

# The Agonist



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*Nietzsche Now*

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## Future Past: *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Eternity

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### Abstract:

The first version of *The Gay Science* was published in 1882 and the aphorism that concludes this book also serves for Nietzsche as *incipit* for his next book: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. This essay looks at the notion of eternal recurrence, which Nietzsche also happens to introduce at the end of Book Four of *The Gay Science*, and this notion connects *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, two books, both of which were designedly, so I shall argue, initially published in unfinished versions. Indeed and because *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was published in *several* unfinished versions the scholars' habit of citing the books of Zarathustra corresponds not to individual 'parts' but separate books, published seriatim. Thus the first Zarathustra book is published as *Also Sprach Zarathustra, Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* with E. Schmeitzner in Chemnitz in 1883.

How his shadow stands even now behind everyone, as his dark fellow traveler. (GS IV: §281)

If you believed more in life, you would devote yourselves to the moment. (Z I: *Of the Preachers of Death*)

### ***The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: Endings and Beginnings**

The first version of *The Gay Science* was published in 1882 and the aphorism that concludes this book also serves for Nietzsche as *incipit* for his next book: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. This essay looks at the notion of eternal recurrence, which Nietzsche also happens to introduce at the end of Book Four of *The Gay Science*, and this notion connects *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, two books, both of which were designedly, so I shall argue, initially published in unfinished versions. Indeed and because *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was published in *several* unfinished versions the scholars' habit of citing the books of Zarathustra corresponds not to individual 'parts' but separate books, published seriatim. Thus the first

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Karl Schlechta's *Nietzsche-Chronik* reports that "Zarathustra I was written out in ten days in January,"<sup>1</sup> giving us an ontic calendar-month illumination of the epigraph *Sanctus Januarius* which Nietzsche sets to Book Four of *The Gay Science*, an epigraph that is both located and dated, Genoa, January 1882. Januaries were manifestly good months for Nietzsche's productivity as he himself noted. Later in 183, Nietzsche publishes the second book, specifically numbered as such: *Also Sprach Zarathustra, Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen, 2*. And Nietzsche published the third book of Zarathustra in 1884 which was, at least patently, that is to say in terms of *public* publication, the final book of Zarathustra: appearing with same publisher under the likewise duly numbered title: *Also Sprach Zarathustra, Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen, 3*.

Notoriously, Nietzsche would restrict the circulation of the fourth, parodic book, his satyr play as it were, to a 'limited' edition — i.e., for 'friends only' — printed in 1885. Thereafter he attempted to reacquire all of the extant copies, which is a bit like hitting 'send' after writing an email and then wishing that one might later unsend or undo the message. That Nietzsche meant to "unsend" or repress the fourth book is clear because in 1886 he published the first three books as *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, but left out the fourth. That this exclusion was deliberate is also plain given the listing of the author's 'other published works' featured on the back-cover of *Beyond Good and Evil*. There Nietzsche emphasizes that 'the fourth and last part of the just mentioned work from the start of the year 1885, was not as yet to be made available to booksellers.'<sup>2</sup>

Of course, we Nietzsche scholars could seemingly care less about what Nietzsche sought to do — he attempted it and he certainly did not succeed or we wouldn't be talking about it — and nearly everyone writes as if there were four books to the *Zarathustra* cycle, rather than three (an issue complicated though I will not discuss this here by both Nietzsche's preoccupation with tragedy and its three-part form with a satyr play as well as by Nietzsche's characterization of his *Zarathustra* as music and hence the formal relevance of the number of parts as — either — sonata or as symphony).

There has been a great deal written about Nietzsche's writing of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, including what one author calls his aesthetic calculus,<sup>3</sup> but also about the meaning of the book and its metaphors, explications of its style, its origins whether based, as a small percentage argue, on Wagner or, as is maintained by the majority of scholars, based on the gospels, whereby Nietzsche presents the prophet *Zarathustra* contra the evangelist, on the model of the new testament convention as Nietzsche also expresses this conventionality to conclude his ultimate author's catalogue of his own books (as of his own life) on the last page of *Ecce Homo* — “Dionysus against the crucified.”

For my part, I am going to update these older accounts in the contemporary context by situating Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* among the genre of parody, particularly the parabolic sort. I argue that Nietzsche draws on Lucian, the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD author because I find echoes of this satirical author throughout, backwards and forwards, but especially given the ‘true stories’ or ‘serious’ or ‘earnest lies’<sup>4</sup> characteristic of Lucian, the stylistic genius and satirist of antiquity, both Roman *and* Greek, both Jew *and* Christian, including all schools of philosophy and so on.

Everyone notes that Lucian was an outstanding stylist. Yet for me what is decisive is that Lucian happened to have been Diogenes Laertius' contemporary and, as we know, Diogenes Laertius wrote, a tad less flashily, on the just the same themes that occupy Lucian. Diogenes Laertius writes on all the philosophers, especially Empedocles, as well as topics Roman and Greek, Jew and Christian.

I find this the most relevant detail because Nietzsche specialized in Diogenes Laertius<sup>5</sup> — and Diogenes Laertius would almost certainly have been the topic of his doctoral dissertation, had Nietzsche submitted one (as he did not in fact although he wrote extensively in preparation for such a text). And as we all know, a philologist, in particular a Graecist, especially one of Nietzsche's formation (and in this case and especially under Ritschl), who wrote on either Lucian or Diogenes Laertius could not dispense with the other.

I've written several essays now on Lucian and Nietzsche,<sup>6</sup> but I believe that you can only take the point *not* if I say so, and especially *not* if you take my word for it, but, and this is also in Zarathustra's spirit as it is also the point of exigent or rigorous philology and philosophy of the continental kind, *only* if you yourself go and read Lucian for yourself. If you do, I think you will see that many of Nietzsche's reflections in *The Gay Science*, especially those on truth and lie and including his reflections "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" are indebted to Lucian and only thereby to Plato as Lucian himself, of course, refers to Plato.

Writing in Zarathustra, "the poets lie too much," (Z II, *Of Poets*) Nietzsche quotes the same Lucian whose 'true story,' his *alethe diegammata*, relates a tall tale (telling it as true while identifying it as a lie), about being caught in the belly of a whale and travelling beyond the pale, to the island of fantastic delights.<sup>7</sup> The same section, "Of Poets," follows "Of Scholars" in *Thus*

*Spoke Zarathustra* and invokes Lucian's "betwixt heaven and earth of which only the poets have let themselves dream." Of course — and literary scholars have made this point before me — it is Lucian's language that inspires Shakespeare. And Zarathustra reflects rather more of Lucian's satirical critical dream than Hamlet's metaphysical musings especially where he goes on to say: "and especially above heaven: for all gods are poets' images, poet's surreptitiousness!" The reference is, as many references are, overdetermined, and we are "drawn upward" as Nietzsche says, wafted like the hero of Lucian's *Icaromenippus* (the first science fiction story so we pretend, because it involves an extraterrestrial flight),<sup>8</sup> wherein Menippus the storied inventor of the satire that carried his name,<sup>9</sup> tells a friend of his voyages in the heavens, outfitted with mismatched wings (echoes of Plato's soul), taken from two different giant raptors ("taking a good large eagle and also a strong vulture and cutting off their wings, joints and all").<sup>10</sup> This fantastic story would already be a quite a lot, if this were all, as we read Zarathustra saying that "we set our motley puppets on the clouds and then call them gods and overhumans." (Z II, *On Poets*) If we all know that Lucian's *hyperanthropos* was the original source for Nietzsche's language of the *Übermensch*, we find, if we also read Lucian's 'true story,' further resonances with Zarathustra, beginning with the above mentioned travels, detailing boat voyages and adventures to strange lands (which also inspired Jonathan Swift among others) but in the same locus in Lucian we also meet Rhadamanthus and the souls of the departed, and a miraculous description of the Isles of the Blest.<sup>11</sup> And in addition to this, if we read further in Zarathustra's *Of the Poets*, we find resonances of what can seem to be a catalog of Lucian's dialogues including *The Dead Come to Life or the Fisherman*<sup>12</sup> as well as Lucian's *Philosophies* — sometimes rendered as *Creeds — for Sale*,<sup>13</sup> "Ah indeed, I cast my net into their sea and hoped to catch fine fish; but always I drew out an old god's head." (Z II: *Of Poets*). And as we move to

the section in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* “Of Great Events,” once again at sea, exploring an island “not far from the Blissful Isles of Zarathustra,” we read that Zarathustra himself, like Menippus, has taken to the air, flying not above the clouds (like Menippus), but downward, as in Lucian’s *Downward Journey*, which is the dialogue where we read about the overhuman: the *hyperanthropos*.<sup>14</sup> *Or the tyrant* is the subtitle of the dialogue and the tyrant is the kind of man who ought to be, and who inevitably will be, overcome. We all go down to the dark.

Serious or earnest liars, as both Nietzsche and Lucian may be described as being,<sup>15</sup> they are also, like Aristotle, better or greater friends to the truth (preserved by inversion) than they are to Plato. Thus one can compare the advantage given Hesiod over Homer in Nietzsche’s discussion of the same<sup>16</sup> and one can note that technically, as Nietzsche also emphasizes, this is inaccurate, that is to say, it is a lie, yet a noble one with living value, an earnest lie — rather as Eunapius, the fourth century AD sophist and historiographer named Lucian a “serious” or “earnest” liar — that is: a good lie, a white lie (as we recall the traditional reason given for valuing Hesiod over Homer, to praise peace rather than to promote war). For Nietzsche the focus on the invention is less about the ‘civic’ or edifying value of the one poet as opposed to the other (always according to our own lights in the present day) but, as his conclusion to his study of the traditionally named *Certamen* makes plain,<sup>17</sup> the focus is on the culture not only of contest, but riddling and paradox. When Nietzsche goes on to summarize the point in *Homer’s Contest*, he points the confusion of today’s ‘Alexandrian’ Philo-Hellenes.<sup>18</sup>

Both Nietzsche and Lucian share a take on lying that stands opposed to the traditional philosophic, that is: Platonic dismissal of poetic invention. As Lucian observes: “on reading all these authors, I did not find much fault with them for their lying, as I saw that this was already a common practice even among men who profess philosophy,”<sup>19</sup> arguing that where other authors

claimed their lies as “true” his own claiming of his lies as lies ought to be accounted “more honest” than the other author’s claims: “for although I tell the truth in nothing else, I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar.”<sup>20</sup>

In the same way as Erasmus and Thomas More read Lucian, so too David Hume who made it a point to read Lucian’s dialogues of the dead, particularly the *Kataplous*, variously translated as *The Downward Journey*, and it is indeed the *Journey into Port*, the port in question being Charon’s home port. As Nietzsche writes “The beauty of the *Übermensch* came to me as a shadow.” (Z II, *On the Blissful Islands*). The underworld for the Greeks is the world of shades and all of us are companions one with another, on that downward journey. In this sense, the overman is the man on the surface, the same surface upon which we find ourselves, here and now. But if all these philosophers from Erasmus to Hume to Nietzsche were reading Lucian, if Jonathan Swift was reading Lucian (his *Tale of a Tub* echoes this as does his *Battle of the Books* not to mention his *Gulliver*), the only philosophers not reading Lucian would be most philosophers today.

With these and other even more recondite distinctions in mind, I mean to begin (I can hardly finish here) to compare both *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as initially or first published as avowedly *incomplete* (which incompleteness is perhaps the most Lucianic joke, if we needed another one, of all: Lucian promises to finish his tale of his adventures at the conclusion of the second volume of his *True Story*, but, of course, he never does and scholars have been pointing this out since antiquity). And, to be sure, the final book of *The Gay Science*, ‘We Fearless Ones,’ foregrounds the question of parts and wholes in what Nietzsche regarded (in a musical context) as the art of endings. Endings matter for Nietzsche as a writer (and of course as a composer, failed or not) because the end of the fourth book of *The Gay Science*, features a



demon, that favorite philosopher's familiar now adding Nietzsche's version to that of Socrates' negative or cautionary *daimon* as also to Descartes' evil genius, a strange demon who predicts or foretells a future that includes no new news, as it were. This future is nothing but the past again, one's own past repeated — no chance for a new age discovery of having been Cleopatra or even Nietzsche himself in one's former life, just the same old, same old with everything great and small in it, repeated, *da capo* and without alteration, without exception. What returns is the everyday time of everydayness itself: that is what was, that is the stone fact, like Mozart's stone guest, the uncanny insight of the persistence of what has been that would prove to be so fruitful — *es war* — for Freud's theory of the unconscious, where all this sameness resides, the same: the past untouched by present reality. The future told by Nietzsche's demon is a future of the past: neither a cycle of recycled stars or souls but just and only the past one already knows so well that (according to Freud again) one spends most of one's waking life and all of one's dream-time revisiting and transforming it. No wonder the second book of Nietzsche's Zarathustra begins with *The Child with the Mirror*, pre-Dionysus, little Zagreus, who comes to Zarathustra to show him his mirror and to ask him to look into it, whereupon Zarathustra cries out as he does not recognize himself “but the sneer and grimace of a devil.” (Z II: *The Child with the Mirror*) What follows are denunciations — fairly hard ones (the Nietzsche of *The Antichrist* proves to be much kinder) — of the redeemer and those who preach the word of the redeemer, of redemption, of paradise: the future perfected, life eternal: “You want to be paid as well, you virtuous! Do you want reward for virtue and heaven for earth and eternity for your today.” (Z II: *Of the Virtuous*) This is the life of those of whom Zarathustra can mock — and the often strident, polemical, hammer-precision of Nietzsche is clearly at stake as he characterizes the virtuous. — “We bite nobody and avoid him who wants to bite; and in everything we hold the

opinion that is given us.” (Z II: *Of the Virtuous*) He had already done so in *The Gay Science* and repeats it explicitly in *Beyond Good and Evil* and again, in case we missed it, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. This biting, also crucial as a word for parodic, satirical wit, turns out to be central.

