

The Agonist

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Exegeses of Nietzsche for *The Agonist*

To further practice reading as an art and to foster rumination, what Nietzsche believed “modern man” has not properly cultivated, *The Agonist* is seeking exegeses of Nietzsche’s texts. “An aphorism, properly stamped and molded,” Nietzsche urged, “has not been ‘deciphered’ when it has simply been read; rather, one has then to begin its exegesis, for which is required an art of exegesis” (GM: P §8).

The Agonist is interested in exegeses of individual aphorisms, bearing in mind that they fold into Nietzsche’s entire corpus and are not entities that one can consider in complete isolation. We are particularly interested in exegeses of aphorisms from *Morgenröthe* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, two of the more neglected books of Nietzsche’s oeuvre, but welcome exegeses on all the published works as well as the *Nachlass*. In this act of ruminating on individual aphorisms within the orbit of Nietzsche’s entire philosophy, we want to promote careful philological reading, the art of “reading well, that is to say, reading slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers” (D: P §5). If Nietzsche demanded for his work “only perfect readers and philologists,” it is incumbent upon us to learn, as he insisted, to read him well. For a section strictly devoted to exegesis, we seek work that strives to fulfill this task.

“A book like this, a problem like this, is in no hurry; we both, I just as much as my book, are friends of *lento*” (D: P §5).

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“On the Sublime in *Dawn*”

by Keith Ansell-Pearson

Every thinker paints his world and every individual thing in it with fewer colours *than actually exist* and is blind to certain particular colours. This is not merely a deficiency. Owing to this approximation and simplification he reads *into the things themselves* colour harmonies that can have great appeal and that can amount to an enrichment of nature, Nietzsche, *Dawn* §426.

Like all conquerors, discoverers, navigators, adventurers, we researchers are of a daring morality and have to put up with being considered, on the whole, evil.—Nietzsche, *Dawn* §432.

Are we then searching for too much when we search for the company of men who have grown mild, savory, and nutritious, like chestnuts that have been placed in the fire and removed at the right time? Who expect less from life and would rather take less as a gift than as something earned, as if the birds and the bees had brought it to them? Who are too proud to be able to feel they could ever be paid what they’ve earned? And too earnest in their passion for knowledge and honesty as to still have the time and obsequiousness requisite for fame? We could call such men philosophers, but they themselves will still find a more modest name.—Nietzsche, *Dawn* §482.

The atmosphere of ‘daybreak’, the magic of twilight—one does not know if it is a morning or evening twilight—which constitutes perhaps the most fascinating allure of Nietzsche’s works, is in truth a magic of the extreme, the trickling dream shudder of initial doubt about the apparent reality, how it begins to stir under the thin and increasingly colorful surface of the morning dream announcing awakening, in fact already the first breath of awakening itself.—Ernst Bertram¹

The ocean neither works nor produces; it moves. It does not give life; it contains it, or rather it gives and takes it with the same indifference. It is the grand, eternal cradle rocking its creatures.—Jean-Marie Guyau²

1 Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology*, tr. Robert E. Norton (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008): 232-3.

2 Jean-Marie Guyau, *Sketch of Morality without Obligation and Sanction*, tr Gertrude Kapteyn (London: Watts & Co: 1898): 43.

My demand: to produce beings who stand sublimely (*erhaben dastehen*) above the whole human species: and to sacrifice oneself and one's 'neighbours' to this goal.—
Nietzsche, KSA 10, 7 [21], 1883.

Introduction

In this essay I want to explore how the sublime is employed in *Dawn*, especially the final book, book five, of the text.³ My contention is that in this text Nietzsche is in search of new possibilities for the sublime as a concept and an experience. In the early to mid 1870s Nietzsche has, in essence, figured the sublime in two principal ways. First, as the 'tragic sublime' in the writings on the tragic, in which nauseous thoughts about the dreadful and absurd character of existence, as human beings encounter it, are transformed into mental images with which it is possible to live and in which the sublime represents the artistic taming of the dreadful and the comical the artistic discharge of the dreadful. And, secondly, as the aesthetic concept of greatness in the unpublished materials of 1872-3 and the *Untimelies*, especially the second untimely on the uses and disadvantages for history of life, in which the lesson imparted is the need to 'hold onto the sublime' (*das Festhalten des Erhabenen*) (KSA 7, 19 [22]).⁴ In addition, Nietzsche appeals at this time to the sublime as a way of drawing attention to the narrowness of life, of discerning and judging that prevails in German scholarship, including its reliance on domestic and homely virtues, and he contrasts the elevation to greatness afforded by the sublime with what he calls 'Philistine homeliness' (KSA 1, 778-82, especially 779-80). In his thinking on the birth of tragic thought Nietzsche is concerned with how the 'truth' of reality is concealed: the sublime (*das Erhabene*) and the ridiculous represent a step beyond the world of beautiful illusion since both contain a contradiction: 'they are not at all congruent with truth: they are a *concealment (Umschleierung) of truth*' (KSA 1, 595). In *Dawn* Nietzsche's usage of the sublime shifts as it is now implicated in the disclosure of reality: what has hitherto struck humankind as ugly is acknowledged and rendered a new source of beauty—we now have the chance to experience the beautiful in a new way and new experiences of elevation and exaltation are available to us.

Throughout book five of *Dawn* Nietzsche, in accordance with the tradition stretching from Longinus to Kant, employs the sublime in connection with notions of elevation, exaltation, loftiness, ennoblement and the attainment of newly discovered heights of experience. At the same time it is bound up for him with practices of purification and sublimation that involve the conquest and overcoming of traditional and conventional conceptions of reality and of what is possible in experience. In the book Nietzsche is clearly mapping out a transitional humanity that is moving from a heritage of religions and moralities to something new, in fact, to uncharted con-

³ The sublime is employed in the following aphorisms of the text, with a concentration in book five: §§ 33, 45, 169, 210, 423, 427, 435, 449, 459, 461, 542, 553, 570.

⁴ For further insight see Keith Ansell-Pearson, "'Holding on to the Sublime': Nietzsche on Philosophy's Perception and Search for Greatness" in Herman Siemens and Vasti Roodt (eds.), *Nietzsche, Power, and Politics* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

ditions of existence. He is keen to militate against the sublime of dread and terror and to configure the sublime in a more modest and even humbling manner.⁵ In Nietzsche's thinking the human is no longer centre stage in the drama that is unfolding; indeed, the task is to overcome ourselves. One might suggest that the overhuman or superhuman is now our new limit and horizon. For Nietzsche, however, this is not to be conceived in terms of a large or inflated human but quite the opposite. There is to be both a new orientation for thinking and a new destiny for the human or what, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche calls the event of a new purification and consecration (EH: III "The Birth of Tragedy" §4). This is foreshadowed in several aphorisms of book five of *Dawn*. In D 548 Nietzsche announces that the order of rank of greatness for all past mankind remains to be determined (the revaluation of values the book encourages permits this) and D 552 reflects on the meaning of the new purification and consecration.⁶

The fundamental change or turning that Nietzsche is proposing finds expression in his metaphorical usage of the image of the sea (he makes extensive use of nautical metaphors in both *Dawn* and the two subsequent texts, *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).⁷ The ocean is first appropriated for the sublime by Longinus who contrasts its awesome character with beautifully clear small streams.⁸ This is then continued in Burke's association of the sublime with the experience of terror: 'A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with any thing so great as the ocean itself?'⁹ The reason for this, according to Burke, is owing to the fact that the ocean 'is an object of no small terror' and for him terror is 'the ruling principle of the sublime' (ibid.). For Kant the 'boundless ocean heaved up' is one example of several phenomena of nature where we see at work a dynamical sublime. Here nature is called sublime whenever it 'elevates (*erhebt*) our imagination' by exhibiting cases in which the mind comes to feel its own sublimity, that is, in a vocation that elevates it 'above nature.'¹⁰

In his early writings Nietzsche employs the idea of the ocean to convey an astonishing philosophical insight into the reality of becoming, one that *initially* strikes mortal human beings as terrifying. He does this in his lecture on Heraclitus in the course at Basel on the pre-Platonics where he notes that confrontation with the insight into 'eternal becoming' has something at first sight that is both terrifying and uncanny: 'the strongest comparison is to the sensation whereby someone in the middle of the ocean or during an earthquake, observes all things in motion.' He

5 The link between the sublime and terror is, of course, the one made by Burke. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): part 1, section VII and part II, section II.

6 The idea of a new purification and consecration appears in Nietzsche as early as his untimely meditation on Wagner in Bayreuth.

7 For further insight, see Duncan Large, "Nietzsche and the Figure of Columbus" in *Nietzsche-Studien*, 24 (1995): 162-183.

8 Longinus, *On the Sublime*, tr T.S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965): ch. 35.

9 Burke 1998, part II, section II.

10 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, tr Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett, 1987): §28.

then notes that it requires an ‘astonishing power to transmit the effects of the sublime (*des Erhabenen*) and joyful awe to those confronting it’ (KGW IV. 2, 272). Heraclitus comes up with a ‘sublime image’ (*erhabenes Gleichniss*) to do just this: ‘only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and Passing Away without any moralistic calculations’ (ibid. 278). It is not that we rise above nature and experience the superior power of human Reason, as in Kant; it is rather that we recognize nature, qua becoming, as the superior power and in ‘play’ we are one with its lack of teleology. In *Dawn* Nietzsche appears keen to replace the sublime of sheer terror with a new sublime of human self-conquest and overcoming in which the sea represents the uncharted future, the comprehensive space beyond familiar land in which the human can purify itself. Nietzsche makes this clear in both the prologue and several discourses in *Zarathustra*, which continues the main lessons of book five of *Dawn*: ‘In truth, the human is a polluted river. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted river and not be defiled. Behold, I teach you the Superhuman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under’ (Z: Prologue §3); and, ‘There are a thousand paths that have never yet been trodden, a thousand forms of health and hidden islands of life. The human and the human’s earth are still unexhausted and undiscovered’ (Z: I, “Of the Bestowing Virtue” §2). The task of humanity overcoming itself consists in it freeing itself of its former sense of its (supra-terrestrial) meaning and destiny. The task now, we might say, is to remain true to the earth.

Nihilism is not yet knocking at the door for Nietzsche because (a) there is the ‘passion of knowledge’, and (b) knowledge enables us, so long as we exist and prosper, to relearn ourselves: the depths are both within us and outside us.¹¹ Nietzsche advises us to go slowly and wisely:

Small doses.—If you want to effect the most profound transformation possible, then administer the means in the smallest doses, but unremittingly and over long periods of time! What great things can be accomplished at one fell swoop? Thus we want to guard against exchanging head over heels and with acts of violence the moral condition we are used to for a new evaluation of things—no, we want to keep on living in that condition for a long, long time—until we, very late, presumably, become fully aware that the *new evaluation* has become the predominant force and that the small doses of it, *to which we will have to grow accustomed from now on*, have laid down in us a new nature (D §534; KSA 3, 305).

Dawn was researched between January 1880 and May 1881 and published in the early summer of 1881. It is one of Nietzsche’s ‘yes-saying’ books, a work of enlightenment which ‘pours out its light, its love, and its delicacy over nothing but bad things,’ giving back to these

11 I thus disagree with Large who sees the emergence of the overhuman in Nietzsche’s utilization of the Columbus figure in 1881-2 but who reads Nietzsche as largely concerned with the depths of the inside. See Large 1995, 172: The “open sea” represents a reorientation of the infinite, which is no longer to be sought in the metaphysical world *above*, for its immensity lies *within*.’ In his lecture on Heraclitus in the course of the pre-Platonic philosophers Nietzsche notes that, ‘Nature is just as infinite inwardly as it is outwardly...’

things the ‘lofty right and prerogative of existence’ (EH: III “Daybreak” §1). The Indian motto, ‘there are so many dawns that have not yet broken’ lies inscribed on the door to it (ibid). Peter Gast had written the motto on the title page whilst making a fair copy of the manuscript and this, in fact, inspired Nietzsche to adopt the new title and replace its original title of ‘The Ploughshare.’ From the vantage point of 1888 Nietzsche speaks of the book as amounting to a search for the new morning that ushers in a whole series of new days. He insists that not a single negative word is to be found in it, and no attack or malice either (in other texts he will make use of ‘sublime malice’). In this book we encounter a thinker who lies in the sun, ‘like a sea creature sunning itself among rocks’ (ibid)—and the book was conceived in the rocks near Genoa in solitude and where, so Nietzsche discloses, he ‘had secrets to share with the sea.’

One further point is worth taking note of before commencing the analysis into the sublime. The questions and problems that Nietzsche is concerned with in *Dawn* are not pursued by him in a linear or sequential fashion. Book five opens on a highly curious and enigmatic note with an aphorism on the great silence and the muteness of the sea and the final aphorism of the book reconnects with this motif of the sea. But other than this there is no fixed order to the aphorisms of the book. In aphorism 454 entitled ‘Interpolation’ Nietzsche says that a book like *Dawn* is not for reading straight through or reading aloud but for dipping into and especially when one is out walking or on a journey: ‘you must be able to stick your head into it and out again over and over and find about you nothing you are used to’ (D §454; KSA 3, 274). There is nothing arbitrary or random about Nietzsche’s selection of topics and problems, and why he elected to write in this non-linear fashion one can only speculate. My guess is that it has to do with what he thinks is now at stake for philosophy as it participates in the passion of knowledge.

The Dawn and Dread of the Sublime

In one of the text’s opening aphorisms Nietzsche argues that, ‘We must again rid the world of much *false grandeur*’ (*Grossartigkeit*)¹² simply because ‘it offends against the justice which all things may lay claim to from us’ (D §4; KSA 3, 20). In fact, the task goes much deeper than this since we are in the process of unlearning an inherited symbolism. The task of purifying ourselves of this inheritance involves inquiring into the origins and sources of the sublime. This is something Nietzsche had already begun to undertake in the previous text, *Human, All Too Human* where, for example, he had located the origins of the sublime in the religious cult (HH §130). Aphorism 33 of *Dawn* continues this inquiry. Here Nietzsche notes that for primitive humanity some evil chance event is interpreted in terms of a demonic power and caprice; there is no investigation into the natural causes of the phenomenon since the demonic cause is taken for granted. In this mental schema we have a demonic cause and a supernatural consequence, such as the punishments and mercies administered by the divinity, in which the sense for reality and taking pleasure

12 The adjectival *grossartig* has the sense of the ‘sublime’ and should not be lost on the reader.

in it is spoiled: reality only has value to the extent that ‘*it is capable of being a symbol.*’ It is, therefore, under the spell of the ancient morality of custom that man disdains the causes, the effects, and reality (*Wirklichkeit*) and ‘spins all his higher feelings of reverence, sublimity [or sublime exaltation] (*Erhabenheit*), pride, gratitude, and love *from an imaginary world*: the so-called higher world’ (D §33; KSA 3, 42). The results of the process are, Nietzsche thinks, perceptible today: ‘wherever a man’s feelings are *exalted* (*erhebt*), the imaginary world is involved in some way.’ It is for this reason that today the scientific human being has to be suspicious of all higher feelings, so tremendously nourished are they by delusion and nonsense: ‘Not that they necessarily are or forever have to be: but of all the gradual purifications (*Reinigungen*) awaiting humanity, the purification of the higher feelings will no doubt be one of the most gradual’ (ibid; 43).

This reorientation of thinking, including of sublime states, guides Nietzsche’s philosophical practice in 1880-1, and what inspires it is nothing other than the free spirited conscience. We can no longer simply trust our feelings since these are nothing original or final; behind feelings stand judgements and evaluations inherited in the form of feelings (inclinations and aversions): ‘Inspiration that stems from a feeling is the grandchild of a judgement—and often a wrong one!—and in any case, not a child of your own!’ (D §35) Only our own reason and experience can replace the inherited obedience of ancestors and stand as a test of authenticity (see also GS §335).

In aphorism 45 of *Dawn* entitled ‘A tragic ending for knowledge’ (*Erkenntniss*) Nietzsche notes that it is human sacrifice that has traditionally served as the means of producing exaltation (*Erhebung*); this sacrifice has both elevated (*erhoben*) and exalted (*gehoben*) the human being. What if mankind were to now sacrifice itself: to whom would it make the sacrifice? Nietzsche suggests that it would be ‘the knowledge of truth’ since only here could the goal be said to be commensurate with the sacrifice, ‘because for this goal no sacrifice is too great.’¹³ But this goal remains too distant and lofty; much closer to home is the task of working out the extent to which humanity can take steps towards the advancement of knowledge and ascertaining what kind of knowledge-drive could impel it to the point of extinction ‘with the light of an anticipatory wisdom in its eyes’. But perhaps here too we discover the madness of such a drive if divorced from human ends of cultivation and enhancement of itself into nobler and superior forms:

Perhaps one day, once an alliance for the purpose of knowledge has been established with inhabitants of other planets and one has communicated one’s knowledge from star to star for a few millennia: perhaps then enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*) for knowledge will swell to such a high tide! (D §45; KSA 3, 52-3)

The problem goes deep because from its history of exaltation humanity has developed

13 See also on this GM: II §7, in which Nietzsche notes that life has always known how to play tricks so as to justify itself, including its ‘evil,’ and today, for us moderns and free spirits, this takes the form of ‘life as a riddle, life as a problem of knowledge.’

within itself much self-abasement, self-hatred, and self-loathing. Nietzsche brings this out in a number of aphorisms. It is as if he is tracing a history of nihilism and pessimism through these insights into exaltation:

Belief in Intoxication (Rausch)—Owing to the contrasts other states of consciousness present and to the wasteful squandering of nervous energy, people who live for exalted and enraptured moments (*erhabenen und verzückten Augenblicke*) are usually wretched and disconsolate; they view those moments as their true self and the misery and despair as the *effect of everything 'outside the self'*; thus the thought of their environment, their age, their entire world fills them with vengeful emotions. Intoxication counts for them as the true life, as the real self . . . Humanity has these rapturous drunkards to thank for a great deal of evil: for they are insatiable sowers of the weeds of dissatisfaction with self and neighbour, of disdain for this world and this time, especially of world-weariness. Perhaps a whole Hell of *criminals* could not muster an impact as sinister and uncanny, as oppressive and ruinous of earth and air into the farthest future as that tiny, noble community of intractable, half-mad fantasists, people of genius which cannot control themselves and who take all possible pleasure in themselves only at the point where they have completely lost themselves . . . (D §50; KSA 3, 54-5)

Nietzsche is dealing with a problem that preoccupies him in book five and throughout the 1880s: the problem of fanaticism (see also GS §347; BGE §10). As he notes, such ‘enthusiasts’ will seek to implant the faith in intoxication as ‘as being that which is actually living in life: a dreadful faith!’ (ibid) Such is the extent of Nietzsche’s anxiety that he wonders whether humanity as a whole will one day perish by its ‘spiritual fire-waters’ and those who keep alive the desire for them. Nietzsche is advising us to be on our guard, to be vigilant as philosophers against, ‘the half-mad, the fantastic, the fanatical’, including so-called human beings of genius who claim to have ‘visions’ and to have seen things others do not see. We are to be cautious, not credulous, when confronted with the claims of visions, that is to say he adds, ‘of a profound mental disturbance . . .’ (D §66; KSA 3, 64)

Humanity has attempted to short-circuit the paths to truth and virtue, so we must be harder, aim higher, and demand more of ourselves. In an aphorism entitled ‘The Integrity of God’ (*Die Redlichkeit Gottes*) he writes: ‘All religions reveal a trace of the fact that they owe their origin (*Herkunft*) to an early, immature intellectuality in humanity—they all take with astonishing *levity* the obligation to tell the truth; as yet, they know nothing of a *duty on the part of God* to be truthful towards humanity and clear in His communication’ (D §91; KSA 3, 84-5). In D 456, which appears in book five, ‘*Redlichkeit*’ (honesty, integrity, probity) is said for good reason to be mankind’s ‘youngest virtue’ (see also Z: “Of the Afterworldsmen”; and for more on honesty in book five, see D §§ 482, 511, 536, 543, 556).¹⁴ Consider also in this regard the aphorisms 59-

14 ‘There have always been many sickly people among those who invent fables and long for God:

61. Nietzsche notes, quite seriously, that Christianity has wanted to free human beings from the *burden* of the demands of morality by showing a shorter way to perfection, perhaps imitating philosophers who wanted a ‘royal road to truth’ that would avoid wearisome and tedious dialectics or the gathering of rigorously tested facts. In both cases a profound error is at work even though such an error has provided comfort to those caught exhausted and despairing in the wilderness of existence (D §59). Christianity for Nietzsche can fairly be called a ‘very *spirited* religion’ that has made European humanity something sharp-witted and not only theologically cunning. It is this sharp-wittedness he will build on himself for the task of revaluation and the ‘self-sublimation of morality’ (D, Preface §4):

In this spirit, and in league with the powers that be and often the deepest honesty (*Ehrlichkeit*) of devotion, it has *chiselled out* the most refined figures ever yet to exist in human society: the figures of the higher and highest Catholic priesthood, especially when they have descended from a noble race and, from the outset, brought with them an inborn grace of gesture, commanding eyes, and beautiful hands and feet (D §60; KSA 3, 60).

The creation of a mode of life which tames the beast in man, which is the noble end of Christianity, has succeeded in keeping awake ‘the feeling of a superhuman (*übermenschlichen*) mission’ in the soul and in the body. Here one takes pride in obeying which, Nietzsche notes, is the distinguishing mark of all aristocrats. It is with their ‘surpassing beauty and refinement’ that the princes of the church prove to the people the church’s ‘truth’ and which is itself the result of a harmony between figure, spirit, and task. Nietzsche then asks whether this attempt at an aristocratic harmony must also go to grave with the end of religions: ‘can nothing higher be attained, or even imagined?’ (D §60; KSA 3, 61) When Nietzsche invites in the next aphorism sensitive people who are still Christians from the heart to attempt for once the experiment of living without Christianity he is once again in search of an authentic mode of life: ‘they owe it to *their faith* in this way for once to sojourn “in the wilderness”—if only to win for themselves the right to a voice on the question whether Christianity is necessary. For the present they cling to their native soil and thence revile the world beyond it . . .’ (D §61; KSA 3, 61) After such a wandering beyond his little corner of existence, a Christian may return home, not out of homesickness, but out of sound and honest judgement. Nietzsche sees here a model for future human beings who will one day live in this way with respect to all evaluations of the past: ‘one must voluntarily *live through* them once again, and likewise their opposite—in order, in the final analysis, to have the *right* to let them fall through the sieve’ (ibid.: 62)

Nietzsche brings book one of *Dawn* to a close by suggesting that Europe remains behind Indian culture in terms of the progress it needs to make with respect to religious matters. He

they have a raging hate for the enlightened human being and for that youngest of virtues which is called honesty’ (*Redlichkeit*), Z: I, “Of the Afterworldsmen.”

suggests that it has not yet attained the ‘free-minded (*freisinnige*) naiveté’ of the Brahmins. The priests of India demonstrated pleasure in thinking in which observances—prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices, and hymns—are celebrated as the givers of all good things. One step further, he adds, and one also throws aside the gods—‘which is what Europe will also have to do one day’ (D §96; KSA 3, 87). Europe remains distant, he muses, from the level of culture attained in the appearance of the Buddha, the teacher of ‘self-redemption.’ Nietzsche anticipates an age when all the observances and customs of the old moralities and religions have come to an end, but instead of speculating on what will then emerge into existence, he instead calls for a new community of non-believers to make their sign and communicate with one another: ‘There exists today among the different nations of Europe perhaps ten to twenty million people who no longer “believe in God”—is it too much to ask that they *give a sign* to one another?’ He imagines these people constituting a new power in Europe, between nations, classes, rulers and subjects, and between the un-peaceable and the most peaceable. Elsewhere in the text Nietzsche will suggest that we live in the time of a ‘moral interregnum’ in which, with the aid of the new sciences of physiology, medicine, sociology, and solitude, we are in the process of constructing anew the laws of life and action (D §453). At this stage in human development nothing further can be expected of us, the emerging free spirits of Europe, than that we seek to be our own experiments in newfound conditions of existence:

So it is that according to our taste and talent, we are living either a *preliminary* or a *posterior* existence, and it is best in this interregnum to be to every possible extent our own *reges* and to found little *experimental states* (*Versuchsstaaten*). We are experiments: let us also want to be such! (D §453; KSA 3, 274)

It is with this attitude towards the future that Nietzsche approaches aspects of the sublime, as well as what he calls the ‘sublimities of philosophy,’ in book five of the text.

