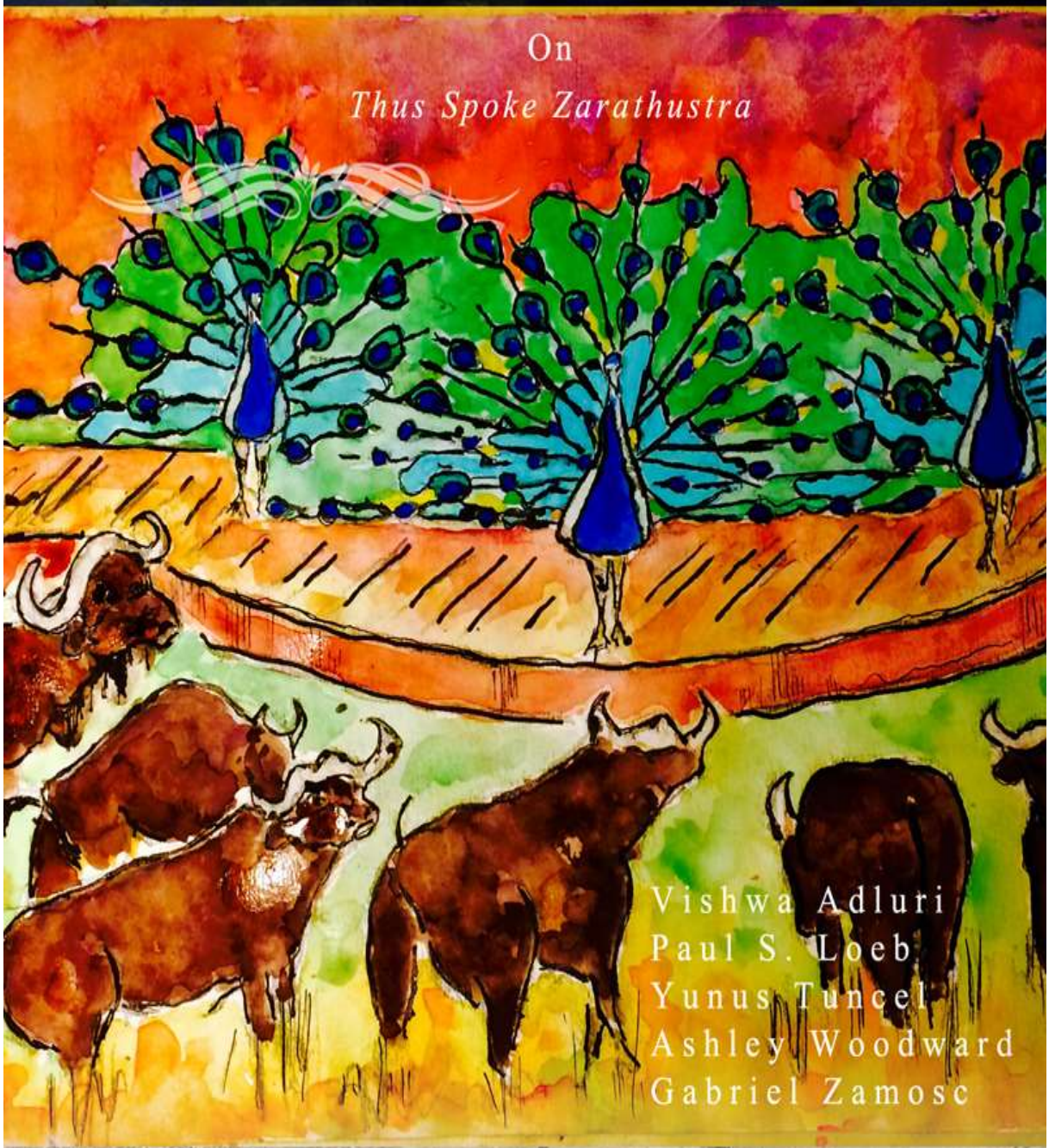
The Agonist

Volume VIII, Issues I & II, Fall 2014-Spring 2015

On

Thus Spoke Zarathustra



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Editors' Introduction

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to publish another set of thought-provoking essays; this time our main theme is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Each essay explores different aspects of this dense and controversial work by Nietzsche.

We would also like to announce our forthcoming special issue on Nietzsche and Chinese thought with our guest editor, Dr. James Luchte. If you do research in both of these areas and would like to share your work with our readers, please contact Dr. Luchte. You can find the CFP for this issue on our page for *The Agonist*.

We wish you a thoughtful reading of this issue and look forward to your comments.

NC Editors, March 2015

The Rebirth of Nietzsche's Zarathustra

By Paul S. Loeb

The title of my essay indicates a kind of sequel point to my study of Nietzsche's book, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*. There I spent most of my time arguing that the published ending of Nietzsche's philosophical novel depicts the protagonist's tragic death. Here I want to dwell a little longer on my study's related claim that this ending also depicts the protagonist's triumphant rebirth. In referring to this published ending, I mean to emphasize the fact that Nietzsche completed the fourth part of his book in 1885 but never published it and then left it out of the collected edition that he published in 1886. Today we always see the collected editions of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as including Part 4 and, indeed, as ending with Part 4.[1] I think that this editorial decision is a mistake that has led most interpreters to miss the significance of Nietzsche's ending in Part 3. If Part 4 were published as an appendix, or within editorial parentheses, or even separately, I think it would be much easier for readers to understand the overall design of Nietzsche's book. This design is supposed to match the ancient Greek plan of three related tragedies followed by a satyr play. In this Greek plan, the satyr play story had a flexible chronological place within the story told by the three preceding tragedies. In some cases, the satyr play functioned as a kind of extended flashback into events that had already taken place in the time of the story told by the tragedies. Similarly, I have argued,

[1] The only exception, as far as I know, is the recently published Basler Nietzsche-Ausgabe of *Also sprach Zarathustra* by Ludger Lütkehaus and David Marc Hoffmann (2013, Stroemfeld). I am grateful to Charles Bambach for drawing my attention to this new edition. Some online sources are more careful to categorize and locate Part 4 as one of Nietzsche's unpublished texts, but they do not offer any guidance about how to study the entirety of Nietzsche's book.

Part 4 of Nietzsche's book is a flashback narration of three sequential days in Zarathustra's life that come before the pivotal Part 3 moment in which he awakens his most abysmal thought.

However, when readers today open up any collected edition of Nietzsche's book, they are led to see the ending of Part 3 as depicting a moment in the temporal sequence of Zarathustra's life that is simply continued at the start of Part 4. Since Zarathustra is alive and well at the start of Part 4, just older and wiser, readers today are naturally inclined to overlook Nietzsche's many obvious indications that he had already killed off his protagonist at the end of Part 3—that is, in the ending of the book that he actually published. I believe that this is the chief reason why no one before had noticed the crucial narrative event of Zarathustra's death.[2] Of course previous scholars had commented on Nietzsche's many narrative anticipations of his protagonist's death—for example, Zarathustra's opening announcement of his impending downfall, or his later prediction that he himself would die at the right time and in the right way. But the editorial inclusion of Part 4 led all of these scholars to conclude that Nietzsche chose to postpone this death until some indefinite moment in some as yet unwritten text.[3]

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[2] See Loeb 1998 and 2000 for my first published arguments in support of this claim. For an interesting extension of these arguments to Nietzsche's engagement with Empedocles and Lucian, see Babich 2013.

[3] Krell (1986: 43 ff.) cited Part 4 in his explicit argument for this postponement thesis and supported this thesis with Nietzsche's unpublished notes and plans regarding the death of Zarathustra—especially those plans alluding to Hölderlin's project about the self-sacrificial death of Empedocles. More recently, Allison (2001: 157-79) followed Krell in this argumentation and contrasted Nietzsche's depictions of Zarathustra's death in his unpublished notes with Nietzsche's depiction of the continuation of Zarathustra's life in Part 4. My new account of Part 4 allowed me to show, contrary to Krell and Allison, that Nietzsche did indeed complete his parallel of the self-sacrificial deaths of Zarathustra and Empedocles *within the text he published*—and, indeed, his additional parallels with the self-sacrificial deaths of Dionysus, Socrates, Jesus, Faust, and Wotan (Loeb 2010: 82-83, 118). Babich (2013: 158, 170) cites Jung and a couple of obscure early scholars as having discussed the issue of Zarathustra's death, but all of them were reading Part 4 as a chronological sequel to the published ending of Nietzsche's book. Babich (2013: 158; 2015: 248-9) also suggests that Zarathustra dies toward the end of Part 1 after being bitten by an adder. But Zarathustra says that a dragon like him cannot be killed by snake poison. He thanks the adder for waking him up on time

I cannot hope to review here all of the textual evidence that I gathered together in my study, but I will mention one especially salient and compelling point. The narration in Part 4 begins by letting us know that years have gone by and that Zarathustra has grown much older and that his hair has now turned white. Since Part 4 is a flashback narration of Zarathustra's backstory, this aging process has not taken place *after* the ending of Part 3 but rather *before* it—indeed, before the pivotal Part 3 moment in which Zarathustra awakens his most abysmal thought. During the temporal gap and narrative ellipsis just before this pivotal moment, Zarathustra has grown much older and is therefore much closer to the moment of his death. So when he seems to drop dead after awakening his most abysmal thought, and is then unable to recover, we are supposed to notice that he is undergoing a convalescence that is only spiritual. After awakening his most abysmal thought, Zarathustra learns how to heal his spiritual ills, such as his guilt, melancholy, and spirit of revenge. But he has also had to confront his new and bitter knowledge of humankind's eternal return and this struggle has dealt his body a mortal blow.

Influenced by their reading of the ending of Part 3 as chronologically leading into the beginning of Part 4, scholars have always assumed that Nietzsche's reference to Zarathustra's convalescence points toward his eventual recovery into the full physical health that is displayed during his vigorous activities in Part 4. These scholars have thus been led to overlook Nietzsche's many narrative indications that Zarathustra is actually dying as he convalesces.

These indications include, in order:

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and then commands the adder to take back his poison (since the adder is not rich enough to give it to him) (Z I.19).

- his pale, trembling and supine state that lasts for seven days after his death-like collapse;
- his subsequent inability to get out of bed;
- his inability to forget the great pain, suffering, nausea, sadness, and death-like weariness that he has just experienced in his struggle with his most abysmal thought;
- his description of himself as still sick and weary;
- his animals' suggestion that he might want to die now;
- his *return* to a supine position after sitting up to smell one of his apples;
- his failure to respond to his animals' last speech, along with his inability to hear that they have become silent;
- his final sleep-like stillness and closed eyes.

It is true that Nietzsche did not end his published book with some completely explicit and literal assertion of Zarathustra's death—such as "Thus died Zarathustra." But we cannot emphasize the poetic logic of Nietzsche's design while at the same time demanding textual evidence in terms of completely explicit and literal assertions.[4] Nietzsche's book is poetic precisely because he refuses to spell out all of its meanings in their entirety. It does not follow, however, that these meanings cannot be understood or that Nietzsche did not want his readers to figure out these meanings. On the contrary, my study shows just how much extensive and detailed guidance Nietzsche gave us for understanding his poetic depiction of the death of Zarathustra.

[4] Cf. Ruin 2011: 391 and Marsden 2011: 5.

Let me venture a little further afield here by comparing the final scene in Nietzsche's published book to the controversial final scene in the final episode of the pioneering long-form television show, *The Sopranos*. In this scene, Tony Soprano looks up to see his daughter enter the restaurant, then there is an abrupt cut to a silent black screen, after which there is a cut to the credits. Careful students of this scene have rightly concluded that the writer and director, David Chase, gave his viewers extensive visual, auditory and narrative guidance for understanding that this last scene showed the point of view of Tony Soprano at the very moment when he is shot and killed.[5] Still, the last episode does not include any explicit and literal depiction of Tony's death, so there remains some argument and controversy as to whether Chase did indeed kill off his protagonist at the very end of his long-running show.

During interviews regarding this last episode, Chase has refused to spell out the meaning of the last scene and said that any such explicit and literal assertion would diminish the emotional power of his artistic ending. Since Chase believes that death is the absolute end for the one who dies, he chose the traditional symbols of silence and blackness to communicate the complete termination of Tony's auditory and visual experience. Because Chase believes that death can come at any time and without warning, he hoped that viewers watching this final scene would be abruptly cut off from the immersive narrative and left disoriented, disturbed, and in denial. He planned that viewers would have entered Tony's point of view just before this last moment and that they themselves would experience something like this same complete termination and thereby be forced to confront the prospect of their own inevitable death.

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[5] For a rigorous and detailed analysis supporting this conclusion, see: http://masterofsopranos.wordpress.com/thesopranos-definitive-explanation-of-the-end.

In my study, I argued that Nietzsche had the same kind of design in mind when he wrote the ending of the book he published. The narration at the ending of the "Convalescent" chapter lets us know that last three chapters are relating Zarathustra's point of view after he has been shattered by his struggle with his most abysmal thought. In these final chapters Zarathustra sees himself as an overripe grapevine who weeps over his longing to die and who anxiously waits for the approaching bark of voluntary death carrying the vintager with his harvesting knife. In these final chapters, Zarathustra also admits to life that he will want to leave her when the ancient bell strikes the hour of midnight. Furthermore, Zarathustra's very last song, in which he joyfully affirms all of his life, is sung immediately after the ancient bell has finished tolling the twelfth bell for the hour of midnight. The ending of this song is unique in omitting the usual narrative closure or signature line that is included at the end of every other chapter in the book. Here Nietzsche trusts his readers to notice his poetic allusion to Goethe's famous concluding scene in which the clock stops at midnight and Faust dies during his life's supremely joyful moment.

Like Chase, then, Nietzsche chose to conclude his poetic artwork by showing his protagonist's own point of view on his own moment of death. Like Chase, Nietzsche thought that it would be more powerful to *show* Zarathustra dying without making some explicit and literal assertion to this effect. Unlike Chase, however, Nietzsche does not believe that death is the absolute end of life for the one who dies. Instead, he believes that the moment of death initiates an immediate return back into the awakening awareness of this same life. Thus, the one who dies immediately begins to relive his life exactly as he lived it before. This difference helps to explain the divergence in their artistic depictions

of the protagonists' experience of the moment of his own death. Tony Soprano is experiencing an affectionate conversation with his family, the music of Journey, the comings and goings of other patrons, the taste of onion rings, and so on. All of a sudden, the entirety of this experience is cut off by a silent black screen. Chase's point is not that the dead Tony is now experiencing a silent black nothingness, but rather that Tony no longer exists to experience anything at all. Chase's artistic design thus recalls the ancient Epicurean perspective on death. By contrast, Nietzsche shows us that the dying Zarathustra experiences a final revelation that prompts him to joyfully declare his love for a life that he now recognizes to be eternal. For Nietzsche's protagonist there can never be any final end to all of life's experience, but only a continuous reliving of this same experience.[6]

If my interpretation of Nietzsche's book is convincing, we might wonder why he would design his most important book around the theme of death. Isn't Nietzsche the philosopher of life and life-affirmation? Didn't he write at one point in *The Gay Science* that he would like to help people think about life rather than death? "It makes me happy

[6] Keith Ansell Pearson (2011: 14-15) has asked whether my interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return involves a theory of personal immortality that is inconsistent with his endorsement in *Dawn* (Section 72) of the Epicurean idea of a final, definitive, or permanent death (*der endgültige Tod*) and with his Epicurean critique in the *Antichrist* (Sections 41, 43, 58) of the Christian concept of personal immortality that he traces back to Paul. My reply is that of course Nietzsche's discovery of eternal recurrence leads him to abandon his earlier belief in permanent death and to deny the Epicurean teaching that "[w]e are born only once, and we cannot be born twice; and one must for all eternity exist no more" (*Vatican Sayings*, no. 14; Inwood and Gerson 1988: 29). Nevertheless, as key passages from *Zarathustra* make clear (Z P:6, III.13:2), Nietzsche continues to agree with the Epicurean claims that the human soul is always embodied and mortal and that the human life span is therefore finite (albeit endlessly repeated). Eternal return does not bring any redemption from these facts of human embodiment, mortality, and finite life span. It is true that eternal return does involve a kind of renewed concern with the "after-death" (das "*Nach-dem-Tode*," in *Dawn* 72), but this after-death is always only a return to life and indeed to the identical and always embodied life *before* death. Thus, Nietzsche is still in a position to endorse the Epicurean critique of fear-inducing theories of eternal damnation—such as the theory advanced in Plato's *Phaedo*. He is also still in a position to offer an Epicurean criticism of the Platonic and Christian doctrines of personal immortality as attempts to devalue the world, and to remove the center of gravity from life, through the related teachings of salvation and damnation in some new, different, better, or worse afterlife.

to see that people really don't want to think about death! I would like to do something to help them feel that thinking about life is a hundred times worthier" (GS 278). Adrian Del Caro, when reviewing my study, expressed this worry well (2011: 83-84). He felt that the focus of my interpretation was morbid and ruined the joyful, salutary, and life-affirming aspects of Nietzsche's book. According to Del Caro, Nietzsche was a spokesman for life and therefore chose to dwell on life instead of death, on how to live instead on how to die. This is why Nietzsche invented a protagonist who, unlike Socrates and Jesus, lives for his beliefs instead of dying for them. Del Caro worried that I had assimilated Nietzsche too much to the Platonic and Christian life-denying approaches by writing about the death of Zarathustra in a way that closely parallels the deaths of Socrates and Jesus.

As I mentioned in my response to Del Caro's review (Loeb 2011: 109-13), I think that the best first answer to this worry is to recall Nietzsche's view that every issue, including the issue of death, can be considered from a life-affirming or life-denying perspective. Indeed, Nietzsche writes, those who long to escape death are actually expressing an aversion to life:

> We simply cannot conceal from ourselves *what* is really expressed by all that willing that has received its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, still more of the animal, even more of the material, this abhorrence of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and of beauty, this longing for the beyond away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, desire, longing itself—all of this means, let us dare to grasp this, a *will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental preconditions of life … (GM III: 28).[7]

[7] Here, and throughout this essay, I have consulted the translations of Nietzsche's texts that are listed in my bibliography.

According to Nietzsche, those who promote the ascetic ideal are interested in advancing the idea of an afterlife in order to deny the phenomenon of death. But death is an essential aspect of life and cannot be evaded without evading life itself. So affirming life means affirming the reality of death.

More specifically, Nietzsche argues that the way for human beings to approach death from a life-affirming perspective is to die at the right time and in the right way. As I argued in my study, this is why he shows Zarathustra exemplifying his own teaching by actually dying at the right time and in the right way. What this means is that he courageously dies at a moment that he himself has freely chosen. This is a moment when he is victorious, when he is surrounded by beloved companions who can witness his triumph, and when he has just accomplished all that he had hoped to achieve and is therefore in a position to be grateful to all of his life as leading up to this supreme moment. In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche sums up this approach to the hour of death and contrasts it with the Christian desecration of this same moment. A death, he writes, should be "brightly and cheerfully accomplished amid children and witnesses: so that a real farewell is still possible, where the one who is taking leave is still there; also a real estimate of what has been achieved and willed, a summation of the life" (TI IX: 36). Thus, the celebration of death does not have to be a life-denying, nihilistic, or ascetic concept, but can actually be an ultimate expression of life-affirmation.