For Nietzsche, this same past focus becomes the concern with the ‘it was’ that he will go on to express as the musing, brooding preoccupation with the past that is the ultimate poison of *ressentiment*. The focus will be on the teaching of the eternal return expressed as a recurrence of the past raised to eternity and the challenge of affirming the standing past, like the *nunc stans*, throughout all possibilities of what will be.<sup>21</sup>

The last lines of the first published book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a promise, a prayer, an oath, that expresses the heart of Nietzsche’s teachings of the death of god, the *Übermensch* or overhuman, and arguably, the will to power: “‘All gods are dead; now we want the Overhuman to live’ — let this be our last will one day at the great noontide.” (Z I: *Of the Bestowing Virtue* 3) What resounds, of course, in the notion of the great noontide is the standing moment of the cycle of the world year, both Empedocles and Heraclitus. Gadamer emphasizes this in his “The Great Year of Zarathustra” as I also argue for a parallel for Empedocles and Heraclitus for Nietzsche, especially with respect to Zarathustra.<sup>22</sup>

Some scholars overlook the connection perhaps because the eternal return is such a complex notion. It’s been argued that the Eternal Recurrence doesn’t even appear in the first book.<sup>23</sup> Of course it does but for readers who require a label (one wonders if this is the best approach with Nietzsche) the reference can be elusive but there it is nonetheless. At the conclusion, albeit only in passing, I point out the connection between *The Gay Science* and

*Beyond and Evil*, and if I had more time I could add all the other published works as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* functions as a cautionary fulcrum intervening between them. Here however I am simply noting the focus on the past (and the present) in Nietzsche's idea of the future as he speaks of it in terms of eternal recurrence as it is this that links the two texts under consideration here.

### **The Greatest Weight**

The teaching Zarathustra comes down from his mountain to teach is not quite the Good News but and much rather and once again, the eternal return. It is not just anamnesis, recycling the soul for a new playing of a new life, expiating karma and all that, like the eternal whirl of the cosmos in all its complexity, like the spin around our own sun and everything it brings round, again and again, but — Nietzsche emphasizes this — *the same. Das Gleiche.*

It is the sameness that offers the light of eternity and the love song, the round with which Nietzsche concludes the third book of his Zarathustra, *The Song of Yes and Amen*. But if there is love and blessing — “for eternity and for the wedding ring of rings — the Ring of Recurrence!” This same sameness as “the breath of that heavenly necessity that compels even chance to dance in star rounds” (Z III: *The Song of Yes and Amen*, §3) is also the same sameness told by the demon who comes at the end of the fourth book of *The Gay Science* to tell us that we will not be ushered into *either* heaven or hell.

This is the kind of demon only philosophical minds like Descartes or, responding to Laplace, scientists like Maxwell could dream up. And the reference to science is important because the mathematician Henri Poincaré offered a stochastic proof of the Eternal Return, quite

independently of Nietzsche<sup>24</sup> and given the assumption that the universe was, for example, closed or finite.<sup>25</sup> This was the scientific assumption for Nietzsche and for others in his day, and some scientists still assume it.

The philosophic question however turns on the sameness of the eternal return of the same. This is echoed in the full presence of eternity, which is of course not *in* time, and thus the beautiful word scene or painting that Nietzsche gives us in Zarathustra's conversation with the dwarf in *Of the Vision and the Riddle*, claiming that the dwarf could not bear the weight of the thought itself. It is at this moment, that Zarathustra himself is no longer weighted down with the weight of the dwarf but lightened: the dwarf literally takes a load off, springing to the ground from Zarathustra's shoulder where he had been pouring thoughts of lead into his ear (do not forget leaden type, as you read this: do not forget the dwarves among philologists and philosophers, and do not forget the obstacles to made by the dead weight of everything they write). The gateway, *Augenblick*, has, as Zarathustra goes on to say, two aspects, two colliding, opposing, aspects: paths along which no one has ever travelled to their end. "The lane behind us," Zarathustra says to the dwarf, "an eternity, the long lane ahead of us, another eternity." (Z III: *Vision*, §2) And now we are counting with Cantorian dimensions. Zarathustra asks a geometer's question, because the point is a matter of mapping the points along the path — tracing the path, namely supposing that one were to "follow them further and ever further," he asks, "do you think, dwarf, that these paths would be in eternal opposition?" (Ibid.) The thought of the circle is evident here, but the key to the problem is the problem of the parallel postulate that shatters Euclidean geometry. And the circular answer is the answer given, disdainfully, if we remember, by the dwarf: "All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle" (Ibid.)<sup>26</sup>

The question, the riddle Zarathustra riddles the dwarf, is cosmological, this is the domain of Ernst Mach's concern as indeed Avenarius and this was Erwin Schrödinger's field.<sup>27</sup> This is also one of the oldest riddles (and we remember Nietzsche's focus on "sympotische Räthselspiele" at the conclusion of his scholarly study of Homer and Hesiod)<sup>28</sup> of time, that of the *Timaeus*, as indeed it is also the riddle of Kant's antinomy concerning the eternity of the world.<sup>29</sup>

Zarathustra repeats the point in his own recounting:

'Behold this moment,' I went on, 'From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane runs back: an eternity lies behind us.'

'Must not all things that can run have already run along this lane? Must not all things than *can* happen *have* already happened, been done, run past? And if all things have been here before: What do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must not this gateway, too, have been here – before?'

And are not all things bound fast together in such a way that the moment draws after it all future things. *Therefore* — draws itself too. For all things that *can* run *must* run once again forward along this long lane." (*Z, Vision, 2*)

The solution to the riddle of the crossroad of past and future, the moment, fore and aft, the now of the present, is not merely as Small reads Heidegger as "as invitation to *enter* the gateway,"<sup>30</sup> but much more than that a presence to presence, as Heidegger himself says: "Den Augenlick sehen, heißt: in ihm stehen"<sup>31</sup> where the language of standing here is and can only be a matter of presence to the eventuation of the present, the moment that by definition does not stay. What Heidegger says, strikingly extraordinary for an understanding of Nietzsche turns upon becoming as what is coming to be: the advent of the event and Heidegger connects it, he takes several passages to do so over a number of pages, with the notion of biting off and spewing forth, all as the physiological articulations of overcoming, which as we know also corresponds for Nietzsche to revaluating, and hence to the dangers of *Ressentiment*. For Heidegger,

that which is in advent [*was künftig wird*] is exactly a matter of decision, the ring does not close upon itself somewhere in the infinite but possesses its unbroken closing together in the Moment as the center of conflict [*Widerstreit*]...

That is what is most difficult and singular in the teaching of eternal recurrence, that eternity *is* in the Moment, that the Moment is not the fleeting ‘now,’ not the moment only rushing past a spectator, but the collision [*Zusammenstoß*] of future and past. In this the Moment comes to itself.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time what must also be considered in *Of the Vision and the Riddle*, as one lists the *dramatis personae*, as it were, here now in addition to Zarathustra himself, the dwarf, the lanes of past and future, the gateway moment is the howling dog: the dog of Hecate,<sup>33</sup> that is Cerberus, and so on. It is “stillest midnight, when even dogs believe in ghosts” and Zarathustra finds himself, not coincidentally as at the end of the fourth book of *The Gay Science* “alone, desolate, in the wildest moonlight.”

There Zarathustra sees what may well be the strangest rebus image of all in Nietzsche’s text. Like a literary Hitchcock, Nietzsche does not paint his word picture directly but tell us that this is the sight that so agitates the dog he hears howling (Heidegger emphasizes Nietzsche’s striking choice of language for the dog’s anguishedly uncanny, otherworldly howl). The word image Nietzsche then proceeds to give us is archaic in its darkness, rustic and so beyond the civic order and steeped in mystery: “a young shepherd, writhing, choking, convulsed, his face distorted; and a heavy, black snake was hanging out of his mouth.” The man, so Zarathustra wondered — and Nietzsche was not unfamiliar with the dangers of obviously open mouths — had perhaps been asleep. Perhaps thus the snake had “crept into his throat — and there it had bitten itself fast.”<sup>34</sup> The problem, this is the snake of time is also the problem of the past, thus Nietzsche speaks of the dyspeptic, those who cannot have done with the past, with time and its ‘It was.’ The recommendation that comes to him is not a considered reflection but spontaneous — “a voice cried from me — ‘Bite! Bite!’” Nothing else works to dislodge the snake but the sudden insight

that one is not to be paralyzed or frozen ‘in disgust and pallid horror’ — think of the image of Laocoon but to act against the biting snake: to bite back and have done with the past.

This is the riddle Zarathustra now riddles his interlocutors — because this is no speech that Zarathustra tells to his own heart — ‘Who is the shepherd? ... who is the man ...’ And while riddling his “venturers and adventurers and those of you who have embarked with cunning sails upon undiscovered seas,” Zarathustra also reports the shepherd’s extraordinary response, biting as one who “bit as my cry had advised him; he bit with a good bite! He spat far away the snake’s head — and sprang up.”

Thereby, so we read, the shepherd, shades of Attis and Montanus, but also prefiguring a certain hero of recent youthful literature and cinema, Harry Potter, is thereby transformed, transfigured: “surrounded with light, laughing” — a human being like no other Zarathustra had ever seen. I guess the snake’s blood is magical, or maybe it’s just the magnificent spitting out, spewing says it better, of the snake’s head that does it. Whatever it is, the result is an other-human laughter “Never yet on earth had a human being laughed as he laughed.” (*Z, Vision, 2*)

So far so good, and all of us, know this passage. But how can the thought of “what is heaviest and blackest,” the snake of the past that weighs on us, be countered as Nietzsche says it can and what does it mean to say that one must bite into it? Heidegger himself goes on to note that just a bit later in *The Convalescent* there is a reprise of the seemingly circular problem of embracing the vision of time as circle, using the theistic language of the straight and the crooked:

» ‘ — Oh, you jokers and barrel-organs be still now, answered Zarathustra, and smiled again. How well you know what had to be fulfilled in seven days.« —

— and how that beast wriggled down my throat and choked me! But I bit its head off and spewed it far away from me. [*Aber ich biß ihn den Kopf ab und spie ihn weg von mir.*]

And you? — you've made a hurdy-gurdy song [*Leier-Lied*] out of it! But now I lie here, tired of this biting and spewing-away, still sick of my own redemption. *And you just watched it all?*<sup>35</sup>

How would this “thought of thoughts” as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra names it, change one’s life, assuming we were *able* to think it to begin with? Like all paradoxes, like all riddles, it is hard to think, thus Nietzsche’s Zarathustra underscores the simple difficulty of thinking it. But, still, to ask an easier version of the same question: *why* on earth *would* thinking it, assuming we *could* think it, change us utterly?

Well it’s the same.

Sameness is what is at stake. Thus the point Nietzsche underscores is the exclusion of any change, much less any utter change, all change, any alteration, big and small, excluded at the outset. Isn’t this also part of the mathematician’s paradox that Hilary Putnam borrows from Abbot’s *Flatland* (a topological insider’s plagiarism none of us would care to fault, so I presume) when Putnam points out that, and this is just Leibniz’ point regarding a difference that would not (in this case because it could not) make a difference, that *were we all*, in fact, so many analytic brains in analytic vats, the very idea of being one would mean nothing (to us) and would-could not be true (there’s a hermeneutic rider here, but I am not going to do work Putnam never bothered to do).

The frozen temporal tableau of the ‘Moment’ in *Vision and the Riddle* reprises the personal dynamism of a lifetime, as Nietzsche puts the same insight into the mouth of the tightrope walker better said, tightrope dancer [*Seiltanzer*], the performing acrobat who falls to his death in the middle of Zarathustra’s first speech. (*Z, Prologue*, §6)

The figure of the tightrope-walker is essential rather than a simple background or decorative touch because after the death of God — as Hegel puts in quite explicitly in the wake of Kant —



we are all of us dancing without a net: suspended in our human, all-too-human lives as Nietzsche puts it, an interval, a breath, “a hiatus between two nothingnesses.” (KSA 12, 473)

Zarathustra pays no attention at all to the tight rope dancer — he doesn't see him and the drama is played out, as if in Plato's cave, above and behind the speaking Zarathustra.<sup>36</sup> And the dwarf is there too, this time in the guise of an evil hunchback, causing all manner of trouble, jumping over the tightrope dancer and causing him to lose his footing, crashing to his death in the marketplace below.

Zarathustra, who goes to the side of the fallen performer as he dies, comforts the dying man by telling him just what follows from the Enlightenment account: “...there is no Devil and no Hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body; therefore fear nothing anymore!” (Ibid., §6), the crushed man is not comforted as he hears the logical and nihilist implications of naturalist science:

If you are speaking the truth,' he said, 'I leave nothing when I leave life. I am not much more than an animal which has been taught to dance by blows and starvation. (Ibid.)

So what is the point of sameness here? What is the problem? Is what Nietzsche says any different from the Socratic alternative offered in Plato's dialogues, either a dreamless sleep, nothing at all, or the afterlife of poetic myth and faith? Plato teaches the same cycle as other Greeks, his theory of knowledge and learning depends on it: anamnesis. But Nietzsche's account excludes memory and identity in the sense of recognition. There is no memory, there is no recognition.

You, you yourself return but not as you are now, or better said exactly as you are now. You 'return' but not as a re-animated self with everything you take now yourself to be: you as you now suppose (or imagine) or remember yourself to have been and you now as expect yourself to become.

Instead what returns cannot be discerned from what is now. What returns is exactly what was: *and there will be nothing different in it.*

My title for this discussion of Nietzsche's teaching of eternal recurrence as set between *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is *Future Past*. What is at stake is the past, the same as it was and every tiny and every major aspect of it: this is *das Gleiche*: the same old, same old.

And the point of it all is the thought of death, which thought of course we do not think because we all already know it: like Zarathustra's companions and like his animals, like Rilke's spectators, everywhere and all around. And to say this as both Nietzsche and Heidegger say is to say that we do not think it. Indeed, not even when we claim that we do. Of course not.

