

Saggi

“An Art for Artists”:
Nietzsche and the Depth of Surface

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Abstracts

Il presente saggio si propone di evidenziare la riflessione di Nietzsche sulla relazione tra filosofia e arte. Il suo intento non è semplicemente quello di celebrare un presunto privilegio dell'arte in relazione alla verità, ma piuttosto di ricondurre la filosofia e la conoscenza alla loro velata origine creativa. A dispetto della ricerca di un al di là del velo, che renda trasparente la visione del mondo, l'arte si arresta alla *profondità* della superficie: la filosofia, abbandonando il pregiudizio della conoscenza, deve accogliere tutto il suo spirito su questo crinale creativo e tornare alle forme, alle increspature, mediante le quali il mondo si offre a noi. Essa deve quindi riconoscere pienamente, secondo Nietzsche, che il suo slancio non è nella direzione della verità, ma in quella della creazione.

This article aims to highlight Nietzsche's reflection on the relationship between philosophy and art. Its intent is not simply to celebrate an alleged privilege of art in relation to truth, but rather to bring philosophy and knowledge back to their veiled creative origin. In spite of the search for a beyond the veil, which makes the vision of the world transparent, art stops at the *depth* of the surface: philosophy, abandoning the prejudice of knowledge, must welcome its whole spirit on this ridge creative and return to the forms, to the ripples, through which the world offers itself to us. Philosophy must therefore fully recognize, according to Nietzsche, that its impetus is not in the direction of truth, but in that of creation.

Keywords

Nietzsche – Arte – Superficie – Corpo – Profondità

Are we not just in this respect – Greeks?

Worshippers of shapes, tones, words?

And therefore – artists?

F. Nietzsche

The *Preface* to the second edition of *The Gay Science* is a crucial place in Nietzschean thought: integrated in 1887 in the work's republishing, it summarizes some key themes of the author. Specifically, it appeals to a rebirth resulting from the overcoming of what he calls “the illness of the severe suspicion”¹, illness which is closely related to the pain that teaches the spirit in the direction of its liberation². Nietzschean thought arises, in fact, as a “disposition of the body”. A body in which the lines of

¹ «From such abysses, from such severe illness, also from the illness of severe suspicion, one returns newborn», F. NIETZSCHE, *Preface*, 4, in *The Gay Science*, translated by J. Nauckhoff, New York, Cambridge University Press 2001, 7; «man kommt aus solchen Abgründen, aus solchem schweren Siechthum, auch aus dem Siechthum des schweren Verdachts, *neugeboren*», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-4>. The quotations from Nietzsche's work will report the reference to the original text in German of the edition *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Digital critical edition of the complete works and letters*, based on the critical text by G. Colli and M. Montinari, de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1967-, edited by Paolo D'Iorio). Therefore, for each quotation, the specific link of the edition mentioned here and freely available online will be reported.

² «Only great pain is the liberator of the spirit, as the teacher of the great suspicion [...]. Only great pain, that long, slow pain that takes its time and in which we are burned, as it were, over green wood, forces us philosophers to descend in our ultimate depths», Ivi, *Preface*, 3, 6; «Erst der grosse Schmerz ist der letzte Befreier des Geistes, als der Lehrmeister des *grossen Verdachtes* [...] Erst der grosse Schmerz, jener lange langsame Schmerz, der sich Zeit nimmt, in dem wir gleichsam wie mit grünem Holze verbrannt werden, zwingt uns Philosophen, in unsre letzte Tiefe zu steigen», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-3>.

a physiological expression are condensed, as the philosophy is a symptom of the state of health of the body: «The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes frighteningly far»³. The strength of this body lies in its ability to face the darkness of the abysses resulting from the abandonment of any foundation, of any center, of any attempt to rediscover meaning in an exogenous territory⁴.

Nietzsche's statements are strictly linked to an idea of hermeneutics of philosophical thought not merely *critic*, but *based* on a physiology of *reflection* placed in the body: «Behind the highest value judgments that have hitherto guided the history of thought are concealed misunderstandings of the physical constitution – of individuals or classes or even whole races. All those bold lunacies of metaphysics, especially answers to the question about the *value* of existence, may always be considered first of all as symptoms of certain *bodies*»⁵. Philosophy *becomes* then symptom, and the spirit (*Geist*) a *surface effect* of body-soul: «We philosophers are not free to separate soul from body as the

³ Ivi, *Preface*, 2, 5; «Die unbewusste Verkleidung physiologischer Bedürfnisse unter die Mäntel des Objektiven, Ideellen, Rein-Geistigen geht bis zum Erschrecken weit», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-2>.

⁴ Cf. aph. 125, *The madman*, in Ivi, 119-120; <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-125>.

⁵ Ivi, *Preface*, 2, 5; «Hinter den höchsten Werthurtheilen, von denen bisher die Geschichte des Gedankens geleitet wurde, liegen Missverständnisse der leiblichen Beschaffenheit verborgen, sei es von Einzelnen, sei es von Ständen oder ganzen Rassen. Man darf alle jene kühnen Tollheiten der Metaphysik, sonderlich deren Antworten auf die Frage nach dem *Werth* des Daseins, zunächst immer als Symptome bestimmter Leiber ansehen», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-2>.

common people do; we are even less free to separate soul from spirit»⁶.

