

*How very noble!
One who finds awakening
in the lightning-flash*

(Basho)

It struck me lately that Nietzsche's style is not entirely dissimilar to the strategy employed by the Zen koan. I'm thinking in particular of the haikus of Basho: short, aphoristic bursts of supersaturated feelings, pressurized information, aimed to awaken and reorient consciousness towards new directions. The author of the haiku plays a subtle game of exchanging masks. Each voice, whether of the dawn, the crickets, the lightning, or the sea, is a gradient into other voices. Their chorus become constellations of breakpoints, fragmenting into still other registers of sound and light. The words explode the page to reconstruct the world.

The book interprets reality, but reality interprets the interpreter. The word, the partial text-object, has no independent form: it becomes only in relation to other becomings, and can also heal by this sharp intensity of feeling. After a long period of illness, just hearing music can make one weep for joy, rejuvenated by a resurgence to health, and rejoicing that one didn't give up. A case in point that affect causes thinking, which is why thinking always errs at ascribing causes. For words are already a complex assemblage of affects; the sentence coordinates this swarm of noise and silence. The book explodes the universe only to reorganize the self — only in rare circumstances do forces converge which create a self capable of meaning 'I', of doing 'I'!

The movement towards self-certainty in Nietzsche's work is undoubtedly as much a 'mask' as that of the Zen sage's clarity — the style is more often celebrated than really explained, at least insofar as higher consciousness, 'daybreak!', is recognized to be a personal and introspective journey, at least as much as it is a spontaneous reorientation of the social space. Much like Zen, Nietzsche's perspective on ethics is a morality of action, not of hope, need, or anxiety — but of acting, doing and becoming. Activity is enlightenment, an ethical paradox: "The truth cannot possibly be on both sides: and is it on either of them? Test them and see." (163)

The ethical act is always a *new* enunciation which reorganizes disparate spheres into new positions, unfolding new communicational spaces. Thus ethics as such is the meticulous construction of a new procedural style, the attainment of artistry in distinction. Ethics is plural, the fulgurations of inter-related insights which forge a new mode of interpretation, a new discourse, behavior and social organization; thus morality as system is unitary, singular, and incomplete. Yet custom is that instrument by which we unconsciously adjudicate (almost) all moral properties, whether of word, human or world.

We must always have a system, a scale, even chaos is a plan, a kind of dimensional break. But no single method can tell us how to behave all the time: "...there is no such thing as a morality with an exclusive monopoly of the moral..." (165) Furthermore, the universal goal is experimenting with variations and juxtapositions of multiple regimes social organization, from the collective field of social intensity to the private solitude of individual activity. Again, strength lies in multiplicity, just as desire is not singular but a swarm, a hydra, a snaking river with many sources: "...every morality that affirms itself alone destroys too much valuable

strength and is bought too dear.” (165) The price we pay for singularization is the fact of singularization: not conformity, but simple unity.

Not emptiness, but blank positivity. No creation and no destruction: equilibrium.

One morality alone denotes a State, a function whose object is itself — to administer, to purify, to protect and to expel the exceptions. Can we conceive of a time when the scattered nomads are no longer enemies, when experimentation and creativity are really embraced and not only paid lip-service? Nietzsche writes that should such a daybreak come, we may yet see an enlightened and liberating shift in social arrangements:

Men who deviate from the usual path and are so often the inventive and productive men shall no longer be sacrificed; it shall not even be considered disgraceful to deviate from morality, either in deed or in thought; numerous novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society; a tremendous burden of bad conscience shall be expelled from the world — these most universal goals ought to be recognized and furthered by all men who are honest and seek the truth (165).