I take this reading to a discussion of *Beyond Good and Evil* inasmuch as the problem of *Beyond Good and Evil* is nothing other than the problem of truth, considered as a problem and just as Nietzsche also raised the problem of science in the same light and questioned *as a problem*. Most of us are so keen to emphasize art or life that we have forgotten that it was Nietzsche's emphasis to raise the question he pronounced himself the very first to raise, very radically and in the spirit of the first critique, the very critically Kantian question of science, as such.<sup>37</sup> And if I had even longer I could include *Twilight*.

But I don't have more time — and part of the point of this essay is that none of us ever do — so let's go back to the thought Zarathustra calls his 'most abysmal thought' as this echoes the conversation with the demon in *The Gay Science*. As noted this is also the thought of death and *The Gay Science* has an aphorism titled with the same name, suggesting that the brotherhood of death that we share as mortal beings is the only brotherhood there is for living subjects of consciousness, subjects of desire, subjects such as ourselves, all of us, born to mortality and thus bound to die, whether we think about it or not.

Nietzsche's point is the philosophical point that living subjects abjure the thought of death: it is the furthest thing from their minds.

For his part, the economically (or dismally) minded Schopenhauer reflected that life was a business that did not cover its costs, a business that from an economic point of view, a *business point of view*, made absolutely no sense "as an enterprise," and therefore was the only thing that really compelled reflection. Nietzsche added more biology and more thermodynamic statistics to the same reflection, recognizing that abundance and waste was the way of life — and of death. Hence he could argue with the best of 19<sup>th</sup> century cosmology that a dancing star was born of chaos, excess, confusion.

Not that it mattered given that that dancing star too would have to die.

In another essay dedicated to Schrödinger and Nietzsche and life, I point to the parallels that may be made if one likes, beyond Nietzsche, to the philosophical problem of consciousness and personal identity but also with eastern philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Thus it matters that here is (and for the Stoics it was essential to reflect that there could be) no difference between the you that says I and the universe. You are already everything *and* you do not know it, with the one crucial exception that it is available to you to master the trick of thinking this identity, as Nietzsche also mused. To this extent, Nietzsche too could suppose that we are those who have figured out that we are figures in the dream of a god who dreams.

### *Amor fati*

I begin the penultimate section of this essay "Future Past" by speaking of the love of fate, of fortune, of destiny: *amor fati*. And although Nietzsche held that it was perhaps "inhuman to bless where one was cursed," (BGE §181) he earlier maintained that what was divine could be called

“the ‘humaneness’ of the future,” (GS §337). A ‘happiness of a god’ was possible for the human being by means of the ultimate trick of divinity: blessing, yes-saying, affirmation: *amor fati*. Key here, and thus this is only a possibility, is the all-too-human element. One might well fall short of the monumental listing Nietzsche details, finding oneself unable to

“endure this immense sum of grief of all kinds while yet being the hero who, as the second day of battle breaks, welcomes the dawn and his fortune, being a person whose horizon encompasses thousands of years of past and future.” (Ibid.)

What is significant for Nietzsche, as for Schopenhauer, is the long run.

Thus when Nietzsche writes contra the usual role of the promises of the afterlife in an early unpublished note, he explains the inexorable or factive force of his thus more than merely categorical imperative here: “My teaching says, Thus to live that you would *wish* to live again is the task — you will do so in any case.”<sup>39</sup>

In other words and this is the Heraclitean, Empedoclean point with which I began this essay, one will, in any case, be reborn, again and again but — and this insight is what can offer, provided one can think it, the happiness of a god — there will be no memory of that, for nothing changes. Qua reborn, your consciousness would be no more connected to your consciousness now or your consciousness past than your consciousness now is identical with the consciousness of even the recent past — even so recent as drinking this morning’s cup of coffee.

We do not remember our own present lives, moment to moment, how would we ever remember our past lives?

It is the past that does not change, what we call our ‘memories’ correspond to our fondest inventions, just as Nietzsche also argues that we cut the world down to the size of what he called our “foursquare” little human intellect, that we humanize nature in order to comprehend it, that even scholars are only able to get out of books what they bring to them, and that when it comes to other persons, we understand little more than our own projections, our own fantasies. This is

not merely a hermeneutic deficiency applicable to our dealings with the external world, texts, other people, etc., it also, so he argues, applies reflexively, to each of us, ourselves. We, Nietzsche says, especially we “knowing ones,” do not “know” ourselves. (GM, *Preface*).

Nietzsche reflects on pride and memory in *Beyond Good and Evil*, his prelude to a *Philosophy of the Future* (an especially important subtitle as we may now see, given our above reflections on the past).

“I have done that’ says my memory. That I cannot have done — says my pride and remains inexorable. Finally — memory yields.” (BGE §68)

You as you are and as you remember yourself are not identical: how could you be? You are no longer present to the past self that you were, that is to say you have no direct awareness of, you are not ‘conscious’ of the past.

As considered above in reflecting on eternal recurrence, Nietzsche emphasizes *the same*. This sameness is the curse emphasized in his account of the greatest heavy weight — *das grösste Schwergewicht* — in his *The Gay Science*, as Nietzsche breaks off the fourth book which he concludes before going on to write what should now be a bit more manifest as his Trojan Horse, or seductive gift to the masses, his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*.

For at the conclusion of the Fourth Book of *The Gay Science*, we recall that Nietzsche’s demon does not come to one in one’s loneliest loneliness in order to ask one to consider one’s life in the light of eternity, as the Stoic philosophers might have done, as the desert fathers would also do. Much rather the demon foretells a future that is not so much about a further future, this is not the substance of what the demon emphasizes, but announces a future prospect that is all about the past as we cannot have done with it. The future is a future of the past, your past, the past you already happen to know so well that, as already mentioned, Freud insists that you spend most of your living and dream time revising it. Nothing like a repetition compulsion. The point

as Nietzsche's reflection on memory and pride makes plain is that all such revisions are phantoms. We lie to ourselves. We retell ourselves to ourselves such that on our account the wretched things we have done can all of them be laid to someone else's account, some other cause, parents, children god, what have you. This is the "dangerous perhaps" (BGE §2), this is why we baptize our convictions, our prejudices as fact or as 'truths' (BGE §5), and it is the reason Nietzsche suggests that "every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir." (BGE §6) Ultimately this is also why Nietzsche proposes in place of the antinomies so many "questions of conscience for the intellect, namely, 'Whence do I take the concept thinking? Why do I believe in cause and effect? What gives me the right to speak of an "I," and even of an "I" as cause of thought'" (BGE §16)

Nietzsche's solution, and I leave this for another paper he touches upon in *Twilight of the Idols*, nothing is to blame, there are no causes, no excuses, only necessities:

"One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole one *is* in the whole." (TI, *The Four Great Errors*, §8)

### **Da Capo: Once More, This Time with Woody Allen**

For Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, our focus on the past explains the reference to our concern with ourselves, with the stone fact, the 'it was,' the musing, brooding preoccupation on the past that is also the poison of *ressentiment*. Let's spell this out a bit further by again recalling what Nietzsche's aggressive demon says in *The Gay Science*:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you and into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!" (GS §341).

The demon's intonation here, the eternity here, focuses on the past: a past elevated to an eternity of the past and not merely the generic idea of the past per se. Living life once, that was bad enough, we might say, living it eternally (and this is worse than infinity: "once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it"), is far, far worse: "every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence." (Ibid.)

How are we to say yes to that? And what difference would it possibly make to do so?

It's the same, to say it once again. And what is more it's the same without there being any consciousness of repetition.

The past Nietzsche's demon foretells reliving again and again is *not* Woody Allen's phantom vision of sitting infinitely bored through an infinite number of seatings at the Ice Capades, this is not a cinematic, videographic, YouTube playlist — in Nietzsche's 19<sup>th</sup> century day, that would have been a zoetropic or praxinoscopic<sup>40</sup> experience — replaying *Groundhog Day*, again and again — as one attempts to shatter the monotony of the same, *déjà vu* — but and only the self-same.

Not the similar, not the 'rather like' and already seen done-drudgery of the been there, lived through that ennui of modern life as we live it, bored as we live our days, but and again and much rather: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it..." (Ibid.)

This demon does not say as we read in Revelations, "Behold, I make all things new."

Nietzsche's emphasis on life, and the revenge that we mean to take on life, is an emphasis on created things, "what can be shaken" (Hebrews 12:27).<sup>41</sup> It is an emphasis on all the things

we condemn as philosophers as he writes in *Twilight*, “Death, change, old age, as well as procreation and growth, are to their minds objections —refutations even.”

Hence Nietzsche’s call to us is to love what *becomes* in life in all its minor details, all of its trivial changes, all of them progressions towards and *including* old age and death. He argues that if one can say yes to one thing, anything at all, everything else is also necessary and nothing can be dispensed with: everything must be blessed. Nietzsche shares this insight as we have now seen with the ancient Stoics and with Heraclitus and with Empedocles and indeed Anaximander.

Like a speck of dust, as the demon says, the hourglass of existence is turned upside down, again and again. That is to say, so Nietzsche argues at the end of his 19<sup>th</sup> century (with the theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century echoing in his mind, as we have also noted), and we may think of this as an harmonic oscillator, the universe is so cycled.

So Schrödinger will later argue the point in his own argument for eternal recurrence and as I have compared his argument to Nietzsche’s. But Schrödinger, interested as he is in the Presocratics, is echoing Schopenhauer and the cycling in question is an even older story, dating back before the tragic age of the Greeks: as Empedoclean as it is Heraclitean as it is Parmenidean and Anaximandrian, it is perhaps especially known to us today as a Vedic notion, also resonant in Buddhism.

This is the Atman and as Nietzsche says — more modern than any of us, making the same point Niels Bohr makes about his horse shoes and about superstition in the realm of the Real<sup>42</sup> — shaking his head: *du wirst es jedenfalls*. (KSA 9, 505): *Tat tvam asi*. I quote the Sanskrit here to quote the Vedic tradition because, as Schrödinger says, translating Descartes’s powerful point about the need for creation and its co-equivalence with conservation, *it is you* in any case.

To give the last word to Schrödinger here:



It is certain that the earth will give birth to you again and again, for new struggles and for new sufferings. And not only in the future : it resuscitates you now, today, every day, not just once but several thousand times, exactly as it buries you every day several thousand times (...). (For) the present is the only thing which has no end.<sup>43</sup>

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Schlechta, *Nietzsche-Chronik. Daten zu Leben und Werk* (München: dtv, 1984 [1975]), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Montinari in a prefatory note to his edition of Zarathustra. See Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Mazzino Montinari and Giorgio Colli, ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980) [KSA], Vol. IV, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Claus Zittel, *Das ästhetische Kalkül von Friedrich Nietzsches „Also sprach Zarathustra“* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> See the translation of and commentary-contributions to Lukian, *Die Lügenfreunde oder Der Unglaubliche*, trans. and interpreted by Martin Ebner, Holger Gzella, Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, Ernst Ribbat (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001). And see for my own argument on Nietzsche and Lucian, along with a good many additional references, Babich, "[Nietzsche's Zarathustra and Parodic Style: On Lucian's Hyperanthropos and Nietzsche's Übermensch](#)," *Diogenes*, 58, 4 (November 2011 [March 2013]): 58-74 (originally published in French, see reference in note 32).

<sup>5</sup> See, Jonathan Barnes, "Nietzsche and Diogenes Laertius," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 15 (1986): 16-40 as well as Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 2008). Nietzsche's work on Diogenes Laertius and in the specific context thematic set by Ritschl is relevant for the doxographical context later established by Hermann Diels, his *Doxographi Graeci*, appears in Jaap Mansfeld and David T. Runia, *Aëtiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer: The Sources. Volume I* (Brill: 1997), p. 93ff. Mansfeld and Runia who are here clarifying the broader meaning of 'synoptic' (including a reference to Calvin) also note that Diels knew Nietzsche's work. Significant here, in a hermeneutic context is also Nietzsche's formation as Mansfeld and Runia also point to the sophistication of "the use of the Lachmannian stemmatic method," pointing out that "as young student at Bonn he had become acquainted with the latest developments in New Testament criticism." *Ibid.*, p. 117. Wolfgang Rößler in his own discussion of this same constellation notes that Diels had hoped to collaborate with Nietzsche. Rößler, "Hermann Diels und die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker," in Annette M. Baertschi and Colin G. King, eds., *Die modernen Vater der Antike: die Entwicklung der Altertumswissenschaften an Akademie und Universität im Berlin des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 369-396, here, pp. 374-375. See too, Thomas Brobjer "Nietzsche's Forgotten Book," *New Nietzsche Studies*, Vol. 4 Nos. 1 & 2 (2000):157-161. I discuss Lachmann and Nietzsche in a related context in Babich, "[Towards a Critical Philosophy of Science: Continental Beginnings and Bugbears, Whigs and Waterbears](#)," *International Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 2010): 343-391. See also although sadly all too elliptically, Lachterman's contribution to Daniel Conway and Rudolf Rehn, eds., *Nietzsche und die antike Philosophie* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Most recently I have elaborated this argument further to emphasize its political dimensions in Babich, "The Time of Kings: Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Nietzsche's Empedocles" in: Horst Hutter and Eli Friedlander, eds., [Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching: For Individuals and Culture](#) (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 157-174.

<sup>7</sup> Lucian's *Icaromenippus* retells Menippus' tale of taking flight to visit the man in the moon (Empedocles, of course). The text of *Icaromenippus* (Or the One Who Flew Above the Clouds), was well-known to Nietzsche and any schoolboy — even those without Greek, translated as it was by Gottsched almost a century before Nietzsche was born and again in 1820 by Christoph Martin Wieland. See Lucianus (Samosatensis), *Auserlesene Schriften* Johann Christoph Gottsched, ed., and trans. (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1745), pp. 49-78, and plainly apotheosized at the start of Nietzsche's essay "On Truth and Lie." See, in a bilingual edition, translated as "Icaromenippus or the Sky Man" by A. M. Harmon in *Lucian: Volume II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915), pp. 267-323.

