Viorel Ţuţui*

The Dionysiac Experience and Nietzsche's Metaphor of the World as a Spectacle

Abstract: The work of certain philosophers can be compared to a complex and fascinating labyrinth. And the experience of reading and interpreting their work is comparable to navigating its intricate pathways. Nietzsche is perhaps the most representative example. This article constitutes a brief exploration into the labyrinth of Nietzsche's philosophical thought, guided by the central metaphor of the world as a spectacle. Along this line of argument, I will emphasize the importance of the philosophical metaphor for Nietzsche's effort to combine artistic expressiveness with the depth of ideas in order to generate in the reader mind not only understanding but also an aesthetic state which is similar to the Dionysiac experience. The investigation of this theme provides a valuable opportunity to better comprehend some topics specific to Nietzsche's mature philosophy, including his critique of metaphysics and its distinctions, as well as the theme of the will to power and the concept of the eternal return. Moreover, it provides a valuable insight into his view regarding the condition of the philosopher and of philosophy as a form of human creation.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Dionysiac experience, philosophical metaphor, spectacle, will to power, Eternal return

To the memory of my beloved professor and friend George Bondor

Introduction: venturing into the labyrinth of Nietzsche's philosophy

As George Bondor rightly notes in the opening pages of his book *The Dance of Masks: Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Interpretation*, upon encountering Nietzsche's philosophy, the reader experiences an enormous sense of perplexity, because his work seems intentionally crafted by a master of dissimulation to function as a perfect labyrinth in which there is no firm guiding thread. Furthermore, his rebellious approach to philosophical writing, characterised by an emphasis on vagueness, indecision and contradiction, makes it practically impossible to reconstruct the thematic

* Lecturer, PhD, Department of Communication Sciences and Public Relation, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi.
Email: tutuiviorel@yahoo.com.

structure of Nietzsche's thought or restore coherence to his themes, concepts and ideas (Bondor 2008, 9-10).

But how, then, should the readers approach Nietzsche's work? My suggestion in this paper is that, although they must abandon the aspiration to achieve a complete and systematic representation of his philosophical thought, the immersion in this labyrinth offers them the experience of a captivating adventure. While the experience remains philosophical in nature, it includes far more than that, offering access to a philosophy that combines the depth of ideas with the expressiveness and aesthetic appeal of the writing. As Gilles Deleuze states, Nietzsche proposes a new conception of philosophical thought that is not concerned with truth, but with meaning and value (2002, 104). Furthermore, thought should not be understood as a natural exercise of a human faculty. It requires other forces to set it in a state of activity, in a state of thinking. According to Nietzsche, in order to be active, thought requires not a method but a "culture," which is an element that acts violently and selectively upon the unconscious of the thinker 'forcing' him to think (Deleuze 2002, 108).

The central argument of this article is that the use of metaphorical language by Nietzsche should not be interpreted exclusively as having an aesthetic purpose or as serving as a device to lure the reader into the complex labyrinth of his philosophy. Nietzsche uses metaphors, aphorisms, and even poetry, combining them with profound philosophical ideas, precisely with the aim of inducing in the reader a specific aesthetic state that, through the artistic pleasure it generates, can stimulate their thinking. In order to regain its authenticity, philosophy must adopt an artistic form, and even its most profound ideas must be expressed artistically. In my opinion, this is the reason why Nietzsche chose to use elaborate metaphors and allegories to express some of his most challenging ideas.

One such example is the metaphor of the world as a spectacle, which is presented in *The Birth of Tragedy* and is the main subject of analysis in this article. I will argue that this metaphor not only serves as a point of entry into the captivating labyrinth of Nietzsche's thought but also provides a guiding thread that can lead us to a more profound understanding of some of the ideas characteristic of his philosophical maturity. These include his critiques of metaphysics and of the distinction between true reality and appearance, as well as his conceptions of the will to power and the eternal return. At the same time, it can shed more light on his understanding of philosophy as a form of human creation. To be sure, this does not mean that I could claim to have captured the essence of Nietzsche's philosophy in this way or that I have offered a comprehensive interpretation of it. Many of the central themes and concepts of his work will not be addressed at all. The line of reasoning proposed here offers merely a glimpse into a universe of ideas that retains both its complexity and its capacity to fascinate.