Philosophy has then the renewed task of rearranging itself on a double axis: 1) reject any distinction between soul and body; 2) understand the ideal and the value as physiological states, indeed states of the body. But, starting from this, it is necessary to reread the history of thought as symptoms, as responses to *living*: in this precise place, Nietzsche expresses the need for a rebirth, a renewal, which starts from a new condition of the body, which is inscribed in the possibility of “acting differently”, or rather in being able to do no other⁷. Hence the rebirth, the transformation, the metamorphosis of a thought that speaks of a renewed state of health, of a physiology of growth, a joyful physiology: an economy of tragic, that dig down to the depth, until the surface⁸.

Nietzsche calls this new state, this new physiological disposition and condition, *the great health* (*Die grosse Gesundheit*),

⁶ Ivi, *Preface*, 2, 6; «Es steht uns Philosophen nicht frei, zwischen Seele und Leib zu trennen, wie das Volk trennt, es steht uns noch weniger frei, zwischen Seele und Geist zu trennen», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-3>.

⁷ «Life – to us, that means constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame, and also all that wounds us; we simply can do no other», Ivi, *Preface*, 3, 6; «Leben — das heisst für uns Alles, was wir sind, beständig in Licht und Flamme verwandeln, auch Alles, was uns trifft, wir können gar nicht anders», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-3>.

⁸ «I doubt that such pain makes us ‘better’ – but I know that it makes us *deeper*», Ivi, *Preface*, 3, 6-7; «Ich zweifle, ob ein solcher Schmerz “verbessert” —; aber ich weiss, dass er uns *vertieft*» <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-3>. This passage will be used again, with the exact same words, in *Nietzsche contra Wagner, Epilog*, 1: <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NW-Epilog-1>. «Those Greeks were superficial – *out of profundity!*», Ivi, *Preface*, 4, 9; «Diese Griechen waren oberflächlich — *aus Tiefe!*», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-4>.

which pushes philosophy to a powerful torsion towards *art*. In this coincides rebirth, regeneration: «If we convalescents still need art, it is *another kind* of art, [...] an art for artists, only for artists!»⁹.

Healing after the illusion illness and convalescence (as he will say in *Zarathustra*¹⁰) determines a new direction¹¹: to orient oneself and sink into the uncharted and the unknown, yet possessing the strength, *health*, to bear the weight of such an experience. The famous passage from the aphorism 125 of *The Gay Science*¹² illustrates, through a whirlwind of questions, the vertigo of a *wisdom* without god, without horizon, without the third that guarantees, without the “sun”¹³ of the foundation¹⁴.

⁹ *The Gay Science*, Preface, 4, 7-8: «Wenn wir Genesenden überhaupt eine Kunst noch brauchen, so ist es eine *andre* Kunst – eine spöttische, leichte, flüchtige, göttlich unbehelligte, göttlich künstliche Kunst!», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-4>.

¹⁰ Cf. F. NIETZSCHE, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, I, Prologue, translated by A. Del Caro, Cambridge University Press, New York 2006, 263-270; www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/Za-I-Vorrede-1.

¹¹ It should be emphasized that this direction is not predetermined. Convalescence and rebirth, as *positive* ways, are not a direct consequence of illness, but the expression of life in its expansion of power: the *becoming* of a force that affirms itself by overcoming the reaction of adverse forces. It could be said, in this sense, that expansion is a possibility, a *potential* possibility, far from being inevitable. But there is also another *becoming*, the *reactive* one, the one that leads to nihilism, to contraction, to *Tristitia* (to use a Spinozian term), in which pain does not lead to *the great health* but to the will to nothingness. Cf. G. DELEUZE, *Le devenir réactif des forces*, in *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, PUF, Paris 1962, 72-74.

¹² F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, III, 125, 119-120.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Regarding the issue of the lack of support points in the self-foundation of the subject, see *Nachgelassene Fragmente* 40 [20] 1885 (from here on reported with NF): «In summa: es ist zu bezweifeln, daß “das Subjekt” sich selber beweisen kann — dazu müsste es eben ausserhalb einen festen Punkt haben und *der* fehlt!»; [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885,40\[20\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885,40[20]).

The great health (*Die grosse Gesundheit*), the rebirth, is a setback to the return from the abyss; in this sense, the aphorism 382, entitled precisely *The great health*¹⁵, echoes the fourth paragraph of the preface to the second edition:

We who are new, nameless, hard to understand; we premature births of an as yet unproved future – for a new end, we also need a new means, namely, a new health that is stronger, craftier, tougher, bolder, and more cheerful than any previous health. Anyone whose soul thirsts to experience the whole range of previous values and aspirations, to sail around all the coasts of this ‘inland sea’ (Mittelmeer) of ideals, anyone who wants to know from the adventures of his own experience how it feels to be the discoverer or conqueror of an ideal, or to be an artist, a saint, a lawmaker, a sage, a pious man, a soothsayer, an old-style divine loner – any such person needs one thing above all – *the great health*¹⁶.