<sup>8</sup> One can also see, just as the start, the influence of Lucian on Jules Verne: "It was three thousand furlongs, then, from the earth to the moon, my first stage; and from there up to the sun perhaps five hundred leagues; and from the

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sun to Heaven itself and the citadel of Zeus would be also a day's ascent for an eagle travelling light." *Lucian: Volume II*, p. 269.

<sup>9</sup> It is Lucian who exemplifies Menippean satire as Nietzsche speaks of it (and Nietzsche also speaks of Lucian by name to be sure). But as I note elsewhere it has been the custom for more than a century to celebrate Menippus above Lucian for rather less reason that the praise of peace that assured Hesiod's triumph over Homer. When Massimo Fusillo suggests in commenting on Bakhtin that one might "understand 'Menippean' not as a definite genre" he is getting at this point while sidestepping it. Fusillo, "Modern Critical Theories and the Ancient Novel" in p. 277-306, here p. 280. Thus Fusillo remarks, rightly if parenthetically, that the 'features' of Menippean satire "would be very difficult to single out" (ibid.) for the plain reason that, as Fusillo neglects to note, we happen to have no single instantiation of any of Menippus' writings. By contrast, we have a lot of Lucian, and Menippus as a character comes via Lucian (see the note below). Hence Lucian, among other ancient authors, is also the reason we prize Menippus.

<sup>10</sup> Lucian, "Icaromenippus or the Sky Man," p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> Lucian, *Alethe Diegammata*, translated as "A True Story" (I and II) by A. M. Harmon in *Lucian: Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), pp. 247-358.

<sup>12</sup> In *Lucian: Volume III*, Harmon, trans. (Cambridge: Loeb, 1921), pp. 1-82.

<sup>13</sup> The Greek title is *Bion Praxis*, and as Harmon notes speaking of 'philosophies' (or we might add of 'creeds') is a euphemism: the title refers to lives for sale. *Lucian: Volume II*, pp. 449-511

<sup>14</sup> Lucian, "The Downward Journey or the Tyrant," *Lucian: Volume II*, pp. 1-58.

<sup>15</sup> See Lucian' "The Lover of Lies or the Doubter" here. *Lucian: Volume III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), pp. 319-382.

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, „Der Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf“ *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, Neue Folge, Vol. 25, (1870): 528-540 as well as the conclusion, Nietzsche, "Der Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf (Schluss)," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, Neue Folge, (J.D. Sauerländers Verlag), Vol. 28, (1873): 211-249. See too Martin West, "The Contest Between Homer and Hesiod." *Classics Quarterly*, 17, 2 (1967): 433-50.

<sup>17</sup> Physical discoveries support Nietzsche's dating, and most discussions of this text are disputes about its date and origination: George Leonidas Koniaris, "Michigan Papyrus 2754 and the Certamen," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 75, (1971): 107-129. The issue for Nietzsche however largely concerned the conditions of contest: does the better poet always win? If not, for what reasons.

<sup>18</sup> That Nietzsche himself did not parse the lie in this way, but saw it rather as a consequence of conventionality and truncation is clear in his conclusion where he summarizes the conclusion or upshot of the "contest" for our times, writing about the ultimate collapse of the simple opposition between the Homeric and pre-Homeric, resulting in yet another and more durable 'invention' or lie, whereby "Alexander, the courser copy and abbreviation of Greek history, now invent the Hellenic cosmopolitan and the so-called 'Hellenism.'" KSA I, 792. What should be evident, at the very least, is that apart from this last sentence one cannot understand the revised subtitle to Nietzsche's later edition of *The Birth of Tragedy Or Hellenism and Pessimism*. It's worth noting that Kaufmann mysteriously leaves out of the section he includes from this in his *The Portable Nietzsche* — Kaufmann ends his translation just after Nietzsche's "it becomes 'prehomeric' —", that is after a thought-slash and leading generations of Straussians and others to decide that the Hesiodic is the Dionysian. See by contrast two studies on this topic, both of which, nicely agonistically, appeared this current year, Christa Davis Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) and Yunus Tuncel, *Agon in Nietzsche* (Milwaukee: Marquette Studies in Philosophy, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> *Lucian: Volume I*, p. 251.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>21</sup> See too for an earlier version of this example, Babich, "[Flamme bin ich sicherlich — Flame am I...: To Eternity](#)," *Existence*, Volume 8, No. 1 (Spring 2013): 7-15 and "[On Schrödinger and Nietzsche: Eternal Return and the Moment](#)" in: Christopher Key Chapple, ed., *Festschrift for Antonio de Nicolas*, based on a lecture originally given at Fordham University, late September 2011. A video version, recorded in early November 2011, may be seen here: <http://digital.library.fordham.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/VIDEO/id/211>.

<sup>22</sup> Gadamer, "The Great Year of Zarathustra" and for further references to the literature on Zarathustra and Empedocles as well as Heraclitus, see the above cited: Babich, "The Time of Kings."

<sup>23</sup> This is a lynchpin of certain readings. See for one instance, Brusotti, „Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen in Also sprach Zarathustra“ in: G. Merlio, ed, *Lectures d'une œuvre. Also sprach Zarathustra. Friedrich Nietzsche* (Paris: éd. du Temps, 2000), pp. 139-154.

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<sup>24</sup> Though one can argue that both Nietzsche and Poincaré were influenced as many were by the today more or less forgotten polymath, Gustav Teichmüller, one of the few authors Nietzsche bothers to footnote, perhaps because he was also a former Basel colleague. Most scholars of course, following the limited positivism of Nietzsche source scholarship that the only books Nietzsche *could have read* were books for which we have positive evidence: given that he cited them, borrowed them, owned them. As most things, we know, are left unsaid, and as Nietzsche famously liked to call himself the kind of author who says in aphorism what others do not say in book, meaning as the master of the unspoken (this is traditionally the esoteric), our positivist conviction in this regard is procrustean.

<sup>25</sup> See Babich, “Towards a Critical Philosophy of Science.”

<sup>26</sup> See here, although these are not my concerns here, Robin Small’s discussion of Paul Loeb and so on in his *Time and Becoming in Nietzsche’s Thought* (London: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> See again, Babich, “On Schrödinger and Nietzsche.”

<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche, “Der Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf (Schluss),” p. 249.

<sup>29</sup> See Luc Brisson and F. Walter Meyerstein, *Inventing the Universe: Plato’s Timaeus, the Big Bang, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). I thank Patrick Heelan for directing my attention, all these many years ago, to this very fine book on the notion and the nature of axiomatic systems.

<sup>30</sup> Small, *Time and Becoming in Nietzsche’s Thought*, p. 118.

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen : Neske, 1961), p. 312

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See Babich, « [Le Zarathoustra de Nietzsche et le style parodique. A propos de l’hyperanthropos de Lucien et du surhomme de Nietzsche](#), » *Diogenè. Revue internationale des sciences humaines*, 232 (October 2010): 70-93, here p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> Small gives a nice listing of possible sources for this, including Rumi, but Heidegger himself simply identifies it as “nihilism.”

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, pp. 444-445.

<sup>36</sup> Zarathustra is in fact, as I like to point out is only talking over the heads of those who assembled there not at all to hear Zarathustra but to see the spectacle of “the pre-announced” tightrope walker. (*Z, Zarathustra’s Prologue* §3)

<sup>37</sup> See my book, [Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Science: Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life](#) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) as well as two recent essays where I reprise this point, in my already cited above, “Towards a Critical Philosophy of Science” and, again in German, “[Nietzsches hermeneutische, phänomenologische Wissenschafts-philosophie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen zu Altphilologie und Physiologie](#)” in: Günter Abel and Helmut Heit, eds., *Nietzsches Wissenschaftsphilosophie. Hintergründe, Wirkungen und Aktualität* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 291-311. But Heidegger who was lecturing at a time when just the same arguments were being reprised once again, in particular by Becker but also Szilasi and others points out in a section of his Nietzsche lectures, “Nietzsche Proof of the Doctrine of Recurrence: that the very effort to “prove” Nietzsche right are really directed to those who take themselves to be oh so clever (“wir ganz klugen”) — “One even shows, with mathematical detail, his proofs are not so bad, apart from a couple of ‘mistakes.’ Indeed, Nietzsche even anticipated several lines of thought in contemporary physics; and what could be more important for a contemporary person than one’s science.” Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, p. 368.

<sup>38</sup> Babich, „On Schrödinger and Nietzsche.“

<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche, KSA 9, p. 505.

<sup>40</sup> Isobel Armstrong draws upon (and cites) Nietzschean (and Freudian) imagery in her final chapter “Coda on Time” in her book, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 246-360. And in Babich, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Science*, I connect Nietzsche’s language of a lightning image from the eternal flux” (see p. 177) with Rüdiger Schmidt’s illustration of Nietzsche’s experience of the landscape glimpsed, as I put it: “through the windows of a railroad car.” (see p. 133) This experience of trains, as I note, would have been formative not only for Nietzsche but also Lacan and indeed Ingmar Bergmann himself (ibid.). In this locus I do not mention Woody Allen though the New York subways, as I can attest from my own experience, would also have lent him the same insights.

<sup>41</sup> See for a related discussion, Babich, “Truth Untrembling Heart” in: Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala, eds., [Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event](#) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> According to several reports, Niels Bohr was famously asked why he, a man of science, would keep a superstitious marker above his barn door, surely, the incredulous question came, he did not believe in such things. To which Bohr replied that he understood that the good luck of the charm worked whether he believed in it or not.

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See one account of this anecdote in Abraham Pais, *Inward Bound: Of Matter and Forces in the Physical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 210.

<sup>43</sup> Erwin Schrödinger, *Mein Leben, meine Weltansicht* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985 [1925]), p. 72.

**FROM THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE TO THE MULTIVERSE:  
TOWARDS A POSTHUMAN COSMO-ONTOLOGY**

**Francesca Ferrando**

**Abstract:**

This article is conceived as an intellectual patchwork of visions and notions, which are considered focal to the development of a posthuman cosmo-ontology. It wishes to experiment in its form, as well as in its contents, in line with the post-dualistic attitude of the posthuman: the “how” is the “what”. It is inspired by Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85), as well as by lived practice and quantum physics. It focalizes on the significance of the eternal recurrence in relation to the reiteration of patterns of existence and to the hypothetical memory of spacetime. It is a work in progress, aiming to spark original connections and a different set of hermeneutical possibilities. Like pieces of a philosophical puzzle, each subchapter makes full sense after reading the complete article. It is advised to approach this text with scientific joy and existential curiosity.

**SPACETIME**

I had a dream. One day in 2010, I woke up with this phrase in my mind: “You will be able to unravel time”. I had never heard the word “unravel” before, so I looked it up in the dictionary to see if it held any meaning: it did. It meant: to undo, to untangle, to solve. And still, what did that phrase mean? How could you unravel time? By only focusing on the “how”, I had no answer. So I changed my focus to the “what”: what is time? Time can be perceived as a human concept, a historical guideline, a cultural framework; and still, time cannot be discerned from space. According to Einstein's general relativity (1916), the concept of time depends on the spatial referential frame of the observer. Time should be addressed more specifically as spacetime. Before proceeding further, we should mention that spacetime is merely a convenient framework; it does not describe “what it really is”, but “what it is like”. In physics, spacetime refers to a mathematical model that combines space and time into a single continuum: time is added as a dimension of space<sup>1</sup>. For instance, due to a principle of physics known as time dilation (Einstein

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<sup>1</sup> For a physics overview of the spacetime continuum, see, among others: Greene, B. (2011). *The Hidden Reality*:

1916), astronauts in space are aging a bit more slowly than the people on earth. It is assumed that spacetime is curved (Wald 1994)<sup>2</sup>; such a curvature would be caused by the presence of matter, and would be responsible for gravity. And still... what does spacetime have to do with Nietzsche?

## ETERNAL RECURRENCE

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra:*

“All that is straight lies,” the dwarf murmured contemptuously. “All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle.”

“You spirit of gravity,” I said angrily, “do not make things too easy for yourself!” (...).

“Behold,” I continued, “this moment! From this gateway, a long eternal lane leads *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. (...) Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before – what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? (...) Must we not eternally return?

(Z: 3 “On the Vision and the Riddle”, p. 271)

I first engaged with Nietzsche's notion of the eternal recurrence when I was sixteen years old: the idea that each and every moment of my life could return eternally as the same, changed my life at the time, inspiring me to craft my existence as my most ambitious work of art, to which I could say “yes” eternally. As many Nietzsche's scholars, I interpreted the eternal return as a thought experiment, and I must admit that, at first, I was surprised when I realized that Nietzsche might have conceived it as a cosmological doctrine as well. Here, I will not enter the debate on whether he actually meant to present the eternal recurrence in one way or in both ways (Loeb 2012)<sup>3</sup>, but I would like to reflect on possible interpretations of it and take it as an inspiration to develop posthuman cosmo-ontological hypothesis, based on contemporary developments in the

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*Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos*. Random House: New York. For a philosophical perspective on it, see: DiSalle, R. (2008). *Understanding Space-Time: The Philosophical Development of Physics from Newton to Einstein*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK).

<sup>2</sup> Wald, R. (1994). *Quantum Field Theory in Curved Spacetime and Black Hole Thermodynamics* (Chicago Lectures in Physics). The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

<sup>3</sup> Loeb, S. P. (2012). “Eternal Recurrence”. In: Gemes, R. / Richardson, J. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

fields of quantum physics. I would also like to remark that I will only refer to Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, instead of other possible texts and passages on the eternal recurrence (such as his famous presentation in *The Gay Science*, 341), not only for an internal coherence of the present text, but more appropriately, for the extensive development of the subject and its visionary approach in Nietzsche's most poetic work, which perfectly suits the evocative purpose of this account.

