern nur durch die That gezeigt werden kann».¹⁵

Against the atomisation¹⁶ of knowledge, which merely amplifies one's own vain ignorance¹⁷ (a problem of alarming topical relevance), the

12 KSA 6, *Ecce homo. Die Unzeitgemässen*, § 1.

13 KSA 2, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches II: Vorrede*, § 1.

14 KSA 1, *David Strauss*, § 6.

15 KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 7.

16 «Wir leben die Periode der *Atome*, des atomistischen Chaos»: KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, § 4

17 «Wir beneiden Niemanden um die Erbauungen, die er sich in der Stille seines Kämmerleins oder in einem zurecht gemachten neuen Himmelreich verschafft; aber von allen möglichen ist doch die Straussische eine der wunderbarsten: denn er erbaut sich an einem kleinen Opferfeuer, in das er die erhabensten Werke der deutschen Nation gelassen hineinwirft, um mit ihrem Dampfe seine Götzen zu beräuchern. [...] Und so verfahren die Strausse unserer Tage thatsächlich: sie wollen von einem Künstler nur so weit wissen, als er sich für ihren Kammerdienst eignet und kennen nur den Gegensatz von Beräuchern und Verbrennen. Das sollte ihnen immerhin freistehen: das Wunderliche liegt nur darin, dass die ästhetische öffentliche Meinung so matt, unsicher und verführbar ist, dass sie sich ohne Einspruch ein solches Zur-Schau-Stellen der dürftigsten Philisterei gefallen lässt, ja, dass sie gar kein Gefühl für die Komik einer Scene besitzt, in der ein

educator must work for the unity of knowledge, conscious of the link between all things; and, in virtue of his 'accelerated inner vision', he must sound a wake-up call to action.¹⁸ Action is a matter of real necessity that traverses histories and civilisations a-chronologically, hence the names of Schopenhauer and Wagner conjoin; together, they say the same word and the same name: Nietzsche.¹⁹

The *Untimely Meditations* are complementary to the problem of the use of words and the degradation of languages, and demonstrate that, for Nietzsche, language is a concrete issue, active and vital: indeed, it is a war («es sind Worte darin, *die* geradezu blutrünstig sind [...]; *die Wunde selbst* wirkt nicht als Einwand») ²⁰ against the risk of that mediocrity («ein Problem der Erziehung ohne Gleichen») ²¹ which can corrode entire civilisations, from scholastic institutions to academic sectarianism.

Thus, in the first *Meditation*, Nietzsche even points out a grammatical error in the learned Strauss's language, while in the second he attacks directly «governments, churches and academies» that are complicit in an aberrant and meaningless schooling in history. The third *Meditation* is entirely dedicated to the theme of education: for Nietzsche, as a teacher, education means first and foremost rehabilitating our relationship with the Ancients in order to «reawaken life to time». While in the fourth he says explicitly: «überall ist hier die Sprache erkrankt, und auf der ganzen menschlichen Entwicklung lastet der Druck dieser ungeheuerlichen *Krankheit*». ²²

unästhetisches Magisterlein über *Beethoven* zu Gerichte sitzt». KSA 1, *David Strauss*: § 5.

The Scientist «hört zu, wie jemand Anderes denkt und lässt sich auf diese Art über den langen Tag hinweg unterhalten. Besonders wählt er Bücher, bei welchen seine persönliche Theilnahme irgendwie angeregt wird, wo er ein wenig, durch Neigung oder Abneigung, in Affekt gerathen kann: also Bücher, wo er selbst in Betrachtung gezogen wird oder sein Stand, seine politische oder aesthetische oder auch nur grammatische Lehrmeinung; hat er gar eine eigne Wissenschaft, so fehlt es ihm nie an Mitteln der Unterhaltung und an Fliegenklappen gegen die *Langeweile*», KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, § 6

18 «Dass Menschen im Augenblick einer ausserordentlichen Gefahr oder überhaupt in einer wichtigen Entscheidung ihres Lebens durch ein unendlich beschleunigtes inneres Schauen alles Erlebte zusammendrängen und mit seltenster Schärfe das Nächste wie das Fernste wieder erkennen»: KSA 1, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 1.

19 «*Schopenhauer und Wagner* oder, mit Einem Wort, Nietzsche...»: KSA 6, *Ecce homo. Die Unzeitgemässen*, § 1.

20 Ivi, § 3.

21 Ivi.

22 KSA 1, *R. Wagner in Bayreuth*, § 5.

Throughout the *Meditations*, Nietzsche *translates* the word (his own name) with action, in a process of permanent backdating that directs the gaze toward a multi-perspectival future. From the start, Nietzsche, in the guise of Faust, *translates*: (Mephistophelean) Action! Not by chance, the preface to the second *Meditation* opens with a Goethe-like appeal: «Uebrigens ist mir Alles verhasst, was mich bloss belehrt, ohne meine Thätigkeit zu vermehren, oder unmittelbar zu *beleben*».²³ ‘Immediately’, that is, in our present and active being. And in an even more explicit way: «wir brauchen sie zum Leben und zur That, nicht zur bequemen Abkehr vom Leben und von der That oder gar zur Beschönigung des selbstsüchtigen Lebens und der feigen und schlechten That».²⁴

There are many more passages in which Nietzsche makes a direct appeal to action. Without further comment here, we shall name just a few, in the manner of *Doctor Faustroll* by Jarry, pataphysical traveller through the constellations of *décadence*:²⁵

Is that all?

No, keep listening:

Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben

– «Die Philosophie ist innerhalb der historischen Bildung ohne Recht, falls sie mehr sein will als ein innerlich zurückgehaltenes Wissen ohne Wirken [...]so weit ist ungefähr Alles erlaubt, *nur* im *Handeln*, im sogenannten Leben ist es anders» (§ 5)

– «Die historische Bildung unserer Kritiker erlaubt gar nicht mehr, dass es zu einer Wirkung im eigentlichen Verstande, nämlich zu einer Wirkung auf Leben und *Handeln* komme» (§ 5)

– «[...] haben doch gerade *die* kräftigsten *Völker*, und zwar kräftig in Thaten und Werken, anders gelebt, anders ihre Jugend herangezogen» (§ 8)

Schopenhauer als Erzieher

– «Die Kultur verlangt von ihm nicht nur jenes innerliche Erlebniss, nicht nur die Beurtheilung der ihn umströmenden äusseren Welt, sondern zuletzt und hauptsächlich die That, das heisst den Kampf für die Kultur und die

23 KSA 1, *Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, Vorwort.

24 Ivi.

25 A. Jarry, *Gesta e opinioni del dottor Faustroll, patafisico* (Milan: Adelphi, 2002), p. 37.

Feindseligkeit gegen Einflüsse, Gewohnheiten, Gesetze, Einrichtungen, in welchen er nicht sein Ziel wiedererkennt: *die Erzeugung des Genius*» (§ 6)

– «[...] und ich erachte jedes Wort für unnütz geschrieben, hinter dem nicht eine solche Aufforderung zur That» (§ 8)

– «[...] Sie beweisen selbst durch *die That*, dass *die Liebe zur Wahrheit* etwas Furchtbares und Gewaltiges ist» (§ 8)

