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THEORY AND CRITICISM OF LITERATURE AND ARTS

Editoriale

Il presente numero di TCLA, il quattordicesimo pubblicato dal 2016 (con una pausa nel 2020 a causa della pandemia), introduce una nuova sezione intitolata *Quaderni del SISD*, in cui figurano cinque delle quattordici relazioni presentate durante il convegno internazionale "L'irradiazione dell'opera dantesca nella letteratura moderna", svoltosi presso la sede del Research Centre for European Philological Tradition, a Lugano, il 7-8 dicembre 2023.

La scelta di distribuire la pubblicazione degli interventi in più numeri, che contengano anche articoli su temi differenti da quelli del convegno, anziché in un singolo volume monografico, riflette la volontà di mantenere vivo il dialogo avviato durante l'incontro luganese, evitando di confinare i contributi a una raccolta conclusiva. L'intento è di favorire un confronto aperto e continuo, che si estenda oltre i confini del convegno stesso.

Già nel 2021, in occasione del congresso su "Dante e l'Economia" organizzato dal Research Centre for European Philological Tradition, era emersa la volontà di istituire una serie di incontri annuali attorno a diversi aspetti dell'opera dantesca. L'iniziativa si è concretizzata nel dicembre 2023, con la nascita del SISD, Seminario Internazionale di Studi Danteschi, che ha immediatamente organizzato il ciclo "Lectura Dantis al femminile". A conferma di questa volontà di continuità, è già in programma per il 24-26 ottobre di quest'anno un nuovo congresso internazionale dedicato a "La donna/Le donne in Dante", che si terrà tra Barcellona e Lugano.

L'approccio consente al vasto gruppo dei membri del SISD, che conta già oltre cento iscritti, di affrontare in maniera continuativa alcuni temi centrali dell'opera dantesca.

I *Quaderni* si propongono dunque come spazio non solo di divulgazione, ma anche come piattaforma dinamica per un confronto tra studiosi, con l'obiettivo di incoraggiare nuove prospettive critiche e favorire il dialogo interdisciplinare. Il formato scelto, in Open Access,

mira a favorire uno scambio costante di idee, promuovendo al contempo discussioni e collaborazioni future.
In questo contesto, i *Quaderni* non si configurano semplicemente come un archivio statico di studi, ma come un motore attivo per lo sviluppo di nuovi progetti e percorsi di ricerca.

Carla Rossi e Raffaele Pinto

Zarathustra's dream: Nietzsche's lyrical 'other' midday

CARLO CHIURCO

1. Introduction

In Elias Canetti's masterpiece *Auto-da-fé*, the protagonist, Kien, summons all the books in his library to a sort of holy war in his defence. To foster the quintessential military virtue of discipline, he abolishes all differences of lineage among the books by putting them with their backs turned to the wall. In doing so, the great authors of the past reacted to such abomination with howls of horror, especially the German philosophers, and none more loudly than Nietzsche: "Nietzsche declaimed all his many personalities, Dionysus, anti-Wagner, Antichrist, and Saviour".[1] Canetti's ironical invention looks indeed very appropriate for an author who unabashedly proclaimed himself to be exceptionally wise, clever, capable on the one hand to write books so good yet, at the same time, for all and none, and, on the other, to divide history into two halves, before and after him, to be dynamite, and many other titles. While, of course, it is possible to refer – but also to reduce, that is dismissed – such rhetorical pyrotechnics to a psychologically exalted (and imbalanced) condition,[2] this being Nietzsche, whose life and thinking are inextricably intertwined, it could also disclose a philosophical significance, concerning which we can here only summarily sketch some possible reasons. To begin with, such a loud voice fits well with the philosopher's philosophical titanism, modelled upon Dionysus' divine creativity, which builds and destroys worlds with the same innocent cruelty of a child, and experiences a pressing, immensely contradictory suffering-cum-joy, from which it yearns to be freed, as stated in the famous preface to the second edition of the *Birth of Tragedy*.[3] Such a cosmogonic notion of artistic creativity admittedly calls for a loud

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[1] Elias Canetti, *Auto-da-fé*, transl. by C. V. Wedgwood, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York 1984, p. 96.

[2] Clinically oriented interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy, referring (and reducing) its value to the author's mental illness, appeared as early as 1902 with the book by Möbius (cf. J. Möbius, *Nietzsche*, Barth, Leipzig 1902). For a general overview (with bibliographical references) on the topic of health and illness in Nietzsche see F. Cattaneo – C. Chiurco, "L'estetica di Nietzsche: l'umano tra salute e malattia", in *Studi di estetica* 51.3 (2023), pp. 1-33.