I think this is a good first answer to the worry I have mentioned, but I do not think that it is the complete answer. Yes, Nietzsche designed his philosophical novel around the theme of death in order to show how life-affirmation can be extended to everything, including death. He ended his book by showing the life-affirming death of his protagonist

in order to ensure that his narrative affirms the whole extent of Zarathustra's life, even its ending. But this would not show that Nietzsche's design is in fact essential to his plan to help his readers feel that thinking about life is a hundred times worthier than thinking about death. Yet I think that this much stronger statement is also the case. In my study I argued that Nietzsche constructed his narrative around the theme of death because there was simply no better way for him to communicate his philosophy of life and life-affirmation.

Here, then, is a second and more complete answer to the worry I have mentioned. This answer includes Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same—a doctrine he describes as a formula for the most supreme affirmation of life that is at all attainable (EH Z:1). What he means by this formula is expressed most clearly in the notes that he wrote in 1881 when he first discovered eternal recurrence:

> Not gazing toward distant unknown blisses *blessings* and *pardons*, but rather to live in such a way that we want to live again and that we want to live *thus* for all eternity! — Our mission pursues us at every moment. (KSA 9: 11[161])

> My teaching says: to live in *such a way* that you must *wish* to live again, that is the mission—you will *anyway*! He to whom striving brings a supreme feeling, let him strive: he to whom rest brings a supreme feeling, let him rest; he to whom alignment following obedience brings a supreme feeling, let him obey. Only **let** *him become aware of* **that which** brings him a supreme feeling and spare *no means*! *Eternity* is at stake! (KSA 9: 11[163])

According to Nietzsche, the best way to affirm life is always to keep seeking those activities that bring you a supreme feeling. Your mission in life is to maximize these activities throughout your life so that you will want to repeat your same life for all of

eternity. However, living your life all over again means returning to this same life after you die. Hence Nietzsche's principle of life-affirmation must include an emphasis on the end of life as leading into the repetition of life. In order to show that his protagonist enacts a supreme affirmation of life, Nietzsche needs to depict the moment of Zarathustra's death as a rebirth into his identical life.[8]

So, how did Nietzsche present this formula in the ending of his published book, that is, in the concluding chapters of Part 3? The key, I think, is to look carefully at Nietzsche's central distinction in these chapters between Zarathustra, on the one hand, and Zarathustra's soul, on the other. The "Convalescent" chapter ends with the narrator telling us that Zarathustra is engaged in a conversation with his own soul. Then, in the next few chapters, Nietzsche actually presents both sides of this conversation. We first hear Zarathustra addressing his own soul, with every single sentence initiated by the phrase, "Oh my soul." We then hear Zarathustra reporting on his soul's answer and concluding his speech by commanding his soul to sing back to him. After that, we hear Zarathustra's soul obeying this command by singing his reply in the last two chapters—"The Other Dancing Song" and "The Yes- and Amen-Song." Both of these songs are addressed to life and both relate a wedding celebration between the male figure of Zarathustra's soul and the female figure of life. In the first of these songs we hear an account of their wedding dance, which is then followed by a roundelay in which each verse is sung to the accompaniment of a new strike of the ancient bell tolling the twelve

[8] Babich (2015: 249, 257) suggests that Nietzsche's doctrine is alluding to Empedocles' theory of metempsychosis. But Nietzsche dismisses the Pythagorean version of eternal recurrence in his second *Untimely Meditation* (UM II:2). Instead, he traces his own version of the doctrine back to the Dionysian mystery cults (TI X:5, KSA 10: 8[15]) and to Heraclitus and the Stoics (EH BT:3). Also, I have argued (Loeb 2010: 37-40, 61-82) that Nietzsche intends his version of the doctrine to counter and refute the Pythagorean and Platonic theories of metempsychosis.

bells of midnight. The second song then appears designed to fill in the twelfth verse of this roundelay in response to the strike of the twelfth bell. In this last song, Zarathustra's soul declares his marriage vows to life and we hear him announce that his wedding ring of eternal recurrence has transformed her into his eternal companion.

Scholars had previously noticed Nietzsche's concluding distinction between Zarathustra and his soul. They all noticed that Zarathustra initiates some kind of dialogue with himself and they all interpreted the reference to Zarathustra's soul as Nietzsche's roundabout way of indicating this inner dialogue.[9] But none of them had noticed that Zarathustra is dying in these chapters and therefore none of them were in a position to notice Nietzsche's use of this distinction to design a narrative enactment of eternal recurrence. This point is crucial because eternal recurrence implies the repetition of life after death. Indeed, Zarathustra's animals have just told him that according to his teaching he will come back after he dies and start reliving his identical life. However, the only moment in the sequence of Zarathustra's life when he can return after he dies is the same moment when he started reliving his life before—namely, the moment prior to his death when he was first "born," that is, first came into existence as a person. So what Nietzsche is actually showing in these concluding chapters is an inner dialogue between two temporally distinct person-stages of Zarathustra: the person-stage who has grown old and is now ending his own life and the person-stage who has been reborn and is now entering childhood.

[9] Cf. Lampert 1986: 223-8; White 1990: 93-5; and Seung 2005: 194-6. Even on its own terms, this common interpretation is not quite adequate because Zarathustra also describes his soul as talking with itself: "'Is not all weeping a lamentation? And is not all lamentation an accusation?' This is how you speak to yourself (*Also redest du zu dir selber*), and this is why, oh my soul, you would rather smile than pour out your suffering—" (Z III.14).

Nietzsche's opening prologue to his book has puzzled readers because it begins *in medias res* and does not seem to say anything about Zarathustra's life before he was thirty years old and climbed up his mountain to enjoy his solitude for ten years. Unlike the New Testament's *ab ovo* narrative, Nietzsche's book does not seem to give us Zarathustra's origin story. But this is because Nietzsche does not believe in the linear Christian story of birth, teaching, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Instead, he believes in circular recurrence. So he tells Zarathustra's story in such a way that we are led to see how his rebirth both follows and precedes his death. In contrast to the writers of the four Gospels, Nietzsche presents his protagonist's origin story at the end of his published book instead of at the beginning.

Of course, what is most striking about Jesus's origin story is that he is the child of an immaculate conception and a virgin birth. We might think that Nietzsche would be averse to designing a parallel origin story, especially since he ridicules these ideas elsewhere.[10] Also, we might wonder how the doctrine of eternal recurrence could possibly lead to any analogy here. But in my study I argued that Nietzsche does indeed construct such a parallel origin story and that his doctrine does indeed lead him to such an analogy.[11] I summarized this aspect of my reading by referring to Nietzsche's allusion to Dionysus in Section 56 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: Zarathustra is the *circulus vitiosus deus* who makes himself necessary. In the concluding chapters of his published book, Nietzsche shows how Zarathustra awakens his own returning consciousness and uses all of his wisdom to shape and educate it—a wisdom that then informs and propels his many journeys and teachings throughout the earlier narrative.

[10] Cf. Section 34 of *The Antichrist*.
[11] See Loeb 2010: 105-9, 190-8.

Speaking as a mother who has just given birth, Zarathustra tells his naked newborn soul about the umbilical cord of time that connects them together. He explains to his soul how he has washed him clean of his after-birth, baptized him with new names, and offered him many colorful toys to play with. There then ensues a debate between the two of them as to who should be more grateful, the giver or the receiver. Zarathustra tells his soul that he has given him all the gifts he had until his hands were empty. He sees that these gifts have helped his soul to grow into a tall living vine that is superabundant, comprehensive, and joyous. This inner dialogue thus depicts the anticipated third transformation of Zarathustra's spirit from a lion who seizes his own freedom into a child who actually expresses this new freedom. But it also depicts the process whereby the dying Zarathustra gives a virgin birth to his own soul through an immaculate conception—that is, brings himself into existence as a person.[12] He accomplishes this feat through the gifts of wisdom that he himself bestows upon his own returning and awakening consciousness. "Never yet have I found the woman from whom I wanted children, unless it were this woman whom I love: for I love you, oh eternity! *For I love you, oh eternity*!"—these are the last words spoken by Nietzsche's parthenogenetic protagonist in the conclusion to his philosophical novel.

There is only one other place in Nietzsche's book where Zarathustra speaks about himself as a young child. In the "Vision and Riddle" chapter at the start of Part 3, Zarathustra relates his prevision of the events that take place at the end of Part 3. In this prevision, Zarathustra first awakens his most abysmal thought and then crosses the portal

[12] On my reading, however, Nietzsche does not represent Zarathustra as *biologically* giving birth to himself in the nonsensical *casua sui* sense of BGE 21. See Irigaray (1991) and Oliver (1995) for this much stronger reading that raises questions about Nietzsche's attempt to erase or usurp women's biological maternal roles. Passages like Z I.18, Z I.20, and Z III.12:23-24 certainly seem to contradict this stronger reading.

named "*Augenblick*" to find himself waking up into a scene that he recalls from his most distant childhood. In my study, I argued that this portal is the midnight instant that acts as a membrane between the last and first moments in the sequence of Zarathustra's life—that is, between his dying consciousness and his returning consciousness. During this instant, the dying Zarathustra is able to awaken his reborn childhood self and bestow upon him all of the wisdom that he has accumulated during his many journeys and teachings throughout the narrative.[13] One such gift, the most important gift, is what his animals call his "new" knowledge of eternal recurrence. Of course, this knowledge is not actually new because it was lying there all along waiting to be summoned and awakened from its dormant state in his subconscious. But the reason it was lying there waiting for him is that he himself had deposited it there after having recovered it and after having used it to teach himself how to awaken his childhood self in order to teach him this same wisdom.

Put in more contemporary terms, Zarathustra's dying knowledge of eternal recurrence is the discovery about time travel that he then uses in order to communicate this same discovery to his younger self who then carries this same information within him so that he can learn it right before he dies.[14] We are accustomed to thinking that H.G. Wells wrote the first time travel novel in 1895. But perhaps we should say that Nietzsche

[13] Immediately after awakening his most abysmal thought and proving that he must eternally return through the portal of death, Zarathustra hears a dog howling nearby and recalls that he heard and saw this same howling dog when his consciousness was first awakening during his most distant childhood. He then notices that this dog belongs to a stricken young shepherd lying nearby and that this shepherd dog has seen him arriving and is now howling and screaming so that he will come to the aid of his master. In my study (Loeb 2010: 182-5), I argued that Nietzsche is using both these images of the shepherd and his shepherd dog to symbolize the previsioned older Zarathustra who is stricken down and screaming for help while struggling with his most abysmal thought. Here too Nietzsche represents the interaction of two temporally distinct person-stages in Zarathustra's life: his older and embattled person-stage screams a cry for help that awakens his returning childhood person-stage.

[14] In my study (2010: 173 ff.) and in my essay, "Nietzsche's Transhumanism" (Loeb 2011), I have argued that Nietzsche designs a narrative in which his protagonist becomes something more than human by gaining power over time through his discovery of backward-willing.

wrote the first such novel a decade earlier? At the very least, we should credit him with inventing what is now called the "bootstrap" paradox of time travel.[15]

I will conclude here by returning to my question about the relation between Nietzsche's narrative themes of death and life-affirmation. In order to completely affirm his life, Zarathustra has to die at the right time and in the right way. This is because otherwise he would not be in a position to bestow his dying gifts upon his returning self—which means that he never would have been in a position to accumulate all of these gifts in the first place. The dying Zarathustra wants to live again because he is looking forward to reliving his life with all of the wisdom, meaning, and joy that he is now giving to his own awakened soul. The maturing Zarathustra lives in such a way that he wants to live again because he has begun his journey with a storehouse of wisdom, meaning and joy that was given to him by his dying perfected self.

This is a strange circular narrative about what Zarathustra calls his ultimate transformation into a self-propelling wheel. But perhaps we can agree that it fulfills Nietzsche's earlier hope that he would do something to help us feel more inclined to think about life rather than death. When expressing this hope, Nietzsche had observed—in keeping with ancient Epicurean ideas—that death and deathly silence seem to be the only certainty and commonality in everyone's future. Now he assures us instead that we will all be returning into our noisy, life-thirsty, and life-drunken pasts. In that earlier book, Nietzsche had imagined, along with Epicurus, that the silent shadow of death stands behind each of us, like a dark fellow traveler. Now he tells us instead that it is

[15] For a clear and persuasive philosophical discussion of this paradox, see David Lewis' essay on the two influential time travel stories written by Robert Heinlein (Lewis 1993). One of these stories, "By His Bootstraps," is the source of the term now attached to the kind of time travel paradox illustrated in Nietzsche's book.

actually our own future selves who stand behind us at every moment, like enlightened fellow time-travelers. How strange, he had remarked then, that this approaching deathly silence makes almost no impression on people, that they do not feel how they form a fellowship of death. Not strange at all, he says now, for Epicurus was wrong. When we are, death has already arrived, and when death arrives, we simply are again. Death is indeed something to us, namely the eternal return to our same lives and to our fellowship of life with those who share them.[16]

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[16] An earlier draft of this essay was presented at the Nietzsche Society meeting in the SPEP conference in New Orleans on October 24, 2014. I would like to thank the participants for their helpful questions and comments, especially Babette Babich, Charles Bambach, Lorraine Markotic, Gary Shapiro, and Tracy B. Strong.

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Why Do Poets Lie Too Much?

Nietzsche, Poetry and the Different Voices of Zarathustra[17]

Yunus Tuncel, Ph.D.

In the beginning of the section "On Poets"[18] of Part II of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, one of Zarathustra's disciples asks him why he once said that poets lie too much. Zarathustra prefaces his response by saying that he is not someone who deals with whys and reasons because he is not a barrel of memory to carry his reasons with him. He then presents the paradox as to why poets lie too much while he himself is too a poet. The presence of this mostly silent disciple simply accentuates the paradox even more strongly as we shall see later. Nietzsche's relationship to poetry and poets is a complex one; he had written poems from his teen years until the onset of his insanity, and many of his books are full of discussions of poets and poetry. This essay, however, is confined to Zarathustra's paradox of the lying poet instead of exploring the broader subject.

The chapter "On Poets" and the paradox of the lying poet reveal a stream of thought that runs through Nietzsche's works; namely the thought of *Dichtung* (creating, composing, making) and the world-view of the *Dichter* (poet/creator). What Nietzsche puts in the mouth of Zarathustra here applies not only to poets in the strict sense, but to all creators and myth-makers. Below I will make an attempt to work on this paradox in three stages: 1) the meaning of lie, 2) the poetry and the poet: old and new, and 3) the spectacle: peacocks and buffalos.

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[17] This essay is an expanded version of the talk the author had given at the first public event of the Nietzsche Circle at Deutsches Haus in New York in April 2005.

[18] *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Penguin Books, 1976, pp.238-241.

I. What is lying? The Question of Illusion, Untruth, and Error

In an attempt to deal with this seeming paradox, Zarathustra says: "*we* do lie too much." Here he puts himself in the same camp with all poets. But what does he mean by 'lying'? What is a lie for Zarathustra? If Zarathustra too lies like all other poets, how does he lie? What makes Zarathustra *different* than all other poets hitherto? And who is a poet after all?[19] Many of these questions have to do with Nietzsche's philosophy of language, the understanding of which his earlier writings and lectures are helpful.

In an early unpublished essay, "Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense,"[20] written some ten years prior to TSZ, Nietzsche presents his ideas on language and poetry: concepts are nothing but metaphors which have forgotten their metaphorical origin. A metaphor is an arbitrary act of name-giving, a fortuitous co-incidence of nerve stimulus, image, and sound on the part of the name-giver who experiences the object and the act in a singular and sensuous way (singular name-giver faced with a singularly named object); the metaphor belongs primarily to the poet/artist, the myth-maker, whereas the concept to the scientist and the philosopher.

In "Truth and Lies" the term 'lie' (*Lüge*) is used in a double sense: the first sense has to do with poet's initial name-giving; this is the first metaphor, which is a 'lie,' because it is, to a large extent, an arbitrary designation. Now the second sense has to do with the concept derived from the first metaphor, that is, with the forgetfulness in relation

[19] The German word for poet is 'Dichter' which means 'composer,' that is, someone who brings a variety of pieces such as image, symbol, thought, and sensual material into a linguistic form within a specific poetic genre. In this broader sense of the term, poet may mean more than just a poet in the conventional sense.

[20] I use the translation of this essay that is in *Philosophy and Truth*, although I find the translation of the title misleading. 'Lie' is singular in the German text; it is *Lűge* and not *Lűgen*, which the translator also observes in his footnote. This gives the impression as though Nietzsche were suggesting that there is one truth, but many lies, far from being the case even in this early piece.

to the initial metaphor. Consequently, the poet lies in one way, and the rest, the speakers, lie in another way[21]; they lie the lies of poets. We all dissimulate since dissimulation is necessary for human life and culture, but we dissimulate *differently*. The poet, therefore, is a liar, a fabricator by the very nature of his activity. Moreover, as Nietzsche observes in *Human, All Too Human* Aphorism 154, the poet enjoys lying:

> *Playing with* life. - The facility and frivolity of the Homeric fantasy was necessary for soothing the immoderately passionate disposition and over-subtle intellect of the Greeks and temporarily banishing them. When their intellect speaks, how cruel and bitter life appears! They do not deceive themselves, but they deliberately and playfully embellish life with lies. Simonides advised his compatriots to take life as a game; they were only too familiar with its painful seriousness (for the misery of mankind is among the favourite themes for song among the gods), and they knew that even misery could become a source of enjoyment solely through art. As a punishment for this insight, however, they were so plagued by a delight in telling stories that it was hard for them to desist from lies and deception in the course of everyday life - just as all poetical people take a delight in lying; a delight that is moreover quite innocent. The neighboring nations were no doubt sometimes reduced to despair by it.

Dissimulation is a playful act, and even human misery can be a source of enjoyment in the mouths of poets (a theme akin to what was said for the tragic in *The Birth of Tragedy*). And there is innocence to this playful dissimulation. That all art, not only poetry in the strict sense, is deceptive is again presented in *Human, All Too Human* Aphorism 160. Here Nietzsche starts with drama and poetry and moves on to visual and plastic arts; the basic insight presented here is that there is much illusion in all art-making:

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[21] Based on Aphorism 222 from *The Gay Science*, one can say that the poet lies with a good conscience; the others, deprived of milk and hence left in misery, have not attained a good conscience.

Created people. - When we say the dramatist (and the artist in general) actually *creates* characters, this is a nice piece of deception and exaggeration in the existence and dissemination of which art celebrates one of its unintentional and as it were superfluous triumphs. In reality we understand very little of an actual living person and generalize very superficially when we attribute to him this or that character: well, the poet adopts the same *very imperfect* posture towards man as we do, in that his sketches of men are just as *superficial* as is our knowledge of men. There is much illusion involved in these created characters of the artists; they are in no way living products of nature, but, like painted people, a little too thin, they cannot endure inspection from close to. And if one should even venture to say that the character of the ordinary living man is often self-contradictory and that created by the dramatist the ideal that hovered dimly before the eye of nature, this would be quite wrong. An actual human being is something altogether *necessary* (even in those so called contradictions), but we do not always recognize this necessity. The invented human being, the phantasm, desires to signify something necessary, but only in the eyes of those who comprehend even an actual human being only in a crude, unnatural simplification: so that a couple of striking, often repeated characteristics, with a great deal of light on them and a great deal of shadow and twilight around them, suffice to meet all their demands. They are thus quite ready to treat phantasms as actual, necessary human beings because they are accustomed when dealing with actual human beings to take a phantasm, a silhouette, an arbitrary abridgement for the whole. - That the painter and the sculptor, of all people, give expression to the 'idea' of the human being is mere fantasizing and sense-deception: one is being tyrannized over by the eye when one says such a thing, since this sees even of the human body only the surface, the skin; the inner body, however, is just as much part of the idea. Plastic art wants to make characters visible on the outside; the art of speech employs the word to the same end, it delineates the character in sounds. Art begins from the natural *ignorance* of mankind as to his interior (both bodily and as regards character): it does not exist for physicists or philosophers.

