“The Song of Melancholy” / “Only Fool! Only Poet!”—Nietzsche’s Philosophical Poetry

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This article analyzes Nietzsche’s poem “The Song of Melancholy,” which later appeared in the Dionysus Dithyrambs *under the title “Only Fool! Only Poet!”. While Nietzsche scholars have noted that Nietzsche outlines a new poetic program in this poem that valorizes the commonly devalued terms “lie” and “robbery,” the question of the poet’s relationship to truth remains controversial. Existing interpretations of the poem tend to read the phrase “only poet” as limiting and pejorative, excluding the poet from any pursuit of truth. The reason for this interpretation lies in the fact that, according to Nietzsche scholarship, truth (as absolute) was abolished in Nietzsche’s analysis of nihilism. A reference to truth (however complicated) is still present in the poem’s depiction of a new poetic program. This program, it is argued, not only integrates philosophical reflection into the new poetic program (thus transcending the alternative of poetry or philosophy), but also reevaluates animality and sexuality as conditions of philosophy and poetry. The poet’s treatment of melancholy in Nietzsche’s poem is anticipated by the type of melancholic fool in Shakespeare’s comedies, who overcomes his melancholy by singing and laughing. The relationship between philosophy and poetry is thus contextualized in the historical semantics of the fool and melancholy.*

Keywords: literature and philosophy / German poetry / Nietzsche, Friedrich / melancholy / fool / laughter

Introduction: Nietzsche’s *Thus spoke Zarathustra* as philosophical poetry?

Nietzsche’s poetic oeuvre and the poetical quality of his “philosophical” work has increasingly received attention in Nietzsche scholarship in the past few years, particularly in its German-speaking branch (cf. Pelloni and Schiffermüller; Benne and Zittel; Grätz and Kaufmann;

König, *Zweite Autorschaft*).[1] This recent peak of attention put aside, a continuity of interest in the poetic and aesthetic dimensions of Nietzsche's works is of course to be noted, an interest, which has been reignited for the German-speaking scholarship in the 1990s (cf. Tebartz van Elst; Zittel, *Ästhetisches Kalkül*), being anticipated by traditions of deconstruction and rhetoric in France in the 1960s and 1970s and in the United States in the 1980s. Hence, however recent this "aesthetic turn" in Nietzsche scholarship may seem, a sensibility for Nietzsche's aesthetic ways of thinking dates well back to Heidegger, and even further to the turn of the twentieth century (cf. Flucher, *Philosophische Seiltänze* 301–313). While a certain blindness for its own history may be stated in recent Nietzsche scholarship, this shall not be the point of this paper. Rather, I am going to discuss one poem by Nietzsche that belongs to the context of the fourth book of *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, "Das Lied der Schwermut (The Song of Melancholy)," and which was later adapted for the *Dionysos-Dithyrambs* using the title "Nur Narr! Nur Dichter! (Only Fool! Only Poet!)" (cf. Groddeck, *Friedrich Nietzsche* XVII–LVI). While focusing on one poem in particular, I am going to keep the horizon of a general and systematic discussion of the relationship of philosophy and literature in mind (as exemplified in Gabriel and Schildknecht; Magnus, Stewar and Mileur; Schildknecht and Teichert; Faber and Naumann; Born and Zittel; Benne and Abbt; Sölch and Capelle).[2]

One recurring aspect of the debate on philosophy and literature is the question of hierarchy between the two fields. While theoretically, most researchers in Nietzsche scholarship agree that the hiatus between literature and philosophy should be put aside or overcome (or already has been overcome), this program has been surprisingly difficult to realize in praxis. Thus, although the ending of the literature-philosophy-divide has been proclaimed several times, their possible conciliation is still being discussed today. The goal of this paper is thus not to repeat these well-known proclamations, but rather to shed light on the innate paradoxicality and intricacy (and implicit elitism) of the question at

[1] Furthermore, an edited volume on this topic is being prepared at the moment by Mark-Georg Dehrmann and Christoph König, collecting essays which have been discussed at several meetings of the Peter Szondi-Kolleg from 2016–2019. The Friedrich Nietzsche Society (FNS) is dedicating this year's 28th annual conference to "Nietzsche and the Lyric," held from September 14–16, 2023, in Lausanne, claiming that the topic "remains rather unexplored in the English-speaking scholarship."

[2] Duhamel and van Gemert even use an adaptation of the title of Nietzsche's poem as their book title *Nur Narr? Nur Dichter?*.

hand, as well as to widen the discussion by opening it to a broader field of historical and cultural analysis, including a gender perspective.