[3] Cf. F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, transl. by D. Smith, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2000, p. 8: "a completely thoughtless and amoral artist-god, who wishes to experience the same pleasure and self-satisfaction in building as in destroying, in good as in bad, who by means of creating worlds frees himself

voice and a penchant for crying – indeed, Zarathustra often shouts and cries out.[4] Even in some of his more deeply philosophical lyrics Nietzsche resorts to crying out, sometimes giving birth to hymns of piercing beauty, as in *Fame and eternity* in the *Dithyrambs of Dionysus*: "Highest start of being! Eternal tablet of forms! *You* come to me?". More often, however, and especially in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's loud voice leaves the reader in the often-oppressive presence of his redundant ego, with his inner fights and contradictions.

Therefore, if Nietzsche's obsessive protagonism conceals a philosophical meaning, all the more so the opposite, if far rarer, attitude displayed by him in the chapter *At noon* from part four of *Zarathustra*, which constitutes the focus of this article, where he, for once, leaves centre stage – and falls silent. This article would like to suggest that side-by-side, and opposite, to Nietzsche's usual titanism, lies another side of the philosopher, one that is more contemplative, even melancholic. The voice of this 'other' Nietzsche is admittedly not often heard, if at all because it whispers instead of crying out. Yet the power of the whispering voice of the contemplative Nietzsche is by no means less impressive than the prophecies, the speeches, and the curses usually uttered by the 'usual' one, to whom we are more accustomed. In fact, in this chapter Nietzsche does not speak: just as we, readers of the text, do, Nietzsche here hears whispers issued from the outside world (indeed, as it will turn out, from *the* world as a whole, and as it is). This is made possible by an apparent weakening of the philosopher's consciousness, brought about by two conditions of great importance, which constitute the whereabouts of this almost mystical experience: the *space* of its occurring, namely the in-between dimension of dreams, and its *time*, noon. What I aim to demonstrate here is, first, that the message conveyed by this whispering voice contains truths as ultimate as those usually found in Zarathustra's speeches, albeit not proclaimed in a thundering tone at all; second, that this voice owes its power to the enchanting beauty of the lyrical form it assumes. The article is divided into three sections: in the first and the second, I will examine the space and time that make this reversal of Nietzsche's usual titanism possible, while in the third I

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from the *distress* of *abundance* and *over-abundance,* from the *suffering* caused by the pressing contradictions within him. The world envisaged in that moment as the *achieved* redemption of god, as the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the greatest suffering, greatest contradiction, richest inconsistency, which can only redeem itself in *appearance*."

[4] Among Zarathustra's many cries, none is probably more important than the advice he shouts at the young shepherd being chocked by the black snake in F. Nietzsche, *Also Spoke Zarathustra*, III, *On the vision and the riddle*, 2, transl. by A. Del Caro, Cambridge Univeristy Press, Cambridge (UK)-New York 2006, p. 127.

will try to determine the meaning of this experience imagined by Nietzsche, and the role the lyrical dimension plays in it.

2. The dream

The chapter *At noon* is very unusual, in that it does not feature one of Zarathustra's many philosophical sermons or meditations: instead, it limits to report Zarathustra's inner speech to his own heart. There is almost no action here: after a long wandering, Zarathustra arrives at a place with a knotty tree surrounded by a grapevine, seemingly offering his fruits to the wanderer. The entire atmosphere is at the same time enchanted and charmed: Zarathustra falls asleep again and again, twice trying to get up from his soft grassy bed, but in vain. In the end, when he finally gets up from his dream, he feels dizzy and hostage to some strange drunkenness, only to realise that his sleep, which had seemed to last for an eternity, had been in fact quite short, given the almost unnoticeable change in the zenith position of the sun over his head. The strange atmosphere of the place hangs between spell and temptation, a sort of Nietzschean garden of Klingsor, where the pure hero succumbs to the force of desire—except that Zarathustra definitely does not preach the virtue of purity and if a seduction occurs here, it conveys a message much different from Zarathustra's doctrine in style, but not in its meaning.

However, before analysing the content of Zarathustra's inner speech aimed at his own heart, it is important to understand the conceptual and lyrical context where it takes place, which, as it has already been explained, is constituted by the dimension of dream, and the noon. Dreaming enjoys an extensive tradition within the history of philosophy.[5] Greek literature provides at least three varieties of dreams.[6] For instance, when Nietzsche, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, speaks of how ancient Greeks dreamt of the Olympian Gods, he probably has in mind the so-called "objective dream", where the dream shows up to the dreamer as an external entity, such as a deity, the shadow of a dead person, or an εἴδωλον, the image of a

[5] Cf. C. Dreisbach, "Dreams in the History of Philosophy", in *Dreaming* 10 (2000), pp. 31–41.

