

2. *The Demonic in the Self*

But ancient Violence longs to breed,
new Violence comes
when its fatal hour comes, the demon comes
to take her toll – no war, no force, no prayer
can hinder the midnight Fury stamped
with parent Fury moving through the house.

– Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*¹

Demons were chasing me, trying to eat me. They were grotesque, surreal, and they just kept pursuing me wherever I went. I was fighting them with some kind of sword, hacking them to pieces. But each time I would cut one into small pieces, another would appear.

– A dream of a patient;
Stephen A. Diamond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic*²

THE SELF

The self is a problem. The long history of educated discussion about the human self has not succeeded in producing a consensus. Scholars working in the same discipline do not necessarily agree on the fundamentals when debating how a human being should be understood. This is even truer as we cross disciplinary boundaries. Some think it is not necessary to presume the existence of something like the “self,” others consider it more fruitful to approach human existence from different levels of observation altogether. In the area of literature and literary studies, in psychology, as well as in other areas where individual experience is of paramount importance, the self nevertheless continues to raise interest. Even if theoretically disputed as the authorial figure, the self of an autobiography, or the selves of some specific readers, are explored as hermeneutic or phenomenological realities. The role of the self appears no longer as the stable source or centre of meanings, but as a complex construction that is open to history and reinterpretation. This change also makes demons and the demonic in their relationship to self an interesting area for research and re-evaluation.

The self is perhaps best understood as an element of figurative language, a metaphor, as a way of interpreting, representing and unifying something intangible and heterogeneous. The attitudes of the Enlightenment are still a strong undercurrent in our culture, and myths and metaphors are too easily labelled no more than lies or illusions to be debunked. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson among others have studied how metaphors and metonymy

¹ Aeschylus 1979, 131 (*Agam.* 755-60).

² Diamond 1996, 238.

mies form coherent systems that help us to conceptualise our experience, and they argue that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical. As our communication, thinking and acting are based on this system, the structure and nature of these metaphors is not a trivial matter. In this and the following chapter, my aim is to illustrate how demons and the demonic are connected with the self in some eminent theoretical accounts, and how this connection holds special interest with respect to the contemporary theory of ‘textuality.’ The evolution I outline here points out how the demons of the self and the *daimons* of tragedy have been transformed into a “demonic textuality” within current theory. Such an analysis can be used as a theoretical background for the readings in the second part of this work. Simultaneously, the fictional texts will help to adopt alternative perspectives, and to question the privileged status of theory. All theory carries its own limits and implied preconditions inscribed into its discourse.



What does it mean that the self is a figure of speech? In the first place, “the self” constitutes a particular manner of expression, or representation; there is no object “out in nature” that would be mirrored by this concept. According to this view, the self is an imaginative construction, useful and perhaps even vitally important in our daily routines.³ We perceive ourselves as individuals, and individuals in our culture possess “selves”: preferably clear-cut conceptions of who they are, what they want, and why. One’s consciousness of one’s own being, or identity, is central to this common-sense idea of the self; the physical disposition, the mental characteristics, personality and life history are all commonly seen as contributing to one’s sense of individuality, or the self (employed often synonymously).⁴

³ Hayden White has emphasised in his *Metahistory* (1973, 33 [note 13], 36), that tropes can work as a means to prefigure problematic areas for the consciousness, prior to analysis.

⁴ According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘self’ was originally used only as a pronoun and pronominal adjective (in the sense of the L. *ipse*). The substantive use developed in early Middle-English. The current usage was slowly adopted, firstly in a discourse philosophical in tone: “That which in a person is really and intrinsically he (in contradistinction to what is adventitious); the ego (often identified with the soul or mind as opposed to the body); a permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness. 1674 TRATHERNE *Poet. Wks.* (1903) 49 A secret self I had enclos’d within, That was not bounded with my clothes or skin.” A little later, ‘self’ came also to mean “What one is at a particular time or in a particular aspect or relation; one’s nature, character, or (sometimes) physical constitution or appearance, considered as different at different times.” The negative connotations (with associations to ‘selfishness’) are prominent, and different compounds derived from ‘self’ have proliferated from the 17th century to the present day (including such as ‘self-accusation,’ ‘self-condemnation,’ ‘self-contempt,’ ‘self-denial,’ ‘self-judgement,’ ‘self-repugnance,’ ‘self-destruction,’ ‘self-despair,’ ‘self-slaughter,’ etc.) Vytautas Kavolis writes in his article “On the Self-Person Differentiation: Universal Categories of Civilization and Their Diverse Contents” that the “concept linkages of the self-compounds of the seventeenth century suggest a violent clash be-

Individuality carries enormous ideological and legal weight in our culture. Economic and legal systems are based on the assumption that citizens are autonomous individuals, in full possession of themselves, and therefore also legally responsible for all their actions. Philosophy is here the other side of the political; broadly speaking, the “subject” and “subjectivity” evolved into central concepts as political power was given over from the hands of a single sovereign to the “people” – in other words, to the diverse economical and political structures of a modern society, and to the individuals operating within these structures.⁵ Michel Foucault extensively studies the historical process whereby the modern individual was produced. The development of “self” meant, among other things, increasing awareness and control by an individual towards his or her own behaviour. Everything in the life of a modern individual came under growing attention and scrutiny – from the organisation of daily life into a regulated timetable to the development of discursive forms for “private” experience, such as sexuality. The individuals were, according to Foucault, “urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct” during this process; they were involved with “the models proposed for setting up and developing the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformation that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object.”⁶

Examination and cultivation of one’s own individuality, one’s self, has become one of the central concerns for modern individual. “One can never know too much concerning human nature,” claimed the anonymous author of *My Secret Life* (1882), a massive autobiography mainly concerned with the author’s various sexual experiences.⁷ As Nikolas Rose has written, the “citizens of a liberal democracy are to regulate themselves”, and in this process they are assisted by different ‘techniques of the self,’ employed by themselves, or by some of the new classes of professionals dedicated to the examination and manipulation of the self.⁸ Rose summarises :

Through self-inspection, self-problematization, self-monitoring, and confession, we evaluate ourselves according to the criteria provided for us by

tween the older (‘Elizabethan’) self-assertiveness and the new (‘Puritan’) self-criticism” (Kavolis 1984, 137).

⁵ The creation of modern subjectivity has received a great deal of theoretical attention, especially during the last three decades. *The Subject of Modernity* (1995) by Anthony J. Cascardi serves as a good example of this discussion. Cascardi takes his starting points from the critique of Western rationalism by Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, and critically reads the works of such thinkers as Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger, Benjamin, Rorty, and Lyotard. Discussions of art and entertainment, such as Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and the myth of Don Juan, are approached through philosophical discourse, and used partly as illustrations. Theoretical works of this nature are useful as analyses of our intellectual history, but also demonstrate the constant danger – of becoming an endless commentary of only the canonised philosophers and authors.

⁶ Foucault 1986, 29.

⁷ Quoted in Foucault 1978, 22.

⁸ Rose 1990, 10.

others. Through self-reformation, therapy, techniques of body alteration, and the calculated reshaping of speech and emotion, we adjust ourselves by means of the techniques propounded by the experts of the soul. The government of the soul depends upon our recognition of ourselves as ideally and potentially certain sorts of person, the unease generated by a normative judgement of what we are and could become, and the incitement offered to overcome this discrepancy by following the advice of experts in the management of the self.⁹

This self has a close relation with a particular way of thinking. George Lakoff has named as *objectivism* the tradition of thought that could as well be called “classical reason” which holds that “conceptual categories are defined solely by the shared essential properties of their members”; that “thought is the disembodied manipulation of abstract symbols”; and that “those symbols get their meaning solely by virtue of correspondences to things in the world.” Lakoff adds that this “view of reason as abstract, disembodied, and literal is well-established.”¹⁰ One of the central consequences of the self being part of such a system, is that it has been perceived as an essential and natural component of being. Our thought confronts problems when dealing with such experiences that do not properly fit this idea. The rational, fully autonomous self is in fact a classical *ideal*, and should be perceived as an abstraction, illustrating particular needs and aims – or, a particular ideology. The following comment from Aristotle’s *Politics* clarifies this point:

An immediate indication of this [natural order] is afforded by the soul, where we find natural ruler and natural subject, whose virtues we regard as different – one being that of the rational element, the other of the nonrational. It is therefore clear that the same feature will be found in the other cases too, so that most instances of ruling and being ruled are natural. For rule of free over slave, male over female, man over boy, are all different, because, while parts of the soul are present in each case, the distribution is different. Thus the deliberative faculty in the soul is not present at all in a slave; in a female it is present but ineffective, in a child present but undeveloped.¹¹

The subordination of emotions and all other (“lower”) aspects of subjectivity to the rational self correspond to the subjugation of slaves, women and children by free men. The definition of subjectivity in terms of the rational soul is a politically motivated fundamental in Aristotelian thought. It

⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰ Lakoff 1987, 586.

¹¹ Aristotle 1981, 95 [1260a4-13]. – Aristotle can, of course, be approached from different angles, and his theories are open to many interpretations. For a recent defence of *logos* and Aristotle’s argument, see the interpretation in Roochnik 1990, 23-45. See also Derrida’s article “The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy *before* Linguistics,” which points out that Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and his categories can be read as expressing awareness of the metaphoric quality of thought (Derrida 1972/1989).

should be pointed out that the demonic “Other” will make its appearance in the guise of all of these “irrational characters” of Aristotle in this study: female and child embody it in chapters four and five, “slaves” are susceptible to the demonic in chapter eight. Acts of definition produce identity, and it is necessary to understand the logic of exclusion operating in our traditional “self” in order to approach its demonic others. Aristotelian exclusions have been very persistent.