Two rhetorical strategies and their respective semantical fields can be mapped out in the question of literature and philosophy: a rhetoric of divide, hierarchy, binarity, and subordination on the one hand, and a rhetoric of harmony, (re)conciliation, relatedness, equality and unity on the other hand. Instead of agreeing with one of these two sides, I will try to reconstruct Nietzsche's own positioning within this question. My argument will be that Nietzsche's poem is philosophical exactly in the sense that it implies a discussion of this abstract question, as well as providing an argument that leads to a non-conventional (and "non-propositional," cf. Gabriel) solution of said debate. Thus, instead of discussing this question in abstract terms, I will follow the line of thought presented in this particular poem (or rather, its two versions), contextualizing it within the texts that they make a part of (*Thus spoke Zarathustra* and *Dionysos-Dithyrambs*) as well as within historical discourses (with short references being made to the history of the fool, of melancholy, poetry, knowledge, and their respective entanglements). Thereby, I am going to "show" (rather implicitly) that taking the side of a particular text already frames and biases the discussion of literature and/or philosophy in a certain way—it makes a case for individual texts being more than instances or examples of theories. Thus, the question of *Thus spoke Zarathustra* being a case of poetic prose *or* philosophical poetry, shall not be answered in an either/or manner, as this would affirm their implied hierarchy. Rather, the mingling of philosophical and poetic styles, as exemplified in Nietzsche's texts, as I will argue, shall give his readers the chance to discover a multiplicity of modes of writing and thinking, which in return shall transform their (en)gendered ways of being and living (among the vast literature on philosophy as a life-form or life-style, cf. Hadot; Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon* 27–42).

"Only Fool"? (De)valuation of poets in the context of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

"The song of melancholy (Das Lied der Schwermuth)" is both the name of a chapter in *Za* IV[3] and a song within this chapter, which is later adapted as "Only Fool! Only Poet!" in *DD*. This altered title draws on the famous finale of the poem, already present in its first

[3] Standard references for Nietzsche's opus are used throughout the paper.

version: "Nur Narr! / Nur Dichter!" (*Za* IV 374) This poem in particular has received a lot of attention in Nietzsche scholarship and is one of the most discussed poems of *DD*, most likely because of its central topic, the alleged devaluation of poets and its inherent statement about the paradox and exclusive relation between the search for truth and poetry. In my reading, I will try to show that the poem does indeed not treat these two options as exclusive, but rather proposes a kind of (negative) dialectic.[4]

In the *Za*-version, the poem is presented by the magician, a figure which exclusively appears in the fourth part of *Za*. As this part is mainly construed as a parody on the first three parts (cf. Zittel, *Ästhetisches Kalkül* 41), the magician could be understood as a satiric version of the poet, a figure which is prominent in the second part of *Za*, where Zarathustra criticizes the lack of truthfulness and the will to deceive on the part of "the poet," a term that refers to a generalized concept rather than to a singular person.[5] These generalized types, the magician and the poet, among others, represent certain aspects and features of their kind, which are then scrutinized in Zarathustra's speeches. Zarathustra's famous critique of poets in the chapter "On the blessed isles (Auf den glückseligen Inseln)" relies on the concept of lie or falsehood: "Alles Unvergängliche—das ist nur ein Gleichniss! Und die Dichter lügen zuviel." (*Za* II 110) More importantly, it rephrases a famous quote by Goethe, stating the opposite of the original verse (cf. Allemann 53; Zittel, *Ästhetisches Kalkül* 38; Flucher, *Philosophische Seiltänze* 79). It creates a connection between "Gleichniss" (which could be translated as "simile," "parable," "metaphor," or "allegory") and lie. Now, the transformed quote seems to state that what poets do is to produce "similes" and that these could be viewed as lies (cf. Schiffermüller 71). The quantifier "zuviel" (too much) then would qualify this statement, arguing that the relation between truth and lie is a *scale* rather than a logical alternative. But the word "Gleichniss" is also related to "das Unvergängliche," which focuses another different aspect of poetic speech, namely the production of absolutes, or philosophical ideas (in a poor Platonist sense, which might defer from Plato's own views).[6]

[4] For the use of Adorno's term of a "negative dialectic" in relation to Nietzsche's *Za* see Zittel, *Ästhetisches Kalkül* 109.

[5] However, similarities between the magician and Richard Wagner have been discussed in Nietzsche scholarship, providing Nietzsche's relation to Wagner, as documented in several discussions of him in his unpublished notebooks and in letters, as interesting intertext. Cf. Himmelmann 42.

[6] For a thorough discussion of Nietzsche's reception of ancient philosophy see Müller, *Griechen*.

Thus, what is essentially at stake in Zarathustra's "scolding" of poets, is actually a critique of philosophy, at least a certain type or style of philosophy which produces "truths" rather than questions or demolishes them. Other aspects relevant to philosophy might be "search for truth," "will to truth," as well as an aphoristic tradition that represents a certain style of writing and thinking. While I cannot unfold these aspects here at length, I would just like to state that Nietzsche seems to affirm some of these ascriptions for his own writing, in order to strengthen the argument that his critique does not aim at rejecting "philosophy" in general, as the term is multi-faceted.