Another crucial passage in which Nietzsche returns to the theme of *great health* is that taken from *On Genealogy of morality*:

¹⁵ F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, V, 382, 246.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*; «*Die grosse Gesundheit*. — Wir Neuen, Namenlosen, Schlechtverständlichen, wir Frühgeburten einer noch unbewiesenen Zukunft — wir bedürfen zu einem neuen Zwecke auch eines neuen Mittels, nämlich einer neuen Gesundheit, einer stärkeren gewitzteren zäheren verwegeneren lustigeren, als alle Gesundheitigen bisher waren. Wessen Seele darnach dürstet, den ganzen Umfang der bisherigen Werthe und Wünschbarkeiten erlebt und alle Küsten dieses idealischen “Mittelmeers” umschiffen zu haben, wer aus den Abenteuern der eigensten Erfahrung wissen will, wie es einem Eroberer und Entdecker des Ideals zu Muthe ist, insgleichen einem Künstler, einem Heiligen, einem Gesetzgeber, einem Weisen, einem Gelehrten, einem Frommen, einem Wahrsager, einem Göttlich-Abseitigen alten Stils: der hat dazu zuallererst *Eins nöthig, die grosse Gesundheit*», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-382>.

For that purpose, we would need *another*¹⁷ sort of spirit [...]: spirit who are strengthened by wars and victories, for whom conquest, adventure, danger and even pain have actually become a necessity; [...] they would need a sort of sublime nastiness (*Bosheit*) itself, a final, very self-assured wilfulness of insight which belongs to great health, in brief and unfortunately, they would need precisely this *great health!*¹⁸.

Resuming the thread starting again from the *Preface* to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, the rebirth that follows the illness of grave suspicion, the healing after convalescence, has led to a new state of the spirit, reconstituted through a new, joyful, cheerful, ticklish sensitivity, for which the body becomes

¹⁷ The expression in German "*andren Art Geister*" (here translated with "*another sort of spirit*"), through the underlining, seems to refer to the analogous one used in the aforementioned passage of the preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, where, with the same choice, Nietzsche appeals to "*andre Kunst*" (*another kind of art*). The commonality of themes that intersect in these places (the function of pain and illness, convalescence, the artist as a lawmaker and man of knowledge, the creative spirit) allows for an observation: the evidence placed by the underlining on this "Otherness" seems to be not contingent but to express a connection between an *otherness* of the spirit and an *otherness* of art; in other words, it refers to a new disposition produced by a fortification in which knowledge has become self-conscious; that is, it became *art*.

¹⁸ F. NIETZSCHE, *On Genealogy of Morality*, II, 24, edited by K. Ansell-Pearson, translated by C. Diethe, Cambridge University Press, New York 2006, 66: «Es bedürfte zu jenem Ziele einer *andren Art Geister*, als gerade in diesem Zeitalter wahrscheinlich sind: Geister, durch Kriege und Siege gekräftigt, denen die Eroberung, das Abenteuer, die Gefahr, der Schmerz sogar zum Bedürfniss geworden ist; es bedürfte dazu der Gewöhnung an scharfe hohe Luft, an winterliche Wanderungen, an Eis und Gebirge in jedem Sinne, es bedürfte dazu einer Art sublimer Bosheit selbst, eines letzten selbstgewissesten Muthwillens der Erkenntniss, welcher zur grossen Gesundheit gehört, es bedürfte, kurz und schlimm genug, eben dieser *grossen Gesundheit!*», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/GM-II-24>.

expression and “flesh” of this regeneration; if we can still speak of knowledge and knowing, it is no longer in the measure of a love of truth and its research but as an art, as a creative impulse, as a spirit-body that aspires to legislate, that joyfully unfolds his «higher (*höchste*) power by impressing (*aufzuprägen*) upon *becoming* the character of *being*», as he says in fragment 7 [54] 1886¹⁹: if there is no possible knowledge within *becoming*, if knowledge is a means at the service of the elevation of life, if *being* and *knowledge*, as illusions, are symptoms of a stage that must be overcome, it is the art that *over-come* becoming through creation, through invention, whose eternity is the sign of a will, of a *self-overcoming*, “a doing, a setting, creative”; it is a sign of something whose will wants it to be eternal²⁰, to *become* eternal.

¹⁹ «Dem Werden den Charakter des Seins aufzuprägen — das ist der höchste *Wille zur Macht*», NF, 7 [54] 1886; [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1886.7\[54\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1886.7[54]).

²⁰ *Ibidem*, «“Being” as appearance; reversal of values: appearance was *that which conferred value* – knowledge in itself (*an sich*), within *becoming*, is impossible; so how is knowledge possible? As an error about oneself, as will to power, as will to deceive. *Becoming* as inventing, willing, self-denying, self-overcoming of oneself: no subject, but a doing, a setting, creative; no “causes and effects”. Art as will to overcome *becoming*, as “eternalizing”, but through a short-look, depending on the perspective”» (our translation); «“Das Seiende” als Schein; Umkehrung der Werthe: der Schein war das Werthverleihende — Erkenntniß an sich im Werden unmöglich; wie ist also Erkenntniß möglich? Als Irrthum über sich selbst, als Wille zur Macht, als Wille zur Täuschung. Werden als Erfinden Wollen Selbstverneinen, Sich-selbst-Überwinden: kein Subjekt, sondern ein Thun, Setzen, schöpferisch, keine ‘Ursachen und Wirkungen’. Kunst als Wille zur Überwindung des Werdens, als “Verewigen”, aber kurzsichtig, je nach der Perspektive». Regarding the relationship between knowledge and becoming, cf. also the fragment NF 11 [330] 1881: «Dem Vorstellen ist der *Wechsel* zu eigen, *nicht die Bewegung*: wohl Vergehen und Entstehen, und im Vorstellen selber fehlt alles Beharrende; dagegen stellt es zwei Beharrende hin, es glaubt an das Beharren 1) eines Ich 2) eines Inhaltes: dieser Glaube an das Beharrende der Substanz d.h. an