A thread in the labyrinth: the metaphor of the world as a spectacle

In one passage from *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche captivates the reader by describing the Dionysiac as an artistic force of nature, which he suggests can be better understood by envisaging a paradoxical spectacle, a musical masterpiece (Beethoven's *Hymn to Joy*) transformed into a painting:

> If one were to transform Beethoven's jubilant 'Hymn to Joy' into a painting and place no constraints on one's imagination as the millions sink into the dust, shivering in awe, then one could begin to approach the Dionysiac. Now the slave is a freeman, now all the rigid, hostile barriers, which necessity, caprice, or 'impudent fashion' have established between human beings, break asunder. Now, hearing this gospel of universal harmony, each person feels himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbour, but quite literally one with him, as if the veil of maya had been torn apart, so that mere shreds of it flutter before the mysterious primordial unity (*das Ur-Eine*). Singing and dancing, man expresses his sense of belonging to a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and talk and is on the brink of flying and dancing, up and away into the air above. His gestures speak of his enchantment. Just as the animals now talk and the earth gives milk and honey, there now sounds out from within man something supernatural: he feels himself to be a god, he himself now moves in such ecstasy and sublimity as once he saw the gods move in his dreams. Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: all nature's artistic power reveals itself here, amidst shivers of intoxication, to the highest, most blissful satisfaction of the primordial unity. (Nietzsche 2007a, 18).

The passage quoted above is found at the end of the first section of the work, the one in which the two 'artistic drives' of nature are introduced. The Apollonian is presented as belonging to the solar realm and as being associated with the dreamlike experience, with the visual arts, with the pleasure and delight of contemplating forms and representations, and with the establishment of the principle of individuation. Beneath this dreamlike experience, however, lies the sensation that all these forms are nothing but appearances, nothing but the veil of maya, of illusion. The Dionysiac reveals itself when this principle of individuation is transgressed, in the experience of the horror of being deceived by these appearances, doubled by the ecstasy and delight associated with music, dance, intoxication, and the orgiastic experiences of losing oneself in a state of collective exaltation, and with the revelation of a deeper reality, of a primordial unity (Nietzsche 2007a, 15-18).

Without aspiring to offer an in-depth interpretation worthy of a Nietzsche scholar, I will argue that this passage, like *The Birth of Tragedy* as a whole, provides an important key to understanding Nietzsche's philosophy, through the description of the Dionysiac experience and the metaphor of the world as a spectacle. This passage offers us a delicate yet reliable thread to guide us

through the complex labyrinth of Nietzsche's philosophical thought. To support my argument, I will draw on the exceptional analysis of Nietzsche's philosophy offered by George Bondor in his book *The Dance of Masks: Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Interpretation*.

However, the first issue we should address is whether there is any merit in focusing on this early work of Nietzsche's, from which he would later distance himself. Hence, I believe that we should begin by asking if these themes are representative of his entire philosophical work, or if they reflect the specific concerns of his early phase, which was marked by romantic and metaphysical influences. For example, in *An Attempt at Self-Criticism*, he called the book "questionable," "odd and inaccessible," or even "impossible" and "constructed entirely from precocious, wet-behind-the-ears, personal experiences" (2007b, 5). Yet, he still characterized it as worthy of consideration and courageous for its audacity "to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life" (2007 b, 5). The same ambivalent attitude towards this early book is evident in the autobiographical work *Ecce Homo*. On the one hand, he referred to the fact that "it smells offensively Hegelian", and "it is tainted with the doleful scent of Schopenhauer" (2007d, 45). But, on the other hand, he emphasized the remarkable originality of this beginning and the height of the leap that his thinking had made by being the first to understand the marvellous phenomenon of the Dionysiac and most effusively high-spirited 'Yes' said to life, as opposed to the type of decadence and instinct of degeneration represented by Socrates (2007d, 46-47). And thus, a characterization of the value of this work, which had begun in the most dismissive terms, ends in the most laudatory terms. As he explicitly states, "everything about this work is anticipatory" (2007d, 49).

The validity of this interpretation is confirmed by Nietzsche scholars. For example, in his study *The Birth of Tragedy: Transfiguration through Art*, Paul Raimond Daniels asserts that, although Nietzsche adopts a Schopenhauerian metaphysics in this work, a 'strange voice' can nevertheless be discerned in the text which subtly but fatally undermines this metaphysics from within. And, he adds that this is a "startling presage to Nietzsche's mature philosophy of the will to power" (Daniels 2019, 163). Similarly, George Bondor encourages us to recognise the anticipation of themes that would become central to Nietzsche's mature philosophy, such as the will to power, in concepts like need, necessity, instinct, force, or even the 'artistic powers of nature', as exemplified by the distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysiac (2008, 14–15).