However, it appears that in Nietzsche scholarship so far it has not yet been pointed out that what is at stake in Zarathustra's critique of poetry, is actually a critique of (idealistic) philosophy. I would like to highlight this point, as it completely turns the discussion around. Now, it should be mentioned that Zarathustra never uses the term "philosophy" or "philosophers" while he does speak about "poets." However, he does use terms like "die freien Geister" or "die Wahrhaftigen" (cf. *Za* II 133), who represent a positive view on philosophers in the sense of "seekers of truth." His discussion of "scholars," "priests," "the virtuous," or "the conscientious" may be used as reference as well. These discursive prerequisites frame his discussion of "poetry and philosophy," and to read them in this way should be marked as a construction that the interpreter undertakes. With this being said, I would like to turn to a close reading of the poem.

In the poem's first strophe the lyrical "I" reflects on the memory of a past experience, in which he/she suffered from a thirst and longing for humidity, while being watched by the sun's mischievous glances (cf. Tönnies 63, who takes the sun beams' voice as the poem's point of view). This allegoric situation uses natural elements as metaphors for affective as well as philosophical states: the striving for humidity is actually a striving for consolation, while the suffering from the burning sun, the thirst and weariness it creates, are later on in the poem identified with the speaker's quest for truth. The burning sun is also associated with melancholy, as the "demon of the noon" is closely connected with the mid-day. However, most interpreters miss this association by instead connecting the evening with melancholy (cf. Grundlehner 191). Now, the situation in which a reflection of the past is possible, is one in which dew is falling from the sky—it is thus a situation in which the longing is relieved: "Bei abgehellter Luft, / Wenn schon des Thau's Tröstung / Zur Erde niederquillt." (*Za* IV 371) Its consolation is paralleled with "divine tears" ("himmlischen Thränen," *Za* IV 371) which imply a consolation (and joy) to be found exactly in sadness. This, together with the topicality of weather (sunshine vs. dew/rain, cf. Greiner 128), marks the poem as a song on melancholy, as the title "Lied der Schwermuth" already implies. One problem with most interpretations of the poem is that they ignore this setting of remembrance and its implication of a situation which has been overcome by the poem's persona, one that he/she is now able to distance him/herself from. And, as shall be explained in the course of this interpretation, the melancholic disposition of the poem's speaker enables him/her to this kind of (self-)distancing.

A second problem in scholarly interpretations is the question, how the phrase "Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!" shall be read. It appears twice in the second strophe, the second time the word "nur" being highlighted: "Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!" (*Za* IV 372) The phrasing "only poet" seems to imply the inferiority of poets in relation to those who are seeking truth. Nietzsche puts this in a metaphor of courtship: "Der Wahrheit Freier? Du?—so höhnten sie—/ Nein! Nur ein Dichter!" (*Za* IV 371) The wooing of the "woman truth" implies the idea or hope that truth may soon be possessed in marriage. The semantic relation of truth and eros in other passages of *Za* as well as in other texts however makes it seem doubtful that woman or truth may ever be possessed or conquered (cf. Derrida). It rather seems that Nietzsche uses "woman" as a metaphor in order to highlight the ungraspable, unreachable nature of truth. The point of the erotic metaphor in the poem then is that truth is not to be possessed and that a person presenting himself as "Freier" (cf. Grimm ad Grimm 107; Sommer 662–663) of truth may well be scolded and laughed at. In this context the alternative between being a suitor of truth or being a poet appears in a different light, and being a poet may be the more truthful option here, as it renounces the entitlement of one who believes that he may bring truth into his possession. In the following lines of the second strophe, everything being said about poets seems to undergo a transvaluation, and the attributes which seem negative at first glance are to be affirmed:

Ein Thier, ein listiges, raubendes, schleichendes,
Das lügen muss,
Das wissentlich, willentlich lügen muss:
Nach Beute lüstern,
Bunt verlarvt,
Sich selber Larve,
Sich selbst zur Beute—
Das—der Wahrheit Freier?
Nein! Nur Narr! Nur Dichter! (*Za* IV 372)

The poet is portrayed here as predator, who is determined by a necessity to lie, but who is aware of this necessity ("Das wissentlich, willentlich lügen muss"). Thus, he is not in denial about his own nature and the conditions of his "animalic" existence (cf. Henne 37)—this is a counterpoint to idealistic theories of self-consciousness, which are based on a strong and anthropocentric view on self-consciousness. In contrast to idealistic theories, Zarathustra defends a reasoning of the body (cf. *Za* IV 39–41). The poet is acting deviously, but he is aware of his lies (cf. Reschke 198). He is deceiving and wearing masks, but eventually, he falls prey to his own mask play ("Sich selber Larve, / Sich selbst zur Beute"). This is an interesting twist of argument: the poet is attributed with a complex and reflexive self-relation, which marks him as highly self-conscious and brings him closer to a "philosophical" type, but what makes him actually philosophical, is his self-deception. There is a critique of reason at play here, which questions the lucidity of self-reflection and grounds it within a broader anthropology or rather bestiology and eventually even within a theory of life, which makes Nietzsche's theory of reason compatible with posthumanist theories. This destructive self-relation (cf. Kommerell 485) which marks his reflexivity is then related to the "animalic" nature of the poet, which describes him as aggressor (cf. Kaiser 310). His predatory qualities are of importance in contrast to a counterposed naïve morality of victimhood represented in the lamb. In the poem, the lamb represents a part within the poet's soul, which becomes prey to his own predatory and reflexive nature:

> Oder, dem Adler gleich, der lange,
> Lange starr in Abgründe blickt,
> In seine Abgründe:—
> Oh wie sie sich hier hinab,
> Hinunter, hinein,
> In immer tiefere Tiefen ringeln!—
> Dann,
> Plötzlich, geraden Zugs,
> Gezückten Flugs,
> Auf Lämmer stossen. (*Za* IV 372-373)

Being drawn in by "his own abysses" and "staring" into them creates a kind of dizziness, as the abysses themselves start to move in circles in a downward spiral ("Oh wie sie sich hier hinab, / Hinunter, hinein, / In immer tiefere Tiefen ringeln"). This introspection is not contemplative, but rather existential and dangerous, as the predator-like subject is looking into the abyss of its own subjectivity, but then turning against an objectified victim within itself. This predatory situation represents a complicated self-relation (relatable also to the term "Büßer des Geistes," which is associated with poets, cf. *Za* II 166), which leads to a reevaluation of the relation of poets towards truth. In this step (in the fourth strophe of the poem) the poet's self-consciousness is analyzed as self-reflexive in a destructive sense. This destruction is not only an inherent critique of philosophy, it also plays an important role in Zarathustra's new view of poets, with their destructive self-relation being part of a productive recreation.

Another important step in the poem's argument leading the way to a revaluation of poets is to be found in its third strophe. Again, it is closely related with a philosophical framing of poetry. The strophe at first presents a dichotomy between an attitude which has already in the second strophe been characterized with the term "der Wahrheit Freier." This binary relation between "truth" and "poetry" is now analyzed more closely. In a first step, the attribute "wooers of truth" is rejected:

> D a s—der Wahrheit Freier?
> Nicht still, starr, glatt, kalt,
> Zum Bilde worden,
> Zur Gottes-Säule,
> Nicht aufgestellt vor Tempeln,
> Eines Gottes Thürwart:
> Nein! Feindselig solchen Wahrheits-Standbildern. (*Za* IV 372)

The characterization of the "wooer of truth" is phrased in negative terms. What is rejected is a static idea of truth and its archaic, religious veneration, a veritable idolatry of truth. The amalgamation of erotic and religious allusions is quite striking, echoing the semantics of wedding in *Za* III's "The seven Seals" and its sexual undertones. What is at stake here, is an epistemological critique of literary expression and the question, what kind of ontology is implied in these expressions: does the literary expression contribute to a static view of "being" or does it embrace change and plurality? Already in *Za* II, in the chapter "On the blessed isles" the critique of poets is completed with a positive alternative: "Aber von Zeit und Werden sollen die besten Gleichnisse reden: ein Lob sollen sie sein und eine Rechtfertigung aller Vergänglichkeit!" (*Za* II 110) This program is of course contrary to a (static) veneration of (static) being. It rather postulates transience and moreover demands a way of speaking which justifies and praises this impermanence. Speaking in "comparisons" or "similes" is a characterization that is not limited to poetic speech, but to linguistic expression in general, as established in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne* (cf. *WL*; Naumann). A "philosophical" critique of language is thus the condition of a new poetic mode of expression, which would be able to "praise" fluid and transient becoming instead of static being. In the poem's third strophe this program is expressed as follows:

> In jeder Wildniss heimischer als vor Tempeln,
> Voll Katzen-Muthwillens,
> Durch jedes Fenster springend
> Husch! in jeden Zufall,
> Jedem Urwalde zuschnüffelnd,
> Süchtig-sehnsüchtig zuschnüffelnd,
> Dass du in Urwäldern
> Unter buntgefleckten Raubthieren
> Sündlich-gesund und bunt und schön liefest,
> Mit lüsternen Lefzen,
> Selig-höhnisch, selig-höllisch, selig-blutgierig,
> Raubend, schleichend, lügend liefest:—(*Za* IV 372)