As a cosmological pattern, the eternal recurrence can be traced back to Eastern philosophies and spiritual traditions related to Buddhism as well as Hinduism; within Western philosophy, we can see antecedents in Heraclitus, the Stoic philosopher Zeno, and in the Pythagorean tradition – all sources which Nietzsche was familiar with (Bishop 2004; Parkes 1991; Mistry 1987)<sup>4</sup>. Some other interpretations of the eternal recurrence can be found in different cosmogonic rituals around the world. For instance, Mircea Eliade, in *The Myth of the Eternal Recurrence* (1949) underlines how ancient societies tended to envisage events not as constituting a linear, progressive history, but as creative repetitions of primordial archetypes. In Eliade's words:

These “rituals imitate a divine archetype and their continual reactualization takes place in one and the same atemporal mythical instant. However, the construction rites show us something beyond this (...). Every construction is an absolute beginning; that is, tends to restore the initial instant, the plenitude of a present that contains no trace of history. (1949: 76)

***How could a moment contain the present, the past and the future at the same time?***

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra:*

Eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. In every Now being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity. (Z: 3, “The Convalescent”, 33)

The moment is the matrix of creation: most patterns of existence will be repeated insuring

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<sup>4</sup> Bishop, P. (eds.) (2004). *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition* (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture). Camden House: Rochester, NY.

Parkes, G. (ed.) (1991) *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Mistry, F. (1987). *Nietzsche and Buddhism*. Walter de Gruyter & Co: Berlin et al.

continuity, some will be slightly modified, few might be radically revisited. Oral historical matriarchal lineages of time and herstories of bodies are also precious sources to be investigated. For instance, Julia Kristeva, in her essay “Women's Time” (1979)<sup>5</sup>, argues that female subjectivity is divided between cyclical, natural time (repetition, gestation, menstruation) and monumental time (eternity, myth of resurrection, the cult of maternity). She is actually pointing out to Nietzsche as her direct source for such a definition of temporal dimensions. These modalities are set off against the time of linear history from where women have been the casualties, the outsiders of the socio-symbolic time contract.

### REITERATION AND REPETITION

Doing some interesting philosophical seminars in jail, a friend of mine received this answer from a prisoner, who had killed both his wife and her lover, when he accidentally found them having a sexual intercourse. He said: “In that moment, I thought that killing them was what I was supposed to do. Everyone expected me to do so. If I did not, I would have not been able to look into the eyes of my family and friends. I did not feel like killing them, but that was the only way I knew to deal with the situation. And so I did”. Repetitions of behavior. That was the only way he knew to deal with that situation. Patterns of existence. Such a perspective can be applied to many other notions and categories. Judith Butler in “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity” (1990)<sup>6</sup>, defines gender as performative and reiterative. As she explains:

The action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation. (178)

More than a noun, gender is a verb: to gender, gendering. This is an example to stress that gender, as well as infinite other micro and macro patterns, are reenacted through the gerundive condition of lived practice. By performing our existence, or more simply saying, by the ways we live, we are creating patterns of existence. Here, it can be of interest to mention Jung's archetypes

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<sup>5</sup> Kristeva, J. (1979). “Women's Time”. In: T. Moi (ed.) (1991). *The Kristeva Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 188-213.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, J. [1990] (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge: New York et al.



as universal, archaic patterns and images of the collective unconscious (1959)<sup>7</sup>. But how these sort of fluid archetypes—formed? In order to address this question, I will now go back to our physics scenario, focusing on modalities of existence, in order to delve into the “how”, which is also the “what” of our possible futures.

## MULTIVERSE

Some years ago, when I was working on posthuman ontology, and specifically, on the subject of the multiverse, the eternal recurrence started to haunt my thoughts: I could not think of the multiverse without thinking of the eternal recurrence of the same...

### *Thus Spoke Zarathustra:*

The soul is as mortal as the body. But the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs and will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of the eternal recurrence. I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent - *not* to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life, in what is greatest and in what is smallest, to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things (Z: 3, “The Convalescent”, 333).

First of all, let me clarify that by “multiverse”<sup>8</sup> I am referring to the scientific investigations on matter from the micro to the macro levels of materialization, which recently brought different fields, from quantum physics to cosmology and astrophysics, to the same hypothetical conclusion: this universe might be one of many. Here, I should also mention that the multiverse “is not a theory, but a prediction of certain theories”, as cosmologist Max Tegmark stresses (2010: 558)<sup>9</sup>. For instance, the math of String Theory,<sup>10</sup> in order to function, requires a distinct feature, which is extra-dimensions of space (Randall 2005; Bars et al. 2010)<sup>11</sup>, consequently

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<sup>7</sup> Jung, C. G. (1959). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Volume 9. Bollingen Foundation: New York.

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive historical account on the notion of the multiverse, see Greene 2011. For a scientific revisit and a theoretical reflection on this notion, see Kaku 2005: 343-361.

<sup>9</sup> Tegmark, M. (2010). “Many Worlds in Context”. In: Saunders, S., Barrett, J., Kent, A., Wallace D. (eds.) (2010). *Many Worlds? Everett, Quantum Theory and Reality*. Oxford University Press: Oxford et al., 553-581.

<sup>10</sup> In the next subchapter I will focus more specifically on such a theory, which is of key importance for our reflection.

<sup>11</sup> Randall, L. (2005). *Warped Passages: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Universe's Hidden Dimensions*. HarperCollins: New York.

advancing the hypothesis that this specific dimension is only one of the many occurring. To go back to our initial point: was Nietzsche, somehow tapping into this kind of memories of the future? Could he be referring to a specific dimension of spacetime, when approaching the notion of the same?

## MODES OF EXISTENCE

Let's now go back to repetitions and patterns of existence. If we think of ourselves as materializations related to one specific vibrational dimension, we can hypothesize such a dimension as holding specificities related to the ways existence manifests in such a dimension, which would imply something like *an ontic nature-culture of spacetime*. In other words, the nature of spacetime would not be something static, but correlated to the events manifesting within it, thus related to a dimensional “culture”, made, among other factors, by enactments and modes of existence. The crucial question behind this hypothesis is:

### *Does spacetime hold memory?*

Spacetime has been defined as the set of all (possible) events in one universe. Each point in spacetime represents an event. Think, for instance, of spacetime as a blackboard, and events as points on it.<sup>12</sup> To label a point on the blackboard, you have to imagine laying down a grid: this grid represents the set of possibilities related to each event. Spacetime is not a blank canvas: as we have previously seen, its own curvature is an effect of the materiality manifesting within it. So, how does each event affect the spacetime of one specific dimension? Does the repetition and reiteration of modalities of existence mark spacetime in a way that such patterns, the more they are performed, the more they are likely to be repeated? In a simple way, think the way you walk or drive home. The more you take a road, the more likely you will be to take such a road. And if you have children, or if you have a guest and you showed them your way, they will most probably take those same roads: few would actually try different paths. Let's now offer a monumental example. The pattern of war keeps coming back within human recorded history.

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Bars, I., Terning, J., Nekoogar, F., Krauss, L. (2010). *Extra Dimensions in Space and Time* (Multiversal Journeys). Springer: New York.

<sup>12</sup> This example is borrowed from: Susskind, L. (2006). *The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design*. Time Warner Book Group: New York, 38.

Could it be possible that this specific vibrational dimension is more prone to it? Let me develop this point further. On one level, we could hypothesize that war, once present as an event in the memory of spacetime, has been repeated enough to become a common pattern of this vibrational dimension. Here, I would like to specify that we should not think of such patterns as fixed, nor as existing in any separate way: their manifestations would only take place in the performativity of each event, in the moment. The significance of each re-enactment, though, cannot be underestimated. Each repetition implies a tuning into, and a recreation, of specific modal genealogies; each repetition carries a vibrational impact, every event is related to a certain grid of possibilities. Here, I wish to open a parenthesis to clarify the notion of vibration. In order to do so, I will take a step back. From a physics perspective, anything that has mass and volume is considered matter. For instance, humans are made out of matter, as well flowers, robots and clouds. The way matter appears on the large scale might be misleading, if taken as its ultimate state. Matter, on a subatomic level, is not static or fixed, but is constantly vibrating, relational and irreducible to a single determined entity: any reductionist approach has historically and scientifically failed.<sup>13</sup> According to the String Theory,<sup>14</sup> an active research framework in Quantum Physics, matter, at a subatomic level, may be composed by tiny vibrating loops of energy, defined as strings. This type of scenario does not entail a dualism between the strings and their vibrations. The two terms are inseparable: the strings are manifesting in a specific mode because they are tuned to a definite vibration, as much as definite vibrations are manifesting through the specific tuning of the strings. In ontological terms, such a view, implies a pluralistic monism, or a monistic pluralism. Going back to our modes of existence, could we infer that specific vibrational states of the strings manifest specific patterns more easily than others?

### *The “DNA” of Energy*

In this hypothetical scenario, vibrational ranges could be seen as a sort of “DNA” of energy, which would carry specific information that may be enacted or left in potential by the manifestations of existence performing within that specific frequency. Such a “DNA” would have evolved through all the events enacted by all the manifestations occurring within that

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<sup>13</sup> On the history of modern physics, see, amongst others: Segrè 1980; Heilbron 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Between the late Sixties, early Seventies, many physicists independently contributed to this theory. For a comprehensive account on String Theory, see for instance: Greene 1999.

specific vibrational frame. The eternal return can be an interesting way to access this type of hypothesis. More specifically, the eternal recurrence of the same could be conceived as related to the patterns of existence, which keep repeating themselves in a specific vibrational dimension. If so, we might be able to unravel them by repeated processes of material awareness, which would imply a quantum cosmo-ontological sensitivity. Such a possibility complies with a posthuman type of agency where not only the human and the non-human realms bear signification, but also modalities of existence: the “what” is the “how”. Such an agency, which exceeds the notion of a mono-dimensional individual existence, is necessarily related to the understanding of posthumanism as a praxis (Ferrando 2012)<sup>15</sup>. How we exist is who we are, in the same way as what we eat is what we become: food, for instance, chemically turns into our own flesh. In such a frame, the multiverse can be perceived not only as an ontology, but as a path of self-discovery, once the self has been recognized as the others within,<sup>16</sup> ultimately turning into a relational dance of ontic manifestations and events.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra:*

For me – how should there be any outside-myself? There is no outside. But all sounds make us forget this; how lovely it is that we forget (...).  
“O Zarathustra,” the animals said, “to those who think as we do, all things themselves are dancing (...). In every Now being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity.” (Z: 3, “The Convalescent”, 329-30)

## CONCLUSIONS

Can we unravel time? Maybe. What we can do is to start by unraveling repetitive patterns of existence within spacetime. A posthuman approach will be of help. Posthumanism invites to think inclusively, comprehensively and relationally, radically stretching the boundaries of human

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<sup>15</sup> Ferrando, F. “Towards a Posthumanist Methodology. A Statement”, *Frame: Journal For Literary Studies*, 25.1, Utrecht University, May 2012, 9-18.

<sup>16</sup> Here, I would like to bring to mind Nietzsche's hypothesis on the subject as a multiplicity:

The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? A kind of aristocracy of “cells” in which dominion resides? To be sure, an aristocracy of equals, used to ruling jointly and understanding how to command? *My hypotheses: the subject as multiplicity.* (WP: 3 § 490: 1885) (1967: 270)

comprehension, in a genealogical relocation of humanity within multiversality (“post-humanism” as a criticism of humanism, anthropocentrism and universe-centrism), and alterity within the self (“posthuman-ism” as a recognition of those aspects which are constitutively human, and still, beyond human comprehension). The human, within this type of framework, turns into a network of energies, alliances, matter and perspectives, relating to any other forms of existence; allied through different material outcomes, and possibly, in different quantum dimensions, in a radical onto-existential re-signification of being. In this type of posthuman ontological scenario, the final deconstruction between immanence and transcendence takes place, inviting the situated actors to envision their own networks in relation to, but also beyond, any specific space-time complexion. The eternal recurrence of the same could thus be perceived as a technology of the multiverse, related to specific vibrational ranges and dimensions. So if this universe is closed, do not worry: you can always use the rainbow!

*Thus Zarathustra meditated, in the cosmic dance of vibrational recurrence...*

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# **Kant, Nietzsche and the Moral Prohibition of Treating a Person Solely as a Means**

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## **Abstract**

The concept of human dignity is central in many constitutions world-wide. It plays a particularly central role in the German foundational law. Kant's concept of dignity is particularly influential in this context. There are two aspects that German law inherited from Kant and both of which are highly problematic. Firstly, even though it is acknowledged by the German constitution that animals are not objects, they are supposed to be treated like objects. Hence, the categorical dualistic separation of animals from human beings is implicitly contained in this judgment. Secondly, it is legally forbidden to treat a person solely as a means. This insight applies both to oneself as well as to other persons, which becomes clear in the following two regulations. Firstly, peep shows in Germany are legally forbidden, even if it is the case that it is the dancer's autonomous wish to earn money in that way. Secondly, it is forbidden to shoot down a hijacked airplane, even though it seems to fly directly into a nuclear power station, as long as there are innocent persons on board. In both cases, the regulation was justified by reference to the Kantian thought that it is morally false to treat a person solely as a means. In the following reflections, firstly, I will question a basic assumption on which this regulation rests; secondly, I will consider which options follow from these reflections; and thirdly I will analyze the challenges related to the options mentioned. Thereby, it is supposed to become clear that the German law needs to be altered concerning the moral prohibition of treating a person solely as a means.

