On the Horizon:
Nietzsche’s Lady Dawn and Deleuze’s Sky-Chance

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Abstract
This interpretation of Nietzsche’s (Zarathustra III) and Deleuze’s (Difference and Repetition) highly poetic passages on the Greek goddess Eos (Aurora, Dawn) and the “sky-chance”—set in the context of the eternal return—emphasizes the role in both thinkers of Greek cosmogony. Of particular importance are the notions (figures) of earth-sky and Chaos in its double-sense of disorder and earth-sky gap or interface, where the latter is also the extended surface of the “horizon.” Nietzsche calls Lady Dawn a “table for dice players” and “dance floor for accidents”—suggesting the momentary event of her appearance, her radical contingency—and an “abyss of light,” suggesting the possibility of upper-sky/deep-earth inversion. Deleuze speaks of the “dice” that are “thrown against the sky” or “sky-chance,” suggesting the singularity of repetition (of dawns, future possibilities) and radical openness of the future. His “hinge between two tables” seems to interpret Nietzsche’s horizontal gap or double-horizon as a porous, flat surface of time (Aion) “through which” the dice are thrown—suggesting the possibility not just of the vertical reversibility (inversion) of earth-sky but of a flattening-out or projection of the vertical dice-throw onto a horizontal table or game-board. But in the original Homeric myth Dawn rises into pure singularity from her horizon-couch, where she lies at night with her lover Tithonos, and this dualism of horizontal embedment and vertical singularity could describe the two sides or aspects of mytho-poetic-metaphysical language: its force of figuration—the horizontal “couching” of one thing or idea in terms of another—and its vertical singularity that lies beyond all embedment.

Keywords
Nietzsche, Deleuze, Lady Dawn, couch, horizon, cosmogony, singularity, dice-throw, sky-chance, figuration
Nietzsche’s thinking is mythopoetic on many levels, not least in the conception of major themes like that of the eternal return. In his late version of the return he speculates that all possible combinations of the cosmos must repeat if we have an infinite amount of time, but in Zarathustra Nietzsche also associates this self-repeating cosmos with the ancient mythic symbol of the ouroboros, the snake (dragon) eating its own tail. He was naturally fascinated by Greek cosmogonies, for these mythopoetic descriptions of the early formation of the cosmos combine physical cosmology with the personifications (gods and goddesses) of myth. He was excited by the images/conceptions of Chaos and Abyss and also of Eos (Aurora, Dawn) and Hespera (Evening, Twilight); Dawn and Twilight mark the day-night transition or difference and thus possess great metaphorical as well as physical force. Perhaps Nietzsche was most moved by the beauty and metaphysical scope of Dawn. Her key role is to usher in each new day, yet while the “same” dawn (dawning) will be repeated countless times, this thinker-of-dawn reflected that each new day opened by the beautiful goddess is radically contingent, singular, different from all the others.

The interpretation pursued here of Nietzsche’s poetic homily to Eos (Dawn) in Zarathustra III will return to Greek cosmogonic myth and also look ahead to Deleuze’s mythopoetic and metaphysical expansions of the Nietzsche passage in Difference and Repetition. The key cosmogonic images are those of a primordial Chaos, out of which earth and sky emerged, and the sky-earth interface, gap or difference itself as a flat and indefinitely extended horizontal surface or “horizon.” In the ancient mythic model this earth-sky gap is already correlated with Chaos (Xaiein in Greek means “gap”) and/or with the “abyss”—earth’s limitless downward extension as the under-earth or Tartaros. Nietzsche goes a step further and calls Eos the “heavenly abyss of light”—thus inverting upper-sky and deep-earth.

Nietzsche also seems to distinguish Dawn’s singularity, in the initial moment or event of her early-morning rising from the horizon toward the zenith, from a

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1 Several essays in Daybreak, for example, discuss the “dawn” of civilizations, and Twilight of the Idols treats of the “twilight” of dogmatic philosophies and religions. The idea of eternal return points to (and equates) future and past; Beyond Good and Evil is a “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.”

2 Horizein in Greek means the circular boundary or limit, and we normally think of it as the line marking the earth (sea)—sky dividing line; here I use it to include the sense of the plane surface that constitutes the earth-sky interface, that is, the surface we see when we cut a sphere in half.

3 “... misty Tartaros... where is the deepest gulf below earth; ... as far beneath Hades as sky is from earth” (Homer, Iliad viii 13). Abyss is Abgrund [“off-ground”] in German; see Note 10.
“twosomeness” which we could associate with the horizon (earth-sky) or with her “embedment” in/on it: in the best-known myth of Lady Dawn, that found in Homer, she sleeps with her lover Tithonos on their horizontal couch (the couch on/of the horizon) before rising alone, single or singular, before the sun (Helius) to light the new day. Nietzsche also correlates Eos with Zufall (accident), Ohngefähr (chance) and Übermuth (overflowing spirit, playfulness), saying she is “a dance floor for divine accidents, . . . a divine table for divine dice and dice players” (“Vor Sonnen-Aufgang,” KSA.24 210; Kaufmann 278). To more fully explore the correlation of this “double-horizon” of floor-table with the “abysmal” inversion of upper-world/lower-world, and thus with the game of pure chance or (chaotic) contingency, it will be helpful to look at Deleuze’s “reading.”

Deleuze in Difference and Repetition correlates singularity with repetition, distinguishing this from doubleness, exchange and generality; I will suggest that doubleness and exchange may be correlated with the Greek cosmogonic horizon—from which Lady Dawn rises in pure singularity—and with her couch (lexeon) on which, until the immanent moment of the dawn (the “dawning”), she lies embedded in romantic exchange with her consort Tithonos. Though not referring specifically to the Dawn image, Deleuze makes more explicit but also complicates Nietzsche’s doubling of the horizon (earth-sky interface) as “dance floor” and “divine table”: “The dice are thrown against the sky. . . . They fall back to earth. . . . It is a game of two tables. How could there not be a fracture at the limit or along the hinge between the two tables. . . . The fracture or hinge is the form of empty time, the Aion through which pass the throws of the dice. . . . A broken Earth corresponds to a fractured sky. . . .” I will pursue an interpretation of this mythopoetic and spatio-temporal model by setting it, once again, in the Greek cosmogonic context and by relating it to Deleuze’s “sky-chance” as the repetition of each new day, of the dawning of each new day, which brings with it the singularity of an immanent and unpredictable difference.

By way of conclusion I will note that Lady Dawn’s lexeon or “couch” can also have the verbal sense (in French and English) of “couching” one thing (idea, meaning) in terms of another and thus of metaphoricity and figuration. I will suggest a correlation of the horizon-couch on which Eos (already “figured” as Lady Dawn by Homer and Nietzsche) sleeps with Tithonos—until she arises as the Dawn—with the doubleness and self-embedment, perhaps also the Nietzschean Übermuth (over-spiritedness, playfulness, excessiveness) of that mythopoetic, figurative yet also extravagantly metaphysical rhetoric in which both Nietzsche and Deleuze, in these Dawn passages, may be said to indulge themselves. Here the
Übermuth might become a sort of *aporia* term since earlier its correlation by Nietzsche with the rising Lady Dawn’s pure chance and singularity had been assumed; however, even in her earliest cosmogonic manifestations Eos might be said to possess an essential “twosomeness” as embedment and rising, horizontality and verticality, geophysical (or astrophysical) event and mythic-metaphysical “figure.”