[6] For dreaming in ancient Greece, cf. D. Del Corno, "Dreams and their interpretation in ancient Greece", in *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 29 (1982), pp. 55-62; G. Guidorizzi, *Il sogno nella Grecia antica*, Laterza, Bari 1988. Beside Aristotle's short treatise on dreams (*de somno et vigilia*), ancient Greek literature also produced the famous works by Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, transl. by M. Hammond, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2020, and Aelius Aristides, *Sacred Tales*, transl. by C. A. Behr, *The Complete Works*, Brill, Leiden 1981 and 1986.

person he knows. The second variety of dream known to ancient Greeks is the χρηματισμός, or oracle, where someone known to the dreamer reveals the future or gives a clear advice, without resorting to symbols, metaphors, or allegories. Finally, there is the healing dream, typical of Asklepios' medicine: dreaming the demi-god Asklepios or his father Apollon in the temple was considered a very powerful remedy for ill people, who eagerly accepted to undergo such therapy. After ancient Greece, dreaming enjoyed considerable success in medieval philosophy,[7] while changing of meaning. The first occurrence is the famous dream of Scipio, or *somnium Scipionis*, the only extant fragment of the lost Cicero's *de republica*, VI, 9-29: miraculously preserved in the writings of Macrobius[8] and avidly read throughout the Middle Ages, it greatly helped to boost a literary genre of its own. The Latin term *somnium*, or *sompnium*, indicates a broader spectrum of meanings comprising dreaming, fainting, having hallucinatory visions, and of course sleeping. Boethius, in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, employed a peculiar narrative technique of *somnium* by imagining that a noble woman, the personification of wisdom, comes to comfort him while in jail waiting for his execution, thus establishing a precedent and a paradigm that was extensively imitated throughout the Middle Ages until Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a text found (although in a summarised version) in Nietzsche's private library.[9] Interestingly, fainting occurs every time Dante must undergo an overcoming to a superior dimension of intellectual understanding (a condition that often translates in a physical displacement to a place of higher rank or importance, also in a reversed sense in the case of the *Inferno*). Whatever *nuance* the *somnium* may possess, it always comes as a moment when the narrator relaxes, so that his (or her) personality leaves the centre stage

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[7] The most important medieval work on dreams is probably the *de somniis* by Boethius of Dacia, engl. transl. by J. F. Wippel, *On the supreme good. On the eternity of the world. On dreams*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto 1987; on the *de somniis* cf. V. Feti, "The Science of Dreams in the Middle Ages: the *De Somniis* by Boezio [*sic*] Dacia", in *Medicina nei secoli. Journal of History of Medicine and Medical Humanities* 27.1 (2015), pp. 147-198. On dreaming in the Middle Ages cf. K. L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1988; S. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK) 1992; M. Nievergelt, *Medieval Allegory as Epistemology: Dream-Vision Poetry on Language, Cognition, and Experience*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2023.

[8] Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. J. Willis, Teubner, Leipzig 1963; engl. transl. by W. Harris Stahl, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius*, Columbia University Press, New York 1952; 1990 (repr.).

[9] Cf. G. Campioni, P. D'Iorio, M. C. Fornari, F. Fronterotta, A. Orsucci, *Nietzsches persönliche Bibliothek*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2002, p. 740.

to make room for another character, provided with a higher knowledge and wisdom, as in the case of Boethius, or, as in the case of Dante, it comes as a short breakout, from which the narrator emerges endowed with at a superior level of knowledge or awareness. In my opinion, it is precisely this 'Christian' variety of dreaming that plays the bigger role in Zarathustra's dream, as it reveals the inner truth of reality in terms of the world's perfection (see below, § 4), while, of the three varieties of ancient Greek dreams, the text faintly echoes only the third (i.e., the healing dream) given that, as a consequence of his vision, Zarathustra experiences a healing of sort in terms of a perfect happiness.[10] It is my convincement that Nietzsche ignored the distinctively Christian origin of this narrative expedient: it is nevertheless ironic that the power of this figure, rooted in the fact that it was conceived from the beginning as inherently philosophical, kept influencing European philosophy even in its most virulently anti-Christian episodes.

3. Noon

Another essential feature of the complex structure of this chapter concerns the time when the dream is said to occur, noon (or midday), which happens to be another metaphor of great importance in Nietzsche's philosophy,[11] one that has received a good deal of attention from great interpreters. However, there is a great difference between the way noon is presented in parts I and III of *Zarathustra*, namely as the "great noon", and how is depicted in part IV. To my knowledge, with the notable exception of Karl Schlechta, scholars have devoted their attention only to the "great noon", which is quite singular given that the metaphor is

[10] See below, notes 37, 40 and 42.