The Sea, the Sea

Book five begins with an aphorism on ‘In the great silence’ that stages an encounter with the sea. The scene Nietzsche depicts is one of stillness and solitude: ‘Here is the sea, here we can forget the city.’ After the noisy ringing of bells announcing the angelus,¹⁵ which produce the sad and foolish yet sweet noise that divides night and day, all becomes still and the sea lies pale and shimmering but unable or unwilling to speak; similarly, the night sky plays its everlasting evening game with red and yellow and green but chooses not to speak. We are encompassed on all sides by a ‘tremendous muteness’ that is both lovely and dreadful and at which the heart swells.

¹⁵ Since the fourteenth century Catholic churches sounded a bell at morning, noon, and evening as reminder to recite Ave Maria, the prayer that celebrates the annunciation of the both of Christ to Mary by the angel Gabriel. Note by translator Brittain Smith. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, tr. Brittain Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

But is there not hypocrisy in this silent beauty? Nietzsche invites us to ask. Would it not speak well and evilly if it so wished? Would it not mock our feeling of sympathy (*Mitgefühl*) with it? A voice, Nietzsche's voice, then interrupts and declares, 'so be it! I am not ashamed of being mocked by such powers' (D §423; KSA 3, 259). This voice pities nature for its silence and on account of the malice that ties its tongue. In this scene the heart, the regulating source of life's blood flow, continues to swell and is startled by a new truth: '*it too cannot speak*, it too mocks when the mouth calls something into this beauty, it too enjoys its sweet silent malice' (ibid.; 259-60). The voice begins to hate speech and even thinking for behind every word it hears the error of laughter, of imagination, and delusion. Should one not, then, mock at one's pity and at one's mockery? What riddle of existence are we caught up in? Has not all become dark for the philosophy of the morning? The aphorism concludes as follows:

O sea! O evening! You are terrible mentors! You teach the human being to *cease* being human! Ought he to sacrifice himself to you? Ought he to become as you are now, pale, shimmering, mute, monstrous (*ungeheuer*), reposing above himself? Sublimely above himself? (*Über sich selber erhaben*) (ibid.; 260)

What sublime state is it that the human being might attain here? How can the human being cease being itself? Is this what has really taken place in this experience? What is the becoming contained within it? Later aphorisms in the book serve to clarify Nietzsche's meaning. I shall come to them shortly. The reader has good reason to pause and reflect on what might be being expressed in the aphorism. Nietzsche's instruction is never simple or straightforward; there is always ambiguity in it. One response might be to suggest that the encounter with the sea challenges the human and its sense of scale and measure, confronting it with something immense and monstrous. But here we have to be careful because of the 'mockery' that greets us in the experience. All the names we might come up with to describe the mute sea will come back to us: profound, eternal, mysterious. Are we not endowing the sea with our own names and virtues?¹⁶ Do we ever escape the net of language, ever escape the human?¹⁷

The basic contrast Nietzsche is making in the aphorism is between stillness and noise (sea and city): in our encounter with the sea, it might be suggested, we quieten our being, become calm and contemplative, think about more than the here and now, the merely fleeting and transient. In D 485 Nietzsche has 'B' state, 'It seems I need distant perspectives to think well of things.' If in *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche had urged his readers to renounce the first and last things and devote instead their energy and attentiveness to the closest things, the distant things, includ-

16 See Z: II "The Dance Song": "Into your eye I looked of late, O Life! And into the unfathomable I seemed them to be sinking. But you pulled me out with a golden fishing-rod; mockingly you laughed when I called you unfathomable. 'So runs the talk of all fishes,' you said: 'What *they* do not fathom is unfathomable. But changeable am I only and wild in all things, a woman and not a virtuous one.'"

17 See D §117 entitled 'In prison,' which ends: 'We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught precisely in *our* net.'

ing distant times return in *Dawn*, perhaps prompted by an encounter with the sea. The aphorism entitled ‘Why what is closest becomes ever more distant’ captures this new sense of perspective: ‘The more we think about everything that we were and will be, the paler what we are right now becomes . . . We grow more solitary—and indeed *because* the whole flood of humanity resounds around us’ (D §441; KSA 3, 269).

We have reason to pause because of the reference to the ‘evening.’ The dawn-philosophy is a philosophy of the morning and, as such, it has its suspicions about thoughts that come to us in the evening. Several aphorisms in book five address this point. In aphorism 539, for example, Nietzsche draws attention to how our ‘seeing’ of the world is coloured by different emotions and moods and different hours of the day: ‘Doesn’t your morning shine upon things differently from your evening?’ (D §539; KSA 3, 308) The aphorism entitled “The philosopher and age” begins with Nietzsche declaring that, ‘It is not wise to let evening judge the day: for all too often weariness then becomes the judge of energy, success, and good will’ (D §542; KSA 3, 309-10).¹⁸ My view is that Nietzsche wishes this encounter of the sea to take place but from it the human is not to cancel itself out of existence but to go out itself and return to itself anew or afresh. For Nietzsche there are different ways of seeing, some more human than others and some which are super-human (this is what he calls ‘pure seeing’; see also D §426 on the ‘richer form of seeing’). The encounter with sea and evening serves to inspire us to think about these different ways of seeing; we no longer only inhabit the day with its ordinary, prosaic consciousness. There is another voice even if that voice be silence or our own echo.

After the opening aphorism the next two aphorisms (424-425) consider truth and error and amplify what has been highlighted in the book’s opening aphorism: the ‘problem’ of the human is that it is an erring animal and dwells in the space of error. In 424 Nietzsche notes that errors have hitherto served as forces of consolation for humanity (errors of human judgement regarding freedom of the will, the unity of the world, the character of time, and so on). If today we are seekers of truth and idealists *of knowledge* may we not, then, expect the same from truth? But can truths be capable of producing the effect of consolation? Is it not in the nature of truth precisely not to console? If human beings exist as truthful beings but employ philosophy as therapy in the sense of seeking a cure for themselves, does this not suggest that they are not, in fact, seeking truth at all? But if the character of truth as a whole is one that makes us ill should we not abolish it in the same way the Greeks abolished gods once they were unable to offer consolation?

In 425 Nietzsche spells out the reason for our ambivalent stance towards errors. On the one hand it is on their basis that humanity has been elevated and has excelled itself again and

18 Nietzsche may have been inspired in these reflections by Schopenhauer: ‘For the morning is the youth of the day; everything is bright, fresh, and easy; we feel strong and have at our complete disposal all our faculties . . . Evening, on the other hand, is the day’s old age; at such a time we are dull, garrulous, and frivolous . . . For night imparts to everything its black color.’ See Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena* (in two volumes), tr. E.F.J. Payne (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974): vol. one, 434-35.

again, for example, through errors as to its descent, uniqueness, and destiny. On the other hand, it has to be noted that it is through the same errors that unspeakable amounts of suffering, persecution, suspicion, and misery have come into the world. Our moralities do not wed us to the earth as a site of dwelling and thinking; rather, we consider ourselves ‘too good and too significant for the earth,’ as if we were paying it only a passing visit. The ‘proud sufferer’ has thus become in the course of human development the highest type of human being that is revered.

Nietzsche clearly wishes to see much, if not all of this, overturned, but in the name of what or for what ends? Aphorism 501, entitled ‘Mortal souls,’ offers a partial clarification and suggests that it is our terrestrial heritage and conditions of existence that will now constitute our new horizon and limit. In this aphorism Nietzsche seems to be suggesting that it is a question of relearning both knowledge and the human, including human time as mortal time. Clearly, this complicates our conception of what the sublime will now mean for us, that is, the experiences of elevation and exaltation. When we gaze out to sea and encounter its great muteness what is it we experience and of what is it we would want to speak? No definitive answers can be given or need to be given at this point in time or evolution; rather, we are caught in a waiting game, one in which we can ‘freely’ orient ourselves:

With regard to knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) the most useful accomplishment is perhaps: that the belief in the immortality of the soul has been abandoned. Now humanity is allowed to wait; now it no longer needs to rush headlong into things and choke down half-examined ideas as formerly it was forced to do. For in those days the salvation of poor ‘eternal souls’ depended on the extent of their knowledge acquired during a short lifetime; they had to *make a decision* overnight—‘knowledge’ took on a dreadful importance. (D §501; KSA 3, 294)

Nietzsche argues we are now in a new situation with regard to knowledge and as a result we can conquer anew our courage for error, for experimentation, and for accepting things provisionally. Without the sanction of the old moralities and religions individuals and entire generations, ‘can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would to earlier ages have seemed madness’ (ibid.). Humanity has earned the right to self-experimentation and its sacrifices henceforth will be to knowledge.

Aphorism 507 entitled ‘Against the tyranny of the true’ signals a warning however concerning our devotion to knowledge through experimentation. Here Nietzsche stages an anxiety that takes on a more dramatic form in his later writings, notably the third essay of the *Genealogy* and its questioning of the will to truth. Of course, this is something that has in fact been a feature of his thinking on the mode of the tragic—for example, the need to will illusion—from the beginning. In this aphorism he asks why it should be considered desirable that truth alone should rule and be omnipotent. We can esteem it as a ‘great power’ but we should not allow it to rule over us in some tyrannical fashion. Much healthier is to allow truth to have opponents and for us to

find relief from it from time to time, and be at liberty to reside knowingly in ‘untruth.’ Failure to place truth within a rich economy of life will make truth, and ourselves in the process, ‘boring, powerless, and tasteless’ (D §507; KSA 3, 297). In the next work, *The Gay Science*, the first three books of which Nietzsche initially conceived as a continuation of *Dawn*, Nietzsche focuses on the task of the *incorporation* (*Einverleibung*) of truth and knowledge and holds this to be our new experiment (GS §110).

A number of questions and doubts might emerge from Nietzsche’s outline of this new set of tasks for humanity. Let’s accept that we wish to learn to know and become genuine knowers even if, as the preface to the *Genealogy* says, we are knowers who are in fact *unknown* to ourselves (GM: Preface §1). But this does mean and must it mean always as *human* knowers? Would this not mean always playing a part in the same comedy and never being able to see into things except through the same pair of eyes? Might there not be beings with different eyes and better equipped for knowledge? Moreover, if we are condemned to see only with human eyes and to know with human minds does this not signal in fact the *impossibility* of knowledge? As Nietzsche rhetorically puts it, do we come to know at the end of all our knowledge only our own organs? (D §483; see also BGE §15). Will this not lead to misery and disgust with ourselves? These are the questions Nietzsche considers in aphorism 483 and his answer to them provides one clue as to his conception of the image of the sea that the final book of the text starts with. He suggests that even when it proves to be the case that our search for knowledge returns us always to ourselves this does not mean that new knowledge is not to be had for even here we have a form of being that remains largely unknown and unexplored:

This is a wicked attack—*reason* is attacking you! But tomorrow you will be right back in the midst of knowing (*Erkennen*) again and so also in the midst of unreason, by which I mean: in the *pleasure* (*Lust*) of being human. Let us go down to the sea! (D §483; KSA 3, 287; see also D §539)

The question pops up: why would we from this experience go down to the sea? Would we encounter there only ourselves, or perhaps a challenge to ourselves that would lead us to discover ourselves—and the world—*anew*? For are we not fundamentally at the core unknown to ourselves? Contra the tendency towards self-loathing, then, Nietzsche is advising us that there are good reasons for taking pleasure or delight in our continuing human-ness. We have reasons to be cheerful and this occupies Nietzsche in aphorism 551 of ‘Of future virtues.’ The fact that the text compels us to keep raising these questions indicates I think that we are in a new space-time of knowledge and explains the nonlinear character of the arguments. Nietzsche is writing in such a way as to keep his reader not only seduced and captivated by the riddles of existence but also genuinely interested in the new and deeply enigmatic spaces and times of thinking.

In aphorism 551 he argues that the more comprehensible the world becomes for us then

the more solemnities of every kind have a chance to decrease. In short, through knowledge we can conquer the fear and anxiety that has gripped previous humanity and taught it to kneel down before the incomprehensible and beg for mercy. But is there not attached to this process of enlightenment a corresponding loss of charm about the world and, through the courageousness of our new ways of thinking, a loss of respect for the world and for ourselves? How we will now be stimulated by life? Will the passion of knowledge not implant in future humanity a death-drive? Nihilism is perhaps on the horizon of Nietzsche's thinking at this time but the concept of it does not as yet make its appearance in his writings. The danger he contemplates is that the courage in thinking will advance so far that it will reach a point of supreme arrogance where it considers itself to be above humanity and any concern with human things and problems. This would be a sublime of the sage who sees himself and existence as things farthest beneath him. But where there is danger there is also promise, and Nietzsche invites us to entertain the thought that this species of courage, which is not far from being 'an excessive magnanimity,' might produce a new species of seers who not only look down on humanity and existence from a great lofty height but also communicate to us about the domain of the possible and new possibilities of life. In short, Nietzsche is keen to promote the 'cheerful' philosophy of the morning that is focused on the hope of new dawns, new modes of living, and new (terrestrial) ideals. If there are reasons for nihilism there are also equally good reasons for its exact opposite:

If only they wanted to let us experience in advance something of the *future virtues!*
Or of virtues that will never exist on earth, although they could exist somewhere in the world—of purple-glowing galaxies and the whole Milky Ways of the beautiful!
Where are you, you astronomers of the ideal? (D §551; KSA 3, 322)

In seemingly each and every case where we might encounter disappointment, despair, or dejection, Nietzsche counters with thoughts of aspiration and new ambition. Nietzsche does not align his thinking with the cause of spreading fear or terror but instead commits himself to expanding our appreciation of the beautiful:

The pessimist, who gives all things the blackest and gloomiest colours, makes use of only flames and bolts of lightning, celestial effulgence, and everything that has glaring brilliance and confuses the eye; brightness is only there for him to increase the horror (*Entsetzen*) and to make us sense that things are more terrifying (*Schreckliches*) than they really are (D §561; KSA 3, 327)

Just as several aphorisms address the sublime in book five so do almost an equal number attend to questions of beauty, the beautiful, and the ugly. In aphorism 469 entitled 'The realm of beauty is bigger' Nietzsche suggests that new appreciations of beauty are becoming possible now that we no longer accept the limitation of restricting beauty to the morally good: 'Just as surely

as evil people have a hundred types of happiness about which the virtuous have no clue, they also have a hundred types of beauty: and many have not yet been discovered' (D §468; KSA 3, 281). In aphorism 550 on 'Knowledge and Beauty' Nietzsche suggests a radical turn or reorientation in our thinking about beauty and reality. He notes that hitherto people have reserved their veneration and feeling of happiness for works of imagination and dissemblance (*Verstellung*) whilst the opposite phenomena leave them cold. Pleasure or delight is taken only by plunging into the depths of semblance (*Schein*) and by taking leave of reality. This developed taste for semblance and appearance over reality has encouraged the aesthetic attitude that takes reality (*Wirklichkeit*) to be something ugly. Contra this development Nietzsche suggests that knowledge of the ugliest reality can be something beautiful for us and the discovery of reality—which is what we 'idealists of knowledge' inquiring into existence are doing—generates for us so many subtle pleasures. Do we not need to ask whether the 'beautiful in itself' makes any sense?

The happiness of those who seek knowledge increases the amount of beauty in the world and makes everything that is here sunnier; knowledge does not merely place its beauty around things but, in the long run, into things—may future humanity bear witness to this proposition! . . . What danger for their honesty (*Redlichkeit*) of becoming, through this enjoyment, a panegyrist of things! (D §550; KSA 3, 320-1; see also D §§ 433, 513, 515)

The final aphorism of book five returns us to its opening aphorism on the silent sea and is not insignificantly entitled 'We aeronauts of the spirit' (*Wir Luft-Schifffahrer des Geistes*).¹⁹ The aphorism begins by noting that although all the brave birds that fly out into the farthest distance are unable to go on at a certain point, this does not mean we can infer from this that an immense open space did not lay out before them. All that can be inferred is that they had flown as far as they could. The same applies, Nietzsche holds, to all our great teachers and predecessors who have come to a stop and often with weariness (see also D §487 on the wearied philosopher). It is a law of life that it will also be the case with us, 'with you and me,' Nietzsche writes. We can, however, derive sustenance and even consolation from the fact that other birds and other spirits will fly further:

This insight and faith (*Gläubigkeit*) of ours vies with them in flying up and away; it rises straightaway above our heads and above our impotence into the heights and from there surveys the distance and sees before it flocks of birds which, far more powerful than we are, will strive to get to where we were striving towards and where everything is still sea, sea, sea!—And where, then, do we want to go? Do we want to go *across* the sea? Where is it tearing us towards, this powerful craving that means more to us than

19 As Duncan Large points out, these aeronauts are flying an 'air-ship' and he suggests that their flying out over the sea indicates 'how close is their kinship to their more earthbound, or at least sea-bound mariner-cousins' (1995, 171).

any other pleasure? Why precisely in this direction, towards precisely where heretofore all of humanity's suns have *set*? Will it perhaps be said of us one day that we too, *steering toward the west, hoped to reach an India*—that it was, however, our fate (*Loos*) to shipwreck upon infinity? Or, my brothers? Or?—(D §575; KSA 3, 331)

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche draws attention to the closing of the book (though its search will soon be reopened with *The Gay Science*) and suggests that it is the only book to close in this manner (EH: III “Daybreak” §1).²⁰ The ‘Or?’ is necessary because the question is a genuine one; the search admits of no resolution, at least not until humanity reaches a point of completed knowledge with all suns discovered and thoroughly explored. But this is to speak of an infinitely long *durée* and Nietzsche derives his confidence in the future from this. He will continue in his writings to provide instruction on the sea, on our new infinite, offering both encouragement and warnings (see, for example, GS §§ 124-125, 283, 289, 343, 374; Z: II “On the Blissful Islands”).

Karl Löwith sought to draw attention to the enigmatic character of the reference to ‘India’ at the end of Nietzsche’s text.²¹ Is Buddhism not for Nietzsche, along with Christianity, a nihilistic religion? How do we square this with Nietzsche’s claim in *Ecce Homo* that *Dawn* is a great ‘yes-saying’ work that contains no negative words? Moreover, why is the epigraph to the book—‘there are so many dawns that have not yet broken’—called ‘Indian’? The interpretation Löwith gives for solving the riddle is highly speculative and focuses on the Nietzsche’s insistence on the need for the No as well as the Yes. In a reversal of the Christian meaning of the expression ‘By this sign (cross) you will conquer,’ which heads D §96, Nietzsche is suggesting that the conquest will take place under the sign that the redemptive God is dead. Buddha is a significant teacher because his religion is one of self-redemption, and this is a valuable step along the way of ultimate redemption from religion and from God. As Löwith points out, in his notebooks of the mid to late 1880s Nietzsche takes Christianity to task for having devalued the value of nihilism as a great purifying movement in which nothing could be ‘more useful or more to be encouraged than a thoroughgoing *practical nihilism*’ (KSA 13, 14 [9]; WP §247). The lie of the immortal private person and the hope of resurrection serve to deter the actual deed of nihilism, namely, suicide. This explains why in his ‘Lenzer Heide’ notebook on European nihilism Nietzsche is keen to construe eternal recurrence as ‘the most extreme form of nihilism’ and why he holds that ‘a European

20 For further insight see Large 1995 and Bertram 2008, 237: “The moment of this extreme, unsettled inner “Or?” finds its classical expression perhaps in the last sentences of *Daybreak*, which are also, simultaneously, a classic example of his mastery of the end . . . no matter from which direction we approach him, even Nietzsche’s mighty torso always rounds out his intellectual silhouette with a final “Or?” just as all of his works from the *Birth* to *Ecce* finish in the doubling of such an Or. Hardly any of them, however, do so with such calm pride, such regal surrender, such masterly confidence in the face of all “Beyonds” as *Daybreak*.”

21 Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, tr. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1997): 113.

Buddhism might perhaps be indispensable' (KSA 11, 35 [9]; WP §132).²² The No-doing precedes the Yes-saying as its purifying precondition. Humanity must become more Greek 'again,' 'for what is Greek was the first great union . . . of everything Oriental and on just that account the inception of the European soul, the discovery of our 'new world'" (KSA 11, 41 [7]; WP §1051; see Löwith 1987, 115). As Löwith points out, 'the continuation of the revived discovery of the old world is "the work of the new Columbus"' (ibid.). Thus the riddle may perhaps be understood: Nietzsche heads west, to where the sun sets, in order to reach an India in the east where the sun arises anew as eternal Being and life out of the nothing of European Buddhism.

On the Sublimities of Philosophy

In a number of aphorisms scattered throughout book five of *Dawn* Nietzsche configures the operations of philosophy in relation to the sublime and its own sublimities. Philosophy's love of knowledge—and to be a lover of knowledge is for Nietzsche to be an essentially unrequited lover—now develops as a form of passion that shrinks at no sacrifice. In aphorism 429 he notes that our drive to knowledge has become so strong for us that we now cannot tolerate the idea of happiness without knowledge: 'Restless discovering and divining has such an attraction for us, and has grown as indispensable to us as is to the lover his unrequited love . . .' (D §429; KSA 3, 264) We now honestly believe, Nietzsche writes, that 'under the pressure and suffering of this passion the whole of humanity must believe itself to be more sublime (*sich erhabener*) and more consoled than previously, when it had not yet overcome its envy of the cruder pleasure and contentment that result from barbarism' (ibid). We even entertain the thought that humanity might perish of its newfound passion for knowledge, though clearly Nietzsche is not an advocate of this. As he notes, such a thought can hold no sway over us. Our evolution is now bound up with this passion, however, and the task is to allow ourselves to be ennobled and elevated by it: ' . . . if humanity is not destroyed by a *passion* it will be destroyed by a *weakness*: which does one prefer? This is the main question. Do we desire for humanity an end in fire and light or in sand?' (ibid.; KSA 3, 265; see also D §435 on perishing as a '*sublime ruin*' (*erhabene Trümmer*) and not as a 'molehill').

