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THE RICHEST POVERTY:  
THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN ZARATHUSTRA AND TRUTH  
IN THE *DIONYSOS-DITHYRAMBEN*

The poem “Von der Armut des Reichsten” is the last poem of Nietzsche’s final work, the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, and it also concludes Nietzsche’s penultimate work, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, where it appears as a “Probe” for “einen zweiten Geschmack” and “eine andre Kunst” (NW Epilog 2). “Von der Armut des Reichsten” presents a confrontation between Zarathustra and the allegorical figure of Truth, and the conflict’s outcome depends on the difficult attribution of the poem’s final line, “– Ich bin deine Wahrheit.”<sup>1</sup> If it is Truth who speaks, the dithyrambic cycle ends with the assertion of her domination of Zarathustra. If the poem closes in Zarathustra’s voice, Zarathustra will have succeeded in transforming truth itself. The resolution of this dilemma is crucial not just for any interpretation of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, but also for the understanding of Nietzsche’s entire corpus, because, if one considers the *Dithyramben* to be Nietzsche’s last completed work,<sup>2</sup> the ultimate dithyrambic sentence, truthful or Zarathustrian, contains nothing less than Nietzsche’s final words.

“Von der Armut des Reichsten” contains a parable for the specific kind of poetic language that governs the entire cycle of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*:

Meine Seele,  
unersättlich mit ihrer Zunge,  
an alle guten und schlimmen Dingen hat sie schon geleck,  
in jede Tiefe tauchte sie hinab.  
Aber immer gleich dem Korke  
immer schwimmt sie wieder obenauf.  
sie gaukelt wie Öl über braune Meere:  
dieser Seele halber heisst man mich den Glücklichen. (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 407)

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to the edition of “Von der Armut des Reichsten” printed in KSA 6, pp. 406–410, but I have also made use of the versions published in Groddeck, Wolfram: Friedrich Nietzsche “Dionysos-Dithyramben”. Bd. 1: Textgenetische Edition der Vorstufen und Reinschriften. Berlin, New York 1991 (MTNF 23).

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche’s last letters from the beginning of January 1889 announce the completion of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*. See KGB III 5, Nr. 1240. For a reconstruction of the dithyrambs’ composi-

Zarathustra's dithyrambic language appears incarnated as a tongue that is constantly changing and never only itself. Like oil over water, Zarathustra's soul floats playfully above what it has licked; his tongue mixes into what it comes into contact with, but it always resurfaces as Zarathustra's tongue. This comparison of the soul and its tongue already appears in the fifth dithyramb, "Das Feuerzeichen":

Meine Seele selber ist diese Flamme  
 unersättlich nach neuen Fernen  
 lodert aufwärts, aufwärts ihre stille Gluth.  
 Was floh Zarathustra vor Thier und Menschen?  
 Was entlief er jäh allem festen Lande?  
 Sechs Einsamkeiten kennt er schon –,  
 aber das Meer selbst war nicht genug ihm einsam,  
 die Insel liess ihn steigen, auf dem Berg wurde er zur Flamme,  
 nach einer siebenten Einsamkeit  
 wirft er suchend jetzt die Angel über sein Haupt. (DD Das Feuerzeichen)

In these lines, the soul is the "Feuerzeichen," a "Fragezeichen für solche, die Antworten haben ...," we read in the first stanza. The estrangement from every voice is accompanied by the tendency towards the expropriation of even more voices, not because Zarathustra is searching for an end to his isolation, but because his estrangement is a kind of happiness: "dieser Seele halber heisst man mich den Glücklichen" (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 407). In "Von der Armut des Reichsten," Zarathustra moves away from what he has and is, because "sechs Einsamkeiten" are not enough:

Verschlagene Schiffer! Trümmer alter Sterne!  
 Ihr Meere der Zukunft! Unausgeforschte Himmel!  
 nach allem Einsamen werfe ich jetzt die Angel ... (DD Das Feuerzeichen)

His objects are multiple, each of them plural; his seventh isolation is populated, expansive, and an intensification of his current isolation. Zarathustra speaks in the voices he expropriates, but he also exceeds these voices, and this excess pushes him to appropriate more voices. If anything can be isolated as Zarathustra "himself" within the many voices of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, it is this intensification of expropriation and estrangement.<sup>3</sup>

The expropriative character of the dithyrambs' language can be best understood when compared to the linguistic nature of the "giving virtue" in the chapter "Von der schenkenden Tugend" from the first book of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. The giving virtue prefigures many aspects of the "poverty of the richest"

tion and an evaluation of their place within the Nietzschean corpus, see Groddeck: Friedrich Nietzsche "Dionysos-Dithyramben," Bd. 1, a. a. O., pp. XVII–LVI.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze describes Dionysos in similar terms in "Mystère d'Ariane selon Nietzsche". In: Deleuze, Gilles: Critique et clinique. Paris 1993, p. 128.

in the final dithyramb. The most explicit presentation of the “schenkende Tugend” begins with an act of theft:

Unersättlich trachtet eure Seele nach Schätzen und Kleinodien, weil eure Tugend unersättlich ist im Verschenken-Wollen. [...]