[11] Beside the texts of Schlechta, Löwith, Masini and Fink quoted below in this article, see also J. P. Vincenzo, "Nietzsche and Epicurus," in *Man and World* 27 (1994), pp. 383-397, which deals especially with this 'other' noon found in *Zarathustra* IV and refers this metaphor to Epicurus' notion of the "world-garden" (see in particular pp. 392-395). Other studies, not focusing on the noon by providing interesting hints at it, include M. A. Gillespie, "Nietzsche and the anthropology of nihilism", in *Nietzsche-Studien* 28.1 (1999), pp. 141-155; A. Badiou, "Session 1. November 9, 1994", in *Lacan: Anti-Philosophy 3*, Columbia University Press, New York 2018, pp. 1-38. Another psychanalytic reasing inspired by Lacan is found in A. Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2003, where Nietzsche's noon stands for "the encounter with this Real […] a quasi-messianic moment when time stands still in the space in between two intra-subjectivities" (N. Turnbull, "Crossing Nietzsche", in *Theory, Culture & Society* 22.3 (2005), pp. 139-149.

eponymous of the chapter in part IV. The metaphor appears four times in the book: the first two occurrences are found in the chapters called *On the bestowing virtue* and *On virtue that makes small* respectively. [12] Here the dominating figure is the 'usual' Nietzsche, the philosopher-prophet carefully listing his many titles of honour ironically portrayed by Canetti, with no exception. Zarathustra often (if not always) resorts to his usual thundering voice to announce the dawn of the new era of a superior humankind, whose members will avidly "compel things to and into" themselves, "so that may gush back from" their "well[s] as the gifts of" their "love".[13] Zarathustra's voice is then "transformed"[14] as he proclaims the new philosophical cult of the "faithfulness to earth". Then, after a long silence, and again in a "transformed" voice,[15] he commands his disciples to leave him alone, and to return only at the time of the "great noon", the turning point in the long preparation for the rise of the new humankind that has eventually overcome itself:

> And that is the great noon, where human beings stand at the midpoint of their course between animal and overman and celebrate their way to evening as their highest hope: for it is the way to a new morning. Then the one who goes under will bless himself, that he is one who crosses over; and the sun of his knowledge will stand at noon for him. '*Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live.*' – Let this be our last will at the great noon![16]

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[12] Curiously, in three out of four mentions in parts I and III the "great noon" is strictly associated to virtue; two chapters even display virtue in their titles, namely *On the bestowing virtue* and *On virtue that makes small*. I will try to provide an explanation for this strange (but probably not fortuitous) occurrence below.

[13] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, I, *On the bestowing virtue*, 1, p. 56: "You compel all things to and into yourselves, so that they may gush back from your well as the gifts of your love. Indeed, such a bestowing love must become a robber of all values, but hale and holy I call this selfishness. There is another selfishness, one all too poor, a hungering one that always wants to steal; that selfishness of the sick, the sick selfishness."

[14] Ivi, 2, p. 57.

[15] Ivi, 3, p. 58.

[16] Ivi, p. 59. These words present another problem: *how* such rise will occur? Is, as the text seems to imply, implicit in the complete decline of the conditions that so far had hampered it (i.e., metaphysics, the faith in "all gods")? Is willing that the overman live enough for him to materialise? How we distinguish such will from a simple wish? By using "will", and not simply "wish", Nietzsche himself seems to admit that the rise of the overman must be prepared and planned: but nothing is said, here or elsewhere, on how to accomplish this tremendous task. See also the discussion on Löwith's reading below.

Things do not change much in the two other loci mentioning the "great noon", which are found in the chapter *On virtue that makes small*. Again, there is much grand-standing ("I am Zarathustra, the godless: where do I find my equal? […] I am Zarathustra, the godless: I still cook every chance in *my* pot. And only when it has been well cooked in there do I welcome it as *my* food")[17] and philosophical prophesising:

> But *their* hour is coming! And mine will come too! By the hour they become smaller, poorer, more sterile – poor weeds! Poor soil! And *soon* they shall stand there before me like parched grass and steppe, and truly, weary of themselves – and yearning for *fire* more than for water!
> Oh blessed hour of lightning! Oh secret before noon! – Wild fires I want to make of them some day and heralds with tongues of fire – – some day they shall proclaim with tongues of fire: It is coming, it is near, *the great noon*![18]