However, if we concede that *The Birth of Tragedy* does indeed offer us an important key to understanding Nietzsche's profound philosophy, another legitimate question arises: how valuable is this key, and how does it work? My answer would be that it offers us an important access point from which

we can better grasp not only the meaning of some of his main philosophical ideas, but also something about the specificity of his philosophical style. The theme of the world as a spectacle is introduced through metaphorical language, like a myth, as expressed in the passage cited in the previous section, and it reverberates throughout the work's argument and Nietzsche's later philosophical writings.

From metaphysics of art to art *as* metaphysics

I believe that a good place to start in the exploration of this topic is Nietzsche's warning in the foreword to Richard Wagner not to reduce the significance of this work to an 'aesthetic problem', or to analyse art as a minor and pleasant phenomenon. And the final paragraph of the foreword contains his well-known statement that "art is the highest task and the true metaphysical activity of this life" (2007a, 14). In a similar vein, towards the end of the text, he affirms: "At this point we need to take a bold run-up and vault into a metaphysics of art, as I repeat my earlier sentence that only as an aesthetic phenomenon do existence and the world appear justified; which means that tragic myth in particular must convince us that even the ugly and disharmonious is an artistic game which the Will, in the eternal fullness of its delight, plays with itself". (2007a, 114).

But how should we interpret these statements? What would be the defining factor that would grant art this status? In the section titled *The Simulacrum and the 'Dionysiac Machine'*, George Bondor explains that in order to understand this important status, we need to consider the much broader context of Nietzsche's rejection of the Platonic tradition of metaphysics. This tradition is centred on the distinction between the world of appearances and that of being, between reason and corporeality, and between models and their pale copies. By rejecting this distinction, he restores the dignity of appearance, which is no longer a copy of a model or essence, and becomes basically one and the same as being. Following Gilles Deleuze (1990), Bondor argues that the reality of the objects of our senses is thus re-established as *simulacra* that remain unjustified by anything else. However, this does not represent a reversal of Platonism because the *simulacrum*, which can no longer be described as an appearance or an illusion, does not become a new foundation; rather, it 'celebrates the disappearance of the foundation'. The *simulacrum*, he observes, is a machine —the 'Dionysiac machine'—that produces the phantasm: the overlapping masks behind which nothing is hidden. This vision upholds 'the right of *simulacra'* and restores their 'positive power', freeing us from the world of representation dominated by the model-copy dichotomy. And he adds that if there are only *simulacra*, then all are coexistent and thus cannot be placed in a hierarchy (Bondor 2008, 225; Deleuze 1990, 263).

But how can art, which appears to be inextricably linked to representation and form, free us from the world of representation? In the aphorisms dedicated to this topic and included in the volume *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche responds as follows: "The antithesis of a real and an apparent world is lacking here: there is only one world, and this is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, without meaning—A world thus constituted is the real world. *We have need of lies* in order to conquer this reality, this 'truth', that is, *in order to live* —That lies are necessary in order to live is itself part of the terrifying and questionable character of existence" (1968, 451). However, metaphysics, morality and religion, as forms of the lie, merely offer refuge from the truth that there is no true world; they deny it. As George Bondor observes, in our human sphere, only art regards appearance as appearance, being the only thing that does not seek to deceive us. Yet, it is opposed by the will to truth, which is specific to reason and conceals the fact that there are only appearances, while at the same time concealing this state of concealment (2008, 224). In contrast to this negative, deceptive manner of relating to reality, art is a positive mode of existence unique to humanity, in which the desire for creativity takes precedence, and where "human existence in its entirety is an artistic act" (2008, 225). This is what Alexander Nehamas calls 'Nietzsche's aestheticism' which expresses the fact that he is "taking the artistic activity as our paradigm for understanding our interaction with the world and with one another" (1999, 243).

For this reason, Nietzsche states that art is the only superior counterforce acting against any will to reject life, that it is the anti-Christian, anti-Buddhist, and anti-nihilist factor par excellence (1968, 452). In art is expressed what he calls the will to appearance, illusion, deception, becoming and change, which is more profound, more primordial, and more metaphysical than the will to truth, reality and being, because it represents a state of supreme affirmation of existence (1968, 453).