This passage is not only an example of "allegory" or "Gleichnisrede" as programmatically established in the critique of poets, but also a stance in relation to the demanded accidental ontology: contingency is embraced in the allegory of the poet as panther. This is also exemplified or embodied in the emphasis on the panther's movements, which is determined only by the "wantonness" of a cat ("Katzen-Muthwillen"). Its beauty and health are opposed to the sickliness and fatigue of the lyrical "I" of the past when it was suffering from thirst and desiring consolation (cf. the last strophe of the poem). Here, on the contrary, the tropical topography is explicitly soliciting enjoyment. All of this may be viewed as a phantasy or utopia, as it is put in brackets and phrased in present participles or conditional sentences when describing the panther's movement and thus closing the strophe in a conjunctive mode. The paradisical topography is highlighted by a vocabulary of sensual experience, combining aesthetics and voluptuousness (marked as "sinful"): "Süchtig-sehnsüchtig zuschnüffelnd." A similar act of "sleuthing" or "scenting" the air is present in "Among daughters of the desert" (cf. *Za* IV 379–380), the good or fresh air representing an atmosphere of free-spiritedness and freedom from constricting moral judgments (cf. Flucher, "Die Wüste" 225). A certain "desire" ("sehnsüchtig") to loot, to sneak and to lie is attributed to the poet as predator, reframing these metaphorical concepts and integrating them into a new poetics. Nietzsche uses words with double meaning, which set a link between animalic behavior and an anthropomorphic interpretation of these same activities. The word "lying" ("lügend") however, stands out, as it is genuinely anthropomorphic and leads back to the philosophical question of truth and lie. It hints at the fact that the strophe is not actually about animals' hunting behavior, but about something else. The word "desire" is important as it highlights again the fact that the idea of a new poet is utopian in nature and requires an attitude of embracing change, envisioning a future, and striving towards its realization: "Also / Adlerhaft, pantherhaft / Sind des Dichter Sehnsüchte." (*Za* IV 373) The allegory is thus leading to a characterization of the poet (cf. Henne 309; Kaiser 317).

Remains the question, how this depiction of the poet is to be evaluated. Different levels of narrative voices are to be discerned and considered when interpreting the poem (cf. Zittel, "Wer also erzählt" 340–342). Focusing on the poem's text only, we find a utopian vision of a new kind of poet who is described in comparisons with predatory animals (who are however loaded with mythological meaning, the panther being an attribute of Dionysos, Nietzsche's god of poetry and (re)creation). We find a positive valuation of the poet, which is defended against the sun's evil comments. However, if we look at the narrative framing of the poem in *Za* IV, we find that it is presented by the magician, a figure who is himself scolded by Zarathustra for his deception. This not only creates an interesting self-referentiality of the text producing a meta-commentary, but also questions the validity of the poem's vision of a transvalued and thus new kind of poetics (cf. Dehrmann 457). Before dealing with this question, one last aspect of the poem's stance should be added. The last strophe, most importantly its last four verses, have provoked most attention in interpreters' discussions of the poem. However, most of them judge unanimously about the meaning of the poem's final verses, overlooking the strophe's complex tense construction:

> So sank ich selber einstmals
> Aus meinem Wahrheits-Wahnsinne,
> Aus meinen Tages-Sehnsüchten,
> Des Tages müde, krank vom Lichte,
> —sank abwärts, abendwärts, schattenwärts:
> Von Einer Wahrheit
> Verbrannt und durstig:
> —gedenkst du noch, gedenkst du, heisses Herz,
> Wie da du durstetest?—
> Dass ich verbannt sei
> Von a l l e r Wahrheit,
> Nur Narr!
> Nur Dichter! (*Za* IV 374)

The final strophe closes the temporal frame of memory that has been established in the first strophe (cf. König, Zweite *Autorschaft*, 187). All the feelings discussed in this strophe are thus remembered, situated in the past, and possibly *overcome* or, as the longing of the past I is described as sickly, it is likely that they are finally *healed* or at least, that the lyrical "I" has achieved some distance to its past. The past sickness is described again metaphorically as being "burnt" by truth, specifically by "one" truth, which can be read not as a single fact or assertion, but rather as truth's singularity: the one and only truth. The consequence seems to be that the lyrical "I" renounces truth altogether. This is indeed the case for the lyrical "I" of the past. However, this renunciation of truth is qualified in two ways: 1) The conclusion is presented as logically wrong. The past lyrical "I" is deducing from a negation of "one" truth the rejection of "all" truth, which is clearly an erroneous generalization. The possibility of "other" truths only seems logical. 2) The desire to be "banished" from/by truth altogether ("Dass ich verbannt sei / Von aller Wahrheit") can be explained as past desire and as reaction of despite and of affect. It is exactly this desire to be excluded from truth, which is characterized as symptom of a sickness ("Des Tages müde, krank vom Lichte"). Thus, it seems unlikely that the wish to be banned from truth should be the conclusion of the speaker, let alone, on a different level, of the poem. However, this is the conclusion that most interpreters draw (cf. Andreas-Salomé 202; Groddeck, "Die Wahrheit" 323; Grundlehner 198; Henne 309; Kaiser 321–322; Kast 396–397).