The figure of *Redeeming man* (*erlösende Mensch*), mentioned by Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morality*, indicates, in this sense, the path and the distance from the overcome danger: «the creative spirit who is pushed out of any position “outside” or “beyond” (*Jenseits*)»²¹ escapes the great disgust that follows the ontological mourning of truth, escapes the nihilism of the will unable to survive the illness of suspicion; but, at the same time, *Redeeming man* carries out a redemption (*Erlösung*) of reality by sinking therein, by plugging into it. His

solitude will be misunderstood by the people as though it were flight *from* reality –: whereas it is just his way of being absorbed, buried and immersed *in* reality so that from it, when he emerges into light again, he can return with the *redemption* of his reality: redeem it from the curse which its ideal has placed on it up till now. This man of the future will redeem us, not just from the ideal held up till now, but also from those *which had to arise from it*, from the great nausea, the will to nothingness, from nihilism, that stroke of midday and of great decision that makes the will free again, which gives earth its purpose and man his hope again, this Antichrist and anti-nihilist, this conqueror of God and nothingness – he must come one day...²².

das *Gleichbleiben* Desselben mit sich ist ein Gegensatz gegen den Vorgang der Vorstellung selber», [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1881,11\[330\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1881,11[330]).

²¹ F. NIETZSCHE, *On Genealogy of Morality*, II, 24, 66. «der schöpferische Geist, den seine drängende Kraft aus allem Abseits und Jenseits immer wieder wegtreibt», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/GM-II-24>.

²² Ivi, 66-67. «dessen Einsamkeit vom Volke missverstanden wird, wie als ob sie eine Flucht *vor* der Wirklichkeit sei —: während sie nur seine Versenkung, Vergrabung, Vertiefung *in* die Wirklichkeit ist, damit er einst aus ihr, wenn er wieder an's Licht kommt, die *Erlösung* dieser Wirklichkeit heimbringe: ihre Erlösung von dem Fluche, den das bisherige Ideal auf sie gelegt hat.

The enduring ideal within the will to power, whose illusory character has fulfilled its task of affirming life, and whose conscience now produces disgust, illness and pain, must now be overcome, joyfully, in order to reborn, redeeming reality from its double curse, transcendence and nihilism: «what was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all “truth” but rather something else – let us say health, future, growth, power, life»²³. But if the illusion of transcendence is overcome, likewise the disgust of suspicion and the pain that follow are overcome in “joy” and “cheerfulness” through creation as well; a creation seen as eternal; art therefore becomes, using an evangelical terminology, the *word* of salvation and redemption:

This cheerfulness conceals something; this *will to surface* reveals a knowledge (*ein Wissen*) of the depth [...]. I admit it: as men of the depth, our cheerfulness is too much needed [...]. We know about this semblance (*Anschein*), every semblance - because we love appearance (*Schein*), we even worship appearance - but only because we have our suspicion about “being” itself ... Oh, if you could fully comprehend why we need the art!²⁴.

Dieser Mensch der Zukunft, der uns ebenso vom bisherigen Ideal erlösen wird, als von dem, *was aus ihm wachsen musste*, vom grossen Ekel, vom Willen zum Nichts, vom Nihilismus, dieser Glockenschlag des Mittags und der grossen Entscheidung, der den Willen wieder frei macht, der der Erde ihr Ziel und dem Menschen seine Hoffnung zurückgibt, dieser Antichrist und Antinihilist, dieser Besieger Gottes und des Nichts».

²³ F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science, Preface*, 2, 6: «bei allem Philosophiren handelte es sich bisher gar nicht um „Wahrheit“, sondern um etwas Anderes, sagen wir um Gesundheit, Zukunft, Wachstum, Macht, Leben...», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-2>.

²⁴ Our translation. This passage is taken from the first version of the *Preface to The Gay science* [Mp XV 2, 23]: «Diese Heiterkeit verbirgt Etwas, dieser Wille zur Oberfläche verräth ein Wissen um die Tiefe [...]. Daß ich es eingestehe: wir Menschen der Tiefe haben unsre Heiterkeit zu sehr nöthig

Then this new horizon, opened by the great health, places oneself in the adoration of appearance, in the celebration of the surface, in creation. Suspicious about the "being itself" (*Das Sein selbst*), from their immersion in reality the creators draw the impulse towards their creation: shapers of forms, of ideals, which do not yield to nothingness, but rather translate the "great pain" into joyful affirmation of power.

We must not, however, conceive this "state of the spirit", this health, as a strict dimension, a sort of *ethical morals*. Specifying this element, Nietzsche states: «a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it away again and again, and must give it away (*preisgeben*)!...»²⁵.