Wahrlich, zum Räuber an allen Werthen muss solche schenkende Liebe werden; aber heil und heilig heisse ich diese Selbstsucht. (Za I Von der schenkenden Tugend 1)

The “schenkende Tugend” appropriates “alle Dinge” and “alle Werthe” only to give them away. Zarathustra’s virtue is insatiable, “unersättlich,” not in its consumption, but in its giving, and its appropriation is not just the transfer of ownership but also an expropriation that frees what has been stolen from every relation of propriety. What is expropriated becomes a gift:

Ihr zwingt alle Dinge zu euch und in euch, dass sie aus eurem Borne zurückströmen sollen als die Gaben eurer Liebe. (Za I Von der schenkenden Tugend 1)

The robbing virtue keeps nothing and gives away what it has stolen, and the only change that takes place is the slight modification marked here by the “als.”<sup>4</sup> Virtue changes how things are, not what they are, and is nothing but this constant, slight alteration.<sup>5</sup>

A poor language is a transforming language, and the sentences that open the second and third parts of the section “Von der schenkenden Tugend” register a change effected by the giving, impoverishing virtue upon the voice of Zarathustra:

Dann fuhr er also fort zu reden: – und seine Stimme hatte sich verwandelt. (Za I Von der schenkenden Tugend 2)

Endlich sprach er also: – und seine Stimme hatte sich verwandelt. (Za I Von der schenkenden Tugend 3)

Zarathustra’s voice changes as he continues to speak about the giving virtue, because, in this contact with virtue, his voice too is taken and given, marked by the change in his voice’s “also,” just as in the slight modification of “als” that characterizes the giving virtue. The repetition of the sentence “Also sprach Zarathustra” in *Also sprach Zarathustra* emphasizes that and how he is speaking. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra speaks *thus*, as his voice and words have been taken from elsewhere (especially the Bible) and then given as the gift of virtue. Most chapters of *Also sprach Zarathustra* end with the sentence “Also sprach Zarathustra,” and this constant repetition of the title within the work traces

<sup>4</sup> For Nietzsche, “rauben” must always be understood in relation to the race of “Raubtiere,” the predators at the center of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, and the fourth dithyramb, “Zwischen Raubvögeln.”

<sup>5</sup> Joan Stambaugh describes the Nietzschean precedence of “how” over “what” in: Stambaugh, Joan: *Amor dei and amor fati: Spinoza and Nietzsche*. In: O’Flaherty, James et al eds.: *Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*. Chapel Hill 1985, p. 136.

out the constant alteration of the “also” that makes Zarathustra speak “thus,” “thus,” “thus,” always differently. The “also” attempts to mark each instance of Zarathustra’s speech as a particular “thus” and, at the same time, serves as a sign of the constant change that takes place within it. It acts as an anaphora and seems to refer back to what is most specific and concrete about a particular instance of Zarathustra’s speech; but, in its formulaic function in the book, the “also” actually brings attention to the constant change that characterizes Zarathustra’s voice.

What are these voices that Zarathustra appropriates? Two of the *Dithyramben* take over and modify fixed genres. “Letzter Wille” is a version of a legal testament,<sup>6</sup> and “Klage der Ariadne” adopts a specific genre from Baroque opera, the “Lamento d’Ariana.” The poem as last will and testament is improper twice over, because of its literariness and because of its speaker, who, in the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, is not the testator, as the form requires, but the heir. A juridical form becomes literary, and a living speaker takes on a role that, although dictated by a living voice, is reserved in its full force strictly for the dead. In addition, “Letzter Wille” presents appropriation as its theme: an act that should be taken as an example. The first and last stanzas begin with the lines: “So sterben, wie ich ihn einst sterben sah” (DD Letzter Wille).<sup>7</sup> His friend’s death offers a way of dying whose mode of exemplarity is carefully circumscribed. The lines read not as “I want to (or will) die as he did” but “To die as I once saw him die ...” Since the initial clause, “So sterben ...,” remains an infinitive without a grammatical subject, the “I” saw a death that becomes exemplary, but not for any subject. The poem thus presents a doubly improper form – a literary will spoken by the heir – and a mode of dying that is exemplary in a way that does not require or even permit a subject.