### Eos and Aither in Homeric, Hesiodic and Orphic Myth

Books and also new narrative sections of books in Homer’s epics sometimes open with the phrase, as at the start of *Odyssey* viii, “When young dawn with her rose- red fingers shone [*phane rododaktulos Eos*, shone rosy-fingered dawn] once more, . . .” (Lawall 287); at the opening of *Odyssey* v we have “As Dawn rose up from bed [*ek lexeon ornuth*, from bed arose] by her lordly mate Tithonos, / bringing light to immortal gods and mortal men [*in athanatoisi phoos pheroi he de brotoisin, to immortals light bringing and mortals], / . . .” (Lawall 260). Homer’s “rosy-fingered young Dawn,” one of his best-known figures, rises from her couch or bed on the southeastern horizon—at a point associated in myth with the eastern isle of Delos, sacred birthplace of the sun-god Apollo, and neighboring Ortygia—and sometimes sits just above the horizon on her “splendid throne” (*euthronos*) or “golden throne” (*krusothronos*).4 Also, according to myth, “At the close of every night, rosy-fingered, saffron-robbed Eos, a daughter of the Titans Hyperion and Theia, rises from her couch in the east, mounts her chariot drawn by the horses Lampus and Phaëthon, and rides to Olympus, where she announces the approach of her brother Helius [the sun]. When Helius appears, she becomes Hemera [Day], and accompanies him on his travels until, as Hespera [evening], she announces their safe arrival on the western shores of Ocean” (Graves 149).5

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4 In James Jones’ *The Thin Red Line* (1962), the American colonel tells his men he studied Homer’s *Iliad* (“the best preparation for war”) at West Point, giving them the Greek for “rosy-fingered dawn,” *rododaktulos Eos* (ροδοδακτυλοσ Εοσ). Nick Nolte plays the part in Terrence Malick’s excellent 1998 film, uttering the harsh-sounding Greek as he gazes at the nearby hills in early morning light. It is the Pacific island of Guadalcanal, and we know the Japanese soldiers are up there somewhere waiting.

5 Therefore in *Odyssey* xxiii 273-280, once Penelope finally sees that this stranger is truly her husband Odysseus because he knows their “secret of the bed”—long ago he had cut their bed from a huge olive tree that grew “inside our court” (and thus *in the center* rather than *on the horizon*)—Athena delays the coming of dawn on their first night together after twenty years: “Dawn with her rose-red fingers might have shone / upon their tears, if with her glinting eyes / Athena had not thought of one more thing. / She held back the night, and night lingered long / at
We know roughly how the ancient Greeks, quite possibly like the peoples of many early cultures, viewed the earth-and-sky from scattered references in Homer: “The sky is a solid hemisphere like a bowl. It covers the round flat earth [on which we stand as if on the upper flat surface of a hemisphere whose ‘other half’ is the ‘inverted’ hemisphere of the sky above]. The lower part of the gap between earth and sky, up to and including the clouds, contains αηρ[air] or mist: the upper part (sometimes called the ouranos itself) is αιθηρ, aither [ether], the shining upper air, which is sometimes conceived as fiery . . .” (Kirk 10).6 “Below its surface, the earth stretches far downwards, and has its roots in or above Tartarus.”

The best-known and arguably most “proto-scientific” Greek creation myth is the cosmogonic narrative presented at the beginning of Hesiod’s Theogony, which appeared not long after Homer’s epic poems in probably the 8th century B.C.7

Verily first of all did Chaos [Χαοσ] come into being, and then broad-bosomed Gaia [earth], a firm seat of all things for ever, and misty Tartaros in a recess of broad-wayed earth, and Eros. . . . Out of Chaos, Erebos and black Night [Nyx] came into being; and from Night, again, came Aither and Day, whom [Gaia] conceived and bore after mingling in love with Erebos. And Earth [then] brought forth [out of herself] starry Ouranos [sky], equal to herself, to cover her completely round about, to be a firm seat for the blessed gods. . . . Holy sky passionately longs to penetrate the earth, and desire takes hold of earth to achieve this union. Rain from her bedfellow sky falls and impregnates earth. . . . (Kirk 24-25, 29)

Mother Earth, then, after emerging along with Tartaros and Eros out of Chaos, generates Father Sky, who now “covers her completely round about” or in effect

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6 “The apprehension [in Heraclitus] that the soul may be fire or aither, not breath as Anaximenes had thought, must have helped to determine the choice of fire as the controlling form of matter” (Kirk 200); Heraclitus 225: “Aither received their souls, earth their bodies” (Kirk 200).

7 For this is still mytho-poetic, allegorical language and not yet properly “philosophical” (metaphysical) or “scientific” (physical) language. Of course, even the latter are forms of embedment, even with science (as Nietzsche himself emphasizes) we never totally escape metaphoricity and figuration—and perhaps not just in “verbal” languages but in “mathematical” ones as well.
“lies” on her (is “couched” on her) and, with the help of Eros, impregnates her with his rain, leading to the generation of the early gods and goddesses.\textsuperscript{8} But what is Chaos? Though Aristotle (influenced by Plato) gives it a much later, mathematical definition as “space” and the Stoics interpreted it as “what is poured, i.e. water” (Kirk 26-27), we would normally assume it means some sort of primordial disorder, perhaps a semi-solid “soup” made up of many random pieces (particles) or a huge “thing confusedly formed” out of which the earth somehow appears or self-orders.\textsuperscript{9} However, it is also possible to interpret the Hesiodic Chaos as Earth-Sky gap or \textit{difference}, suggesting that we might equate this Chaos with the Nietzschean and Heideggerian\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Abgrund}, “off-ground” or “abyss”:

The noun is derived from $\chi[a]ka$, meaning “gape, gap, yawn,” as in \textit{xainein, xaskein}, etc. . . . [B]efore 400 B.C., [this term] refers to the cosmogonic \textit{Xaos} of this passage [and also] has the special meaning “air,” in the sense of the region between sky and earth. . . . In view of the basic meaning of \textit{Xaos} (as a gap, a bounded interval, not “void” . . . .), . . . serious attention must be paid to [the] interpretation . . . that \textit{Xaos genet} in the first line . . . implies that the gap between earth and sky came into being; that is, that the first stage of cosmogony was [their] separation. . . . This would not be consistent with . . . the postponement of the birth of \textit{Ouranos} until a second stage, [but] the other conditions fit the proposed interpretation. (Kirk 27-28)

\textsuperscript{8} Chaos is unlimited but so, arguably, is earth: in both Pythagoras (500s B.C.) and the Chinese \textit{I Ching} Earth correlates with woman, dark, and the number two as “unlimited”; in Pythagoras the male sky-principle is One or Unity, in the \textit{I Ching} it is One and also Three. Kristeva (woman as non-rational, unlimited semiotic \textit{khora} of language), Irigary (woman as “Volume Without Contours” and as the non-limit or “difference” of Twoness over against the male rational limit of Oneness), and Cixous (woman as “bi-sexual” in a sense that includes going beyond the male economy of rational unity and exchange to the female economy of the excessive, overflowing “gift”) also reinforce this correlation.