Richard Wagner in Bayreuth

– «Mir scheint dagegen *die* wichtigste Frage aller Philosophie zu sein, wie weit *die* Dinge eine unabänderliche Artung und Gestalt haben: um dann, wenn diese Frage beantwortet ist, mit der rücksichtslosesten Tapferkeit auf *die* Verbesserung der als veränderlich erkannten Seite der Welt loszugehen. Das lehren *die wahren Philosophen* auch selber durch *die That*. [...] Wagner ist dort am meisten Philosoph, wo er am thatkräftigsten und heldenhaftesten ist [...] und hielt seinem höheren Selbst Treue, welches von ihm Gesamthaten seines vielstimmigen Wesens verlangte und ihn leiden und lernen hiess, um jene Thaten thun zu können» (§ 3)

– «Der eigentlich freie Künstler, der gar nicht anders kann, als in allen Künsten zugleich denken, der Mittler und Versöhner zwischen scheinbar getrennten Sphären, der Wiederhersteller einer Ein- und Gesamtheit des künstlerischen Vermögens, welche gar nicht errathen und erschlossen, sondern nur durch die *That* gezeigt werden kann» (§ 7)

– «Als der herrschende Gedanke seines Lebens in ihm aufstieg, dass vom Theater aus eine unvergleichliche Wirkung, die grösste Wirkung aller Kunst ausgeübt werden könne, riss er sein Wesen in die heftigste Gärung» (§ 8)

Act II: Ajax, Prometheus, Oedipus

All Nietzsche's work (including the Basel lectures, the conferences and the unfinished, or merely imagined, books) is an attempt to write an 'unheard music', entrusted to a posthumous *livre à venir*. In the decade under consideration, his attention is focused on everything that happens *around* the theatre; only with *Der Fall Wagner* would the problem shift directly to *the stage* to be vacated «in order to fix, incise the differences, like scars». ²⁶ In these years, the stage for Nietzsche is synonymous, above

26 R. Calasso, *Monologo fatale*, in F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (Milan: Adelphi, 2007), p. 160.

all, with tragedy, and with the actions of those who fight against «the blind force of the real»:²⁷ (anti-)hero with a sight dysfunction and an innate tendency for dissonance, for the fundamental *imprecisions* of eye and ear:²⁸

Ursprung der ant. Trag. Aus der Lyrik, der neuen (german., di roman. aus der Antike) aus dem Epos. Dort der Accent auf den Leiden, hier auf dem Thun. Unterschied von Mysterien und Moralitäten u. den Dithyramben: jene von vornherein Handlung, das Wort und das Gefühl unterstützt nur und kommt erst allmählich zum Recht. Diese sind Gruppen von kostümirten Sängern: die innrliche Veranschaulichung durch das Wort zur Phantasie ist das erste, die Sichtbarkeit des Phantasiebildes in der Aktion ist etwas Späteres.²⁹

In ancient Greek tragedy the link between word and music was perfectly balanced, and to the monody corresponded the practice of listening, as a collective phenomenon, to a sacred drama; whereas, in modern tragedy, the employment of the word is *anti-musical* and representative of *décadence*. As Bortolotto writes, «in Nietzsche it isn't really the word that is the obstacle: what he hates is the representative project, the public proposal»,³⁰ which has lost all the sacred experience of the ancients, forever. Yet, before renouncing the Bayreuth project, in the third *Meditation* Nietzsche the educator repeats to himself and Wagner that «Der heroische Mensch verachtet sein Wohl- oder Schlechtergehen, seine Tugenden und Laster und überhaupt das Messen *der* Dinge an seinem Maasse, er hofft von sich nichts mehr und will in allen Dingen bis auf diesen hoffnungslosen Grund sehen. Seine Kraft liegt in seinem Sich selbst-Vergessen».³¹

In this sensorial fade-out three figures dear to Nietzsche are reunited, as the undeclared purveyors of his untimely programme: Ajax, Prometheus and Oedipus. Their wild and prophetic language translates literally (betrays) the comprehensible and anti-musical discourse of representation; their silence is *anomos*, outside the laws of our syntax. All three have *seen* that

27 KSA 1, *Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, § 8.

28 «Bilder in menschlichen Augen! Das beherrscht alles menschliche Wesen: vom Auge aus! Subjekt! das Ohr hört den Klang! Eine ganz andere wunderbare Conception derselben Welt.

Auf der Ungenauigkeit des Sehens beruht die Kunst. Auch beim Ohr Ungenauigkeit in Rhythmus, Temperatur usw. darauf beruht wiederum die Kunst»: KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1872, 19 [66].

29 KGS, II, 3, p. 10. It is an introduction to Greek tragedy that preceded the course on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, held in the summer semester of 1870.

30 M. Bortolotto, *Altra aurora*, in F. Nietzsche, *Scritti su Wagner* (Milan: Adelphi, 2013), p. 61.

31 KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, § 4.

«hopeless bottom» and have «forgotten themselves»: Ajax in confusing gods and beasts, Prometheus in the mystery of his name, Oedipus in the depths of his lifeless eyes.

In November 1862, during his school days at Schulpforta, Nietzsche attempted a philological analysis of the first stasimon of Sophocles' *Ajax*. The summary of the *Prologue* explains in Latin the reasons for Ajax's madness, focusing as well on Ulysses' psychological features and on the unbalanced relationship between human and divine. Nietzsche would return to these figures just a few times — referring especially to the theme of the *agon* with the gods and the blind rage that leads to Ajax's madness — but the figure of the defeated hero would be, to the end, intimately present in Nietzsche's thought.

In Greek drama, what happened off-stage was known to the spectators, and such a blind and silent supplement was considered a basic component of tragedy. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Sophocles insists on removing reason and language.³²

Sophocles' play opens in the midst of Ajax's bloody fury — blinded by Athena, he kills the cattle, mistaking them for the Argive army — and it ends with his suicide, or perhaps with the obstinate silence of his shade, visited by Odysseus in Hades.³³ If there is something capable of terrifying Odysseus, the most cunning of Homer's heroes, it is precisely the absence of reason that Athena forces him to observe («To look upon a madman art thou afraid?»).³⁴ His defeat lies in the impossibility for him to contemplate folly («Had he been sane, no fear had made me shrink»).

Odysseus, moreover, possesses that which Ajax lacks: patience, the wisdom to wait and return. Ajax doesn't know how to wait, unlike Achilles, whose worthy successor he should have been. And his anger has all the

32 Thus Athena to Odysseus: «Twas I restrained him, casting on his eyes / O'er-mastering notions of that baneful ecstasy, / That turned his rage on flocks and mingled droves / Of booty yet unshared, guarded by herdsmen»: English translation by R.C. Trevelyan (Internet Classics Archive): <http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/ajax.html>

33 *Odyssey*, XI, II. 543–546; 560–565: «But that of Ajax son of Telamon alone held aloof- still angry with me for having won the cause in our dispute about the armour of Achilles. [...] Therefore, bring your proud spirit into subjection, and hear what I can tell you. / He would not answer, but turned away to Erebus and to the other ghosts; nevertheless, I should have made him talk to me in spite of his being so angry, or I should have gone talking to him, only that there were still others among the dead whom I desired to see»: <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.11.xi.html>

34 *Ajax*: <http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/ajax.html>

force of a personification that inhabits him, that clouds his vision and loosens his tongue in «harrowing cries of pain» before isolating him in an irreducible silence (in Aphorism §61 of *Human, all too Human*, Nietzsche connects the tragic flaw, hamartia, with impatience). The words of the madman are hidden; in his unsaying, the silence erodes the logic of reason and anticipates the final word, the end that cannot be spoken, but only acted out. Ajax would later kill himself by falling on Hector's sword; and so, his death would be a going-towards, a voluntary self-abandonment to the blade, a resistance to the gravitational pull. It is his body's action that causes his death, while the sword remains stuck in the ground. And the body falling on the enemy's sword neutralises both victory and defeat. Ajax's action is an *actio pro verbo* (the Chorus calls him «the hero who vacillates») in which the dignity of the crime manifests itself; and for Nietzsche herein lies the difference between sin and crime, between Christianity and the Greek world.