Most importantly, no lyrism is found here. Instead, Nietzsche clearly resorts to Biblical apocalyptic repertoire. A possible reason for this style choice may reside in the very nature of noon, which, as a tipping point halfway in the sun's daily course, possesses an eschatological meaning, as it had already been noted by Schlechta: "Something like a new eschatological hope bounds Nietzsche to his image of the great noon".[19] Already in ancient times, noon assumed a fearful significance: it is the halfway point of the day, the milestone signalling the fulfilment of a condition and the imminent passage to another, still unknown one. Just like midnight, then, noon is a gate to other dimensions, although their sudden proximity may lead to incalculable consequences: in the halfway of noon, "the boundaries between up and down, the living and the dead disappear: the past becomes present, what is hidden, manifest",[20] and, as James Hillmann beautifully put it, "ordinary time is crossed by something extraordinary".[21] All the philosophical interpretations of Nietzsche's "great noon" converge on its half-way nature of a *passage* leading to another, superior and fulfilling, condition. Beginning with Schlechta, noon is the edge, from which man becomes the protagonist of the challenge involving his fate: "Man's judgement day depends on his decision, here and now. In each

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[17] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, III, *On virtue that makes small*, 3, p. 136.

[18] Ivi, p. 137.

[19] K. Schlechta, *Nietzsches große Mittag*, Klostermann, Frankfurt a. M. 1954; it. transl. by U. M. Ugazio, *Nietzsche e il grande meriggio*, Guida, Napoli 1981, p. 52.

[20] Ivi, p. 47.

[21] J. Hillmann, *An Essay on Pan*, Spring, New York 1972, p. 121.

case, his fate rests on him, and even in the Christian version of final judgement the possible grace does not exempt man to move towards it".[22] Nietzsche's "great noon", then, is not "a zenith", but "an end and a passage". The same notion is reprised and developed by Karl Löwith[23], who interprets the "great noon" as something strictly connected with the problem of *how* the rise of the overman may occur. Is it, as Nietzsche's text sometimes seems to imply, implicit in the complete disappearance of the conditions that have so far hampered it (i.e., metaphysics, the faith in "all gods")? If so, then the appearance of the overman would be inherently conditional: this is why, according to Löwith, in other passages Nietzsche seems to imply that such appearance rests solely on the strength of the will that such event must finally occur – and the disappearance of metaphysics and the faith in "all gods" is then *the consequence* of such will. This leads Löwith to propose an interpretation of the "great noon" as "the passage towards the ultimate goal", distinct from "the experience of noon" as "the experience of the overman, just as the eternal recurrence is the doctrine of the overman". In other words, Löwith sees the "great noon" is the proclamation that, after the death of God, "the passage towards the ultimate goal" of the overman is finally open: yet Zarathustra cannot linger in such announcement, but walks on, hurrying along his path of liberation, rushing "towards a 'new morning'",[24] the dawn of the overman. Finally, also for Ferruccio Masini the "great noon" is not "the experienced temporality of the meridian hour, overflowing in grace", but the outcome of Zarathustra's decision, when the new humankind, finally freed from all boundaries and all subordination after the death of God, indefinitely tends towards the unconditioned.[25] In all these interpretations, noon is seen as a passage toward something higher, the announcement of a fulfilling condition yet to come, only partly and imperfectly experienced in the present liberation from the constraints that had so far impeded it to materialise. The reader here eye-witnesses the childbirth of a new humankind, whose painful labours would justify enough the complete absence of lyrism in these passages of *Zarathustra*. Another explanation could be found in the striking contradiction, highlighted by Masini, nested in the tenets of the philosophical cult heralded by the "great noon": the new

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[22] Schlechta, *Meriggio*, p. 64.

[23] Karl Löwith, *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (1935), in *Sämtliche Schriften*, 6: *Nietzsche*, Metzler, Berlin-Heidelberg 2022, pp. 101-384.

[24] Ivi, pp. 105-106.

[25] Ferruccio Masini, *Lo scriba del caos. Interpretazione di Nietzsche*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1978, p. 216: "L'invenzione di chi crede di avere così soppresso la sua condizionatezza, con la pretesa di sapersi, nell'attimo della decisione, dopo la morte di Dio, assolutamente affrancato da ogni legame e da ogni subordinazione".

humankind, finally liberated from all the constraints and subjugations after the death of God, strives to the infinite and the unlimited,[26] while at the same time swearing immortal allegiance to finiteness, given that "faithfulness to the earth" implies to "never fly away from earthly things".[27] Nietzsche's philosophical and near-apocalyptic prophesising, then, could be the half-apt, half-obligated choice to express, in a loud-crying voice, this crushing contradiction under whose star the new humankind is born, so remindful of the contradiction affecting the divine, cosmogonic creativity of the Dionysian, with a positive-creative pole inextricably intertwined with a negative-destructive one.[28] It is perhaps in such extremely difficult (indeed, nearly impossible) exercise in balance that resides the new, post- as well as non-Aristotelian virtue of Zarathustra, and also a possible explanation of the curious reason why virtue features in the titles of both chapters dealing with the "great noon" and the philosophical prophecies related to it.