“Letzter Wille” is more than an example; it offers an example of exemplarity for our reading of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* as a cycle as well as for the understanding of the expropriating language of “Von der Armut des Reichsten.” Zarathustra’s expropriation takes and gives a certain kind of language and estranges it from the traits that define it, especially from the prescribed speaker and addressee. Since the act of expropriation reduces the importance of the self in the speaker and in the voice that is assumed, this distancing (but not total dissolution) of the identity of what is expropriated extends to Zarathustra “himself.”

<sup>6</sup> Wolfram Groddeck notes that “Der Ausdruck ‘letzter Wille’ [...] ist die standardisierte Verdeutschung des lateinischen Wortes ‘Testament’ aus dem Vokabular der Jurisprudenz” (Groddeck: Friedrich Nietzsche “Dionysos-Dithyramben”. Bd. 2: Die “Dionysos-Dithyramben”. Bedeutung und Entstehung von Nietzsches letztem Werk. Berlin, New York 1991 (MTNF 23), p. 99).

<sup>7</sup> The repetition of this phrase calls into question the interpretation of the poem’s final “impression” as “one of continued forward motion” in: Grundlehner, Philip: *The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York, Oxford 1986, p. 257.

How can Zarathustra “himself” be characterized? In his reading of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, Max Kommerell sees a philosophical and literary force at work that brings about a dissolution of the philosophical “I” and the concept of the subject (“der Begriff des Subjekts scheint kaum mehr zulänglich”).<sup>8</sup> It is possible to see the reason for Kommerell’s conclusion in the specific understanding of the subject marked out by the dithyrambs’ poetic figures and tropes. Zarathustra is always caught between roles, speaking a voice at the same time that he is estranged from it. Zarathustra’s “between” position can be seen in both the thematic and rhetorical effects of an alliteration that begins with his name in the fourth dithyramb, “Zwischen Raubvögeln.” All of the words that begin with “z” in “Zwischen Raubvögeln” characterize Zarathustra as occupying a liminal position: he “zögert an Abgründen [...] zwischen der Ungeduld wilden Gerölls [...] zwiesam im eignen Wissen [...] zwischen zwei Nichtse eingekrümmt, ein Fragezeichen” (DD *Zwischen Raubvögeln*, KSA 6, pp. 389–92). He also appears as estranged from himself: “zwischen hundert Spiegeln / vor dir selber falsch.” The alliterative effect here emphasizes the link between Zarathustra, “zwischen,” and the question mark, but it also brings attention to the fragility of this link, because the figure of alliteration establishes a relation between two words based on the smallest possible phonetic link.<sup>9</sup> The tie could not be more tenuous between these words, just as the tie between Zarathustra and his many voices relies on a fragile link that is as much distance as it is intimacy.

The poem continues the assignment of Zarathustra to a “between” space by the use of another figure: the anagram or para-anagram. Zarathustra’s interval position is described and shown in the para-anagrammatical couplet repeated twice in the poem: “Selbstkenner! / Selbsthenker!” These two words are almost identical, distinguished only by two letters, and the exclamation “Selbsthenker!” presents an antagonistic relation to the self that is also a pejorative redescription of the exclamation “Selbstkenner!” The two words are similar, inseparable in any reading of the poem despite their divergent meanings; both describe a relation to the self as other, and they are almost the same word, alike *and* different. A similar relation can be read within the title *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, because the word “Dithyramb” is not just the genre of a poem that praises Dionysos, but also another name for Dionysos.<sup>10</sup> The relation between the words “Dionysos” and “Dithyrambus” is intensified in Dionysos’ lines in the dithyramb “Klage der Ariadne,” where he suggests yet another name for himself:

<sup>8</sup> Kommerell, Max: *Gedanken über Gedichte*. Frankfurt am Main 1943, pp. 483–484.

<sup>9</sup> See Lausberg, Heinrich: *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. Registerband. München 1960, p. 885.

<sup>10</sup> See Max Baeumer, who writes that “‘Dithyrambos’ ist zugleich ein alter Name des Dionysos. D. h., der Gott ist mit dem Dithyrambos, dem Preislied zu seinen Ehren, inhaltlich und formal als Topos identisch” (Baeumer, Max L.: *Dialektik und zeitgeschichtliche Funktion des literarischen Topos*. In: ders. (Hg.): *Toposforschung*. Darmstadt 1973, p. 310; cited in Groddeck: Friedrich Nietzsche “Dionysos-Dithyramben”, Bd. 2, a. a. O., p. XVIII).