All that artists of all variety do is to fantasize, invent, and deceive; "this deception is, after all, the essence of art."[22] However, lying, dissimulating, and illusion-making[23] in themselves could not be a problem for Zarathustra, because all poets lie, but the problem is that they lie *too* much. Poets know very little ("wir wissen auch zu wenig"), and they invent lies[24] to compensate for what they do not *know*. Here the word *wissen* can cover a variety of knowledge and experience, since the word *wissen* is the root of both *wissenschaft* and *weisheit*. Knowledge based on all sciences, philosophical wisdom, and experience can be implied with the word *wissen*. Someone who is wise is not someone who simply knows much, but who has a certain integral experience and a way of relation to life. Zarathustra is not necessarily beating the poets for their lack of 'knowledge,' but for the fact that they fabricate where they do not *know* or, more importantly, where they do not have the sensuous experience that is needed in the creation of metaphor. Let us not forget: for Zarathustra bodily experience is integral to human experience, and the chapter "On Poets" opens with his affirmation of the body: "Since I have come to know the body better…The spirit is to me only quasi-spirit…"[25] The regime of the body covers a variety of fields for Nietzsche: the senses, the fitness of the body, sensuality, sexuality, and dance

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[22] *Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. And tr. by S. Gilman, C. Blair, and D. J. Parent, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 245.

[23] On the subject of illusion-making, I cannot agree with Grundlehner who dismisses illusion from Nietzsche's vision of poetry: "Consequently, he [Nietzsche] rejects the metaphysical loftiness associated with the word *poet* and replaces it with his own formulation, the penitents of the spirit ("die Büßer des Geistes"). These are prophets who, instead of inventing illusions, strive for self-revelation…" (154). No doubt, the penitence of the spirit, or the practice of self-making, is central to Nietzsche and his *Zarathustra*; however, illusion-making too is a part of this practice, which falls to a large extent under the mythopoeic function in Nietzsche. What are at stake for Nietzsche regarding illusion-making are what the illusions are (are they healthy and life-embracing, or decadent and life-negating?) and what kinds of poets create them (in what spirit and according to what world-view).

[24] In an earlier note from 1875, Nietzsche explains this lie-invention as the self-deception of the poets: "The poets deceive themselves about *their own self*; they do not know where it really comes from—so high has error lifted the opinion that they are inspired. Hesiod Thnnichos (from Plato's *Ion*)." *Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, p. 243. In another note, he refers to the poet as a trickster (or cheater), *Betrüger* (*Nietzsche Werke*, II-5, p.351).

[25] *Zarathustra*, p.238.

(the last one is a recurring theme in *Zarathustra*).[26] With this statement Zarathustra is reminding all poets that poetry-making, though an act of dissimulation, is not merely rambling words and rhyming them, but a singular, somatic, and an integral experience.

Moreover, Zarathustra's attack on poets can be linked to Nietzsche's early diagnosis of the modern age, its logo-centricity inherited from the Socratic age, and one of its main problems in the domain of language (that is also connected to other domains and their problems); namely, the forgetting (or the underestimation) of metaphor, the forgetting that all concepts owe their origin to the sensuous act of carrying over. As Kofman observes "carrying over must not be understood here as a transition from one place to another: it must itself be taken as a metaphor which, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, condenses several meanings: transfiguration, transformation, ecstasy, self-dispossession and metamorphosis…as well as: transposition of the truth of Being into symbolic languages."[27] This forgetting that takes concept as the primary effects all use of language: the use of rhetoric (the art of persuasion based on unchanging concepts, still prevalent in our age), scientific constructs built on concepts that also have claim to permanence via objectivity, and the poet who is displaced from his own home because the priority of the metaphor has been forgotten and the metaphor is relegated to the lesser domain of fiction, fantasy-making. One of the targets of Zarathustra is this homeless poet who not only does not claim his home back, but worse than that, composes poetry within the hegemony of the conceptual apparatus (the poet who idealizes, who moralizes, etc.)

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[26] On this topic one may consult with LaMothe's *Nietzsche's Dancers* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

[27] Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, translated by Duncan Large, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, p.15.

II. The Poetry and the Poet: Old and New, the Question of Epoch-Making

There is, for Zarathustra, another type of poetry that does not tamper with the expanse of human experience or with the depth of philosophical thinking, but operates in a new horizon; a new depth that the poet himself opens up in the infinity of poetry making. Poets of the old epoch, however, mix things up, cook things like alchemists, believe in gossips and folk wisdom, and dabble with the Eternal-Feminine, that is, with the ideal and the after-life. Adulterated wine and poisonous hodge-podge are what they contrive. This section, "On Poets," has several explicit references to the ending of Goethe's *Faust*; one could, therefore, assume that Goethe is one of the targets of the polemic, though he is not the only one[28].

Poets lie too much and then empower their lies when they believe and pretend that it is nature or gods that are speaking through them, that they are the beloved of nature and the only spokespersons of all those things that are eternal. Here what is at stake for Zarathustra is what lies poets empower and how, that is in what spirit, they empower them since these empowered lies become the highest values for their people. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, written shortly after TSZ, Nietzsche presents two primary modes of value-making, the modes in and through which certain words are made into moral concepts according to their *spirit*. Although these two modes are not discussed explicitly in TSZ, they are present in the text (present in the different ways of doing poetry).

The power of the poet, however, does not begin or end here. Arguing for the utility of poetry (utility in a different sense), Nietzsche presents four primordial forces

[28] Throughout his works, Nietzsche attacks agonistically many old and new poets including Goethe, Baudelaire, Lombardi for a variety of reasons. Some of his major criticisms have to do with the idealist, other-worldly, pessimistic, nihilistic, and romantic elements in their works. They were not *thinkers* enough to undo some of the philosophical presuppositions of their age; therefore, they were not *poets* enough.

that are at work in poetry, which have strong appeal to humans and gods alike; these forces are rhythm, melody, magic, and prophecy.[29] (They are all inter-connected, and rhythm permeates all). Rhythm reorders the sentence, helps the speaker in choosing his words with care, and gives one's thought a new color. Additionally, rhythm creates a bond between mortals and gods who are compelled to join this bond through poetry; "rhythm is a compulsion…Thus one tried to *compel* the gods by using rhythm."[30] On the other hand, music functions—here Nietzsche looks out of poetry into music, song, and dance within the context of other artistic mediums—for unloading the affects, purifying the soul, and easing the ferocity of the soul (or the mind). "When the proper tension and harmony of the soul had been lost, one had to *dance*, following the singer's beat: that was the prescription of this therapy."[31] He even attributes this function of easing the ferocity of the soul to the orgiastic cults (gods have to be appeased so that they leave mortals in peace). And melody is a tranquilizer (*Besänftigungsmittel* which translates as "means of soothing or calming); "not because it is tranquil itself but because its aftereffects make one tranquil."[32] Rhythm has a magical power also and magical songs were supposed to cast a spell over the demons so that mortals could act unhindered by such spirits (Nietzsche sees the magical song as a primeval form of poetry). Finally, rhythm has its role in oracles; by gaining the favor of Apollo through verse (in both directions), one could compel the future. "As the formula [of Apollo] is pronounced, with literal and rhythmic precision, it binds the future."[33]

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[29] *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books, 1974, Aphorism 84, pp.138-140.
[30] *Ibid*., p.139.
[31] *Ibid*., p.139.
[32] *Ibid*., p.139.
[33] *Ibid*., p.140.

In the above quoted aphorism, Nietzsche uncovers four areas of poetry in which poets can and do lie: through rhythm they establish the musical appeal, set the psychic well-being, and the emotional make-up, through melody they can soothe mortals and gods in their own way, through magic they can control and empower themselves vis-à-vis their believers, and through prophecy they can dictate over the destiny of their people. Lie and value are thus conjoined. As Kaufmann observes in the footnote, the aphorism ends with an irony: "For as Homer says: "Many lies tell the poets," which echoes what Zarathustra says about poets.

By using these poetic devices that have universal appeal, the poets have monopolized the realm of the spirit—they claim to hold the keys to heaven—and thus their lies are sealed forever for those who believe in their lies. Since poets borrow from gossip and folk wisdom, this sealing does not take much effort for them to achieve; people see their own reflections in the fabrications of the poets and feel elevated when they recognize themselves in poetically sublimated new forms. The gods and the overhumans, or the highest values, are the fabrications of the poets. Here Zarathustra conceives poets as value-makers and polemicizes against the ways through which they create values, that is, their *modus operandi*.

Zarathustra, therefore, is weary of poets. He is weary of the fact that all the imperfections and all the poetic shallowness have become an event (*Ereigniss*); that is, they have become the highest values, and that is an event for an epoch. At this point in Zarathustra's speech "On Poets," the disciple becomes angry with him. But why does he become angry? The passive disciple is the model of a passive reader who faithfully follows Zarathustra, but what does faith matter to Zarathustra? The disciple is the model

Zarathustra wants to dismantle, and his anger is a reflection of this dismantlement and a reflection of his disillusionment with Zarathustra as his idol. Zarathustra is not the poetic idol he thought he was. Zarathustra too is a liar, but not in the way that the old poets are. The disciple is the reader of the old poets and has not, up to this point in his journey, understood how Zarathustra lies. This mood of anger, that is emblematic of disillusionment and dismantling, will be followed by silence[34], the moment of solitude, the possibility of self-transformation.

But why do poets lie too much? And yet Zarathustra too is a poet. Zarathustra is not a poet of yesterday, but of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow; here we arrive at the second dissolution of the paradox. Here the previously established 'we' of all poets falls asunder: Zarathustra is not any poet, at least not a poet in the old sense[35]. This was implied in the first dissolution of the paradox, but is now clearly stated. Zarathustra is weary of all poets, old and new. They lie and their lies don't have depth, they are superficial, shallow seas; neither their thoughts nor their feelings penetrate the depths. They are guided by boredom and lust, present shallowness as depth, pose as reconcilers, but they are, in fact, mixers who bring the unmixable together, creating eclectic forms. They are poor in style and mix eclectically where the form and the content remain apart, where a variety of disparate elements is not creatively appropriated, which is the mixing

[34] There are different kinds of silences that surround Zarathustra throughout the text, depending on where and with whom he is. The silence that appears here is the collective silence, the silence in the presence of other(s), and is the most uncanny one, because it is the most difficult silence to attain. There has to be a mythic context for such a mystical silence; Zarathustra seems to have established such a context.

[35] Zarathustra's teachings on poetry does not support Grundlehner's conclusion that "Nietzsche ultimately distrusts the validity of poetry," although he comes to this conclusion via different routes. (*The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p.305). No doubt, Nietzsche sees the pitfalls of language, the temptations of rhetorical devices and the seduction of words, as Grundlehner observes, and does not withhold his attack on poets where they represent what is wrong with art and poetry. And these poets may be the giants of his century like Goethe, Poe, and Baudelaire. However, one must not forget that Zarathustra too is a poet. And this must invite the reader to ask the question as to what type of poetry Nietzsche envisions for the future. Who are his poets of the future?

of modern style, or stylelessness. Here we are in the town of Motley Cow, the cow that passively waits to be painted with a variety of colors that do not belong together and that are not absorbed aesthetically.

Instead of good fish, Zarathustra always finds the head of some old god in the sea of the old poets; either in the form of ideals or the after life or the sentimental love stories of lovers who die in each other's arms to meet in eternity. If it is not some old god, it is the shadow or the ghost of the old god. Instead of souls, Zarathustra often finds salted slime in the old poets. In contrast, Zarathustra is a poet who announces the death of God that stands for a symbol of a set of values and teaches the overhuman and the eternal recurrence of the same. Zarathustra's polemic with the old poets must then be understood within the context of this epochal shift the signpost of which is the death of God. Zarathustra is a poet who has understood the problems of the godly epoch and has undertaken the journey of a self-transformation. His poets of the future[36], like his animals, will too have understood these problems and will poeticize according to the demands of the new age.

III. The Spectacle: Peacocks and Buffalos, the Grand Spectacle of Zarathustra

Dichter-Eitelkeit
Gebt mir Leim nur: denn zum Leime
Find' ich selber mir schon Holz!
Sinn in vier unsinn'ge Reime
Legen—ist kein kleiner Stolz!
(GS, "Joke, Cunning, and Revenge," Poem 56)[37]

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[36] I would like to list, among many others, Rilke, Valery, Apollinaire, and Char as Zarathustra's poets of the future.

[37] Poet's Vanity
Give me glue and in good time
I'll find wood myself. To crowd
Sense into four silly rhymes
Is enough to make one proud.

Why do poets lie too much? And yet Zarathustra too is a poet. In the third and the final dissolution of the paradox of the lying poet, we are presented with a parable to poets, a parable on poets and their vanity. The egos of the poets want to be at the center of the stage like beautiful peacocks, no matter who the spectators may be. Poets bring all beauties together like peacocks (especially when they open their tails); they amalgamate all folk songs and sagas and recreate a new poetry that can easily attract the crowds. In this sense, the poets are the peacock of peacocks. Insofar as their function is myth-making, poets are always, albeit unconsciously, connected to their folk, the folk whose stories, rhapsodies, cults and cult functions form the substance of poetic creation. Since poets are connected to the folk, the folk are connected to them. And the vanity of the poet is formed in this interaction; it is formed in the space of the collective unconscious, or in Zarathustra's mouth it is the sea from which the poets learn their vanity.[38]

But what is vanity and why is vanity a problem for Nietzsche (and for Zarathustra)? Aphorism 87 from *The Gay Science* sheds light on this *eternal* human problem, however, the context is not general human vanity, but rather the vanity of the artists. "I believe that artists often do not know what they can do best, because they are too vain and have fixed their minds on something prouder…" The first problem of vanity

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The Gay Science, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Press, 1974.

[38] Neither the poetry of myth-makers in general nor Nietzsche's poetry in particular can be understood strictly as monological as Grundlehner claims: "Nietzsche's poetry is to a large extent monologic art in that much of it forms a dialogue with itself." (309) Despite many textual evidences, Grundlehner's conclusion is far from convincing. However important the monologue, the silence, the soliluqoy may be in Nietzsche's works and for Zarathustra, these practices of the self cannot be more than half of the story. The second half consists of the collective, the community through which another set of self-making practices are possible. Here one can consider the following from *Zarathustra*: the sun that shines upon others, Zarathustra's search for his disciples (together they form the spiritual community), and his encounter with the higher men, not to mention his animals many of which symbolize human qualities. Moreover, one must not forget that the Dionysian experience is a collective experience; the dithyrambs are songs sung by the Dionysian revelers in their ecstatic moments.

is the lack of self-knowledge regarding one's capability. "They do not think much of what is actually good in their own garden or vineyard…" The second problem of vanity is that artists take their own native soil for granted (the inability to see the richness and the beauty in the small things that one has and the inability to view these small things anew from refreshed perspectives). Even if the artist is great in his own small domain, he will not be content with this. Nietzsche presents the case of a musician (no name is mentioned, but Kaufmann thinks what is said here is applicable to Wagner) who can create by drawing "from the very bottom of human happiness" and who is "master of the very small." But he is not satisfied, "that is not what he *wants* to be. His character prefers large walls…" He cannot see that he can create his masterpieces in his own smaller garden; "he is too vain to know it."[39] Finally, the last point about vanity is that one is never content with one's own garden (one does not know one's own garden) and always looks for bigger gardens in which one cannot create. Ultimately, whether it is general or that of the artist, vanity is the inability to know one self, one's own domain, who one is *truly* at a deeper level, and what one can do and becomes manifest, in different degrees, in the discrepancy between who one is and what one does or how one presents himself. The more one's vain actions pertain to others (as in collective forms of expression), the more others become affected by such vanities. Hence the discussion of the problem of vanity within the context of spectacle-making at the end of the chapter "On Poets."

Human beings are spectacular beings; there are those who create spectacles and those who experience them passively (at least, this is so in the occidental world since the rise of theater in ancient Greece). Zarathustra's parable shows the deficiency of these immediate tendencies in the problem of the creator and the non-creator and points to

[39] *The Gay Science,* Aphorism 87, pp.142-143.

other possible ways of constituting spectacular experiences where there are no beautiful peacocks on one side and ugly buffaloes on the other. The problem of spectacle in Occidental civilization since the Greeks persists in Nietzsche as a problem all throughout his thinking, although he does not pursue it as rigorously as he does in his two early works, *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Untimely Meditations IV*.

There will, however, always be vainglorious peacocks who will always find a herd of ugly buffaloes to stare at them and their motley outfits. In this last part of "On Poets," one cannot help but think of Richard Wagner, his Bayreuth, and why Nietzsche was appalled and sickened by the spectacle Wagner had created that attracted all that was non-artistic for the vainglory of the master. Again it is the peacock and the buffaloes it attracts, but this problem of spectacle exceeds one single artist and one single spectacle however grand it may be, and goes right into the heart of the problems of the epoch.

Nietzsche's earlier attraction to Wagner and his Bayreuth project has to do, among other things, with his admiration for the Greek theater as a form of grand artistic spectacle and its festive spirit. In his analysis of Greek tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he not only sees drama as an agonistic union of Apollinian/imagistic and Dionysian/symbolic forces and the unity of all arts on a grand scale, but also considers the Dionysian artist, the lyric poet, who is one with all being, as an unconscious *spokesperson* of nature, the primordial unity. In other words, the Greek artist was humble before all creation and great in proportion to the greatness he had achieved. This humility, or sense of mortality, was also projected onto the tragic stage, and all of this was a collective experience with the audience. We moderns including our poets, on the other hand, are far removed from this tragic experience of selfhood and mortality.

Although Nietzsche was not a maker of spectacles in the strict sense, he has a vision for a grand spectacle[40] that is inspired by the ancient Greeks and Wagner (despite his disagreements). And this vision (not only the concept) is most vivid, richest in terms of imagery and symbolism in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Below I would like to present briefly the type of *grand spectacle* Nietzsche attempts to create in this work.[41]

Zarathustra's grand spectacle is that he is a hero and a life-affirming poet—a self-made sage who cultivates himself in solitude in his cave and knows or comes to know the problems of his age (it is not a coincidence that Nietzsche does not use a Greek figure here—in almost all things he is a pupil of ancient Greece, but an entirely fictitious *contemporary* figure though based on a historical character). He then undertakes a journey of self-transformation as he imparts his teachings on a select audience, his disciples, and as he interacts with crowds from towns, a variety of types of the godly order, and animals or the forces of life. Throughout the journey, Zarathustra never loses touch with his cave, that is, with the symbolic place of his solitude; he is not beholden to anyone, but to his own self, the cosmic cycles where his self is situated. The drama unfolds in these encounters, in the monologues and dialogues of Zarathustra. And finally his fall is symbolized by his despair, his illness, and his *final* mysterious Oedipus-like disappearance at his sign[42] that comprises the morning sun on the way to the great noon, his animals (the eagle, the birds, the lion, a mighty, yellow, dog-like animal, the doves), and his children (one appealing version of Zarathustra's disappearance is his dance-like

[40] Here I do not suggest that Nietsche has a Mallermé like vision for whom poetry for spectacle meant spectacle itself.
[41] Here I cannot help but think Mallarmé and other symbolists who identified a great (dramatic) poetic book with its grand artistic spectacle. Although I can see the link between the two, I cannot follow them in all respects in this identification.
[42] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "The Sign," pp.436-439.

walk into the sun). There should not be any doubt that Zarathustra would go to his death joyfully when it is the "right time" to die, but his death is symbolic. Zarathustra has died many times throughout his journey and come back to life again.