What about the poem's context in *Za* IV? The magician is presented as a figure who is himself deceiving and playing with masks. He does not seem to be a trustworthy "narrator" or someone who represents Zarathustra's own position, but then again, it is not clear that there is a consistent position to be defended. Rather there is a "labyrinthic" variety of positions that are being played out (cf. Zittel, "Wer also erzählt" 340). However, the magician's untruthful deception does not lie in his program of a poet as predator which is promoted in the poem, but rather in the atmosphere of nostalgia and remembrance it evokes. This evocation of past suffering revives and actualizes the suffering, and even worse, might affect the listeners (cf. Grundlehner 198, who describes the effect as "depression"). The affective quality of the poem is thus quite contrary to its actual message or meaning. Although this reception would be a misreading of the poem's sense, it might still be a powerful reading. It is this atmosphere then, which is criticized in the context of *Za* IV:

> Also sang der Zauberer; und Alle, die beisammen waren, giengen gleich Vögeln unvermerkt in das Netz seiner listigen und schwermüthigen Wollust. Nur der Gewissenhafte des Geistes war nicht eingefangen: er nahm flugs dem Zauberer die Harfe weg und rief 'Luft! Lasst gute Luft herein! Lass Zarathustra herein! Du machst diese Höhle schwül und giftig, du schlimmer alter Zauberer!'" (*Za* IV 375)

This passage seems to confirm Zarathustra's supposed critique or scolding of poets, as it is the magician's song which creates critical suspicion here. However, the "conscientious of spirit" is also not speaking for Zarathustra or for the text, so his perspective should be interpreted with care. Nevertheless, his affinity to science makes him a reasonable reference point in this case. What he criticizes is the way the magician speaks about "truth." He not only seems to use the word in a misleading sense, he is also "making too much of a fuzz" about it:

> Du verführst, du Falscher, Feiner, zu unbekannten Begierden und Wildnissen. Und wehe, wenn Solche, wie du, von der Wahrheit Redens und Wesens machen! / Wehe allen freien Geistern, welche nicht vor solchen Zauberern auf der Hut sind! Dahin ist es mit ihrer Freiheit: du lehrst und lockst zurück in Gefängnisse. (*Za* IV 375)

This critique implies references to the song, to their pronounced "desires" and their exotic landscapes which are said to be "alluring." The main argument is that the song leads the way to a loss of freedom, while the "scrupulous of spirit" is a defender of "free spirits," as is Zarathustra. The glorification of poetry risks an uncritical veneration which produces not only a profound loss of intellectual truthfulness and freedom (a "sticky and heavy" atmosphere), it also spreads melancholy (cf. König, Zweite *Autorschaft*, 182).

The fool's mask play: Hiding or seeking melancholy

The magician's song is considered as deceiving by the "scrupulous of spirit" because it evokes melancholy without actually suffering from it. The actual deception of the magician is pretending to be melancholic and suffering from a lack of knowledge, or in the poem's terms from an "exclusion from truth." But this connection between truth and melancholy is quite demanding and has a long history, so a few words should be said about the tradition of erudition and melancholy, and its connection with the history of the fool. Melancholy and erudition are connected at least since the Renaissance, when Ficino revived the antique concept of melancholy (cf. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl 161–165). In antiquity, melancholy referred to "black bile" and was used as a medical concept in the humoral pathology, in which context it also referred to a character type. It was already in antiquity linked with poets and philosophers, but the conception of the "genius" melancholic was finally established in the Renaissance. Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) collects symptoms, treatments and other anecdotes, sources and general reflections in an encyclopedic manner und understands his book as therapy for melancholics, while he himself writes from the informed position of a melancholic (cf. Heusser 1). Writing and reading, especially overly studying, can thus be all reasons for melancholy, but they can serve as healing strategies as well. Now, the fool is also part of this history (cf. Schillinger), as satirical treatments of scholars have at least since early modern times used the fool as a way to demonstrate scholars' inadequacies in relation to society (cf. Košenina). This satirical treatment of scholars has a long tradition dating back to antiquity, for example in Aristophanes' "Clouds" (for a discussion of these references in *Za* cf. Flucher, *Philosophische Seiltänze* 128). The appearance of the fool in modern literature is thus dating back to a satirical tradition, in comedy and prose, which treats the scholar as fool.

Most influential for the dramatic staging of the fool in German literature of the early modern period as well as of the enlightenment and after that, in the nineteenth century, have been Shakespeare's plays (cf. Lande 17–37). For the discussion of Nietzsche's poem, it may be a useful reference, because Shakespeare's comedies endow a relation between the fool and melancholy which is illuminating for Nietzsche's own staging of a melancholic fool. There are a few of Shakespeare's plays in which fools are characterized as melancholics. One of them is *As You Like It*, in which there are two fools, one of them, Jacques, representing the melancholic who criticizes mankind for its madness (cf. Greiner 119). That the person accused of melancholy or folly is him/herself exposing society's own irrationality, is a commonplace in the history of melancholy and most famously exemplified in an anecdote on Democritus, whose fellow citizens are assigning Hippocrates to put him under examination because of his continuous laughter. It turns out, however, that Democritus has good reasons to laugh at society, and it is exactly his superior insight that made him mad (cf. Starobinski 165–167). It is important to consider that melancholy was already in antiquity considered a sickness of the body as well as of the mind (cf. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl 52–54), and is closely linked with general madness. Shakespeare's Jacques is turned from melancholic to fool, thus satirizing the melancholic's disposition, but also transforming it to a kind of wisdom, which uses the pain or sadness and transforms it to laughter (cf. Greiner 123). The fool Feste in *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* is gaining superior insight because he is the only one who knows that he is playing a role (cf. Greiner 126). Thus, he is wearing masks, but is aware of these masks. This attitude creates a distance to the world, serenity, and inner freedom (cf. Greiner 127). Another common expression of a fool's coping with his melancholy is the singing of a song. The singing of a sad song creates again a freeing distance and gaiety (cf. Greiner 129, 135). All of these examples of fools in Shakespeare's dramas, not to mention Hamlet's famous example of a character turned to a fool out of wisdom (cf. Greiner 134), prefigure the fool's relation to both melancholy and truth in Nietzsche's "Song of Melancholy."