The spectator doesn't witness the suicide, but nevertheless knows exactly how it happens. It takes place off-stage, in the imaginary space toward which all words are directed. At the origin of the crime, even in the bravest man, there is the stupidity he exhibited when alive — and not sin, of which the Greeks had no notion (Nietzsche would reflect at length on the theme of sin/guilt and revenge, as we can see in the second treatise of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, especially §23.)

Recognising the beast in man is 'generally human': Ajax can be considered one of the many Dionysian masks, since his mania is complementary to a god's. The Chorus closes *Ajax* by constating the human limitation in knowing the future: «Men may learn many things from what they see. / But no man can see what the Fates have in store for his future».³⁵

Prometheus seems to offer a contradictory echo to these words: «I have known this all the while. Of my own will, yes, of my own will I erred — I will not deny it. By helping mortals I found suffering for myself».³⁶ While silence erodes the word and disorients in Sophocles' *Ajax*, in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the word is secret, full of trickery, keeper of the fates of gods and men. This time it is not a god who lies in order to trick a man, but the opposite: Prometheus is a Titan, the creator and kindred spirit of humanity, who tricks Zeus and blinds his prodigious sight. While Ajax vacillates and sinks, Prometheus cannot move, and so his single point-of-

35 Ivi: ἢ πολλὰ βροτοῖς ἔστιν ἰδοῦσιν / γνῶναι: πρὶν ἰδεῖν δ' οὐδεὶς μάντις / τῶν μελλόντων, ὅ τι πράξει.

36 Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ll. 265–267, ed. and trans. by Herbert Weir Smyth: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Aesch.%20PB>

view becomes absolutist, as he lies bound to a rock in the Caucasus, where his liver is devoured every day by an eagle.

Nietzsche's interest in this tragedy was rather precocious: it is thought he read it when he was fourteen, since he wrote a single Act called *Prometheus* that can be dated to 1859. Certainly the figure of the Titan was always fascinating to him, as can be seen in a sketch for a tragedy, dated 1874, in the lectures at the *Pädagogium* in Basel, and above all in the Titan's prominence in *The Birth of Tragedy* (§ 9), in which Nietzsche's reflections on Prometheus as a «champion of impiety» and «titanic artist» begin with a quotation from the last lines of a short poem by Goethe: «Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen Nach meinem Bilde, Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei, Zu leiden, zu weinen, Zu geniessen und zu freuen sich, Und dein nicht zu achten, Wie ich!»

Instead of making man in his own image, Prometheus' fault lies in making his own image look like that of a man, even though he lacks the power of deciding when to die. The most obvious difference from Ajax is that Prometheus, in virtue of his foresight, is compelled to the ends of the world in eternal suffering. The real suffering is not being ripped apart, but the blight of eternal punishment with no escape. His words are on the *limen* of silence, yet they have a different connotation: his secret concerns the king of the gods and the destinies of two worlds, while also 'secret' is the innermost part of the lock that chains him to the rock, a lock which cannot be dismantled. Prometheus is a naked creature exposed to the elements, like all his human creatures; an all-too-human, far from humans, collocated *outside* any possible spatial identification.

Nietzsche's interest in the myth of Prometheus lies in the antithesis at the heart of its original contradiction: chained and free, creator of men and destroyer of gods, himself both man and god, «bei dem heroischen Drange des Einzelnen ins Allgemeine, bei dem Versuche über den Bann der Individuation hinauszuschreiten und das eine Weltwesen selbst sein zu wollen, erleidet er an sich den in den Dingen verborgenen Urwiderspruch d.h. er frevelt und leidet».³⁷

The first word that Nietzsche quotes in Goethe's poem — Hier, here — reinforces and defines the space in which the self resides, as if to justify fiercely the decision. Prometheus is aware of his punishment and doesn't shirk it. The spatial indication acquires an abstract connotation, since humanity is off-stage; 'here' is an imprecise and absent place, it coincides with the divine time that dictates the great visitations.

37 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, § 9.

Like Ajax, Prometheus is a madman, say the Oceanids: «You have lost your wits and have gone astray» (ll. 472–473); «he in malice, has set his soul inflexibly, [...] deranged» (i. 977; 1058). He isn't mad because he tricks, offends and robs Zeus, but because of his pity, which saves men, those paradoxical beings, from extinction.

«Und so stellt gleich das erste philosophische Problem einen peinlichen unlösbaren Widerspruch zwischen Mensch und Gott hin und rückt ihn wie einen Felsblock an die Pforte jeder Cultur». ³⁸ Humanity is condemned by its saviour to an «indemonstrable knowledge», to opening «their vision to discern signs from flames, which were obscure before this». (ll. 498–499), and to hoping in the non-visible, which up to that point was the exclusive territory of the divine.

Prometheus — ‘he who sees first’, from *pro-metheus*, apprehend, see, reflect — has closed the gap between human and divine, giving men hope that they can overcome their own limits. For this reason Zeus, in his superior justice, immobilised him on the rock. «They had eyes to see, they saw to no avail; they had ears, but they did not understand» (ll. 447–448), until his vision of death was extinguished through hope. ³⁹ The fire came later.

The process that articulates the events, from the creation of humanity to the theft that emancipates them from the god's care («Und dein nicht zu achten, Wie ich!») requires a superhuman patience, which Prometheus, unlike Ajax, possesses. Aeschylus even gives a specific stage direction here and, after a long silence, the Titan says: «And yet, what am I saying? All that is to be I know full well and in advance, nor shall any affliction come upon me unforeseen. I must bear my allotted doom as lightly as I can, knowing that the might of Necessity permits no resistance» (ll. 101–105).

Prometheus' silence is unlike the ‘blind pride’ that tears Ajax apart; ⁴⁰ it has to do with an offence endured and with a secret that can stop all space and time. From that ‘here’ suspended between earth and sky, the fate of all things hangs in the balance; in the immeasurable secret of the word, the foundation of all irrational knowledge can be found («because of my very great love for mankind», I. 123): «denn wie könnte man die Natur zum Preisgeben ihrer Geheimnisse zwingen, wenn nicht dadurch, dass man ihr siegreich widerstrebt, d.h. durch das Unnatürliche?» ⁴¹

38 Ivi.

39 «Yes, I caused mortals to cease foreseeing their doom. [...]» (ll. 248–250).

40 «No, do not think it is from pride or even from wilfulness that I am silent. Painful thoughts devour my heart as I behold myself maltreated in this way». (ll. 436–438).