In aphorism 427 Nietzsche employs the sublime to address what philosophy now means and does in relation to the new science (*Wissenschaft*) of knowledge. He draws a comparison with rococo horticulture which arose from the feeling that nature is ugly, savage, and boring and thus the aim was to beautify it. This is now what philosophy does with science, beautifying what

²² See also KSA 11, 35 [82]; WP §1055: 'A pessimistic teaching and way of thinking, an ecstatic nihilism, can under certain conditions be indispensable precisely to the philosopher—as a mighty pressure and hammer with which he breaks and removes degenerate and decaying races to make way for a new order of life, or to implant into that which is degenerate and desires to die a longing for the end.'

strikes us as ugly, dry, cheerless, and laborious.²³ Philosophy is a species of art and poetry and thus a form of ‘entertainment’: it wants to entertain ‘but, in accordance with its inherited pride, it wants to do this in a more sublime and elevated manner’ (*in einer erhabenen und höheren Art*) and before a select audience’ (D §427; KSA 3, 263). Nietzsche already has here, then, the conception of the project of ‘the gay science’ with its mixture of poetry, song, the philosophical aphorism, and dedication to science. In this aphorism from *Dawn* Nietzsche speaks of philosophy enabling us to wander in science as in ‘wild nature’ and without effort or boredom. Such an ambition for philosophy is one that makes religion, hitherto the highest species of the art of entertainment, superfluous. Eventually a cry of dissent against philosophy may emerge, one voiced by pure scientism and naturalism: ‘“back to science,” to the nature and naturalness of science!’ At this point, Nietzsche notes, an age of humanity’s history may then commence that discovers the mightiest beauty in precisely the wild and ugly sides of science, ‘just as it was only from the time of Rousseau that one discovered a sense for the beauty of high mountains and the desert’ (D §427; KSA 3, 263).²⁴ In short, Nietzsche can see no good reason why humanity cannot grow in strength and insight with science: even when science deflates it humanity can experience an elevation above itself and the nature of this elevation is best thought about in the clear light of day.

In aphorism 449 Nietzsche appeals to the ‘spiritually needy’ and considers how the new tasks and new modes of knowledge suppose solitude as their condition. He imagines a time for higher festivals when one freely gives away one’s spiritual house and possessions to ones in need. In this condition of solitude the satiated soul lightens the burden of its own soul, eschewing both praise for what it does and avoiding gratitude which is invasive and fails to respect solitude and silence. This is to speak of a new kind of teacher who armed with a handful of knowledge and a bag full of experiences becomes, ‘a doctor of the spirit to the indigent and to aid people here and there whose head *is disturbed by opinions . . .*’ (D §449; KSA 3, 272) The aim is not to prove that one is right before such a person but rather, ‘to speak with him in such a way that . . . he himself says what is right and, proud of the fact, walks away!’ Such a teacher exists like a beacon of light offering illumination. Nietzsche imagines this teacher existing in the manner of a new kind of Stoic and inspired by a new sublime:

To have no advantage, neither better food, nor purer air, nor a more joyful spirit—but to share, to give back, to communicate, to grow poorer! To be able to be humble so as to be accessible to many and humiliating to none! To have experienced much injustice and have crawled through the worm-tunnels of every kind of error in order to be able to reach many hidden souls along their secret paths! Always in a type of love and a type of self-interest and self-enjoyment! To be in possession of a dominion and at the

23 See also Z: I, “Of War and Warriors”: “Are you ugly? Very well, my brothers! Take the sublime (*das Erhabene*) about you, the mantle of the ugly!”

24 On Rousseau’s creation of a new and original emotion compare Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, tr. R. Ashley Audra & Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979): 41-2.

same time inconspicuous and renouncing! To lie constantly in the sun and the kindness of grace and yet to know that the paths rising to the sublime (*zum Erhabenen*) are right at hand!—That would be a life! That would be a reason to live, to live a long time. (ibid.)

In this new mode of life one is strengthened and encouraged by the promise of the sublime and with a love that at one and the same time centres on ourselves and yet freely gives to others. Interestingly, in his treatment of the ancient Greeks Nietzsche had viewed tragic art as the means by which a people had conquered a world-weary pessimism (e.g. the wisdom of Silenus) and to the point where they loved life to such an extent that they wanted long lives. The pain and suffering of life no longer counted as an objection but became the grounds of a beautifying and sublime transfiguration of existence. In book five of *Dawn* he is now envisaging how such comportment towards life can exist for us modern free spirits who have renounced so much (God, religion, the first and last things, romantic music, and so on). In D §440 Nietzsche in fact raises the question whether the philosopher of the morning is really renouncing things or gaining a new cheerfulness or serenity:

To relinquish the world without knowing it, like a *nun*—that leads to an infertile, perhaps melancholic solitude. This has nothing in common with the solitude of the thinker's *vita contemplativa*: when he elects *it*, he in no way wishes to renounce; on the contrary, it would amount to renunciation, melancholy, downfall of his self for him to have to endure the *vita practica*: he relinquishes the latter because he knows it, knows himself. Thus he leaps into *his* water, thus he attains *his* serenity. (D §440; KSA 3, 69)

For the thinker who now has the new dedication to knowledge and can recognise the extent of its future-oriented character—it is such because the discoveries of knowledge always run ahead of a humanity that in time will seek to become equal to it—existence is lived magnanimously. In aphorism 459 entitled ‘The thinker’s magnanimity’ Nietzsche writes:

Rousseau and Schopenhauer—both were proud enough to inscribe upon their existence the motto: *vitam impendere vero* (‘to dedicate one’s life to truth’). And again—how they both must have suffered in their pride that they could not succeed in making *verum impendere vitae*! (‘to dedicate truth to life’)—*verum*, as each of them understood it—in that their lives tagged along beside their knowledge like a temperamental bass that refuses to stay in tune with the melody! But knowledge would be in a sorry state if it was meted out to every thinker only as it suited his person! And thinkers would be in a sorry state if their vanity were so great that they could only endure this! The great thinker’s most beautiful virtue radiates precisely from: the magnanimity with which he, as a person of knowledge (*Erkennender*), undauntedly, often shamed, often with sublime mockery (*mit erhabenen Spotte*) and smiling—offers himself and

by: **Keith
Ansell-
Pearson**

his life in sacrifice (D §459; KSA 3, 276)

Neither Rousseau nor Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is arguing, were cognitively mature enough to allow for knowledge and life to enter into a new marriage in which knowledge elevates and pulls life up with it: their emotional personalities interfered too much to permit this process to take place.²⁵

We can contrast this with the depiction Nietzsche provides of the likes of Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe in aphorism 497 entitled ‘The purifying eye.’²⁶ In the genius of these natures we find a spirit that is only loosely bound to character and temperament, ‘like a winged essence that can separate itself from the latter and soar high above them’ (D §497; KSA 3, 292). Nietzsche then contrasts this genius with another kind, namely, those thinkers who boast of it but who in fact have never escaped from their temperament, and he gives as an example the case of Schopenhauer. Such geniuses are unable to fly above and beyond themselves but only ever encounter themselves wherever they fly. Nietzsche does not deny that such genius can amount to greatness, but he is keen to point out that what they lack is that which is to be truly prized—‘the *pure, purifying eye*.’ Such an eye is not restricted in its vision by the partial sightedness created by character and temperament and can gaze at the world ‘as if it were a god, a god it loves.’ Although these geniuses are teachers of ‘pure seeing,’ Nietzsche is keen to stress that such seeing requires apprenticeship and long practice. In aphorism 542 on ‘The philosopher and old age’ Nietzsche offers a warning about the noblest kind of genius such as we find in Plato. This consists in having belief in one’s own genius to the point where the thinker permits himself the right to decree rather than to prove. In effect the thinker has reached a state of spiritual fatigue and chooses to enjoy the results of their thinking instead of testing them out again and again. At this point the old thinker believes he has elevated (*erhebt*) himself above his life’s work when in actuality he has infused his thought with rhapsodies, poetic fog and mystic lights (D §542; KSA 3, 311). Such a thinker wants to found institutions that will bear his name and no longer build new edifices of thought. He wants to create a legacy with ‘confirmed party supporters, unproblematic and safe comrades,’ coming close to inventing a religion in order to have community and have himself canonized. Nietzsche notes poignantly: ‘Whenever a great thinker wants to turn himself into a binding institution for the future of humankind, one may be certain that he is past the peak of his

25 On Schopenhauer compare Wittgenstein: ‘Schopenhauer is quite a *crude* mind, one might say. I.e. though he has refinement, this suddenly becomes exhausted at a certain level and the he is as crude as the crudest. Where real depth starts, his comes to an end. One could say of Schopenhauer: he never searches his conscience.’ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, tr. Peter Winch (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980): 36e.

26 See also Z: I, “Of the Tree of the Mountainside”: “ ‘The free human of the spirit, too, must purify himself. Much of the prison the rottenness still remains within him: his eye still has to become pure.’ ” Ironically perhaps, Schopenhauer’s own insight into Goethe seems to anticipate Nietzsche: “Such a life, therefore, exalts the man and sets him above fate and its fluctuations. It consists in constant thinking, learning, experimenting, and practising, and gradually becomes the chief existence to which the personal is subordinated as the mere means to an end. An example of the independent and separate nature of this intellectual life is furnished by Goethe” (Schopenhauer 1974: volume two, 75).

powers and is very weary, very close to the setting of his sun' (D §542).

It is clear that for Nietzsche true genius is something extremely rare simply because so few can free themselves from their temperaments and character.²⁷ Most of us see existence through a veil or cloak and this occupies Nietzsche's attention in aphorism 539. He challenges us to reflect on whether we are in fact suited for knowing what is true or not. Our mind may be too dull and our vision too crude to permit us access to such knowledge. He runs through the many subjective elements of our perception and vision of the world, how, for example, we are often on the look out for something that affects us strongly and at other times for something that calms us because we are tired: 'Always full of secret predeterminations as to *how* the truth would have to be constituted if you, precisely you, were able to accept it!' (D §539; KSA 3, 308) To attain objectivity of perception is hard for human beings—to be just towards something requires from us warmth and enthusiasm, and the loveable and hateful ego appears to be always present—and may in fact be only attainable in degrees (see also GM: III §12). We may, then, have good reasons for living in fear of our own ghost: 'In the cavern of every type of knowledge, are you not afraid once more of running into your own ghost, the ghost that is the cloak (*verkleidet*) in which truth has disguised itself from you?' (ibid) For Nietzsche both Goethe and Schopenhauer are geniuses: the difference is that one is more capable than the other of 'pure seeing' and hence more profound.

In aphorism 547 on the 'Tyrants of the spirit' Nietzsche suggests that we should no longer feel the need to rush knowledge along to some end point. There is no longer the need, he holds, to approach questions and experiments as if the solutions to them had to correspond to a typical human time span. We are now free to take our time and go slowly: 'To solve everything at one fell swoop, with one single word—that was the secret wish: this was the task one imagined in the image of the Gordian knot or of Columbus' egg; one did not doubt that in the realm of knowledge as well it was possible to reach one's goal after the manner of an Alexander or a Columbus and to solve all questions with *one* answer' (D §547; KSA 3, 317). The idea evolved that there was a riddle to solve for the philosopher and that the task was to compress the problem of the world into the simplest riddle-form: 'The boundless ambition and jubilation of being the "unriddler of the world" were the stuff of thinker's dreams' (ibid.; 318). Under such a schema of the task of thinking philosophy assumed the guise of being a supreme struggle for the tyrannical rule of spirit reserved for a single individual (Nietzsche thinks that it is Schopenhauer who has most recently fancied themselves as such an individual). The lesson to be drawn from this inheritance is that the quest for knowledge has been retarded by the moral narrow-mindedness of its disciples; in the future, Nietzsche declares, 'it must be pursued with a higher and more magnanimous basic feeling: "What do I matter!" stands over the door of the future thinker' (ibid.).

27 Nietzsche's conception of the genius surely has affinities with Schopenhauer who defines genius as 'the highest degree of the *objectivity* of knowledge' (this knowledge is a synthesis of perception and imagination and found in a rare state and abnormal individuals). See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (in two volumes), trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York, Dover, 1966): vol. two, 292; see also chapter XXXI.

In aphorism 553 Nietzsche directly addresses the question of the direction of this new philosophy of the morning: where is it headed with all its detours? He himself raises the suspicion that it may be little more than the translation into reason of a concentrated drive, ‘for mild sunshine, clearer and fresher air, southerly vegetation, sea air, transient digests of meat, eggs, and fruit, hot water to drink, daylong silent wanderings . . . almost soldierly habits’, and so on. In short, is it a philosophy ‘that at bottom is the instinct for a personal diet’ and hygiene, one that suits a particular idiosyncratic taste and for whom it alone is beneficial? (D §553; KSA 3, 323) He continues:

An instinct that is searching for my own air, my own heights, my own weather, my own type of health, through the detour of my head? There are many other and certainly more loftier sublimities (*höhere Erhabenheiten*) of philosophy and not just those that are more gloomy and more ambitious than mine—perhaps they too are, each and every one, nothing than intellectual detours for these kinds of personal drives?—In the meantime (*Inzwischen*) I observe with new eyes the secret and solitary swarming of a butterfly high on the rocky seashore where many good plants are growing; it flies about, untroubled that it only has one more day yet to live and that the night will be too cold for its winged fragility. One could certainly come up with a philosophy for it as well: although it is not likely to be mine. (*ibid.*; KSA 3, 323-4)

Although Nietzsche can observe and appreciate the butterfly in a new way, as he now can all things of nature, its mode of life is too simple and untroubled in contrast to the philosophy of life his search is opening up, which is one of deep and troubled fascination and with ever-new peaks of elevation.

Two points are to be considered here: first, it is Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity that leads him to be honest on this point and to raise the question whether philosophy is anything more than a means to satisfy a personal drive or set of drives; second, it is not until later in the 1880s that he will adequately answer the question in a more direct manner. He does so in the prefaces he wrote to new editions of his books in 1886 and 1887, and what comes across in them is Nietzsche’s generosity as a thinker: the philosophy of the morning and the gay science are open to anyone in whom a ‘task’ grows and wishes to be incarnate:

This is how the free spirit gives himself an answer concerning the riddle of liberation and ends by generalizing his own case and this reaching a decision about his own experience: “What I went through, he tells himself, must be gone through by everyone in whom there is a *task* that wants to be embodied and ‘to come into the world . . .’” (HH, Preface §7)

In fact, the direction of this philosophy is clear and is stated in firm terms in the next work,

Agonist 26

The Gay Science. The direction is one of purification for those who wish to become the ones that they are, ‘new, unique, incomparable, self-creating, self-legislating’: in short, the human-superhuman ones and who can only become this by purifying themselves of their opinions and valuations (GS §335). In short, drives are important but not all that is at stake. The ultimate goal is authenticity or the task of becoming one’s own lawgiver.

Conclusion

Kant chose the figure of Copernicus to depict his philosophical revolution. Nietzsche selects the figure of a new Columbus to promote the new orientation for thinking being outlined in his middle period work. With the disorientating event of the death of God that which is the highest and that which is most comprehensive—the sun and the sea—and with it humanity’s entire previous horizon disappear and give rise to a new sea.²⁸ The need for new orientation adds hidden depths to what is typically construed as Nietzsche’s transitional embrace of ‘positivism’ at this time. Mostly written in Genoa, *Dawn* is a book that journeys into the future and which for Nietzsche constitutes, in fact, its true destination: ‘Even now,’ he writes in a letter of March 1881 to his old friend Erwin Rohde, ‘there are moments when I walk about on the heights above Genoa having glimpses and feelings such as Columbus once, perhaps from the very same place, sent out across the sea and into the future.’ Of this Genoa, Ernst Bertram wrote in his study of Nietzsche of 1918: “. . . that means the sea, it means the secretiveness of the sea, the happiness and the dread it evokes; it means daybreak and beyond, hope without horizon and the most daring adventurousness, godlessness out of profundity, solitude out of a belief in humanity, cynicism out of the will to the highest reverence.”²⁹ In *Dawn* the chief task is clearly laid out: it consists in liberating ourselves from our human inheritance and looking at everything with searching eyes, new eyes. In its suspicion of intoxicated states and concern over the danger of fanaticism, the text continues an enlightenment project. Indeed, Nietzsche saw himself as carrying forward the task of the Enlightenment which he thinks in Germany was only carried out in a half-hearted manner, one that left too much room for obscurantism and reaction (see D §197 where he mentions as retarding developments: German philosophy, German historiography and romanticism, German natural science, and Kant’s attempt to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith).

Although Nietzsche will continue to figure the sublime in different ways in subsequent texts, including devoting a discourse to the sublime ones in *Z*, several crucially important moves have been made by him in the texts of the middle period.³⁰ They include the following: (a) dis-

28 See Lowith 1997, 41.

29 Bertram 2008, 225. See also *Z*: I, “On the Bestowing Virtue”: “And this is the Great Middy, when the human stands in the middle of its path between beast and superhuman and celebrates its way to evening as its highest hope, for it is the way to a new morning.”

30 In *Z*: II, “Of the Sublime Human Beings” Nietzsche addresses the ‘penitent of the spirit’ that are ‘decked out with ugly truths’ and who have not yet learned of laughter, beauty, and gracefulness

criminating between the sublime of the sage of old and the new sublimities of philosophy; (b) showing how the sublime can now serve as a point of attraction to new realities and experiences (e.g. the ugly).³¹ In HH §217, for example, Nietzsche notes that the ugly aspect of the world, which was originally hostile to the senses, has now been conquered for music: ‘its sphere of power especially in the domain of the sublime (*Erhabene*), dreadful, mysterious has therewith increased astonishingly.’ In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche will continue to make use of the sublime in both critical and illuminating senses. In the well-known aphorism on giving style to one’s character (GS §290), for example, he figures it in the context of this problematic, noting how the ugly that cannot be removed is on the one hand concealed and, on the other, ‘reinterpreted and made sublime’ (*Erhabene*). In GS §313 he indicates clearly that his intention is not to continue the association of the sublime with images of cruelty and torture: ‘I want to proceed as Raphael did and never paint another image of torture. There are enough sublime things (*erhabenen Dinge*) so that one does not have to look for the sublime (*die Erhabenheit*) where it dwells in sisterly association with cruelty.’ His ambition, he tells us, could never find satisfaction if he became ‘a sublime (*sublimen*) assistant at torture’ (*sublim*’ is used here in the sense of ‘subtle’ or ‘refined’).³²

Finally, in Nietzsche’s very first and remarkable sketch of August 1881 on the eternal recurrence of the same he reflects on the new passion of knowledge, on the play of truth and error in humanity’s evolution, and brings it to a close by speaking of the sublime states that define a free spirited philosophy in search of a new orientation:

For thinking over: The various *sublime states* (*erhabenen Zustände*) I had to undergo as foundations of the various chapters and their material—regulating in each chapter the expression, style, and pathos—so as to gain an imprint (*Abbildung*) of my ideal, as though through addition. And then to go even higher! (KSA 9, 11 [141])

and who need to grow weary of their sublimity in order to allow beauty to rise up: ‘... he should be an exalted one (*Gehobener*) and not only a sublime one (*Erhabener*)—the ether should raise him up (*heben*), the will-less one!’ The identity of the sublime ones is unclear: are they Stoic sages, as one commentator has suggested (T. K. Seung, *Goethe, Nietzsche, and Wagner: Their Spinozan Epics of Love and Power* (Lanham & New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006): 191.), or the modern seekers of knowledge Nietzsche refers to in more explicit terms of the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morality*? It is important to appreciate that in this discourse Nietzsche is addressing a quite specific clothing of the sublime in which he is indicating that without the purifying knowledge those who are sublime remain too tied to that which needs to be overcome, namely, the old sources of the sublime and which he has opened up in HH and D. We are not to be huntsmen and women who return from the forest of knowledge gloomy and despondent. See also BGE §45 on the nature of the ‘lover of the “great hunt.”’

31 For Burke ugliness is consistent with the idea of the sublime but must be united ‘with such qualities as excite a strong terror’ (Burke 1998, 109). Nietzsche’s thinking of the ugly and its transfiguration is quite different and linked to more general concerns about human becoming through continual aesthetic sublimation and transfiguration.

32 See also Nietzsche’s letter to Heinrich von Stein of the beginning of December 1882: “I would like to *take away* from human existence some of its heartbreaking and cruel character.”

In a recent study of the philosophy of fear Lars Svendsen has argued, in a chapter which considers the sublime and that begins with a position attributed to Nietzsche, that fear is something that lends colour to the world and a world without it would be boring: “In an otherwise secure world, fear can break the boredom. A feeling of fear can have an uplifting effect.”³³ Whilst Nietzsche is not oblivious to the shock function fright can sometimes play in human existence,³⁴ he does not hold in *Dawn* to the position Svendsen credits him with: ‘Nietzsche complains that the world has lost much of its charm because we no longer fear it enough’ (ibid. 73). In truth, in the passage on which this claim is based—aphorism 551 of *Dawn*—Nietzsche makes no such complaint and his position is much more subtle. It is the aphorism entitled ‘Of future virtues,’ in which Nietzsche looks forward to new experiences and new possibilities of life, not backwards to previous experiences and ancient reverences. In the aphorism Nietzsche is taking cognizance of several facts as he judges them. He observes that as the world becomes more comprehensible to us the more solemnity of all kinds decreases. Hitherto, he notes, it was *fear* that informed humanity’s attitude of reverence as it found itself overcome in the face of the unknown and the mysterious, forcing it to ‘sink down before the incomprehensible.’ He then asks whether the world will lose some its appeal once a new humanity comes into being that has grown less fearful in the face of the character of the world: might it not also result in our own fearsomeness becoming slighter? His answer is negative and it is such because of the *courage* that he sees as amongst our new virtues; this is a species of courage so courageous that it feels itself to be ‘above people and things,’ it is a kind of ‘excessive magnanimity’ and, he notes, has hitherto been lacking in humanity. Nietzsche concludes the aphorism by declaring the age of ‘harmless counterfeiting’ to be over and he looks ahead to the ‘astronomers of the ideal’ who will take over the role of the poets whose task was to be seers who could recount to us ‘something of the *possible!*’ In short, what Svendsen misses is the key point of book five of *Dawn* and around which its various insights hinge, namely, the promise of a *new dawn*.