4. Nietzsche's 'other' noon

Löwith's remark is essential in order to understand the meaning of Nietzsche's 'other' midday, and the role lyrism plays in it. The last mention of the "great noon" in part III of Zarathustra is found in the chapter *On the three evils*. Once more, we find a long tirade against those who teach to contempt the world, body, sex, lust to power, the 'right' sort of selfishness[29], and against the bad virtue[30] – with no trace of lyrism. Before, however, there is an interesting section that describes "the last dream of the morning" occurred to Zarathustra

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[26] See note 27, above. Cf. also this interesting passage from F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 224, transl. by J. Norman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK)-New York 2002, p. 116: "*Moderation* is foreign to us, let us admit this to ourselves; our thrill is precisely the thrill of the infinite, the unmeasured [*der Kitzel des Unendlichen, Ungemessenen*]".

[27] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, I, *On the bestowing virtue*, 2, p. 57.

[28] See above, note 4.

[29] That is, the selfishness of the "bestowing virtue", which obsessively accumulates only to give away.

[30] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, III, *On the three evils*, 2, p. 153: "And precisely *that* was supposed to be virtue and be called virtue, that they played evil tricks on selfishness! And "selfless" – that is how they wished themselves, with good reason, all these world-weary cowards and cross spiders! But for all of them now the day is coming, the transformation, the judgement sword, *the great noon*: then much shall be revealed! And whoever pronounces the ego hale and holy and selfishness blessed, indeed, he tells what he knows, this foreteller: '*Look, it is coming, it is near, the great noon*!' "

just before the "jealous dawn" woke him up. Here we have a first taste of the exquisite lyrism we will find again in chapter *At noon* in part IV:

> How certainly my dream looked upon this finite world, not inquisitively, not curiously, not incuriously, not fearfully, not beseechingly:
> – as if a plump apple offered itself to my hand, a ripe golden apple, with cool soft velvety peel – thus the world offered itself to me:
> – as if a tree waved to me, a broad-limbed, strong-willed tree, bent as a support and even as a footrest for the weary traveler: thus stood the world on my foothill:
> – as if delicate hands carried a shrine toward me – a shrine open for the delight of bashful, venerating eyes: thus the world offered itself to me today:
> – not riddle enough to chase away human love, not solution enough to lull human wisdom to sleep
> – a humanly good thing the world was for me today, of which so much evil is spoken!
> How do I thank my morning dream for allowing me to weigh the world early this morning? As a humanly good thing it came to me, this dream and consoler of the heart![31]

This "last dream of the morning" is very close in style and content – the description of the perfection of "this finite world" – to the other one Zarathustra experiences at noon in the eponymous chapter of part IV, to which we now finally revert. The chapter, entitled simply *Noon*, shows a remarkable difference from the 'usual' Nietzsche from its very beginning:

> – And Zarathustra ran and ran and found no one anymore, and he was alone and found himself again and again, and he enjoyed and sipped his solitude and thought about good things – for hours. At the hour of noon, however, as the sun stood directly over Zarathustra's head, he passed by an old crooked and knotty tree, embraced by the luxurious love of a grape- vine and hidden away from itself; from it hung abundant yellow grapes, trailing toward the wanderer. Then he got a craving to quench a slight thirst and to pluck himself a grape; but when he had already stretched out his arm to do so, then he got an even stronger craving to do something else, namely to lie down beside the tree, at the hour of perfect noon, and to sleep.
> This Zarathustra did; and as soon as he lay on the ground, in the quiet and secrecy of the colorful grass, he quickly forgot about his slight thirst and fell asleep. For, as Zarathustra's proverb says, one thing is more needful than the other. Only his eyes remained open – because they did not tire of seeing and praising the tree and the grapevine's love.[32]

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[31] Ivi, 1, pp. 149-150.

[32] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, IV, *At noon*, p. 223.