41 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, § 9.

Nietzsche knows that Dionysian knowledge is a «horror against nature» because it forces her secret out and violates her innermost workings. The Promethean-Dionysian revelation consists in making the non-visible the basis for what we learn to recognise by means of its measurable exactness. Prometheus teaches mankind to *see* across the abyss; indeed, Nietzsche tells us that tragedy is an «optical phenomenon»: just as when one stares at the sun and then turns away, the glare produces dark fissures on the retina, so the true significance of the myth is beyond the «bright image» we see on stage, behind the Apollonian mask. It is Dionysian knowledge that contemplates human error without condemning it. At the heart of the myth is the justifiability of existing: «Alles Vorhandene ist gerecht und ungerecht und in beidem gleich berechtigt».

So let's start with the image: it is curious that Nietzsche chose to show a freed Prometheus on the frontispiece of the 1872 edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Prometheus unbound is an image seen by Dionysius, but also a mask adhering to the god's face. Just as tragic music is an unheard hypothesis, so the image of the Titan unbound refers to a play for which only a few fragments survive. Unheard and unseen are the persistent traces of the path to freedom: knowledge is generated by the 'imprecision' of seeing and hearing, as Wagner had stated, well before Nietzsche, in *The Artwork of the Future* (1849). In Aphorism §300 of *The Gay Science*, entitled *Prelude to Science*, Prometheus appears as the 'forger of images', teaching man that all he sees (science) comes from an invisible knowledge, that everything is a product of the human imagination.⁴²

And finally, unlike Prometheus, who keeps his secret till the end, Oedipus is he who solves the enigma, and speaks. In fragment §19 [131], entitled significantly *Oedipus. Reden des letzten Philosophen mit sich selbst. Ein Fragment aus der Geschichte der Nachwelt*, we read:

Den letzten Philosophen nenne ich mich, denn ich bin der letzte Mensch. Niemand redet mit mir als ich selbst, und meine Stimme kommt wie die eines Sterbenden zu mir. Mit dir, geliebte Stimme, mit dir, dem letzten Erinnerungshauche alles Menschenglücks.⁴³

42 «Musste Prometheus erst wähen, das Licht gestohlen zu haben und dafür büßen, – um endlich zu entdecken, dass er das Licht geschaffen habe, indem er nach dem Lichte beehrte, und dass nicht nur der Mensch, sondern auch der Gott das Werk seiner Hände und Thon in seinen Händen gewesen sei? Alles nur Bilder des Bildners? – ebenso wie der Wahn, der Diebstahl, der Kaukasus, der Geier und die ganze tragische *Prometheia* aller Erkennenden?»: KSA 3, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aph. 300

43 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 1869–74, 19 [131].

Nietzsche had developed a precocious interest in Oedipus too, and one which was important from a formal perspective: as a schoolboy at Schulpforta in 1864 he redacted an 'exercise' in three languages on the Chorus' first song.⁴⁴ Nietzsche compared the Greek tragedy to a sacred representation, in which the individuality of the lyric (*dramatis persona* and *mask*) dissolves in the trans-individual dimension of the Dionysian, while the aesthetic value of the work of art becomes a theory justifying existence (wherein what is intensified is not the subjective element, but rather liberation from it: «denn nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt»⁴⁵).

The distinction between Dionysian and Apollonian lyric would be at the centre of the course, *On the History of Greek Tragedy*,⁴⁶ in which *Oedipus Rex* is cited in order to underscore the differences from modern forms of representation: «die innliche Veranschaulichung durch das Wort zur Phantasie ist das erste, die Sichtbarkeit des Phantasiebildes in der Aktion ist etwas Späteres»⁴⁷ In Sophocles' tragedy, however, the word is quickly consumed and the Elders' questioning is followed inexorably by the self-condemnation to silence and wandering, the punishment of repeated suffering and, finally, the revelation of the secret. A voice that dies in a sigh, enigmatic utterances and stammering that lead Oedipus to «reduce speech to a minimum» (*Oedipus at Colonus* l. 569) and to entrust to posterity the redemptive power of (his) body («this old and grief-worn body» — he says to Theseus — «as a gift I bear» l. 575).

When man is reduced to a mere biological substance, he can affirm his existence through irremediable suffering. In his own body Oedipus resolves the enigma of man, precipitating Nature into the abyss of annihilation, destroying with excess wisdom every law, all order and all morality. For Nietzsche, Oedipus is the symbol itself of science, in him Nature precipitates in the dissolution of the limits defined by the enigmatic utterances of the (double-natured) Sphinx, so that «eine magische segensreiche Kraft um sich ausübt, die noch über sein Verscheiden hinaus wirksam ist».⁴⁸ In tragedy we witness a glorious dissipation of *bios*: his body worn down by pain and fatigue, Oedipus' 'bright power' fades into an image:

44 KGS, I, 3: Primum Oedipus regis carmen choricum commentario illustravit, dissertationibus adornavit Fr. Gu. Nietzsche.

45 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, § 5.

46 KGS, II, 3.

47 Ivi, p. 10.

48 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, § 5.

Messenger — These are the last words we all heard from him and then, with tears in our eyes and with sighs, we followed the girls away from the place. We left but after a short while we turned our heads back and saw that the stranger had disappeared. Theseus was standing there alone and petrified, covering his eyes with his hands as if he had just seen a most horrifying, unbearable vision. [...] Oedipus died without the groans of pain that usually come with terrible diseases. Mortals, in fact, would think his death to have come by some benign miracle.⁴⁹

The «benign miracle», the «dream of wonder» [trans. Gilbert Murray] is the power of extinction held by the word: the fading away of the body.

Final Act: The posthumous self

Lieber Herr Professor, zuletzt wäre ich sehr viel lieber Basler Professor als Gott; aber ich habe es nicht gewagt, meinen Privat-Egoismus so weit zu treiben, um seinetwegen die Schaffung der Welt zu unterlassen.⁵⁰

Thus begins Nietzsche's last letter to Jacob Burckhardt. Turin 6 January 1889: the final act, scene of the complete collapse, 'a madman's visiting cards' signed by all the names that had ever inhabited him («Was unangenehm ist und meiner Bescheidenheit zusetzt, ist, daß im Grunde jeder Name in der Geschichte ich bin»)⁵¹. Nevertheless, in the last letter, we can glimpse the salutation of a name that requires recognition, the final bow before the curtain: «In herzlicher Liebe Ihr Nietzsche».⁵²

A pure performative gesture, the letter falls apart in the parentheses:

Doch habe ich mir ein kleines Studenten-Zimmer reserviert, das dem Palazzo Carignano (– in dem ich als Vittorio Emanuele geboren bin) gegenüber liegt und außerdem erlaubt [...] In diesem Herbst war ich, so gering gekleidet als möglich, zwei Mal bei meinem Begräbnisse zugegen, zuerst als conte Robilant nein, das ist mein Sohn, insofern ich Carlo Alberto bin, meine Natur unten) aber Antonelli war ich selbst.⁵³

49 Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, ll 1645–1653; 1663–1665: <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Colonus.htm>