Epilogue

Faith, blind following, or icon worshipping does not make Zarathustra blessed. Zarathustra expects that his disciples seek their own paths and create their own journeys as they appropriate other similar journeys in creative ways and as they fit them into their own journeys. There is no predetermined journey, no single path that is good for all. Zarathustra whirls around himself as he rises out of himself and expects that his disciples too would whirl and rise out of themselves on their own unique paths.

Zarathustra too is a poet; he too is a liar, but a different kind of a liar. He is not a fabricator of *dishonest* lies such as the lie of an after-life; he is not a maker of ideals because for him permanence is a parable and a lie of the poets. He has come to know the body better, he has plunged into the bottom of thinking to bring depth into his poetry, and he does not dress like a peacock to attract buffaloes. In the first part of the paradox of the lying poets Zarathustra showed that all poets lie and how they lie; in the second part he presented himself as a different kind of a poet; and finally in the last part he exposed how poets, out of vanity, seek spectators indiscriminately to place themselves at the center of all attention. Zarathustra, himself a poet but of a different kind, a poet who has seen through the vanity of the poet, sees the rise of new poetry out of the ashes of the old poets.

We have seen the dissolution of the paradox of the lying poet in three stages: the poet who fabricates (almost any poet), the poet who makes myths and thereby is a value-creator (a few poets like Homer), and the poet who makes spectacles (more than few). Through the basic poetic function (the use of language and metaphor-making), value-creation and spectacle-making, all poets are united (the *we* of poets) but they also fall asunder according to epoch-making (the old poets and the new poets). Nietzsche has shown in *Zarathustra* and elsewhere how all three and their problems are connected within the context of epoch-making. The poets of the future will have to attend to all three and their inter-connectedness.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it has been more than a century since Nietzsche created the character of Zarathustra, a new type of a poet, and placed him as the main character of the grand tragic spectacle of the epoch he envisioned. Since then there have been *spectators* who experienced the spectacle of Zarathustra attentively and recreated different forms of poetic philosophy. Since then the spectacle of Zarathustra has been unfolding in a variety of forms and artistic media, always ready for the attentive, creative spectator, to be experienced anew.

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Nihilism Now and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*

Ashley Woodward

Exitless nothingness

Despite several weighty academic studies, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* remains the most mysterious and unsettling of Nietzsche's books. Robert B. Pippin notes that there is "nothing close to a standard reading of the work's intention, form, development, resolution, or lack of resolution," and locates the crux of the problem of interpretation in the difficulty of identifying its genre.[43] As K. T. Seung puts it, "[w]e cannot even be sure what kind of book it is supposed to be."[44] I wish to propose another approach to this enigmatic work. I am not concerned here with a historicist or close textual interpretation (which have already been undertaken by others), but rather with the living, existential problem of what value this strange and fascinating text might have for us in understanding and responding to nihilism as we confront it today.

'Nihilism' is a philosophical term and concept, established in the philosophical tradition as a way of talking about a crisis concerning existential meaninglessness, which is often voiced in other ways in the broader cultural context. This concept of course finds its classical expression in the works of Nietzsche, which remain indispensable for a philosophical engagement with the problem. Yet on Nietzsche's own analysis nihilism is subject to historical process, and so his nineteenth-century understanding of the issue needs constantly to be reconsidered in the light of current philosophical and cultural

[43] Pippin, Robert B. "Irony and Affirmation in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" in *Nietzsche's New Seas*, ed. by Michael Allen Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 45-7.
[44] Seung, K.T. *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul:* Thus Spoke Zarathustra. New York: Lexington, 2005, p. ix.

developments. Over the last several decades some prominent philosophers who have been concerned with nihilism have considered it necessary either significantly to revise Nietzsche's concept, or to abandon Nietzsche entirely in favour of alternative thinkers who have also dealt with nihilism.

An example of the first kind is Gianni Vattimo. While continuing to insist that what he is doing is interpreting Nietzsche, Vattimo has developed a heterodox reading (in dialogue with other thinkers, most importantly Heidegger) whereby nihilism has a *positive* form, and is seen as a 'solution' to the various problems glossed under the heading of 'metaphysics.'[45] As an example of the second kind, Jean-François Lyotard sees figures such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Spengler as tarred with the brush of romantic nostalgia, indulging a fantasy of lost meaning. Rejecting them, Lyotard formulates an alternative canon of writers on nihilism, including figures such as Paul Valéry, André Malraux, and Theodor W. Adorno.[46] Despite the specific differences of their views, what philosophers such as Vattimo and Lyotard agree is outmoded in Nietzsche's thought is the apparent attempt to replace the position vacated by God with something thought too closely to resemble God; to install a new God (or, given the semantic richness of the shorthand term 'God,' a new myth, religion, or metaphysics).

If any of Nietzsche's works would seem to be so outmoded, surely it would be *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, with its evangelical style and its apparent ambition to create a new

[45] See for example Gianni Vattimo. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, tr. by John R. Snyder, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988.
[46] See Jean-François Lyotard. *Postmodern Fables*, tr. by Georges Van Den Abbeele, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997 and *Soundproof Room: Malraux's Anti-Aesthetics*, tr. by Robert Harvey, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

mythology or religion.[47] This is how Lyotard argues the point:

> Nietzsche … did not succeed in removing the pathos from the "nothing is worth anything." Writing in the form of dithyrambs and fragments does not interrupt, rather it reinforces the filiation with Romanticism and Symbolism. Zarathoustra's poetic prose, like the late Heidegger's sibylline writing, is well made for speaking the expected arrival of a "last god." It is still prophesying, just as it is said that the pre-Socratics prophesied in their time; even though the circumstances are propitious, in the artificial light of the megalopolis, for a laconism without pathos. Wittgenstein, Gertrude Stein, Joyce, or Duchamp seem like better "philosophical" minds than Nietzsche or Heidegger – by better, I mean more apt to take into consideration the exitless nothingness the West gives birth to in the first quarter of the twentieth century …[48]

For Lyotard, while Wittgenstein's style is "apt for taking it into account," no philosopher before Adorno adequately recognized what he takes to be the true character of nihilism.[49] (op. cit.). Nietzsche and Heidegger, he believes, ignore its "exitless" nature by preparing the way for a new beginning, an overcoming of nihilism. The same goes for Oswald Spengler, whom he describes as "but the aborted child" of Nietzsche, "argued in a flat-footed way."[50]

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[47] A significant recent interpretation which affirms this image of *Zarathustra* is T.K. Seung's *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul* (2005). Seung argues that the central drama of *Zarathustra* is the conflict between the 'Faustian' autonomous individual and 'Spinozan' deterministic Nature. While a rational resolution of this problem is not possible, Seung see's *Zarathustra* as Nietzsche's presentation of a religious solution, in which the individual will is reconciled with cosmic necessity in the deification of nature through the figure of Dionysus. He argues that Nietzsche's self-described 'fifth Gospel' "is not meant to be a mere addition to the four Gospels. It is the Gospel for the nature-religion of Dionysus. Its function is to announce a new religion to replace the religion of the New Testament just as the latter replaced the religion of the Old Testament." Seung asserts that "Nietzsche's allegiance to the god of Dionysus is not only philosophical but religious. But his avowal of the Dionysian allegiance has rarely been taken as anything more than a rhetorical flourish. It is about time to take it as a pious expression of his religious reverence for Dionysus." (xxvi)

[48] Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables,* p. 23.

[49] Op. cit.

[50] Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, p. 23.

How, then, does nihilism appear for Lyotard, "in the artificial light of the megalopolis"? With his thesis on postmodernity, Lyotard has arguably provided one of the most significant and influential – if not generally well-understood – updates of the Nietzschean account of nihilism. Nietzsche saw very well that after the death of God, God's position would be taken by Man. In Lyotard's parlance, this accords with the modern era of the prominence of metanarratives, stories which give meaning and value to life and the world by construing Man (a universal subject of history) as the *hero* of the narrative, history as its *diegesis*, and the emancipation or redemption of Man as its *denourment*. This is the period in which Nietzsche found himself, and the barbs in his stinging rhetoric were directed as much against insipid humanism as against the Church. As is well-known, Lyotard characterised the late twentieth century as affected by an "incredulity toward metanarratives."[51] He links this explicitly with Nietzsche's story about nihilism,[52] and we may see what Lyotard calls postmodernity as a 'progression' of nihilism, in which disorientation deepens, because not only are religious values seen to be bankrupt, but humanist values as well.

A further stage in Lyotard's reflections is little appreciated, in which the narrative of *development* takes the place of the metanarratives. As Bernard Reginster astutely remarks (in what is one of the most significant recent studies of Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism), Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God amounts to the claim that God and the existence of a metaphysical world are *discredited*, and "[a] discredited belief is not, strictly speaking, refuted, but it is a belief the possible truth of

[51] Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, tr. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. xxiv.
[52] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, pp. 38-39.

which can no longer be taken seriously."[53] Nietzsche understood that God was not 'entirely refuted,' and that he would continue to hold sway over our imaginary for a long time to come: the dead God would continue to cast his shadow (GS §108).[54] The same is true of Lyotard's announcement regarding metanarratives. While in *The Postmodern Condition* he announced that our mourning for narrative legitimation was complete, he quickly realized that this was not the case; that a peculiar kind of metanarrative still circulates. This is the narrative of development, which he outlines in multiple essays written throughout the later part of the nineteen-eighties, and sometimes termed the 'postmodern fable.'[55] According to him, this fable is "the great narrative that the world persists in telling itself after the great narratives have obviously failed."[56] This narrative presents the process of development itself as the protagonist of the story, and at the most abstract level it is understood only as 'order' or 'negentropy' (while the antagonist is entropy, the tendency to disorder). Glossing Lyotard briefly, the upshot is that according to the narrative of development, capitalism and technoscience are legitimated because they are the most efficient agents of development, while all other values we previously believed in are robbed of their worth. This is 'nihilism now' for Lyotard: religious and humanist values are devalued, while the absolute rights of development reign supreme.

It seems we are a long way from Nietzsche's esoteric proclamations and impassioned pleas for exceptional individuals to create new values in the shadow of the dead God. Yet some of Nietzsche's descriptions of nihilism are in fact not far from

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[53] Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 9.
[54] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1991.
[55] See in particular the essay "A Postmodern Fable" in *Postmodern Fables*.
[56] Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, pp. 81–2.

Lyotard's dark vision of development. A *Nachlass* note from the autumn of 1887 includes the following:

> Once we possess that common economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of this economy – as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly "adapted" gears; as an ever-growing superfluity of all dominating and commanding elements; as a whole of tremendous force, whose individual factors represent *minimal forces, minimal values.*
>
> […]
>
> It is clear, what I combat is economic optimism: as if increasing expenditure of everybody must necessarily involve the increasing welfare of everybody. The opposite seems to me to be the case: *expenditure of everybody amounts to a collective loss*: humanity is *diminished* – so one no longer knows what *aim* this tremendous process has served. An aim? A new aim? – *that* is what humanity needs. (KSA 12: 462-3, 10 [17] Fall 1887 / WP §866 / WLN 10[17]).[57]

Commenting on this note, Pierre Klossowski suggests that Nietzsche is prophetic here not in any sense of heralding a 'last God,' but in forseeing planetary planning or management.[58] In broad general agreement with Lyotard here, Nietzsche sees global economic development as a process without a meaningful aim or goal in which the value of humanity itself is negated. At least at points, then, Nietzsche's work is not obviously obsolete for a consideration of 'nihilism now' as Lyotard portrays it in terms of its *content*.

However, as the above-quoted passage indicates, Lyotard's dismissal of Nietzsche's current relevance is based not so much on content, but on *style*. Lyotard argues that this style is pathetic (in the sense of making an emotional appeal) and prophetic, and that a more appropriate style with which to reflect on contemporary nihilism is a 'laconism without pathos' (that is, a minimal style which does not appeal to

[57] As quoted in Pierre Klossowski. *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, tr. by Daniel W. Smith, London and New York: Continuum, 2005, p. 123.

[58] Klossowski. *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, p. 122.

the emotions) which does not prophecy a new beginning, but confronts the exitlessness of our contemporary nothingness. And as Lyotard also indicates, *Zarathustra* is the paragon of the style he dismisses. The question I wish to ask here is this: In what sense, if any, can we understand Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* to have a contemporary relevance for our current nihilism? What are we to make of this strange book today? Perhaps surprisingly, in response to this question I wish to propose a hypothesis via one of the most comprehensive commentators on *Zarathustra*, whose work continues to be largely ignored by mainstream academic Nietzsche scholars: C. G. Jung. Rather than look at the detailed content of Jung's voluminous *Zarathustra* seminars,[59] I am interested rather in how Jung's general framework of analysis allows a reading of the contemporary meaning and significance of the book regarded in terms of its style and literary genre. After outlining a specific approach to Jung, I will then argue that we may see *Zarathustra* as a *parodic* work, which does not reinscribe a desire for God, but rather subverts deep unconscious longings for religious transcendence, and thus works to prepare its readers to live in a Godless world.

This mixed-up being

Many academic scholars are no doubt dismissive or wary of Jung because of his apparent 'supernaturalism,' and his reputation in this regard has not been helped by his adoption in popular 'New Age' circles. The interpretation I adopt here is guided by the hypothesis that Jung, quite to the contrary, may be 'naturalized.' There are strong naturalistic

[59] These seminars were delivered between 1934 and 1939. For many years the transcripts circulated privately, and only became readily available in English translation with the 2-volume edition published in 1988: Jung, C.G. *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminars Given in 1934-39*, 2 vols., London and New York: Routledge.

tendencies guiding Jung's work, and the contemporary psychologist Anthony Stevens has done important work to carry Jung's thought further in this direction by reading it as consistent with evolutionary psychiatry.[60] Stevens acknowledges that Jung lacked caution, and that this allowed him to get carried away with his speculations. We may also note that he also had a disconcerting habit of speaking of the realities of the psyche in a way which refused to accord them less reality than the physical world (for example, his insistence that a patient of his had spent the last several years on the moon).[61] Yet, as with Nietzsche, much that Jung is popularly supposed to have believed he never actually did, and in general his work on apparently supernatural phenomena in fact functions to give it a naturalistic explanation (for example, interpreting apparent spirit possession as mental illness, or gods as psychological forces).

Before drawing out the implications of analytical psychology for *Zarathustra*, I propose to prepare the path by offering a brief sketch of how a naturalized Jung might be thought as significantly consonant with some of Nietzsche's own concerns.[62] Both thinkers may be understood to offer hypothesizes which should be understood under the heading of *speculative naturalism*. According to Brian Leiter, Nietzsche is a speculative naturalist (like Hume) because he sought to "construct theories that are "modeled" on the sciences … in that they take over from science the idea that naturalistic phenomena have

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[60] See Anthony Stevens. *Jung,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994; Anthony Stevens. *Archetype Revisited: An Updated Natural History of the Self*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002; and Anthony Stevens and John Price. *Evolutionary Psychiatry: A New Beginning*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

[61] This amusing anecdote is recounted by Marie-Louise von Franz in the 1989 PBS documentary *Carl Jung: Wisdom of the Dream*.

[62] While there have been a number of significant studies of Nietzsche and Jung, charting the reception and influence of Nietzsche in Jung's thought and exploring a variety of common themes (in addition to those cited elsewhere in this essay, see Lucy Huskinson. *Nietzsche and Jung: The Whole Self in the Unity of Opposites*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004), I am not aware of any which have made a naturalistic theory of mind the significant point of comparison, as I do here.

deterministic causes."[63] Speculative naturalism is 'speculative' in that it works without reference to *actual* causal mechanisms that have been confirmed by the sciences, and 'naturalistic' in that its "speculative theories of human nature are informed by the sciences and a scientific picture of how things work."[64] Both Nietzsche and Jung may be seen as speculative naturalists in this sense because their theories of human nature take inspiration from a scientific worldview, but extend to psychological and philosophical realms in which scientific knowledge is lacking, and in which the methods of the natural sciences may well not in principle ever be applied.

For both Jung and Nietzsche, Darwin's theory of evolution may be understood as a starting point. Following Darwin, Nietzsche wants to understand human beings as wholly natural, a part of the animal kingdom (rather than beings defined by the possession of a supernatural soul). Nevertheless, Nietzsche criticizes Darwin for ignoring what is distinctive of human beings and an essential factor in our survival and evolution: human consciousness (TI "Expeditions" §14).[65] According to Nietzsche, human beings are naturally *interpretive* creatures; our capacity to take cognizance of ourselves and the world and impute them with values is a result of environmental adaptation. Our interpretations of the world have formed under the pressures and needs of survival (rather than purely abstract considerations of truth, as philosophers have imagined), and they are also conditioned by the specific sensory organs we are endowed with, which give us

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[63] Brian Leiter. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 5.

[64] Brian Leiter. "Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered" in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. by J. Richardson and K. Gemes, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 577.

[65] Nietzsche, Friedrich. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, tr. by R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, 1990.

restricted access to the world.[66] According to Nietzsche, the fact of consciousness explains why human cultures have typically not supported the survival of the fittest, but of the *weakest*. (TI "Expeditions" §14) Moreover, it is consciousness which intensifies human suffering because we suffer not only from suffering itself, but from not being able to find a *meaning* in suffering (GM III §28).[67] Nevertheless, consciousness is for Nietzsche nothing more than a natural outgrowth of the body; it is the body itself (Z I "Despisers"),[68] and entirely continuous with the natural world. As has often been noted, with this continuity, yet complex relation, of the mind and the body we find in Nietzsche an important precursor to Freud's theory of the unconscious.