Lakoff opposes the tradition of Aristotelian objectivism with *experiential realism*, which argues that human reason generally complies with the following main principles:

- Thought is *embodied*, that is, the structures used to put together our conceptual systems grow out of bodily experience and make sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement, and experience of a physical and social character.
- Thought is *imaginative*, in that those concepts which are not directly grounded in experience employ metaphor, metonymy, and mental imagery – all of which go beyond the literal mirroring, or *representation*, of external reality. It is this imaginative capacity that allows for “abstract” thought and takes the mind beyond what we can see and feel. The imaginative capacity is also embodied – indirectly – since the metaphors, metonymies, and images are based on experience, often bodily experience. Thought is also imaginative in a less obvious way: every time we categorize something in a way that does not mirror nature, we are using general human imaginative capacities.¹²

Other such principles include *gestalt properties* in human thought (our thinking follows an overall structure that is not just an atomistic combination of “building blocks”) and *ecological structure* (learning and memory are governed by the overall structure of the conceptual system and what the concepts mean; thought is not just mechanical manipulation of abstract symbols).¹³ Lakoff supports his argument with a wide variety of evidence that is not limited to our culture; the fundamentals of language are rooted in the experience of living in the world, not in some transcendental logic.¹⁴ In

¹² Lakoff 1987, xiv.

¹³ Ibid., xiv-xv.

¹⁴ Lakoff’s examples include the aboriginal language of Diyrbal, which he uses to point out how conceptual categories are organized according to basic domains of experience, which may be culture-specific. Categories in Lakoff’s title, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, belong in the Diyrbal system to the same class. (Ibid., 92-96.) *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff - Johnson 1980) includes further evidence of how even the English conceptual system is replete with metaphors that express cultural inheritance and experience. ARGUMENT IS WAR is a metaphor that is reflected in the use of such expressions as *attack a position, indefensible, strategy, new line of attack, win, gain ground*, etc. Other fundamentals include CONSCIOUS IS UP (UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN), RATIONAL IS UP (EMOTIONAL IS DOWN); the physical basis (erect awareness vs. sleeping lying down) is linked to other elements in a culture (we value control *over* others, who are *lower*) – until it is perfectly natural to say, e.g. “He couldn’t *rise above* his emotions.” (Ibid., 4-7, 14-17.)

our culture, it makes sense to say: “I have a self” – or, “I am my self” – but one should be careful not to suppose one, fixed and objective reality behind these expressions. They are metaphorical in character; in other words, they imaginatively illustrate our traditions of thinking and our experience of living as members of our societies. The self is not an external object in the world: we do not perceive any “selves” in external reality – and David Hume even claimed that when we study the internal reality of our thinking, we always find merely separate ideas and perceptions. We just believe that these heterogeneous elements are unified by the “self.”¹⁵

Hume’s refutation of the “self” has not been the last; rather, the main impetus of modern scientific thought has been directed towards discrediting or dissolving the classic idea of a unified, rational self. Why do we then still go on speaking of ourselves and others in these terms? The answer derived from Lakoff and cognitive science (the interdisciplinary study of our conceptual system) is that we have a practical *need* for a self; the figurative way of thinking helps us organise our life and thinking, to communicate and to make perceptions.¹⁶ But when these practical functions are reified into an abstraction that is granted real existence, problems arise; the example of Aristotle’s division of soul helps us to become more aware of the necessary tensions and potential conflicts inherent in the construction of a self. The conceptual categories are organised on the basis of some “prototype,” a figure that is perceived as the most natural, or basic representative of that category. As the concept becomes defined, certain features are posited as marginal, and others as totally extraneous to this concept.¹⁷ Aristotle’s definition of “rational soul” as the privileged element of subjectivity does not treat different people equally. Slaves, women and children become “less human” as the prototype of subjectivity is figured as an autonomous, adult and emphatically rational male.

Demonic imagery can be approached from this viewpoint: as an alternative tradition to figuratively model the dynamics of human existence and behaviour. As the heritage of positivism and rationalism has come under at-

¹⁵ J.P. Stern makes the following useful condensation of Hume’s argument: “Since ‘I never can catch *myself* without a perception’, and there are no perceptions of a constant and invariable nature of which the self might be a constant and stable bearer, only ‘successive perceptions’ can constitute the mind. And so, ‘setting aside some speculative metaphysicians ... who claim existence and continuance in existence for what we call our SELF’, Hume affirms ‘of the rest of mankind’ that we are ‘nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement’.” (Stern 1990, 3; Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature* [1793], conclusion of Book I.)

¹⁶ Some cognitive scientists closely converge the premises of the study of artificial intelligence. Lakoff opposes the computational models of the human cognitive system. Cf. e.g. *Perspectives on Cognitive Science*, ed. D. Norman (1981); Hautamäki 1988.

¹⁷ Lakoff’s examples include *mother* which is, according to him, still defined and organised around the “housewife-mother” stereotype in the United States. A “working mother” becomes defined in contrast (and as a deviation) from the stereotype. (Lakoff 1987, 79-81.)

tack in the so-called “human sciences,” and non-Western traditions of thought have extended their influence, demons and the demonic have gained fresh interest. They are particularly important in questioning the integrity of subjectivity.

COHERENCE OF THE SELF

It thinks: but that this ‘it’ is precisely that famous old ‘I’ is, to put it mildly, only an assumption

– Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*¹⁸

“One’s self-identity,” R.D. Laing has written in a circular manner, “is the story one tells one’s self of who one is.”¹⁹ When the classic conception of the self as a real, essential substance of a person with claims to the transcendental, has lost its ground, interest in the narrative construction of selfhood has increased. It has become relatively common to perceive the self as belonging to the domains of the aesthetic, and rhetoric, as much as to philosophy, psychology or psychiatry. Stephen Frost, in his work *Identity Crisis: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and the Self* (1991), outlines the general consensus about the self in clinical psychology as something constructed; the self is built up developmentally by linking interpersonal relationships with internal mental structures. The most significant relationships – ‘object relations’ – are “absorbed as a set of fantasised internal relationships which become the building blocks of personality.”²⁰ The self is an “imagined entity” and we are capable of various different interpretations, or self-representations, of our persons. “Creating a self is like creating a work of art,” concludes Frost.²¹

The aesthetic approach to the self carries its own burdens. The cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz has pointed out that the Western conception of “person” is a peculiar idea among world cultures: it is commonly perceived as

a bounded, unique, more or less integrated, motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background.²²

When the self is established as an aesthetic object to be fully explored and realised (according to a romantic ideal), other aspects of the self are in danger of being forgotten. The Marxist critic Terry Eagleton thinks that the influential trend of Romantic expressivism is empty of value-judgements;

¹⁸ Nietzsche 1886/1986, 28 [§17].

¹⁹ Laing 1961/1980, 93.

²⁰ Frost 1991, 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²² Geertz 1979, 229.

the only imperative is that human capacities should be actualised, however destructive they might be. The aesthetic, in his view, offers the middle-class subject an ideological legitimisation of its own alienation and passivity – in the words of Schiller: “Beauty alone makes the whole world happy.”²³

The principle of unity and coherence is central to classical aesthetic standards.²⁴ The “distinctive whole” in Geertz’s definition emphasises similar standards in our self-conception. The increasing unity of the psyche is an essential goal in many therapeutic techniques; therapists aim at “helping patients reconnect with themselves by establishing or reestablishing an effective relationship between ego consciousness and the unconscious.” The link between *heal* and *whole* is not only etymological in this line of thinking.²⁵ The question of wholeness and integrity for the self, however, has become a subject for theoretical dispute. Foucault wrote about the role of interpretation in the works of Nietzsche, Freud and Marx, claiming that these three thinkers engaged us in an endless self-interpretative task – they built “those mirrors which reflect to us the images whose inexhaustible wounds form our contemporary narcissism.”²⁶ The ideal images of wholeness and unity are threatened and displaced by alternative narratives: people are at least as much products of society and of history, as they are its agents (Marx); psychoanalysis decenters our view of ourselves as subjects conscious of our actions and decisions (Freud claimed that the unconscious is the real power in the psyche); the followers of de Saussure establish language as an autonomous system of differences, transcending the intentions of individual “language users.”²⁷ The work of such radical theorists as Jacques Lacan breaks up classical subjectivity even more: “subject” becomes a deeply divided and de-centered structure, and the self (*moi*) a tragic illusion, a misperception of unity where none exists.²⁸

²³ Eagleton 1990, 110-11, 223 (the Schiller quotation from page 110).

²⁴ See, e.g. Aristotle 1982, 52-3 [1450b-1451a]. The dogmatic adherence to the “rule” of unity was a later, classicistic interpretation of Aristotle; the “three unities” of classicism were those of action, time and place. *De Arte Poetica* by Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65 B.C.E. - 8 B.C.E.) is also an important influence.

²⁵ Kluger - Kluger 1984, 162.

²⁶ Foucault 1990, 61.