50 KGB, 1889, 1256: *Brief AN Jacob Burckhardt: am 6. Januar 1889*.

51 Ivi.

52 Ivi.

53 Ivi.

Only in the presence of his own dead self can the man of knowledge⁵⁴ respond to the one untimely question possible (Who am I?) and discover himself to be linked fatally to a past that is still painfully alive: «Sie können von diesen Brief jeden Gebrauch machen, der mich in der Achtung der Basler nicht heruntersetzt».⁵⁵

The good reasons are forgotten, and an unexpected, though still not final, reply emerges («Damals – es war 1879 – legte ich meine Basler Professur nieder [...]: als Schatten»)⁵⁶. The use of the verb tense is decisive, if the 'becoming' seems to belong to a past dimension that is still active, the present imposes itself as the final act of the representation («[...] scheint es mir unerlässlich, zu sagen, wer ich bin»)⁵⁷ in order to open itself up simultaneously in the names of all the intervals of «superimposed impossibilities».⁵⁸

'Dressed in as little as possible', until he has divested himself of every name, while, like Ajax, Prometheus and Oedipus, his vision is obscured. His final solo act is closer to Mephistopheles' gesture than to the words of the learned Doctor Faust:⁵⁹ «Du bist am Ende – was du bist. / Setz dir Perücken auf von Millionen Locken, / Setz deinen Fuß auf ellenhohe Socken, / *Du bleibst doch immer, was du bist*».⁶⁰

Outside the magic box of representations, Nietzsche-Mephistopheles points the magician's wand at the centre of his blind chest and fades away.

54 In the *incipit* of *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) Nietzsche rewrites the age-old enigma of knowledge that contains the impossible reply behind the question: «*Wir sind uns unbekannt, wir Erkennenden, wir selbst uns selbst: das hat seinen guten Grund. [...] wer sind wir eigentlich? [...] Jeder ist der sich selbst fernste*»: KSA 5, Zur Genealogie der Moral: Vorrede, § 1.

55 KGB, 1889, 1256: *Brief AN Jacob Burckhardt: am 6. Januar 1889*.

56 KSA 6, *Ecce homo*, Warum ich so weise bin, § 1.

57 Ivi, Vortwort, § 1.

58 Calasso, p. 180.

59 «[...] welcher schopenhauerisch leben wollte, würde wahrscheinlich einem Mephistopheles ähnlicher sehen als einem *Faust* – für die schwachsichtigen modernen Augen nämlich welche im Verneinen immer das Abzeichen des Bösen erblickens»: KSA 1, Schopenhauer als Erzieher, § 4.

60 J.W. Goethe, *Faust*, by E. Trunz (München: Beck, 1986), p. 60.

Entr'Acte: a film by René Clair (1924)

According to convention, cinema was born and died in March 1895 when the Lumière brothers invented a magic box 'without a future'. Since then the word that gets the cameras rolling has always been 'Action!' and no shoot is ever born (or dies) at the same time: «'To be in the presence' of someone means recognising them as our contemporary [...] cinema enacts the strange paradox of tracing an object across time, while registering the imprint of its duration».⁶¹

Music and cinema are two extreme experiences of untimeliness, both translating the word 'action' in the representation of a disappearance: music uses acts to justify an impossible unity of time and space (instantly called into question by the interval in which the actors change), while cinema names the start of filming (subject to inevitable cuts in the editing process) and every action disappears behind the props that support the scene.

When René Clair directed the film *Entr'Acte*, which was first shown in June 1924 (screenplay by Francis Picabia and music by Erik Satie) the Lumière brothers' hasty declaration seemed already proven resoundingly wrong. The title refers to the space allotted for the film's projection, during the intermission of *Relâche*, the Dadaist ballet by Jean Börlin and Francis Picabia. The film closely reflects the screenplay jotted down on a slip of paper: every image is self contained, there are no connections between scenes, every scene is an interval in the midst of action; even the actions happening in reverse, rather than establishing any connections, mimic the mute babbling of «death at work», as Cocteau calls it, «24 frames a second». For around 20 minutes the film progresses amidst jumps, explosions, digressions, slow motion, fast motion, macabre fashion shows. A whole lost world continues to reproduce itself in the obstinate pursuit of a hearse. The unexpected image no longer hits the terrified spectator watching the train arrive, but instead aims directly at his half-closed eyes (and blinds him), as if on tiptoe, with all the bearded grace of a decadent intellectual.

In cinema, phantasms and prophetic shadows are at work, backdated apparitions that are projected towards an eternal future: from its inception, cinema has carried on with surprising rigour the untimely programme of its own disappearance in reproducible duration. It was born mute. And it was expected to remain so; music was superimposed on the images in order to

61 A. Bazin, *Che cosa è il cinema?* (Milan: Garzanti, 1999), p. 162.

keep the spectators silent.⁶² In *Entr'Acte* Satie's music uses superimposition and lap dissolve, slow motion and fast motion, close-up and point-of-view. His music score is a playful fugue with a disappearing act à la Méliès: the imprecision of hearing.

A Dadaist manifesto, the film was conceived as a 'landslide mechanism' of the temporal and spatial unity of the 'acts', or better, the *entre* is the visible off-screen of the *acte*, a gestural ellipsis that recalls theatre, but without the stage. The off-screen of the interval is the space of false perspectives, whose flip side is «made of canvases, nails and wood»: ⁶³ the imprecision of sight.⁶⁴

The behind-the-screen and offstage destroy the illusion of centrifugal space, which made the being-in-the-presence of the theatre actor, or the absent reproducibility of the cinematic frame, the centre of the world. In *Entr'Acte*, the action does without any twists, and alone destroys itself in the ineluctable acceleration toward the elementary catastrophe of the ending. The dramatic sequence of a funeral tips over into its opposite: («Ganz so dachte ich, als ich in einem Walde bei Pisa erst zwei und dann fünf Kameele sah»⁶⁵) the comic «terrorism of things».⁶⁶ Let loose from the camel that dragged it to its own funeral, the magic box precipitates outside reason, where a self-critical illusionist fades away 24 frames per second.⁶⁷

62 «[Music in cinema] creates a 'superior' space, which absorbs both the space of the auditorium and of the figures on the screen, forming a sort of barrier around each spectator. From the start, therefore, music served to isolate the spectator from the noise of the projector, and from the coughs and comments of the other spectators. [...] The function of music was to prevent the 'diegetic' silence from being contaminated by the uncontrolled noises coming from outside»: Noël Burch, *Il lucernario dell'infinito. Nascita del linguaggio cinematografico*, (Milan: il Castoro, 1994), p. 204.