The concept of human dignity is central in many international constitutions.. It plays a particularly central role in the German foundational law (Sorgner 2010, 23-29). Kant's concept of dignity is particularly influential in this context (Sorgner 2010, 82-108). There are two aspects which German law inherited from Kant and both of which are highly problematic. Firstly, even though that it is acknowledged by the German constitution that animals are not objects, they are supposed to be treated like objects. Hence, the categorical dualistic separation of animals from human beings is implicitly contained in this judgment. Secondly, it is legally forbidden to treat a person solely as a means. This insight applies both to oneself as well as to other persons, which becomes clear in the following two regulations. Firstly, peep shows in Germany are legally forbidden, even if it is the case that it is the dancer's autonomous wish to earn money in that way (Welti 2005, 397). Secondly, it is forbidden to shoot down a hijacked airplane, even though it seems to fly directly into a nuclear power station, as long as there are innocent persons on board (BVerfG, 1 BvR 357/05 from the



15.2.2006). In both cases, the regulation was justified by reference to the Kantian thought that it is morally false to treat a person solely as a means. In the following reflections, firstly, I will question a basic assumption on which this regulation rests, secondly, I will consider which options follow from these reflections and thirdly I will analyze the challenges related to the options mentioned. Thereby, it is supposed to become clear that the German law needs to be altered concerning the moral prohibition of treating a person solely as a means.

### 1. Challenging Kant's Basic Assumptions

The Kantian moral prohibition of treating a person solely as a means rests on the distinction between persons and things. Persons participate in the world which is governed by the laws of nature and the laws of freedom. Things, however, participate solely in the world which is governed by the laws of nature. This distinction implies that only persons do not solely belong to the natural world (Kant 1902ff, vol. 4, 428-434). Kant did not affirm an anthropocentric conception of personhood, but a logocentric position of personhood, as it was not necessary for him that only human beings are persons. In the German legal context, however, the distinction between persons and things turns into an anthropocentric conception, as only human beings are seen and legally treated as persons.

Is this a plausible anthropology today? Darwin, Nietzsche and contemporary posthumanist thinkers might have reasons for doubting this conception (Badmington 2000, 9). Given recent biological research; given that human beings and great apes have common ancestors and given that a basically naturalist understanding of the world applies, it is more plausible to hold that there is merely a gradual difference between human beings, great apes, plants and maybe even stones. Nietzsche's anthropology provides a possible non-dualist anthropology, which attempts to grasp the related concepts philosophically. Thereby, all entities turn into constellations of power-quantum and organisms and human beings are seen as a specific type of animal, sometimes even a "sick animal" (KSA, GM, 5, 367). However, this sickness in Nietzsche is not necessarily a deprecation of human beings. The aspect of sickness has several

implications. It means that they have developed a special capacity, namely the capacity of not immediately having to follow their instincts. This can have both beneficial as well as problematic consequences. It can be beneficial as it enables human beings to create culture, develop technologies and enable them to realize sublimation processes. It can be problematic, as it separates acts from the immediate realization of instincts whereby instincts in many cases are more reliable concerning one's own interest than intellectual reflections. (Sorgner 2010, 184-191)

## 2. Moving Beyond Kant's Basic Assumptions

As both philosophical and scientific reflections lead us to doubt the Kantian anthropology on which the German foundational law rests, what can be done to take these insights into consideration? It needs to be stressed that it is problematic to refer to the posthumanist insights as the ones who are generally accepted. This is not the case. In Germany there are many citizens who still uphold a Christian understanding of the world, which rather affirms the basic assumptions of Kantian reflections. Still, it needs to be asked whether a social-liberal democracy ought to be based upon a premise that affirms a strong metaphysical anthropology, namely one which is most consistent with an anthropology that sees only human beings as being constituted out of a material body and an immaterial soul. Animals, plants and stones on the other hand are regarded as objects and as not participating in any world outside the material naturalist one. This seems to go against the fundamental norm of freedom on which democracies rest. In the case of Germany it can be said that at least thirty per cent of citizens can be classified as naturalists, skeptics or atheists who are being treated paternalistically by this type of legal regulation. A problem related to this group of people is that that they are not politically organized enough to efficiently act against such regulations. Members of the Catholic and the Protestant churches on the other hand have strong institutions and hence have an enormous amount of power to influence political decision making processes. However, given that at least one third of the population is treated

paternalistically in an aggressive manner by these types of regulations goes against the central value the norm of freedom ought to have within a democracy. Therefore, these regulations ought to be revised.

What does it imply to revise the related premises of the foundational law? The current implications of the foundational law are such that it has strong metaphysical implications such that only human beings are seen as participating both in a material as well as in an immaterial world, but it is problematic that the foundational law of a liberal-democratic society has an ontological basis. It cannot be an appropriate way of reacting to these insights to simply replace this regulation by another one such that human beings and animals are seen as merely gradually different. In this case, one ontology would simply be replaced by another one. Instead of such a substitution, it would be more appropriate to stress the norm of negative freedom whenever the ontological implications of anthropology become relevant. However, the main question that I intended to address here was primarily the one concerning the prohibition of treating a person solely as a means.

So far I described that the Kantian moral prohibition implies the ontological distinction between persons and things. Persons have autonomy and hence dignity, which implies that no finite value can be attributed to them. Things, on the one hand, can have a finite amount of value, which is also the reason why they can be treated solely as a means. Persons, on the other hand, cannot be identified with a finite amount of value, and consequently must not be treated solely as a means.

Hence, the intellectual basis on which Kant's moral prohibition rests is a highly problematic ontological understanding, which currently is not shared by at least one third of the German citizens. Still, they are forced to be judged on this basis, as this regulation is part of the German law. It has consequences such as the prohibition of peep shows as well the prohibition to shoot down hijacked airplanes with innocents on board.

If the prohibition to treat a person solely as a means rests on the aforementioned ontological basis, the question needs to be addressed as to consequences it has concerning this prohibition, given that one merely sees a gradual difference between human beings, animals and other entities. Two immediate options come to mind: Firstly, due to there being merely a gradual difference between human beings and other entities, there are no more things and hence, it will have to be morally prohibited to treat any entity merely as a means. Secondly, it can be argued that the prohibition of treating a person solely as a means does not even apply today as a universally valid regulation; for instance if someone has been an offender, he can be put into prison or he can even be killed in specific circumstance, let us say if he threatens to kill someone else. Hence, treating a person solely as a means can be both morally legitimate as well as morally illegitimate (Hoerster 2013, 11-23). If this judgment applies to persons, then it applies also to all other entities, given that there is solely a gradual distinction between all entities in question.

### 3. Challenges related to these Moves Beyond Kant's Basic Assumptions

There were two major suggestions concerning these moves beyond Kant's basic assumptions. Firstly, the moral prohibition to treat persons solely as a means was reinterpreted such that all entities from stones to great apes and human beings turned into persons. Secondly, the moral prohibition mentioned was dissolved as the distinction between morally legitimate ways of treating a person solely as a means and morally illegitimate ways of treating persons solely as a means was introduced. The second case seems to imply that the prohibition in question no longer applies to any case such that the question has to be asked anew: What is moral and how can we conceptualize morality? The first reply, however, raises different questions, as then the questions come up what it means and which implications it has to treat someone solely as a means? Does it imply that I must no longer eat salmon? Is it morally problematic to walk on grass?

A further issue has to be considered in this context, too, which has been mentioned beforehand. If the moral prohibition was altered in one of these two ways, does this not imply that one ontology was simply replaced with another one within the legal context? Is it not problematic to have any ontology, which influences legal decisions, as a social-liberal democracy must imply openness to a great variety of ontologies and must not judge its citizens on the basis of any ontology due to the morally problematic implications involved? If this is indeed the case, then it might be advisable to move beyond any ontological discourse when dealing with any legal discourse, as this is the only way of remaining ontologically neutral such that no morally problematic intrusion of the state into personal decisions of its citizens occurs.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the above-mentioned reflections, several challenges of legally dominant regulations have become clearer, which have a particular relevance for the German legal context. Given the above reflections, it seems appropriate and necessary to move beyond the prohibition of treating other persons solely as a means and also beyond the tradition of allowing ontological positions within a constitution of a social-liberal democracy, as both judgments contradict the initial premises of such constitutions and hence are self-contradictory.

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# **Nietzsche, Mass/Social Media, and the Question of Education and Spectacle<sup>1</sup>**

**Yunus Tuncel, Ph.D.**

## **Abstract:**

Since Nietzsche's death technology expanded and spread in many areas of social life and communication that today it is impossible to find any public (or even perhaps private) place where one or another form of recent mass/social media is absent in the technologically advanced societies. Although none of these forms (radio, TV, internet, and social media) was present in Nietzsche's own life time, his ideas on how individuals are influenced or shaped in a given culture, whether they are made into blind followers with herd mentality or inspired to become great individuals, are still relevant today. There are two areas of reflection in Nietzsche that can shed light on this issue: one is the question of breeding, formation, and education and the other one is the problem of spectacle and spectacular relations. In this paper, I will present Nietzsche's ideas on both of these issues and bring them together within the context of contemporary mass/social media.

The recent emerging technologies, specifically those that effect formation of the self directly like the internet and social media, have posed many problems for thinkers and they will keep doing so, as they become integrated into public life at the global level more and more in the coming years. To a large extent, they have already permeated technologically advanced societies. Today many of us are already integrated into these mediums and rely heavily on them for our communication and interactions. How can we approach this question of technology based on Nietzsche's critique of culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe? This will be the focus of my reflection in this paper. I will approach this problem from two areas that are crucial in Nietzsche's thought: first, spectacle (*Schauspiel*), second, formation/education (*Bildung*), as well as the kinds of types and affects that are produced in and through them. It is important to keep in mind that these two distinct but overlapping domains of culture are directly connected to Nietzsche's philosophy of value.

## **The Question of Spectacle**

The question of spectacle preoccupied Nietzsche from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) to *The Case of Wagner* (1888). While in the former he was concerned with the disintegration of poetic, mythic and Dionysian forces and the rationalization of arts and culture in ancient Greece and

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<sup>1</sup> A different version of this paper was presented at the Nietzsche Now panel, organized by the Nietzsche Circle, at the World Congress of Philosophy in Athens in August 2013.

their impact on European culture up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the case of Wagner he saw the symptoms of ascetic idealism, nihilism and *decadence*. Although more than two millennia separate Wagner from Euripides, what we can gather from Nietzsche's critique of Euripidean and Wagnerian artistic spectacles are as follows: artistic spectacles, that are in the position of retaining and uplifting the greatness of culture, must not *degenerate* into popular forms of media, while they, at the same time, uphold the Dionysian ecstatic core via music, dance and singing, and the unity of spectacle and all beings. Rationalization, popularization, the decline of Dionysian functions, the decline of the power of creation and bodily regimes are both symptoms (what they inherit from the macro-culture) and affects (what they re-produce) of these non-Dionysian spectacles. To strive for and to uphold the highest forms of creation are the demands of the eternal return of the same and overhumanliness; demands that, in Nietzsche's assessment, the tragic and agonal Greeks<sup>2</sup> met or strove to meet, but post-Socratics did not. In the post-Socratic age, according to Nietzsche, Dionysian artistic functions and bodily regimes declined and heroes and gods, the higher types, became subject to popular sentiments or caricatures; hence, the withdrawal of mythopoesy, the primordial creative life forces of a culture. The main philosophical aporia from the beginning to the end of Nietzsche's philosophical life, which persists in his thought, despite the variations in the way it is expressed is this: greatness (great values and types) must reign over a culture in its Dionysian connectedness to existence. No doubt, what is greatness and how great values and types rule are questions that remain unending question marks for Nietzsche, and his assessment of culture moves along these lines. For example, Parsifal is no hero and Wagner succumbed to the problems of the moral world-order and nihilism.

Furthermore, Nietzsche raises the question of disinterestedness of spectator in response to Kant to emphasize the physiological, Dionysian functions that are at work in spectacular relations. Nietzsche's point of departure in this criticism of Kantian aesthetics (in GM III) lies in the artistic experience of the work of art from the artist's perspective; therefore, any notion of spectator that creates a detachment of the spectator from spectacle (the problem of impersonality) is not acceptable by Nietzsche, and not any spectator can be the judge of aesthetics (the problem of universality). Although Nietzsche's interpretation of Kant's

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<sup>2</sup> See my *Agon in Nietzsche* for an in-depth discussion of this topic.

disinterestedness is a poor interpretation, misguided by Schopenhauer according to Heidegger,<sup>3</sup> the issues he raises are of significance for a theory of spectacle:

Schopenhauer made use of the Kantian version of the aesthetic problem—although he certainly did not view it with Kantian eyes. Kant thought he was honoring art when among the predicates of beauty he emphasized and gave prominence to those, which establish the honor of knowledge: impersonality and universality. This is not the place to inquire whether this was essentially a mistake; all I wish to underline is that Kant, like all philosophers, instead of envisaging the aesthetic problem from the point of view of the artist (the creator), considered art and the beautiful purely from that of the “spectator,” and unconsciously introduced the “spectator” into the concept “beautiful.” It would not have been so bad if this “spectator” had at least been sufficiently familiar to the philosophers of beauty—namely, as a great *personal* fact and experience, as an abundance of vivid authentic experiences, desires, surprises, and delights in the realm of the beautiful! But I fear that the reverse has always been the case; and so they have offered us, from the beginning, definitions in which, as in Kant’s famous definition of the beautiful, a lack of any refined first-hand experience reposes in the shape of a fat worm of error. “That is beautiful,” said Kant, “which gives us pleasure *without interest*.” Without interest!<sup>4</sup>...