We know where Nietzsche’s thought is heading at this point: in the direction of the gay science with its distinctive mood of *Heiterkeit* (cheerfulness). If the point was not clear in the first edition of the text (GS), including the meaning of the announcement of God’s death, Nietzsche makes it clear with book five added in 1887—it commences with an aphorism on the meaning of our cheerfulness in the face of this death and this is the opening gambit of a book entitled

33 Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear*, tr. John Irons (London: Reaktion Books, 2008). Svendsen’s book sets itself a laudable aim: to ‘break down the climate of fear that surrounds us today’ and that has colonised our life-world (8). The ‘fear’ at work here is what he calls ‘low-intensity fear’ (75).

34 In a note of 1872-3 Nietzsche writes, ‘Fright (*Das Erschrecken*) is the best part of humanity’ (KSA 7, 19 [80]). The context in which he states this is a consideration of the conditions under which we venerate what is rare and great, including what we imagine them to be and including the miraculous. Nietzsche’s preoccupation with ‘greatness’ in the *Untimelies* has to be understood in the context of his attack on a complacent and philistine bourgeois culture. The context of his reflections on the fate of fear and reverence in *Dawn* is quite different and these reflections are part of the philosophy of the free spirit and European wanderer.

‘We Fearless Ones.’³⁵ We are not, then, to go forwards in a state of fear or in order to excite it.³⁶

We philosophers and ‘free spirits’ feel . . . as if a new dawn shone upon us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation . . . the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an ‘open sea’.— (GS §343)

35 This is not to deny that there is not at work in Nietzsche a will to the terrifying and questionable character of existence since this is one of the distinguishing features of the strong type as he conceives it (KSA 12, 10 [168]; WP §852); and cheerfulness in Nietzsche is always a complicated matter and comes from deep sources. The point to be stressed, however, is that Nietzsche always appeals to ‘courage’ as the best destroyer and to a courageous humanity, not a fearful one. If it is legitimate to construe Nietzsche’s entire philosophy as a training in ‘the hard school of life’ (affirmation of the tragic conditions of existence), it is clear that he holds that such a training must conquer the fear of life. *The Birth of Tragedy* can profitably be read along these lines: ‘...we are forced to gaze into the terrors (*die Schrecken*) of individual existence—and yet we are not to freeze in fear (*und sollen doch nicht erstarren*)’ (BT §17).

36

See the note of March–June 1888 entitled ‘Religion as decadence’ on this where Nietzsche distinguishes between the fool and the fanatic and the ‘two sources’ of intoxication: KSA 13, 14 [68]; WP §48.

Translation
Circulus Vitiosus

by Pierre Klossowski

translated by Joseph D. Kuzma

Preface

A hundred years after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, amidst the decadent splendour of the Château of Cerisy-la-Salle, the fabled lineage of French Nietzscheanism enjoyed what might arguably be considered its apotheosis; a single event whose significance to the history of ideas is perhaps overshadowed only by the undeniable philosophical incandescence, as feverishly intense as it was brief, which captivated its famous participants. If the colloquium at Cerisy, held during July of 1972, still elicits interest from us today, over thirty-five years later, it is perhaps because there has developed around it something of a mythos in the intervening years. Imagine two generations of Europe's greatest thinkers, from across the spectrum of political and philosophical persuasions, coming together over the course of two weeks for the sole purpose of discussing Nietzsche. Indeed, to speak of Cerisy is quite simply to evoke the convergence of a veritable pantheon: Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, and Nancy—all of whom, alongside their German counterparts, Eugen Fink and Karl Löwith, as well as a plethora of others—delivered papers and joined in open discussion. Cerisy represents, then, a high-water mark for those movements in European philosophy which recognised, in the figure of Nietzsche, a spokesperson and emblem for the valorisation of difference, life, and creativity. And if these movements of thought still matter to us today, then we would do well to acknowledge the one individual who, from the 1950s onward, did perhaps more than anyone else to facilitate and promote the French reception of Nietzsche's work. That individual is Pierre Klossowski.

As a philosopher, translator, and scholar, Pierre Klossowski's contribution to the development of the distinctively "French" Nietzsche is difficult to over-state. Though his intellectual engagement with the works of Nietzsche dates back to the 1930s, when alongside his friend Georges Bataille he recognised in Nietzsche's *oeuvre* a conceptual repertoire capable of displacing the Hegelian-Marxist narrative of teleological completion, it was with his translation of *The Gay Science* in 1954 that Klossowski unmistakably established himself as one of the central figures in French Nietzsche studies. Klossowski's translation was followed in 1958 with the seminal essay, "Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie," which would come to profoundly influence an entire generation of philosophers and critics, radically reconfiguring the entire paradigm of

Nietzsche scholarship through its innovative and controversial reading of the death of God – an event which, for Klossowski, entails the inexorable dissolution of personal identity.

By 1964, Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche had taken a number of provocative steps forward, as evidenced by his stunning contribution to the Royaumont Nietzsche Conference (organised by Deleuze) held in the same year. The essay, "**Oubli et anamnèse dans l'expérience vécue de l'éternel retour du Même,**" would later be reworked for inclusion within Klossowski's most significant and enduring contribution to philosophical discourse—the 1969 text, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*. **The work chronicles, with scholarly acuity, the relationship between Nietzsche's oscillating valetudinary states and the fortuitous emergence of the thought of the eternal return, a thought which, quite literally, demanded the destruction of the very organ (Nietzsche's brain) which rendered it possible in the first place.**

Klossowski's Cerisy paper, "Circulus Vitiosus" (published below in English translation for the first time) is the author's final published writing on Nietzsche. Though closely related to his previous works, and in some ways a continuation upon the themes introduced in *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, it also contains a number of themes and accents not previously elaborated upon. Key among these is the notion of *complot*, or conspiracy. To follow Deleuze's explication featured in the discussion that follows Klossowski's paper, a conspiracy can be understood as "a community of singularities." Taken in this light, much of Klossowski's paper constitutes an attempt at subtly outlining the complex tension that arises between precisely such a community and the pervasive cultural forces seeking to *regularize* it, particularly those various mediocrising forces belonging to the institutions of psychoanalysis and late capitalism.

By raising the question of the community in this context, Klossowski's paper presciently anticipates both Nancy's *La Communauté désœuvrée* (1982) and Blanchot's later *La communauté inavouable* (1988). For all three thinkers, the question of community demands, rather aporetically, that we attempt to think relationality outside the scope of restricted expenditure and the reciprocity of exchange. Or more precisely, to follow Deleuze's adept commentary on Klossowski's essay, "the problem which we now inherit from him is to know if it is possible to conceive of links between singularities which would have as their criteria the eternal return, insofar as it implicates the loss of identity, not just for individuals but also for societies and groups."

I would like to thank Leslie Hill, Keith Ansell-Pearson, and Sarah Jane Barr for their valuable comments and suggestions on the translation. Any mistakes that remain are wholly my own.

Translation

“When one makes his way towards a goal, it seems inconceivable that the absence of goal in itself could be a principle of belief.

Everywhere I look, I see nothing but the subsistence of the very people who compromise life and the value of life.”—*Anti-Darwin*

To begin with, I shall give a quick overview of what might be called Nietzsche’s authentic thought (this term, “authentic,” of course, is very problematic). If it can be permitted, however, we wish to employ it in the sense that over the past forty years the intricacies of Nietzsche’s supposed system have become increasingly accessible, leading us to the certainty that from now on, no one will dare to separate, oppose, or consider mutually exclusive (as was commonplace during the half-century following Nietzsche’s death) the notions of the eternal return and the will to power. But if Nietzsche is indeed the philosopher of will to power precisely *because* he is the advocate of eternal return, then this indisputable Heideggerean delimitation can now, on the basis of Nietzsche’s own declarations, find itself interpreted more diversely, and more problematically. Based upon these declarations, we can trace the following stages by which—leaving behind the ecstatic instant of Sils-Maria, having converted the lived experience into a concept, or into what he calls the thought of thoughts—Nietzsche tried to give a scientifically elaborated version of it, and subsequently introduced it as the impulsion [*ressort*] behind the will to power when he revealed the eternal return as the secret instrument in his doctrine of selection, or to speak purely in historical terms, as that which facilitates the passage from passive to active nihilism whose sign and figure is the *circulus vitiosus deus*.¹

The figure of the vicious circle leads (as I ventured to show in my earlier study) to an analysis which I find absolutely indispensable to an understanding of the Nietzschean criteria of decline and ascent, health and sickness, gregariousness and particularity, and more specifically, as far as the vicious circle is concerned, the fortuitous case. For my part, I have allowed myself to be guided by a constant thread (*un fil conducteur*), one that seemed to me most reliable for overcoming the feeling of strangeness that, *prima facie*, Nietzsche’s affirmations inspire—in other words, that which suggests, in Nietzsche’s affirmations and projects, the preparation of a conspiracy [*un complot*]. One is forced either to turn away from this aspect of Nietzsche’s writing as if it were an absurdity irreconcilable with his authentic thought, or one can choose to accept what this thought tells us at first glance, that is, that we have no adequate criteria for judging what is aberrant and what is not, other than the possibilities and impossibilities of living on the basis of a certain thought. Neither the doctrine of selection, nor the notion of conspiracy, allow us to deal with the terms “overhuman,” “master and slave,” and “sovereign formation” as pure metaphors.

Nietzsche’s conspiracy is hatched against the secret collusion between institutional morality and Darwinian theory (“selection is not necessarily favourable to the exceptions, but only to the mediocre”). However, it only comes to fruition at the moment when the thought of eternal

1 The phrase *circulus vitiosus deus* appears in aphorism 56 of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

return becomes explicit. The doctrine of the vicious circle has the effect of abolishing the principle of identity, the identity of the individual, and therefore also of those subjects of power who never use their power unless they can imagine, in advance, a goal and a meaning for their action. Because the vicious circle abolishes, once and for all, alongside identity the meaning of acts and demands their infinite repetition in a complete absence of a *telos*, it becomes the selective criteria of experimentation within the conspiracy itself.

What sovereignty will ever dare to abandon the notions of sense and purpose, from which an established power authorizes itself to dominate?—What sovereignty will use any other form of violence than that of absurdity?

This sovereignty, or these sovereign formations (*Herrschaftsgebilde*), which Nietzsche evokes, would necessarily merge their domination with their own disintegration if, indeed, they take the form of an institution, or a State, in the traditional sense. There can be no question, in Nietzsche's thinking, therefore, of instituting a political regime in any traditional sense. Nietzsche's conspiracy is thus only conceivable insofar as it would be led by some secret, elusive community, whose actions would resist suppression by any regime. Only such a community would have the ability to disperse itself through its action whilst maintaining a certain efficacy, at least until the inevitable moment when gregarious reality appropriates the community's secret in some institutional capacity.

Nietzsche speaks about the advent of a power which would be, in effect, that of a secret society comprised of experimenters, scholars and artists, in other words, *creators* who will know how to act according to the doctrine of the vicious circle and who will make it the *sine qua non* of universal existence. Hereby, he introduces the theme of eliminatory terror [*la terreur éliminatrice*], which would arise from the thought of eternal return.

How, we might ask, is this thought alone capable of evoking such terror? Nietzsche would reply: merely by its contents—for this thought would not interest the masses. Indeed, it could only be taken seriously if the fear which is implicit to it comes to be translated into consecutive acts the content of which would have no other goal or purpose than to return *ad infinitum*. No political regime could ever adopt such a thought, and the individuals and the masses who would be incapable of living under this sign, without purpose or meaning, will begin—he supposes—to disappear.

Nietzsche, in his own speculations, not only takes into consideration the concrete probability of realising such a scenario as being utopian, he also analyses the empirical data, contextualising his theory within the evolution of modern economy. The complete management of the Earth, the planetary planning of existence [*la planification planétaire de l'existence*]—obeys the law of an irreversible movement. The economic movement which consecrates the reigning mentality of the false, Darwinian selection, leads to a mediocrisation of man, and demands a reaction in the form of a counter-movement.

It may be helpful to consider the following passage, which more or less all of you will

know, and which is useful to reread in light of the developments that I will subsequently try to develop:²

To demonstrate that an increasingly economical use of men and mankind, a ‘machinery of interests’ and actions ever more closely entangled, *necessarily implies a counter-movement*. I designate this the *elimination of the luxury surplus from mankind*: which will bring about the emergence of a *stronger* species, a higher type whose conditions of emergence and survival will differ from those of the average man. My concept, my parable for this type of human, as is well known, is that of the ‘overhuman.’

That first path, which we now clearly see, entails adaptation, levelling-down, a higher Chinesehood, modesty in instincts, contentment in the diminishing stature of mankind—a kind of *stagnation in the level of the human being*. Once we encounter the inevitable economic and administrative totalization of the earth, humanity will *be able* to discover its greatest significance as a piece of machinery within that economy: as an enormous clockwork of ever increasingly smaller, and more subtly ‘adapted’ cogs; as an embodiment of the increasing superfluity of all dominating and commanding elements; as a totality of forces, whose individual factors represent minimal forces, minimal values. In opposition to this levelling-down and adaptation of men to an increasingly specialised usefulness, a counter-movement is needed, namely, the engendering of a *synthesizing, amalgamating, and justifying* man for whom this mechanisation of mankind is precisely the condition of his existence, and the basis upon which he is able to invent for himself his superior form of existence . . .

Furthermore, he needs the antagonism of the levelled-down masses, the pathos of distance in relation to them; he raises himself over them, he lives off them. This superior form of *aristocratism* is that of the future.—Or, to speak in moral terms, this total machinery, the solidarity of all cogs, represents the maximum *exploitation* of man: but this presupposes a species of man for whom this exploitation has meaning. Otherwise, this scenario would merely constitute an overall *value* reduction of the human *type*—a *regressive phenomenon* in the grandest style.

One can now see that to which I am opposed, namely, *economic* optimism: it is the notion that an increase in costs for everyone necessarily leads to an increase in everyone’s profits. To me, it seems that the contrary is rather the case: *the costs of everyone add up to an overall loss*; the human being is *devalued* so that one is no longer capable of justifying this enormous process. A ‘Justification,’ a *new* ‘Justification’—that is what humanity needs...”

Posthumous Notes 1887, 10 [17]

And following from this we come to another text, entitled “The Strong of the Future,”

² In translating the following passages from the *Nachlaß* I have attempted to reconcile, wherever possible, Nietzsche’s original text with the French version quoted by Klossowski. In the process, a recent English translation by Kate Sturge, which appears in *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), has also been consulted.

which points us directly toward the heart of the conspiracy:

The emergence of a *stronger species*, which up to this point has proceeded partly out of hardship and partly out of chance, can now finally be comprehended and deliberately *willed*: we are capable of producing the conditions under which such an elevation of humanity is possible.

Up until now, education was conducted strictly for society's profit: *not* for the greatest possible profit of the future, but for the benefit of the present moment. Everything was relegated to strictly instrumentalist usage. Supposing the *wealth of forces* were in excess, then one could imagine some *forces being siphoned off* for the sake of benefiting a society not of the present, but of the future.

The urgency of this task would be better appreciated if it were understood that society in its present form is in the midst of a powerful transformation, and that in the future *it will no longer be capable of exiting for itself*, but only as an instrument in the hands of a stronger race.

The levelling-down of mankind is precisely the impetus for leading us to think about the breeding of a stronger race, which would discover that its particular excess lies in precisely those areas where the species-at-large is subject to diminishment (will, responsibility, self-assurance, the power to set itself goals).

The *means* would be those taught by history: *isolation* through *interests* of preservation which are the inverse of those which prevail in the present; practicing the revaluation of values; distance as pathos; a free conscience with regard to all that which is today least esteemed and considered most reprehensible.

The *levelling-down* of the European man confronts today as a great, irreversible process—one that should be even accelerated.

The necessity of an *abyss opening*, of a *distance*, of a *hierarchy* is thus given: it is precisely *not* a matter of impeding the process.

This *levelling-down species*, from the moment it is realised, requires *justification*: a justification which is brought into play by a sovereign individual who stands over it and uses it as a platform for elevating himself.

What I am describing is not merely a master-race whose task would be to govern, but a race with *its own sphere of life*, with an excess of force for beauty, courage, culture, manners, right up to the highest spiritual realm; an *affirming* race which can accord itself every luxury . . . powerful enough not to need the tyranny of the virtue-imperative, neither parsimonious nor given to pedantry, beyond good and evil; a hothouse for strange and exotic plants.”

Posthumous Notes 1887, 9 [153]

What is not as clearly stated here as in the other passage, and yet does form part of Nietzsche's vision, is the notion of excess [*surcroît*].³ What Nietzsche discerns in the actual state of

3 Literally, “growing-out-of.”

affairs is that men of excess, those who create, now and from the outset, the meaning of the values of existence (a very paradoxical configuration for Nietzsche) form, so to speak, an occult hierarchy for which the supposed hierarchy of current labourers does all the work. They are precisely the real slaves, the ones who do the greatest labor.

Therefore, for Nietzsche, the human species, from the moment that it first articulates itself, through production, in order to maintain itself at the level of humanity, can only do so through the absurdity of a total reduction of its moral resources achieved through work itself. To reverse this annihilating condition of the absurd into supreme meaning, this meaning must coincide with total iniquity [*la totale iniquité*].

I now shall pose my first question. In what measure would the Nietzschean description of excess not simply be an abbreviated, non-dialectical, version of the notion of class-struggle and infrastructure in Marx? It must be said that Nietzsche's thinking culminates in considerations on economy only by way of the utilitarianism of John Stuart-Mill. He sees in Darwinian selection and Anglo-Saxon systems a reigning gregarious mentality that turns into a moral conspiracy, and tends to render impossible and incomprehensible his vision for the future. Nonetheless, it is upon this terrain that Nietzsche develops his own conspiracy. Of course, in the process, he completely ignores the progression of thought, in Marx, proceeding from the inversion of the Hegelian dialectic—and if he had been aware of it, were he to have been familiar with it, he would have nonetheless thought the same. Notwithstanding his historical incomprehension of the master and the slave, the notion of excess deployed in opposition to the mediocrisation process leads him to a terrain similar to that which is occupied by Marx. Both meet, so to speak, back-to-back [*dos à dos*].

One might establish, then, a parallel between what Nietzsche calls the mediocrisation of individuals in proportion to the accumulation of wealth, and the alienation of the proletariat described by Marx—but the important divergence, which is fundamental, lies in their differing notion of value [*valeur*]. Marx's analysis with regard to the mystification of the exchange of goods coincides, if it can coincide in a negative sense, with Nietzsche's notion of value, and goes contrary to what he puts down as the source, or basis, of any affirmation; namely, knowledge that the only valuable thing is the mystification of life by itself. Any demystification coincides with a decrease in the value of life, any remystification with an increase. A production that does not derive from an active mystification will always remain less important for existence. It is the affects that engender the obligation to produce. Production will only ever be a replication of this obligation and any division of the labour of the affects will always aim at the diminishing of their own production force. For Nietzsche, this is one way of demystifying the fact of life.

All in all, we encounter at precisely this point the commentary of the concept, not to say the criterion, of the *Will to Power*. Any domination must generate a creation which transforms pure violence into pleasure [*jouissance*], as much on the part of those who create this violence—and this, as much on the moral level as on the material level (be it merely through the fact of

communicating, which Nietzsche always identified with a violent act)—as for those who are subjected to this violence. The affective and material exploitation, in whatever form it takes, can only be practised as long as the need to be exploited exists. The necessity to transvaluate values comes from the fact that the moral resources of a specific form of exploitation are exhausted; hence, one must find in people another level where the desire to be exploited would provide them the benefit of pleasure. A form of domination collapses as soon as it overlooks this principle of creating implements of pleasure constituted by a given value. Violence and pleasure have no foundation as soon as creation disappears. The violence of absurdity can only crumble back to the same level as the absurdity of violence.

The second question would be to inquire into how matters stand with the possibility of adopting a Nietzschean comportment in relation to our current upheavals, no longer from the point of view of power, or potency, but from the perspective of the vicious circle, which is a manifestation of the nihilist judgment passed upon all acting. Let me remind you once again of the genesis of the thought of eternal return. As I have insisted, this thought, as the theme of Nietzsche's highest contemplation, becomes the instrument of a conspiracy. It is from this stage onwards that the *god of the vicious circle* can truly be considered the blossoming of a delusion [*délire*].⁴ The question that I now pose is whether delusory or deranged behaviour, in this sense, when confronted with reality, can become in any way efficacious, or if, more generally, any deranged comportment might be said to constitute an efficient resistance in the face of a determined adverse force.

How, in any case, does the vicious circle, as a selective dilemma, become the instrument of a conspiracy? That is, do you recognise or not that your actions have no sense or purpose, other than the fact that they are always nothing but the same situations infinitely repeated? What follows from this is the following exigency: act with no remorse. The worst, if it has not yet been attained, never shall be. Here we begin to see the basis upon which Nietzsche, with all the terror alluded to earlier, introduces his experimental programme of conspiracy. And yet, the terror of the thought of eternal return, in this form, may very well be nothing other than a parody of the real terrorism of industrial modernity. The god of the vicious circle, as the pure simulation of a universal economy, is still only an appearance. Even if the thought of the circle were also merely a parody, the parody would remain, nonetheless, a deranged creation in the form of a conspiracy. If the conspiracy suggests certain acts to be accomplished, then the thought of the vicious circle demands that these acts, once accomplished, become necessarily the never-ending simulation of an action emptied by repetition of all its content, which will never be established once and for all.

⁴ The noun *délire* (meaning frenzy or delirium) and its adjectival form *délirant/e* are used by Klossowski as terms intended to be juxtaposed—though by no means in a straight-forwardly dialectical manner—with the notion of gregarious, or everyday, reality. The word *delusion* seems to carry this particular connotation most effectively, as long as it is understood to operate within the economy of what Klossowski elsewhere refers to as the *fantasm*.

Who, or what, therefore, would be the simulating agent [*l'agent simulateur*]? Nothing but the pathos that Nietzsche proposes as the simulating power *par excellence*. The thought of eternal return, which abolishes identity and empties all acts of their content, therefore implicates itself in the preparation of a conspiracy that essentially foretells a series of experimentations. Who wills the ends, wills the means, says Nietzsche. Moreover, experimentation, in this sense, is principally a type of act which reserves for itself the privilege to fail. The failure of an experiment reveals more than its success. Or more precisely, at the level of pathos, failure and success merge within a never-ending play of impulses. Here, major experimentation does not aim for the practical success of a conspiracy ending in the attainment of some goal; but rather, with the manifestation of a state, reigning clandestinely, eternally, that we can seek and pursue as a simulated end [*une fin prétendue*].