Absorbed in the dynamic flow of the will to power, the impetus to creation does not reach a definitive point; given that this impetus is aimed at power and not at truth, it does not stop to produce new creations, reinventing, *eternalizing*, conquering new knowledge, new wisdoms, producing new works. Its greatest height (*höchste*) is to *eternalize* its creation; its greatest *conatus* is to sacrifice each time its eternity in favor of another and more

[...]. Wir verstehen uns auf diesen Anschein, auf jeden Anschein - denn wir lieben den Schein, wir beten ihn selbst an - , aber nur weil wir über das "Sein" selbst unsren Argwohn haben... Oh wenn ihr ganz begreifen könntet, warum gerade wir die Kunst brauchen!» (F. NIETZSCHE, *Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe*, Reinschrift 2, KSA 14, S. 231 f).

²⁵ F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, 382, 246. We allowed a variation in the translation, which uses the verb "to give up" to translate "preisgeben". It seemed more correct, especially for semantic questions, to use the verb "to give away", in our opinion more suitable for returning the meaning of the Nietzschean quote: «eine solche, welche man nicht nur hat, sondern auch beständig noch erwirbt und erwerben muss, weil man sie immer wieder preisgibt, preisgeben muss!...», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-382>.

powerful one: in other words, its greatest *conatus* is a *joyful sacrifice*. Spinoza's *friendship* goes in this sense²⁶: *Laetitia* is an expression of an increase in strength²⁷.

²⁶ «I am really amazed, really delighted! I have a precursor, and what a precursor! I hardly knew Spinoza: what brought me to him now was the guidance of instinct. Not only is his whole tendency like my own -- to make knowledge the most powerful passion (mächtigsten Affekt) -- but also in five main points of his doctrine I find myself; this most abnormal and lonely thinker is closest to me in these points precisely: he denies free will, purposes, the moral world order, the nonegoistical, evil; of course the differences are enormous, but they are differences more of period, culture, field of knowledge. In summa: my solitariness which, as on very high mountains, has often, often made me gasp for breath and lose blood, is now at least a solitude for two. Strange!», F. NIETZSCHE, *To Franz Overbeck*, 89 [Postmarked Sils Engd., July 30, 1881], in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Edited and Translated by Christopher Middleton, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/ Cambridge 1996, 176; «Ich bin ganz erstaunt, ganz entzückt! Ich habe einen *Vorgänger* und was für einen! Ich kannte Spinoza fast nicht: daß mich *jetzt* nach ihm verlangte, war eine "Instinkthandlung". Nicht nur, daß seine Gesamttendenz gleich der meinen ist – die Erkenntniß zum *mächtigsten Affekt* zu machen – in fünf Hauptpunkten seiner Lehre finde ich mich wieder, dieser abnormste und einsamste Denker ist mir gerade in *diesen* Dingen am nächsten: er leugnet die Willensfreiheit –; die Zwecke –; die sittliche Weltordnung; das Unegoistische –; das Böse –; wenn freilich auch die Verschiedenheiten ungeheuer sind, so liegen diese mehr in dem Unterschiede der Zeit, der Cultur, der Wissenschaft. In summa: meine Einsamkeit, die mir, wie auf ganz hohen Bergen, oft, oft Athemnoth machte und das Blut hervorströmen ließ, ist wenigstens jetzt eine Zweisamkeit. – Wunderlich!», Letter 135, *An Franz Overbeck in Basel (Postkarte)*, 30 Juli 1881, <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/BVN-1881,135>.

²⁷ However, it is useful to underline the distance that Nietzsche expresses with respect to Spinoza, especially with regard to the theme of *conatus*: («Conatus sese conservandi est ipsa rei essentia»; «Conatus sese conservandi primum et unicum virtutis est fundamentum», B. SPINOZA, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, III, Def. III, in *Tutte le opere*, Bompiani, Milano 2010-2011, 1465-1466): it is here that a profound break is evidently expressed, where the potential impetus is understood by Nietzsche in a dispersive and not conservative sense. The *Macht* is the horizon of life, which does not simply want to be preserved, but rather to grow and to expand: «*Once again*,

The new condition of the man of knowledge, then, is the *gaya scientia*, which consists in the innocence of a newborn (*neugeboren*), who was able to overcome the horror of nothingness, who faced the tragic in decline and undergoing (*untergehen*), who made his discoveries an affirmation of power, which sets his knowledge as an art, and that in this sense he needs «a mocking, light, fleeting, divinely untroubled, divinely artificial art that, like a bright flame, blazes into an unclouded sky! Above all: an art for artists, only for artists!»²⁸.