Philosophical metaphor, aesthetic state and Dionysiac experience

In Nietzsche's view, the pure philosophical search for the truth is nothing more than a deception. In his work *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense* he argues that pure cognition is just the invention of a pitiful 'clever animal' living in a remote corner of the universe, immersed in illusions and dream-images that serve no real purpose and lead to no truth. Driven by boredom and necessity, these creatures formed societies and created language as a means of "making the unreal appear real" (2007c, 143). Hence, the use of words provided people with a way to forget that their so-called truth is just a deception:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding; truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer as coins. (Nietzsche 2007c, 146)

Therefore, the problem with pure, conceptual philosophy is that it relies on people forgetting the origins of this illusion and unconsciously following their apparent moral duty to search for an unattainable truth. He stresses that an accurate perception of reality is impossible to achieve because the object cannot be fully and adequately expressed in the subject. Between these two different spheres, there can only be an "aesthetic way of relating". Consequently, the solution to this problem lies in reversing the process to restore the original, primal world of metaphor, which "originally flowed in a hot, liquid stream from the primal power of the human imagination", but which has now become hard and rigid (2007c, 148). This would imply the victory of the 'man of intuition' over the 'man of reason', the former being the creative subject capable of shaping a culture, establishing the 'rule of art over life', and ensuring his happiness described as "constant stream of brightness, a lightening of the spirit, redemption, and release" (2007c, 152).

And this is where, I believe, the significant role played by philosophical metaphors and the description of the Dionysiac experience in Nietzsche's philosophy comes into play. However, it must first be noted that, in describing this experience, he faced a fundamental difficulty: how to describe it in rational terms, drawing on the conceptual arsenal of the 'man of reason' and using categories that are merely "simple falsifications, lies of reason," as George Bondor calls them (2008, 247), a phenomenon that is precisely the opposite of any such falsification? Thus, his choice will be an *a-theoretical* one, itself falling within the artistic, metaphorical register. Gianni Vattimo calls it Nietzsche's "philosophical-poetical" language, in which metaphor constantly eludes exhaustive decoding (Vattimo 1993, p. 68). In a similar manner, in his study *Nietzsche on the Arts and Sciences*, Sebastian Gardner characterized it as the "mythopoeic" strategy of integrating philosophy and art, which involves achieving intellectual assent through a presentation of ideas that is based on an "aesthetically charged" experience (Gardner 2008, 323). Ştefan Vianu also spoke in the same vein about how, for Nietzsche, literary creation becomes the highest form of philosophical activity, which forges a new connection between philosophy and poetry (Vianu 2025, 175). As we can see from the passage quoted at the beginning, the Dionysiac cannot be explained; it must be intuited. The Dionysiac is, at

its core, a state, an aesthetic state. In order to understand it, one must experience the Dionysiac state directly: the state of 'supreme affirmation' of existence.

The Dionysiac experience is explained in the metaphorical description of the world as a spectacle, but also in *The Will to Power* as an unleashing within us of artistic forces such as the power of gesture, passion, song, and dance. Thus, unlike the Apollonian experience, associated with sight, creation, and the categories of contemplation, which keep us in a realm of an at least partial exteriority, the Dionysiac involves a total immersion of the entire being in the spectacle, from which no distance or form of exteriority separates us. As stated in the passage quoted at the beginning, the persons who live the Dionysiac experience seems enchanted, and this is an enchantment that manifests itself through gestures, song, and dance: something supernatural sings within them, and they themselves feel like the gods and walk like the gods. This experience is perceived by the spectators as an aesthetic state that is not induced from the outside and which they do not feel as external to themselves. Moreover, as Nietzsche emphasizes in *The Will to Power*, the state of excitement and intoxication specific to the Dionysiac involves voluptuousness and even sexuality, an outpouring of strength, an intense feeling of power. Additionally, he asserts that these are states in which we transfigure and poeticize things by infusing them with a *fullness* until they come to mirror our own fullness and joy of living. But the effect also works in reverse: "Conversely, when we encounter things that display this transfiguration and fullness, our inner animal responds with an excitation of those spheres in which all those pleasurable states are situated. And a combination of these very delicate nuances of animal wellbeing and desires constitutes the *aesthetic state*" (1968, 421-422).