Jung, for his part, supplements and extends Freud's well-known view of the mind by adding, in addition to consciousness and the 'personal' unconscious, what he terms the 'collective' unconscious. Contrary to the popular misunderstanding that this is some kind of supernatural, disembodied collective mind, the collective unconscious is a 'deep' part of the mind stemming from regions of the brain in which (Jung speculated) inherited predispositions to thoughts and behaviors reside. Human beings have been conditioned to interpret the world in certain ways under the pressures of survival within hunter-gatherer type communities for many thousands of years. In short, Jung's hypothesis is that with human beings, not only behavioral functions are inherited as instincts (as is the case with other animals), but also predispositions to *interpret* the world in certain ways. For Jung,

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[66] Christoph Cox has convincingly argued that Nietzsche's naturalism is entirely consistent with his perspectivism on this count. See his *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

[67] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. by Keith Ansell Pearson, tr. by Carol Diethe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[68] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tr. by R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, 1974.

such interpretations have not only a cultural transmission, but a biological transmission; this is what gives his theory of mind a fundamentally naturalistic grounding. This naturalistic basis of Jung's thought is abundantly clear in one of his most widely circulated works, *Man and His Symbols*. Here he explains:

> Just as the human body represents a whole museum of organs, each with a long evolutionary history behind it, so we should expect to find that the mind is organized in a similar way. It can no more be a product without history than is the body in which it exists. By "history" I do not mean that fact that the mind builds itself up by conscious reference to the past through language and other cultural traditions. I am referring to the biological, prehistoric, and unconscious development of the mind in archaic man, whose psyche was still close to that of the animal.
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> This immensely old psyche forms the basis of our mind, just as much as the structure of our body is based on the general anatomical pattern of the mammal. The trained eye of the anatomist or the biologist finds many traces of this original pattern in our bodies. The experienced investigator of the mind can similarly see the analogies between the dream pictures of modern man and the products of the primitive mind, its "collective images," and its mythological motifs.[69]

According to Jung, the basis of these collective images and mythological motifs are what he calls *archetypes*. They are predispositions to interpretations and behaviours that reside in the collective unconscious. They are ""archaic remnants" – mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind."[70] The test of an archetype is that it can be found as a symbol in all human cultures. However, the archetype itself is not reducible to any specific symbols or representations, but is "a tendency to form such representations of a motif – representations […] can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern."[71] Jung underlines the naturalistic cast of his theory of

[69] Jung, C. G., "Approaching the Unconscious" in *Man and His Symbols*, London: Aldus, 1964, p. 67.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

archetypes when he writes that they are "an instinctive *trend*, as marked as the impulse of birds to build nests, or ants to form organized colonies."[72]

On the basis of his speculative naturalistic psychology, Jung presents his own intriguing picture of contemporary nihilism: the tragedy of modern humanity is that we are psychologically programmed, at a very deep unconscious level, to interpret life according to symbolic meanings and patterns of behaviour that are radically out of step with the typical modes of contemporary existence. In short, we are still deeply conditioned by the needs of pre-industrial, hunter-gatherer societies, even as we attempt to find fulfillment in our postindustrial megacities. Jung explains:

> Modern man is in fact a curious mixture of characteristics acquired over the long ages of his mental development. This mixed-up being is the man and his symbols that we have to deal with, and we must scrutinize his mental products very carefully indeed. Skepticism and scientific conviction exist in him side by side with old-fashioned prejudices, outdated habits of thought and feeling, obstinate misinterpretations, and blind ignorance.[73]

Like Nietzsche and other critics of modernity, Jung sees reason as a poisonous gift: for all the good that it has done us, it has cut us off from the unconscious impulses which were previously able to give our lives a sense of meaning by being expressed in our conscious lives through living cultures and religions. He suggests that

> [i]n earlier ages, as instinctive concepts welled up in the mind of man, his conscious mind could no doubt integrate them into a coherent psychic pattern. But the "civilized" man is no longer able to do this. His "advanced"

[72] Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 69. Paul Bishop has noted that Jung's reading of Nietzsche had a significant (though somewhat indirect) role to play in the formation of his theories of archetypes and the unconscious. Jung was struck by the fact that a section of *Zarathustra* seemed to be an unconscious reproduction of a passage in a book Nietzsche read much earlier and had consciously forgotten about. This impressed him with the power of the unconscious, both in terms of its memory (the theory of cryptomnesia), and its creative drive. See Bishop, "C.J. Jung and Nietzsche: Dionysos and Analytical Psychology" in *Jung in Contexts. A Reader*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 209.
[73] Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 96.

> consciousness has deprived itself of the means by which the auxiliary contributions of the instincts and the unconscious can be assimilated. These organs of assimilation and integration were numinous symbols, held holy by common consent.[74]

A key factor in this development is not only rationality as such, but also science and technology, through our use of them in the attempt to dominate nature, and in creating an artificial world for ourselves cut off from nature. According to Jung, the symbols which were in the past an integral part of the lives of psychologically healthy individuals and cultures were *natural* symbols; they arose through a long process of development in ages when mankind lived closer to the natural world. But now,

> [t]hunder is no longer the voice of an angry god, nor is lightening his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree is the life principle of a man, no snake the embodiment of wisdom, no mountain cave the home of a great demon. No voices now speak to man from stones, plants, and animals, nor does he speak to them believing they can hear. His contact with nature has gone, and with it has gone the profound emotional energy that this symbolic connection supplied.[75]

This then is Jung's picture of our modern nihilism. For him, the capacity to interpret the world in such a way that it has meaning for us is dependent on 'effectuating' or 'constellating' archetypes through symbols, which allow our deep instincts expression and holistic integration in our conscious lives, on the personal and cultural levels. Because they have formed within natural environments, these archetypes tend to take natural objects (lightening, snakes, plants, etc.) as their symbols. Now, cut off from our religious and cultural traditions as well as from direct everyday experience of the natural world, modern humanity finds itself disoriented, lost and miserable, unable to make sense of itself in the world. For Jung as for Nietzsche, nihilism means that God is dead:

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[74] Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 94.
[75] Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 95.

> There are no longer any gods whom we can invoke to help us. The great religions of the world suffer from increasing anemia, because the helpful numina have fled from the woods, rivers, and mountains, and from animals, and the god-men have disappeared underground into the unconscious. There we fool ourselves that they lead an ignominious existence among the relics of our past. Our present lives are dominated by the goddess Reason, who is our greatest and most tragic illusion. By the aid of reason, so we assure ourselves, we have "conquered nature."[76]

While Jung's language is typically evocative of the mythical, religious, and supernatural, he asserts the *psychological* (rather than metaphysical) significance of what he evokes, and underlying his mystical prose is what can be seen as a naturalistic, if highly speculative, philosophical anthropology.[77]

What I have suggested in underlining this naturalized Jung is that his account of nihilism may be read as consonant in important ways with Nietzsche's. Yet the interesting difference is this: For Jung the 'old values,' the 'highest values posited so far,' are not just those of the Christian-Platonic worldview with a two-and-a-half-thousand year history; they involve basic dispositions to interpretation and behavior which have much more archaic roots. Such roots, having had much longer to burrow themselves into the earth (or into the part of the human brain which houses the chthonic unconscious), would surely be much harder to uproot. If Jung is right, it seems we are in more dire straights than even Nietzsche suggested. Having briefly sketched this Jungian approach, let me turn now to an application of this to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*.

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[76] Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 101.

[77] The scientific status of Jung's analytical psychology is too complex an issue to be treated here. However, in brief defense of my characterization of it as a 'speculative naturalism,' we may note the difficulty of verifying or falsifying the theory of archetypes, since the claim to something's being an archetype depends on it being identifiable in every human culture – despite being manifest through symbols which are not invariant – and thus requiring a great deal of interpretation. However it is also worth noting, following Stevens (*Jung*), that a hypothesis competing with the archetype theory is that of cultural transmission originating from a single common source, which could potentially explain the presence of symbolic meanings in all cultures without having recourse to the collective unconscious.

A river of pictures

> *Zarathustra* is such a bewildering phenomenon, there are so many diverse aspects, that one could hardly make a whole of it. Moreover, *Zarathustra* itself is not a whole; it is, rather, a river of pictures and it is difficult to make out the laws of the river, how it moves, or toward what goal it is meandering.[78]

As Jung indicates here, one of the first things that strikes the reader is that *Zarathustra* is abundantly overflowing with diverse and rich figures and images. In addition to the famous tight-rope walker, the camel, lion, and child, the eagle and the serpent, we can find the superhero and the superdragon (in addition to the superman), honey, mountains, lakes, swamps, seas, the sun and its daily cycle, the moon, the earth, dancing stars, saints, Gods, apes, free spirits, the rabble, the Devil, towers, gravediggers, towns, a hermit, rainbows, stairways, afterworldsmen, priests, the body, the Ego, the pale criminal, trees, warriors, women old and young, the New Idol, flies, market-places, friends, enemies, disciples, law-tables old and new, neighbours, snakes, Heaven and Hell, mirrors, the Evil One, Blissful Islands, shadows, tarantulas, Cross-spiders, philosophers, the Spirit of Gravity, dancing girls and other dancers, cupid, Wisdom, Life, sublime men, sportive monsters, wild beasts, houses, caves, a white ox, angels, beetles, dragonflies, fatherlands, motherlands and the children's land, fish-bones, shells, prickly leaves, a thousand breasts rising from the sea, sheep and lambs, an ivory-wreath, salty slime, peacocks, buffaloes, a volcano, two kinds of fire-dog, silky rabbits, inky fish, scribbling foxes, a horse, an ostrich, oysters, treasure pits, shells, a mole, mummies and phantoms, lickspittles and

[78] Jung, C.G. *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminars Given in 1934-39*, 2 vols., London and New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 1339.

parasites, bufoons, prophets and astrologers, nobles, knights, goats, and geese, a leech's brain, and of course Zarathustra himself.[79]

It has been common to see *Zarathustra* as a work more literary than philosophical, and, as noted above, the tone of the text is evangelical and revelatory. In the section devoted to it in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explains the process of composition of *Zarathustra* as a powerful *inspiration*:

> If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one, one would hardly be able to set aside the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely medium of overwhelming forces. (EH "Books" Z §3)[80]

He goes on to describe it as a 'revelation,' an 'ecstasy,' in which

> [t]he involuntary nature of image, of metaphor is the most remarkable thing of all; one no longer has any idea what is image, what metaphor, everything presents itself as the readiest, the truest, the simplest means of expression. It really does seem, to allude to a saying of Zarathustra's, as if the things themselves approached and offered themselves as metaphors … (EH "Books" Z §3)

Of course Nietzsche resists the religious interpretation that there is some supernatural, metaphysically transcendent force speaking through him, even as he marvels at the extent to which it *felt* that way.

A naturalized reading consonant with the hypothesis I am offering here would be that such inspiration arises from the unconscious: on a Jungian interpretation, to a large extent from the *collective* unconscious. The images in *Zarathustra* might be understood as *symbols* in Jung's sense, that is, as charged with numinous, psychic energy, expressive of archetypes.[81] Patricia Dickson has developed such an interpretation of all of

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[79] The translation of *Zarathustra* I use throughout, and from which this list is gleaned, is R. J. Hollingdale's. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tr. by R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, 1974.

[80] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*, tr. by R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, 1992.

[81] Jung did not discount the tremendous significance of the personal unconscious and the history of the individual. For him, it is not enough for a symbol to be generally recognized within a culture; it will only

Nietzsche's work.[82] Dickson describes the 'transcendent function' of the psyche as its capacity to produce symbols in a two-fold process: first, "the spontaneous emergence of a unifying symbol that unites opposing elements," and "the birth, from this union, of a new attitude – a transition to a higher level of consciousness and creativity."[83] For Jung, the drama of psychic life is to a large extent composed of the need to unite opposing psychological impulses, allowing the individual to move from states of self-negating turmoil and tension to states of dynamic creativity, in which the opposites work not simply against each other, but in productive relation. These opposing tendencies are mediated and united by the psychic structure Jung terms the Self.[84] The reading Jung proposes in his *Zarathustra* seminar is governed by the view that that Nietzsche's text is structured by the psychological dynamic of 'enantiodromia,' the emergence of opposing unconscious tendencies in chronological order.[85]

Jung argued that Nietzsche had gained a privileged access to 'archetypal knowledge' through personal encounters with his unconscious, and saw *Zarathustra* as both a deeply personal statement and a reflection of the age with world-historical importance.[86] The images in Zarathustra can thus be seen as the generation of symbols from Nietzsche's unconscious, with the possibility of transforming both himself and his readers in order to achieve a 'higher level of consciousness' – that is, a healthier

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work as a symbol – that is, have a deep emotional resonance which appeals to the unconscious of the individual – if they have been raised in the appropriate culture or had appropriate life experiences.

[82] Patricia Dickson. *Nietzsche and Jung: Sailing a Deeper Night*, New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

[83] Dickson, *Nietzsche and Jung*, p. 4.

[84] Preempting a possible Nietzschean reproach that the Jungian notion of Self is too Apollonian, Dickson emphasizes that for Jung, 'unity' is not a Hegelian dialectical synthesis in which the opposites are resolved in a higher synthesis; rather they are brought into a relationship of dynamic, creative tension, generating energy which drives further growth and change (loc. cit.).

[85] Paul Bishop. *The Dionysian Self: C.G. Jung's Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995, p. 216.

[86] Bishop, *The Dionysian Self*, pp. 216-17.

integration both of unconscious impulses themselves, and unconscious needs with conscious psychic life. The fact that these images are all contextualized within the pre-industrial world in which the book is set lends weight to this suggestion – the images are like the natural symbols that can be found in more archaic religions and cultures.[87] In addition to Jung's 6-year seminar series devoted to a close commentary and analysis of the symbols in *Zarathustra*, there are numerous mentions of them throughout his *Collected Works*, demonstrating the attraction they had for him as precisely such archetypal symbols.

Does the Jungian 'archetypal' reading of *Zarathustra* then lend weight to Lyotard's dismissal of it? In the book on Nietzsche most influential in Germany between the World Wars, Ernst Bertram proffered a reading that would lead in this direction. Nietzsche's work – and *Zarathustra* in particular – may very well be interpreted, as per the title of Bertram's book, as an *Attempt at a Mythology*.[88] Rudiger Safranski concisely describes Bertram's goal *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche as "the creation of a myth suited to uniting a nation under a common banner now that religion had faded."[89] As he further notes, this idea of creating a nationalist myth has its source in the romantic tradition, and was endorsed by Wagner, as well as the young Nietzsche. Nietzsche himself alludes to a possible comparison of *Zarathustra* with Wagner's Ring cycle,[90] and Zarathustra even

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[87] Sarah Kofman has noted "the almost complete absence in Nietzsche of metaphors taken from the world of the machine and modernism," and connected this with a desire to parody old metaphors, rather than create new ones. *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, tr. by Duncan Large, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, pp. 185-6, note 23.

[88] Ernst Bertram. *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology*, tr. by Robert E. Norton, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009 [1918].

[89] Rüdiger Safranski. *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. London: Granta, 2003, p. 331.

[90] Soon after completing the first (3-part) version of *Zarathustra*, he described it in a letter to Peter Gast as "a small book … my *best* …It is to be called: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. With this book I have entered into a new *Ring*." Letter of 1 February 1883 (*KSB* 6: 321). Cited by Graham Parkes, "The Symphonic Structure of

has his Ring: the eternal recurrence, figured as the ring that would wed him to Eternity ("Oh how should I not lust for eternity and for the wedding ring of rings – the Ring of Recurrence!" – Z III "Seven Seals"). In his book Bertram not only wishes to present Nietzsche as attempting to create such a mythology, but attempts to mythologise Nietzsche himself, to turn him into a figure who can revivify German culture by reflecting in his life the 'soul' of Germany. Such a new mythology might perhaps be thought to heal the split in contemporary existence that Jung saw. Bertram writes that "[l]egend alone actually connects the primeval past with the present through a continuous dynamic bond; only it unites the saint and the people, the hero and the peasant; the prophet and posterity meet only here."[91]

Such a reading would seem to lend itself to Lyotard's characterization and dismissal of *Zarathustra* as the fruit of a romantic nostalgia and an attempt to create a new mythology, and Jung's interpretation of the text as developing symbols which have the same psychological function as mythological and religious symbols could well support such a reading. Yet need this consequence follow? Lyotard's concerns with Zarathustra's 'piety' were something Nietzsche himself was quite aware of, and this issue is dramatized in the section of Book 4 entitled "Retired from Service," in which Zarathustra encounters 'The Last Pope.' Melancholic for his dead God, the Pope is in search of Zarathustra, whom he calls "the most pious of all those who do not believe in God." (Z IV "Retired from Service") While acknowledging that there is a certain piety in atheism, and expressing respect for the piety he observes living on in the Last Pope, Zarathustra nevertheless counsels him that he cannot cure his melancholy: "Truly, we

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Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Preliminary Outline" in Luchte 2011: 12. For an extended comparison of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Wagner's *Ring*, see Hollinrake (1982).

[91] Bertram, *Nietzsche*, p. 1.

should have to wait a long time before someone reawakened your God for you. For this old god no longer lives: he is quite dead." (ibid.) Zarathustra asserts that it is *piety itself* which in the end says: "Away with *such* a god! Better no god, better to produce destiny on one's own account, better to be a fool, better to be God oneself!" (ibid.)

A reading of *Zarathustra* in terms of Jungian archetypes thus does not determine the normative implications we should draw. The text itself raises (without definitively answering) questions of what it means that God is dead, and if we are tempted to resurrect or create some new God, what this might mean. I propose that on the basis of Jung's speculative naturalistic view of human nature and the nihilistic predicament we find ourselves in, we might divide possible *responses* to nihilism into two camps. First – and this would seem to be to a large extent the line of thought of many of Jung's followers – one could take a 'reactionary' response, which would consist of remaking our psychology and our culture in conformity with the archetypes. In effect, this means molding our lives once again to the patterns of the preindustrial and our thoughts to the mythical mode. Such a strategy could be understood as a form of 're-enchanting the world'; reintroducing the sacred into the secular.[92]

Alternatively, however, I wish to suggest that there may be an alternative strategy: to acknowledge the depth of the archetypes, but to transform them critically. Such a critical transformation would seek a deeper engagement with human psychology and culture than the Enlightenment attempts to throw off myth and religion through the power of conscious will, and to disenchant through rational argument alone. *Zarathustra* will

[92] Again, although he is not a Jungian, we can cite Seung (*Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul*) as an example of this tendency in reading *Zarathustra*: "This gospel and epic is addressed to all those who are struggling, in despair and yet with courage, to restore the sanctity and dignity of their precarious selfhood under the crushing weight of secular culture." (p. xxvi)

appear most obscure, and most outdated, to those with rationalist and modernist perspectives: those who see Reason as a mistress sufficiently wise to entrust with our wellbeing and progress. Yet, schooled in ancient philosophy - the practitioners of which knew very well that the transformation of our values and worldview requires practical exercises, habits and repetitions to engage the deepest parts of ourselves[93] - Nietzsche believed that more than discursive reason and theoretical discourse were required to effect existential change. How can we see this deeper, critical level of engagement in *Zarathustra*?

Incipit parodia

It is well-known that Zarathustra makes his first appearance at the end of Nietzsche's previous book, *The Gay Science* (at the end of the fourth book, before a fifth was added in a later edition). This section is practically identical to the first section of *Zarathustra* ("Prologue" §1), and appears under the title: *Incipit tragoedia* ("the tragedy begins"). It has often been noted that *Zarathustra* may indeed be understood as a tragedy, at least in terms of its four-part structure: the ancient Greek playwrights were in the habit of composing their tragedies in three acts, and appending them with a satyr play.[94] Wagner's ring cycle also follows this structure, with *Das Rheingold* a Prelude roughly analogous to the more marginal satyr play, and *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung* the three parts of the tragedy proper. This might appear to confirm the reading of *Zarathustra*

[93] See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995 and *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, tr. by Michael Chase, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

[94] For a recent discussion of this reading, see Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 91-101. Loeb cites Eugen Fink as the first to propose this reading, and provides a succinct list of others who have subscribed to the view of Part IV of *Zarathustra* as analogous to a satyr play in support of an ironic or parodic interpretation of the text (p. 91, note 13).

as creating a new mythology, as was Wagner's own aim. Yet in Nietzsche's preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, written in 1887 (and thus after *Zarathustra*), he writes:

> "*Incipit tragoedia*" we read at the end of this awesomely aweless book. Beware! Something downright wicked and malicious is announced here: *incipit parodia*, no doubt. (GS P §1)

Walter Kaufmann explains that "[w]hat Nietzsche is saying, then, is that *Zarathustra* is something of a parody – which it surely is – although most readers during the first half of the twentieth century failed to see this." (GS, translator's note 1, page 33) Arguably, this is also what Lyotard fails to see.