²⁷ Cf. Edwards 1990, 25. – The structuralist reading of de Saussure has been mainly interested in the last lecture in *Cours de linguistique générale*, which explains the meanings of signs as determined by relationships to other signs. Words can never be taken in isolation, without their difference to other terms in the system. Saussure, however, emphasised in the beginning of *Cours* that “Linguistic structure is only one part of language [...]. Language in its entirety has many different and disparate aspects. It lies astride the boundaries separating various domains. It is at the same time physical, physiological and psychological. It belongs to the individual and the society. No classification of human phenomena provides any single place for it, because language as such has no discernible unity.” (de Saussure 1916/1983, 9-10.) This suggests a rich and many-dimensional view of our linguistic make-up, certainly not any “Prison-House of Language.”

²⁸ Lacan, “The Mirror Stage” (1966/1983, 1-7). See also Freud, “Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis” (SE 16, 284-85), and Rajchman 1986, 44. Freud positions psycho-

A number of scholars have felt the basic tenets in this demolition as uncomfortably pessimistic. Furthermore, the exposure of the self as fragmentary and internally conflicting, in a sense, only reproduces the anomie of postmodern society on a theoretical level.²⁹ Marshall Berman has characterised the experience of the modern individual in his study *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (1982) as a tension between the infinite possibilities (for adventure, power, joy, growth) and the vortex of “perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.”³⁰ Berman differentiates between the experiential reality of living in modernity, and the actual processes of modernisation that have produced the conditions for this experience – industrialisation, urban growth, mass communications and the world market, for example. Literary modernism is an important area of our culture where we can discuss, represent and witness different aspects of this experience, “attempt to find a way of living with continually dissolving realities and fluctuating boundaries.”³¹

The need for ways to positively reconstruct new versions of subjectivity, ones that would not be locked into the classic dualisms (soul/body, reason/emotion), has led into partial rehabilitations of the self. Paul Ricoeur’s careful formulations in his article “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” are illuminating:

[The] *subject* is never given at the beginning. Or, if it were so given, it would run the risk of reducing itself to a narcissistic ego, self-centred and avaricious – and it is just this from which literature can liberate us. Our loss in the side of narcissism is our gain on the side of the narrative identity. In the place of an ego enchanted by itself, a *self* is born, taught by cultural symbols, first among which are the stories received in the literary tradition. These stories give unity – not unity of substance but narrative wholeness.³²

Even such moderate claims for the unifying capacities of art are prone to stir disagreement; the disintegration of identities, radical multiplicity and narrative discontinuity are much more preferable goals for many. In Julia Kristeva’s thinking, for example, all attempts of establishing a regulated system, or unity are perceived as entangled with the symbolic order (and the Law of the Father, in Lacanian terms); the semiotic (the bodily alternative)

analysis as the third “wounding blow” to human “megalomania,” in the series preceded by the wounds inflicted by Copernicus and Darwin.

²⁹ ‘Anomie’ signifies the modern social condition permeated by alienation, caused by the disintegration of mutually accepted codes (originally by Emile Durkheim).

³⁰ Berman, 1982/1991, 15.

³¹ Frosh 1991, 16 (based on Berman 1982/1991, 16-33).

³² Paul Ricoeur, “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator” (1987; Ricoeur 1991, 437). This view of self as a narrative construction might be named as the “constructivist” position. See also Bernard Williams’s article “Imagination and the self” (Williams 1973/1991, 26-45) which discusses the general distinction between imagining (activity displayed in different forms of narration) and visualising something, especially a self.

can manifest itself only in irruptions, dissonances or rhythmic elements within the symbolic.³³ The pursuit of the experience of ‘wholeness’ can, however, be defended as a necessary step. It constitutes the alternative, an awareness that is needed to identify dissonances, tensions, or division lines. A parallel example can be taken from Eastern philosophies like Hinduism or Buddhism; the goal is to eliminate the ego, but one has to first achieve a crystallised conception of ego, before one can renounce it.³⁴ One feels sympathetic towards those feminist critics of French theoretical radicalism who claim that “dissolution of subject” does not properly address their most urgent needs.

THE DEMONS OF DISINTEGRATION

It could be claimed that the structures of the self are already dissolving, and that this is not a pleasurable experience. Charles Taylor, in his study *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), claims that we need “stories” which provide us with value horizons. These “moral ontologies” offer us frameworks and landmarks to orient our thinking and acting in meaningful ways. Indeed, Taylor claims that

living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood.³⁵

Loss of meaningful commitments and identifications in life would mean loss of significance. The total lack of stable meanings combined with the disintegration of psychic structures may be lyrical in theoretical prose; in living experience, however, they are more likely to produce pain and fear, feelings of spatial disorientation and different personality disorders, even psychosis. A critic of Taylor might adopt a postmodern position, and argue that between the total lack of structures and one solid structure there lies an interesting middle ground of flexible production of “small narratives” and situated solutions. Even such a “moderately dissolved” condition could probably not completely banish the potential for pain and fear; there might be an inexhaustible source of anxiety rooted in our (post)modern condi-

³³ See Kristeva, “Signifying Practice and Mode of Production” (*Edinburgh Review* 1976:1); quoted in Grosz 1990, 152. – Luce Irigaray, in contrast, passes the limits of the Lacanian model and thinks that there exists “a discourse or a movement where masculine consciousness and self-consciousness is no longer master” (Grosz 1990, 175). This view renounces the classical subject, or self, because it is conceptually rooted in rationalistic, patriarchal reason, and aims to enable women to claim some place as women, and to defy the discursive domination of phallogentrism (ibid., 173, 176). Even if the construction of subjectivity is superseded by the necessity for a new language, this kind of possibility suggests some hope for more functional ways of thinking about selfhood.

³⁴ See Diamond 1996, 345n69.

³⁵ Taylor 1989, 27.

tion.³⁶ The problematic status of the referent in the structuralist theories has tended to discourage such (perhaps sentimental) considerations – after all, various aspects of the “world” can even be theorised as illusions created by language.³⁷ Nevertheless, the role of emotions has been central to the critical understanding of narrative art since Aristotle’s *Poetics*; Aristotle spoke in these lectures about *eleos* and *phobos* (pity and fear) as central elements in his definition of tragedy – tragedy effecting “a *catharsis* of such emotions.”³⁸ In this, he prefigures several contemporary theories concerning the integrative function of dramatic stories. It is interesting to note the enduring popularity of references to classical tragedy in the psychological literature. Tragic characters are, after all, not only exemplars of “narrative wholeness”; tragic *ambiguity* describes perhaps best the tensions between calm rationality, anxiety, even the murderous insanity with which they are fraught.³⁹ The role of the emotions, and particularly the incapacity to experience emotions is important in many of my analysed “demonic texts” (see especially chapters six and eight).

Psychoanalysis with its different variations and successors has been in the forefront of addressing the questions about the divisions inherent in the self. Freud developed through his career different models to account for the psychic conflicts, suppressions and breakdowns he witnessed in his patients. With the publication of *Studies in Hysteria* in 1895, Freud (with Josef Breuer) suggested psychogenic reasons for mental illnesses; the organic reasons were replaced by mental conflicts between different elements in the mind. In the early model the psyche was topographically divided between the unconscious, preconscious and conscious areas. Later, a tripartite structural model was adopted (with the id, ego, and superego). Freud used metaphors to illustrate his thoughts, and he compared the id to a horse whose power must be simultaneously shared and harnessed by its much weaker

³⁶ Of the irreducible role of ‘worry’ and ‘fear’ in the postmodern condition and the multiplicity of language games, see Lyotard - Thébaud 1985, 99-100. Jean-François Lyotard himself has advocated an attitude of “resolute passivity” – potentially a “surrender to the ‘other’ in language, rather than the attempt to make language a more and more faithful instrument of the human mind” (Connor 1997, 42; the reference is to Lyotard’s *The Inhuman* [1991]).

³⁷ See, e.g. Scholes 1980, 206 (“reference is a mirage of language”).

³⁸ Aristotle 1982, 50 [1449b]. – In *The Politics* Aristotle somewhat clarifies his ideas about art, emotions and catharsis: “Any feeling which comes strongly to some souls exists in all others to a greater or less degree – pity and fear, for example, but also excitement. This is a kind of agitation by which some people are liable to be possessed; it may arise out of religious melodies, and in this case it is observable that when they have been listening to melodies that have an orgiastic effect on the soul they are restored as if they had undergone a curative and purifying treatment.” Aristotle clearly separates this sort of people from his ideals: “Now in the theatre there are two types of audience, the one consisting of educated free men, the other of common persons, drawn from the mechanics, hired workers and such-like. For the relaxation of this latter class also competitions and spectacles must be provided.” (Aristotle 1981, 473-74 [1341b-1342a].)

³⁹ Jean-Pierre Vernant’s views concerning the tragic ambiguity are discussed below, p. 72.