In Nietzsche's version, the magician is not characterized as sad or gay, nor is he wavering between both. His kind of melancholy is shaped by disgust and a deep feeling of senselessness, it is a nihilistic version of melancholy. This is interesting, because quite many interpreters read the magician's song as expression of a nihilist philosophy. What they mean by this is usually a loss of orientation after the "death of God," implying that no other ideal like truth, beauty or morality is able to replace God as absolute mark of reference. Accordingly, the wish to be expelled from truth as displayed in the song is interpreted as expression of nihilism (cf. Grundlehner 184–199). However, the situation is more complex. The magician is inspired by the "Spirit of Gravity (Geist der Schwere)," who is well established in the context of *Za* as Zarathustra's personal devil and counterpart. More precisely, the magician is "possessed" by the spirit of gravity: "Und schon […] fällt mich mein schlimmer Trug- und Zaubergeist an, mein schwermüthiger Teufel, /—welcher diesem Zarathustra ein Widersacher ist aus dem Grunde: vergebt es ihm! Nun will er vor euch zaubern, er hat gerade seine Stunde; umsonst ringe ich mit diesem bösen Geiste." (*Za* IV 370) The magician's performance is thus actually an appearance of the spirit of gravity in disguise, just like Zarathustra is described as one of the masks of the same spirit. I would argue that this description does not withstand critique and is not in line with the rest as *Za*. However, it is true that Zarathustra himself is indeed depicted as someone who has to fight and overcome the spirit of gravity. In this way, the magician is mirroring Zarathustra (like the other higher men) in an interesting way, highlighting as well as satirizing and distorting some of his traits. The magician, although being possessed by the spirit of gravity, is indeed a comedian who is aware of his mask play.[7] He is a melancholic fool in the established Shakespearean tradition. However, Nietzsche's fool is not wise, but sly, and wants to deceive his audience. This implies that he himself is not fooled by the devil, he is only pretending to fall prey to melancholy and thus remains in a free state of mind. His comic distance is expressed in the metaphor of the mask, which is echoed in the song. Thus, the song describes the remembrance of a past state of melancholy and loss of sense, which both have been overcome by the lyrical "I".

The mask play of a new "predatory poet" as postulated in the poem becomes a metaphor of a free and independent state of mind. The intentional lying ("wissentlich, willentlich lügen," *Za* IV 371) and display of colorful masks ("Bunt verlarvt") are then part of a poetic program which aims for the speaker's moral independence, and for a diverse multiplicity of expressions: "Nur Buntes redend, / Aus Narren-Larven bunt herausschreiend, / Herumsteigend auf lügnerischen Wort-Brücken, / Auf bunten Regenbogen, / Zwischen falschen Himmeln / Und falschen Erden, / Herumschweifend, herumschwebend." (*Za* IV 372) This is a poetic program which uses language's freedom to express "lies" and thereby opens unlimited possibilities of imagining different realities. What is rejected then is a limitation of poetry to mimesis in a Platonic sense. It allows poetry to go beyond moral judgment and enables the speaker/writer/performer to try and explore different realities without being bound by them personally and morally. So, what is at stake here, is actually poetry's autonomy and freedom of expression; a freedom that appears to be "predatory" or "evil" from a certain (moralistic) perspective. Poetry's autonomy and its potential of self-reflexive thought (cf. Kommerell 485) make it a kind of philosophical undertaking (cf. Stegmaier), not philosophy's rival (cf. Pütz 50).

Final note: Gender crossing

So far, the aspect of gender has not been considered in the argumentation at hand. However, it is important to note that the magician has two appearances in *Za* IV, and that his other song ("The Magician," *Za* IV 313–317) is also present in the version of the *Dionysos-Dithyrambs*

[7] Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* would make an interesting reference for this discussion, cf. Benne and Abbt 65–71.