\textsuperscript{9} In \textit{Laozi} 25, Dao is \textit{hun dun} (“chaotic”) and a \textit{wu hun cheng} (“thing confusedly formed”). Waley translates the latter as “something formless yet complete, /That existed before heaven and earth” (174).

\textsuperscript{10} In Zarathusra’s Prologue, Nietzsche says man is that “becoming” which walks across “the rope stretched between ape and overman, a rope over an abyss.” In \textit{Introduction to Metaphysics}, Heidegger distinguishes between the \textit{Urgrund} (primal ground) \textit{Ungrund} (non-ground) and \textit{Abgrund} (abyss).
We normally think of the “horizon”—*horizein* in Greek means the circular boundary or *limit*—as the meeting point of the sky and the (far-away edge of the) earth’s surface. Perhaps the strangeness of this flat-line horizon, seen most clearly when we gaze out across a large (“limitless”) body of water, is due to the fact that there is a certain earth-sky “gap” here; perhaps the horizon-line is marking this *difference* as a gap. Thus we could say that Eos, sleeping on her couch on (her couch that *is*) this horizon-line and then rising above it just before the sun rises, has both horizontal and vertical aspects. Horizontally she is herself the couch, the horizon within which all else on earth is (horizontally) embedded; or rather we might say that Eos and Tithonos sleeping together on this horizontal couch represent the horizontal space, the horizontal gap that more essentially marks sky-earth horizon-line as we normally perceive it, since we are mainly aware of its horizontal distance *out* from us. Yet in her act of rising (alone, singular) *above* her couch (horizon) Eos represents the pre-existing verticality of the horizon itself as the line marking earth/sky and night/day difference, a line that will momentarily be crossed (transgressed) by the rising sun which, once shining, will cause Eos in her proper sense as “Dawn” to disappear. The rising Dawn, in other words, reinforces our sense that the horizon of our perception already has a vertical as well as horizontal gap or difference.

Nietzsche sees Dawn as the “abyss of light” and thus seems to take her verticality, not so much as a minimal earth-sky gap “on the horizon” (though perhaps he is including and expanding on this sense) but rather as a more total earth-sky gap or “inversion” from the depths to the heights. That is, the dawn sky in its moment of night/day (earth/sky) difference seems to have such an unlimited “depth” above the earth that it could as well be the unlimited reach of earth itself (with its abyss of Tartaros) beneath us. This perspective takes us back to the *Abgrund*, Abyss in its more familiar sense as a deep (limitless) pit beneath us, or even beneath the earth itself, but in its unlimitedness also above us: “O heaven above me, pure and deep! You abyss of light! [*Oh Himmel über mir, du Reiner! Tiefer! Du Licht-Abgrund!*] Seeing you, I tremble with godlike desires. To throw myself into your height, that is my depth” (“Vor Sonnen-Aufgang,” *KSA*.24 207; “Before Sunrise,” Kaufmann 276).

Gender difference already implies, then, both horizontal (woman lying beside man) and vertical (man above woman or, with Dawn’s rising, woman above man) difference, and this complexity (sometimes a “neutrality”) is reflected in Hesiod’s gendered cosmogony. At the opening of the *Theogony* we have the (chaotic) separation of Mother Earth (who “came first”) below and, generated from her,
Father Sky above. In the early stages of his cosmogonic generation Hesiod has, as we saw above, Erebos and Night coming out of Chaos, and then Aither and Day coming out of Night (but ambiguously also from the “mingling in love” of Gaia and Erebos). Not just Earth but also the lower, under-earth darkness of Night and Erebos are either feminine or ambiguously neuter (neutral, ungendered like the primordial Chaos itself as “difference”) and feminine\(^\text{11}\); therefore Aither and Day, which come either directly out of Night or from the Earth-Erebos conjunction, will be feminine or (again) neuter-feminine, where “neuter” might be interpreted as a sort of “singularity.” Erebos is sometimes translated as “darkness” but literally means “covering”; the bright upper air or Aither (Ether) will later be closely associated (though not quite identified) with Eos in her appearance as what Nietzsche calls the heavenly abyss of light: here “abyss” implies, again, a reversal or inversion of the lower Earth, Erebos, dark Night (and perhaps abysmal Chaos) with respect to “direction” (they can also be above us, “on top”) though perhaps not gender.

The Homeric figure of Eos (Lady Dawn, sometimes associated with Aither) rises, then, just before the sun (the male god Helius) from her couch at a certain point on the southeastern horizon of that double-body we call the earth-sky. If we attribute to her the femininity of Mother Earth then this fits the picture of her lying on the couch with her male consort Tithonos, though clearly she is the more powerful (in the first place the more purely immortal) of the two. That is, her femininity balances his masculinity; they are the two sides or halves of a (heterosexual) couple. But then when Dawn rises from her couch to a point (her throne) just above it as “the awakening of dawn” and ultimately rides up to the zenith, to the essentially patriarchal Mt. Olympus at the top of the sky, her femininity as Hemera (Day) would seem to challenge the Sky-father before she “sets” again as Hespera (Evening) on the southwestern horizon. For Dawn transforms into Day, Hemera, and then into Hespera; this change is the passing of time itself now seen as the changing (brightening and darkening) of the light. Here already, inasmuch as she is separated from Tithonos (from the couch, from a gendered doubleness), Dawn begins to take on a kind of neutral or “neuter” singularity or self-difference.

In the rather different and probably later Orphic cosmogony, we begin not with Chaos but with Chronos (Χρόνος) or Time (which may not have been directly associated with Kronos the god, son of Ouranos and father of Zeus), who is

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\(^{11}\) Night and Hypnos (Sleep) can subdue even the gods (which also must sleep), and sometimes (as in Homer’s *Iliad* xiv.258) Night is clearly personified as a “she.” See Kirk 19.
sometimes figured, probably due to Middle Eastern (Babylonian and/or Persian) influence, as a large, multi-headed, winged snake. Then out of Time comes Aither and Chaos, from which come the cosmic Egg (Huon, ωον), from which comes the winged, bisexual, self-fertilizing creator-god Phanes. It is interesting to note that now “Unending Time” precedes (and generates) Chaos, but also that Aither apparently takes priority over Erebos and Night (which are not even mentioned here), whereas in Hesiod’s cosmogony it came after them. However, in a variant Orphic myth Time gives birth to Aither, Chaos and Erebos; from these three comes again Huon, the cosmic Egg, but this time from the egg comes a theos asomatos, “incorporeal god,” perhaps a variation on Phanes insofar as it has “wings and animal heads” (but then how can it also be “incorporeal”?) Both this god and Phanes may be figures of or for “a certain double-bodied god” which emerged from the cosmic egg once it burst open, along with its top (Sky) and bottom (Earth) halves. It is curious to think that in addition to splitting into sky and earth the bursting egg also generates (redundantly) a “double-bodied god.” Perhaps this is the redundancy of rhetoricity, of allegorization and figuration, a couching or embedding of an idea (figure) inside of itself?