Yet what kind of parody is *Zarathustra*? As has often been noted, it is a parody of the New Testament, with its mischievous distortions of the biblical text (a pithy example: "Unless ye become *cows* ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven," Z IV "Voluntary Beggar"), and with the figure of Zarathustra a parody of Jesus Christ. It is also clearly a parody of the Platonic dialogues, with Zarathustra as a parodic version of Socrates. As Kathleen Higgins explains, Zarathustra is thus a teacher who brings a teaching of a similar scope, but of a radically different meaning, to the teachers he parodies:

> Jesus and Socrates are the teachers with the greatest influence on how we in the West confront questions regarding the basic meaning of human life. Zarathustra is drawn as a philosophical teacher who advocates a fundamentally different approach to these questions, and his role as a teacher is underscrored by the fact that he is a parodic counterpart of Socrates and Jesus. Zarathustra offers what in effect is a parodic gospel—for it is to be taken by the reader as similar in scope to the gospels of the West's two great teachers but diametrically opposite to them in much of its import.[95]

[95] Kathleen Marie Higgins. *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, New York: Lexington, 2010, p. 65.

In a complementary fashion, Laurence Lampert highlights the grand scope of Nietzsche's ambition in writing *Zarathustra*.[96] Nietzsche has traced the problem of contemporary nihilism to the metaphysical and moral positions (the 'Christian-moral' interpretation of the world) he believes were first introduced by the historical figure Zarathustra, and has resurrected him as a literary figure in order to overturn these positions. Zarathustra is thus no arbitrary figure chosen to parody Jesus and Socrates, but the teacher who sowed the first seeds that would ripen with them. Nietzsche's ambition, then, is world-historcal in scope, and paradigm-changing in intent. Yet as Lampert also sees, Nietzsche's intent cannot be simply to set up a new religion on the model of the old. He expects more of his readers than that. Summarising these points, Lampert writes:

> The scope of the new Zarathusra's ambition – or of what Nietzsche wanted to do- is to be measured by the ancient Zarathustra's achievement. The founder of the view that time is progress in the moral overcoming of earthly life returns to bring a different teaching, one that is true to earthly life – a new teaching around which the world will turn. No prophet, fanatic, or preacher demanding belief, Nietzsche's Zarathusra appears as a seducer, a tempter, an "immoralist" to those moral in the old way.[97]

The scope and intention of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* can thus be identified by what it parodies. In short, the work seeks to be a counter-movement to the nihilism stemming from the key teachings of the Western tradition. We can see the parodic function of *Zarathustra* as precisely the 'immoral' temptation or seduction Lampert notes: it appeals to our pious or religious desires for eternal transcendent meanings, then subverts or perverts them once we are hooked. That is, the text appeals to what, in us, those texts which it parodies appeals – the yearning for meaning expressed in numinous symbols, and the desire for something like a religious or metaphysical transcendence of mundane

[96] Laurence Lampert. *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra."* New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
[97] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p. 3.

life. Yet at the same time, the parodic function works *against* this. Frequently the quasi-religious pathos of the text explodes in laughter, and Zarathustra himself praises the value of laughter as such (see Z IV "Of the Higher Men").[98] The text intrigues and engages its readers through its narrative and symbols, which mirror those of the great Western traditions, yet it leads us to a very different place than do the Platonic dialogues or the New Testament. We do not, perhaps, really understand yet where that place is, but there are frequent indications that the desires we might have for a consistent morality, a set of symbols, a doctrine, and so on, are quashed in parody (Klossowski notes, for example, that the eternal return can only be understood as the parody of a doctrine[99]). So I suggest that we can understand *Zarathustra* as both creating a mythology, and parodying such a mythology; appealing to our desires for a new God, and ruining those desires in the very course of their apparent fulfillment.

If *Zarathustra* appears in evangelical guise, then, it is because of the need to engage the deepest levels in us from which meaning is produced, that which Jung discovered and named the collective unconscious. Understanding that meaning is so deeply rooted does not mean that it is hopelessly fixed, but precisely that it needs seductive ruses and strategies such as literary parody in order to shift. Jung's own writings display an inexhaustible fascination with the symbols of past mythical and religious traditions, and his criticisms of modernity can often give the impression that his work was directed towards reviving archaic modes of thought and feeling. Indeed, as Bishop has noted, in the last period of his correspondence with Freud, one of the things which seemed to be driving a wedge between the two psychoanalysts was Jung's developing conviction that

[98] On this theme, see Klossowski "Nietzsche, Polytheism and Parody."
[99] Pierre Klossowski. *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* and "Nietzsche, Polytheism and Parody."

the aim of the nascent science should be to create a new Dionysian myth as a substitute for the decline in Christian religious belief. Jung argued that only a religion can replace a religion.[100] Yet at least at times, Jung insists that whatever form the new myth or religion he seeks takes, it is not appropriate for contemporary humanity simply to revive the old gods. This is evident in the well-known essay "Wotan," which is an attempt to understand the phenomenon of National Socialism as an eruption of the primitive autonomous psychic power worshiped in the past as the eponymous pagan God.[101] For Jung the violent consequences of this movement could be understood as the unleashing of primitive impulses which constituted 'a step back into the past,' as a result of these impulses finding no healthy form of release in the present forms of culture. In the *Zarathustra* seminars he explains:

> It is the old assembly of the gods that begins to operate again because no other principle is on top. Where there is no recognised leading principle, the collective unconscious comes up and takes the lead. If our *Weltanschauung* is no longer in existence or is insufficient, the collective unconscious interferes. Wherever we fail in our adaptation, where we have no leading idea, the collective unconscious comes in, and in the form of the old gods. There the old gods break into our existence: the old instincts begin to rage again.[102]

Here it is clear that what Jung advocates is no simple revival of archaic forms of worship:

> The old gods are coming to life again in a time when they should have been superseded long ago … Do you not find it also rather suspect to nourish the metaphysical needs of our time with the stuff of old legends? … We need some new foundations. We must dig down into the primitive in us, for only out of the conflict between the civilized Man and the Germanic barbarian will there come what we need: a new experience of God.[103]

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[100] To which Freud pointedly replied: "I am not thinking of a substitute for religion: this need must be sublimated." Quoted in Bishop, *The Dionysian Self*, p. 212.
[101] Jung, C. G. "Wotan" in *Civilization in Transition: The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 10*, ed. and tr. by G. Adler and R. F. C. Hull, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
[102] Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, p. 1517.
[103] Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, pp. 1517-18.

So it is clear that Jung did not want a revival of the old god(s). Yet the critical issue at stake in interpreting *Zarathustra*, as we have been discussing, is the question of a *new* God, and Jung seems unambiguous on this issue, as the quote above, as well as his insistence that only a religion can replace religion, attests.

A key point of difference between Jung and Nietzsche, identified by Anthony Storr, now comes into focus.[104] Storr has argued that Jung and Nietzsche both developed their views in response to a loss of religious faith, and that both realized something more than a rational response was needed, and unconscious processes must be involved.[105] The key point of difference Storr sees between them is that while Nietzsche considered *art* to provide such an engagement with unconscious, instinctual powers, Jung tended to discount art as superficial, and considered only *religion* effective in meeting the deepest human needs. In this respect, *Zarathustra* can be understood to engage the same deep unconscious instinctual drives identified by Jung, but rather than attempting to distil them into a new Dionysian religion, to form them into a work of art with a critical, transformative function. The reading of *Zarathustra* I am suggesting here is thus positioned between what would be a 'faithful' Jungian reading, and the 'deconstructive' readings which focus on the surface play of Nietzsche's texts.[106] The former seem to me to be excessively reactionary, in calling for a new myth or religion, while the latter seem to be excessively shallow, and do not appreciate the deep psychological level the text can be understood to engage.

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[104] Anthony Storr, *Nietzsche and Jung: J. R. Jones Lecture*, Swansea: University of Wales, 1996.
[105] Storr, *Nietzsche and Jung*, p. 17.
[106] Exemplified by Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, tr. by Barbara Harlow, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979; Kofmann, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*; and Alexander Nehamas. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985.

The argument for the continuing current relevance of *Zarathustra* I have outlined here rests on the speculative naturalist interpretation of analytical psychology which suggests that the archetypes of the collective unconscious, which shape our propensities towards meaning, are deeply rooted and difficult to reshape, and thus require continued engagement with the kinds of symbols with which *Zarathutra* abounds. On this line of interpretation – which I have only been able to sketch here, briefly and speculatively – *Zarathustra* appears as a 'transformation machine,' an apparatus for the transvaluation of values, which reaches deep into our ancestral uncounscious and constellates archetypes, but which 'perverts' them through parody, adapting them to the more recent pressures asserted by our *reason*, that is, to a Godless world.[107] It arouses the tragic pathos, the desire for transcendence, but instead of allowing it its direct natural course, to hurl itself into the beyond, it distorts and twists it back, insisting that it energise the *immanent* world, the here and now. It is in this way that, *pace* Lyotard, we can see *Zarathustra* as a work of continued and powerful relevance to the problem of nihilism now.

As a final point, let us remember that *Zarathustra* is ambiguously subtitled "A Book for All and None," and we might understand it has continuing to have a strategic function for those for whom the religious tendency or the tragic pathos still compels. It will work for some, with whom its special feeling-tone resonates, and not for others. Perhaps such is not the case for many academic philosophers (like Lyotard), but for many others the shadows of gods and monsters still loom large in the artificial light of our megalopolis.

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[107] Douglas Burnham and Martin Jesinghousen emphasise this transformative dimension of *Zarathustra*. *Nietzsche's* Thus Spoke Zarathustra: *An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

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Life, Death, and Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*

Gabriel Zamosc

This paper offers a preliminary approximation to Nietzsche's puzzling doctrine of Eternal Recurrence as it is presented in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In what follows, I will argue that the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence is best understood as a parable concerning the creative will, the will to power, of which the individual human being, while he is alive, is merely a surrogate. What recurs is the moment of action, which Nietzsche describes poetically as a moment of transitory death and resurrection; a moment that the living agent must repeat eternally *while he remains alive*.

In this way, my interpretation is opposed to the consensus among many commentators (and especially those working within the Anglo-American tradition) that Eternal Recurrence involves a belief about the circularity of our lives or about their identical repetition.[108] Of course, these same commentators disagree as to the belief's precise status: is it meant to be accepted as literally true, or are we supposed to simply entertain its possibility in order to derive some practical injunction or lesson from it? I want to distance myself from this way of framing the debate, because I suspect that Eternal Recurrence does not really involve a belief in the exact repetition of our lives, at least as far as its presentation in *Zarathustra* is concerned. The only place in the book where Zarathustra himself appears to assert such a belief is in the chapter "On the Vision and the Riddle". Other statements seeming to voice the belief in this way are not uttered

[108] For example, Danto (1965), Jaspers (1965), Soll (1973), Kaufmann (1974), Strong (1975), Sterling (1977), Magnus (1978) and (1979), Schacht (1983), Nehamas (1985), Simmel (1986), Lampert (1986), Higgins (1987), Clark (1990), Löwith (1997), Gooding-Williams (2001), Seung (2005), Hatab (2005), Loeb (2010).

by Zarathustra himself, but by his animals, in "The Convalescent", when they attempt to interpret Zarathustra's encounter with the thought of Eternal Recurrence, and it is far from clear whether Zarathustra himself agrees with their interpretation.[109] In fact, he seems to disapprove of it, for he accuses his animals of being buffoons and barrel organs that have made of Eternal Recurrence a mere hurdy-gurdy lyre song (KSA 4, 273-5). This, I take it, is part of the reason why, as his animals themselves in the end recognize, he must fashion *a new lyre* in order to sing about Eternal Recurrence, for the lyre fashioned by his animals is inadequate to the task.

But if "On the Vision and the Riddle" is the only place where Zarathustra appears to speak of Eternal Recurrence as if it involved a belief in the exact repetition of our lives, we should bear in mind that in this chapter Zarathustra, who has been speaking in parables that do not have a literal meaning, tells us that he is recounting a hallucinatory experience or vision that he himself calls a riddle, and which therefore does not carry its real significance on its sleeve. Yet what we find on the sleeve of this vision are precisely Zarathustra's words that, literally, seem to assert as truthful the idea that we must return to our exact same lives after we die, that the road of time is one in which whatever can happen must have already happened many times before, and that he, and the dwarf, and the spider, and the gateway called "Moment" must all have been in this life before, and must therefore eternally return (KSA 4, 200). Thus I judge it prudent to take Zarathustra's

[109] The dwarf in "On the Vision and the Riddle" also seems to formulate a cyclical version of time, but Zarathustra accuses him of taking things too lightly, and he then addresses him with a series of rhetorical questions that culminate in what, I have said, is the only assertion Zarathustra himself makes that apparently postulates the qualitatively identical repetition of our lives. It is usually assumed that Zarathustra ends up accepting the dwarf's cyclical version of time, even if he appears at first to reject it. Although I am not in agreement with such a reading, I do not wish to designate the dwarf's own interpretation as that of yet another character that also weds the Eternal Recurrence to a belief in the circularity of life, for I am inclined to interpret the character of the dwarf as being a manifestation of Zarathustra himself, an aspect of his self or of his being. See note 5.

words to be metaphorical in nature, perhaps doubly so in the case of this particular chapter. But if that is the case, then how should we interpret what Zarathustra says about Eternal Recurrence?

To answer this question, notice first that Eternal Recurrence has to do with what is eternal in life, that is, it has to do with what is permanent or imperishable in it—what seems to lie outside of time and the stream of becoming. In the chapter "On the Blessed Isles", Zarathustra criticizes other doctrines that also traffic with concepts of eternity, like the concept of God, of the Unmoved, of the Permanent, and so on. He then asserts: "All the permanent—that is merely a parable! And the poets lie too much.—But it is of time and becoming that the best parables should speak: they should be a praise and a justification of all impermanence!" (KSA 4, 110). Since the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence also speaks in the language of permanence, it must be a parable. Yet, because it is one of Zarathustra's own making, it must be of the type that he considers best: a parable that praises and justifies all impermanence. How does it do that? We get an indication of the answer to this question in the same section I just quoted. For there, Zarathustra goes on to claim that

> Creation – that is the great redemption from suffering, and life's becoming light. But in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation.
>
> Indeed, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators! In that way are you advocates and justifiers of all impermanence.
>
> To be the child who is newly born, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth giver (KSA 4, 110-1).

The clue I take from this passage is that Eternal Recurrence is a parable that speaks of the truth stated here: that for creation there must be much bitter dying while one is alive, and

that this is the only justification to be found in life. To explore this point, let me schematically state Zarathustra's words concerning life and the nature of the living.

For Zarathustra all life is will to power, which he warns us is not simply a will to life, but rather a will to self-overcoming. Although it is not altogether clear what exactly this implies, one thing it seems to imply is the idea that what is living wants to perish or "to go under" (KSA 4, 148). Now, obviously, this cannot mean that the will to power is a will to death in the literal sense, for that would make life impossible: no sooner would something be alive than it would take itself out of existence by willing its own death. Being alive involves the risk of permanently dying, but it does not directly involve the will to self-termination. Instead, the mechanism of life involves what I shall call a will to a *transitory death*: all living things want to transform into something new or different from what they are, for the sake of exerting or releasing their power. This transformation implies that one has stopped being what one was, and in that sense, what one was has died; but only in a transient manner, since, as Zarathustra asserts, the will to power is the "unexhausted procreative will of life" (KSA 4, 147). As such, the will to power does not cease, but is reborn out of its own transitory death in order to operate in the same manner as it did before, allowing the living to continue living, that is, transforming until the moment they are overtaken by their own physical demise and can do so no longer, since then they would have stopped being altogether.

The result of this conception of life is that there can be nothing truly permanent in it; nothing, that is, except the way it itself operates, the will to power, which never changes. This explains why Zarathustra poetically locates the will to power in the heel, and, in a reverse allusion to Achilles, calls it invulnerable and unburiable, and also the

shatterer of all tombs (KSA 4, 144-5). Of course, as was mentioned, the will to power is not invulnerable to death as such, since all life does end; but it is invulnerable to its transitory deaths since, like the phoenix bird and like Dionysus, it is reborn again from them to return to its self-same life, in order to repeat the cycle of transitory deaths and resurrections for as long as the surrogate form that embodies it remains alive.[110]

I have claimed that the will to power is the mechanism through which all life operates. But human beings are special incarnations of that will to power, for we are instantiations of life become conscious of itself and of its way of operating. This gives us a unique and extraordinary power, for it allows us to be self-conscious creators who are in control of their actions, and who can guide those actions by goals that they themselves have set.[111] But the ability to be autonomous incarnations of the will to power can become a heavy burden for us, and makes us susceptible to forms of suffering that are unknown to other creatures. Chief among them is our capacity to feel guilty for our actions and, in general, to feel dissatisfied, distressed, or enervated by our past and by life as such. This feeling expresses a type of *retrospective* impotence with respect to the past

[110] These considerations raise some important questions concerning the notions of individuation of phenomena and the temporal continuity of things that I cannot stop to investigate here. The concept of transitory death that I have attributed to Zarathustra would seem to require some kind of metaphysical permanence of living things in order to make the idea of their transformation intelligible. I have said that what endures is the will to power that each living thing incarnates and that, it seems, allows us to differentiate it from other living beings. But it is not altogether clear what exactly is the metaphysical status of such a will: is it some sort of unique and indivisible entity in the Cartesian fashion; or is it merely an epiphenomenon of something that, in reality, cannot be identified as a unity? Some of the things Nietzsche says in other places suggest that he does not approve of the Cartesian notion and that he thinks of the will as a unity only linguistically, not metaphysically (KSA 5, 32). As I have said, this is not the place to explore such issues. I will simply assume that, given the way he speaks about it, for Zarathustra the will of a living thing is some kind of unity that remains invulnerable to its transitory deaths and that allows the living thing to change and to transform (i.e. to live), and I will set aside the problem of what type of metaphysical outlook this commits us to.

[111] Although Zarathustra never uses the word "autonomy", I think that many of his discourses clearly (if indirectly) refer to it. Zarathustra speaks of the child and the creator as a first movement and a wheel that moves for itself, and he also claims that the will wants to command itself and to give itself its own laws, or its own good and evil (KSA 4, 31, 80-1, 90, 99, 147, 189, 250, 265, and 348). In all these claims one can very well read references to the ideas of self-determination, self-mastery, and self-legislation that are part and parcel of traditional notions of autonomy, like those found in the German Idealist school of philosophy.

and its "it was": the inability to make the past really pass or stop tormenting us. But Zarathustra also thinks that there is a *prospective* version of our impotence that consists in the will's inability to prevent the present and the future from turning out differently to the past, that is, its inability to stop them, due to the passage of time, from becoming "what was". These types of suffering can easily degenerate into even more pernicious forms. In "On Redemption", Zarathustra suggests that our anger and melancholy, our gnashing of teeth at our inability to change the past, leads us to draw an insane conclusion: the conclusion that existence in general and our will in particular are corrupt and inherently reprehensible, and that we therefore deserve to be penalized and to suffer the punishment of finding life to be a heavy burden (KSA 4, 180-1). Similarly, our prospective impotence with regard to the passage of time can degenerate into a kind of cynical and fatalistic attitude toward existence that crystallizes in the thought that nothing is worthwhile, everything is the same, and that knowledge chokes (KSA 4, 172 and 274). I cannot stop here to examine these ideas. Suffice it to say that Zarathustra thinks that the will is eventually driven to postulate a solution to this problem that is equally foolish and insane: that of renouncing its right to be a creative and transformative power by turning itself into a "not-willing". Zarathustra ends up suggesting that the will itself needs to be cured and liberated from its insanity in order to be able to fulfill the function it is meant to perform for us, that of redeeming us from the suffering we experience as a result of being its self-conscious manifestations (KSA 4, 181).