Sei klug, Ariadne! ...  
 Du hast kleine Ohren, du hast meine Ohren:  
 steck ein kluges Wort hinein! –  
 Muss man sich nicht erst hassen, wenn man sich lieben soll? ...  
 Ich bin dein Labyrinth ... (DD Klage der Ariadne, KSA 6, p. 401)

What is “klug” about Dionysos’ words? Dionysos, in his own words, *is* a “labyrinth”: or, if Dionysos’ other name is substituted, then Dithyrambus is a labyrinth: dithyramb = labyrinth. The words are almost perfectly anagrammatical, close to each other in the same way that “Selbstkenner” and “Selbsthenker” are. Here, the anagram is preceded by a description of the relation between Ariadne and Dionysos as love-hate, and the relation between the two words can be characterized as a certain kind of similarity. “Selbstkenner/Selbsthenker,” *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, “Labyrinth/Dithyramb”: these three pairs present a model of reference to a self that is always different, to a self that is neither one nor the other, but which occupies a position between the two – between the lines, in a hyphen, between a name and its para-anagram.<sup>11</sup> All of these forms develop the figure of “the smallest gap” that characterizes Zarathustra in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Za III Der Genesende 2, KSA 4, p. 272).<sup>12</sup>

The smallest gap appears throughout these forms in the relation to the self. I have emphasized these gestures of self-estrangement in the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* to prepare for the reading of Zarathustra’s final encounter with Truth, which, as in their previous conflicts,<sup>13</sup> centers on the notion of the self. In “Von der Armut des Reichsten,” the appearance of reflexive verbs marks the difference between Zarathustra’s tongue and truthful language. Zarathustra’s lines do not contain a single reflexive verb, while Truth’s speech is dominated by the repeated, reflexive imperative: “Verschenke dich selber erst, oh Zarathustra!” The instances of reflexive verbs characterize her understanding of Zarathustra’s poverty:

Du opferst dich, dich quält dein Reichthum –,  
 du giebst dich ab,  
 du schonst dich nicht, du liebst dich nicht (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 409)  
 verschenke dich selber erst, oh Zarathustra! (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 410)

<sup>11</sup> For a theory of anagrams and their possible centrality to (Latin) verse, see Starobinski, Jean: *Les mots sous les mots: Les anagrammes de Ferdinand de Saussure*. Paris 1971, especially pp. 151–154. Starobinski’s conclusions are pertinent here in their insistence on the distance between the poet and his or her writing.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Stingelin equates the rhetorical figure of paranomasia with the relation of the “kleinste Kluff” in: Stingelin, Martin: *Nietzsches Wortspiel als Reflexion auf poet(olog)ische Verfahren*. In: ders.: *Nietzsche-Studien* 17 (1988), p. 344, pp. 336–349.

<sup>13</sup> See especially the confrontation between Zarathustra and the “stillste Stunde” in the chapter “Die stillste Stunde” (Za II, KSA 4, pp. 187–190).

Nowhere in “Von der Armut des Reichsten” does Zarathustra speak of “sich quälen,” “sich opfern,” “sich abgeben” or “sich vergeben.” Instead, Zarathustra presents his giving as “verschwenden” and as “strömen,”<sup>14</sup> just as he does in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, where Zarathustra’s excessive waste is specifically opposed to the notion of sacrifice: “Was opfern! Ich verschwende, was mir geschenkt wird, ich Verschwender mit tausend Händen: wie dürfte ich Das noch – Opfern heissen!” (Za IV Das Honig-Opfer, KSA 4, p. 296). Nietzsche’s critique of sacrifice runs through his works and culminates in the opening pages of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, where the “Selbstopferungsinstinkte” are equated with another target of Nietzsche’s scorn, the “Unegoistische” (GM Vorrede).<sup>15</sup> *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* specifically warns philosophers not to martyr themselves for the truth: “Seht euch vor, ihr Philosophen und Freunde der Erkenntnis, und hütet euch vor dem Martyrium! Vor dem Leiden “um der Wahrheit willen!”” (JGB 2. Hauptstück 25).<sup>16</sup> The terms of Zarathustra’s encounters with Truth in “Von der Armut des Reichsten” appear in Nietzsche’s texts that precede the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* and point to the impossibility of their reconciliation.