In fact the Orphic Chronos (Xronos, time) as winged snake may also directly suggest Nietzsche’s association in Zarathustra 3 of his eternal return with an ouroboros or “snake eating its own tail.” At the end of “The Vision and the Riddle,” the narrator (and/or Zarathustra) has a “vision” of a “shepherd into whose throat the snake crawled. . . . [H]e, however, bit . . . with a good bite. Far away he spewed the head of the snake. . . . Never yet on earth has a human being laughed as he laughed!” (Kaufmann 272) In the following “Involuntary Bliss” section he hears his “abysmal thought that is my thought . . . burrowing” deep inside him (274), and in the later “Convalescent” section he commands: “Up, abysmal thought, out of my depth! I am your cock and dawn, sleepy worm. . . . I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life . . . to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things. . . . I spoke my word, I break off my word. . . .” (327, 333). This “abysmal thought” (abgründliche Gedanken, presumably that of the ewige Wiederkehr, eternal return—the thought that finally everything, every “event” and “combination” in our

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12 See the discussion in Kirk 39-43.
13 “Heracles generated a huge egg, which being completely filled by the force of its begetter burst into two through friction. So its top part ended up as Ouranos [Sky], and its underneath part as Ge [Earth], and a certain double-bodied god [theos tis disomatos] also came forth” (Kirk 42-43).
14 The name of the prophet “Zarathustra” is also tied to that of the ancient Persian sage “Zoroaster,” and Nietzsche was no doubt familiar with Orphic cosmogonies. However, one would not want to tie him too closely to such a stylized mode of allegorizing.
own lives and in the universe must repeat, given infinite time—is thus somehow (metaphorically) correlated with the snake burrowing deep inside of him, inside his body which now becomes doubled or self-repeated.\(^{15}\) And between “Involuntary Bliss” and “The Convalescent” in Zarathustra 3 we have “Before Sunrise,” with its innocent and profound vision of the ethereal Dawn in all its difference (rather than doubleness), its paradoxical self-reversal or self-inversion as the pure abyss of light.

**Nietzsche’s Dawn as Singularity, Chance, Übermuth**

In the “Before Sunrise” passage of Zarathustra 3, Nietzsche sings his hymn or love-song to an Eos who is clearly figurative and “rhetorical” yet also somehow actual in her striking beauty, her immediacy, momentary presence, transience:

O heaven above me, pure and deep! You abyss of light! [\textit{Oh Himmel über mir, du Reiner! Tiefer! Du Licht-Abgrund!}] Seeing you, I tremble with godlike desires. To throw myself into your height, that is my depth. To hide in your purity, that is my innocence. . . . Today you rose for me silently over the roaring sea . . . and came to me . . . shrouded in your beauty. . . . Before the sun you came to me, the loneliest of all. . . . Rather would I sit . . . in the abyss without a heaven, than see you . . . stained by drifting clouds. . . . O heaven over me, pure and light! You abyss of light! . . . “Over all things now stand the heaven Accident [\textit{der Himmel Zufall}], the heaven Innocence [\textit{Unschuld}], the heaven Chance [\textit{Ohngefähr}], the heaven Prankishness [\textit{Übermuth}].” This prankish folly I have put in the place of . . . “eternal will”. . . . That is what your purity is to me now, that there is no eternal spider or spider web of reason; that you are to me a dance floor for divine accidents, that you are to me a divine table for divine dice and dice players. But you blush? Did I speak the unspeakable? . . . Or is it the shame of twosomes that makes you blush? Do you bid me go and be silent because the day is coming now? The world is deep—and deeper than day had ever been

\(^{15}\textit{Abgrund} (“abyss”) is literally “off-ground” in German. One might speculate here, given the phallic implications of serpents which in some (e.g. Pelasgian) cosmogonies can impregnate goddesses, on the possible male heterosexual and/or autoerotic and/or bisexual meanings of these “inner-snake” passages.
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aware. . . . But the day is coming, so let us part. (“Vor Sonnen-Aufgang,” KSA.24 207-210; “Before Sunrise,” Kaufmann 276-279)

In this ode to the ethereal abyss of light that is the clear cloudless sky at dawn, Nietzsche catches the mythic and “romantic” aspect of Lady Dawn, this young goddess who seduced several young male mortals, including Tithonos and Orion, the handsome hunter who upon his death became the brightest constellation in the night sky. For “Seeing you, I tremble with godlike desires [Dich schauend schaudere ich vor göttlichen Begierden].” In effect Nietzsche (or his speaker, Zarathustra) has replaced Tithonos here as the male consort and lover of Eos. Yet obviously this all-too-human speaker—like Quixote riding out on his first adventure and looking up at this lady who has deserted “the soft couch of her jealous spouse” and now appears “to mortals at the gates and balconies of the Manchegan horizon” (Cervantes 30)—is not lying beside Dawn on her horizon-couch but rather gazing up at her in wonder from the earthly world of mortal men.

The “oneness” (not “twosomeness”) and “purity” of this Dawn may suggest her virginity, self-enclosure, loneliness (“the loneliest of all”) and shyness—“is it the shame of twosomeness that makes you blush?”—but this is a purity in which the (equally shy?) speaker also wants, through a powerful inversion, to “hide himself.” Of course, if he could really hide within her or even become her then there would still be no problem of (romantic) twosomeness, but Dawn (he imagines) bids him “go and be silent because the Day is coming now”—perhaps because his presence (so far hidden by the dark) would become clear to her, and/or because Eos is “ashamed” of the fact that she must lose the singularity she possesses, at this transient moment or “event” of the dawn (the “dawning”), once she transforms into Hemera (Day) in her journey toward the top of the sky.

Perhaps Nietzsche is seeking here the metaphysical essence of the dawn, of this natural phenomenon so beautiful and so pure and so momentary that it becomes an “abyss of light”—a shocking reversal or (down-up) inversion of the earth-abyss which is in itself the singularity that he seeks. The senses of Accident (Zufall), Chance (Ohngefähr), and Prankishness (Übermuth, “over-spirit,” playfulness) that Nietzsche correlates here with “heaven over me, pure and light,” that is, with the Dawn would need to be, in any case, interpreted in terms of both a human-cosmic (or human-cosmogonic) inversion and a human-cosmic singularity or identity. As for Chance (a term into which one may perhaps assimilate “Accident”) we think again of the momentary transience of dawn, the actual moment or event (Gefähr could suggest “event”) of night-becoming day. Thus we think of the day/night or
earth/sky gap, difference, “horizon” from whose doubleness (as horizontality and verticality) Dawn now arises (differentiates herself) as pure verticality and pure singularity. If we also think of Dawn as Chance in her move out of and up from her horizontal couch where she is coupled with Tithonos, it is the singular chance of her sudden appearance at daybreak that draws to her the male speaker standing far below. Yet the singularity of the rising Dawn may also imply, as with the Aither of Hesiodic and Orphic myth, a neuter gender, whereas when embedded with Tithonos she obviously had a feminine one; perhaps it is within both her (its) neutrality and singularity that the speaker wishes to “hide himself.”