Just as in part III, the scene is introduced by the image of a plant offering its ripe fruits to Zarathustra (the plump apple in part III, the grapevine in part IV), which, of course, could be read as a symbol of temptation (again, a Biblical reference), an interpretation consistent with Löwith's intuition that the perfection of the world risks to persuade Zarathustra to indulge in its exquisite pleasure (indeed he tries several times to wake up, to no avail). However, this image could also be a redemption of Biblical imagery as well, in which case the plant's offer of its fruits would simply be a symbol of the joy and the overabundance of life, with no second thoughts about ruining the condition of humankind. More importantly, Zarathustra here leaves centre stage, showing from the beginning a passive attitude (the sleep "persuades" Zarathustra, "pat[ting him] on the inside with flattering hand", until "he" finally "conquers" him "until [his] soul stretches out")[33] is said soon culminating to sleep: the reader here is presented with inaction and especially contemplation – quite a rare sight in the book – of the spectacle of nature, described both in terms of beauty and love ("Only his eyes remained open – because they did not tire of seeing and praising the tree and the grapevine's love"). Just as Zarathustra's heroic and titanic posture softens and slowly melts away together with the prophecies, the cursing, and the apocalyptic revelations dividing human history in a before- and after-Nietzsche, so the thundering tone is entirely replaced by a whispering, near-silent[34] lyrism of exceptional beauty and literary quality, employing images of extreme delicacy, and

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[33] Ibidem.

[34] The importance of silence in *Zarathustra* could hardly be underestimated. To begin with, the entire book is a teaching of a very peculiar sort, given that Zarathustra "is a teacher without disciples, students or pupils" (cf. G. Peters, *Irony and Singularity. Aesthetic Education from Kant to Levinas*, Routledge, London 2005, pp. 105-137, p. 115) – in other words, his teaching is a *silent*, unheard one. This may be explained (at least partly) by Zarathustra's own ignorance about listening: "it is Zarathustra himself who must first learn to listen to himself" (ib.), an urgency well expressed in Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, III, *The Convalescent*, 1, pp. 173-174: "Up, abysmal thought, out of my depths! I am your rooster and dawn, you sleepy worm: up! Up! My voice will yet crow you awake! Unsnap the straps of your ears: listen! Because I want to hear you! Up! Up! Here there is thunder enough to make even graves learn to listen! […] I, Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle – you I summon, my most abysmal thought! Hail to me! You are coming – I hear you! My abyss *speaks* […]!" Since silence is clearly necessary in order to learn to listen to ourselves, this could well be the meaning to that sort of *art of silence*, Zarathustra hints at ivi, *On the Mount of Olives*, p. 139: "My favorite malice and art is that my silence learned not to betray itself through silence. Rattling with diction and dice I outwit the solemn waiting ones; my will and purpose shall elude all these fierce watchers. To prevent anyone from looking down into my ground and ultimate will, I invented my long bright silence".

expressing a pudor in handling life and reality that makes these lines among the most beautiful ever written in German. Mesmerised by "a delicate wind, unseen, dancing on a paneled sea, light, feather light", in his divine sleep Zarathustra begins to speak to his own heart, letting the ripe perfection of the world exhilarate his soul in happiness:

> – Like a ship that sailed into its stillest bay – now it leans against the earth, weary of the long journeys and the uncertain seas. Is the earth not more faithful?
> How such a ship moors and nestles itself to the land – now it's enough for a spider to spin a web to it from the land. It needs no stronger lines now.
> Like such a weary ship in the stillest bay, thus I too rest now close to the earth, faithfully, trusting, waiting, bound to it with the lightest threads.
> Oh happiness, oh happiness! Do you want to sing, oh my soul? You lie in the grass. But this is the secret solemn hour when no shepherd plays his flute.
> Stand back! Hot noon sleeps on the meadows. Do not sing! Still! The world is perfect.[35]

Unlike its "great" counterpart, this noon is not eschatological, but purely pagan, as the reference of the shepherd playing no flute reminds us. It is indeed a perfect reminiscence of the enchanted hour of Pan, "the hour of silence and immobility, of sleep, of full abandon and passivity. Every individual returns to the universal, to universal life. The self falls silent, caught in a grasp that annihilates the boundaries of the I".[36] Unlike the "great noon", in this alcyon noon Nietzsche-Zarathustra, as Schlechta says, "is not entirely forgetful of himself, but only insofar to catch the whispering flowing between his heart and his soul—to catch the very voice of the world. Within and around him it's finally silence, within and around him finally all is still. For a single moment, he comprehends the world and himself not as a task, but as an event [*Ereignis*]".[37] The grandiosity to which Zarathustra is accustomed, made up of fights and calls to follow his destiny, leaves room to the dazed happiness that may be found only in small things, like "a winged bug in the grass" or "a lizard's rustling, a breath, a wink, a blink of an eye". The revelation of the secret of happiness is the gift bestowed by the world made perfect and transfigured by the power of lyrism:

> Do not sing, you winged bug in the grass, oh my soul! Do not even whisper! Look here – still!
> Old noon is sleeping, he's moving his mouth: didn't he just drink a drop of happiness –

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[35] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, IV, *At noon*, p. 224.