There are two versions of poverty in “Von der Armut des Reichsten.”<sup>17</sup> For Truth, Zarathustra’s virtue is “der Reichthum des Ärmsten”: “du Ärmster aller Reichen! Du opferst dich, dich quält dein Reichthum”<sup>18</sup> (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 409). In her version, he has wealth and is the “poorest”; he lacks love (“Aber wer sollte dich auch lieben ...”). The “Armut des Reichsten” in the title reverses and displaces her version of poverty. In Zarathustra’s version, he no longer has “Reichthum,” but “Armut,” and he is thereby the richest, not the poorest. He has only his tongue, his giving, and nothing else, because he spills everything out and causes everything that might be his to flow away. He “has” poverty, because all he has is his virtue, a power that is not a thing but that makes rich in its giving. His poverty enriches others; her poverty enriches itself.

<sup>14</sup> The conflict between Zarathustra and truth makes it difficult to agree with an interpretation of these lines as an attempt to make Zarathustra “aware of his foibles by constructive criticism” and that presents Zarathustra’s poverty as “paradoxically a prerequisite to genuine wealth” (Grundlehner: The poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche, a. a. O., p. 286).

<sup>15</sup> See also “Moral der Opfertiere” (M 215).

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche also writes in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* about the “philosophers of the future” and insists that “sie werden sich nicht mit der “Wahrheit” einlassen” (JGB 210, KSA 5, p. 143).

<sup>17</sup> A comparison to the “schenkende Tugend” shows that the truthful and Zarathustrian versions of poverty in “Von der Armut des Reichsten” correspond to the notions of the thief and the robber that Zarathustra describes in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Za I Von der schenkenden Tugend 1, KSA 4, p. 98).

<sup>18</sup> Zarathustra condemns this kind of poor wealth: “Seht mir doch diese Überflüssigen! Reichthümer erwerben sie und werden ärmer damit. Macht wollen sie und zuerst das Brecheisen der Macht, viel Geld, – diese Unvermögenden!” He goes on to praise poverty: “Wahrlich, wer wenig besitzt, wird um so weniger besessen: gelobt sei die kleine Armuth!” (Za I Vom neuen Götzen, KSA 4, p. 63). Versions of the saying “wer wenig besitzt, wird um so weniger besessen” appear throughout Nietzsche’s work. See: MA II, VM 317.

According to Truth, Zarathustra's poverty takes like a thief – and keeps for itself, thus impoverishing others. For her, his excess points to the need to transcend the self; for him, his excess is a “gaukelnde Zunge,” a playful dissemination (“Milchwarme Weisheit ... / ströme ich über das Land”), and sweetness below the summit:

süß geworden und gekocht,  
unterhalb seines Gipfels,  
unterhalb seines Eises (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 408)

He approaches the summit and does not reach it or attempt to go beyond it, just as elsewhere he remains confronted and not unified with the eternal return and the overman. Truth conceives of his excess as something painful (“dich *quält* dein Reichthum ...”) that he owns and can give away, while Zarathustra presents excess as his possible origin (“Ist nicht mein Vater Prinz Überfluss”) and enjoys his poverty as a game and not as a burden.

Truth presents Zarathustra's excess in terms of a reflexive relation, but there is almost no reflexivity in the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*. As I showed above in the readings of both the thematic and figural force of alliteration and anagrams in the dithyrambs, there is no Zarathustrian position or thing that is merely identical to itself, no reflexivity that is not distanced from itself. The demand that Zarathustra give himself up appears as an impossible task. When the antagonism in Zarathustra's relation to Truth in “Von der Armut des Reichsten” is revealed, Zarathustra can be seen to lay a trap for Truth. Zarathustra summons Truth not so that he can surrender himself to her, but so that he can “pluck” her:

Vom Lächeln vergüldet  
nahe mir heut die Wahrheit,  
von der Sonne gesüsst, von der Liebe gebräunt, –  
eine reife Wahrheit breche ich allein vom Baum. (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 407)

These lines show how his poverty reaches beyond himself to further acts of expropriation, just as the fishing flame of “Das Feuerzeichen” throws out its line for Truth. If poverty allows him to assume different voices, it may permit him to expropriate Truth herself – to take over and transform her voice.