The “playfulness” (Übermuth) of Eos directly fits with her contingency (as Ohngefähr, “chance”) since, in the first place, we “play” a game of chance (of dice). This Dawn represents for Nietzsche the non-rationality (spontaneity, randomness, chaotic unlimitedness, paradoxical nature) of accident, chance and playfulness (as well as pure, youthful innocence, Unschuld): “That is what your purity is to me now, that there is no eternal spider or spider web of reason; that you are to me a dance floor for divine accidents, that you are to me a divine table for divine dice and dice players. But you blush? Did I speak the unspeakable? . . . Or is it the shame of twosomeness that makes you blush?” Nietzsche’s Dawn herself embodies chance, she is (to the speaker) “a divine table for divine dice and dice players”—even though she is so pure that she might blush at the thought of a game of chance, perhaps because it would mean “being played by the gods.” But this “dance floor” on which, perhaps, human dancers might have “accidents” (Zufall contains the word Fall, which also means “case” in German) and “divine table” upon which the gods play dice are two horizontal surfaces, two horizons, a double-horizon. Of course, staying within the cosmogonic model we have been assuming all along, the simplest way to interpret this picture of two parallel, horizontal plane surfaces (divine dice-table and human dance-floor) would be to take them as the sky-surface above—as we “see” it when we look up at the sky—and the ground upon which we walk, dance, move and act in our everyday lives, having lucky outcomes and making random mistakes in a way that is predicted or fated by the gods’ game of chance being played on the table above us.

Yet Nietzsche’s Dawn here is the two tables. This could imply Dawn’s rise from the horizon-floor to the sky-table, that is, her double-nature as divine-human, but also her immanent potential for vertical self-inversion (upper sky as lower earth, abyss of light as abyss of darkness), an inversion which in itself suggests

16 Cf. the paradoxical and “contingent” sense of Nietzsche’s line in Gay Science: “Glattes Eis, ein Paradies, für ihn der gut zu tanzen weiss” (“Flat ice, a paradise for he who knows well how to dance”).
contingency and chance. Dawn’s singularity, the contingency of her momentary dawning, lies in her initial location on the earth-sky horizon followed by a move upward (becoming-Hemera, Day at the zenith) and then a move downward (becoming-Hespera, Night, near or at the horizon). Yet this contingency is further emphasized by the fact that we could also begin with Dawn-as-night, setting and then traveling as far “down” as the geo-cosmic nadir—which in the vertical-inversion model becomes in effect the zenith—and then “rising” again toward the horizon. But if becoming-day could just as well have been becoming-night (the horizon remains the center and ground) then up-down inversion in space might also imply forward-backward reversal in time, with the Dawn (always following Helios, the sun) moving “backwards” or in modo reverso by “setting” in the East and the “rising” in the West.17

Deleuze’s Sky-Chance and the Porous Horizon

To further explore this correlation of the double cosmogonic-horizontal surface (dancing-floor/dice-table) with the potential inversion of upper-world/lower-world, the potential reversal of time and the game of pure chance, it will be helpful to turn to Deleuze. Above we noted the Orphic myths according to which “Unending Time” precedes (and generates) Chaos as well as Aither (shining upper air, which Nietzsche may have assimilated to his image of Eos in the “abyss of light” passage) and Erebos (dark night of the underworld); we also noted that Nietzsche’s eternal return as we get it in Zarathustra III, in particular the correlative image of the ouroboros or (eternity as) serpent eating its own tail, has certain affinities with the figures of Orphic myth. However, in the “abyss of light” passage the theme of eternal return does not appear explicitly, even if we are aware that this

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17 We also get a sense of chaotic inversion or upside-downness in Nietzsche’s claim that “all things . . . would rather dance on the feet of Chance” (Kaufmann 278). The English term “zenith” is from the Latin semit and Arabic semt, meaning simply “path”; English and Latin “nadir” are from the Arabic nazir-as-samt, literally “opposite the zenith,” an etymology reinforcing the relativity of the opposition.

18 We get astrophysical relativity, if not explicitly temporal reversal (though Einstein’s physics and quantum mechanics already allow for this possibility), in Nietzsche’s famous “God is dead” passage of Gay Science: “But how have we [killed God]? . . . Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? . . . Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up and down left?” (Kaufmann 95). Heraclitus famously said that “The way up and way down are the same.”
is an immanent moment, the singular, contingent and infinitely *repeatable* event of the dawning of a new day.

In his Introduction to *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze says:

Repetition is not generality. . . . Repetition and resemblance are different. . . . Cycles and equalities are . . . generality. . . . Repetition . . . concerns non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities. . . . If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition. Therefore, there is an economic difference between the two. . . . And perhaps this repetition at the level of external conduct echoes, for its own part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal vibration within the singular. This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an “unrepeatable.” They . . . carry the first time to the “nth” power. With respect to this power, repetition interiorizes and thereby reverses itself. (1)

If we see the dawning of each new day as a singular event that keeps getting repeated, then this is different from the mere generality of a night-and-day cycle. As a singularity each new dawn repeats what is unrepeatable and perhaps “echoes . . . a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal vibration”—which in the case of the dawn might be the “vibration” between the absolute horizon and a point just above (or below) it, a vibration which punctuates each night-to-day transition by somehow disrupting it and thus making it “unrepeatable.” Deleuze also brings in the term “reversal” here: due to its own inner vibration, repetition “interiorizes and thereby reverses itself.”

Above it was suggested that Nietzsche’s description of Lady Dawn as an “abyss of light” seems to invert earth-heaven, the lower and upper “abysses,” horizontal surfaces that suddenly gain verticality as *Abgrunds*, and that this larger up-down inversion—which in one sense leaves the horizon in the same “place” but with reversed “surfaces”—bears a close relation to Dawn’s potential for “horizontal” self-reversal, rising my moving beneath the horizon and thus perhaps moving from west to east across the sky, even moving in reverse-time order (backwards in time). Rising in the “West” and setting in the “East” might then, in Deleuze’s terms, be seen as a “smaller vibration” within the larger vibration of abysmal inversion, up-down or sky-earth inversion. For it is no longer the time order of repeated events, through which the earlier event (e.g. a festival) gives
meaning to the later one, that Deleuze is concerned with here; rather, it is the inner vibration of the event, the self-disruption or self-inversion (self-reversal) of the event itself.

In Nietzsche’s late version of the eternal return, which we get in his notes compiled by his sister as *The Will to Power*, he says this: given an infinite amount of time and a finite amount of matter-energy, every possible combination, array of physiochemical possibilities, “throw” of possibilities within the ongoing game of the universe—a game because its rules are completely arbitrary, like those of basketball, having no meaning (e.g. God, absolute Logoi or first principles) outside of itself—must be repeated. Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and again in *Difference and Repetition* interprets this idea (model) as being not a “repetition of the same” but a “repetition of difference”: each moment-to-moment “combination” or “throw” of the universe is like a dice-throw and thus in itself a purely contingent explosion of possibilities. As a smaller “internal” vibration within the wider vibration (or passage through continually changing states) of the universe, each successive earthly sunrise or each successive dawn—where the dawn is really the “forward edge” of the light that will be centered and embodied in the rising sun (itself a continual physiochemical explosion)—is like the explosion of a dice-throw inasmuch as the “array” or “combination” of this immanently dawning day, what will happen during this dawning day, is purely contingent, singular, different from every other day.