“rider,” the ego.⁴⁰ Freud also described the id as “the dark, inaccessible part of our personality,” that must be approached with analogies – “we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations.”⁴¹

It is commonplace to think of psychoanalysis as being concerned with purely technical goals (such as the preservation and restoration of mental health) without any moral agenda. As psychoanalysis gained ground as the metadiscourse of modern life, it nevertheless was cast into the role of a moral legislator.⁴² Freud’s works such as *Totem and Taboo* (1913; SE 13) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930; SE 21) were characterised by deep pessimism towards the oppressive and distorting nature of culture. Ego, or the conscious self, was threatened on both sides in the Freudian model; by the powerful instinctual impulses of the id, and by the attacks of superego morality.⁴³ The existence of unconscious ideas was in itself enough to render the (complete) integrity of the self into an impossibility. The idea that this divided structure could nevertheless be interpreted, or *read*, was the major Freudian insight. The unconscious has its own mode of organisation (“language,” as Lacan later emphasised), and it is structured by the emotional experiences of interpersonal relationships. The opposition between “culture” and “nature” is emptied as the social and instinctual become inseparable.⁴⁴

The imagery Freud employed in connection to the unconscious has its demonic undertones (the *dark part*, the *cauldron*). Psychoanalysis constituted rejection and subversion of the metaphysical terminology of morally and rationally superior “good” versus “evil.” In Judeo-Christian tradition evil was a domain laden with sexual and aggressive imagery and prohibitions. Freud opened a means of liberation from guilt and re-assessment of those areas, but sexuality and aggression nevertheless retained their terrible, destructive charge in his writings. James S. Grotstein even accuses Freud and his followers of having “unconsciously demonized the id”: the ego has been regarded as unilaterally needing protection from this nameless thing from

⁴⁰ Freud, “The Ego and the Id” (SE 19, 25). The metaphor of powerful “horses” in the psyche which the rational mind has to control is ancient. It appears also in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (247b-248c), a dialogue analysed below.

⁴¹ Freud, “New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis” (SE 22, 73); see also the summary on the unconscious and the id in Diamond 1996, 89-95. – Nietzsche’s influence in identifying the unconscious cannot be overestimated; he also links it with the demonic and the sexual impulses, even uses the same metaphor: “The central concern with such [Dionysian] celebrations was, almost universally, a complete sexual promiscuity overriding every form of established tribal law; all the savage urges of the mind were unleashed on those occasions until they reached that paroxysm of lust and cruelty which has always struck me as the “witches’ cauldron” *par excellence*” (Nietzsche 1872/1990, 25-26 [§ II] – see also below, page 67n56).

⁴² Margolis 1966, 146.

⁴³ E. Mansell Pattison argues that Freud considers morality solely in terms of the superego, and ignores the important functions moral thinking has in consciousness and ego; Pattison 1984, 68.

⁴⁴ Frosh 1991, 42.

the netherworld.⁴⁵ Subsequent developments in Jungian analysis, ego psychology, object-relations theory, and the psychology of self have all modified the Freudian view of the unconscious and instinctual drives, so that the Oedipal narrative of Freud – the child as a son who secretly fosters desire for his mother and hostility towards his father – now competes with other stories. The reading of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy by the existential analyst Stephen A. Diamond holds special interest in its attempt to interpret the traditionally “demonic” horrors in terms of the “daimonic.”

THE TRAGIC DAIMONS

The primary departure Jung made from Freud's theories was concerned with the dominant role of infantile sexuality. Under “libido,” Jung unified other strivings besides sexuality, and considered this force as a more heterogeneous form of “psychic energy.” The unconscious had two important dimensions for him, the personal and the collective. More concerned than Freud with the individuation process during the growth of the adult personality, Jung saw our psychic life as informed by different mythical (archetypal) patterns.⁴⁶ He regarded the libido as consisting of different needs and drives. Because it was an autonomous element of psyche, repression or dissociation of its components could “possess” the individual, forcing him or her into some symptom or behaviour.⁴⁷ For Jung, religious and mythical imagery carried important knowledge about how people have experienced this mechanism: “As a power which transcends consciousness the libido is by nature daemonic: it is both God and devil.”⁴⁸

In his *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic* (1996), Stephen A. Diamond is concerned with the “senseless violence” that is perceived as “epidemic” in contemporary American life, dominating daily news, as well as cinema and

⁴⁵ Grotstein 1984, 205, 207.

⁴⁶ See Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* (1911-12; CW 5), *The Psychology of the Unconscious* (1917; CW 7, 3-117) and *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (essays collected into CW 9 [Part I]).

⁴⁷ Existential theories of psychoanalysis have reacted against the “autonomy” of the unconscious, because this implies a dichotomy between “rational” and “irrational.” Jung's archetypes should properly be read as only “partially” autonomous elements – the therapeutic effect of the model, after all, relies on the recognition and integration of such elements as parts of the self. (See Diamond 1996, 104.) – In his lectures, Lacan presents an alternative view: he differentiates (human) libido fundamentally from mere biological function, emphasises that the object of the drive is indifferent, and stresses how the movement of desire is based on lack – “the fact that the subject depends on the signifier and the signifier is first of all the field of the other” (Lacan 1973/1986, 165, 168, 205). The “linguistic” structure of the Lacanian unconscious is involved with the pre-ontological split in the subject and an adjoining indestructible desire (*ibid.*, 20-32). The central role of desire in Lacan's theory makes it diverge radically from any ego- and even self-oriented systems.

⁴⁸ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* (CW 5, 112).

literature.⁴⁹ Diamond looks in the works of psychologists such as Freud and Jung, and especially those of the existential psychoanalyst Rollo May, to find models that would facilitate an understanding of bursts of rage, and violent action. Mythical models and concepts are of essential importance: “they speak to us not merely intellectually, but on several different levels of experience at once.” For as Rollo May has argued: “Myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence.”⁵⁰

The Jungian concept (or archetype) of the *shadow* is an important step in understanding the demonic. It was Jung’s way of dealing with the effects of sexual and aggressive impulses on the psyche. The “SHADOW,” according to Jung, is “that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious.”⁵¹ The shadow consists of those parts of the self that are incompatible with the conscious personality; the libido is, nevertheless, in Jung’s theory also the origin of creativity. The more the shadow is hidden from con-

⁴⁹ The American context has witnessed a veritable revival of interest in the moral questions and themes in recent years. ‘Evil’ and ‘demonic’ are also going through a renaissance in this connection. A popular psychologist, M. Scott Peck, published his work, *People of the Lie*, in 1983. Peck is a Christian, and he argues that the concept of ‘evil’ should be rehabilitated in clinical terminology to describe people who have serious deficiencies in their capacity to experience empathy towards other people, and who also enjoy putting down others. Peck also values the Christian ritual of exorcism as a cure. (Peck 1983/1989.) Psychoanalyst Carl Goldberg, too, takes “senseless acts of violence” as his starting point in *Speaking With the Devil* (1996). He addresses case histories replete with religious imagery and language, but insists in interpreting them in terms of psychological “malevolence,” instead of some metaphysical “evil.” Goldberg follows Georges Bataille by maintaining that “malevolence is allowed to grow because it is fostered in a condition of intoxication or madness in which the selfish instincts of childhood predominate and are acted upon with no concern for their consequences to the self or others” (Goldberg 1996, 256.) But he also believes in the analysis of the Trappist writer Thomas Merton: “In actual fact, we are suffering more from the distortion and underdevelopment of our deepest human tendencies than from a superabundance of animal instincts” (ibid., 255). In *The Lucifer Principle* Howard Bloom (1995, 3) contends that “evil is woven into our most basic biological fabric.” According to this view, the evolutionary battle of self-replicating systems manifests itself (inevitably) as “evil” acts and suffering at the level of human experience. An author and a professor of literature, Paul Oppenheimer agrees that ‘evil’ is returning to common use. His *Evil and the Demonic* (1996) is an exploration of the aesthetics of evil in cinema and literature, and also a poetic study of the imagery, atmosphere and language surrounding “monstrous behaviour.” All of these authors offer interesting and colourful examples, but not particularly systematic views or theories of the demonic.

⁵⁰ May 1991, 15. – In his massive study, *Work on Myth* (Arbeit am Mythos, 1979), Hans Blumenberg develops a theory of myths starting from the lack of biologically adaptive instincts (in other words, his theory opposes the traditional view of the human being as a superior *animal symbolicum*); “By means of names, the identity of such factors [invoking indefinite anxiety] is demonstrated and made approachable, and an equivalent of dealings with them is generated. What has become identifiable by means of a name is raised out of its unfamiliarity by means of metaphor and is made accessible, in terms of its significance, by telling stories.” (Blumenberg 1979/1985, 6.)

⁵¹ Jung, *Aion* (1951; CW 9 [Part 2], 266). Emphasis in the original.

sciousness, the more it gives rise to different symptoms. In some cases, under the influence of alcohol, for example, this other personality might temporarily take hold of the individual – who subsequently becomes incapable of understanding his or her own behaviour.⁵² The individuation process, as Jung sees it, consists of confrontation and communication between the dissociated parts of the self (for example, coming to terms with the female component in man, *anima*, or male in woman, *animus*); especially in the areas of creativity and satisfaction in life, contact with the “dark” part is important.⁵³

In Jung’s theory “demonism” denoted the state in which some inadequately integrated complexes take control of the total personality. Because Jung paid attention to the collective level, as well as to individual psychology, he identified a possibility for “collective psychoses of a religious or political nature” – something that the Nazi atrocities during the Second World War seemed to suggest.⁵⁴ Rollo May’s theory of “the daimonic” has basically a more neutral approach to this problematic area.