Here is where Eternal Recurrence enters the scene. For when Zarathustra summons this abysmal thought, he experiences the same kind of impotence with regard to the past that, in the chapter On Redemption, he had made responsible for the vindictive

attitude that makes our will to power turn against itself and attempt to become a not-willing. But Zarathustra is able to avoid this outcome and emerges form the experience with an affirmative attitude toward life (and, thus, toward the will to power itself). This indicates that he has found the way to liberate the will from its gnashing of teeth at the past, and has taught it to will backwards (*Ibid*.). Although here I cannot provide a full analysis of Zarathustra's encounter with Eternal Recurrence, I do want to at least sketch my interpretation of the type of impotence that assaults him, and of how he overcomes it and is able to learn to "will backwards".

After complaining that his animals have made his experience of Eternal Recurrence into a barrel organ song, Zarathustra gives his own version of the despondency that assailed him. He claims that what made him sick with disgust for man and all of existence was his realization that the small man of whom he is weary must eternally recur, and that the greatest man is still small and human all too human (KSA 4, 274). In this description of the problem, Zarathustra gives us a version of each of the two forms of impotence with respect to the "it was" that were mentioned earlier, namely, prospective and retrospective impotence. The former version is found in his realization that he is unable to stop the small man from recurring, for this is just a slight variation of the idea that we are unable to stop the rapacious passage of time, and of preventing all present and all future from becoming the same as the past. Zarathustra has realized that no matter how much transformation and greatness the will achieves, the small man, whom one thought one was leaving behind through an act of self-overcoming, will be discovered once more next to us. This is why Zarathustra says that his realization that the small man must eternally recur turns all that is living into "musty past" (*Ibid.*). But to

understand this is also to recognize our retrospective impotence, for by doing so Zarathustra admits that there can be no self-overcoming that is or has ever been altogether successful. In the human case, all self-overcoming is a striving to become something greater and nobler than one currently is (KSA 4, 146-9). In lamenting that the greatest is still human all too human, Zarathustra expresses his impotence to alter past results and his dissatisfaction with the fact that there is no self-overcoming that has managed to produce something greater and higher than what it in the end produced, namely, a being that is still too small and human all too human. These two types of impotence generate in Zarathustra a disgust with man and with existence that has its origin in the *eternal perspective* from which he views life: he has realized that we are condemned to never be able to transcend our humanity in such a way as to be completely satisfied with what we are.[112] This is harmful and paralyzing because such a perspective can easily lead to the conclusion that no self-overcoming is worth our while, that all acting is futile and a piece of vanity. We can thereby fall prey to the fable of madness that wants to turn our will into a not-willing.

However, Zarathustra does not succumb to his nausea, but is rather able to implement the cure he had foreseen in his earlier vision: that of biting off the head of the snake of disgust that had crawled down his throat and bit itself fast to it (KSA 4, 201). What does Zarathustra's biting symbolize? I think that there are two main things it symbolizes: the first has to do with the association of the snake's bite with the pang of

[112] In this respect I am in agreement, although for different reasons, with Seung who establishes a relation of identity between the dwarf and Zarathustra himself. For Seung, the former is a manifestation of the latter's physical self, that is, he represents the natural and passionate side of Zarathustra (Seung 128, 144). In my view, the dwarf represents the small man that every human being, including Zarathustra, carries within and of whom he can never rid himself, even if he tries to elevate himself above him, attempting thereby to erase or replace the small image he has of himself and the low self-esteem he feels. Other commentators also associate the dwarf with the small man, for example, Gooding-Williams 214; Loeb 143, 159.

conscience that is established elsewhere in the book (KSA 4, 45-6 and 87-9).[113] If Zarathustra bites the snake in turn, this means that he is applying the same guilt-ridden mechanism of the conscience against this conscience itself.[114] In other words, Zarathustra makes himself feel guilty for letting his impotence with respect to the past foment in him the disgust that afflicts him. But, secondly, in doing so Zarathustra performs an act of will that has a backward orientation: his present biting is directed toward the backward looking glance of his will and conscience that has become stuck in its impotent regard for the past and threatens to impede the will's forward movement (that is, its continued living). This act symbolizes, then, a kind of reconciliatory attitude of acceptance of the past by means of which the will learns to "let go" of what was, and actively wills the past to retreat and to no longer linger on dragging down the present and the future.

In doing all this Zarathustra actually takes advantage of the thought of Eternal Recurrence that, having been summoned by him, had originally caused his illness, and uses it to cure himself. We are condemned to the Eternal Recurrence of what is essential and never changes in life. But this is the will to power itself, the invulnerable aspect of our life that is constantly resurrected in our transitory deaths and going-unders, and that

[113] Another indication of this association with the bad conscience is given by the relationship between the dwarf and the snake in "On the Vision and the Riddle". As Loeb (2002 and 2010) convincingly argues, when the dwarf of the vision disappears, he transforms into the snake that strangles the shepherd (see also Seung 126-7, who follows Loeb on this point). Zarathustra describes the snake as the heaviest and blackest thing. Before he had associated the dwarf with the spirit of gravity (an association that he later ratifies in KSA 4, 243). If now we recall that during the vision the dwarf is sitting on Zarathustra's shoulder, whispering to him heavy words (KSA 4, 198-9), we can conclude that the dwarf, who turns into the snake, symbolizes the voice of conscience that in the religious imagination is often represented as the voice of an angle of God that sits on our shoulder and exhorts us to resist the temptations that the devil, situated on the opposite shoulder, whispers in our ears. It is interesting to note that Zarathustra has inverted this religious imagery, for, according to him, the dwarf represents the devil that is exhorting him not to engage in self-overcoming, that is, not to follow the footsteps of the god Dionysus, who is the god of the will to power. Contrary, then, to the religious vision, the one who awakens in him the bad conscience is not the god, but the devil. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche also describes the bad conscience as a type of bite produced by a nagging worm; see KSA 5, 318-9; 397.

[114] In this way, Zarathustra applies the strategy that Nietzsche suggests in the *Genealogy* KSA 5, 335.

will continue to do so while we remain alive.[115] In the human case, the transitioning of deaths and rebirths takes the form of our conscious contempt and opposition to life as we find it in the "moment" of acting, and our attempt to overcome it by creating something better and greater. What Eternal Recurrence teaches us is that this dissatisfaction with and contempt for what is small in life will never go away: after we act, our life will not be better, or new, or similar, but the same in all its essential features, that is, a life in which we will continue to transitorily die many times in order to be reborn again at the moment of acting (KSA 4, 276). To embrace Eternal Recurrence is to love the fate of being incarnations of the will to power that must eternally return to themselves while they remain in existence. This love of fate liberates our will and allows us to pursue the ideal of the *Übermensch* (superhuman) by inoculating us against the fantasy of believing that one day we will transcend our human condition. We will never escape our humanity, which will follow us like a shadow wherever we go.[116] But in attempting to raise ourselves above it, in pursuit of the superhuman, we set for ourselves an eternal, unattainable goal that can give meaning and justification to our fleeting lives, helping us accept our tragic destiny: which is to never fully attain this ideal of superhumanity, and

[115] Perhaps this might be why Zarathustra calls his will his necessity and the turning of all necessity (KSA 4, 99 and 268). For the will is the condition *sine qua non* of our lives, what will always accompany us while we remain alive, and what allows us to act in the world and traverse the road of time and becoming (i.e. live). The play on words that Zarathustra employs by calling his necessity (*Nothwendigkeit*) the turning of all necessity (*die Wende aller Noth*), could be interpreted as a reference to the fact that, as I stated earlier, the will always returns to itself, or spins eternally on itself, while it remains alive or in existence. It is only in that sense that the will is invulnerable and eternal. This is perhaps also the aspect that makes our will free and, therefore, not necessitated to action: for in each of its turnings the will is always a first movement, a wheel that moves itself and that spins on itself; it is the child that is born again at each moment of action and laughs innocently at what was and is already past, playing with the sting of freedom (KSA 4, 31 and 248). The Eternal Recurrence allows the will to recover its innocence and to recognize all of this, reminding it that it is the one that flips necessity over, transforming it into freedom, the one that redeems the past in the present and in the future. In this respect I disagree with Seung who interprets Zarathustra's words as an indication of his acceptance of the will's determinism, that is, precisely of the will's lack of freedom. See Seung 159-160.

[116] Here I disagree with authors like Loeb who believe that the ideal of the superhuman is realizable and that we can successfully escape our human condition.

yet, to constantly strive to do so together, and to be continuously in the process of *temporarily* achieving it and losing it, until the day of our final goodbye to our lives and to everything we love.[117]

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[117] This essay first appeared in Spanish in the proceedings *VI Jornadas Internationales Nietzsche y Jornadas Internacionales Derrida*, edited by Mónica B.Cragnolini and Noelia Billi and published in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2012 (ISBN: 978-987-28671-0-2). With permission from the editors I have translated it into English for inclusion in this journal. I want to thank attendants of the Nietzsche portion of the conference entitled, "Cuestiones Biopolíticas: Vida, Sobrevida, Muerte" for their comments on the Spanish version of the paper that I delivered in one of the parallel sessions in October of 2012.

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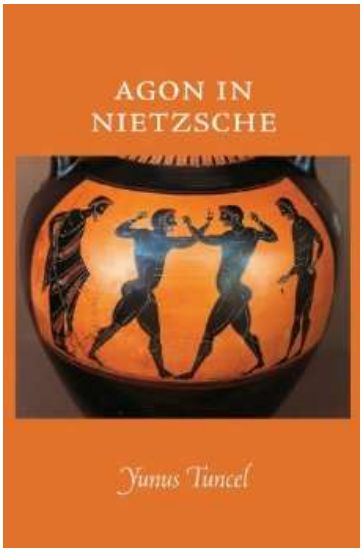
BOOK REVIEWS

Yunus Tuncel, *Agon in Nietzsche*.

Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013.

$29.00, ISBN 978-0-87462-823-4 271 pp. + index.

Review by Vishwa Adluri



Nietzsche's philosophy is essentially a challenge – and remains even more so today. It marks the limits of an epoch that we call *modernity*. While placing himself within the tradition of his age, he is its antagonist; he effects a three-fold reversal in religion, philosophy, and morality. He questions the foundations of occidental thought laid more than two millennia ago through the figures of Jesus, Socrates, and Zarathustra. These foundations, Nietzsche shows have withered away. He presents himself as a prophet, a sophist, and a genealogist, on the one hand, and, on the other, as a hero, a thinker of the future, and the creator of new values. In the complex presentation of his profound thought, Nietzsche revives the quarrel at the heart of modernity: the quarrel between ancients and moderns. He sides with the ancients. What better way, then, to study Nietzsche's thought than to focus on the spirit of agonism and the role it plays in ancient Greek culture? Tuncel's *Agon in Nietzsche* rises to the challenge and explores

Nietzsche's thought brilliantly. Before I turn to a discussion of Tuncel's book, let me place his work within broader philosophical and historical perspectives. I will focus on Nietzsche's three-fold reversal of religion, philosophy, and morality.

First, religion. Nietzsche's philosophy, as Tuncel rightly notes, essentially unfolds as an agon with his age and its values, principally *Christian* values (252–54). Yet, the notion of agon is itself complex. On the one hand, Nietzsche describes himself as Christianity's most vociferous critic, the Anti-Christ who will denounce Christianity "upon all walls, wherever walls are to be found." Christianity is "the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means are venomous enough, or secret, subterranean and small enough." On the other hand, Nietzsche does not see agon primarily in political terms. Agon bespeaks a creative act that carries both participants in the contest or struggle higher.[118] At the heart of the agonistic experience, as Nietzsche understood it, is the awareness that a culture of agon is necessary to struggle, train, and excel among more or less equals before a worthy public in a specific form and context so that the best "works" could be created to become exemplary models in culture. Agon is the cultural condition for new values where it is "Time [that] . . . will tell what valuations throw humanity higher" (252). In ancient Greece, agon did not take place in vacuum but had its own mythic, religious, and ritualistic context. It is at least partly out of an awareness of the dependence of agon on

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[118] Tuncel quotes Nietzsche's rules of his "agon-praxis," written at the end of his life as an agonistic writer (97). These rules appear in *Ecce Homo* and consist of four principles (cited in full in *Agon in Nietzsche*, 98–103) that Tuncel summarizes as follows: "1) To attack victorious causes . . . 2) To attack alone with no allies since agon is an individual strife . . . 3) Not to attack persons . . . 4) To attack out of good will, even out of gratitude. . . (184–185). In his account of the fourth rule, Nietzsche also specifically clarifies his relationship to Christianity, that is, the reasons why he attacks it: "When I wage war [*Krieg*] against Christianity I am entitled to this because I have never experienced misfortunes and frustrations from that quarter – the most serious Christians have always been well disposed toward me. I myself, an opponent of Christianity *de rigueur*, am far from blaming individuals for the calamity of millennia."

Greek ritual and cultic practice that Nietzsche takes up the struggle with Christianity.[119] Tuncel notes: "almost all his [Nietzsche's] ideas on religion and the reference point from which he critiques Christianity and other religions are indexed on Greek polytheism. The mythic context of agon that created a hierarchical universe from gods to mortals for the contestants is dismissed or has fallen into oblivion today. However, without this mythic hierarchy there was no agon for the Greeks. Nietzsche was well aware of this" (12).

Second, philosophy. "Agon lies not only in the words and deeds of the *agonal* individual, but also in the social, political and cultural formations that he is a part of . . . . When these formations collapse, the *agonal* culture collapses as well, since agon does not live only in the lives of the *agonal* poets and thinkers or the isolated acts of the contestants. On the contrary, it lives and is fed by the dynamics of culture" (197). A look at Nietzsche's writings on philosophy and philology suffices to show that he was well aware of these aspects. His agon with the values of his age unfolds not only as a struggle with Christianity but also contains a positive element of formulating a new ideal of philosophical pedagogy – a project that, once again, unfolds as a reversal of existing ideals. Tuncel discusses Nietzsche's lectures from the 1870s in Basel, in which he contrasts "two types of education . . . useful education (all professional education) and education for the production of genius, what Nietzsche calls 'true education'" (205). This task specifically requires us "to exchange the fundamental idea behind our present system of education, which has its roots in the Middle Ages and the ideal of which is actually the

[119] It is very important to note that, in Nietzsche's thinking, Christianity represents a certain attitude, a certain potential within humans that can manifest historically (and has done so from time to time). Thus, when he speaks of "Christianity," he does not primarily mean the religion called Christianity. The term takes on metaphysical, moral, and cultural dimensions for him. If we read Nietzsche's criticisms merely as an intellectual polemic against personal faith, we would miss both the point of his philosophy and the role that his reading of Christianity plays in it.

production of the medieval scholar, for a new fundamental idea." Tuncel correctly notes of this passage (found in the third *Untimely Meditation*) that "Nietzsche does not trace modern education back to the Greeks" (207), but, we might also argue a stronger thesis: Nietzsche connects modern education to Christianity, whose genealogy, he shows, is specifically theological.[120] Indeed, he will ultimately link both together, as is shown in his hyperbolic contrast of the Greeks with the philologists in the essay *We Philologists*:

The Greeks render homage to beauty, develop the body, speak clearly, are religious transfigurers of everyday occurrences, are listeners and observers, have an aptitude for the symbolical, are in full possession of their freedom as men, can look innocently out into the world, are the pessimists of thought.	The Philologists are babblers and triflers, ugly-looking creatures,stammerers, filthy pedants, quibblers and scarecrows, unfitted for the symbolical, ardent slaves of the State, Christians in disguise, philistines.

This point should not be underestimated: Nietzsche's positing of Greek agonal values as an alternative to Christian morality occurs in the context of his relationship to the ancients via their reception in modernity, and this means that he cannot evade the agon with the interpreters of the ancients, that is, the philologists. Within Germany, philology has always maintained close links with Lutheranism and Protestant hermeneutics.[121] This connection cannot be overstated. Men such as Johann Matthias Gesner (1691–1761), Johann August Ernesti (1707–81), and Jeremias David Reuss (1750–1837) all came from pastors' homes. Perhaps the most famous of them all, Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824) was the son of the choirmaster of Lohra, while others such as the biblical critics

[120] Thus, in *The Antichrist* he writes, "The Protestant pastor is the grandfather of German philosophy. Protestantism itself is its *peccatum originale*. Definition of Protestantism: hemiplegic paralysis of Christianity – *and* of reason. . . . One need only utter the words 'Tübingen School' to get an understanding of what German philosophy is at bottom – a very artful form of theology."

[121] See Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Johann Salomo Semler (1725–91), Friedrich Christian Baur (1792–1860), and David Friedrich Strauß (1808–74) traditionally maintained an even stronger interest in theological questions. David Friedrich Strauß belonged to the Tübingen School; Friedrich Christian Baur was considered its founder, and thus not only was Christianity implicated in a certain kind of philology but philology also went hand in glove with and pursued a certain kind of Christianity.[122]

Third, morality. Nietzsche's comments on morality are diverse and scattered across many writings. Yet, a few main strands may still be gleaned. As with the other two aspects, religion and philosophy, here also his main target is Christian morality, which he equates with "slave morality" and opposes to "master morality." Greek morality was of the latter type. In the contemporary period, however, Nietzsche's main target is the revival of Christian morality through Luther, whom he specifically holds responsible for reinstituting the values of a slave morality after its near overcoming in the neo-platonically inspired Renaissance. For Nietzsche, the Renaissance was the "*transvaluation of Christian values*," "the attempt, undertaken with all means, with all instincts, with all genius, to bring about the triumph of the *opposite* values, the *noble* values." According to Nietzsche, with the election of the Borgia popes, Christian morality was exhausted and almost at its end. He exults that Christianity "the old depravity, the *peccatum originale*, . . . no longer sat on the throne of the Pope! But life! The triumph of life! The great yea to all things high, beautiful and daring!" Luther's

[122] Nietzsche was well aware of these concerns, mediated to him via the work of David Friedrich Strauß and others. In aphorism 95 of *Daybreak* ("Historical refutation as the definitive refutation"), he noted: "In former times, one sought to prove that there is no God — today one indicates how the belief that there is a God could *arise* and how this belief acquired its weight and importance: a counter-proof that there is no God thereby becomes superfluous. — When in former times one had refuted the 'proofs of the existence of God' put forward, there always remained the doubt whether better proofs might not be adduced than those just refuted: in those days atheists did not know how to make a clean sweep."

attack upon Christianity, however, had the effect of restoring the Church once more. More: "they [the Germans] also have on their conscience the foulest kind of Christianity, the most incurable, the most irrefutable that exists, Protestantism . . . If we do not get done with Christianity, the *Germans* will be to blame for it." This historical attribution explains why much of Nietzsche's reversal of morality unfolds as a contest with Luther and German thought. It also explains the transformation that takes place in Nietzsche's thought between 1876 and 1882. Heinz Blum notes: "As late as 1876 he [Nietzsche] looked upon Protestantism as a source of light and freedom and upon Roman Catholicism as the embodiment of darkness and intellectual bondage. However, all his complimentary utterances on Luther and the Reformation are scarcely based on an intimate knowledge of the man and the movement he inspired. They rather express little more than the idea of Luther held by most educated Protestants of that day. . . Luther the great hero of the Reformation, the first representative of modern culture, without whom the world in which we live would be quite unthinkable."[123] After 1876, however, Nietzsche's appraisal of Luther is decidedly less complimentary; in fact, he makes him responsible both for the failure of the sciences to develop and for the lack of respect for the truth and for a kind of cultural philistinism, associated with anti-Semitism, that he considers characteristic of the Germans (Luther himself was the author of two anti-Semitic tracts, *On the Jews and their Lies* and *Of the Unknowable Name and the Generations of Christ*, that were to have a profound influence up to twentieth-century German Nazism).[124] Nietzsche's rejection of

[123] Heinz Blum, "Nietzsche's Idea of Luther in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 65, no. 6 (1950): 1053.