When Nietzsche says: he who wants the ends, also wants the means, he speaks in two registers—that of gregariousness and that of singularity, that of individuals identical to themselves and that of the fortuitous case [*cas fortuit*], that of common wisdom and that of delusion [*délire*]. But when this is comprehended at the level of institutional language, it is immediately denied at the level of pathos. The end, which is delirium, is here inscribed in the means, like phantasm within simulacra, which affirms itself as the means to impose in universal fashion the constraint, up until now hidden, of the phantasm. The anti-Darwinian protest, which denounces the false interpretation of natural selection, is in itself nothing of a delusion—it is essentially lucid, reasonable. It is precisely the anti-gregarious intervention projects and the criteria for these interventions, invariably aimed at raising humanity to a higher level, which convert the contemplative thought of the eternal return *as the instrument of conspiracy*, into a delusion. It is only from this point onwards, even though the thought of return seems to have been neglected in its contemplative prestige by the experimental project of the conspiracy, that pathos achieves its so-called delusory construction. The true motive behind the conspiracy was not the effective realisation of a material upheaval which, according to the vicious circle, is already inscribed in the economic fate of the world. Rather, under the sign of the vicious circle, anti-Darwinian conspiracy entails the coming to autonomy of productions that are primarily pathological as the very condition of a monumental upheaval in the relation between the social forces present. So it seems that the doctrine of the vicious circle passes through all the projects emanating from the initial psychological consequences of the *Will to Power*, as the practical devaluation of these projects, and by the same token, as a valorisation of the delusion which engenders them.

DISCUSSION

Léopold Flam: If one places oneself in what could be called the philosophical tradition, say from Thales to Hölderlin, don't you think that it would be necessary to say that the philosopher is someone who determines himself [*le philosophe est celui qui se détermine lui-même*]? Now autonomy, as a realisation of oneself and comprehension of the world, eliminates the delusion

[*délire*]. Otherwise, all this drifts into fascism.

Pierre Klossowski: I have no response, other than to say that what I have described goes beyond philosophy as you define it.

Léopold Flam: If the thinker goes against the current, if in his solitude he dares to protest, it seems to me, that it runs contrary to the fantasm you have described. This is the reason why I dare to say it: I am against what you say, but not against you . . .

Pierre Klossowski: Well, I have no further response to your comments.

Norman Palma: One problematic point in Klossowski's interpretation is the supposed rapprochement between Nietzsche and Marx. For Nietzsche, it is precisely the universe of the bourgeoisie that he calls 'the last man,' the universe where there is but a single flock and no shepherd. For Marx, on the contrary, this universe is precisely where the opposition between the master and the slave is the greatest. Nietzsche's true objective is the restructuring, not the destructuring, of domination. I fear that you have somewhat concealed this opposition in your treatment of value and alienation. From the passages that you read, which are redolent of the classic Nazi interpretation of Nietzsche, I expected an exegesis that justified the portrayal of Nietzsche as a libertarian.

Pierre Klossowski: For Nietzsche, the world cannot exist outside a constraint; if socialism triumphs—and, in this case, Nietzsche says it expressly, it can achieve with a considerable expenditure of energy the basis it requires—it is necessary to expect a new tension, because each time society, no matter which one, secretes an excess [*surcroît*], this excess will always be transformed into dynamite, it will blow-up the Whole.

Norman Palma: If there is an affinity between Marx and Nietzsche, it seems that this would not be at the level of theory, but rather, between what might be termed the Nietzschean exigency and the Marxist praxis. The exigency which Nietzsche accepts is the restructuring of domination. In all his works, from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *The Antichrist* and *The Will to Power*, he rehearses it, however he never imagines, even in the slightest, this restructuring as a movement away from the domination of merchants, or capitalists—for him, this restructuring cannot be the work of a class that does not have control over the means of production.

Pierre Klossowski: Yes, this is similar to the Tibetan Society described by Bataille in *The Accursed Share*, where we see a class being supported by society-at-large. Which, according to Nietzsche, we have the power to critique because it is linked to an outdated sociology (that sees class as a static reality), but beyond which it is necessary to retain a lucidly observed process, a pertinent description of human pathology, in spite of an aesthetic conception of history of which Nietzsche was never able to rid himself, perhaps because it was common to his epoch.

Norman Palma: How can we reconcile the static nature of class structure with the will to power

which wants to blow up all barriers, and which you have called a delusion [*délire*]?

Pierre Klossowski: I said that the will to power can only become apparent if it is given the chance to be made manifest, which is already given by human nature.

Norman Palma: No doubt, but it still remains that this liberation of impulse that Nietzsche calls will to power cannot and does not find itself brought into play by the dominant class. If, in the world of the last man, the will to power cannot manifest itself, it is because the masters are nothing but slaves [*les maîtres ne sont eux-mêmes que des esclaves*].

Pierre Klossowski: Indeed.

Heinz Wismann: Could you situate your developments on conspiracy and class in relation to the Stefan George Circle which was intended as a reprise, at the same time, both poetical and political, of a kind of Nietzscheanism?

Pierre Klossowski: The George Circle already seems to me a falsification; it features a pontificating element that is absolutely unthinkable in Nietzsche. Nietzsche would have probably taken the same attitude with respect to the George Circle as he took with respect to Bayreuth. He reserved for himself the secret of histrionism, which is precisely to play, to mock. When one does not attain the level of the *pseudo*, one falls into nothingness, but both the ritualists of George entourage and the Wagnerians, would be incapable of achieving the doubling required for this histrionism. For Nietzsche, this belongs to the heritage of the great Romano-Occidental tradition: the notion of a theatre that does not exclude the divine. This is what Georges Bataille likewise wanted to realize by inscribing laughter amongst those attributes belonging to a divinity without divinity.

Fauzia Assad-Mikhaïl: How does the selection of the eternal return relate to all of this?

Pierre Klossowski: This is precisely the dilemma that leads Nietzsche to write: “In a world whose reality depends upon *circulus vitiosus*, either you affirm or you perish ...”

Fauzia Assad-Mikhaïl: But if the conspiracy [*complot*] is a parody, would not the criterion of the selection also be parodic?

Pierre Klossowski: For sure, that is just what I have been saying...

Fauzia Assad-Mikhaïl: And this is its essential difference from the George Circle!

Norman Palma: Allow me to return to the problem of autonomy. For Nietzsche, it can only exist for the masters, for those who control and dominate within the Apollonian sphere. On the other hand, you mentioned that Nietzsche saw in socialism the possibility for an actualisation of his primary imperative. He does not so much want the masters to be merchants; rather, as an ad-

versary of capitalist domination, wasn't he indeed dreaming of a new kind of domination which would be similar to what might be called 'oriental despotism' in which there would be no private ownership of the means of production? The means of production would be controlled, instead, by a specific class.

Pierre Klossowski: Your hypothesis is interesting; it is a possible extension of what I said, but which could also very well turn against what I said...

Alfred Fabre-Luce: It seems that at the limit, Nietzsche's thought can result in either the refusal of all politics, or, alternately, in the legitimation of any politics whatsoever. That is why your comments on histrionism struck me as very profound and very important. Let us not forget, however, that Nietzsche was constantly concerned with nobility. Other thinkers have had perhaps a similar attitude, but in a way that would have very much dissatisfied him. The word "histrionic" could perhaps be misleading here.

Pierre Klossowski: Nietzsche's position draws us away, in any case, from all that which has up to the present been called "political action"; it requires the creation of a new comportment with regards to conflict and strategising. It seems to me more and more—and here I allude to Gilles Deleuze—that we move towards a kind of anti-psychiatric insurrection (unfortunately this term has become over-coded), that is to say, the discovery of a species of pleasure [*jouissance*], on the part of psychiatrists or doctors in becoming the "object of investigation"—and moreover, the pathological case will feel more and more comfortable if he lives, and imposes himself, by subverting the institutional investigations which brand him pathological.

Christian Deschamps: You spoke about "delusory behaviour" [*comportment délirant*]*—*taking this expression in the laudatory sense and contrasting it with reality. On the basis of what you have said, I think that one can understand the critique of the traditional political scene in terms of what was for a long time considered precisely this deranged behaviour which can certainly be formulated in terms of an exigency, and which is perhaps a radically new vision in relation to what had been called politics up until now.

Pierre Klossowski: Yes, perhaps ... I use the term "delusory" [*délirant*] because I think everybody understands the sense in which I mean to deploy it.

Jacques Derrida: Could you add anything to what you have just said about the pleasure one would feel on becoming an object of investigation?

Pierre Klossowski: As long as knowledge maintains its prestige in comparison to the mere fact of existing, tribute will be paid to knowledge, but precisely as the condition of always subverting itself. It is, if you want, a division of labour: one lives, one does not have to justify one's existence, society will take responsibility for it.

Jacques Derrida: But then we must address the phrase “to subvert” the same question which we pose to the phrase “to parody.” You suggested that parody could become political, and that it was, ultimately, subversive...

Pierre Klossowski: To the extent that “politics” is taken to entail “strategy” or “comportment.”

Jacques Derrida: But how, in any case, does parody operate? Should one not distinguish between two kinds of parody: between the one which, on the pretext of being subversive, takes the risk of establishing a political order (which very much likes a certain type of parody and finds its own confirmation there) and, on the other hand, a parody which can really deconstruct the political order? Is there a form of parody which actually marks the body politic, in contrast to a parody which would be a parody of a parody, which would play upon the surface of the political order, playfully teasing [*chahuter*] rather than destroying it?

Pierre Klossowski: I think that in *the long run* nothing can resist such a parody.

Jacques Derrida: But someone who wants to transform the political order – can he really trust in the *long run*?

Pierre Klossowski: The time that is needed is a function of exercised pressure, and pressure depends, as a consequence, upon contagion.

Jean-François Lyotard: For Nietzsche, the “parody of a parody” consists in a kind of *ressentiment* against power; it goes no further, it is a condition of mediocrity or weakness in intensity. To differentiate it from the other kind, I think the fundamental criterion is that of intensity. However, it is impossible to determine beforehand what the effectiveness of a parody will be, that’s why Nietzsche says it is necessary to be experimenters and artists, not people who have a plan and try to realise it—that’s old politics. Nietzsche says it’s necessary to try things out and discover which intensities produce which effects.

Norman Palma: It reminds me of Plato’s *Republic*, that is to say, of the power of the thinkers, of scientists, etc., who should perform experiments on the slaves, but at a time when the morality of the slave still had none of the force which, according to Nietzsche, Christianity gave him.

Jean-François Lyotard: This is in no way what I said.

Christian Deschamps: It seems that in the United States a certain number of people who are not precisely philosophers, but who are linked to the hippy movement, use the figure of Nietzscheanism, notably his critique of “back-worlds,” for the sake of projects which they consider, in any case, to be political, but which make a mockery of these themes.

Gilles Deleuze: This remark is very important. I think of the question posed by Derrida on the two kinds of parody. In some ways it evokes the two currents which emerge in recent debates

on what might be called “popular justice.” One group says, roughly: the goal of popular justice is to make “good” what bourgeois justice makes “evil,” consequently, they institute a parallel court, then try the same case; it is a type of parody that defines itself as the copy of an existent institution, with jurors, accusers, lawyers, witnesses, but that considers itself better and more fair, more rigorous than the model. But another group might pose the problem in a very different way, saying that a popular justice, if there were one, would not proceed according to the formalism of courts because it would not merely be a copy which claims superiority to that which models it—it would be a parody of another type which would pretend, at once, to overthrow the copy and the model. It would be, therefore, a justice no longer prescribed by the courts. The efficacious parody, in the sense of Nietzsche or Klossowski, does not pretend to be a copy of a model, but rather, in its parodic act overthrows, in the same blow, the model and the copy. An example from another domain is pop art. People can always talk about copies of copies of copies, etc., but everybody senses that what is at stake is something altogether different, which, to speak like Klossowski, pushes the simulacral so far that its product goes against, at the same time, the copy and the model. It seems to me that this is exactly the criterion of effective parody in the sense that Nietzsche understands it. Indeed, I think that, politically, these things are extremely concrete, operating at the level of what can be called “justice.”

Jacques Derrida: May I simply ask: the value of justice, which you have kept in both cases of parody—is it not part of the model?

Gilles Deleuze: I’m not sure. It is not of the same value, otherwise the parody is just another copy.

Jacques Derrida: But why, then, do you still speak of justice?

Bernard Pautrat: In this debate on popular justice, we may encounter these two ways of understanding it, but the debate itself is in fact situated at the heart of a single political stream of thought. The key is to figure out where the greatest effectiveness lies. In some respects, the justice which maintains a certain number of forms waiting for revolution, it seems to me, at the level of intensity, at the level of combat, is more effective, more efficient. If you’ll excuse me for lingering over this question which only really comes up amongst political allies, but I would like to mention, for example, the notion of sequestration. It’s not a case of parody, and its efficiency lies precisely in the fact that it’s not merely a parody but rather a localised, temporary usurpation of power. There is perhaps here a copying of a certain power which installs itself, but I think this is a copy of a model which indeed has efficiency, but only for a certain period.

Gilles Deleuze: You say that sequestration is not a parody. It is not a parody in the ordinary sense, but we are referring to the meaning that Klossowski has given the word, and which is in no way its everyday meaning. In the sense accorded it by Klossowski, sequestration is obviously an emi-

nently parodic act. Jean-Luc Godard, who is a bit Nietzschean, shows this in “Tout va bien.”

Gérard Kaleka: Could we also admit of a “popular psychiatry” that would perhaps be the parody of actual psychiatry?

Pierre Klossowski: It would really blur the picture. Either psychiatry disappears or it goes on; there can only be a single anti-psychiatry, namely, the one that abolishes psychiatry. I cannot say how, it is not my concern at the moment, but this, in any case, is how I see the issue.

Eric Clémens: I would like to point out, *à propos* of pop art, that Deleuze forgot all about the museum because he’s so interested in the problem of popular justice – a bias which is, of course, not Nietzschean and which in fact obscures Nietzsche...

Hughes Labrusse: We are now in full-blown parody and the seriousness of the debate seems to me compromised. To maintain that Nietzsche would be a supporter of pop-art makes no sense! Moreover, Pautrat spoke of socialism and we then digressed toward the question of popular justice. It is a very suspicious use of Nietzsche, especially if one thinks of him writing on socialism under its most gregarious form...

Jacques Derrida: Nietzsche’s thoughts on socialism are problematic...

Hughes Labrusse: Then let us pose the problem!

Gilles Deleuze: The problem of justice is absolutely Nietzschean, it is everywhere in his work.

Pierre Boudot: In any case, Deleuze remains within the Nietzschean thematic when he speaks about a structure which would destroy, at the same time, the copy and the model. It is what Klossowski calls “insurrection”—a word which seems very important. In a society subject to complete uniformity, some people would have the possibility of affirming themselves, of “appearing suddenly,” subverting society as a result of simply being themselves. But I notice an ambiguity here, one which is disclosed by what Deleuze said, because to challenge at once the copy and the model is to challenge exemplarity, even if it is unintentional or “natural.”

Pierre Klossowski: Of course. But I don’t at all believe that once the project, as if through some miracle, has been achieved that Nietzsche would be tempted to search for a new model. On the contrary, he would turn in derision of these ideal products, these higher types, and nothing of this kind would, for even one second, resist his sarcasms. That’s why what we are discussing is ultimately subject to infinite regress. Such is the virtue of delusion [*délire*].

Jean-Noël Vuarnet: I think that we might pose, at this point, the question of the thesis and the myth in order to distinguish between those theses which are counter-theses, in other words, between those which aim at an immediately realisable change, and, on the other hand, experimentation with myths and other regulatory fictions. There is a whole utopian dimension here which

exceeds the world of theses and which is not absent, even in Marx.

Claude Vivien: I fear that we're slightly losing sight of Klossowski's original point of departure—namely, the dissolution of the principle of identity. In neglecting the consequences of this dissolution, some of which are indeed practical consequences, we have launched into a series of ambiguities which perhaps are interesting, but which correspond neither to the style with which Nietzsche poses certain problems, nor, especially, to the way in which Klossowski encounters them and transforms them. When one speaks about insurrection—and in Klossowski's texts it is rather about a particular type of insurrection, that is to say, a matter of forces destabilising the subject itself—these intensities dissolve the principle of identity, insofar as the subject can under no circumstances be held responsible. It is commonly said that, in a mediocre universe, only certain individuals are truly able to become who they are; but it is these, precisely, who will not have identity. To throw the principle of identity into ruin is therefore to give precedence to forces which will no longer operate within a restricted economy—to use Bataille's phrase—but which will be pure forces of expenditure, under no circumstances recuperable...

Hughes Labrusse: And by no means delivered into the frenzy [*frénésie*] of efficacy, or efficiency, at all costs...

Claude Vivien: On the contrary! The less they are recuperable, the more they are efficient.

Gilles Deleuze: Certainly the notion of the loss of identity is important, and on this point, for a long time now, we have been in Klossowski's debt. But today what Klossowski is developing is the notion of conspiracy. Undoubtedly it is linked to the loss of identity, but it is not the same thing. I would like to, at this point, sum up some aspects of the discussion that has just taken place: Klossowski introduced for us the notion of conspiracy [*complot*]; Alfred Fabre-Luce inquired: "But if there is a conspiracy, can it have an actual political meaning?" In response, I tried to say: "Why yes, certainly, in fact we are living this very problem." Then Labrusse intervened to say that if it's a conspiracy, it must not be spoken about, and so he remains sitting there horrified. There is a topic which Klossowski addressed, I believe, at the same time that he was addressing the loss of identity, namely, the topic of singularity, by which he means the "non-identical." A conspiracy, if one understands Klossowski's thinking, is a community of singularities. The question, then, configured in terms of the political (understood either in its contemporary or ancient sense) is this: how are we to conceive of a community of singularities? This is a subject very dear to Klossowski; his thinking on this matter follows upon the ideas of Fourier, and also Sade, which we can see clearly displayed in *La Monnaie Vivante*. What we call a society is a community of regularities, or more precisely, a certain selective process which retains select singularities and regularises them. In order to maintain the proper functioning of society it selects for regularisation, to use the language of psychoanalysis, what might be called paranoiac singularities. But a *conspiracy*—this would be a community of singularities of another type, which would not be

regularised, but which would enter into new connections, and in this sense, would be revolutionary. It seems to me that Pierre Klossowski's thought has moved decisively in this direction and I believe, unless I am mistaken, that the problem which we now inherit from him is to know if it is possible to conceive of links between singularities which would have as their criteria the eternal return, insofar as it implicates the loss of identity, not just for individuals but also for societies and groups.

Jean-Noël Vuarnet: It also seems to me that, for Klossowski, any revolutionary thought involves a relation to the mythical or the metaphorical. Would he then suggest that a parody necessarily creates regulating fictions at the same time that it creates a thesis, or idea, leading to a sort of impure, incessant alternation between thesis and fiction?

Pierre Klossowski: One can formulate it in such a manner, as long as we stress the continuousness of this oscillation.

Jean-Marie Benoist: I wonder if the difficulty of articulating the politics of Nietzsche in relation to the politics of Marx does not come in part from their differing readings of Book VIII of Plato's *Republic*, concerning, in particular, the disintegration into timocracy up to the point of tyranny. Whilst Marx would want to pursue this movement to its limit, finding in it the dynamic of dialectical struggle between the classes (which Plato had of course omitted), Nietzsche, on the other hand, would react to these ideas by introducing something new—namely, the conspiracy, which would bring him to the second moment, namely, that of timocracy, and which corresponds to the will to power. So, on the one side, with Marx, there would a dynamic of the classes, whilst on the other hand, with Nietzsche, there would be stasis among the classes, both making use of, but in completely different ways, Book VIII of the *Republic* rather than, for instance, making recourse to the oriental model of class.

Pierre Klossowski: Yes, but I think that it is the vicious circle, precisely, which is the manner through which Nietzsche renews this notion by adding Plato to Manu⁵—all of this losing any cultural heaviness for him, thanks to the eternal return which is the splitting in two of all that I know, and of all that I do, and of all that was, so that there remains no possibility of grounding any installation. What you have just said is very sensible, but if one does not support this idea of a permanent solution, without which all the conclusions that we would draw from Nietzsche's words would become immutable, nothing would any longer make sense. What gives Nietzsche all his force is the affirmation of things that are then immediately refutable, but only by him.

5 In Hinduism, Manu is the primordial king of the earth. On May 31, 1888—in a letter to Peter Gast—Nietzsche writes: "I found *Manu's* book of laws in a French translation done in India under strict supervision from the most eminent priests and scholars there. This absolutely *Aryan* work, a priestly codex of morality based on the Vedas, on the idea of caste and very ancient tradition—not pessimistic, albeit very sacerdotal—supplements my views on religion in the most remarkable way. I confess to having the impression that everything else that we have by way of moral lawgiving seems to me an imitation and even a caricature of it..."

Interview with: **Jill Marsden**

by Christopher Branson (University of Warwick)

Jill Marsden grew up in Nottingham and studied philosophy at the University of Essex, where she wrote her doctoral thesis on Nietzsche. Since then she has worked at the University of Bolton, where she is currently senior lecturer in Philosophy and English. She is the author of *After Nietzsche: Notes towards a philosophy of ecstasy* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), along with numerous articles on Nietzsche, Deleuze, the philosophy of the body and related questions. After reviewing her original and inspiring book for *The Agonist*¹ I was keen to meet her and ask about her relationship with Nietzsche and her approach to writing and academia. I found myself in conversation with a rare free spirit of the academic world, discussing, amongst other things, the secrets of her working methods and her vision of philosophy as aesthetics. The interview was conducted in her office in Bolton in April 2008 and was continued by correspondence.



CB: Let's start at the beginning. How did you get into philosophy?

JM: I did philosophy as an undergraduate, at Essex, but it was a last minute thing. I just perversely decided at the last moment that I wanted to do philosophy.

CB: Had you had any philosophy at school?

JM: No.

CB: That's the problem, isn't it?

JM: Yes, that's the problem, because I was going to do English at university. Somehow I realised, just in time, that what spoke to me in the literary texts that I particularly admired were philosophical questions, and that was the route in.

CB: I wasn't so lucky. It took me two years of deriving physical equations at university before I realised that I had been interested in physics at school insofar as it had philosophical implications.

JM: Yes, it's a common problem. But I never looked back from that point. It was a spur of the moment thing, but a good decision. When I started I'd decided I was going to do philosophy the week before, so it was completely new to me. At Essex, in the mid-eighties, there was a big emphasis on continental philosophy. David Krell was there, along with Robert Bernasconi. At that time, Warwick and Essex, and possibly Sussex, were the only universities that were really exploring continental philosophy, so I didn't have a mainstream philosophical education. It certainly wasn't biased towards the Anglo-American analytic tradition, and that suited me because of my interest in the literary. That's when I discovered Nietzsche, as an undergraduate student, before I'd had any classes on Nietzsche. I came across him and I did have that wonderful sense of finding something that you know you're going to stay with. It was easy for me after that because I knew that I wanted to write on Nietzsche.

CB: Which text did you discover first?

JM: *Beyond Good and Evil* was the one I first picked up. I remember reading the first section, where he is asking about the value of truth. We ask after this value of truth, but, he says, why not untruth, why not uncertainty, even ignorance? And it just seemed to me that these questions had been against the law. It was a case of really finding something. It's really from that point onwards... I think you can often do that with a book: that you can open a book and you'll know within the first moments whether you're going to have a good relation with it or not. With Kant I remember thinking, "I don't want to read this," but that would perhaps be the only exception. And I really had a strong reaction to Nietzsche.