Between the individuals and the world, understood metaphorically as a spectacle which envelops and captivates them, producing the Dionysiac experience, there is, as I have stated, no distance and no exteriority. As the author Robert Solomon puts it, "there is nothing to separate the spectator from the spectacle" (1999, 196). But this aesthetic state of identification can only be understood metaphorically. This is why, when attempting to offer a description of the world in its entirety and of its relationship with the human being absorbed in the Dionysiac experience of life-affirmation, Nietzsche makes use of metaphor. In the passage quoted at the beginning, we find a metaphor of the world as a paradoxical and dynamic painting, a musical canvas in which we have transformed Beethoven's *Hymn to Joy*, with millions of people prostrating themselves, spellbound and enchanted, overwhelmed by the pleasure of shattering illusions, by the discovery of universal solidarity, sensing the presence of the immanent creator of the world, the artistic power of all nature, which carves the most precious

marble, man, with the chisel-blows of the Dionysiac world-artist (Nietzsche 2007a, 18).

However, the question remains: how does this state of aesthetic identification emerges between the individual immersed in the Dionysiac experience and the entire world, understood metaphorically as a spectacle? And how should we understand this metaphor? The answer Nietzsche offers when speaking about the experience of the spectator and the creator of tragedy is that the world understood in this sense is not a pitiful imitation of reality, a type of intermediate world arbitrarily inserted between heaven and earth. The spectacle is characterised by a consistency and reality that are both evident and captivating. This is not merely a copy of reality, but rather a reality that is concrete and indisputable, seamlessly integrating with the reality of external objects. The reality of the spectacle is one that is perceived as floating before the eyes of the spectators, as described by Nietzsche in his characterisation of the poet's relationship with metaphor: "For the genuine poet metaphor is no rhetorical figure, but an image which takes the place of something else, something he can really see before him as a substitute for a concept" (2007a, 43). Thus, he tells us that for the spectator of ancient tragedy—the creation that merges the Apollonian and the Dionysian—the Dionysian excitement bestows the gift of seeing oneself surrounded by swarms of spirits with which one unconsciously merges, the primordial dramatic phenomenon being precisely this process induced by the tragic chorus: "this experience of seeing oneself transformed before one's eyes and acting as if one had really entered another body, another character" (2007a, 43). This is what the author Sebastian Gardner calls the "paracognitive" and "world-creating" power of art, which leads him to assert that, for Nietzsche—the Nietzsche of this work—truth can aspire only to the status of "metaphoricity" (2008, 305).

Two metaphors in dialogue: a musical painting and a surging sea of forces

As Richard Schacht has pointed out, Nietzsche's philosophy is experimental and often involves shifting the perspective from which the same problem is investigated (1999, 154). Therefore, we might ask what would happen if we shifted our perspective from that of the spectator immersed in the spectacle of the world, presented as a musical painting, to that of the creator of this spectacle: the Dionysiac world-artist itself. However, in my opinion, this is precisely what Nietzsche had in mind when he described the world as a spectacle, a work of art encompassing everyone and everything. Because, in *The Will to Power* he argues that understanding the world as a work of art does not mean seeking a vantage point outside it in order to enjoy its perspective. A deeper understanding requires adopting *the artist's viewpoint* rather than that of the audience. They are opposed,

antagonistic. Nietzsche observes that, for the audience, the culmination of excitement lies in reception, whereas for the artist it lies in giving; and to force the artist to adopt the opposite viewpoint is to ask him to diminish his creative power. He must not look; he must give (1968, 429).

Extended to the scale of the world, this perspective implies understanding the world as "a work of art that gives birth to itself" (1968, 507). Therefore, the world can only be properly understood as a spectacle, as a work of art, if we understand the term 'spectacle' in the same way as its creator, who experiences the joy and power of giving. But, if we also add the fact that the spectacle is neither separate from nor external to its creator, that the Dionysiac creative force is essentially immanent, that it is indistinguishable from its creation, then we understand that the Dionysiac experience and the world as spectacle or work of art are one and the same.