He attracts her, and she approaches with her commands. Zarathustra's luring of Truth depends on his appearing needy and ready for surrender, and he succeeds not only in convincing Truth, but also many critics, that he is ready to sacrifice himself. Clemens Heselhaus writes of the *Dithyramben* as “der Entwurf eines neuen Ideals vom guten Tode” and goes so far as to see the image of the sinking sun in the fourth dithyramb “als metaphysischer Trost, gereicht von der Kunst.”<sup>19</sup> Philip Grundlehner writes in *The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche* that “the

<sup>19</sup> Heselhaus, Clemens: *Deutsche Lyrik der Moderne von Nietzsche bis Yvan Goll: Die Rückkehr zur Bildlichkeit der Sprache*. Düsseldorf 1961, p. 30.



poverty of the richest is that condition of giving oneself in an act of sacrificial suffering.”<sup>20</sup> Even such a sensitive reader of Nietzsche as Michel Haar can write about the dithyrambs as a celebration of the flight of Zarathustra’s soul into the sun,<sup>21</sup> but the Zarathustra of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, although he sometimes may resemble Empedocles and was linked closely in Nietzsche’s earlier projects with Empedocles, never takes the final leap or wishes for “l’union avec l’être universel.”<sup>22</sup>

How does Zarathustra respond to Truth’s demand? It seems at first that Zarathustra does not respond at all. After he introduces her in the poem with the words “Still! Meine Wahrheit redet!” (DD Von der Armut des Reichsten, KSA 6, p. 408) it seems that he never speaks again. In “Klage der Ariadne,” which stages a similar conflict between Ariadne and Dionysos, the final lines are spoken by Dionysos, and the lack of response by Ariadne might lead us, by analogy, to expect that Zarathustra will not respond to Truth, who would then have the final word of the poem and of the entire cycle. However, a few signs point to Zarathustra as the speaker of the final line. Only Zarathustra begins his stanzas with a hyphen (stanzas 8, 9, 10); only Zarathustra says the word “Wahrheit” (lines 18 [“Wahrheiten”], 23, 25, 59, 64, 66, 75); and the only other isolated line in the poem is spoken by Zarathustra (stanza 10). The final line is also followed by four dots; this ellipsis could be read as openness to an uncertain future or to interpretation, which would be uncharacteristic for Truth. None of these signs allows for a definitive assignation of the final line to Zarathustra, and, even taken together, they prove nothing except the possibility that Zarathustra may be speaking.<sup>23</sup>

The critical edition of the manuscripts<sup>24</sup> shows how the final line developed and how the problem of attribution appears even as Nietzsche writes the poem<sup>25</sup>: from “du bist meine,” which was immediately changed<sup>26</sup> to “ich bin

<sup>20</sup> Grundlehner: The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche, a. a. O., p. 286.

<sup>21</sup> Haar, Michel: Présentation. In: ders.: Friedrich Nietzsche. Poèmes 1858–1888. Dithyrambes pour Dionysos. Trans. by Michel Haar. Paris 1997, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 20. Nietzsche even writes that “– das Verlangen nach einer unio mystica [...] ist das Verlangen des Buddhisten in’s Nichts, Nirvâna – und nicht mehr!” (GM I 6, KSA 5, p. 266). On Nietzsche’s parallel development of an Empedocles drama and a Zarathustra drama, see Haase, Marie Louise/Montinari, Mazzino: Nachbericht zum ersten Band der sechsten Abteilung: Also sprach Zarathustra. KGW VI/4. For a presentation of Nietzsche’s abandoned project for an Empedocles drama and the relation between Zarathustra and Hölderlin’s *Der Tod des Empedokles* (which Nietzsche read), see Vivarelli, Vivetta: Empedokles und Zarathustra: Verschwendeter Reichtum und Wollust am Untergang. Nietzsche Studien 18 (1989), pp. 509–536.

<sup>23</sup> On the use of such “evidence” in literary criticism, see Szondi, Peter: Über philologische Erkenntnis. In: ders.: Schriften I. Frankfurt am Main 1978, pp. 263–286.

<sup>24</sup> Groddeck: Friedrich Nietzsche “Dionysos-Dithyramben”, Bd. 1, a. a. O., p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Kerényi describes a similar change in attribution in Nietzsche’s *Gespräche auf Naxos* and in the seventh dithyramb; see Kerényi, Karl: Nietzsche und Ariadne: Gedanken über die Zukunft des Humanismus. In: Neue Schweizer Rundschau. Heft 7. November 1944.

<sup>26</sup> Groddeck labels this change as a “Sofortkorrektur.”

deine Wahrheit” to “– Ich bin deine Wahrheit.” Each of these versions is marked by ambiguity and the possibility of polyvocality. The first version could have been spoken in the voice of Zarathustra and have been a confirmation of Truth’s address, but, like his introduction in line 75 (“Still! Meine Wahrheit redet!”), the line could be read with emphasis on “meine” and thus as insisting on Truth’s subordination to Zarathustra. Nietzsche corrected this to read “ich bin deine Wahrheit,” which could be spoken by Truth and thus be either a confirmation of Truth’s domination (“I am your Truth”) of Zarathustra or of Zarathustra’s domination of Truth (“I am *your* Truth ...”). In the third and final version, the addition of the hyphen and the capitalization of the “Ich” isolate the sentence from Truth’s speech and either make her finale more insistent or mark the transition to Zarathustra’s speech. Although philological evidence reveals nothing decisive about the attribution of the final line, it does show that the line is marked by hesitation from the moment of its composition. We learn from the critical edition only that Truth and Zarathustra are difficult to tell apart.