CB: For me it was partly the honesty of it, but also the bravery, that you could dare to ask these questions. Two incidents in the formation of my relationship with Nietzsche stay in my mind. The first was when I was an incredibly disgruntled physics student towards the end of my second year, drinking in someone's room. We were discussing why on earth we did this, why we studied, pursued "truth," and so on. And our reasoning came to this dead end where we thought, "We have to, there's nothing else to do. We have to learn more." But we couldn't say why. Studying was accepted as a virtue; we weren't able to make that leap to questioning the value of it. A year or so later I was sitting on a bus, reading Nietzsche for the first time. It was *On the Genealogy of*

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Morals, and within about two pages it felt like somebody had hit my head with an axe and opened up a new world of possibilities. It was simply the fact of the questions he was asking. I had been ready to ask them, but it had seemed almost preposterous that one could: as if it was too dangerous, or frightening to ask them. So I had always shied away from it.

JM: It's a huge shot of adrenaline, isn't it? There is this sense with Nietzsche of finding the familiar becoming strange immediately, and the world becomes large again. It opens up to the most wonderful possibilities.

CB: On the first page of the preface to your book, *After Nietzsche*, you write, with regard to the idea of the eternal return of the same, "The transformative potential of this profoundly captivating thought has obsessed, preoccupied and enraptured me from the 'tremendous moment' of its first encounter, leading me again and again to a strange kind of knowledge, one which is glimpsed at the very moment that the reflective powers are eclipsed." Can you remember this moment?

JM: Well, from the moment of reading it, there was a sense of "this is going to be with me," and it has been. That would be twenty years ago ... There was a sense that there was something here that is a vector for thinking. Of course, as with any student, I had a desire to find out what it was about, and I've constantly been interested in trying to find out what it's about.

CB: Do you think you've got there? Do you think you could exhaust its sense?

JM: I'm not sure that I could exhaust it really, because I suppose I've become more interested in finding the question to which it could be presented as an answer. I think that is something which, philosophically, hasn't been explored. The students here [at the University of Bolton] that study Nietzsche initially do want to have ready answers, and they find reading Nietzsche a tremendous challenge because it makes serious demands upon them as students, but I've noticed a similar thing happen to them. If they abide with it for an amount of time—and there is a certain patience required—they eventually resist that desire for immobility and actually relinquish that desire to fix it in a certain position. They become much more interested in the quiet machinery of it and what it opens up for reflection. That's been really interesting for me, seeing what other people say about it, because I've never had any strong preconception of what students are going to say. I know they might talk about cycles of birth and rebirth, and occasionally that comes up, but they often surprise me, even though I know the passages quite well. In that respect the thought seems to be an infinitely rich and fecund resource.

CB: I've taught it in seminars and I find it enormously difficult, partly because, if I was doing my job properly, they would leave with even more questions and perhaps no firm answers. Many students encounter Nietzsche and don't know how to identify it as philosophy. At Warwick, the undergraduate degree is now heavily weighted towards analytic philosophy, which is specifically problem-based. With Nietzsche, perhaps, they are being asked to find new problems, rather than

answer questions that are definitely given, and I sympathise with them in finding this difficult, because they are asked to do something very different from what they have been trained to do.

JM: You do have to ask students to relinquish a lot of the tendencies they have when they encounter something for the first time. I used to go to Warwick a lot in the late eighties and early nineties, when Nick Land was there. Before he was at Warwick he was a PhD student at Essex, but a bit before my time. One of the things he did after he'd gone to Warwick was to organize a Nietzsche symposium and this was quite a wonderful thing, because rather than meeting to give great weighty papers on Nietzsche, or even to read passages together and talk about them, what we tried to do was write things which weren't really 'on' Nietzsche, but which were inspired by reading Nietzsche and his aphoristic style. It only lasted for a few weeks, but it worked quite well. It certainly took us all out of our comfort zone, doing something quite different. I still have some of the writings from various members of that group, and it was instructive. It is something that I'm particularly alert to in the way in which I respond to Nietzsche: how do you write on Nietzsche or about Nietzsche?

CB: I did want to ask about how you write. Quite aside from what I admired about your book philosophically, it was a real, rare delight to read. It has a poetic voice for much of the time and is incredibly passionate. Was this written in a burst of intensity, in the manner that Nietzsche would give birth to his books like sudden eruptions? Or was it toilsome, heavily worked on?

JM: It was both, I suppose, because the nature of these things is that we always have deadlines and I do work to deadlines—I literally work to deadlines! This meant that I spent far longer on the earlier parts of the book than on the later parts. I think the first chapter might have taken nine months to write and the last chapter probably a day [*laughs*]. And I suppose there was also the whole spectrum between.

CB: The voice in the book is incredibly pronounced. Was the fact that the first chapter took so long to write at all to do with trying to find a suitable voice, such that once you had found it the process became easier?

JM: No, I don't think it was that. I think the way that I work is to find a strand of interest in the text and to pursue that initially, without having a sense of where it's leading, and to simply follow the connections. There are a few intersecting themes in the book, which flow in and out of different chapters, but it was important for me to write a book that I would like, rather than one that would serve the purpose of career capital. I didn't want to write an introductory book. I wanted to produce something that I would appreciate.

CB: Reading the book it was clear that this wasn't necessarily a book written to improve your career standing.

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JM: No, I'm not sure it has [*laughs*].

CB: I wasn't referring to the quality of it, but in terms of the format that one comes to expect of books on philosophy. In terms of general appeal and approval, what people want tends to be what they are used to, what they expect. Unusual forms always risk being rejected or ignored. Reading your work I was reminded of something David Lynch once said in an interview. Mark Cousins asked him how he felt when *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* was booed at Cannes. Lynch said that his earlier film, *Dune*, had upset him, because he didn't make the *Dune* he wanted to, but that he was happy with *Fire Walk with Me*. He said that he could worry about the critical reception, but that would be to take his attention away from the work itself, which is the only important thing. It's like a ring doughnut and its hole, he said: the responses are the hole, and you need to keep your eyes on the doughnut. Your book reads like one written by someone who was only concerned with the doughnut.

JM: [*laughs*] Thank you. We do have copies of the book in the library here—I did think that this might be one library that might be persuaded to buy it!—and the students who do the Nietzsche module do read it, but I wonder what they make of it, really.

CB: In one sense, it's easy to read: one gets swept up by the rhythm of it, and so if one reads it without worrying too much about understanding everything immediately, then I think it communicates really well. But—and I realised this particularly as I was writing the review—it also contains much detailed and difficult scholarship and argumentation. For it to be written in such a beautiful way is particularly impressive. It reads as though it was written in a very intense way, but for this to be possible, you would have had to have ingested a great amount of scholarship and conducted a great amount of independent thought.

JM: Well, I suppose it is a scholarly book in the sense that there are passages of Nietzsche which claim my interest and I attempt to work on those and think about those. In the process of doing that connections are generated: not necessarily with other passages in Nietzsche, but perhaps with other things which also claim my interest at the time, like Schopenhauer, or whoever. So I didn't feel there was a tension between the scholarship of my approach and the writing voice.

CB: This was your first book. Did it follow from your PhD work?

JM: That is a good question and I could only give a vague answer. I did write about Nietzsche for my PhD at Essex, but even though that was about eternal return, the book is entirely different.

CB: Did you ever try to get your doctoral thesis published?

JM: No, like I said earlier, I work to deadlines. I submitted the PhD, went back to my flat and packed everything in a van to start here [the post at Bolton] the following day. I didn't have much cause to think about the PhD for a while, and even though I still had to have a *viva*, in my naivety

I assumed that I'd got it. It wasn't arrogance, but just that, for me, the task had been to get it completed. And then I started this job. Going back to Essex for a *viva* was something I gave no thought to whatsoever [laughs]. Luckily that didn't turn out to be a big problem, but that's why I didn't return to the PhD. And it was a PhD: a PhD is a very different thing. I'm pleased that I didn't try to make that into a book. You know, it has its scholarly tone and I wanted to have a different voice.

CB: It is an idiosyncratic book and, in terms of what I've read, at least, it is unusual for a first book. As your modest title says, it contains "Notes towards a philosophy of ecstasy." It consists of interrelated investigations that sometimes go off in different directions, exploring different areas. At times the connection is loose between them, although they all use the ontology that you've tried to develop in the earlier chapters. I was wondering how the book was received by the academic community, and other readers beyond that.

JM: The responses I've had have been favourable. I suppose that finishing the book was rather like finishing the PhD: my attention was immediately turned towards something else. Of course, it wasn't that I was indifferent to how it was received: I hoped that it would be positively received. I suppose you already have an imagined audience when you write these things. I knew that this audience was probably quite small and that I'd probably know who most of the members of this audience were, so I was quite surprised to find that copies had been sold in America: people had bought it who didn't know me! Goodness knows what they would have made of it...but I've had extremely flattering and warm responses. And I take it that someone who'd read and disliked the book wouldn't be bothered to write and tell me that, or indeed carry on reading it, I suppose.

CB: I'm just wondering what you feel your relationship is to the academic community at large—do you feel part of it? Or maybe you feel part of a smaller section of the community: the Nietzsche scholars, perhaps, or the adventurers in ecstasy?

JM: I suppose I do, but it would be a fairly small community. I feel connected to a number of people with whom I studied, such as my peers on the course at Essex, who've gone on to teach philosophy and continue to develop their own particular interests. And, although I've been away from the conference scene for the last three years, I still feel quite connected at a distance, I certainly feel part of something. As for the broader academic scene, probably not, but then I've got quite an odd relationship to academic philosophy, in the sense that there are very few jobs in philosophy that would really suit me, because my interests cross with a lot of literary texts and other kinds of texts and I've been able to completely indulge that in this job.

CB: Could you describe what your role here is?

JM: When I first got the job here it was to teach Philosophy and Gender and Women's Studies; the latter closed a number of years ago. Perhaps with it being a relatively young institution,

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there's a freedom that comes with that. So the courses that I've taught since I've been here are courses that I've developed. I haven't been obliged to ever teach practical ethics or formal logic, so that's completely ruined me for a job elsewhere. As it happens, this campus is closing for good in the summer, and the philosophy degree as well. I'll be continuing in Creative Studies, and I'm teaching on the English degree at the moment, and we've still got philosophy students for another year or two as the cohorts go through, but it's a turning point, quite a critical time. It's such a shame because a lot of really good things have been able to flourish here, simply because there hasn't been that tradition of the mainstream degree, and the department's very big: big for this sector, at least. It used to be even larger, with eight members of staff doing very different things, so there wasn't a constellation of interest in one area. Being at Bolton has been excellent for me and I've been able to really pursue my own interests.

CB: That strikes me as incredibly lucky in this day and age.

JM: It is, but it's rare. I have got a colleague who hasn't ever been entirely convinced that I wouldn't rather be at Oxford, but where else would I be able to do what I've been doing?

CB: Could I ask you about what you are working on at present? Do you have any current projects?

JM: Well, I'm planning to write another book. I feel like I'm approaching that sort of space. I want to develop, in the broadest terms, a philosophy and literature project. It won't be "how can philosophers use literature to do philosophy?" and it certainly won't be literary criticism with a philosophical edge to it. I suppose it relates to some of what we've been speaking about. I want to explore, particularly in modernism and modernist writers, this alertness to different rhythms of thought and the way in which certain texts map out alternative cartographies of the human. I'm not sure if this is going to be a case of leaving Nietzsche behind... I suspect not.

CB: Can you name any of the figures that you'll be exploring?

JM: Yes... but it's eclectic. If I say someone like James Joyce, I'm not thinking about *Ulysses* and I'm not thinking about *Finnegan's Wake*: I'm not thinking about that kind of thing in general. I'm thinking of a precise story in *Dubliners*, and I'm thinking of a precise story by Katherine Mansfield. It kind of grows in that way, because I must feel some connection that will perhaps show itself thematically. There is a sense that certain things, if put together, will cross-fertilise and produce something new.

CB: It must be a slow process; quite different in spirit from the current demands of academic production. It sounds like you wait patiently for connections to be made, in order to try and find something new.

JM: It's not something that worries me very much: the beginnings of projects, starting some-

thing. You have an instinctive urge to read a story by Kleist, or to read a poem by Trakl or a passage from Nietzsche. It isn't obvious that they are connected in any way but at a more unconscious level some path between them is apparently being forged. There are a lot of blind alleys, of course, when you work in this meandering fashion but I like to work like this, to think about why the things that really interest me interest me. It's what I love, pursuing these transverse connections.

CB: Returning to Nietzsche, I wanted to ask you about his place in the academy. There is an Epicurean aspect to his philosophy, which comes from his recognition that there are enormous amounts of different conditions of life, different forces. He saw his task as trying to become the one he is, which can loosely—albeit dangerously—be interpreted as the task of fulfilling his greatest potential. In order to achieve and explicate this he became overtly concerned with the conditions of the body. This led him to argue why certain seemingly benign factors are so important, such as the weather, diet and company. We have to think about the types of people one should spend one's time with and the types of people one should stay away from. Above all, he saw academia as a deeply unhealthy community and a decadent industry, which distracts one from important questions. For this reason I find the world of Nietzsche scholarship an incredibly strange and often contradictory place. I was recently at a conference and heard two wonderful papers, but I had to leave early, for the sake of my health. There was an overbearing atmosphere of “progress” in there, this self-congratulatory atmosphere, as though we were worthy children of a good cause.

JM: It does spawn some truly curious life forms, doesn't it? I find this weird, fascinating and horrifying in equal measure. For example, the ease with which Nietzsche can be presented as a liberal humanist: “Well, we've destroyed those old law tables: now we're completely free to create *ex nihilo*”. I also find this ‘heroic individualist’ reading of Nietzsche quite terrifying—as if all we need to do is ‘maximise our potential.’ There's none of the danger—it's an utterly domesticated Nietzsche—none of the goads to really go beyond what you think you might be able to think, or what you might be able to do. It's really anodyne and benign, and I just wonder, “Why read *Nietzsche* in that way?” There are other things you could read for that. And that really puzzles me. But then, it's very interesting to see how different readers approach Nietzsche's work. If you ever look at Walter Kaufmann's translations, his footnotes suggest a very literal reading of some of Nietzsche's metaphors, for example, when he pulls Nietzsche up on a point of empirical certainty. It amuses me a great deal. It horrifies me as well, because, going back to your question of the academy, I wonder if before long we will be teaching Nietzsche with bullet points.

CB: It is such a fascinating, but precarious aspect of reading Nietzsche. There is the instinct you have mentioned, to find in him what you wish to find, and perhaps to close your eyes to what contradicts it. For example, there are many readers who would say, “I love Nietzsche—apart

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from what he says about women,” and then carry on as though it is unproblematic to simply reject these views whilst affirming the rest of his thought, as though they were expressions of personal *ressentiment* and historical prejudices that are beneath his station as a philosopher, and which we have now rejected. The idea that the concept of the feminine might be a central feature of his thought—the symbol of Ariadne, for example, and her relation to Dionysus—is ignored because the reader fears the implications of following such a line of thought. The opposite instinct, which is equally dissatisfactory, is to feel that his work is beyond criticism. This perhaps emerges from a feeling of inadequacy in relation to the great philosopher, but also from a unique trust in him, in the personal voice with which he writes. The dangers of this instinct are, on the one hand, stultifying scholarship (“Who is Nietzsche?” “What is Nietzsche’s philosophy?”), and on the other hand, the deification of Nietzsche or Zarathustra: where Nietzsche becomes one’s model and one’s conscience, and we forget the task of ceasing to be a pupil. What is common to both instincts is that we close ourselves off from certain aspects of his philosophy. Is it necessary that we relate to his labyrinthine thought in a piecemeal fashion? And how should we negotiate with it in order to avoid these dangers?

JM: Well, I suppose the idea of reading Nietzsche in a piecemeal way sounds unsatisfactory, but I think we all, usually without thinking about it, do have preferences, and so there will always be texts that are considered, but are not explored with the same intensity. I suppose it’s a question of what speaks to you in the thinker, and there are different Nietzsches. I know that seems like a glib and obvious thing to say, but within Nietzsche’s corpus there are different personae, so I don’t think it’s a problem to find your attention alighting on one thing and not another. There are clearly dangers in ignoring or dismissing ideas that one finds unpalatable but these issues only emerge as problematic in relation to a particular perspective and for Nietzsche perspectives are developed in the process of enquiry - they are not given in advance. I particularly agreed with what you said a little while ago about attending to the material conditions of thought, referring to *Ecce Homo*, where he talks about the importance of climate and food, and the way these nearest things are given primacy—the nearest things rather than the furthest things: God, immortality and the soul. It’s what you eat every day and the company that you keep which strictly speaking determines what you are able to think. This is most interesting philosophically: the material conditions of thought, that thought has its material conditions. Some people dismiss *Ecce Homo* as being frivolous and parodying the writing of an autobiography, but I think something really interesting is being said there about the climate and culture of thought. Of course, in the ‘Why I am a Destiny’ section at the end, he does say I don’t want believers, I fear that I am going to be pronounced holy, so there is in that very declamatory passage a lot of railing against this notion of having acolytes, and yet at the same time there is this imperative to be read and considered.

CB: I wanted to ask about what emerged out of your earliest readings of Nietzsche. You argue against the potential for existentialist interpretations to draw out what is interesting and exiting in

Nietzsche's thought; that perhaps such readings miss what is radical about it. You explicate this in terms of a philosophy of ecstasy, broadly construed as a foundational aesthetics, a science of sensitive knowing. Was this there in your first thoughts when reading Nietzsche, or did it take a longer period of consideration to draw it out?

JM: That took a longer time to come. It was influenced by reading Kant, primarily: the third critique.

CB: I thought that your work on Kant was your best chapter. It is a radical reading, but I found it compelling.

JM: Your description of it as 'radical' and 'compelling' makes me wonder whether an orthodox Kantian would accept the interpretation.

CB: Do you worry about things like that?

JM: [laughs] No. I presume that such a person wouldn't want to read the book anyway. I found Kant's third critique so compelling and, of course, it made me realise how important Kant is for Nietzsche. I don't think I'd really thought that through before. Whilst I assumed that Schopenhauer would be an important influence, it was only when I started to read Kant that I saw what an event for Nietzsche's philosophy Kant is. It is absolutely important.

CB: A lot of people feel that there is something incredibly unstable in the third critique, that there he's beginning to uproot the whole critical system, and that he really problematises the synthesised 'Self' of the first two critiques. I think you draw out the implications of this very successfully. I wrote in my review that Kant's concept of the Self haunts your book, insofar as the 'I' is something that we habitually return to in our thought, even though this is that which we're trying to think past, or even forget in our thinking.

JM: Yes. I mean, that's why I saw Kant as oddly being quite an ally of Nietzsche: I saw something anti-humanist there. You can interpret the demand for an intersubjectivity of taste as being, at the same time, an appeal for an anonymity; that there is something transpersonal about a genuinely disinterested judgement, which you almost have in spite of yourself, because there is nothing interested, invested, personal about it. I think in my book I put it as, "It's of you, without it being yours."

CB: It evokes the metaphor of the dream, as in *The Gay Science*: "I suddenly woke up in the midst of this dream, but only to the consciousness that I was dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish—as a somnambulist must go on dreaming lest he fall" (*GS* §54). Suddenly you are introduced into a philosophy which talks about transpersonal forces, the illusions and limitations of consciousness, and, ultimately, fatalism as well. You have made me eager to return to Kant: it's as though you have heard in him an utterly different voice than other listeners tune into.

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JM: But there is something astonishing there, particularly where he’s talking about the sublime, that makes you really re-think the Dionysian in Nietzsche. You read Nietzsche and it’s not obvious that Kant would have been such a stimulus, but you know, the language is there. You find a Kant revelling in a kind of sensory vibrancy in the sublime: it’s the sort of thing Nick Land certainly identifies. There is such an energetic vocabulary at work there, which I don’t see in the other Kantian texts, that language. You realise that you’re in quite rare waters.

CB: I’d like to ask you about the relationship between the philosopher and art, as it is developed in your thought. I think, overall, what I most appreciated in your book was the idea of ‘affective’ knowing. If we are to take the death of God seriously—as our unbelief in forms of identity—then we have to pursue philosophy as sensitive knowing, i.e. as aesthetics, in the broadest sense. I completely agree with you that it is incorrect to pigeonhole aesthetics as the study of art. In fact, it makes it seem altogether absurd that aesthetics, in that sense, should be one of the central four philosophical disciplines, along with metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. It makes the whole enterprise seem trifling by comparison. You have the questions of ‘what is it?’, ‘how do I know it?’, ‘how should I live?’, and then we tag the question of art on at the end. ‘What is beautiful?’ To most ears this sounds like a flighty little trifle by comparison, a superfluous luxury. Such a view of aesthetics shows precisely that we have forgotten its original significance. But it does strike me that, if we are to pursue philosophy in the way you are proposing, it presupposes that the philosopher has an aesthetic sensibility, that he is sympathetic to the types of experiences you are thinking from and about. Now, we all have this to some extent: we all respond to music, for example, but then music is less problematic. It’s my intuition, however, that the majority of our systems of education, particularly philosophical and scientific training, actually inhibit the aesthetic sensibility, insofar as these processes alienate us from the act of seeing. We have a habit of over-intellectualising, wishing to determine a work’s ultimate “meaning,” or wishing to interpret its signs as simple referents of thought. And yet what we are faced with is not a collection of ideas, not even a text, but a piece of art, a composed form. In such cases, we are intellectualising something insofar as we are viewing it under the form of the same, seeking to find in it the concepts that we had already brought with us. The possibility for seeing the new, of the sensation of ecstasy, is thereby minimised. I was wondering if you could talk about your own relationship to art in this context, of the relation between art, philosophy and aesthetic sensibility.

JM: I suppose the idea of rapture has romantic overtones and I’m aware that to speak about aesthetics in terms of rapture seems to focus on a notion of pleasure which is a very old, eighteenth century notion. For me, by contrast, what was important was to really think what it means when you describe aesthetics as a *science* of sensitive knowing. That gives us a definition of aesthetics,

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and I liked what that definition suggested for philosophy. It's too easy to equate thinking with consciousness and mentality, but if you pursue a Freudian line of enquiry, then very quickly you have to relinquish that prejudice and recognise that thought is already 'of' the body. If philosophy could abide with that notion, then ethics, epistemology and metaphysics would look quite different. So, for me, it was an attempt to start from a position which doesn't assume that thinking is the soul's silent dialogue with itself. I think that Nietzsche is exploring something like that in the 'physiology of art.'² Art then would be one of the opportunities in which you might talk about that sensitive knowing, and it might be one of the vehicles for encountering that, but, interestingly, in Nietzsche it's in other places that an aesthetic sensibility might prove more subtle and telling. I do have interests in certain artists, usually the tormented ones [*laughs*], and that's not ancillary, but it isn't imperative for me that aesthetics is thought about in relation to art. I suppose that there are states, and Nietzsche talks about these states, which inspire a kind of ecstasy, because they communicate something of the ecstasy of the creator of the artwork. I suppose this touches upon the question of what you are entering into contact with, when you encounter something which you want to say moves you—and we do use this language of transport, because something is happening. Again, it's not so far away from Kant, when Kant is talking about the genius not knowing what he has produced—for obvious reasons, it can't be rehearsed: Kant can't have a genius knowing in advance what he is doing. So there is this illegibility of an artwork, which, at the same time, is communicated. It's something which never seems to arrive within the circuit of cognition, it seems to add relatively little to cognition, and yet something happens, something is transmitted. Nietzsche is fascinated, particularly in the notebooks, when he's talking about that element of perception, things which we are sensing all of the time, but of which we are unaware.