Nietzsche offers another perspective on the same theme in the famous concluding paragraph (1067) from *The Will to Power*. Hence, the metaphor described in the passage quoted at the beginning resonates, as it was previously mentioned, in Nietzsche's mature philosophy, again in a metaphorical and mythical form. The metaphor with which the image of the world as a spectacle enters into dialogue—to complement and illuminate one another—is that of the world as a sea of surging forces, described as a paradoxical monster, in perpetual flux and yet always true to itself, One and Many, in eternal creation and self-destruction, a world of eternal return:

> And do you know what 'the world' is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by 'nothingness' as by a boundary […]. (Nietzsche 1968, 549-550)

This paradoxical monster seems to elude any rational understanding. A multitude of apparently contradictory traits are strung together in a seemingly endless sentence spanning an entire page:

> […] not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be 'empty' here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home to the simple out of this abundance, out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of concord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness […]. (Nietzsche 1968, 550)

According to George Bondor, this passage constitutes a perfect synthesis of the doctrine of eternal return. The world is nothing other than permanent and eternal becoming, pure immanence in perpetual self-transformation. But because it represents a finite plurality of centres of force, the transformations through which it can pass are limited. Thus, it is necessary for all combinations of these forces to occur and recur an infinite number of times. It is an eternal self-creation and an eternal self-destruction, a work of art that creates itself without the mediation of any artist (Bondor 2008, 272-277).

Towards the end of the fragment 1067 from *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche returns to the personal register in his 'description', successively rendering both the image of the world in itself and the image of the world from his perspective, of *his* world, as he calls it almost pathetically: "[…] this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my 'beyond good and evil' […]" (1968, 550).

We thus sense, enchanted by this yet another metaphoric description, that the world reflected in Nietzsche's *mirror*—the world for him, and the world as such—represents one and the same thing. This paradoxical mirror reflects only itself in all its transformations, *speculum* and *spectaculum* alike. And the ending 'opens' this mirror to encompass everything else and everyone else: "*This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!" (1968, 550).

Concluding remarks: Nietzsche's philosophical mirror reflecting on itself

As we approach the end of our brief adventure in the labyrinth of Nietzsche's thought, we can take the opportunity to reflect on where the thread we have been following has led us. Guided by the metaphor of the world as a spectacle, we first observed Nietzsche's desire to restore the authenticity of philosophy by incorporating an artistic and creative dimension into it. In a world where the distinction between reality and appearance is meaningless, art is the only thing that does not deceive us, offering a path to the creative affirmation of life. A philosophy that abandons the absurd search for an otherworldly truth must turn to metaphor to revitalise itself. Philosophical metaphors offer more than mere knowledge; they produce a Dionysiac aesthetic state, similar to that experienced by a spectator immersed in a spectacle, or more authentically, by its creator. Yet, it is also a state that characterizes the world as a whole, seen as a surging sea of creative forces in a perpetual cycle of creation and self-destruction.

I believe that in both metaphorical descriptions offered by Nietzsche in the cited passage from *The Birth of the Tragedy* and in the closing fragment from *The Will to Power*, we find not only a description of the world. We also find a description of the condition of the philosopher and his philosophy and life (see also Vianu 2025, 172-174), as well as of the destiny and meaning of philosophy as a form of creation. In a way, philosophy itself can be understood as a mirror that metaphorically reveals not only the meaning of the world, but also its own meaning. Philosophy is the sister of art, as he called it in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. It is based on metaphors that spring from brilliant intuitions and is driven by the illogical power of the imagination, which allows it to advance by leap ahead "on tiny toeholds" because hope and intuition lend wings to its feet, while the "calculating reason lumbers heavily behind" (1962, 40). In a similar vein, he emphasized in *The Gay Science* that the philosopher must be a good dancer: "For the dance is his ideal, also his art, and finally also his only piety, his 'service of God'." (2001, 246)

The reason Nietzsche resorts to metaphorical language, paradox, hyperbole, irony, and aphorism itself—which George Bondor calls his "masks"—stems from his desire to prevent any superficial, conceptual, and thematic understanding. That is why, in putting his ideas out into the world, he hides a part of them—perhaps the most important part—because he fears being understood more than he fears remaining misunderstood (Bondor, p. 20). The explanation for this style of doing philosophy may be, in my opinion, that Nietzsche aims for something more than understanding: namely, to produce in the reader a kind of "aesthetically charged" state. This is precisely the Dionysiac experience described above, which enables philosophical ideas to be experienced and embraced in a way that involves more than merely contemplating an universe of ideas in a neutral and external manner; it involves immersing oneself completely in it, as if one were playing a role in a spectacle of the world that becomes one's own life.

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