63 Bazin, p. 170.

64 For a more in-depth discussion of the imprecision of seeing and hearing applied to cinema, see my *La rappresentazione concomitante. Breve storia di fantasmi per adulti*, in *Film parlato*: <http://filmparlato.com/index.php/numeri/5/item/115-interzone-friedrich-nietzsche>

65 KSA 2, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II, Der Wanderer und sein Schatten, Dialog*

66 Bazin, p. 187.

67 We're not interested in the truthfulness of the well-known film about a dying Nietzsche, since the image is always by nature a falsification of the 'real' world. What interests us, instead, is the fact that the film shows, in exemplary fashion, the phantasm, the hologram of thought, death at work. In whatever way one wants to intend it, these are images stolen from the wings of some personal tragedy, exactly as the cinema of *dis-limit* director Júlio Bressane (author of *Days of*

Nietzsche in Turin, 2001) 'acts'. A cinema of cuts and montage rejects, of eternal returns to earlier shoots: «'Cinema is the music of light', (Abel Gance). On this formulation, on this fringe, is centred (the metaphor) *Limite*, the film and its tradition. *Limite* (1930), exemplary assimilator of discoveries, is the process that chokes down our innocent 'thing'; it is the exploratory process that collocates the hand-held camera at ground level (disquieting position of the camera, challenging logic and common sense) and continues to move along (eye-almost-free, combination of rigour and arbitrariness) in order to create, to the best of Chaos Theory, the new shot, the new cage, with a delicacy, a movement and a musicality of *total poetry* without precedent in cinema. There we arrive at painting. There we arrive at music»: J. Bressane, *Dislimite* (Bari: Caratteri Mobili, 2013), p. 13.

LUCA ROMANO

VIRTUALITY: THE NIETZSCHE MECHANISM AND DERRIDA

1. *The Nietzsche mechanism for Derrida*

We must start with a question in order to understand the position and to understand successive movements: what is the Nietzsche mechanism?¹ On the one hand, it can be said that Nietzsche prefers form to content, prefers questions to answers, however, on the other hand, it can also be stated that he prefers content to form. How can we resolve this aporia?

It is necessary to state that Nietzsche allows, for both extremes as well as all in between, the same possibility of existing. This possibility of existing from one side or the other of this mechanism of semantic mutation can be defined with the word «Nietzsche».

The problem with this systematism lies in this mechanism. Inside the word-idea «Nietzsche» the meaning of oscillation is included a demarcation line that has eliminated itself, leaving space for the total possibility. Thus, Nietzsche is the interpretative attempt which shows the limits and the incapability of defining words. His style, especially, represent the «maybe» in the discourse.

This is where Derrida is useful. He writes in Sproni: «If Nietzsche had wanted to say something, would it not be, perhaps exactly this limitation of the will, to say in effect the necessarily differential power of will, and thus itself always divided, twisted, multiplied?»²

The Nietzsche interpretation created by Derrida is, thus, an interpretation of doubt, put to use in writing from the absolute verisity of the conflicting sides. The work of weaving dualism is, for Nietzsche, an activity of constant repetition.

In the interpretative «Nietzsche» mechanism, paradoxically, Socratism takes care of itself and totalizes itself in each field, in each choice, in each

1 To work with the Nietzsche mechanism, one can start at the language used by J. Derrida, *Éperons* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).

2 Ivi, p. 122, author's translation.

action or human thought. Showing a direct thread between Nietzsche and Socrates, that snaps itself deliberately by the will of Nietzsche himself, but one that is found in its own forced splitting.

2. Nietzsche and Socrates

In this context, the Nietzsche-Socrates relationship is used only as a trace; it is not completely exhaustive in analysis, rather, it imposes a discourse aside from the reading of Nietzsche by Derrida.

The interpretation and the word, in fact, becomes «the incentive» for Nietzsche, writes Derrida, through which to go forward, through which to carry out the only analysis possible on the road intself: traced from the «line» of the letter, of the word or of the aphorism.

A style that is not usually defined. But one that we attempt to conceptualize as «ironic» in the manner of Richard Rorty (if irony itself was subjected to an ironic attitude). That of Nietzsche is a deconstructive irony.³ Let us move it closer to Socrates.

Speaking of Socrates, our attention returns immediately to the extreme act of which it is a symbol: his death. And it is on the death of Socrates that we need to dwell on before returning to Nietzsche. The gesture is a symbol through which the Greek philosopher decides to deny himself, in order to remain in coherence with himself. An extreme act of contradiction. In the *Apology of Socrates*, Plato narrates the process that would terminate in the death sentence; however the accusation of corruption towards people with whom Socrates adored conversing and dialoguing gets dismantled by Socrates himself with these words:

I was never no-one's master, if someone, young or old, desired to listen to me when I was speaking and was attending to perform my mission, I have never impeded him. I was not one of those who talk only to those who pay them and avoid those who do not; but, indifferently to rich and to poor, I have allowed them to question me and to dialogue with me, if they wanted, on what I happened to be saying. And if, then, some of these turned out to be honest and others not, one cannot certainly blame me, since I never promised no-one to teach, nor did I ever taught any doctrine. And if someone claims to have privately understood or heard from me things that others did not hear or undertand, know that he lies.⁴

3 On this we refer back to L. Romano L., 'Derrida e il meccanismo interrogativo', *Logoi*, I, 2, 2015, pp. 476–483.

4 Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, XX1 32e–33b, author's translation.

In this reply, given by Socrates to his judges and accusers, there is the impossibility and the contradiction of the Athenian philosopher. Not having a doctrine and not having the pretence to teach anything to anyone, the centre of philosophical analysis becomes the question, utilized as much as an instrument of analysis as an instrument of criticism. The question is the total discussion of the affirmation; it is the relativization of the point of view of he who asserts. Socrates, moreover, is presented on several occasions as a stingray; an animal which, with his sting, paralyzes and is paralysed at the same time.⁵

Questioning becomes a logical system for reaching a truth, a truth, however, that at the same moment, could be put into question by a further question. Moreover, through the same process, one could arrive at discovering the veracity of the opposite vision of the truth, that is to say, the lie.

In any case, the constant overturning of that which becomes true and that which becomes false is the further step carried out by Nietzsche with regards to the Socratic thought. Socrates, from Nietzsche's point of view, remains paralysed in questioning alone. It is he who followed rationality, bringing it from the extreme through logic.

Nietzsche writes:

Der Moralismus der griechischen Philosophen von Plato ab ist pathologisch bedingt; ebenso ihre Schätzung der Dialektik. Vernunft = Tugend = Glück heisst bloss: man muss es dem Sokrates nachmachen und gegen die dunklen Begehungen ein Tageslicht in Permanenz herstellen – das Tageslicht der Vernunft. Man muss klug, klar, hell um jeden Preis sein: jedes Nachgeben an die Instinkte, an's Unbewusste führt hinab...⁶

3. *To perish or to be absurdly rational*

The movement down is a metaphor for decadence. The Socratic journey is, through the words of Nietzsche, a journey that places us once again in the face of a double choice: «to perish or to be absurdly rational».⁷

5 «You resemble a lot, in form and in the rest, to the stingray. This animal too, in fact, numbs whoever gets close and touches it»: Plato, *Meno*, 79e–80b, author's translation.

6 KSA 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung, Das Problem des Sokrates*, § 10.

7 Ivi.

In this sense, it is useful, with a leap in time, to go to Hegel, who writes on the logic in philosophy:

Worauf ich überhaupt in meinen philosophischen Bemühungen hingearbeitet habe und hinarbeite, ist die wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis der Wahrheit. Sie ist der schwerste Weg, aber der allein Interesse und Wert für den Geist haben kann, wenn dieser einmal auf den Weg des Gedankens sich begeben, auf demselben nicht in das Eitle verfallen ist, sondern den Willen und den Mut der Wahrheit sich bewahrt hat; er findet bald, daß die Methode allein den Gedanken zu bändigen und ihn zur Sache zu führen und darin zu erhalten vermag. Ein solches Fortführen erweist sich, selbst nichts anderes als[14] die Wiederherstellung desjenigen absoluten Gehalts zu sein, über welchen der Gedanke zunächst hinausstrebte und sich hinaussetzte, aber eine Wiederherstellung in dem eigentümlichsten, freisten Elemente des Geistes.⁸

Hegel is not chronologically distant from Nietzsche; however is a witness and a bearer of a search that, in certain points of view, is poles apart from Nietzsche, particularly from *Science of Logic*. The journey through Hegel is necessary in order to understand the triggered mechanism of Socrates and repeated by the entire western philosophy.