The daimonic is the urge in every being to affirm itself, assert itself, perpetuate and increase itself. The daimonic becomes evil when it usurps the total self without regard to the integration of that self, or the unique forms and desires of others and their need for integration. It then appears as excessive aggression, hostility, cruelty – the things about ourselves which horrify us most, and which we repress whenever we can or, more likely, project on others. But these are the reverse side of the same assertion which empowers our creativity. All life is a flux between these two aspects of the daimonic.⁵⁵

The *daimon* was placed within various interpretative contexts in the previous chapter. It is important to remember here that daimon is a concept from a polytheistic culture, and that it antedates the development of moral or ontological dualism. The daimon suggests an unknown influence that might be benevolent or malevolent; in other words, it is a perfect myth for the ambivalent status of the unconscious. Diamond points out that the roots of modern psychotherapy are in demonology; even Hippocrates, the father of medicine, was originally trained as an exorcist, and, while launching modern psychology, Sigmund Freud exercised a lasting interest in the “demonological neuroses.”⁵⁶ Discourses on the demonic and those on madness

⁵² Diamond 1996, 96-97.

⁵³ See Jung, “Concerning the Archetypes, With Special Reference to the Anima Concept” (CW 9 [Part I], 54-72), “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation” (CW 9 [Part I], 275-89); Stevens 1982, 210-43.

⁵⁴ Jung, “The Definition of Demonism” (CW 18, 648).

⁵⁵ May 1969/1989, 123. – May’s definition carries traces of the Christian discourse on demonic possession; cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, quoted above, page 29.

⁵⁶ Freud’s interest in witchcraft, possession and similar phenomena may originate from his studies with Charcot. Freud translated Charcot’s discussions of the hysterical nature

have an intimate relationship. The main difference here with the ancient beliefs is that in the modern attitude the conflicting influences of the unknown are perceived as “intruders from the unconscious,” rather than as supernatural, exterior agents.⁵⁷ It is possible to see the demonic as a particular interpretation and modification of the daimonic, developed in a dualistic system of thought; for example, the demonic is situated as “low,” as opposed to “high,” and “evil” as opposed to “good.” It is necessary at first, however, to approach the daimonic, in order to get a background for the ambiguities surrounding demons and the demonic.

The traditional Western imagery of the demonic is condensed in presentations of Hell, that “seething cauldron.” Overt sexuality, bestiality and uninhibited sadistic fantasies are just some of the elements figuring in this rich and controversial heritage. In May’s terms, the emphatically negative interpretation dominating our sense of “the demonic” tells us about our difficulties in dealing with the ambivalent daimonic. “The daimonic,” according to May, “is *any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person*. Sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power are examples.”⁵⁸ Such self-representations which do not acknowledge the central role of body and emotions, or different needs and cravings (in our thought as well as in life) are particularly threatened by these areas. “The daimonic can be either creative or destructive and is normally both,” adds May.⁵⁹ In a confrontation with such a phenomenon, the construction of the self as rationalistic and fully autonomous, is questioned both in the areas of its sovereignty, and in its logic; any clear-cut boundaries do not fit any more, and the logic of “either/or” is replaced by mixed categories and “truths” that depend on acts of interpretation. The daimonic presents human thought, emotion and action as fundamentally interrelated.

The existentialism in May’s and Diamond’s theories manifests itself in the weight they put on *choice*. If daimonic forces are represented, and recognised, they come into awareness; in this way, it should be possible to stop between stimulus and response, and reach toward integrated decisions by preferring a particular response among several possible ones. Freedom is thus not the opposite of determinism. “Freedom is the individual’s capacity *to know that he is the determined one*,” writes May;⁶⁰ it is possible to approach relatively free choices only if one knows as much as possible about the different factors influencing oneself at the moment of decision. As I emphasised in the previous chapter, the daimonic traditionally signifies an experience of limited autonomy; the tragic and epic works of classical Greek poetry portray their characters as crediting their “irrational” actions to the

of medieval “demonomanias,” and referred to these areas in his writings and lectures. (See Freud 1990, 379-81 [“Editor’s Note”]; also in SE 19, 69-71.)

⁵⁷ Diamond 1996, 60-65; see also Freud 1923/1978 (SE 19, 69-105).

⁵⁸ May 1969/1989, 123. Italics in the original.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ May 1967, 175. Italics in the original.

influence of daimons.⁶¹ Diamond emphasises that the “cathartic expression” of the daimonic area is not a sufficient reaction to it. The daimonic has to be integrated into one’s sense of self, otherwise some powerful areas are always making war against the consciousness.⁶² The techniques suggested by Diamond for this process are based on our capacity for dialogue, emotions, and figurative imagination or fantasy.

One traditional Jungian method utilizing the “structure of consciousness” to dialogue directly with the daimonic is a form of waking fantasy known as “active imagination.” In active imagination, the patient may at times be taught to allow images deriving from the daimonic to spontaneously well up into consciousness, permit them to speak, and actively respond to their compelling messages. This technique necessitates a solemn, respectful attitude toward the daimonic, one which takes the daimonic seriously, values it, and honors its voice. With this attitude, Jung’s useful but demanding method of confronting the daimonic symbolically, in one’s inner world of imagination – that is, conscientiously attending to and amplifying the *imagery* of the daimonic, as it appears in dreams, for example – can provide patients with an alternative to having to “act it out” in the outer world.⁶³

Diamond believes that he finds this process illustrated in the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus. This series of plays has been described as a “rite of passage from savagery to civilization.”⁶⁴ It is the only surviving classical Greek trilogy (it remains without the fourth part, the satyr play *Proteus*). The plot, of course, consists of the most famous murders in the bloody history of the house of Tantalus and Atreus, the killing of Agamemnon on his return from Troy by his wife Clytaemnestra, and the subsequent matricide by their son, Orestes. In the third play, *The Eumenides*, Orestes is being pursued by the Furies (*Erinyes*), spirits of vengeance; the play culminates in a trial where Orestes is acquitted and the Furies are transformed into the Eumenides, the Kindly Ones. Diamond focuses on the individual psyche of Orestes and advocates a psychological reading: “the Furies can be seen as the symbols of Orestes’ horrible rage: first, fueling the vengeful, hot-headed murder of his hated mother; then, turning against himself in the form of guilt.”⁶⁵

The idea of Justice, *Dikê*, is central throughout the *Oresteia*, and the tragic conflict in it is rooted in the incompatibility of the individual conceptions of justice. In Nietzsche’s words, “Whatever exists is both just and unjust, and equally justified in both.”⁶⁶ Aeschylus depicts a process of mutual recognition and reconciliation; the “irrational” is brought into contact with conscious deliberation and the drive to maintain balance. The discussions

⁶¹ See above, pp. 24-26.

⁶² Diamond 1996, 223.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 233-34.

⁶⁴ Fagles 1966/1979, 19.

⁶⁵ Diamond 1996, 239.

⁶⁶ Nietzsche 1872/1990, 65 [§ IX]. – The tragic conflict was theorised in analogous terms by Hegel in his *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts* (1835/1988, 1196).

between the leader of the Furies (“the daimonic emotions,” in Diamond’s reading), Apollo (the god representing consciousness),⁶⁷ and Athena (the goddess of good counsel and the personification of the *polis*)⁶⁸ dramatise this process. Apollo abjures the guilt of Orestes for matricide on the grounds that “The woman you call the mother of the child is not the parent, just a nurse to the seed [...]. The *man* is the source of life – the one who mounts.”⁶⁹ The rationalisation is quite transparent, but it is offered as the mythical explanation needed to ward off the taboo of blood-pollution.⁷⁰ The Furies, however, go on crying for vengeance, unabated. The conclusion (here considerably abridged) is one of the pivotal moments in classic literature:

FURIES:

You, you younger gods! – you have ridden down
the ancient laws, wrenched them from my grasp –
and I, robbed of my birthright, suffering, great with wrath,
I loose my poison over the soil, aiee! – [...]

ATHENA:

Let me persuade you.
The lethal spell of your voice, never cast it
down on the land and blight its harvest home.
Lull asleep that salt black wave of anger –
awesome, proud with reverence, live with me.
The land is rich, and more, when its first fruits,
offered for heirs and the marriage rites, are yours
to hold forever, you will praise my words. [...]

LEADER:

Queen Athena,
where is the home you say is mine to hold?

ATHENA:

Where all the pain and anguish end. Accept it.

LEADER:

And if I do, what honour waits for me?

ATHENA:

No house can thrive without you. [...]

⁶⁷ Nietzsche makes this connection: “Apollo is [...] etymologically the ‘lucent’ one, the god of light [...]. Apollo himself may be regarded as the marvellous divine image of the *principium individuationis*, whose look and gestures radiate the full delight, wisdom, and beauty of ‘illusion’.” (Nietzsche 1872/1990, 21-22 [§ I].)

⁶⁸ E.R. Dodds refers to Athena’s original function as the protectress of the Mycenaean kings (Dodds 1951/1973, 54).

⁶⁹ Aeschylus 1979, 260 [*Eum.* ll. 665-69].

⁷⁰ For an interesting view of how the idea of catharsis might be connected to the Greek blood-mystique, see McCumber 1988.