A parallel idea, namely that the highest place of the artistic spectacle cannot be reduced or lowered to the common denominator of the spectator, was introduced in *The Birth of Tragedy* where Nietzsche discusses the artistic freedom of the chorus by way of Schiller. Here Nietzsche, to show the high and lofty ground of artistic experience, aims at a wrong target in Kant, because

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<sup>3</sup> In his Nietzsche lectures, Heidegger explains what is beautiful and what is meant by disinterestedness in Kant: “...in order to find something beautiful, we must let what encounters us, purely as it is in itself, come before us in its own stature and worth. We may not take it into account in advance with a view to something else, our goals and intentions, our possible enjoyment and advantage. Comportment toward the beautiful as such...is *unconstrained favoring*.” A few paragraphs later he says that if Nietzsche understood Kant by himself, “...then he would have had to recognize that Kant alone grasped the essence of what Nietzsche in his own way wanted to comprehend concerning the decisive aspects of the beautiful.” (*Nietzsche*, tr. by David Farrell Krell, San Francisco: Harper, pp.109-111). To apply all of these ideas to spectacle (and not only to the beautiful), one can say that spectacle is that which shows itself purely as it is in itself, and spectators are connected to this spectacular event through their comportment of letting-be and through their rapture.

<sup>4</sup> *On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books, 1967, Third Essay, Sec.6, pp. 103-4.



Kant is not talking about the same thing; his aporia has to do with the conditions of aesthetic experience, and the disinterestedness is that of the imagination in relation to other (cognitive) faculties of the mind. Nietzsche may respond to that by saying Kant is not an artist and is not writing about aesthetic experience the way an artist would; see how Stendhal, for instance, looks at art, he would say.

Another important aspect of Nietzsche's interest in spectacle is its festive nature. In ancient Greece, like many other archaic societies, festivals occupied a significant space in the life of culture, as in competitive games (there were four major sites for such games in ancient Greece) or in the performance of dramas (in Athens there were four drama festivals per year). And Nietzsche must have had a good knowledge of these festivals from his early studies. As Bergmann observes<sup>5</sup>, Nietzsche's festival ideal<sup>6</sup> is formed at an early stage, roughly around 1867 before his Wagner phase, and coincides with his interest in the Greek culture of competition. Upon meeting Wagner and Burckhardt shortly after Nietzsche's festival ideal is further encouraged, and Burckhardt was one of the leading historians of festival at the time. According to Burckhardt's vision, festivity captures the religious, moral, and political life of a people and constitutes the point of transition from everyday life into the world of art; and thus it functions as a unifying principle. In his *Die Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, he claims that the Greek city-states used the festivity of the contests to sustain a sense of PanHellenic unity after the colonization of the Mediterranean.

There are several instances in Nietzsche's early works where he discusses the role of festival in ancient Greece. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he writes not only about the Dionysian festivals of ecstatic states, but also the Apollonian festivals of rhapsody (one can even add, to the list, the festivals dedicated to other gods and goddesses, which Nietzsche does not discuss in this text). In his unpublished "Greek Music Drama," he attributes the greatness of the Greeks to their agonal festivity; one central idea here is that "...genius was only realized in the act of displaying oneself

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche, The Last Antipolitical German*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p.60.

<sup>6</sup> I do not know the exact number of festivals Nietzsche attended, but one festival he experienced in the company of the Wagners was the Singers' Festival in Lucerne in August, 1869.

in the public arena.”<sup>7</sup> Again in an earlier note, art, festival and education are placed together in terms of their importance: “When life, like the Athenian life, carries continuously duty, demand, undertaking, and toil inescapably, so one knows also to honor and desire arts, festival and, in particular, education; in this way it becomes cheerful.” (KSA 7, 748) Moreover, festivals give vent to our human passions and emotions: “For many natures it may be good to give, from time to time, a festival to their passions.” (KSA 8, 571)

Nietzsche’s interest in the festival ideal did not subside in his later writings. In *The Gay Science*, he refers to the art of festivals as the “higher art.”<sup>8</sup> In a note from this period the Greeks come up again and this time the term ‘danger’ and ‘festival’ appear in the same sentence: “Greeks lived only in danger: in their force, calmness, and justice they revered their convalescence, their inhalation, and their festival...”<sup>9</sup> That ancient Greeks “lived in danger” or played with fire is a recurrent theme in Nietzsche’s works, which highlights the intensity and the depth of Greek expressiveness; the Dionysian ecstatic expressions, the agonistic games, the festivals, the political life all point to this Greek expressiveness in which Nietzsche sees a great vitality. Finally, he regards death as festivity: “It is a festival to go from this world over to the “dead world”...” and “to be released from life and to become dead nature again can be felt as festival—by those wanting to die...”<sup>10</sup> Many cultures celebrate death, and the burial rites are organized as festivals. That death is part of life and can be celebrated festively just like any other aspect of life (as in funeral games) is another point Nietzsche shares with the ancients.

There are many scenes in *Zarathustra* that are presented in the spirit of a festival, including the circus-like scene in the market place in the Prologue, and the scene where the higher men appear in the last part of the book. Besides the fact that Zarathustra in general is a festive spirit like a troubadour and that his journey, his grand spectacle can be considered a long festival, being with him is also portrayed as a festival: “Living on earth is worth while: one day, one

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<sup>7</sup> Bergmann, p.63.

<sup>8</sup> GS Aphorism 89, p.144. This aphorism carries the sense of grand artistic spectacle presented as a spectacle. Our age is contrasted with that of the Greeks (without being named) in which the works of art served for such festive, grand spectacles.

<sup>9</sup> KSA 9, p.343 (translation is mine).

<sup>10</sup> KSA 9, p.468 and p.486 (translations are mine).

festival with Zarathustra, taught me to love the earth.”<sup>11</sup> These words are uttered by the ugliest man, the murderer of God. With the death of God, one *festival* is over; another festival is yet to start.

### **The Problem of Education**

In his reflections on formation or culture (*Bildung*) in any of its form (general formation, upbringing or academic education), Nietzsche repeats the same problem of production of greatness in the form of great values and types, great culture in general, vis-à-vis the concerns of society, whether they be economic, social or political. Now the problem is presented within a larger field of culture than an artistic field, in the strict sense of the word. In the lectures that Nietzsche gave in five parts in early 1872 at Basel University, called “On the Future of Our Educational Institutions,” he presented, via a fictional encounter with a philosopher, the problems of education, which still elude us today. If I can summarize the basic idea of these lectures, it would be this: practical, professional education for self-preservation functions must not be confused with the education of great artistic, philosophical spirits, and, more importantly, the latter must not be compromised with the demands of the former. Our modern educational institutions have gone in the direction of the useful and deprived culture from producing its great examples of spirit. In these lectures, Nietzsche’s critique is focused on the ‘useful’ functions in human existence that stand in the way of greatness and the production of great spirits. As the philosopher in FEI laments, “...all over I smell that ‘resistance of the stupid world,’ i.e., *your* guiltiness.” (FEI, p.93)

In a similar vein, in the *Twilight of the Idols* from the last year of his philosophical activity, Nietzsche regrets the decline of the German education and spirit: “Even a rapid estimate shows that it is not only obvious that German culture is declining but that there is sufficient reason for that.” (“What Germans Lack,” p.508). In this critique, Nietzsche’s scope is very broad; spirit, education, and university education are all included. He points out the fact that German culture no longer produces greatness as exemplified by Kant, Goethe, Hegel, Heine, and Schopenhauer. Since there are no great living examples, Nietzsche concludes that there are no educators. “Educators are lacking, not counting the most exceptional of exceptions, the very first

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<sup>11</sup> TSZ, Part IV, “The Drunken Song,” Sec.1, p.429.

condition of education...” (p.510) In this context, Nietzsche diagnoses the problem in politics and the rise of the German state, as he shows how investment in politics in this way, in grand politics, is a divestment in culture. “If one spends oneself for power, for power politics, for economics, world trade, parliamentarianism, and military interests—if one spends in *this* direction the quantum of understanding, seriousness, will, and self-overcoming which one represents, then it will be lacking for the other direction.” (TI,p.509). Hegemonization of political power in the hands of one big state machine emaciates cultural power and the power of mythopoesis, as it turns citizens into an army of automatons.

### **Mass/Social Media and their Affects**

Educational and spectacular concerns, those of *Bildung* and *Schauspiel*, come together in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra presents a grand spectacle and, at the same time, is an exemplary model for formation; his journey is a symbolic spectacle of self-overcoming and he is the teacher of the Overhuman and, as such, an educator, in the sense Schopenhauer was an educator, *Erzieher*, in UM III. While Zarathustra brings together all artistic and spectacular functions in himself and struggles for higher states of being, he sets himself up as an *educator*, the educator of the overhuman. While upholding the morality of breeding of higher types, Zarathustra must undo the morality of taming; the former treats individuals qua individuals while upholding bodily regimes and the latter throws around a cloak of general education and functions repressively with its ascetic idealism.

Nietzsche was critical of the newspaper culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the only dominant form of mass media that existed then. He often refers to this culture as ‘journalistic.’ “A degenerated human being of culture is a serious thing: it affects us fearsomely to observe that our collected learned and journalistic public carries the signs of this degeneration within itself.” (FEI, p.113) The impact of such culture is the annihilation of the individual. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mass media have proliferated in many forms from radio and TV to the Internet and its offshoots. In every form of mass media, one can ask the same questions that Nietzsche raises regarding the affects these mass media create and their quantitative proportion, within a cultural context, to those affects produced by great spirits (or the Overhuman) either as “educators” or as grand spectacle makers. This, no doubt, is a function of culture and cultural production.

This last point about conflicting affects notwithstanding, what may be the debilitating elements of the mass and social media from a Nietzschean standpoint? Below are some points I would like to make:

There is a disintegration of Dionysian forces in mass culture. Mass media produce more isolation, alienation, and detachment, while taking up the place of *spectacular* forces. For Nietzsche spectacle was the core of the Dionysian forces, a festive space. Mass media along with its cohort social media, on the other hand, disrupts that communion and retain spectators in their isolated state, as it inflates the *Ersatz* experiences to the further decimation of somatic experiences. It is claimed that virtual experiences will replace physical experiences in the coming ages.

There is rampant information thrown around, mostly “useful” information, with no regard to what is high and what is low. All that is available have equal status; everyone is lost in the giant labyrinth of information production, which has also permeated educational institutions. This exacerbates the already eclectic world as related to the disjunction between the inner and the outer and creates a weekend personality. In the second *Untimely Meditation* Nietzsche diagnoses it as a problem of modernity: “Thus the individual grows fainthearted and unsure and dares no longer believe in himself: he sinks into his own subjective depths, which here means into the accumulated lumber of what he has learned but which has not outward effect, of instruction which does not become life.”<sup>12</sup>

In the form of a giant encyclopedia, the dominant mass media has taken the Alexandrian culture of all knowing to a further level; now, the presumed knowledge seems to be out there, available to all. In former times, one had to struggle to know, but this struggle seems futile. Knowledge is presumably under the tip of our fingers. On the other hand, faith in knowledge seems to be reinforced at a deeper level, and the unknown is brushed aside. The artistic uncovering, which Nietzsche speaks about in BT, Sec.15, is now further obliterated; we are no

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<sup>12</sup> UM II, sec.5, p.84.

longer interested in puzzles, in the process of uncovering, in hidden meanings, and in ambiguities; all is clear, all can be known.

Mass emails with no specific target audience, which function with the “anything for anyone” mentality, subsume individuals to certain categories to which they don’t belong; categorization exists in our social lives, and mass/social media operates with it. Herd mentality is dominant in the world of the Internet and social media; the recent political events in the Middle East in which social media were used, are mass uprisings. They are not events inspired by free-spiritedness. Mass movements will be stuck in the vicious circles they create. Media usurps even the spirit of protestation; what may be left is pseudo-protestation.

Readers or viewers are treated in the same, uniform way, reducing their individuality to mobilized or mobilizable forces; they are seen as numbers or as buyers in the market place. They are assumed to be passive forces rather than an active audience; things are already made. This is mostly true for mass media, but social media also have restricted boundaries for creativity, if it has any, and levels of bureaucracy, which hinder creative activity. The presumed initiative for creativity in social media is a false one; it is there as an Ersatz for the creative deed, but it is only pseudo-creativity. (BT, Sec. 4, TSZ, Prologue on the Last Man who knows it all, but is not creative, etc.)

## **Epilogue**

There needs to be a new ethos of media and spectacle to counteract the surging tides of mass movements in recent times, as they have been reinforced by technological media. Both the technology and the media it has enabled must be questioned; those alienating and alienated elements, treatment of human beings as numbers, as a standing army to be mobilized, as instruments for the market place, as objects and subjects of ideologies (to be followed blindly), as objects of repression in all forms, all of these issues must be confronted. It is in this way that a new ethos that embraces these new technologies in an *active*, life-affirming spirit, will emerge. Mass media and social media as they exist today are infused with the spirit of reactivity; the “world stage” is taken over by the masses in one form or another, whether at the level of grand

state politics or at the level of pop culture. Only a new ethos can change things in meaningful ways.

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The consensus about Nietzsche is that he is constructivist, but not constructive. Iconoclastic, yes; the great negator, yes; embodying the subversion and radical critique of deconstruction with a pleasing individualism, yes. But is he someone who can help us? Who can heal people? Who can affirm? Not Nietzsche. This is despite the fact that many other philosophers, including complicated Continental philosophers, have their names routinely involved as tropes of affirmation: Heidegger lets us embrace being, Wittgenstein—the later—houses us in a reassuring plurality of language-games. Even the dark and skeptical Foucault was, at least in the 1980s, seen as affirming the realities of power. Even the later Derrida was, for a brief and absurd time, seen as an Uncle Cuddly of forgiveness. Nietzsche, perhaps the most brilliant of them all, yet left in an outsider limbo, where, admittedly as Coleridge would put it, “he on honey dew had fed/and drunk the milk of paradise,” but not to any affirmative end. This collection, though, presents a different Nietzsche, one reflecting the following magnificent quote from *Human, All Too Human* (Hollingdale translation): “In the history of mankind the most savage forces beat a path, and are mainly destructive, but their work was nonetheless necessary, in order that later a gentler civilization might raise its house. The frightful energies—those which are called evil—are the cyclopean architects and roadmakers of humanity” (§246).