the origin of the scholars. – To wish to preserve oneself is a sign of distress, of a limitation of the truly basic life-instinct, which aims at the *expansion of power* and in so doing often enough risks and sacrifices self-preservation. It is symptomatic that certain philosophers, such as the consumptive Spinoza, took and indeed had to take just the so-called self-preservation instinct to be decisive: they were simply people in distress. That today's natural sciences have become so entangled with the Spinozistic dogma (most recently and crudely in Darwinism with its incredibly one-sided doctrine of 'the struggle for existence' –) is probably due to the descent of most natural scientists: in this regard they belong to "the people", their ancestors were poor and lowly folks who knew all too intimately the difficulty of scraping by. English Darwinism exudes something like the stuffy air of English overpopulation, like the small people's smell of indigence and overcrowding. As a natural scientist, however, one should get out of one's human corner; and in nature, it is not distress which rules, but rather abundance, squandering – even to the point of absurdity. The struggle for survival is only an exception, a temporary restriction of the will to life; the great and small struggle revolves everywhere around preponderance, around growth and expansion, around power and in accordance with the will to power, which is simply the will to life», *Gay Science*, IV, 349, 207-208. For a broader examination of Nietzsche's interpretation of the Spinozian *conatus*, cf. A. U. SOMMER, *Nietzsche's Readings on Spinoza: A Contextualist Study, Particularly on the Reception of Kuno Fischer*, in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43 (2012) 2, 156-184. Concerning the Darwinian theme, called into question in aph. 349, cf. A. U. SOMMER, *Nietzsche mit und gegen darwin in den Schriften von 1888*, in *Nietzscheforschung: Jahrbuch der Nietzsche-Gesellschaft* 17, Verlag Walter der Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2010, 31–44.

²⁸ F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science, Preface*, 4, 7-8; «eine spöttische, leichte, flüchtige, göttlich unbehelligte, göttlich künstliche Kunst, welche wie eine

This is the solemn proclamation of a future which unfold itself on a new ground, a new horizon that no longer seeks a world behind the world, but that stops at the appearance, at the surface, that does not conceive *being* and *truth* except as *aisthèseis*, as perceived and created externalities.

Nietzsche indeed prepares his new epistemological line by stating: «There are some things we now know too well, we knowing ones: oh, how we nowadays learn to forget well, to be good at *not* knowing (*nicht-zu-wissen*), as artists!»²⁹.

This quote explains the path from not-knowing to art. Not-knowing opens the path to knowledge towards art, towards creation. Hence, Nietzsche adds a crucial element: he, indeed, appeals to a *bashfulness*, a modesty, that despises the implied nudity of *Wille zur Wahrheit* and *love of knowledge*, which intend to unveil and uncover:

No, we have grown sick of this bad taste, this will to truth, to “truth at any price”, this youthful madness in the love of truth: we are too experienced, too serious, too jovial, too burned, too deep for that. . . We no longer believe that truth remains truth when one pulls off the veil; we have lived too much to believe this. Today we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, to be present everywhere, to understand and “know” everything³⁰.

helle Flamme in einen unbewölkten Himmel hineinlodert! Vor Allem: eine Kunst für Künstler, nur für Künstler!», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-4>.

²⁹ Ivi, 8; «Wir wissen Einiges jetzt zu gut, wir Wissenden: oh wie wir nunmehr lernen, gut zu vergessen, gut nicht-zu-wissen, als Künstler!».

³⁰ *Ibidem*; «Nein, dieser schlechte Geschmack, dieser Wille zur Wahrheit, zur “Wahrheit um jeden Preis”, dieser Jünglings-Wahnsinn in der Liebe zur Wahrheit — ist uns verleidet: dazu sind wir zu erfahren, zu ernst, zu lustig, zu gebrannt, zu tief... Wir glauben nicht mehr daran, dass Wahrheit noch

The truth cannot be entrusted to a research to the transparency, which removes the veils that hides it from us. The truth is hidden, like nature, «behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties»³¹; it would therefore be “indecent” (*unanständig*) to claim to possess an eye that sees beneath its veils: «perhaps truth is a woman, who has good reasons for not showing her reasons»³². Nietzsche’s elegant polysemy, which plays on the term *Grund* (through the double meaning of “reason” and “ground”), refers at the same time to an invisible and an “*invisible*”, to use a neologism by Jean-Luc Marion³³: a ground that tends to avoid from the look and that, moreover, it is not permissible to “pre-view”. That background therefore remains un-fore-seeable.

Here Nietzsche loves to play with a misunderstanding (as often elsewhere), which seems to enslave the *will to truth* to the criterion of powerlessness of gaze, or to an unattainable research. In this sense, we can be led to believe that Nietzsche refers to an ontological and epistemological failure, which denies the possibility of a clear vision of truth. Through the veil, truth is “half-seen” through, and it is precisely through this veil that what is hidden can equally be given. The look unites what it separates; so what is hidden would seem to persist in its elusive space.

Wahrheit bleibt, wenn man ihr die Schleier abzieht; wir haben genug gelebt, um dies zu glauben. Heute gilt es uns als eine Sache der Schicklichkeit, dass man nicht Alles nackt sehn, nicht bei Allem dabei sein, nicht Alles verstehn und “wissen” wolle».

³¹ *Ibidem*; «Man sollte die Scham besser in Ehren halten, mit der sich die Natur hinter Räthsel und bunte Ungewissheiten versteckt hat».

³² *Ibidem*; «Vielleicht ist die Wahrheit ein Weib, das Gründe hat, ihre Gründe nicht sehn zu lassen?».

³³ See J.-L. MARION, *Le donné II: Degrés*, in *Etant donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Livre IV, PUF, Paris 2005, 251-342.

However, Nietzsche adds a clarification through an allusion partly obscure: «Perhaps her name is – to speak Greek – *Baubo?*»³⁴.