Nietzsche’s own texts offer some assistance in interpreting the final encounter between Truth and Zarathustra. Nietzsche discusses the problem of dissimulation in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in the well-known aphorism “Vom Probleme des Schauspielers,” where he takes advantage of the polysemy of the verb “sich geben,” which means both to surrender and to pretend to be:

Man höre die Aerzte, welche Frauenzimmer hypnotisirt haben; zuletzt, man liebe sie, – man lasse sich von ihnen “hypnotisiren”! Was kommt immer dabei heraus? Dass sie “sich geben”, selbst noch, wenn sie – sich geben. ... Das Weib ist so artistisch ... (FW 361)

Women pretend (“sich geben”) even when they surrender themselves (“sich geben”). The crucial moment of supposed surrender is more than just another instance of mimicry, because mimicry, when pushed to its extreme point, when forced to show itself and to surrender, is at its strongest. The hypnotist is “zuletzt” himself hypnotized, and the woman is still acting “selbst noch” when she surrenders. When she seems to give herself up, she is only masquerading as something else.<sup>27</sup> The same model of mimicry may be operative in “Von der Armut des Reichsten,” because Zarathustra, at the moment when he seems to give in to Truth, may be acting, or, going even farther than that, acting as Truth. The final line would be a masquerade, just as Wolfram Groddeck reads the final

<sup>27</sup> This conception of femininity has been appropriated by, among others, Luce Irigaray, who offers a feminist understanding of mimicry in: Irigaray, Luce: *This Sex which is Not One*. Trans. by Catherine Porter. Ithaca 1985, especially pp. 76–77. See also Irigaray, Luce: *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Trans. by Gillian Gil. New York 1991, pp. 84–89. Elizabeth Berg discusses the centrality of mimicry to Irigaray’s work in: Berg, Elizabeth: *The Third Woman*. *Diacritics* 12 (1982), p. 17–18.

lines of the seventh dithyramb as farcical, burlesque, and “operettenhaft.”<sup>28</sup> Poverty’s expropriative force would allow Zarathustra to take over truth’s role, the final lines of the poem would present a triumph of poverty over truth, and Nietzsche’s final words would be the overcoming of the last figure of Christianity.

But Zarathustra does more than just take over Truth’s position, because a mere switching of roles would mean that truth’s hegemony would simply be extended under another name. The end of the domination of truth cannot come about in the installation of another kind of truth or any kind of Zarathustrian wisdom. Instead, what follows in the wake of Zarathustra’s masquerade is best understood as a labyrinth, as these sentences from *Zur Genealogie der Moral* suggest:

“Nichts ist wahr, Alles ist erlaubt” [...] Hat wohl je schon ein europäischer, ein christlicher Freigeist sich in diesen Satz und seine labyrinthischen Folgerungen verirrt? (GM 3. Abhandlung 24, KSA 5, p. 399)

After truth comes the labyrinth, but truth itself plays a role after it has been taken over. The parallelism between the final line of the seventh dithyramb – “Ich bin dein Labyrinth ...” – and the last line of “Von der Armut des Reichsten” – “– Ich bin deine Wahrheit ...” – make the relation between truth and the labyrinth explicit within the dithyrambic cycle. If the labyrinth begins as the *explicit* of “Von der Armut des Reichsten,” it begins with a statement regarding truth. At the final moment, Zarathustra pretends to be Truth, but this pretending is not simply the act of a subject taking on another distinct voice or mask, because Zarathustra, in declaring that he is “your truth,” is also contaminated by her. When the hegemony of truth is contested, it can no longer be clear who is speaking which role:

Das Problem vom Werthe der Wahrheit trat vor uns hin, – oder waren wir’s, die vor das Problem hin traten? Wer von uns ist hier Oedipus? Wer Sphinx? Es ist ein Stelldichein, wie es scheint, von Fragen und Fragezeichen. (JGB 1. Hauptstück 1)

This passage from the opening pages of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* could be a description of the conflict of “Von der Armut des Reichsten.” We are left with a speech that is neither only truthful nor only Zarathustrian but that is suspended between the two. When truth becomes a problem, there can be no solutions, but only “questions and question marks.” The appearance of Oedipus in these lines reveals a link between the problem of truth and tragedy, which, as Nietzsche presents it in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, is a genre in which it is impossible to decide who is speaking at the highest moments of conflict. After having served as the necessary veil for the Dionysian throughout the tragedy, the Apollinian finds itself cornered by the Dionysian effect,

<sup>28</sup> Groddeck: Friedrich Nietzsche “Dionysos-Dithyramben”, Bd. 2, p. 206.