CB: What I read you as being primarily interested in is what ecstasy enables us to think. Is it in this sense that you are suggesting that, apart from those cognitions which we have merely brought forward in perception, there is something else going on, something that is incomprehensible as far as the understanding goes?

JM: Yes, there is another thinking which hovers at the borders of "thinking", and that fascinates me. And you can't point to exactly what it is, but you can point to examples of the sorts of things that it is like. Leibniz speaks of these little perceptions, which are too insignificant, or too banal, to enter into consciousness, but are there all the time. And of course when Freud is talking of the psycho-pathology of everyday life he is giving plenty of examples of the way in which another kind of thinking is protruding into conscious thought.

CB: What we are actually aware of, including this language which we "know," is actually the tip

2 'Physiology of Art,' was the prospective title Nietzsche gave to a series of notes on art and physics in the 1880s, which connected his later concerns of embodiment and incorporation with the Apollinian and Dionysian. Many of these notes are collected in **The Will to Power**, Ch. IV, 'The Will to Power as Art' (794-893).

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of an iceberg of bodily forces and movements that are unknown to us.

JM: Yes, and artists have the tremendous power to explore those and that's something which Nietzsche is clearly pursuing in the physiology of art, or, at least, I think he is.

CB: Insofar as you wish to articulate this thinking that you are trying to develop, you are really fighting against language. You have this language of the drives, which is helpful, and you say that we are forced into this language and these metaphors: that these are the types of metaphors that we have to use when we talk about these things. But, at the same time, we are so conditioned into what thought is that it is very difficult to remain in the metaphor. I always got the sense that I understood what you were talking about, and that I was on the verge of being able to articulate this myself, but it was nonetheless very difficult to capture.

JM: It does seem to be very limited, what you can speak about, but I don't want to speak about this in some mystical way. What I find very inspiring in *The Birth of Tragedy*, for example, is the way in which Nietzsche starts with figures of transport and of ecstasy. He starts with the Apollinian and Dionysian, rather than a concept or a subject, both of which are forms of identity. His starting place is just to say, immediately, "let's approach this physiologically, in terms of a compulsion to dream, a compulsion to intoxication or rapture." That ability to start elsewhere and to pursue it means that you're looking at a quite different map of what's possible and what is thinkable. Inevitably, there will be a tendency to fall back into a certain way of theorising, but I think Nietzsche really shows directions of another kind, of where you begin and how you enter.

CB: Before we finish, I'd like to offer my congratulations. A mutual friend informed me that you have recently started a family. I was just wondering, if you don't mind me asking, what the implications of this are for the material conditions of your thought.

JM: Well, that's why I've not been on the conference circuit for a while. I've had three children in fairly rapid succession. The youngest is only nine months. It does force a different pace, because your time is accounted for, which means all of that wandering around in the middle of the night, drinking, chain-smoking, just isn't there. You know, four in the morning, when you start to have your insights and you collapse into bed and emerge at three in the afternoon. That's gone... [laughs] What's interesting is that the things I've written since having children have either been fairly brief, or about brevity. There's obviously a new relation with time in that, a new form. So, in the process of having children I've made new conditions, and am writing in a different way.

CB: Is this something you've thought about a lot?

JM: Well, one of the last things I wrote on Nietzsche was on the aphorism.³ But I wanted to write

³ Editor's note: See Jill Marsden, "Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism" in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 22-38.

on the aphorism for quite a while, because that was another thing that interested me in Nietzsche quite early on. The whole issue of what it means to write ‘on’ Nietzsche is worthy of consideration. My own view is that the text makes demands on the reader which are different to those made by other philosophers and that to really ‘engage’ with Nietzsche might mean to follow a vector of interest that conducts us away from commentary. I suppose, to some extent, that’s what I try to do.

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Book Review

Rhetorical Allure, Real Evil: Claire Ortiz Hill

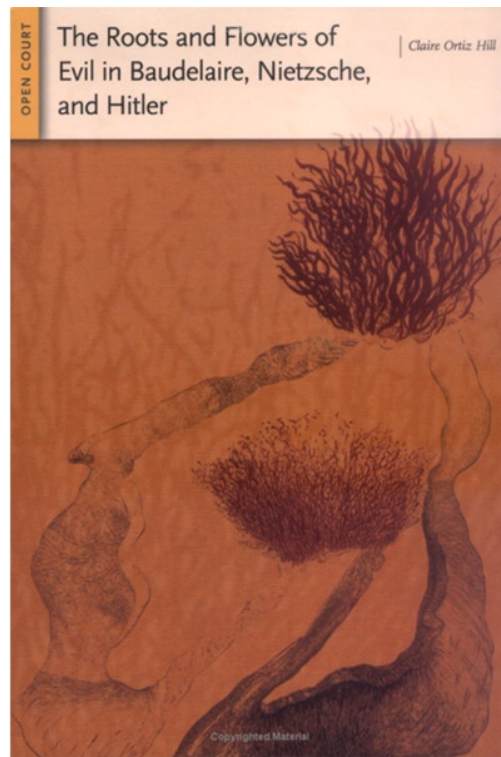
The Roots and Flowers of Evil in Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Hitler

by Claire Ortiz Hill (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2006)

reviewed by Angela Holzer (Princeton University)

Claire Ortiz Hill's interest in Nietzsche is not in fact primarily theoretical: She considers Nietzsche's writings, mostly focusing on the works of what she calls his "mature period," namely *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, alongside Baudelaire's poems and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. But she considers these writings in the first part of her book in order to divest the reader of the appeal that purely rhetorical or linguistic glorification of "evil" can exert. Therefore, the second part of the study deals with descriptions of real terror—albeit, of course, textually mediated—and the third part suggests that nonviolent responses to evil that might seem naïve are actually grounded in "human realities" (xvii) and should therefore be adopted in real life to resist and reduce evil in the world. Evil, the study attempts to show, "bears within itself its own contradictions and in them the seeds of its own destruction" (xvii).

Thus, the aim of the book is a rather direct one; it is fueled by humanistic belief in the possibility to outdo and overcome evil by collective will—by the refusal to acquiesce in its silent workings as well as by empowering nonviolent responses to it. The author has dedicated her study to victims of Buchenwald as well as to her spiritual mentor, Jacques Sommet, S.J., survivor of Dachau and member of the French Resistance. Her decision to study philosophy, as the author explained, arose out of the desire to understand her century with its vast devastating force, examples of which make up part two of her present book. Keeping this in mind, it is a laudable effort of the author to confront the problem of evil, and, even more, to argue against a cliché understanding of Hitler as the incarnation of evil. In fact, her taking Hitler's writings seriously, she confesses, might be considered "perverse or offensive" (5). Nonetheless, she attempts to analyze



him along with Baudelaire and Nietzsche as a systematic thinker who gave “serious, original and coherent answers” to the problem of evil. But why does she group Nietzsche, Hitler and Baudelaire together at all? Why these three authors, the philosopher, politician and poet? Hill sees in them the “great experts on the problem of evil” as well as “history’s most eloquent and alluring disseminators of ideas about evil” (3). It seems, of course, somewhat anachronistic to argue that Hitler’s thought was rational and systematic: historians have acknowledged this for a long time now. The same goes for the argument considering Nietzsche’s consistency. It seems, if not superfluous, at least irrelevant for the purposes of the study to argue that Nietzsche’s thought is to be taken seriously as philosophy and cannot be dismissed as paradoxical, ambiguous, and contradictory. After decades of post-war Nietzsche-exegesis beginning with Walter Kaufmann’s study, it should seem, however, that there is no need to rehabilitate either Nietzsche’s philosophical importance, nor is it necessary to defend him by cleaning his writings of paradoxes and inconsistencies. While the set-up of the study comparing Baudelaire, Nietzsche and Hitler could be quite interesting, the basis of it does not have to be an argument that all of them—even Baudelaire, who is really read for his ideas at the expense of their poetic form, which is debatably impossible—can be taken seriously as systematic thinkers.

It is one thing to write about Hitler’s writings, another one to adopt his thoughts and use them methodologically, as the author does. Why does she repeatedly resort to this gesture? Not only is the image of a mosaic, which the study tries to put together with regard to evil, borrowed from *Mein Kampf*. Also, to “give my argumentation form I have adopted a methodology inspired by *Mein Kampf*” (xiv), namely the reciprocal verification of theory and reality.

The first part, then, develops the theoretical mosaic of elements of evil. A philosopher, especially one versed in Nietzschean thought, might be disappointed to find no elaboration of the idea of evil that is being sought after or dealt with; there is no philosophical or theological definition or argument on which the search can be based. No recent studies on evil—like Susan Neiman’s for example—are taken up or taken issue with. Rather, evil is quite commonly understood as “that which is intentionally morally bad or injurious, or causes suffering, misfortune, or disaster” (3). Implicit in this definition is, of course, that “morally” means the liberal, egalitarian, humanistic morality. Thus, already at the outset the argument moves on a level that seems inadequate to the intricacies of a Nietzschean, genealogical argument about morality and its historical becoming as part of a value-system of specific groups. Briefly, the study argues from a viewpoint that Nietzsche sought to question without justifying this viewpoint. The author then seems to search for thoughts in the works of the three authors that can be classified in one of the following categories, which are the elements of “evil”: anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian sentiment (only partially valid, I submit, in the case of Hitler); contempt of the sick, philosophy of life; ennui and resulting (violent) capriciousness; anti-Marxist and anti-Jewish sentiment; the role of the “devil” in these writings; magical power of words—the allure of oration—that all three were able to exercise as speakers. All of these aspects contribute to the “theory of evil” expounded in the first part.

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Unfortunately, the author more or less assembles respective thoughts from Baudelaire, Nietzsche and Hitler, often without analysis. She neither contextualizes the texts historically, nor does she put pressure on the literal word. The hermeneutic stance taken toward the texts does, then, seem rather banal, and results in the mere statement that, yes, some passages in Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Hitler apparently glorify “evil”—“Nietzsche was also keen about showing crime and vice in a better light” (78). It is also questionable if Nietzsche can in fact be simply seen as advocating an inverted value system (that whatever conventional morality considered to be evil should be viewed as being good, 118). This is a crass reduction of Nietzsche’s foray into the realm of ethics and does not even do justice to his *grand politics*. Arguably, this approach in fact contributes to turning Nietzsche and Baudelaire into thinkers of evil. A more subtle reading would surely be able to show how they did not necessarily extol evil for evil’s sake. Also, a compilation of the most provocative thoughts in Nietzsche does not aid to an understanding of what he “really meant” (8), a hermeneutic approach prone to the intentional fallacy at any rate. The first part closes with Carl Jung’s reflections on Hitler, in the vein of the argument that Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Hitler were not realistic in their descriptions of evil, but that they were realists about the way “human beings are behind appearances and any masks they wear.” They had, according to the author, “a realistic sense [...] of the raw material upon which they worked, a realistic sense of human nature, of the human mind. And that is indeed being realistic about the true nature of evil” (83). This seems to suggest that evil is seen by Hill as anthropologically grounded: it seems to be neither projection, nor imagination, but part of human nature as such.

The second part of the book opens with a discussion of the relation of theoretical and real evil, the pen and the sword. Rather than advancing her own arguments, the author again only offers a summary and quotes, this time of Harry Mullisch’s book from 1961, which portrays a number of German Romantic authors as “prefiguring the universe of Hitler” (99). She seems to be unaware of who Jean Paul was (“there was the person whom Mullisch just calls Jean Paul” 99), but seems to adopt Mullisch’s thesis of the Romantic prefiguration of Nazism. She then, again following Hitler’s suggestion, proceeds by “setting aside aesthetics” (101) by turning to the reality of evil (paradoxically, however, this section witnesses the two only completely reproduced poems, one by Owen, one by Baudelaire without analysis)—the inherent problematic of doing so in a mediated way, even without the “beautification” of evil, which, according to her, is in itself “an evil thing to do” (101) is unfortunately not addressed. But then, the “reality” of evil which the second part discusses is not an ontological question, but the paradigmatic ability of Hitler to convert the latent tendencies in society, infused by “evil” theories—“pathological fantasies” as she calls them with Carl (Gustav) Jung (116)—like the one discussed in part one, into action. To subsume Baudelaire and Nietzsche under such a heading—quasi as mouthpieces of a collective pathology that Hitler then put into practice—does seem exquisitely simplistic, but it nevertheless appears to be the bottom line of this chapter. And what justification is there for taking Jung and, occasionally, Freud as opponents rather than as symptoms of their age?

Are the socio-psychological explanations of modernity and of “the Germans” as suffering from a collective inferiority complex (Jung) really sufficient to explain the occurrence of National-Socialism? The second part not only expounds the terrors perpetrated by it, but also focuses on Hitler’s mental genesis explaining his success in realizing terror—which he had learned, as the author shows, from Social Democrats. While “many Nazi SS-men would fit Nietzsche’s description of hardened, powerful, revengeful, hostile, malicious, distrustful people ready for the most horrible things and inventive and insatiable in cruelty” (120), the French General Aussaresses is compared or portrayed as manifestation of Baudelaire’s “hardy soul” (125). Not only do these applications of 19th century visions to 20th century political agents seem futile, they don’t explain anything. They moreover add to what can be called a mystification of evil—given the rhetorical effort the author put into their description (in the chapter that sets aside aesthetics). Surely many members of the SS were much more mundane than that. And the problem of Aussaresses is not simply one of “evil,” but the one of Guantanamo: Do Western liberal constitutions have to be suspended in the face of danger that can seemingly only be controlled by force? Is torture justifiable? In this case, as well as in others, it would be useful to distinguish between different acts of evil and categories of crimes rather than subsume every atrocity—from Nazi killings of mentally disturbed to the war in Algeria and Stalinist Terror—under the heading “evil.” But what is the author’s aim in bringing to mind and describing in detail real massacres and slaughters? Is there an anthropological, ethical, political, juridical, theological insight to be gleaned beside the one that massacres are often theoretically legitimized and prepared, or that ideals that inspire evil seem to be born from inversed projection, i.e. that Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Hitler were themselves physically far from the ideal they seemingly glorified (139)? Is there any explanatory worth in relating the sicknesses of Nietzsche once again as if they would invalidate his philosophy? And how does Jung’s analysis of Nietzsche and Hitler as psychopathically German help to confront the nature of evil?

The third part discusses the ideas and justifications—philosophies—of leading proponents of non-violent action, mostly Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Mikhail Gorbachev, and argues that this is not only a possible solution to the problem of evil, but the only possibility in the current state of the world. Ortiz Hill is intent on demonstrating the realistic character of non-violent action and the self-destructive force of “evil” regimes. Tolstoy and King are profiled as radical opponents of Nietzsche, and “Gandhi contra Hitler” (203). Paradoxically, however, also “that veteran of the underclass Hitler and that sickly Nietzsche were as lucid about the puissance of the powerlessness, the might of weakness, the force of nonviolence, the potency of spiritual forces” (220). Do we now have to see in them theorist of nonviolence as well? The chapter proposes that love can ultimately be a stronger force than evil and more congenial to human nature—the Christian principal of agape serves here as proof, in comparison to which Freud’s *eros* seems selfish: “Love, goodness, life, creation, peace have to be primary or there would be nothing for hatred, evil, death, and destruction try to undo. [...] The flowers of evil ultimately wilt and die, a dream

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carries them away” (220).

The story Ortiz Hill tells, largely by citing a handful of secondary sources, is the one of a pathological (German) modernity of which Nietzsche is a symptom and Hitler the culmination point—despite her comment, that a direct line from Nietzsche to the Third Reich cannot be drawn, she often and explicitly brings them in close juxtaposition. Anti-Semitism is one of its fiercest evils, which she also detects in Baudelaire and the “work of Hitler and his minions to annihilate the Jewish people” (148) is “the most outstanding example” (148) of the radical evil of extermination, in turn prepared by thoughts of Baudelaire and Nietzsche (148). The aestheticization of evil that she described in the first part is part of this evil and its perversion, a kind of sinister second skin of evil—but is it also a reason or motif for evil acts?

Apart from the historically reductive character of this line of argument, it does nothing to help us gain insights into a phenomenology of evil—the motivations for it are restricted to some Jungian pathologizations. Rather, it proposes the view that evil, as described in the book, is an invention of the 19th and a reality of the 20th century—neglecting the fact that there have always been reports of large-scale atrocities in history. If evil action is grounded in human nature—as we assume due to the lack of better explanations—it remains fundamentally unclear how it can be confronted and overcome—even by non-violence.

The problem posed by Nietzsche, namely the inextricable interrelation of violence and culture, is, unfortunately, not even addressed. The book on the whole does not explain the roots and flowers of “evil,” it rather assembles a number of its canonical instances. The role of language in beautifying evil is not brought to analytical clarity: the author seems on the one hand to condemn it without really inquiring into its workings; on the other hand, she inserts poems, like Baudelaire’s “A corpse” into her description of the reality of evil as if it captured the real sight of death. There is also no reflection on the mediated character of her own, often detailed description of massacres and murders—and on its consequences.

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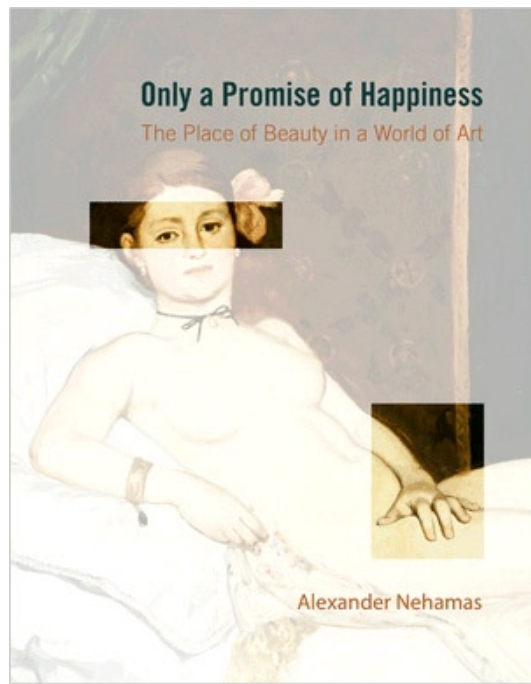
Book Review

Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art

by Alexander Nehamas (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007)

reviewed by Jill Marsden (University of Bolton)

As Diotima acknowledges in Plato's *Symposium*, there is something exorbitant about our craving for beauty. To be initiated into knowledge of Eros, the true follower of this subject must begin in his youth with the pursuit of physical beauty in its carnal form, attaining with the intensity of his ardor, ever more surprising insights into beauty's metamorphic power. With desire at the threshold, the philosophical quest is consecrated as an erotic drive, a longing that ever reaches beyond itself. It is precisely this 'risky language of passion' (2) which Alexander Nehamas finds lacking in twentieth century discussions of art. In *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*, he remarks:



Although the word continued to be used, beauty itself was replaced by the aesthetic, which, completely isolated as it is from all relationships with the rest of the world, promises nothing that is not already present in it, is incapable of deception, and provokes no desire. (10)

The broad thesis of his book is that the Platonic idea that beauty is the object of love has been extinguished from modern conceptions of art and aesthetics, a gesture which represents both a change in artistic preoccupations in the twentieth century and a more general philosophical suspicion of passion, pleasure and desire. The concept of the 'aesthetic' which features prominently in this argument is derived from Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) which isolates the judgment of the beautiful from all the sensual, practical and ethical issues so central to Platonic thought. Much hinges for Nehamas's thesis—and for the tradition he seeks to challenge—

on how this Kantian legacy is to be understood.

In marking out a domain for the autonomy of aesthetic reflective judgment in the *Third Critique*, Kant introduces the contentious notion of a *pure* judgment of taste, a liking for the beautiful which seemingly carries with it no admixture of self-interest or personal investment in the object so judged. According to Nehamas, Kant's notion of disinterestedness is to be understood as pleasure bereft of desire: 'The pleasure ("satisfaction") we find in beautiful things is completely independent of their relations to the rest of the world—of their uses and effects' (3). Sketching a lineage from Kant to early Modernism, Nehamas highlights the suppression of rapturous discourse in accounts of beauty. Citing Schopenhauer's idiosyncratic identification of Kantian aesthetic judgment with the cessation of worldly desire, he notes how in 'disinterested' contemplation of art the unhappy slave of the passions wins liberation from the torture wheel of endless craving and thereby transcends all worldly involvements ('the penal servitude of willing'). It is perhaps a short step from this view of art as a palliative for desire to the 'anemic' conceptions of the aesthetic that Nehamas identifies and sets out to challenge in late modernity.

In charting his trajectory thus it is possible that Nehamas may be influenced by Nietzsche's allusions to Schopenhauer and Kant in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). As Nietzsche observes, 'Schopenhauer made use of the Kantian version of the aesthetic problem—although he certainly did not view it with Kantian eyes' (GM III, §6). Not without irony, Nietzsche notes that Schopenhauer interpreted the term 'without interest' in an extremely personal way, seeking out the kind of 'disinterested' aesthetic experience that would afford a glancing respite from the 'vile urgency of the will' (GM III, §6). So tormented by his libidinal proclivities that even a plausible still life of edible objects was a taunting prospect, Schopenhauer championed a notion of the aesthetic that was tantamount to the staunching of desire. The more immediately plausible position of the sensualist provides a sharp counterpoint. In this context, Nietzsche writes that the happily constituted Stendhal saw beauty as '*la promesse de bonheur*' precisely because it *arouses the will* (GM III, §6). In this section of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche takes a mischievous delight in contrasting Stendhal with Kant, noting that 'under the spell of beauty' our Kantian aestheticians 'can even view undraped female statues "without interest"' (GM III, §6). His mockery notwithstanding, Nietzsche remarks that this is not the place to debate whether or not Kant's attribution of impersonality and universality to aesthetic experience is mistaken, thus reserving in principle the possibility that the Kantian view might yet be upheld.