If Nietzsche’s picture of dawn as an “abyss of light” implies the possibility (contingency) of a sky-earth inversion and even a temporal (night-day-night) reversal and so seems grounded in ancient cosmogony, Deleuze too, in *Difference and Repetition*, takes us straight back to the earliest Greek cosmogony where (as in Hesiod) Chaos can be both the disorder out of which earth and sky appear (or self-order)—as in a throw of the dice—and the *xaiein*, gap or difference between heaven-earth, in which case we begin from a no-ground or perhaps the abyss of an *Abgrund*. But like Heidegger, whose *Seinsfrage* (question of Being) he also discusses here, Deleuze calls this ontology:

Ontology is the dice-throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges. . . . This is precisely what Nietzsche meant by will to power . . . —that dice-throw capable of affirming the whole of chance. . . . If “being” is above all difference and commencement, Being is itself repetition, the recommencement of being . . . and an origin assigns a ground only in a world already precipitated into
universal ungrounding. . . . This is the point at which the ultimate origin is overturned into an absence of origin (in the always displaced circle of the eternal return). An aleatory point is displaced through all the points on the dice, as though one time for all times. . . .

(Difference and Repetition 198-202)

As Mallarme says in his long poem Un Coup de Dés, discussed by Deleuze in the context of the eternal return in Nietzsche and Philosophy, “a dice-throw / never / even cast in eternal circumstances / . . . can abolish / . . . chance” . . . (Un coup de des / jamais / quand bien même lancé dans des circonstances éternelles / . . . n’abolira / . . . le hasard. . . .”19 Yet as the purely contingent order (combination, array, “throw”) the universe assumes at each moment, this dice-throw can nonetheless (as in Nietzsche’s will to power) “affirm the whole of chance.” Like repetition itself and singularity, this idea is of course paradoxical (self-reversing): chance cannot be abolished, meaning there can never be certainty, the necessity of a logical order, and yet the very “total affirmation” of this (cosmic) chance becomes a certain kind of necessity or certainty. The “displacement” of an “aleatory point . . . through all the points on the dice, as though one time for all times,” suggests Aion as the flat surface (flat “table”) of time and of the eternal return, the singularity of repetition itself.20

It is rather a question of a throw of the dice, of the whole sky as open space and of throwing as the only rule. The singular points are on the die; the questions are on the dice themselves; the imperative is to throw. . . . The throw of the dice is in no way suggested as an abolition of chance (the sky-chance). . . . [T]he throw of the dice affirms chance every time; every throw of the dice affirms the whole of chance each time” . . . The dice [as questions] are thrown against the sky. . . . They fall back to earth with all the force of the victorious solutions which bring back the throw. (DR 198, 283)

19Mallarme 214-229. Deleuze’s word for “chance” is also hasard (English “hazard”), from the Arabic az-zar; “the game of dice”; the Latin “die” and (plural) “dice” also referred originally to a game of chance; the Latin (French, English) “aleatory” is from alea, “a dice game.” Thus in a sense the abstract meanings, as normally with languages, derive from concrete things or activities or are embedded (couched) within concrete contexts; see later discussion of Deleuze’s “hinge connecting two tables.”

20 See previous note.
Here we get the striking image of the “whole sky as open space” up against which the dice are thrown, suggesting the infinite expansiveness of the spatio-temporal universe as chance, that is, as a radical openness to all possibilities. These passages on chance are intermixed, in *Difference and Repetition*, with passages on metaphysical “questioning” and “problematizing” which take us back more than once to Heidegger’s *Seinsfrage*, “Question of Being”—Heidegger’s *Dasein* or “human-being” being the (kind of) being that asks this question. Deleuze also treats the asking of questions as an “imperative” or (in some sense) speech act (speech-force); this fits with Heidegger insofar as we inevitably (must) ask such ontological questions as “What is it?” or “What is happening?” or “What will happen?” where the latter, as an act of trying like gamblers (though it is also not possible) to predict the future, clearly fits the dice-throwing context. The point is then (also) that we cannot help but keep asking philosophical questions like “What?” or “Why?” and the dice-throw each time is our speculative-metaphysical question; here again we see the influence of Mallarmé, who ends *Un Coup de Des* with the statement (or speculation) that “Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés,” “Every Thought gives off a Dice Throw” (232-233).

In another passage Deleuze speaks of a “game of two tables,” so that we may take his upper dice-table of the sky, against which the dice are thrown, as being indeed an allusion to Nietzsche’s Lady Dawn passage of *Zarathustra* 3, even if the ground (table) below, where mortals stand to throw up the dice and also catch them as they fall back down to earth, is not described as anything like a “dance floor for divine accidents”:

> It is a game of two tables. How could there not be a fracture at the limit or along the hinge between the two tables. . . . The fracture or hinge is the form of empty time, the *Aion* through which pass the throws of the dice. . . . A broken Earth corresponds to a fractured sky. (283-284)

Deleuze is at least maintaining the basic cosmogonic “map” Nietzsche gives us: we have the apparently horizontal surface of the sky as we look up at it and the seemingly flat surface of the ground we stand upon. As too in Nietzsche’s very Greek figuration it is the gods at the table above who throw the dice and thus determine the contingent “throw” of our actual human lives down below: “this creation or throw which makes us descendant from the gods, is . . . not our own.” Yet Deleuze also reminds us of the Homeric view that even Zeus himself—as when
he holds up the scales balancing Hector and Achilles and then passively watches Hector’s side go down—must obey a higher Moiros or Fate: “The gods themselves are subject to the Ananke [Necessity] or sky-chance. . . .” The Greek view is already a proto-scientific one and Nietzsche believes, not that there are really gods playing dice (it is a figure) but that there is, as contemporary physicists might also say, simply “contingency”; whereas Nietzsche’s rhetorical passage praising Dawn keeps to the mythic pattern or figure, Deleuze begins with and then breaks out of it, reminding us that sky-chance is indeed something that lies beyond human myth as well as, perhaps, human reason.

But what would it mean to have “a fracture at the limit or along the hinge between the two tables”? In the Greek cosmogonic model, Xaos can mean both a primordial disorder (or mixture) and the earth-sky gap, difference or “fracture.” Horizein in Greek means the circular boundary or limit, so the image of “hinge” also fits well within this cosmogonic or geo-astrophysical map: it catches both the connectedness of earth-sky at their interface/horizon and their separation, the paradoxical and indeed “virtual” quality of the horizon-line itself as we gaze at it from a distance, especially when looking out over a large body of water. Yet Nietzsche is above all praising the immanent moment or event of dawning, the moment of Dawn’s rising up from the horizon itself—her couch on the earth-sky “hinge”—and into the sky: for him time itself has essentially the form, not of a linear, ongoing clock-time (Deleuze’s Kronos) but of a repetition of explosive, singular moments such as that of the dawn, or (Deleuze) a repetition of differences. Deleuze figures this as the “flat surface of time”—thus we think once again of the earth/sky interface or horizon, horizein as circular limit of an indefinitely, horizontally extended plane surface— which he calls Aion, meaning “ever” or “forever” in Greek. We must first assume this sort of picture or model in order to try to reflect on the cryptic claim: “The fracture or hinge is the form of empty time, the Aion through which pass the throws of the dice. . . . A broken Earth corresponds to a fractured sky . . .” (284).

