

The ghostly dance of Zarathustra

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Maris's *De Dans van Zarathustra: Nietzsche en de vrolijke rechtswetenschap* (2006) (hereafter 'Dans I'), outlines an epistemology and a state theory, and in addition introduces *Nietzsche-Niëzky-Nijinsky: De Dans van Zarathustra* (2004) (hereafter 'Dans II') where Nietzsche and Nijinsky - the dancer and the philosopher, body and spirit, thesis and antithesis (Dans I at 32) - will be conjured for a debate, a dramatised dialogue, philosophical theatre (Dans I at 34). Remarkable coincidences are pointed to: Nietzsche loses his mind in 1889, dies in 1900; Nijinsky is born in 1889, loses his mind in 1919, and dies in 1950 (Dans I at 32). But there is even more: they appear to share an ancestor in the mythical Niëzky, the aristocratic polish ancestor Nietzsche constructs for himself in a delirious letter dating from 1888 (Dans I at 33). Maris hypothesises that Niëzky is the original superman, combining thinking and dancing in one person and thus possessing a perfect unity of body and soul (Dans I at 33). In later generations, body and mind tragically separate, yet keep on searching for their missing half as recounted in Plato's *Symposium* (Dans I at 33). This lack gives rise to artistic expression. Around 1900 the spiritual finds its highest expression in the dancing philosophy of Nietzsche and the bodily in the dancing art of Nijinsky (Dans I at 33). In their personal lives, this lonely separation of body and soul however leads in both instances to madness (Dans I at 33). In the political context, Nietzsche proposes an aristocratic class society where an elite of artist-tyrants rule over the masses, while they (the artist-tyrants) stand above the law (Dans I at 10). Although the author agrees with Nietzsche's perspectivism, he views Nietzsche's elitist state model as inappropriate in the modern age where geniuses seldom excel in more than one sphere (Dans I at 30): non-conformist individuals should indeed be allowed as much freedom as possible to pursue their own goals, but this should not be at the expense of others. The elite should above all not be allowed to legislate for others (Dans I at 31). The liberal-democratic constitutional state, the author concludes, provides the best guarantee for the freedom of all individuals (Dans I at 24).

Dans II serves as a kind of doubling of the scientific discourse in Dans I. Yet this is a strange doubling which seems to envelop the discourse in Dans I in an unexpected way. Here (in Dans II), different from what we find e.g. in Plato's *Republic* Book X (595a-608b), there is no original, no truth, no simple, no reality that precedes the double or the copy. Two erotic dancers are conjured: Nijinsky as the erotic faun and Nietzsche with his dancing metaphors (Dans II at 7, 15, 35, 37), suggesting a form of 'gestural writing' by both. As is however suggested by the positing of a fictional father (Niëzky) standing as model for Nietzsche's superman (Dans II at 7), the dancers as

conjured here do not appear as former living bodies, but, as has been said of the Mime in Mallarmé's *Mimique*, as 'phantom[s] of no flesh, wandering about without a past, without any death, birth or presence' (Jacques Derrida *Dissemination* (2004) 217). The doubles multiply without limit in this text: The author, doubling as performer of both 'Nietzsche' and 'Nijinsky', declares himself to be double (Dans II at 7); the text itself is double, that is, split between fragments and commentary; Nietzsche's *The Wanderer and his Shadow* is invoked (Dans II at 11) as well as *Ecce Homo* where Nietzsche declares his own double nature (Dans II at 11); and Nijinsky himself is said to be a double and to have had his own shadow (Dans II at 19). With Niëzky posited as forefather of Nietzsche and Nijinsky we are inevitably reminded of Hoffman's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* which is likewise about two men who, without them knowing it, come from the same father and suffer from the same mental disorders (for discussion, see Otto Rank *Der Doppelgänger: Eine Psychoanalytische Studie* (1925) 18-20; Sigmund Freud *Standard Edition* (2001) vol XVII at 233-4). In 'The "Uncanny"' Freud attributes this phenomenon (under which falls the figure of the double) to a return of repressed childhood experiences, thereby implicitly relying on the Platonic conception of repetition (i.e. the return of an original experience). Yet he is left with a nagging doubt as to the accuracy of this theory in view of literature (inter alia that of Hoffmann) which suggests that another kind of law is at stake here (Freud vol XVII at 249; Derrida *Dissemination* 306 fn 67). Dans II appears to further develop Freud's suggestions in this regard through the invocation of Zarathustra's question about a new force and a new law (Dans II at 40) ('Zijt gij een nieuwe kracht en een nieuw recht?') and through the posing of a double question about the horror vacui: 'Opent Gods dood geen peilloze afgrond, zonder bodem om op te dansen?' and 'Hoe laat een oneindige leegte zich denken?' (Dans II at 17). In thinking this abyss and its new law, Nietzsche's notion of eternal return (Dans II at 44) is obviously of great importance. This is not to be understood as simply a return of the same. The multiplication of doubles in Dans II and the uncanny time sequence of the two publications make this clear: an allusion is to be found here to Plato's discussion (and condemnation) in the *Republic* of the copy of a copy, that is, a copy which is, in a sense, itself original. The return (of the double) in this way becomes 'original', there being no prior presence that gets repeated (Jacques Derrida *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1987) 351-2). In Dans II there is no condemnation of the appearance of the copy of a copy, but an affirmation: the author, through a series of doublings, performs this return through a certain kind of writing on himself (as author/performer), producing himself on a 'stage' - a Lutheran Church doubling as University auditorium - which at the same time undermines the idea of 'an orderly physical and logical space' (Dans II at 17; Dans I at 5). This performance subtly hints at the return of what can be called arche-writing, a certain madness beyond reason, the demonic, a pleasure without end, or an event of unbinding which has never been a past present, and which disrupts the self (see in general Derrida *The Post Card* and Jacques Derrida *Writing and Difference* (1978)). As we know from Derrida's *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), this latter 'event' can in the political context be translated into the democracy to come, which likewise calls for the suspension of the

calculations and limitations intrinsic to all those states calling themselves (liberal) democratic. Dans II alludes to this democracy to come with its implications of an equality without limit through the invocation of the following, seemingly naive, yet thought-provoking statement of Nijinsky: 'Ik zeg vaak, maar wordt niet begrepen, dat iedereen een neus en ogen, enzovoort heeft, en dat we daarom allemaal gelijk zijn. Ik wil daarmee zeggen dat je iedereen moet liefhebben' (Dans II at 43).