LEADER:

Your magic is working ... I can feel the hate,
the fury slip away.⁷¹

Diamond points out how the daimonic is respected and valued in this drama. The Furies are invited to have a function in the community, and their destructive power is thereby dissipated. Diamond draws parallels between this symbolic unification and the psychological developments of his patients under therapy. He describes their dreams of demons, or of people metamorphosing into snakes, as expressions of their repressed, daimonic areas.⁷² The connection between the creative process and the traditional imagery of evil is beautifully expressed in Aeschylus' drama. The Furies were ambiguous mythical figures, female, sometimes depicted as having their heads wreathed with serpents – in Pythia's lines: "Gorgons I'd call them; but then with Gorgons you'd see the grim, inhuman [...] *These* have no wings, I looked. But black they are, and so repulsive."⁷³ According to legends, the Furies sprang to life from the blood of Ouranos' genitals as they were thrown into the sea. They connect the regenerative powers of nature to death and the spirits of the avenging dead. The Furies contributed to the later ideas about demons who torment people for their sins, and thereby they gradually metamorphosed into personifications of evil.⁷⁴ However, as Robert Fagles notes, "the Furies are a paradox of violence and potential."⁷⁵ According to the theory of the daimonic, the demonic figures are related to the self and thus hide behind their "evil face" an original ambivalence – they are not parts of the conscious ego, but they represent powers of the self that have been repressed. A dialogue with these figures is thereby of dual character: it reveals hidden conflicts and brings them into awareness, having thus integrative potential. Diamond further illustrates this connection by giving brief biographical sketches of some twentieth century artists whose psychological conflicts have fuelled their creativity.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Aeschylus 1979, 266-71 [*Eum.* ll. 792-95, 839-46, 900-3, 908-9].

⁷² This dream-imagery is ancient. Dodds mentions that "we know from a treatise in the Hippocratic corpus (*Virg.* 1, VIII.466 L.), that mental disturbance often showed itself in dreams or visions of angry daemons" (Dodds 1951/1973, 57n70).

⁷³ Aeschylus 1979, 233 [*Eum.* ll. 50-55].

⁷⁴ Alan E. Bernstein notes how the "three personified avenging deities" of Plutarch were modelled on the Furies. Plutarch is concerned with the punishment and purification of evildoers in his *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance*. He argues that the punishing figures and the afterlife (even metempsychosis) is needed to extirpate the evil. (Bernstein 1993, 73-83.) – Jeffrey Burton Russell bestows the (perhaps questionable) honour of "dividing the good gods from the evil demons and shifting the destructive qualities of the gods onto the demons" upon Plato's pupil, Xenocrates (Russell 1988/1993, 25).

⁷⁵ Fagles 1966/1979, 22.

⁷⁶ These include the film director Ingmar Bergman, who has told how he was psychiatrically hospitalised and put under heavy sedation (in 1949, at the age of thirty-one): "Slowly and imperceptibly, my anxiety disappeared – my life's most faithful companion, inherited from both my mother and my father, placed in the very centre of my identity,

OPPOSING READINGS OF THE CONFLICTING SELF

A different reading is put forward by Jean-Pierre Vernant, whose views on *daimon/ethos* conflict I introduced earlier. He thinks that the integration of the Erinyes does not entirely dispense with the contradictions inherent in the *Oresteia*. Rather, this just establishes an equilibrium, which is based on tensions. A vote was taken to clear Orestes from charges, and Vernant emphasises that actually the majority of human judges voted against Orestes – the vote was tied, and only because Athena had cast her lot for Orestes was an absolving verdict reached.⁷⁷ In Vernant's reading, "tragic ambiguity is not resolved; ambivalence remains."⁷⁸ The mythical past and the young democratic society lay different claims to the fundamentals of the city; these tensions in basic values and conceptions of human subjectivity can be analysed in the dialogue between the chorus (an anonymous collective) and the individualised character (the tragic hero). As I have pointed out, ancient tragedy did not recognise the unity of a person in the modern sense; instead, as Aristotle wrote, the character must bend to the requirements of the action (*muthos*).⁷⁹ Vernant claims that the tragic effect of such plays as Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* is constituted by constant reference to two conflicting psychological models, "political psychology" and "mythical psychology." In this way, Vernant comes to his double reading of Heraclitus (discussed above).⁸⁰ The tragedy is not pointing towards true integration; instead, it is Vernant's strategy to focus on hidden tensions and to emphasise conflict as fundamental for tragedy and the human condition.

Suzanne Gearhart, in her *The Interrupted Dialectic* (1992), has explored the use of tragedy in theoretical discourse, and noted how criticism, philosophy and psychoanalysis have an ambivalent relationship to it. Many theories privilege tragic literature, find their theoretical insights confirmed by it, but, according to Gearhart, they are also limited by their particular interpretations of tragedy. In the case of Hegel, for example,

philosophy itself can claim to be higher than tragedy only because it incorporates tragedy into itself, because its own truth has a tragic dimension. The dialectic of tragedy and philosophy is a process out of which philosophy itself emerges as absolute, because of the way it is able to recognize itself in tragedy and merge with it without losing its own identity.⁸¹

my demon but also my friend spurring me on. Not only the torment, the anguish and the feeling of irreparable humiliation faded, but the driving force of my creativity was also eclipsed and fell away." (Bergman, *The Magic Lantern*; quoted in Diamond 1996, 295.)

⁷⁷ Aeschylus 1979, 264-65 [*Eum.*, ll. 750, 767].

⁷⁸ Vernant 1969, 108n2.

⁷⁹ Aristotle 1982, 51 [1450a-1450b]. See above, page 24.

⁸⁰ See above, page 26.

⁸¹ Gearhart 1992, 2. – The "ancient quarrel" between poetry and philosophy has been discussed in Gould 1990 and Rosen 1988.

Particular theories incorporate readings of particular tragedies, depending on the manner of their relation to questions of (tragic) conflict and identification. Stephen Diamond, a psychotherapist, and Jean-Pierre Vernant, a scholar of literature and history, prefer different tragedies (the *Oresteia* and *Seven Against Thebes*, respectively) because they have different theoretical and practical interests invested in tragedy, and these plays sustain these differing interpretations. As Gearhart argues, tragedy and its interpretations are ambiguous in nature; living at the borderlines of identification and conflict, they do not properly fit inside any single identity or discipline.⁸² According to her, tragedy is “less an entity that can be studied from differing theoretical perspectives – be they psychoanalytical, literary-critical, philosophical, or social – than a space in which these different perspectives meet and clash.”⁸³

The interpretation of the daimonic as an element of the self, that can and should be integrated into a larger conception of the human subjectivity, is at odds with the view that holds conflicting elements as fundamentally irresolvable. Following Gearhart’s analysis, the basic attitudes behind these conflicting readings can be seen operating already in the discord apparent in Hegel’s reaction to Kant. The status of subjectivity as a representation based on the categories of the mind is the problematical question this discussion addresses; in the chapter titled “On Applying the Categories to Objects of the Senses As Such” in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant speaks about the “paradoxical” quality of the subject as an observer of itself – “how [the inner] sense exhibits to consciousness even ourselves only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves.”⁸⁴ Gearhart follows Gilles Deleuze in interpreting this as a “split within the Kantian subject,” an alienation of the acting self from the “I” that is an object of representation for the consciousness.⁸⁵

Hegel’s readings of tragedy privilege Sophocles’ *Antigone*; he thought that art in general effects reconciliation of the various oppositions of Kant’s thought – “between subjective thinking and objective things, between the abstract universality and the sensuous individuality of the will,” and between “the practical side of the spirit” as contrasted with “the theoretical”⁸⁶ – and *Antigone* was for Hegel the most successful work of art in this. The conflict between Creon and Antigone embodies for Hegel the conflict between the family and the state, woman and man, and, finally, between nature and reason. The third party in the conflict is represented by the chorus, which is the embodiment of the “ethical community” in the play. Hegel conceives the chorus as “the scene of the spirit”; it makes acceptable the tragic conflicts and even the destruction of individuals, because the chorus illustrates the

⁸² Gearhart 1992, 16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁴ Kant 1781/1996, 192 [B 152-153].

⁸⁵ Gearhart 1992, 49.

⁸⁶ Hegel 1835/1988, 56.

preservation and continuity of the community.⁸⁷ In other words, the Hegelian reading of the chorus perceives it as a symbol of non-egocentric subjectivity, in an analogous move to the construction of a Jungian or existential concept of “self.” In Gearhart’s words, the Greek chorus, as interpreted by Hegel, “encompasses the subject, providing a context for it that is both its other and its own substance, and in this sense it prefigures philosophy in its harmony and in its reconciliation of self and other.”⁸⁸

Gearhart’s criticism of Hegel is that he portrays the conflict between Antigone and Creon as “ultimately superficial and resolvable.”⁸⁹ Hegel is, according to Gearhart and Jauss, “totally ignoring the boundaries separating the ethical and the aesthetic.”⁹⁰ This boundary actually proves to be a fluid one in the case of self-representations. As Kant’s paradoxical “objects,” conceptual and figurative representations of subjectivity are needed for establishing ethical relationships, but at the same time they are open to aesthetic evaluation, as are all representations. One might agree with Stephen Frosh, that “creating a self is like creating a work of art,” but banishing the identity into the area of the aesthetic just relocates the self and its conflicts, it does not solve them. There are several possible and equally justified approaches to the fundamental questions of the aesthetic; when philosophers and psychoanalysts write about the healing powers of the aesthetic, they are probably thinking about such precepts of the classical aesthetics as “unity,” “harmony,” or “consistency between content and form.”⁹¹ Different varieties of modern or postmodern art and aesthetics also take issue with such areas that are commonly perceived as disruptive, ugly, unsettling or destructive. Adopting this kind of aesthetic sensitivity, one might claim with Gearhart that the tragic conflict and heterogeneity in self-representations should never be reduced, or “solved.” There is, however, a danger that the irreconcilable difference is thereby becoming a new, postmodern dogma. One point where I agree with Gearhart is that the dialogue (or “dialectic”) with tragedy, or other texts which confront us with the daimonic, cannot settle for any one theory or perception of it, but has to continually move between them.⁹²

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1211.