Facing this quote, we need to offer some more elements, attempting to decipher it. Nietzsche here refers to the sacred Eleusinian gesture, freely quoting Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus*, II, 20), for which the divinity *Baubo*, raising his peplum, reveals his obscenities to Demeter³⁵. This Nietzschean reference, which offers a clue to understand the question of disclosure and truth, has its indirect continuation in the aphorism 57 of *The Gay Science*. The second book begins, in fact, with a paragraph entitled *To the realists*, where Nietzsche says:

To the realists. – You sober people who feel armed against passion and phantastical conceptions and would like to make your emptiness a matter of pride and an ornament – you call yourself realists and insinuate that the world really is the way it appears to you: before you alone reality stands unveiled, and you yourselves are perhaps the best part of it – oh, you beloved images of Sais!³⁶.

³⁴ F. NIETZSCHE, Ivi, *Preface*, 4, 8; «Vielleicht ist ihr Name, griechisch zu reden, Baubo?».

³⁵ «When the goddess Demeter was grieving for the abduction of her daughter by Hades, god of the underworld, the witch Baubo made her laugh again for the first time by lifting her skirts and exposing herself», Footnote 6, Ivi, 8. Cf. also F. NIETZSCHE, *La gaia scienza e Frammenti postumi (1881-1882)*, in *Opere di F. Nietzsche, V, II, Nota al testo*, Adelphi, Milano 1965, 534.

³⁶ *The Gay Science*, 57, 69, «*An die Realisten*. — Ihr nüchternen Menschen, die ihr euch gegen Leidenschaft und Phantasterei gewappnet fühlt und gerne einen Stolz und einen Zierath aus eurer Leere machen möchtet, ihr nennt euch Realisten und deutet an, so wie euch die Welt erscheine, so sei sie wirklich beschaffen: vor euch allein stehe die Wirklichkeit entschleiert, und ihr selber wäret vielleicht der beste Theil davon, — oh ihr geliebten Bilder von Sais!», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-57>.

In order to partially dissolve the obscurity of this passage and, in particular, the reference to the images of *Sais*, we have to rely on the very precious note from Colli-Montinari, appropriately translated in the edition reported here, with some useful additions:

Plutarch reports (*De Iside et Osiride*, 9) that in a temple in the Egyptian city of Sais, there was a veiled statue of the goddess Isis with the inscription: "I am everything that is, that was, and that will be, and no mortal has <ever> raised my veil." In his Critique of Judgement (1790, § 49) Kant says that this inscription is the 'perhaps most sublime thing ever said'. In a short historical essay 'Die Sendung Moses' the German poet and dramatist Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) speculates on a possible influence of this cult on Moses and thus on the origin of monotheism. Schiller also wrote a poem entitled "*Das Verschleierte Bild zu Sais*" which told of an Egyptian youth who was especially eager to know The Truth³⁷. One night he broke into the temple and violated the prohibition by lifting the veil, but when found the next morning, he could not report what he had seen and died an "early death". The Romantic poet Novalis (1772–1801) gives two further variants (1798–9). In the first the youth left the young woman he loved, Rosenblütchen, to go in search of wisdom, truth, etc. When he arrived at the

³⁷ See in this sense the passage in the *Preface* in which Nietzsche says: «And as for our future, one will hardly find us again on the paths of those Egyptians youths who make temples unsafe at night, embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into a bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons», Ivi, *Preface*, 4, 8; «Und was unsere Zukunft betrifft: man wird uns schwerlich wieder auf den Pfaden jener ägyptischen Jünglinge finden, welche Nachts Tempel unsicher machen, Bildsäulen umarmen und durchaus Alles, was mit guten Gründen verdeckt gehalten wird, entschleiern, aufdecken, in helles Licht stellen wollen».

temple he fell asleep and dreamed that when he lifted the veil of the statue “Rosenblütchen sank into his arms”. In the second variant, when he lifted the veil, he saw himself³⁸.

This interweaving of Nietzsche’s allusions, then, aims to show how the truth, far from being an inaccessible place which would reveal a secret and open a breach towards an unknown beyond, actually offers only a reflected image of the one who looks at it and enunciates it. The *unveiling* in the quote above means finding oneself in front of a mirror; is not a question of un-covering a veil in order to access to a clear visibility, but of re-finding the pure self-looking gaze.

In this way, the following passage appears clearer: «Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to live: what is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, words – in the whole Olympus of appearance! Those Greeks were superficial – *out of profundity!*»³⁹.

The surface does not lead to the depth of truth but to that is expressed by the creative spirit: the *appearing* does not refer to the ground of *appearance*, but it constitutes itself as the *screen* on which the created image-forms are projected. The Olympus of appearance returns the grammar of *creation/creator* only, and does not return the path allowing the access to the *Grund*. This is why it is a question of “stopping bravely at the surface” in order to free the creation’s *laws of the optic*.

³⁸ Ivi, note 5, 8.

³⁹ Ivi, *Preface*, 4, 9; «Oh diese Griechen! Sie verstanden sich darauf, zu leben: dazu thut Noth, tapfer bei der Oberfläche, der Falte, der Haut stehen zu bleiben, den Schein anzubeten, an Formen, an Töne, an Worte, an den ganzen Olymp des Scheins zu glauben! Diese Griechen waren oberflächlich — *aus Tiefe!*», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-4>.