Horst Hutter has long been known as one of the most charismatic and innovative Nietzscheans. From his base in Montréal’s most experimental Anglophone University, Concordia, Hutter has roved far and wide, in a Nietzschean way living out his takes of instruction. No one would be more suited to edit a volume on *Nietzsche’s Therapeutic Teaching*. He is ably assisted by Eli Friedland, who contributes a really original essay to close out the volume, to which I will return in good time. The volume begins with a few essays devoted explicitly to the question of teaching, followed by more specialized essays which radiate out to specific areas or treat the question of teaching more abstractly. Nathalie Lachance sets the agenda in an essay positioned early on in the book when she argues that to turn Nietzsche from questioning constructivist to constructive builder one has to read Nietzsche against himself to understand his call for reading beyond books as a

call for reading beyond *his* books, and often not to take what he says literally or as Gospel truth.

These essayists could be accused of wanting to rework Nietzsche, to make him palatable for a politically correct twenty-first century agenda. But, more truly, these essays answer the persistent question of why the readings of Nietzsche that earlier generations have offered us are so unsatisfying. Lachance's essay, for instance, turns around customary conjectures that Nietzsche vaulted beyond the philology in which he had been trained by instead arguing that Nietzsche thought most philologists were simply bad philologists; a truly proficient philology would be eminently Nietzschean. So often, Nietzsche's brashness and dynamism, his orientation towards action, have made people think that he was not *au fond*, what the root meaning of philology indicates: a lover of words.

To see Nietzsche as teacher and therapist, we must see him as more generous in his attitude towards, and manifestation of, language. Lawrence Hatab links Nietzsche to, again, thinkers usually seen as more constructive, midcentury cognitive linguists such as Vygotsky and Piaget. (One wonders why not Jakobson?). Whereas traditional Nietzscheans had seen Nietzsche's preference for the early, the strong, and the instinctual as meaning he was not interested in language as a proliferating, mediating agent, Hatab points out that the key difference between Nietzsche and Plato is that Nietzsche is willing to acknowledge rhetoric. Hatab goes further when he argues that Nietzsche's inclusion of rhetoric makes him more democratic than Plato, as it accepts the imperfection and vulnerability that rhetoric in a democracy inevitably has. Hatab fashions the Plato-Nietzsche contrast as, essentially, Plato keeps philosophy in the "mirror for princes" tradition; Nietzsche, through this acknowledgment of language, renders this mirror an arena for democrats, one of "agonistic, embodied passion" (202).

Babette Babich similarly emphasizes Nietzsche's democratic potential, how, far from exalting the *Übermensch* as an ideal of concentrated power, as vulgar Nietzscheanism supposes, "worldly supremacy, this worldly and all too slavish power" (168). Contrasting Aristotle's role as counselor to Alexander of Macedon in contrast to Empedocles, somebody with worldly power who gave it up or transmogrified it for the sake of philosophy, Babich seeks to disentrail philosophy from dependence not only on

literal monarchies but on metaphorical ones, for instance the promise of technological advance, which serves as a kind of vicarious magnet when totalitarian ideologies are no longer so readily available. (I must confess, though, that while I understand what Babich means when she says Heidegger opted for a king, when she says Zizek does as well, I do not see it, unless it is for the “monarchy” of pop celebrity, or unless he advised, say, Assad when somehow I was not looking, which I doubt). Babich reads Lucian of Samosata’s idea of the *hyperanthropos*, someone who precisely because of his dedication to “the art of attending to life”, chooses to eschew “the vanity of a worldly king” (168), as helping define what Nietzsche means by the *Übermensch*. It is not the mere *hyperanthropos-Übermensch* connection, which has been made by Walter Kaufmann and several others, which makes this essay original, nor the connection between Nietzsche and middle-antique skepticism, which has been made recently by Jessica Berry. It is Babich’s association of the *hyperanthropos* with an inversion of the authority, allegedly invested in the Greek *polis* but in many ways a displacement of traditional monarchical authority, privileged by such thinkers as Werner Jaeger, Eric Voegelin, and Leo Strauss. Babich reverses this paradigm to emphasize the over-person as someone who discards and carnivalizes accustomed ideas of governance and power. In a generally strong collection, Babich’s essay is one of a few that stands out because of its style and grace, and its willingness to make fresh connections, for instance allying Nietzsche with Hellenistic thinkers, although we have long been told he liked no Greek after Socrates. Babich is a literary as well as a philosophical thinker—she cites and brilliantly reframes Northrop Frye on satire—and her essay is a pleasure to read as well as admirable in its dedication to those too-rarely-aligned pillars of intellectuality and democratic instincts.

Another essay with highly literary qualities comes from Graham Parkes, acclaimed translator of *Zarathustra*, who contrasts the life affirmed in Nietzsche and in so much of this book to the heaviness of stone. Dance knows itself in its lightness, which is a rebuke of the stone. But, Parkes indicates, the stone must be there to make the legerity of this dancing legible; we cannot do without some interrogation of the inorganic. (One thinks of John Cowper Powys’s “mineralogy” here). Beatrice Han-Pile goes so far as to see the Nietzschean principle of *amor fati* as a preventive safeguard against the excessive love whose unleashed delight is otherwise one of the principle glories Nietzsche fosters; here

an acceptance of whatever happens operates in the mode of checks and balances, making sure that a love otherwise valuable does not become hegemonic.

Like Babich, Michael Ure explores Nietzsche's interest in Hellenistic thought, this time the Stoic idea of "the view from above." While most have touted Nietzsche's perspective and seen him as eschewing an Olympian vantage point, Ure argues that such as Olympian view is not incompatible with Nietzschean pluralism as long as it is progressive and flexible. Ure brings in theories of evolution and speculates about how Nietzsche and Darwin are closer than might appear. I thought here of Tolstoy, and Hugh McLean's arguments that Tolstoy, while coming from very different presuppositions than Darwin, and fundamentally antagonistic to science of the sort that Darwin practiced nonetheless cannot be limned as totally antagonistic. Ure does something similar for Nietzsche.

Nandita Biswas Mellamphy ingeniously argues that Nietzsche's nihilism precisely by not anthologizing the world, works to heal; by negating toxic banalities of wholeness, the philosopher becomes physician. This is interesting in making a double move, first likening Nietzsche to a figure like Adorno who primarily excelled at puncturing the false structure of ideology, and then seeing that puncturing of the false whole as a healing gesture, a liberation from a poisonous, toxic excrescence.

Many of the authors in this book eschew an organic, vitalist Nietzsche, opting instead for a more calculating and riddling sense of Nietzsche as ingenious and contradiction-threading pedagogue. Rainer J. Hanshe, in an essay written with his customary intensity and dedication, addresses the practice of incubation in *Zarathustra* to combine both an affirmation of the organic and a sense of wisdom coming through deferral and postponement, as the process—or, as Hanshe puts it, the art—of incubation involved both perspectives. Incubation is an actual practice in *Zarathustra*, not just a trope, and reorients philosophy away from a Platonic hypostasis or a melodramatic dualism. Incubation is a state of potential that is not just development in a teleological sense, but an (in)activity itself worthwhile, a simmering, a savoring, not a deferral. Hanshe, following Peter Kingsley, points out that *hesychia*, quiet, does not necessarily mean inertness, but can indeed involve intense disquiet. So can the moil of incubation be not just latency but an agonistic (anti-) jelling? One could, of course, use these reflections on

*hesychia* to talk as well about later Greek Orthodox mysticism and about the mystical tradition in general.

Keith Ansell-Pearson, while not going so far as to claim Nietzsche as an ecologist, explores how Nietzsche's ideas about the care of the self and a therapeutic attitude towards the world can foster and ramify contemporary ecological attitudes. Once again we have the theme of Nietzsche being allowed to be constructive, to offer a solution, as Wittgenstein and Heidegger and even Foucault are allowed to do. Now, this is not to say that Ansell-Pearson forces Nietzsche into an ecological straitjacket. But Nietzsche's abstention from "the delusions of human exceptionalism" (110) and his (again, intriguingly Tolstoyan) search for what the French would call *la simplicité volontaire*, for a life freed from unnecessary excess and glitz, make him premonitory of an ecological frame of mind. Ansell-Pearson emphasizes Nietzsche's Epicureanism, a nice contrast to Ure's Stoicism-informed argument; but the common ground here is that Hellenistic thought is, after all, relevant to Nietzsche. In this light, we are reminded more than once that Erwin Rohde, the preeminent German scholar of the Greek (Hellenistic) novel, was a friend of Nietzsche's. Too often, Splenglerian, Auerbachian denigrations of the Greek romance as decadent have been larded onto Nietzsche; the cumulative weight of these essays is to tell us that, at the very least, one can look to at least middle (if not late) antique thought and imagination and find there kindred spirits with respect to a truly elucidated version of Nietzsche's thought.

Yunus Tuncel joins Hatab in emphasizing Nietzsche's rhetoric. Tuncel notes the abundance of polemical turns of phrase in Nietzsche, but argues that their agonism is as much playful as purposive, that they are as close to sport as they are to war—the gestures of violence, the aura of competition, but ultimately dodged in a Schillerian play-space where people may lose, but they do not die. Hutter's own essay, on Nietzsche's gymnastics of willing, notes the curative effects of Mozart's *Magic Flute* and links the pseudo-Egyptian mythology of that work with Nietzschean pluralistic amplitude. It is an intriguing connection, principally because Mozart's music has the same qualities, of being intensely serious but light and deft in its effects, as does Nietzsche's prose.

Willow Verkirik, in her treatment of Nietzsche and friendship, provides a pleasing counterpoint to the other essays' emphasis on the constructive aspect of Nietzsche.

Though we might like Nietzsche to be a guide to friendship, Verkerk makes clear that, firstly, Nietzsche in biographical terms found friendship more of a burden than a blessing as life went on, secondly, that the “bestowing virtue” (67) of the respected warrior—think, e.g., of Beowulf as ring-giver—is so complex in its mixture of selfishness and generosity as to be not easily writeable in the language we have developed for friendship; thirdly, that we should not expect Nietzsche’s texts to be all that friendly with us, that an overly cozy relationship with them, constructing Nietzsche as, again, an Uncle Cuddly. This essay is refreshing in its willingness to draw a limit to its argument, a practice, which the other essays suggest, is also a Nietzschean one. José Daniel Parra also draws a limit to an overly affirmative Nietzsche, noting that solitude is always needed, that one cannot use Nietzsche to affirm a categorically ambient *Umwelt* the way, again, the later Wittgenstein is often taken to affirm. Bela Egyed takes a slightly different tack, emphasizing not Nietzsche’s imperfections but our own. In examining the uses of Nietzsche’s philosophy for life, Egyed urges us not to insist too much on our own perfection, that we should manifest not so much what would in Christian terms be humility as a sort of vulnerability, a confession to insufficiency, which would be a kind of Nietzschean equivalent of humility.

Martine Béland addresses Nietzsche as academic. Though we tend to see Nietzsche as, in today’s parlance, more an independent scholar than a member of academia in an institutional sense, Nietzsche was indeed quite at home with the protocols of academia and felt a *Beruf*, a vocational call, to be an academic. Béland does not see Nietzsche as a run-of-the-mill academic, climbing up the institutional greasy pole of tenure, grants, and committees; indeed, for Béland, seeing Nietzsche as academic is a cry against academic mediocrity and the acceptance of fitting into the system as the be-all and end-all of an academic life. Nietzsche is far less anti-establishmentarian than earlier versions, but it is so because Béland thinks a Nietzsche more inside the establishment can pose a fundamentally more effective challenge to it. I wonder if some of the insights in Daniel Blue’s biographical work on Nietzsche, for instance that, in his first real educational experience, secondary school at Schulpforta, Nietzsche found an essentially congenial environment, could come in here.

Eli Friedland's strong and highly original concluding essay argues that Nietzsche's anti-Christianity has been seen too simplistically. Provocatively, Friedland argues that just as Jesus sought to fulfill the (Jewish) law, not repudiate it, so does Nietzsche aspire to both repudiate and fulfill Christian doctrine. Like Babich, Friedland notes *hyperanthropos* as a precursor of *Übermensch*, but in the Christian version of this term: as Christ as the ultimate man who, through his godliness, surpasses man. Whereas, argues Friedland, a sophomoric polemic against Christianity will only leave Christian absolutes in place, a thought that seeks "to inaugurate the possibility of a new—very different—tragic age" (242). Much as Fulya Peker did in her 2007 play *Requiem Aeternam Deo*, Friedland sees the Christian tragedy as a precursor to the Zarathustran one, and it is precisely the tragic elements—one might add, perhaps, in Girardian terms, the sacrificial—that provides the continuity. It is precisely because Friedland obviously does not seem to rebaptize or sanctify Nietzsche that makes his drawings-out of parallels to Christianity so productive and sustaining.

This book has so many of the leading lights of contemporary Nietzsche scholarship that one wished some of the following had also been included: Thomas Brobjer; Christa Acampora; Paul S. Loeb; Duncan Large; Friedrich Ulfers; Philip Pothen. As it stands, it is one of the most significant anthologies ever published on Nietzsche. This book is very useful for those interested in pedagogy, not because applying Nietzsche in the classroom will instantly make that morning's seminar go better but because the volume shows how various and many-trope a good teacher has to be. It would also be interesting to "literature and medicine" people, precisely because it proposes a mode of literary healing that is bracing instead of suturing, and does not see reassurance as the only road to restoration. As Babich points out, Nietzsche's military service was as an orderly, and throughout this collection there is a close link between teacher and healer, pedagogue and therapist, both operating from a catalytic but non-authoritative position.

That Nietzsche was himself periodically ill throughout his life, severely ill in its last decade, that he was somebody who, both in the most material and the largest sense's needed therapy, that he was so obviously and undisguisedly imperfect, makes him an unbelievably rich node around whom thoughts of wisdom, example, and embodiment can revolve. A healer is always also a potential patient.