It is notable that Nietzsche's rhetorical strategy in this essay ('Who is right: Kant or Stendhal?') has echoes in the opening section of *Only a Promise of Happiness*, 'Plato or Schopenhauer?' From the outset, Nehamas works to vindicate the Platonic view by means of an extended meditation on the Stendhalian notion of promise:

So long as we find anything beautiful, we feel that we have not yet exhausted what it has to offer, and that forward-looking element is . . . inseparable from the judgment

of beauty. (9)

The accent in Nehamas' account is on the anticipation of happiness contained in the attraction we experience. For Stendhal, love is as much about projection as perception. It is part of the mesmerizing power of love that we are impelled beyond what we can reasonably imagine in the first flush of excitement. Since 'beauty mobilizes the emotions and always looks to the future' (68) our voyage into the realm of the beautiful bears with it a hope that our life will be endlessly enriched. In this way, desire necessarily exceeds understanding: 'we can be attracted to things of which we are not fully aware' (71). Once again, the thirst for beauty exhibits an exorbitant migration beyond the dictates of sense, undermining the certainties of the 'self' it holds captive.

Such extravagant notions are hotly contested by the contemporary aesthetician. According to Nehamas, 'the position of judgment in criticism is in real conflict with the place of beauty in art' (15). In making this claim he seeks to engage with those philosophers in the Analytical tradition who have downplayed the role of beauty in their considerations of art. Nehamas names Clive Bell, R. C. Collingwood and Arthur Danto, amongst others, as figures who have driven a wedge between beauty and aesthetic value. More polemically Nehamas presents a picture of a general community of philosophical aestheticians who are frightening in their classificatory zeal: their 'passion for ranking' and 'fervor for verdicts' has 'deformed our attitude to the arts' (137). Accordingly, the reader is introduced to a world in which 'aesthetic features' are listed as 'stock components in text-books' (99), where it is an 'institutional commonplace' to regard certain terms as 'aesthetic' (49) and for which it is 'almost an article of faith that the end of our interaction with the arts comes when we are in a position to make a judgment of taste' (15). In this characterization the philosopher is presented as less a judge than an auctioneer, passing 'verdicts' on works of art in order to hand them on to a more interested party.

No less controversially, this aesthetic community is presented as the privileged source of evaluations and interpretations which are more sophisticated than the testimony of direct and immediate experience. This prompts Nehamas to conclude that:

If the beauty of things strikes us as soon as we are exposed to them, beauty can't be the same as the value that criticism is supposed to determine through the interpretations it offers. (16)

It would be unfair to suggest that this characterization of his opponents presents them as more forward-looking than those who perceive beauty at a stroke. To clarify, we must note a second set of implied interlocutors in Nehamas's text, the proponents of high Modernism for whom the difficult labors of the intellect are superior to the appeal of the senses: 'genuine value is not obvious pleasure: the obvious is common' (29). Part of Nehamas' more democratic agenda is to insist on the value of popular art forms and the cultural legibility of the appeal of beauty. However, this is not to imply that he subscribes to the view that unrestrained liking for the beautiful is

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brutally ‘instinctual’ or incompatible with further reflection. In fact, the reverse is true:

The experience of beauty is inseparable from interpretation, and just as beauty always promises more than it has given so far, so interpretation, the effort to understand what it promises, is further work in progress. (105)

In defiance of these real or imagined dogmatists Nehamas asserts that there can be no impetus to forestall or curtail our acquaintance with the objects of our desire. His frank and enthusiastic accounts of attraction for beautiful things, his untroubled adoption of the male gaze and his candid exploration of his pleasure responses to paintings of the female nude underscore his thesis that the discourse of beauty is a tale of desire: ‘Beauty beckons as love impels. The art we love is art we don’t yet fully understand’ (76). Indeed, the author’s detailed account of his fascination for Manet’s *Olympia*—a work which defies all his attempts to penetrate its enigma—succeeds in communicating a contagious excitement, reminding the reader that aesthetic judgments are so often suitors for our agreement whether they succeed in eliciting our assent or not.

The elusive nature of beauty, its inexplicable power and mute implacability render the beholder humbled in his or her vain attempts to articulate its force. For Kant the reason we cannot explain why we find something beautiful is that the judgment of taste lacks the conditions of determinate judgment. Nehamas’s reading of this Kantian position takes a more tenuous line:

.. the reason we can’t fully explain either to others or to ourselves why we find something beautiful is that the judgment of taste is simply not a *conclusion* at all. (75)

This slightly odd nuance is illuminated when placed in the context of the aforementioned institution of philosophical aesthetics. It is for others to decide whether this account of current practice is representative of the field but the weakness of this argument cannot be so easily concealed. A disinterested judgment is not equivalent to a discontinuous one. Whilst disinterested liking may sound inherently contradictory, Kant’s insistence on the impersonality of our judgment serves to emphasize the estranging effect of beauty, its enchanting, entrancing power. Satisfaction without interest is a prescription against *personal* desire. Our inability to account for our experience of beauty in rational or practical terms is indicative of a potential transpersonality. Perhaps what goes by the name of beauty is the uncanny magnetism which defeats all worldly explanations that the subject could adduce. The impersonality of this liking is not a marker of its objectivity but rather its exorbitance. What Kant presents us with is a kind of immanent transcendence. The judgment of beauty is one that characteristically reinforces a ‘lingering’ [*weilen*] (§ 12), a liking which ‘carries with it directly a feeling of life’s being furthered, and hence is compatible with charms and an imagination at play’ (§ 23). The ‘forward-looking element’ of Nehamas’s account is more than hinted at here. Wonder ensues when excitement is registered yet understanding withheld.

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In this regard, Nietzsche's own characterization of liking for the beautiful in terms of the transpersonality of libidinal drives (the 'Apollinian') is more Kantian in spirit than it might initially seem. In other words, we may question whether in the final reckoning Nietzsche actually endorses the Stendhalian position. That this prospect remains unavailable to Nehamas is a consequence of his essentially humanist conception of desire. Whilst Manet's rejection of the conventions of beauty may have been scandalous in its day, his *Olympia* is not a difficult painting to adore. It would be harder for Nehamas to advance his Stendhalian thesis in relation to more contemporary, more controversial art works, ones which test the bounds of rational, liberal values. Whilst keen to acknowledge that in the pursuit of beauty there is 'an element of ineliminable risk' (133) this is not to do justice to the terrible pull of bad gravity, our liking for what will surely undo us.

In his concern to reject a notion of the 'aesthetic' which he reads as formalist, dispassionate and potentially elitist Nehamas jettisons the notion that art might be world-disclosing:

[B]eauty .. is part of the everyday world of purpose and desire, history and contingency, subjectivity and incompleteness. That is the only world there is, and nothing, not even the highest of the high arts, can move beyond it. (35)

Such a prosaic conclusion is in conflict with the ambition of the work and also with the spirit of Stendhal, so famous for his accounts of the transfiguring power of love. If Nehamas is to be taken at his word, it is not obvious why this is a book about the place of beauty in a 'world' of art if, for him, there is nothing distinctive about creative production as such. As a disinterested aesthetics ultimately attests, it is by virtue of its gratuitousness that art confounds our view of the everyday world of purpose and desire. The promise of happiness is an arc of expectation reaching into the future, an optimism charged with the weight of conviction and the frailty of prayer. Perhaps this is simply to underline the point—which is also Plato's—that Eros tends to overreach its boundaries.

Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art

Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art

review by:

Jill
Marsden

Agonist 71

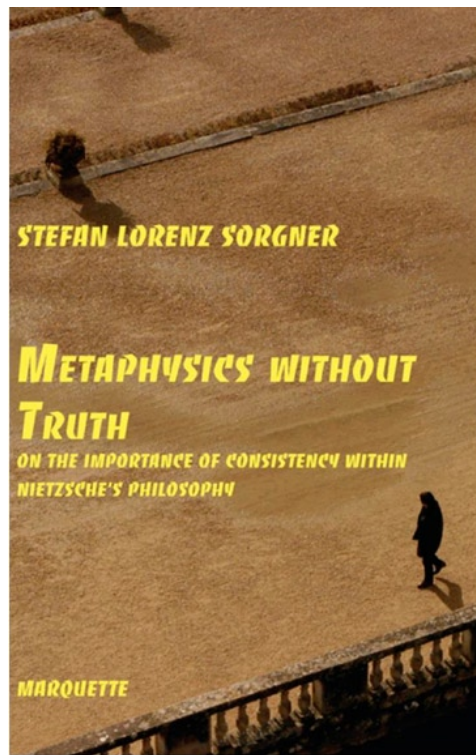
Book Review

Metaphysics without Truth: On the Importance of Consistency within Nietzsche's Philosophy

by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press 2007)

reviewed by Yunus Tuncel (Ph.D., The New School)

Much has been said on truth and metaphysics in Nietzsche, and yet much remains to be said. Sorgner's recent book, *Metaphysics without Truth*, is yet another addition to this dialogue. One central question Sorgner asks in this book is whether there is any good reason to believe in Nietzsche's metaphysics, what he calls "artistic metaphysics," that refers to a philosophy that postulates a real world (39), if "the truth" that corresponds to the world does not exist for him. Sorgner explores the questions of truth and consistency in Nietzsche's works within the context of such notions as the will to power, the eternal recurrence, and perspectivism. Before he embarks on his exploration, he presents some definitions and parameters for his work.



For Sorgner metaphysics, in the sense that is applicable to Nietzsche, simply refers to any description of the world, not to the metaphysics of two world theories that have existed from Plato to Kant. There is not only a metaphysics in Nietzsche, that is, a world-description, but also an ontology that explains certain aspects of Being. In Nietzsche's metaphysics, Apollo stands for the creative force, whereas Dionysos for the destructive force. As Sorgner explores Nietzsche's artistic metaphysics, he also keeps in sight several key issues that Nietzsche was sensitive to. The first one is that philosophers defend their prejudices and baptize them as truths; according to Sorgner, Nietzsche does not exempt himself from this criticism that he raises against other philosophers. The second issue, closely connected to the first one, has to do with philosophers' approach to philosophy; here what stands out as significant is how philosophers start practicing philosophy and how they regard their philosophical activity. Both of these issues, no doubt, have to do with the lives of philosophers, and Sorgner touches briefly on Nietzsche's life. These and

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other remarks are presented to set the stage for the main body of the book that has three parts: "Apollo," "Dionysos," and "Apollo & Dionysos Reconciled." Below is a review of each of these parts.

The first part of the book, "Apollo," deals with the metaphysical aspect of Nietzsche's artistic metaphysics. Central to this metaphysics are the will to power and the notions of organic life and force. All that is living is organic, and all organic beings have memory and mind. For Nietzsche the world is not one unified organism, but is rather a continuum of power-quanta that are in perpetual interaction with one another—here Sorgner likens power quanta to Leibniz's monads. These interactions may be agonistic and war-like or loving and friendly. Furthermore, the power-quanta manifest themselves as will to power where will is their form and power their content (52), and there are both degrees of strength (or power) and an integrally unified internal/external power (53). What the overhuman has to achieve is the highest form of power (56); this is an insightful way of linking the will to power to the overhuman both of which appear as important themes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Proceeding with his reflections on Nietzsche's philosophy of power, Sorgner adds that every power-quantum is a perspective, an interpretation in which perceptions and judgments about the world occur via mind and memory: "So a power-quantum perceives its environment via its mental capacities and makes a judgment about it via its memory" (59). Here Sorgner places too much emphasis on mind and memory, whereas for Nietzsche instincts and drives play their game at the unconscious level and manifest their power as power-quanta. Only in passing he mentions instincts which "age-old memories are transformed into" (59). However, he makes a sound observation when he says that "Nietzsche's will to power metaphysics offers a way of unifying emotions" (60) and also that a power-constellation is always what it does or is the sum of its effects.

In the section where Sorgner deals with pleasure and pain and their connection to power, he makes two assertions that need more support from Nietzsche's texts to be convincing. The first one is that "...according to Nietzsche everything has a mind" (61) This would make Nietzsche not only an Anaxagorean but also a logocentricist, both of which he was not, unless something else is meant by 'mind' such as the capacity to have some kind of perception, beyond the limits of the intellect. As for the second point, which is made after Sorgner explores carefully and insightfully the connection between power and the feelings of pain and pleasure, it has to do with the disjunction between pain and pleasure. He writes: "I do not think that one can be consciously aware of pain and pleasure at the same time. They might be both present, yet one is always dominant" (65). Although this is Sorgner's own position, I believe that for Nietzsche both pain and pleasure may be equally strong (as in an agonistic tension) and can make themselves felt as such at the same time (as in the practices of the orgiastic cults of ancient Greece he so much revered).

In the last sections of "Apollo," Sorgner discusses Nietzsche's notion of eternal recur-

rence and its connection to the will to power. After stating that Nietzsche and modern physics concur on the implications of the eternal recurrence and the fact that it follows by necessity, Sorgner rightly observes, in disagreement with many scholars, that the eternal recurrence is a cosmological principle with ethical implications. Furthermore, contra Bäumler and Heidegger, he shows that the eternal recurrence and the will to power are consistent metaphysically, and that consistency resides in the fact that the will to power is the content of Being and the eternal recurrence its form; a point that was missed by Heidegger, according to Sorgner, when he thought both of them as two modes of *Seienden* (beings).

In the second part of the book, “Dionysos,” Sorgner presents a lengthy discussion of perspectivism, truth, and nihilism in Nietzsche. Regarding truth, he makes distinctions among a variety of notions of truth (88): Nietzsche’s truth, each interpretation being a “truth,” “our truth,” and finally “the truth” which is the sum-total of all possible perspectives (and which cannot be known). As Sorgner observes, for Nietzsche there is no “the truth;” therefore, Nietzsche does not accept the correspondence theory of truth. What we have are many “truths” that are the individual perspectives. The author reiterates a question often posed against Nietzsche: If there is no “the truth,” then why believe in what Nietzsche says? Some light is shed on this question in the part on perspectivism.

Sorgner rightly observes that some perspectives are superior to others; one might also add that this may be so within the context of a particular set of highest values, and this brings up the question of hierarchy. Nietzsche must have believed that his perspective was higher than others so that it can be taken into account (so that his works are read and they have the power of persuasion). Sorgner then comes to a conclusion on the question of the hierarchy setting: “It is the intellect with its logic and the categories of reason which enable us to create a hierarchy of perspectives” (95). It must be pointed out that in Nietzsche it is not only the intellect that sets hierarchies.

Regarding truth in Nietzsche, there are, at least, two other notions of truth that are not brought up in *Metaphysics without Truth*: Dionysian truth and truthfulness. The Dionysian truth is presented in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as it is expressed in the dictum: “excess revealed itself as truth.” Even though the term Dionysian rarely appears in Nietzsche’s later writings, what the Dionysian truth stands for is an integral part of his works and his way of thinking. On the other hand, the notion of truthfulness, *Wahrhaftigkeit*, which also appears in BT and runs throughout Nietzsche’s works, stands for the search for truth as opposed to the possession of truth. Though missing in Sorgner’s discussion of truth, both of these aspects of truth in Nietzsche would have supported his position on the hierarchy of perspectives. Those who are searching, seeking, wandering, overcoming, and experimenting, qualities embodied in the notion of the overhuman, are on the higher steps of the hierarchy, although all beings are somehow connected in this universe.

As though Sorgner predicted a criticism on the role of the intellect, he later says that

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logic does not tell us anything about the world and “the truth” cannot be expressed in language at all (99). Logic and language are some of the most intellectual functions of human life; they facilitate our lives and thus serve the preservation of the species, but beyond that they do not have much to do with “the truth.” Here we can also come to the conclusion that neither logic nor language alone can set the hierarchy of perspectives according to Nietzsche; this applies to both the hierarchy of truths and the hierarchy based on “the truth,” even though such truth does not exist for Nietzsche. Finally, what complicates Nietzsche’s already complicated notion of truth is also what he says about untruths, namely that our perspectives or our little truths are falsifications.

Next comes another important issue in Nietzsche: nihilism. What again makes the subject of nihilism intricate are the different meanings of the term as they appear in his texts. Sorgner captures some of these meanings which will be briefly surveyed here: 1) There is no justification for any (one) absolute standard; this has to do with the death of God and Nietzsche’s anti-foundational posture (102). In this sense, Nietzsche can be said to be a nihilist. 2) Nihilism is about a process of change, of overcoming, as in active nihilism (105). Nietzsche can be said to be a nihilist in this sense also. 3) Nihilism belongs to an intermediary stage between two periods (106). Nietzsche, insofar as he has revealed this *interregnum*, is a nihilist. 4) Finally, nihilism is an indicator (107), a symptom that reveals the current state of affairs of a civilization.

On the other hand, Nietzsche is not a nihilist in the ways Schopenhauer, Plato, Buddhism, and Christianity are nihilistic, as Sorgner observes. Schopenhauer is a pessimist who promotes a certain type of the ascetic denial of the will. Buddhism fights against suffering and is ultimately pessimistic, as it promotes calmness and peace. Plato and Christianity, Sorgner treats them together, are life-negating, promote will to nothingness, and appeal to the weak, the sick and the stupid. Furthermore, there are not only “nihilistic” religions and philosophies, but more importantly nihilistic forces, nihilistic in the retrospective sense, that may manifest themselves in different historical and cultural contexts, as in arts and artists, for example, a frequently recurring subject for Nietzsche. Therefore, I do not agree with Sorgner when he says “...it is not quite appropriate that Nietzsche used the expression “nihilistic religion” for Christianity as well as Buddhism...” or when he writes: “So Nietzsche’s use of language here is misleading and inappropriate...” (121-122) For one thing, Nietzsche uses the term ‘nihilism’ in a variety of ways, as Sorgner himself explores; we must try to understand its sense within the context where it appears. Therefore, the concept of nihilism does not remain the same for each context. On the other hand, when Nietzsche uses the term “nihilistic religion,” he must mean that there are nihilistic forces in that religion, not to say that that religion is entirely nihilistic. Nietzsche is not a unitarian thinker that sees life or culture as consisting of one force, but rather of multiple forces, albeit in their agonistic unities.

In the third and the final part of the book, “Apollo & Dionysos Reconciled,” Sorgner

wants to demonstrate that there is consistency in Nietzsche, especially regarding metaphysics and truth, as he presents ideas on the following topics: Christianity, science, and spirit. To achieve this goal, Sorgner presents Nietzsche's life (the person behind the philosophy), his insights, and what philosophy meant to him.

From the chapter "Apollo" we have learnt that "the greatest power is to impose Being on Becoming" (131), and from "Dionysos" that Nietzsche's conception is an interpretation among many others, but it is a special one. These two teachings come together in how Nietzsche fashions himself to be the inventor of values for the new epoch; he claims to be pre-destined for this task, which Sorgner sees unfit for Nietzsche's way of thinking and explains it at the end of this chapter. The term 'pre-destination,' no doubt, has many different meanings depending on the context; obviously, Nietzsche is not saying that the God of monotheism sent him to mortals to save them (such a claim would bring down his entire philosophy which does not rest on some other-worldly being as its blood supply and source of power). On the other hand, Nietzsche recognizes all these other forces that are larger than him, that came before him, and all the epochal conditions of his times, all of which make his philosophy and "prophecy" possible. It is not a divine necessity in the Judeo-Christian sense of eschatology that dictates such a predestination for Nietzsche, but rather a tragic necessity, akin to what befell tragic heroes, through whom the unconscious forces make themselves felt intensely and the cycles of creation and destruction run their violent course and battle.

Furthermore, the highest values that are proposed by Nietzsche are the overhuman, the eternal recurrence, and the will to power. For his claim to hold, "he has to be convincing, to actually be able to change the perspectives people have..." (133-134) Although the author does not mention it, here comes the role of rhetoric that Nietzsche learned from the Greek rhetoricians and modified it according to his own need and use as a value-creator. These new values, as Sorgner says, call for a new metaphysics that will be based on the will to power. In fact, it seems like this is one of the tasks that *Metaphysics without Truth* tries to accomplish: to what extent does Nietzsche's explanation of the world (i.e. his metaphysics) make sense or is convincing?

In the section "Christianity" Sorgner discusses the different phases the Western spirit goes through as an evolution of Christianity such as Enlightenment, decadence, pessimism, and nihilism. He then presents another aspect of nihilism, which is the blending of growth and decline, which he considers to be a good sign. Once a civilization recognizes its decline, then it can rise out of its ashes. As he further observes, between the two there are only differences of degree. Nietzsche's role was to hasten the decline of Christianity (139), not to be the killer of God (God was already dead before Nietzsche was born). At the end of the third part, Sorgner claims that Nietzsche, despite his counter position to Christianity, remains within the Christian tradition (158). To support his claim, he presents the following: Nietzsche's notion of antichrist is borrowed from the Bible; TSZ has an affinity to the New Testament (TSZ also has an affin-

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ity to several literary, tragic, and musical works); and Nietzsche's favorite numbers were 7 and 10 (7 was also a favorite number for ancient Greeks, and 7 and 10 may be favorite numbers in other cultural contexts). All of these may be true, but the question to be posed to Nietzsche who, despite his Christian upbringing, was immersed in the teachings of ancient Greece, is not whether he wants to remain within the Christian tradition or not, but what he proposes to retain and what to overcome in Christianity (the emphasis in Nietzsche's works is on the latter). By claiming that Nietzsche remains within the Christian tradition, Sorgner seems to be turning Nietzsche upside down and turning Nietzsche's own critical tools against him.

Sorgner then proceeds to another area of concern in Nietzsche scholarship; here he states with textual support that Nietzsche's worldview is scientific and that the next age will be scientific. Now even if one reads the word 'scientific' in the broadest possible sense as in German, where would one place Nietzsche's artistic, poetic, and mythic world-conceptions, not to mention the other ones? No doubt Nietzsche has an immense *respect* for all the sciences and scientific activities; however, what makes Nietzsche unique and original in many ways, is not in this respect, but the fact that he could envision the unity of opposing forces of culture (such as *sciences* and *mythology*) within the context of a new epoch with its unique ideas and values. Furthermore, Nietzsche's own attempt to provide scientific proofs of the eternal recurrence does not mean that it should be taken only as a scientific principle.

In the last section of the third part, "Spirit," Sorgner addresses the question as to why anyone does or should accept Nietzsche's artistic metaphysics. Here are some of his observations: there must be a basis for ordering perspectives in Nietzsche for the overhuman to make any sense; Nietzsche gives an explanation as to how and why the scientific spirit is winning over the religious spirit (a problematic reading as observed above); Nietzsche seduces us with his metaphors; Nietzsche speaks not to the herd, but to the value-creators; and finally, the most compelling one in my view, Nietzsche's philosophy appeals to the spirit of our times (but unlike the author I do not reduce the spirit to the scientific spirit).

Metaphysics without Truth raises many thought-provoking questions within the context of Nietzsche's philosophy, which are still debated today in Nietzsche scholarship. The most outstanding of these questions are: What is truth in Nietzsche? Is there consistency in his thought? Is there a hierarchy of perspectives in his perspectivism? Where is Nietzsche's position on nihilism? In many of these difficult aspects of Nietzsche's thought, Sorgner has done an in-depth analysis, as he explores them from different angles. I recommend the book highly for those who are interested in these aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy.

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