Nietzsche defines the mechanism of the fall of rationality, and as he says it is triggered by Socrates through his death. And, in fact, it has been a necessary mechanism for that same philosophy in order to construct itself as a logical essence that is «absurdly rational».

Nietzsche continues:

Es ist ein Selbstbetrug seitens der Philosophen und Moralisten, damit schon aus der *décadence* herauszutreten, dass sie gegen dieselbe Krieg machen. Das Heraustreten steht ausserhalb ihrer Kraft: was sie als Mittel, als Rettung wählen, ist selbst nur wieder ein Ausdruck der *décadence* – sie verändern deren Ausdruck, sie schaffen sie selbst nicht weg.⁹

This extract of Nietzsche on Socrates is the conclusion — «they mute the expression» — sends us back to a direction to a 'yes', pronounced by a child, inside *The three metamorphoses* (in *Also sprach Zarathustra*),¹⁰ towards the repetition — exactly with a change of expression — on the pages of the Zarathustra, in which this yes (*ja*) becomes *j-a*, *hee-haw*, the

8 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830) ed. by F. Nicolin. and O. Poeggeler (Hamburg: Meiner, 1991), pp. 3–4.

9 KSA 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung, Das Problem des Sokrates*, § 10.

10 Ivi.

bray of a donkey divinized by superior men met by Zarathrusta himself. The mutation is the umpteenth attempt for leaving the *décadence*, however this exit is impossible, since rationality, triggered by the Socratic question and the perpetual employment of logic as the method of confutation or valuation of reasoning, is forever in constant approvation of itself.

The question represents at the same instant the cracking of a logical system, that accepted until the moment when the question is posed, and the gestation, the creation of a new logical system. The question remains a «logical» and total acceptance of the world, an act merely passive in saying yes. And the repeated question becomes a purely religious act. In fact, Derrida writes:

The yes must also be a reply, a reply in the form of a promise. From the moment that the 'Yes' is a reply, it must be addressed to the other, from the moment that it is a promise, it pledges to confirm what had been said. If I say yes to you, I've already repeated it the first time, since the first 'yes' is also a promise of this 'yes' being repeated. You say yes is to acquiesce, to pledge, and therefore to repeat. To say yes is an obligation to repeat. The pledge to repeat is implied in the structure of the most simple 'yes'. There is a time and a spacing of the 'yes' as 'yes-yes': it takes time to say yes. A single 'yes' is, therefore, immediately double, it immediately announces a 'yes' to come and already recalls that the 'yes' implies another yes. So the 'yes' is immediately double, immediately 'yes-yes'.¹¹

The repetition of the yes, thus, appears necessary. He who commits to say yes to life, will be saying yes in front of the eternal return as of the linearity of time, will say yes to the death of God, as he will say yes to a new God.

The total acceptance, apparently outside of the *décadence*, cannot manage to leave, once again, from the movement of the fall of reason, which tends, with its own affirmation, to become «absurdly rational».

Wenn man nöthig hat, aus der Vernunft einen Tyrannen zu machen, wie Sokrates es that, so muss die Gefahr nicht klein sein, dass etwas Andres den Tyrannen macht. Die Vernünftigkeit wurde damals errathen als Retterin, es stand weder Sokrates, noch seinen «Kranken» frei, vernünftig zu sein, – es war de rigueur, es war ihr letztes Mittel. Der Fanatismus, mit dem sich das ganze griechische Nachdenken auf die Vernünftigkeit wirft, verräth eine Nothlage: man war in Gefahr, man hatte nur Eine Wahl: entweder zu Grunde zu gehn oder

11 R. Beardsworth, 'Nietzsche and the machine: Interview with Jacques Derrida', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 7 (1994), 7–64, pp. 54–55.

– absurd-vernünftig zu sein... Der Moralismus der griechischen Philosophen von Plato ab ist pathologisch bedingt; ebenso ihre Schätzung der Dialektik.¹²

The importance of this passage, in understanding the relationship between Socrates and Nietzsche, is determining.

Rationality as necessity is the fruit of a mechanism of total yes-saying. Once again, the saying yes to the world, which presents itself as another, becomes the logical mechanism, which overturns the pure abandoning of the world becoming a tyranny, a dogmatic adoration of the world as it is.

What is there on the outside of reason? The Nietzschean answer, through Derrida, is the possibility.

4. *The "possibility" outside of reason and virtuality*

Doubt, in splitting the truth into further truth, becomes a moral block; the eternal return of a choice (or one could say the act of choice itself) which nevertheless becomes impossible to fulfil.

On this Derrida and Nietzsche accompany one another: for the creation of a space of multiplicity that remains absolutely potential and never fully necessary.

The metaphysical system of possibility — which Derrida constructs through Nietzsche and which one could, with a leap, raise up to the Socratic approach — is the exact approach in which all remains unexpressed. The reciprocity of the opposites that become one, co-existing, cancel the moral valence of the action, mending in the act the system of infinite possibility; a convergence that co-exists in every single human action.

In other words, the virtual prepares itself as a foundation, not only through the oxymoron of the term virtual reality, but also because the virtual act becomes creative.

The concept of virtuality, a bubble from which for us contemporaries is impossible to exit, is the foundation of possibility, where the foundation does not imply the total realization in its positivity and its negativity, but on the contrary, the co-presence of all the intervals.

On the outside of this type of virtuality, the only device, such as for example a smartphone, a tablet, a computer or ourselves, becomes a limited possibility. On the contrary, in the virtuality, the discourse of the possibility is total. It is in the virtuality where objects acquire their functionality, their

12 KSA 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, *Das Problem des Sokrates*, § 10.

being as objects and their function. It is the bubble in which the making of objects «intelligent» is submerged: that is to say, a virtuality.

However, human beings, too, in the same way as objects, in the virtuality completes the journey towards another humanity, orientated extremely towards waiving the choice and the co-existence of further possibilities. The Socratean stingray is now totalizing, the paralysis is overturned mirror-like in the movement of both, of the animal and of whom has been stung; the virtuality is the contest; and, one could say, without attributing an ethical value: the poison.

The Nietzsche mechanism is, thus, the waiving of the human being for the human being itself, in favour of an anthro-logical change that takes the same prefix as «anthropos» in favour of another human, virtual, of which, in fact, it is no longer possible to exit.

This journey could easily place itself inside of the prophetic sphere; one could compare it to the new type of man proclaimed by Nietzsche: however it is useful to place oneself outside of this prophecy in order to attempt to evaluate the Nietzsche mechanism differently and employ it as a foundation of study for the virtuality. A virtuality which is simultaneously online and offline, but in which, in any case, we are immersed as human beings beyond the concept of the human being as it has been known until now.