If we take the earth-sky fracture as a “porous” earth-sky interface/horizon then again we come back to the key ambiguity we began with in our attempt to interpret Nietzsche’s Dawn as an “abyss of light”: Xaos/Chaos may have had an equivocal sense for the ancient Greeks, meaning both a primordial disorder or mixture out of which earth-sky (in Hesiod first earth and then out of her sky) self-ordered, and the gap between earth-sky (which seems to make less sense if we assume with Hesiod that earth formed before sky, unless the chaos-gap even here could have a temporal sense). One might read this Aion passage as picturing this very equivocality or
paradoxical double-sense of Xaos, for if all (including earth-and-sky) is essentially the brokenness (into many pieces, perhaps atoms) of an encompassing disorder, then the earth-sky “difference” is also a manifestation of this same brokenness or disorder, one of which no sense can finally be made beyond the random meanings or predictions of a series of (chaotic) dice-throws.

Yet (Xaos as) the earth-sky horizon is itself a sort of flat surface, even if we see it as a (relatively narrow) gap between earth-sky. And in picturing Aion as the “flat surface of time,” of the time of (eternal) repetition rather than of linear time, Deleuze may be identifying it, as a pure singularity, with the flat, horizontally broken (thus vertically “porous”) surface of the horizon. The event of the “throws of dice passing through”—that is, downward and/or upward and/or horizontally along—this horizontal Aion-time itself marks the “sky-chance” of this identity. For Deleuze is really emphasizing the horizontality or flatness of time itself (perhaps implicit in Nietzsche’s return), so that the “ungrounding” of the primal cosmogenic “ground” is perhaps not (just) the vertical sky-earth inversion which Nietzsche seems to suggest but—can this still be the same thing?—simply an indefinite horizontal extending or folding-out (unfolding) of the ground, that is, of the horizon.21

Perhaps then the hinge is that of a backgammon board, and to really play the game we have to open it out horizontally in order to get the full board.22 Yet in the case of the earth’s circular limit or horizein, this would have to mean a sort of horizontal extending of the circular “plate” of the earth in all directions combined with an increasing effect of flattening it. Such an image or model might fit Deleuze’s notion that an “aleatory point is displaced through all the points on the dice, as though one time for all times. . . .”: this displacement could have the force of a spatio-temporal flattening and indefinite widening if we take the dice as being rolled across a flat table or game-board, that is, if we flatten out (rather than reverse

21 Such a reading might also be implied by Mallarme’s “displaced” statement in Un Coup de Dés that, even after a countless number of dice-throws, “All that will have taken place is the place (lieu).” Lieu is tied to the Latin locus (location, place); the English “place” (as in “displaced,” desplacer) is from Old French place (“open space”) and Latin platea, “broad street,” from Greek platys, “broad, flat”; Latin planta is the “sole of the foot.” (Webster’s 887).

22 See the previous note. The first two meanings for “table” (French table) in Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1185) are “tablet” and “one of the two leaves of a backgammon board or either half of a leaf.” But “either half of a leaf” (or of a “board”) seems a horizontal variation on the vertical, and also reversible (as in a mirror reflection), model of sky-earth as “two halves of a whole.” (That “tablet” could suggest the Mosaic “tablet of laws” which Nietzsche “transvalues” in Zarathustra, as in his move from obedient camel to No-saying lion to playful child in “The Three Metamorphoses,” is presumably not relevant here.)
or invert) the presumed upward-downward verticality of the dice throw, or *project* this verticality of the throw onto a horizontal surface. Now those pores in the porous horizon which we first tend to picture as the sort of holes something, perhaps the dice themselves or time or chance, can fall down through would become holes in the hinges (joints) of the hinged and horizontally extended (*via* an indefinitely successive unfolding) backgammon board. Such a model or figure would apparently be hard to fit with “actual” earth-sky cosmogonic models, including Deleuze’s when he speaks of throwing dice up against the sky and catching them as they fall back down, though it might make sense as a stereographic projection, a surface-simulacra, a virtual (computer) model or game.

In any event it is really the distant future—closely tied by both Nietzsche and Deleuze to the distant, even mythic, cosmogonic past—that is at stake here, the openness and unpredictability of this future. As with Nietzsche’s first version of the eternal return (in *The Gay Science*), in which we are invited to joyously affirm our life, moment to moment, even if we knew that this same life (moment to moment) would *repeat* itself innumerable times, perhaps we are also being invited here (of course by Nietzsche but even by Deleuze) to “throw ourselves into” the radical openness of this sky-chance, to joyously affirm it. The future’s unpredictability is precisely what we might reflect on while watching the sun rise each morning, or while gazing at the early-morning dawn light. But to gaze at the childlike innocence of this dawn light that we know will keep returning to us is also already to be filled with a sense of possibility and hope; to speak of the “sky-chance” is also to affirm and welcome the future even in its radical unknowability, its abysmal unfathomability, the pure opacity of its brokenness.23

23 “The system of the future... must be called a divine game, since there is no pre-existing rule, since the game bears already upon its own rules and since the child-player can only win, all of chance being affirmed each time and for all times” (*Difference and Repetition* 116). Deleuze takes this image of the “child-[game]-player,” also associated with *Aion* (in Greek “forever” and for Deleuze the “flat surface of time”), from a fragment of the 6th-century-B.C. philosopher Heraclitus. Thus in *Zarathustra* I we get the child as “third metamorphosis” in the first of Zarathustra’s Speeches: “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes.’ For the fame of creation, my brothers, a sacred ‘Yes’ is needed: the spirit now wills its own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.” (Kaufmann 139; the last line is a parody of Jesus’ command in the Bible: “You must lose your life in order to gain a new life in me.”).
Configurations of the Couch

It may be important to keep in mind the highly rhetorical, metaphorical nature of these particular Nietzsche and Deleuze passages, and of the Greek mythic-cosmogonic model(s) they are both to a degree presupposing. Even if Nietzsche emphasizes the fundamental role of metaphor in philosophical discourse, while Deleuze would rather speak of figures (in a very visual, indeed mathematical and geometrical sense) than of metaphors,24 the fact remains that some “philosophical” texts seem more fully (mytho-)poetic than others, and thus seem to demand more fully (mytho-)poetic readings or interpretations. The crucial terms that were in some way “interpreted” in the above discussion might all be said to be essentially metaphors or figures: Lady Dawn of course, but also “Chaos,” “Abyss” and “horizon” in the special (perhaps ancient Greek) sense given them here, dice-table and dance-floor, Aion (as “flat surface of time”) and sky-chance. If so, then can

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24 In “Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense” Nietzsche suggests that “Truth” may be nothing but a “mobile army of metaphors,” and he begins his Preface to Beyond Good and Evil with the “figurative” claim that “Truth is a woman.” As for Deleuze on figure and metaphor, see Stevenson, “Stretching Language to its Limit: Deleuze and the Problem of Poiesis.”