However, we have to clear the field of any possible idealistic or spiritualistic interpretation of Nietzschean thought. In this direction, Nietzsche had already, and several times, spoken about knowledge as an *image in the mirror*. Namely, we find this theme in a passage within *Dawn* and a fragment that belongs to the materials used in the preparation of this work as well. Aphorism 438 says: «*People and things*. – Why don't people see things? They themselves are standing in the way (*Er steht selber im Wege*): they cover up things»⁴⁰. And again, in fragment 6 [429] 1880, Nietzsche states:

All the relationships that are so important to us are those of the *figures on the mirror*, not the real ones. The distances are the optical ones on the mirror, not the true ones. "There is no world if there is no mirror", is a nonsense. But all of our relationships, however exact they may be, are descriptions of man, *not of the world*: they are the laws of this highest optic, from which we have no possibility of detaching ourselves. It is not an appearance, it is not an illusion, but an encrypted writing in which an unknown thing is expressed, — for us very clear, made for us: our human position towards things. Thus, things are hidden from us⁴¹.

⁴⁰ F. NIETZSCHE, *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, 438, in *The Complete Works of Friederch Nietzsche*, Translated by B. Smith, Based on the edition by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2011, 227; «*Mensch und Dinge*. – Warum sieht der Mensch die Dinge nicht? Er steht selber im Wege: er verdeckt die Dinge», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/M-438>.

⁴¹ Our translation. NF 6 [429] 1880; «Alle die Relationen, welche uns so wichtig sind, sind die der *Figuren auf dem Spiegel*, nicht die wahren. Die Abstände sind die optischen auf dem Spiegel, nicht die wahren. "Es gibt keine Welt wenn es keinen Spiegel giebt" ist Unsinn. Aber alle unsere Relationen, mögen sie noch so exakt sein, sind Beschreibungen des

Finally, the fragment 10 [d83]: «Der Mensch entdeckt zuletzt *nicht* die Welt, sondern seine Tastorgane und Fühlhörner und deren Gesetze [...]. Ich denke, der Spiegel beweist die Dinge»⁴².

Man therefore, *stands* between himself and things: his gaze only highlights a relationship to the world, *his* relationship to the world. But if a coincidence between the world and a specular vision is a *nonsense*, then in the same way it has *no sense* to expect the grasping of the reality of things by this same gaze. On the contrary, the world's description expresses only the relationship established between the viewer and this latter, the absolutely partial modality through which, more or less randomly, the viewer establishes a link. This is why knowledge coincides with optics and its laws: it expresses a grammar of vision and not of things. Or rather, the way in which mankind relates to things. This is why the world is neither true nor apparent⁴³. Relations to

Menschen, nicht der Welt: es sind die Gesetze dieser höchsten Optik, von der uns keine Möglichkeit weiter führt. Es ist nicht Schein, nicht Täuschung, sondern eine Chiffreschrift, in der eine unbekannte Sache sich ausdrückt, — für uns ganz deutlich, für uns gemacht, unsere menschliche Stellung zu den Dingen. Damit sind uns die Dinge verborgen», [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1880,6\[429\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1880,6[429]). Cf. also F. NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 207, Translated by J. Norman, Cambridge University Press, New York 2002, 98: «The objective man is really a mirror: he is used to subordinating himself in front of anything that wants to be known, without any pleasure than that of knowing, of “mirroring forth”», 98; «Der objektive Mensch ist in der That ein Spiegel: vor Allem, was erkannt werden will, zur Unterwerfung gewohnt, ohne eine andre Lust, als wie sie das Erkennen, das “Abspiegeln” giebt», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/JGB-207>.

⁴² NF, 10 [d83] 1880; [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1880,10\[D83\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1880,10[D83]).

⁴³ F. NIETZSCHE, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, «Wie die ‘wahre Welt’ endlich zur Fabel wurde. 6. Die wahre Welt haben wir abgeschafft: welche Welt blieb übrig? die scheinbare vielleicht?... Aber nein! mit der wahren Welt haben wir auch die scheinbare abgeschafft!», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/GD-Welt-Fabel>.

the world refer solely to the language of a description reflected in a mirror, through which mankind encrypts and reads the world, finding oneself there.

The worship of forms and appearances⁴⁴, returning to the conclusion of the *Preface to The Gay Science*, allows then to overcome the prejudice of knowledge⁴⁵, as well as that of a hidden truth of things: *worshippers of forms* return knowledge to its creative virtue, which deduces the value of its creation solely from its affection of power. The future of the *man of knowledge*, for Nietzsche, is therefore to be established through the emergence of a subtle, refined, superficial art, which *stops at the surface to go deeper*, into the depths of the human, that is to say in stratifications, overlaps, conflicts that characterized his development, and that emerge in his gaze. An art that *creates* the world and its "truth", rather than chasing the illusion of a gaze through which to access to an *indecent* vision of a *beyond of things*.

⁴⁴ Cf. F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science, Preface*, 4, «Anbeter der Formen, der Töne, der Worte? Eben darum — Künstler?», <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-Vorrede-4>.

⁴⁵ F. NIETZSCHE, *Science as prejudice*, V, 373, in *The Gay Science*, 238-239.