(*DD* 398–401). In the second version of the poem, the speaker of the song becomes Ariadne, addressing Dionysos ("Ariadne's Lament," "Die Klage der Ariadne"). We thus witness a transformation of gender between the first and second version of the song. It is notable that also in "The Song of Melancholy" the question of gender is addressed, as the appearance of the spirit of gravity in the introduction to the poem is discussed under the question of its gender manifestation: "[E]s gelüstet ihn, nackt zu kommen, ob männlich, ob weiblich, noch weiss ich's nicht." (*Za* IV 370) There is a lack of determination concerning the gender of the spirit of gravity, which is quite peculiar, because why would a "spirit" need a sexual identity? First of all, Nietzsche highlights the animalic aspects in this chapter and gives them a substantial role in his poetic program (the poet as predator). Secondly, there is a gender metaphor in the background, which construes truth as woman, the seeker of truth as suitor/wooer. Now, in the poem it is exactly this kind of relation to truth, which is repudiated. So, it would follow that the proposition of a new relationship with truth and a different conception of truth would have effects on their gender manifestation as well (on the general concept of gender transformation in Nietzsche see Oppel). In that respect it is striking that in "Ariadne's Lament," instead of truth we find Dionysos' labyrinthian wisdom, instead of a male wooer of truth we find Ariadne who is left behind by her lover Dionysos for good. The marriage or union with the lover which is still sought in "The Song of Melancholy" has become impossible in "Ariadne's Lament." Thus, "Ariadne's Lament" presents the case of a female melancholic lover, whose love is actually lost and who needs to overcome her melancholy. In "The Song of Melancholy," "Only Fool! Only Poet!" the suitor of truth is disappointed, but his rejection is less extreme, less existential. He might still have hope to find truth, although a close examination of the poem allows to conclude that he has reached a wiser standpoint. In "Ariadne's Lament" however, this conclusion is much clearer, the case for an overcoming of melancholy much stronger. While in the *Zarathustra*-version this is expressed by the context of the song, by the scolding of the magician by Zarathustra (cf. *Za* IV 317), and by the overall impression that the magician might be an "imposter," this is expressed in "Ariadne's Lament" in the version of the *Dionysos-Dithyrambs* by Dionysos' answer to Ariadne (cf. *DD* 401), commenting on her lamentation (cf. König, "Ich bin dein Labyrinth") and reminding her of her autonomy.

The instance of gender crossing exemplified in "The Magician" and "Ariadne's Lament" (cf. Krell 19–22) is also relevant for "The Song of

Melancholy" as the magician can wear many masks and is speculating about the spirit of gravity's sex when he/she appears "naked." This dialectic of nakedness and mask, or essence and appearance, reflects the magician's own mask play as well as the mask play that he demands of the predatory poet and the mask play he suspects Zarathustra to be playing. These mark at least four instances of mask play, which complicate the chapter's structure. The magician, however, strives to exhibit the spirit of gravity during his performance in his nakedness, thus also exposing his/her sexual identity: "[H]ört nun und seht, ihr höheren Menschen, welcher Teufel, ob Mann, ob Weib, dieser Geist der Abend-Schwermuth ist!" (*Za* IV 371) Thus, in the mask play, with a maximum of deceit and comedian's distance, some kind of essence is supposed to be appearing. The magician hints at the solution of this question, but it remains an unsolvable riddle. What is hinted at then, may be a radically new conception of truth.

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»Pesem melanholije«, »Samo norec! Samo pesnik!« – Nietzschejeva filozofska poezija

Ključne besede: literatura in filozofija / nemška poezija / Nietzsche, Friedrich / melanholija / bedak / smeh

Članek analizira Nietzschejevo »Pesem melanholije«, ki se je pozneje pojavila v *Dionizovih ditirambih* naslovljena »Samo norec! Samo pesnik!«. Če so raziskovalci Nietzscheja ugotovili, da pesnik v tej pesmi zasnuje nov pesniški program, ki prevrednoti običajno razvrednotena pojma »laži« in »kraje«, pa ostaja vprašanje pesnikovega odnosa do resnice neodgovorjeno. Obstoječe interpretacije zveze »samo pesnik« se nagibajo k omejevalnemu in ponižujočemu pomenu, ki naj bi ga imela v tej pesmi, s čimer pesniku odrečejo možnost stremljenja po resnici. Razlog za to interpretacijo je po mnenju njegovih proučevalcev v dejstvu, da je Nietzsche resnico (kot absolutum) v analizi nihilizma ukinil. Vendar pa je (kakorkoli že zapleteno) raziskovanje resnice še vedno prisotno v načinu, kako pesem upodablja nov pesniški program. V članku torej zagovarjam tezo, da ta program ne le vključuje filozofsko refleksijo (in tako preseže izbiro med poezijo in filozofijo), ampak tudi na novo ovrednoti živalskost in spolnost kot pogoja filozofije in poezije. Pesnikovo ukvarjanje z melanholijo izhaja iz lika melanholičnega norca iz Shakespearovih komedij, ki lastno melanholijo premaguje s petjem in smehom. Razmerje med filozofijo in poezijo je tako kontekstualizirano znotraj zgodovinskih pomenov norca in melanholije.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original scientific article
UDK 821.112.2.09-1Nietzsche F.:1
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/pkn.v46.i2.02