This type of task of the corporeal (which is fundamentally incorporeal, in being virtual) is a task that is actively realizable only in the virtuality.

5. Virtuality and connectivity

Should we take any smartphone, we could transform it into an object largely un-utilizable only by subtracting its principal functions of connectivity. Its transformation to «smart» is a process through which it is the interaction that provides the identification of the object to the subject who uses the object, because the smartphone alone is not able to use itself, the reason for which connectivity does not concern merely the object, but mainly the utilizing subject.

Thus we can say that a relatively important part of our very existence (perhaps, by now we could affirm also our entire existence) depends on the connectivity, on the virtual bubble inside which all devices are immersed.

It is necessary, then, to resume the discourse, to return back to formulating new questions, to advance in the possibilities until their

exhaustion, admitting that these can never be completely exhausted in a virtual environment of the kind in which it operates.

Could there exist a being that can claim himself to be outside of the interaction? A being that gives itself to virtuality, it is the same type of being (human and non-human) which, in past, gave itself to the interactions? Could virtuality exist without the human being?

There would be several other questions from which to depart and on which to question ourselves, but it is necessary to proceed step by step, in order to attempt to understand an absolutely new environment, inside which we all operate and which Nietzsche, it becoming mechanism, introduced philosophically, and which Derrida, by explaining that mechanism, also explained.

The French philosopher, in fact, demonstrates the total presence of the differents and the necessity, today, to understand virtuality¹³ using «possibility» as a key task of its structure and functioning.

But, what does the possibility as a key to reading of the virtuality consists of practically speaking? It is the user interface of our device that functions as a pivot through which the user interacts with virtuality. The point is not any more what it is possible to «do» in a virtual environment, because all is potentially realizable in the virtuality, but something that the interface that is presented to us allows us to do. Thus our potentialities are reduced to a series of choices preordained by the software that we have in front of us, which as much as extending possible «freedoms», to date is not able to prevent the limits (something that on the other hand perhaps would not even be useful to do). But here we enter the field of ethics that is equally vast and that should be examined with the accuracy that this occasion does not allow us to do. A part of this examination is present in the text *The Online Manifesto*,¹⁴ where Luciano Floridi explained very well potentiality, the limits and risks of who controls the interface and the use it is put to.

«What does it mean to be human in a hyperconnected era?» This foundational question cannot receive a single definitive answer, but addressing it has proven useful for approaching the challenges of our times. We think that handling these challenges can best be done by privileging dual pairs over oppositional dichotomies.¹⁵

13 See P. Levy, *Qu'est-ce que le virtuel?* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995)

14 L. Floridi (ed. by), *The Online Manifesto* (New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer Open, 2015).

15 L. Floridi, *Introduction*, *ivi*, p. 9.

The presence of dualisms, rather than the antagonism of dichotomies represents in evident manner the completion of that which we have seen starting with the Nietzsche-mechanism and developing with the work of Derrida.

However in this context, how do we respond to the questions of the human being? What is the human being that uses a device and that is immersed in a virtual bubble? In what way does one place itself in front of singularity?

The answers to these questions need to be inexhaustive for various reasons. Above all because the acceleration inside of which every single man is inserted places the discourse in an peculiar a-temporality: a space inside which the discourse extrapolates classical historic temporality from linearity and places it in a circumference in which all occurs, in the virtual, in a present that does not alter itself with time, but repeats itself. Here Nietzsche with his own visionariness is able to provide a trace that needs to be elaborated on and reproduced, expanded and adapted.

The circularity of time, that which Nietzsche defined as an eternal return, takes on particular new characteristics, no longer bound to the analysis completed up to today, but one of a completely new kind. Borrowing this Nietzschean concept, we can see that the present in which man has fallen could recur, and in fact recurs, not only with the same mechanisms and with the same rhythmical intensity, but as the same in all of its conformation. The anthropological structure of the subject surrenders itself to the virtuality inside which it has fallen, renouncing its conformation, this time in the virtue of others.

6. *Renouncing antropomorphism*

An example of what is meant by man's renouncement of his own antropomorphosis is given by one of Google/ Alphabet's patent on 28th April 2016.¹⁶ The patent is called Intra-ocular device and requires, through 4D print, the injection of a liquid that solidifies inside the eye and is able to communicate with other device, such as for example a smartphone and a tablet. Beyond the realization and the real capacity of the invention, the trace that it leaves of itself on man's perception is evident.

Can a person with this type of eye be considered a person the same way as a person without an Intra-ocular device? Moreover, it is necessary to

16 Patented by Google (in the meantime became Alphabet)

work on human limits asking ourselves if it is possible to consider better and more functional a subject that is able to see farther and to memorize what he sees, in comparison with a person with a vision that, at this point, could be considered reduced?

However, omitting the physical aspect, with regards to the social and individual aspect, this process has already occurred with the creation of that virtual environment made up of social network, websites and apps. Place/ non-place in which all occurs in the form of dualism between opposites and not in dichotomy. There is no possibility to exclude or to consent to a synthesis between the opposites. We do not aspire here to discuss about information and disinformation that the Web produces, nor the disciplining of the intervention of singular subjects on social networks and the repercussions that this type of activity have on that which we can consider (by now wrongly) the offline.

The Western subject cannot ever exit the perimeter of virtuality of which he is part of, nor it is possible to formulate thoughts that are not derived from virtuality. Certainly, by virtual we intend all that necessarily co-exists in that bubble inside which single devices and men co-exist. Thus falls also the dichotomy between real and virtual, in favour of a virtuality that is obviously real and of a reality that does not exist in any way without virtuality. The questions generated by this development that is not futuristic but contemporary, confronts, something that will only be indicated here with the hope that it can be discussed elsewhere, with singularity.

7. Singularity

By singularity we intend the cognitive autonomy that robots and devices have achieved passing the Turing test¹⁷ more than once, prospecting the construction of an artificial intelligence superior to that of human intelligence. Such a step signals the dwindling of differences between what the human is and what the machine is, in favour of an artificial construction to which men will have to adapt to.

This field of analysis leaves questions that could seem rhetoric, but which, on the contrary, deserve the analysis that is philosophically right: is it possible for man to develop a superior mind to his own? Is it possible for man to still define himself as such in the function of singularity? However,

17 'Artificial intelligence passes the Turing test for the third time', *Reppublica.it*, 14/06/2016

more precisely still, we need to ask ourselves what makes man man and what is the distinctions between singular subjects and all the rest of the existing and of the virtual.

The problem of virtuality and singularity is found in the concept of limit and its structures as well as distortions. Is it possible that the limit is no longer limiting, but that itself is an error given by the interpretative structure? And if the limit of concepts, of objects and of interpretative structures becomes less, how is thought able to think?

Certainly Nietzsche was not able to foresee the technological development that would occur after the invention of the internet, however the he had the comparison with technology. Derrida, in his turn, brought forward an analysis on the limits of the thought, however for him it was a structural limit; for this he sought to construct stylistic and argumentative frameworks that were able to escape from that same structuralism.

Today there are various questions on technology and on limit. In any case, the comparison of the two thinkers and of Nietzsche in particular, who led the process of breaking from classic formulas of metaphysics and of reality, is necessary, in order to have the capacity to confront the contemporary that is present, and as any present constitutes a fundamental passage, by confronting it with current and obsolete instruments.

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