⁸⁸ Gearhart 1992, 59.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 59; Gearhart reformulates the criticism of H.R. Jauss, from his article “Dialogique et dialectique” (*Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 89 [April-June 1984]:2).

⁹¹ This is certainly what Hegel valued most highly: “Because drama has been developed into the most perfect totality of content and form, it must be regarded as the highest stage of poetry and of art generally” (Hegel 1835/1988, 1158).

⁹² Gearhart writes that “The question whether identification is an aesthetic or purely psychological or social process is virtually as old as the *Poetics*, and if it has been debated so long and so inconclusively, it can only be that identification, like tragedy, is all of these things at the same time and never a process characteristic of or determined by one of them alone” (Gearhart 1992, 16).

NIETZSCHE'S AESTHETICS AS A DISCOURSE ON THE DAIMONIC

Friedrich Nietzsche made the connection between the self, the aesthetic and the daimonic even more explicit when he celebrated the aesthetic transgression of individual existence in his *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872). "Apollo" is for Nietzsche the moral deity, a symbol for self-control, and embodies, "in order to observe such self-control, a knowledge of the self." He is the "god of individuation and just boundaries."⁹³ The opposing force operating in Greek tragedy was, according to Nietzsche, Dionysus. The historical connection between the development of tragedy into an art form and Dionysian ritual was employed by Nietzsche to construct a daimonic reading of tragedy.⁹⁴ The violence and ecstasy of the worshippers of Dionysus stood in powerful contrast to the self-possessed and controlled civic ideal; the central ritual in the cult of Dionysus (*sparagmos*) was the tearing apart of a live animal, eating its flesh and drinking its blood. The ritual re-enacts the mystery associated with this god: Dionysus was, according to a myth, killed by the Titans, who tore him apart and ate some of the pieces. Some parts of the god were saved and Dionysus was believed to arise from the dead each year in Delphi. As a symbol of death, disintegration and rebirth, Dionysus was an important fertility god who had the demi-human Pan and satyrs as his companions. Nietzsche interpreted the attraction of the Dionysian as a transgression beyond the "limits and moderations" of an individual. This register of animalistic violence, suffering and ecstasy offers an alternative way to approach existence; not in "Apollonian" images or concepts of clear-cut identities, but by acting out the conflicting or unifying aspects of it.⁹⁵ "Excess revealed itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke from the very heart of nature."⁹⁶ Nietzsche is here inquiring into the metaphysical assumptions inherent in our conception of our subjectivity.

[...] I feel myself impelled to the metaphysical assumption that the truly existent primal unity, eternally suffering and contradictory, also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasurable illusion, for its continuous redemption. And we, completely wrapped up in this illusion and composed of it, are

⁹³ Nietzsche 1872/1990, 34, 65 [§§ IV, IX]. Francis Golffing's translation. I have mainly used here Walter Kaufmann's version, which is scholarly, but often stylistically inferior to that of Golffing.

⁹⁴ Nietzsche is building largely on the information in Aristotle's *Poetics*: that tragedy developed from the "impromptus by the leaders of the dithyrambic chorus," and that it was originally "satyric" (*satyrikon*: designed to be danced by a chorus of satyrs; Aristotle 1982, 48-49 [1449a10-11, 23]). Euripides' *Bacchae* is a dramatisation of the confrontation between the Attic society and the arrival of the Dionysian cult. The cult was finally acknowledged, and incorporated in the existing religious institution (the Dionysian rituals ruled the sacred religious centre of Delphi during the winter months, until the return of Apollo in the spring; see Silk - Stern 1981, 179).

⁹⁵ Kaufmann translates this term as "Apollinian." I follow here Young (1992/1996, 32-5).

⁹⁶ Nietzsche 1872/1967, 46-47 [§ IV]. Trans. Walter Kaufmann.

compelled to consider this illusion as the truly nonexistent – i.e., as a perpetual becoming in time, space, and causality – in other words, as empirical reality. If, for the moment, we do not consider the question of our own “reality,” if we conceive of our empirical existence, and of that of the world in general, as a continuously manifested representation of the primal unity, we shall then have to look upon the dream as a *mere appearance of mere appearance*, hence as a still higher appeasement of the primordial desire for mere appearance.⁹⁷

In his study, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (1992), Julian Young points out that the metaphysical theory in *The Birth of Tragedy* comes from Arthur Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Representation* (1819) takes Kant's categories of thought as a starting point, but posits the “will” as a reality evidenced by the painful striving in nature and human life. Nature is filled with *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war, all against all, in Hobbes's phrase), and Schopenhauer was ready to describe this ultimate reality in demonic, rather than divine terms.⁹⁸ Nietzsche pays special attention to the demonic in his work, but his attitude is more sympathetic to the ambivalence of the Greek daimonic, than towards the Schopenhauerian perception of the nature as evil or morally repugnant. Later, as Nietzsche had made his differences to his former idol clear, he commented that Schopenhauer “remained entangled in the moral-Christian ideal,” seeing the will (and, thereby, nature or “in-itself of things”) as “bad, stupid, and absolutely reprehensible.”⁹⁹ The Kantian “disinterested” contemplation in an aesthetic experience was for Schopenhauer as well an important phenomenon; in this experience we “lose” ourselves, and “we are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception but the two have become one since the entire consciousness is filled and occupied by a single image of perception.”¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche retained the idea of the integrative function in art, but the “ugliness and disharmony” of tragic myth, the violence and ecstasy, provided him with a more accurate aesthetics than the idea of disinterested contemplation. Nietzsche was not justifying any detached aestheticism as he wrote that “it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*”;¹⁰¹ the Dionysian rite was for Nietzsche an alternative response to the problem of the self – the model of the ego as an intellectual observer is replaced by a dynamic fusion at the ecstatic moment of action.

In song and dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is on the way toward fly-

⁹⁷ Ibid., 45 [§ IV].

⁹⁸ Schopenhauer (1819/1969, 275-76) relates how the “wisest of all mythologies,” the Indian, expresses the power of nature in the figure of Shiva, and in his opposed attributes (the necklace of skulls, and the lingam, the stylised phallus). See also Schopenhauer 1819/1977, 349 and the interpretation by Young (1992/1996, 7).

⁹⁹ Nietzsche 1968, 521 [§1005].

¹⁰⁰ Schopenhauer 1819/1977, 118-19; translation by Young (1992/1996, 12).

¹⁰¹ Nietzsche 1872/1967, 52 [§ V]. Italics in the original.

ing into the air, dancing. His very gestures express enchantment. Just as the animals now talk, and the earth yields milk and honey, supernatural sounds emanate from him, too: he feels himself a god, he himself now walks about enchanted, in ecstasy, like the gods he saw walking in his dreams. He is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art [...].¹⁰²

The inversion of the traditional dualism between the subject and object signals also other transgressive features, that Nietzsche is able to perceive in tragedy and the daimonic. He pays special attention to the connection of tragedy to the satyric, and claims that “the satyr, the fictitious natural being, bears the same relation to the man of culture that Dionysian music bears to civilization.”¹⁰³ Nietzsche’s aesthetic interest was directed towards the tension between harmony and dissonance, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, but he emphasises the significance of the discordant, often ignored by classical scholars. The principal target of Nietzsche’s attack was not the harmonious Apollonian, but what he called the “demon of Socrates” – the intellectual animosity towards the mythical “truths.” The first version of the study was titled “Socrates and Instinct”¹⁰⁴ (in 1870), and Nietzsche wrote that tragedy was destroyed by the conflict between the Dionysian spirit and the Socratic version of rationality.

Dionysus had already been scared from the tragic stage, by a demonic power speaking through Euripides. Even Euripides was, in a sense, only a mask: the deity that spoke through him was neither Dionysus nor Apollo, but an altogether newborn demon [Dämon], called *Socrates*.¹⁰⁵

Nietzsche’s theory is nowhere presented clearly and unambiguously, but he actually opposed the figure of Socrates on the grounds of a daimonic view of selfhood. As Plato writes in the *Apology*, Socrates was notorious for questioning the wisdom of his contemporaries; when he examined the poets, for example, he concluded that “it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean.”¹⁰⁶ Socrates also spoke about his *daimonion*, the inner voice which only dissuaded and warned him from making mistakes; Nietzsche’s alternative figure to this “perfect non-mystic” was the satyr, and daimonic selfhood. “The satyr, as the Dionysiac chorist, dwells in a reality sanctioned by myth and ritual,” Nietzsche writes.¹⁰⁷ Satyrs are creatures of myths, and, according to Nietzsche, myth is necessary for our existence: “The images of the myth have to be the unnoticed omnipresent demonic guardians, under whose care the young soul grows to maturity and whose

¹⁰² Ibid., 37 [§ I].