[36] Schlechta, *Meriggio*, p. 64.

[37] Ivi, pp. 74-75.

> – an old brown drop of golden happiness, golden wine? It flits over him, his happiness is laughing. Thus laughs – a god. Still! –
> – "Happily, how little suffices for happiness!" Thus I spoke once, and deemed myself clever. But it was a blasphemy: *this* I learned now. Clever fools speak better.
> Precisely the least, the softest, the lightest, a lizard's rustling, a breath, a wink, a blink of an eye – *a little* is the stuff of the best happiness. Still![38]

The difference between this *experimental* revelation, and the *philosophical* ones Zarathustra has familiarised us with, is striking. Its lyrical frame, of exceptional quality, resonates within us with a force that finds few parallels in Nietzsche's works. The power of lyrism succeeds in performing the task Zarathustra charges his disciples with, namely to return only after they will *live* his thoughts and doctrines: by reading these lines, we experience together with Nietzsche the transfigured perfection of the world in the meridian hour, and we do so *instantly*. The power of lyrism, here, not only wins over the power of philosophy, even an unorthodox and programmatically liberating one such as Nietzsche's, but also turns out to be better at philosophising. Suffice to read the wonderful final lines describing the content of this dream, only seconds before Zarathustra gets up:

> – What happened to me: listen! Didn't time just fly away? Am I not falling? Did I not fall – listen! – into the well of eternity?
> – What's happening to me? Still! Something is stinging me – oh no – in the heart? In the heart? Oh break, break, heart, after such happiness, after such a sting!
> – What? Did the world not become perfect just now? Round and ripe? Oh the golden round ring[39] – where is it flying to now? I'll run after it! Rush![40]

The world, the totality of being, appears in its perfection only in the vision instantaneously brought about by, and not simply "in", the meridian hour. As Eugen Fink remarks, "in the instant, the fabric of infinite time does not unfold entirely, but allows to clearly perceive how each smaller piece of thread is part of an endless twine: maybe in the instant it is not possible to grab the entire multiplicity of the twines and the outlines, but it is possible to grab its

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[38] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, IV, *At noon*, p. 224.

[39] See also ivi, p. 225: "Let me be! Still! Didn't the world become perfect just now? Oh the golden round ball!"

[40] Ivi, pp. 223-224.

necessity".[41] The ecstatic experience of the perfection of the world in, and *because of*, its finiteness amounts to the comprehension of the secret of appearance, the only epistemic task man is charged with: "Man has the incredible possibility to comprehend appearance and, from his own play, to dive in the great play of the world, and to be aware, in such diving, that he is a co-player in the cosmic game".[42] In this way, the unification of art with science, the problem already outlines in The Birth of tragedy, is finally achieved. However, fulfilling this task is possible only if Zarathustra abdicates centre stage, switches the ethical-political project of the renovation of humankind for the theoretical-aesthetical task of comprehending appearance, and leaves aside the philosophical-prophetical tone for the lyrical philosophical contemplation of the world.

Far from the tormented masks of Dionysian divine creativity, where conflict is never pacified and dissolved; far from the philosophical, all too philosophical heaviness of Zarathustra's task and fate, the lyrism of the meridian hour enriches us in knowledge of the truth – by allowing us to grasp both the original structure of being as the world (that is, finiteness), and the world as the totality of being – and wisdom, by bestowing on us the gift of the experience of the transfigured beauty of truth. Such experience can occur only in the instant, "in the ecstatic emergence of the circular meaning of time as *anulus aeternitatis*", the only place "where every conflict is pacified and dissolved", as Masini says.[43] This is possible, however, only when philosophy falls sleeps, stays silent, and finally practices the most important of all virtues—that of listening: "In the instant, the world is fulfilled, so that only listening may occur – and wait".[44]

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[41] Eugen Fink, *Nietzsches Philosophie* (1960), Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1979, p. 157.

[42] Ivi, p. 188.

[43] Masini, *Scriba*, pp. 205 and 207.

[44] G. Franck, "Nietzsche: tempo sacro, tempo del gioco nel pensiero dell'eterno ritorno", in M. Cacciari (ed.), *Crucialità del tempo. Saggi sulla concezione nietzschiana del tempo*, Liguori, Napoli 1980, pp. 93-129, p. 128: "Nell'attimo, il mondo è giunto al suo compimento, e quindi solo l'ascolto può darsi – e l'attesa".