If we assume what may seem a horizontally “wider” playing field then we could say that all philosophical discourse as well as literary and poetic discourse is inevitably embedded within language, langue. But this perspective fits Derrida and perhaps Nietzsche more easily than Deleuze, for the latter tends to think of language more in terms of mots-d’ordre, order-words or speech-acts or indeed vocal-physical-political forces than in terms of the langue of semiotics, and thus prefers to think of “figures” more in the sense of abstract action-models or “diagrams.”

Also coming out of the Nietzschean and Mallarméan texts (Mallarmé in Un Coup de Dés speaks of the “alternative veil” (voile alternative, “alternative veil,” 216-217), Derrida in Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles, possibly thinking too of Lady Dawn and the “dance floor for divine accidents,” comments on Nietzsche’s Aphorism 60 in Gay Science II, which concludes: “The enchantment and the most powerful effect of woman is, to use the language of philosophers, an . . . actio in distans; there belongs thereto, however, primarily and above all—distance [Distanz]!” Derrida’s reading: “What is the opening up step of that Dis-tanz? Its rhythm already is mimed in Nietzsche’s writing. The hyphen, a stylistic effect inserted between the Latin citation (actio in distans) which parodies the philosopher’s language and the exclamation point, suspends the word Distanz. The play of silhouettes which is created here by the hyphen’s pirouette [dance-step] serves as a sort of warning to us to keep our distance from these multifarious veils and their shadowy dream of death” (Spurs 47-49). In this book Derrida of course says that “Nietzsche’s styles are his women” and that his operation feminine (suggesting the “self-distancing” of irony as well as figuration) is to “suspend truth between the tenterhooks of quotation marks” (Spurs 57). See Frank Stevenson’s discussion of this in relation to the connection between Nietzsche’s woman-figures and his notion of speculative and rhetorical questioning in “Nietzsche’s Umsphinxt.”
their interpretations be other than metaphorical or figurative, or indeed “rhetorical”?

Of course, both thinkers want to get away from rationality and perhaps even “logic” in the more conventional or traditional (logocentric) sense, and the fact that they both do actually foreground a kind of metaphorical or figurative language, certainly in the above passages, one which arguably guides or drives the meaning, is interestingly captured by the other sense of Lady Dawn’s couch—that couch (lexeon) where she sleeps with Tithonos on the horizon before her early and singular rising. The French verb coucher and its English derivative “to couch” mean to “embed” one thing (idea, meaning) within or in terms of another; thus Dawn’s gendered doubleness when she is horizontally coupled with Tithonos on their couch—of which perhaps the earth-sky interface or doubleness itself is a metonymic extension or expansion—is reflected (doubled) by/in the ambiguity or equivocity of abstract metaphysical concepts that are expressed as or in (terms of) metaphors or figures. And yet Eos rises from her horizon-couch, where she had been bedded-down for the night with Tithonos, into pure singularity as the infinitely repeated yet still radically contingent Dawn, and perhaps mytho-poetic-metaphysical language itself has its unavoidably-langue-embedded side and also its other, purely “avoiding” side, the side turned toward singularity.

In a late Renaissance manifestation of which Nietzsche was no doubt aware, Eos looks down on the aging “knight” as he sets forth, like the rising dawn herself, on his daring adventure near the beginning of Cervantes’ 1605 novel Don Quixote. In a sophisticated, proto-postmodernist passage containing three levels of textual (self-) embedment and a parody of Homer’s “rosy-fingered dawn” that exaggerates Homer’s own poetic style, Lady Dawn appears to be a kind of welcoming or

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25 Deleuze says the dice that are thrown up at the sky are also questions, which fall back as answers. Perhaps these are unpredictable, (im)possible answers to unanswerable questions rather than the pre-determined or pre-known answers to rhetorical questions, but even if so the issue of “rhetoricity”—itself the function of a sort of self-embedment—might also seem to arise in this context. Dice as questions/answers might imply, though in a different way from that of Derrida, world (or in this case cosmos) as a “text” that, in being “played” as a dice-game, is in some sense also being “interpreted.”

26 According to the “Online Etymological Dictionary,” the verb “to couch” began to be used in England around 1330 (the era of Chaucer and Middle English); it came from the “Old French colchier, from the Latin collocare, ‘to lay,’ from com- ‘together’ + locare ‘to place.’ Meaning ‘to put into words’ is from 1529. Heraldic couchant is from 1496.” Moreover, “couch” was not used as a noun (meaning something like “sofa”) in England until 1340. It came “from the Old French couche, ‘a bed, lair,’ from coucher ‘to lie down,’ from Latin collocare (see couch v.).” This “co-location” also fits with the notion of horizon as earth-sky interface, and in current French couche can also mean the “setting” of a star (on the horizon); au coucher du soleil means “at sunset.”
guiding good-luck “sign” for Quixote, perhaps a variation on his own Lady Fortune or Lady Dulcinea:\(^\text{27}\):

Scarce had the rubicund Apollo spread o’er the face of the broad spacious earth the golden threads of his bright hair, scarce had the little birds of painted plumage attuned their notes to hail with dulcet and mellifluous harmony the coming of the rosy Dawn, that, deserting the soft couch of her jealous spouse, was appearing to mortals at the gates and balconies of the Manchegan horizon, when the renowned knight Don Quixote of La Mancha, quitting the lazy down, mounted his celebrated steed Rocinante and began to traverse the ancient and famous Fields of Montiel. . . . (Cervantes 30)

Cervantes seems to associate the figure of Dawn herself with a kind of excessive and extravagant, redoubled or multi-layered, “over-spirited” (Übermuthlich) rhetoric in this passage, only part of which (the innermost level of textual embedment) is quoted above. But he also associates the actual dawn with something very different: the momentary, contingent, singular sense of exciting possibility (where all possible outcomes, good and bad, are both possible and unpredictable), the sense not of good or bad fortune (good or bad luck) but of pure chance (pure luck, pure fortune) itself—in the extreme case even a radically open and expansive sky-chance—that greets and guides us at the commencement of some important new adventure or serious, heavily consequential quest, whether physical or (as in metaphysical questioning, pure speculation) intellectual.

**Works Cited**


\(^{27}\) In Act III of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1601-1605), when his old friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell him they are the “indifferent children of the earth,” neither too fortunate nor too unfortunate, Hamlet jokingly asks them: “Then you live about her waist, or in / The middle of her favors? . . . In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true, / She is a strumpet.” (And we note that “waist,” in mythic-cosmogonic terms, could suggest horizon.) Quixote imagines that a local farm-girl he had dreamed of (though she hardly noticed him) when younger can be his Lady Dulcinea, for whose sake or in whose honor he will, in the truest chivalric tradition of earlier centuries, perform all his knightly acts of valor.


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