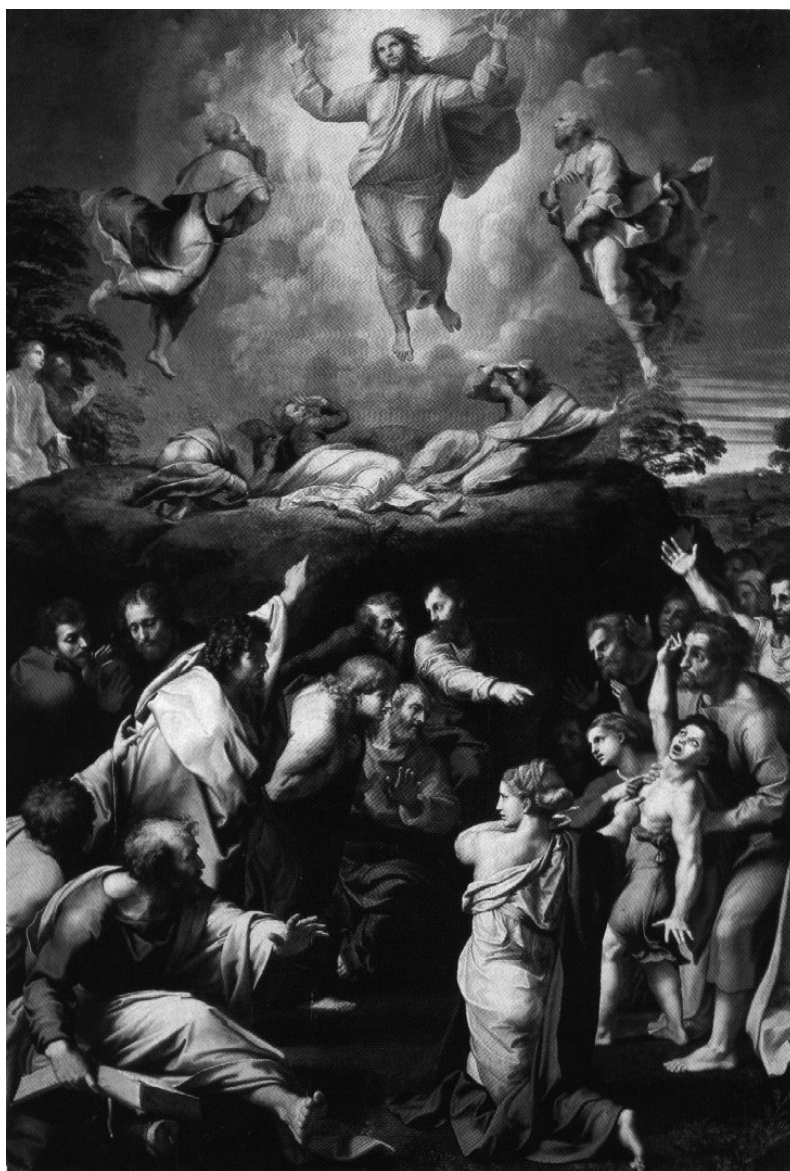
¹⁰³ Ibid., 59 [§ VII].

¹⁰⁴ Silk - Stern 1981, 43.

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche 1872/1967, 82 [§ XII].

¹⁰⁶ Plato 1954/1969, 51 [21b-22e].

¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche 1872/1990, 50 [§ VII]. Here in Golfing’s translation.



“The Transfiguration” by Raphael (Vatican Museums).

signs help the man to interpret his life and struggles.”¹⁰⁸ There can be no such separation of the rational self from the “errors” of myths and instincts as the Socratic scepticism and Platonic idealism seem to suggest: Nietzsche adopts the figure of satyr to point out the borderline character of selfhood. Half-divine, having also the animal half, this “daimon” of Nietzsche powerfully illustrates those ambiguous aspects of subjectivity that are not in consciousness.

Nietzsche’s aim was to consider aesthetics seriously – as the “truly metaphysical activity,” he claimed in his original preface.¹⁰⁹ He criticises Schopenhauer, whose metaphysics he otherwise endorses, as sticking with the distinction between subjective and objective in the area of aesthetics;

¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche 1872/1967, 135 [§ XXIII]. (Trans. Kaufmann.)

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Nietzsche claims that we are not “the true authors of this art world.”¹¹⁰ The illusory character of our conception of selfhood is broken down in Dionysian rapture, but art is nevertheless “not merely imitation of the reality of nature but rather a metaphysical supplement of the reality of nature.”¹¹¹ The myths and illusions of identity are necessary for life, but Dionysian art breaks down these structures producing painful pleasure that Nietzsche likens to that of musical dissonance; the “daimonic truth” reveals our selves as transitory fictions, but simultaneously offers powerful “metaphysical comfort” (*Metaphysischer Trost*).¹¹² The painful dissolution makes us “look into the terrors of the individual existence,” but our simultaneous identification with the chorus as well as the tragic heroes makes us part of the daimonic life force – “In spite of fear and pity, we are the happy living beings, not as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose creative joy we are knitted.”¹¹³

Nietzsche illustrates this ambivalent horror with the ancient legend of King Midas hunting and catching the wise Silenus, a companion of Dionysus (an old man with a horse’s ears, often identified with satyrs). The king asked him what was man’s greatest good, but Silenus was reluctant to answer. As Midas forced him, the “daemon” says (according to Nietzsche): “Ephemeral wretch, begotten by accident and toil, why do you force me to tell you what it would be your greatest boon not to hear? What would be best for you is quite beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best is to die soon.”¹¹⁴ Another example, this time from the visual arts, is “The Transfiguration” by Raphael (1517, a panel in the Vatican museums). This dramatic painting divides into two, powerfully conflicting and contrasting realms. The upper part of the painting depicts the ascending figure of Christ, bathing in transcendental light as a soothing centre of attention. The lower area is the domain of earthly existence, filled with the wild gestures of the disciples, unable to help the possessed boy.¹¹⁵ The possessed boy and the figure of Christ reflect on the redemptive role of illusion: it is necessary to transcend chaos and pain into an illusion of “Oneness.” Both the Apollonian (conceptual, conscious) and Dionysian (the “outside” of conceptual and conscious) areas need to be recognised, but the latter is

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 52 [§ V]. (Golffing translates this as “the true originators of the art realm” [Nietzsche 1872/1990, 41].)

¹¹¹ Ibid., 140 [§ XXIV].

¹¹² Ibid., 59 [§ VII], 108-9 [§ XVII]; cf. Silk - Stern 1981, 191. – The double movement (the simultaneous affirmation of logical opposites) at the epistemological, ontological and moral levels of Nietzsche’s theory make it dynamic and complex. David Lenson (1987, 111) characterises *The Birth of Tragedy* as a “revolutionary” work that aims at changing consciousness itself. Alternatively, one might rather say that it changes the way the status of consciousness is conceptualised.

¹¹³ Ibid., 104-5 [§ XVII].

¹¹⁴ Golffing’s translation; Nietzsche 1872/1990, 29 [§ III]. Cf. Nietzsche 1872/1967, 42.

¹¹⁵ The story in question is narrated in its different versions in Mt. 17:14-20; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.

implicitly a more comprehensive and important area for Nietzsche – he perceives in the pain and the demonic possession a way to experience the “sole ground of the world: the ‘mere appearance’ here is the reflection of eternal contradiction, the father of things.”¹¹⁶

Nietzsche’s reading of the painful and conflicting situation depicted in Raphael’s painting differs from the religious interpretation: the figure of Christ embodies one solution, but the main thrust of Nietzsche’s thinking goes in the opposite direction. The colliding multitudes of the “low” alternative have a theoretical and existential priority. The “ground of being” connects Nietzsche’s reading to the German metaphysical tradition, going at least back into Jacob Böhme (1575-1624), named as “the father of German philosophy” by Hegel.¹¹⁷ The philosophical-religious dialectic of Böhme was systematised by Hegel’s philosophy; the tension between divine *Ungrund* (Abyss) and *Urgrund* (Primal Foundation) leads into Attraction, Diffusion, and (as their synthesis) to the Agony. Dialectical thinking is a conceptual means to capture the dynamic character of nature: as Böhme wrote, of how “life and death, goodness and evil are at once in each thing.”¹¹⁸ This metaphysical theory posits the conflict in the divine ground of being itself – the existence of “evil” is explained as the suffering of God as he yearns for self-realisation.¹¹⁹ Nature was even more emphatically amoral for Nietzsche, and he also differed from Böhme and Hegel in the question of eventual synthesis, or reconciliation of the primary conflict. It is the paramount Socratic illusion for Nietzsche that thought, “using the thread of logic,” could correct the “abysses of being.”¹²⁰ *The Birth of Tragedy* ends in an exhortation to sacrifice in the “temple of both deities”; the therapeutic illusion (the Apollonian) and the tension, madness and suffering (the Dionysian) are two necessary moments in Nietzsche’s daimonic reading.¹²¹ Both must be confronted and recognised without reducing either into the other. These two alternatives of reading are central also in the next chapter, that proceeds to study the demonic and subjectivity in the context of theoretical explorations of ‘textuality.’

¹¹⁶ Nietzsche 1872/1967, 45 [§ IV].

¹¹⁷ Nugent 1983, 166.

¹¹⁸ Böhme, *Hohe und tiefe Gründe von dem Dreyfachen Leben des Menschen* (Amsterdam, 1682); quoted in Carus 1900/1996, 156.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 153. – For Böhme’s views on the devil and the authorship, see page 280n98.

¹²⁰ Nietzsche 1872/1967, 95 [§ XV].

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 144 [§ XXV].