[...] die doch so mächtig ist, am Schluss das apollinische Drama selbst in eine Sphäre zu drängen, wo es mit dionysischer Weisheit zu reden beginnt und wo es sich selbst und seine apollinische Sichtbarkeit verneint. So wäre wirklich das schwierige Verhältniss des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen in der Tragödie durch einen Bruderbund beider Gottheiten zu symbolisiren: Dionysus redet die Sprache des Apollo, Apollo aber schliesslich die Sprache des Dionysos: womit das höchste Ziel der Tragödie und der Kunst überhaupt erreicht ist. (GT 21, KSA 1, p. 139–140)

Nietzsche presents tragedy as a continual conflict between two inextricable forces that in the end (“schliesslich”) speak each other’s language, even as each is unable to speak its own language. The dithyramb, whose importance as the predecessor of tragedy is noted throughout *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, becomes a showplace for a similar conflict between Zarathustra and his Truth.

Two of Nietzsche’s most well-known definitions of truth describe the similarity that relates Zarathustra and his Truth and thus allows for their conflict. He writes about the “Sinn für Wahrheit, der im Grunde der Sinn für Sicherheit ist” (MI 26) and that truth is merely “useful” (Nachlaß 1884, KSA 11, 25[372]). In what is deemed to be true, Nietzsche sees the need for stability and utility but not “truth,” which he places in quotation marks to indicate that he is using the word in the traditional sense of adequation. The ascetic ideal and its will to truth both work to maintain their objective, stable nature and to obscure their perspectival origins. Truth as merely useful stability is itself a product of human creation, a faculty that remains active after the invention of truth. Truth is only a perspective that has become constant and now appears to be objective.<sup>29</sup> This is why Heidegger writes that, for Nietzsche, “die Einheit des Zusammengehörens [of art and truth] ist durch die *eine* Realität, das perspektivische Sehen gegeben.”<sup>30</sup>

Truth as constancy includes a relation to the transformability that created it and that Nietzsche calls the giving virtue or the poverty of the richest. Both figures emerge from the same transformative virtue. This close relation explains how Zarathustra might be able to say “Ich bin deine Wahrheit” and how Truth comes to speak in the *Dionysos-Dithyramben*. Even Truth’s poor wealth, opposed to Zarathustra and closest to the “unselfish” values that are the object of Nietzsche’s “Umwertung aller Werte,” is a mere declination of Zarathustra’s richest poverty. In the *Dithyramben*, Truth is lured into the labyrinth from which she emerged. The final dithyrambic sentence “Ich bin deine Wahrheit” only rephrases Dionysos’ closing words in the seventh dithyramb: “Ich bin dein Labyrinth.” The dithyramb-labyrinth speaks a language that is poor, deprived of truth’s useful, stabilizing fictions and recognizing nothing as constant. Inhabiting the labyrinth means living at a distance and being able to enter into what

<sup>29</sup> See GM III 12, KSA 5, pp. 364–365.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, Martin: Nietzsche. 2 Bde. Pfullingen 1961. Bd. I, p. 250.

is without being absorbed in it; it means seeing different perspectives and personae as possibilities and not as merely stable or useful identities. The “artistic” virtue of poverty refers humanity not to some vague realm of possibilities that “float above life,”<sup>31</sup> but to the realm of possibilities that humanity already is. Zarathustra’s speaking in the voice of Truth, too, only involves a different relation to what already is. The reactive version of poverty, Truth’s poorest wealth, is only separated from its ability to transform itself, and Zarathustra’s poverty would restore this relation to possibility.

Nietzsche’s final words in the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* are themselves seen from the perspective of the labyrinth. They could be Zarathustra’s, but they could also belong to Truth. The lasting uncertainty regarding their speaker and the possible victory of Truth show how Nietzsche remains true to his giving virtue by ending not with a final decision, but with an enigma that forces us to consider the similarity that both joins and separates Zarathustra and truth and that reveals the power of “die Armut des Reichsten,” a virtue that allows both for Truth’s insistence on the self and Zarathustra’s expropriation of the voice of Truth.

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<sup>31</sup> The phrase is Heidegger’s, from ders.: Nietzsche, Bd. 1, a. a. O., p. 568.