[124] Nietzsche specifically makes the following accusations against the Germans: (1) they are not thinkers; they write no books (Kant is a "nihilist with the intestines of a Christian dogmatist"); they are motivated by a desire for profit (the Reformation, according to Nietzsche, only succeeded because Luther knew how to appeal to the German spirit "to *plunder* and . . . to *economize*"); they misuse history ("in relation to the *imperium romanum* they are the bearers of freedom, in relation to the eighteenth century they bring back

German nationalism as well as Protestantism, counter to a tradition in German philosophy both before and after him of emphasizing one's connections to Protestantism,[125] must be traced to this interest in seeing, in the German Reformation, a regression to the Middle Ages.

Nietzsche's multifaceted struggle with modernity thus places enormous demands on the scholar. It is with a deep awareness of this complex philosophical and historical background behind Nietzsche's work that Tuncel takes up the task of an interpretation of Nietzsche's notion of agon. His book is among the recent trend of works that consider agon a central concept of Nietzsche's philosophy (the other is Christa Davis Acampora's *Contesting Nietzsche*[126]). In this careful study, Tuncel shows how the thought of agon,

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morality, the 'categorical imperative' . . . There is a German, imperial way of writing history . . . there is even an anti-Semitic way"); they are psychologically unclean and lack depth ("What is considered 'deep' in Germany is precisely this sort of instinctive uncleanliness with respect to oneself: people do not even *want* to be clear about themselves"); they have no instinctive feeling for rank and distinction ("the German places every one on an equal footing"); they are given over to melancholy ("How much sullen heaviness, dullness, humidity, pyjamas, how much *beer* there is in German intellect"); and their music is "constipated, [and] constipating." This litany of accusations contrasts starkly with the tradition of praising German intellectual life and wishing to be seen as a part of it before and after him (see next note).

[125] John Hare has argued of Kant's project in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* that "he [Kant] is translating the theology he encountered in the Lutheran catechisms of his youth, and which he was not much interested in changing." John Hare, "The Place of Kant's Theism in his Moral Philosophy," in *Kant on Practical Justification: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Mark Timmons, Sorin Baiasu (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 313; Manfred Kuehn cites interpreters who hold that Kant's moral philosophy "is not much more than a secularized form of pietism." Manfred Kuehn, "Kant's Jesus," in *Kant's* Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gordon Michalson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). In the case of Hegel, there is much less room for debate: he explicitly sees his philosophy as being in the service of a justification of Lutheranism ("I have there explained and expressed Luther's teachings as true, and as recognized by philosophy as true") and makes no secret about the fact that he considers Lutheranism a superior religion ("We Lutherans (I am and will remain one) have a better faith."), while also arguing for the role of his philosophy in confirming his Lutheranism ("I am a Lutheran, and through philosophy have been at once completely confirmed as a Lutheran."). After Hegel, the next philosopher to emphasize his links to German Protestantism will be Heidegger who, according to Hans-Georg Gadamer, expressed his desire "to be a new Luther." When reading Nietzsche in the 1930s, Heidegger scribbles the word "un-deutsch" in the margins, meaning it as a criticism of Nietzsche.

[126] Acampora's book is structured around four major historical figures, Homer, Socrates, Paul and Wagner, and engages in a historical reflection on them from the standpoint of Nietzsche's agonistic philosophy. In contrast, Tuncel's book focuses only or mostly on the agonal age of ancient Greece, its micro-dynamics, and how Nietzsche interprets it and how his inter-operation plays out in his more mature late writings. His reflection on history ends, to a large extent, with fifth-century ancient Greece (although there are some reflections about the later decline of the culture of agon).

although only explicitly the subject of Nietzsche's reflections in the period 1870–74, continues to organize all of Nietzsche's later philosophy. Even though words denoting agon (Tuncel lists *Wettkampf*, *Wetteifer*, *Wettbewerb*, *Wettspiel*, *Wettlauf*, and *Wettstreit*) rarely make an appearance after this period, Tuncel argues that the *thought* of agon remains central to Nietzsche's philosophy inasmuch as the latter is essentially undertaken as an agonistic struggle with the other value-creators of history (one need only think of Nietzsche's polemics against Socrates, Plato, Jesus, Luther or also implicitly with Kant). Yet, Tuncel's book is about much more than a historical reconstruction of Nietzsche's philosophy: at the limit, Tuncel is interested in understanding how agon forms and makes possible not only a certain kind of society but also a specific type of individuality, the agonistic individual, and what the loss of this type of individuality means for contemporary culture. This task (i.e., of understanding what happens when the culture of agon declines and what the possible ways of reversing this decline are) is undertaken, Tuncel says, not "not to imitate but to learn at the symbolic level" (236). It is this genuine interest in understanding what role agon plays for culture and what we lose when we lose the ability to see ourselves as striving in an agon that gives the book its unmistakable pathos.

In the introduction, Tuncel sets up his project as the attempt "to explore the connection between Nietzsche and Greek agon by studying a variety of sources from ancient Greece on the culture of competition, how Nietzsche directly relates to this culture, especially in his early works, and finally how this influence appears in his later writings." (8) This project required Tuncel to examine a rich collection of sources, many of which would not have been accessible to Nietzsche. Each chapter of the book thus

represents a free-standing attempt to elucidate specific aspects of the Greek culture of agon. The first chapter, titled "Mythic Context of Agon," looks at some of the myths that relate to contests between mythic figures or the founding of contest sites. Chapter 2 and 3, titled "The Sacred in Agon" and "Suffering, Destruction, and Transfiguration," respectively, continue with this theme of looking at agon in the context of religion and responses to human suffering. Chapter 5, "Agon and War," discusses the relation of agon to the culture of war-making in ancient Greece; without reducing either one to the other, Tuncel argues for a "chiasmatic relation" between them that allows Nietzsche to "move back and forth from the symbolism of one to the other." (91) Chapters 5, "Agonal Feelings," examines certain feelings in human beings (e.g., hate, ambition, and envy) that arise from the situation of competition and how those can be purified by directing them into the proper channels. Chapter 6, "Agonistic Unity and Justice," seeks to understand how the Greeks, though living in a culture characterized by agon, nonetheless regarded themselves or constituted themselves as a unity. The concept of "agonistic unity" is very closely related to the concept of "agonistic justice," which, Tuncel argues, is a precursor of Nietzsche's concept of "active justice" in his later works. In Chapter 7, "From Agonistic Individualism to the Overhuman," Tuncel discusses the emergence of a specific ideal of individuality in the agonal age – that of the agonistic individual. He identifies three different but related types of individualities – mythic, heroic, and agonistic – that Nietzsche discusses in his early works. Mythic individuality reflects the Titanic order where the individual does not have much role; the heroic is the Homeric individual who knows mostly war but not agon, who has not channeled his destructive urges into competition to excel; finally, the agonistic individual is both mythic and

heroic, but has evolved into a higher being, as the mythic and the heroic take on different meanings. This chapter contains some of Tuncel's most pertinent and astute remarks on the concept of individuality.[127] Finally, chapters 11 and 12, "Festival and Spectacle" and "Political Theory," respectively, look at the political aspects of agon. Tuncel makes the wise choice of deferring this aspect to the end, even though it is one that, for most modern readers, would have appeared primary. Here he is concerned to work out the differences between modern ideas of competition or of sport (as embodied, for instance, in the modern Olympic games) and ancient ones as a prelude to his concluding chapter, "The Decline of the Agonal Age," which explores the various reasons that might have contributed to the end of Greek agonistic culture.

Tuncel makes a strong case for the fact that agon is the thread that links Nietzsche's writings from the early to the late period. "Although his discussion of ancient Greek culture gradually loses its primary focus after this period, the spirit of ancient Greece is always present in his thought and writings, and almost all of his major areas that are developed later (including the eternal return, the Overhuman, and the will to power) can be traced back to it. This spirit, no doubt, includes the spirit of agonism." (8) Each of the chapters constitutes a self-contained, yet detailed meditation on one aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy of agon. (Both in its systematic arrangement and in its intimate knowledge of the Greek sources Tuncel's book clearly demonstrates the influence of Tuncel's teachers Reiner Schürmann and Joan Stambaugh, the latter a major Nietzsche

[127] See, for instance, his discussion in this chapter of an understanding of individuality that does not juxtapose freedom and causality: "the *agonal* individual sustains within himself both the mythic individual and the heroic individual; that is, he is both *destiny* and *freedom* at the same time. He has adjusted his individual *freedom* to the flow of eternal cycle instead of standing against it like a motionless soldier. Contrary to the common opinion that tragic man is all destiny, bound by destiny, he is, insofar as he is also an *agonal* individual, *free* to the extent that or because he knew and lived out his destiny and mortality. It was out of this *freedom* that many *works of culture* were created in the *agonal* age of ancient Greece from Homer to Socrates" (142).

scholar.) I especially appreciated the discussion of "the macro- and micro-world of the agonist" in its relation to "the rise of the individual and the principle of individuation, the Dionysian state, the mythic, heroic, and agonal individuals, and the Overhuman" (139) (in chapter 7). Tuncel also casts a revealing light on the value of agon for Nietzsche *as a principle* and not just as a historical concept. An "important aspect of the agonistic philosopher is to hold, within his own self or his own world-view, the multiplicity of *necessary forces of culture* in their *agonal* togetherness" (254); "The agonistic culture Nietzsche contemplates in his works can be gathered from his writings on culture and from his world-view. This is a culture, which brings and holds together its various expressions, its various *forces* in their agonal togetherness, where they are ranked as highest values and where the highest types are appropriated for its strife for the highest" (255). In contrast to many commentators who avoid discussion of the topic, Tuncel also appropriately recognizes the role played by Greek polytheism in fostering or preserving a sense of agon: "With the ancient Greeks, the agonal spirit had already existed in poetry, mythology, arts, and athletics, before it re-produced itself in thought with the rise of philosophy. And the primordial core of agon resides in the polytheistic genius of the Greeks" (255).[128]

I found the book well-researched and Tuncel is obviously well-informed about the history of Nietzsche scholarship. He recommends a reevaluation of the role played by Burckhardt in the formation of Nietzsche's thought, whose influence is often downplayed in favor of Wagner and Schopenhauer. Brief discussions of Bataille, Foucault, Burkert, Eliade, Kerenyi, Freud, and Girard enrich the book. Tuncel has an interesting reading of

[128] Ed Butler has recently made a strong case for polytheism as an essential element of Greek philosophical life; see Edward P. Butler, *Essays on a Polytheistic Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Edward P. Butler, 2014).

eternal recurrence, which he connects to the idea of sacred, mythic time in Eliade, and which he argues can be understood as the manifestation of "an agonistic play between creative and destructive forces" (43) unfolding over cosmic cycles. (This reading interestingly complements the reading of eternal recurrence as a motif to be taken "literally" so that one can experience the full "existential force" of Nietzsche's challenge of Lawrence Hatab as well as the "performative understanding" reading of eternal recurrence of Paul Loeb, and shows that the final word on eternal recurrence is not yet spoken.) In the background of Tuncel's work, I clearly detected the influence of Schürmann, whose own philosophical project was informed by agonal thinking, derived from Nietzsche. Schürmann's philosophy of uncovering a structure of "tragic differing" at work in thinkers from Parmenides to Heidegger obviously shapes much of this book (as, for instance, in this observation: "No thinker has stretched the individual as the one as far as Parmenides has done, without, at the same time, detaching it from the larger unity it belongs to, namely, the One," 141).

As the iconoclast of Christianity enshrined in secular modernity, Nietzsche is of immense importance to us standing in the demise of modernity. Tuncel has written a timely and sensitive book that helps the reader navigate Nietzsche's retrieval of Greek culture in a milieu of modernity, philology, and Christianity. Yet, he has also done much more than simply write another introduction to Nietzsche. His book is motivated by his desire to engage with Nietzsche and to see in him the "agonistic philosopher," who holds, "within his own self or his own world-view, the multiplicity of *necessary forces of culture* in their *agonal* togetherness. . . " (254)[129] In raising himself to the level of

[129] Tuncel is correct to emphasize, via Nietzsche, the significance of agon to philosophy. In ancient traditions in general, agon is a structural principle of existence; its significance is thus limited neither to the

philosophical agon, Tuncel has paid his teacher Schürmann, described in the dedication as "a pure agonist," a fitting tribute.

political nor to the cosmological spheres. Although Nietzsche may or may not have known about the Indian sources, the Sanskrit epic, the Mahābhārata, offers further confirmation of his approach to agon. (For a good introduction, see Alf Hiltebeitel's *The Ritual of Battle* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990].)

Beatrix Vogel, ed. *Umwertung der Menschenwürde – Kontroversen mit und nach Nietzsche*. München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2014. 288 pp. ISBN 978-3-495-48655-9.

Review by Yunus Tuncel

This collection of essays was the result of a symposium, "Riddle Human Being: Human Dignity according to Nietzsche," organized by the Nietzsche-Forum in Munich in September, 2012. Most of the essays were presented at this symposium. In the introductory chapter of this book, the title of which can be translated as *Transvaluation of Human Dignity*[130] *– Controversies with and after Nietzsche* ('after' and/or 'according to'), Vogel gives a comprehensive overview of Nietzsche's reception in Germany shortly after his death. In this period Nietzsche's ideas resonated especially with artists of all types, as they saw a new beginning in Nietzsche (18). Nietzsche and Wagner were brought together under the same artistic inspiration for such a new beginning. However, this new beginning was shattered by two world wars and the traumas they created. As Vogel highlights the sensitivity of the issue and the renewed discussion of the overhuman, she frames the question anew as to how one can conceive of the place of human being in the universe as between the animal-human and the overhuman (23). This conception assumes a new species of human being and, as Sorgner argues in his book *Human Dignity After Nietzsche*,[131] demands a new discussion of human dignity. It was this monograph by Sorgner and the challenges

[130] I will translate *Menschenwürde* as "human dignity," although the word *Würde* is often translated as 'worth.'

[131] *Menschenwürde nach Nietzsche: die Geschichte eines Begriffs.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010.

concerning the concept of human dignity as highlighted there, which represent the intellectual background of the above mentioned conference as well as of this essay collection (26). Vogel had realized that the criticisms Sorgner puts forward are the ones which urgently need to be discussed in Germany by a wider public and which Vogel deals with extensively in her more than 100 pages long introduction (37-57). What follows below is a brief review of each of the eleven essays of the anthology gathered in three parts.

Part I, "Aspects of Constitutional Law," has two chapters. In the first chapter, "Does Human Dignity Remain Untouchable?," Böckenförde discusses the legal aspects of human dignity in the post-war German constitution, especially in the light of recent advances in medical technology and genetics. After exploring several positions in the legal debate, some of which revolve around the status of the embryo, Böckenförde concludes that the concept of human dignity is an open concept, which is not fixed in its concrete applications (140); the concept has its philosophical underpinnings and functionality must not be confused with principles. He then asks what the guarantee of human dignity will turn out to be, if it does not reflect the needs and ideas of the times and to what extent this guarantee is owed to a near-born or an unborn human-being. Here the question turns around the advances made in human genetics, bio-technology, and reproductive sciences (141). In the second chapter of this part, "Erosion of Human Dignity," Triedhelm Hufen highlights some of the core issues regarding political and legal aspects of human dignity, as he responds to Böckenförde. He poses the question as to whether the state should not only pay heed to human dignity but also protect it. This clearly leads to another question as to when human dignity would start in the biological life a human being: at conception, at birth or in the in-between stages of the fetus? After discussion Kant's ideas on rationality and self-determination in relation to human dignity, Hufen reflects on the political/legal dimension of medicine and the ethics of healing. State can allow medicine to flourish so that sufferings and diseases can be alleviated. He rightly observes that, although the sufferer retains and should retain dignity, disease and suffering may compromise it (154). This is true especially when we keep in mind that every human being has different (low or high) tolerance for suffering. After examining the implications of human dignity in several areas of medicine such as in-vitro

fertilization and stem cell research, Hufen concludes that human dignity is in danger neither as a principle nor as an ethical ground of the community (161-2).

Second part of the book consists of five chapters and is entitled, "Philosophical Aspects." In the first chapter, "Beyond a Rigid Conception of Anthropocentricity," Stefan Lorenz Sorgner demonstrates the contradictions and metaphysical implications of the concept of human dignity, while showing how this concept can be thought without its rigid anthropocentric framework. After exposing several contradictions in the German Constitution regarding the status of the foetus and animals, Sorgner asks whether the constitutional law of a liberal-democratic country like Germany should be based on such as a strong metaphysical grounding principle (170). Portraying human beings as a riddle, Sorgner exposes the dualistic metaphysics that operates in the German Constitution; it is a metaphysics that categorically separates human-being from other living beings. His claim that members of Western industrial countries do not share this dualistic conception is unfounded; the fact that many examples and cases of mistreatment of animals and the many do not recognize the animal-human disprove his optimism regarding the Western world. Sorgner then discusses Singer's radical position on speciesism and rightly suggests that problems must be overcome incrementally, not radically as in Singer. "Future needs the past. A radical change...is rarely in the interests of many people." (174) After presenting the historic context of the concept of human dignity, which is integral to liberal democracies, Sorgner examines some of the recent debates and ideas on the moral status of animals. Can animals be treated as persons, for instance? If so, how would this be reconciled with the concept of human dignity? This would clearly open up the door to many questions regarding human interactions with animals. And what about non-organic (or inorganic) objects such as computers, cyborgs, and BCIs (Brain Computer Interfaces)? Sorgner presents three examples of BCIs. Today computer-brain interface remains at the forefront of research. The status, therefore, of non-human entities remains to be open for debate. The next question for Sorgner pertains to the hierarchy of all beings. Here he introduces four levels of personhood based on such criteria as consciousness and capacity to feel and suffer. In my view, these are arbitrary criteria and no being in its multiplicity can be reduced in this way. But it is a suggestion, as he puts it, and they can be assessed and discussed. Sorgner ends his piece with a note on the future

of human being, where he brings up transhumanism, posthumanism, and enhancement technologies. While relating them to the concept of dignity (or worth), he concludes his essay by showing the implications of his proposed post-dualistic suggestions and a post-Kantian ethics, so to speak, where humans are no longer treated in isolation from their non-human neighbors and no longer privileged to their neglect, abuse, and destruction.

In the next chapter, "Humanity's Ideal of Personal Dignity or Naturalistic Reduction of the 'I'? – Nietzsche's Veto against Iconography and One-Dimensional Humanity," Edith Düsing raises the question as to how the idea of human dignity, as one finds it in Kant's philosophy of right, fits with Nietzsche's naturalism. As she rightly observes, "Nietzsche's free-spirited deconstruction of old European image of human dignity is no dogma for him; it belongs to the experimental and philosophical antithesis of naturalism and idealism…" (199) Nietzsche opens Pandora's box for many questions: what is life? What is human? Why is the human between the un-animal and the over-animal? Even more dangerous questions are at store: do all humans have the same worth? The death of God unleashed a horrendous stream of forces, but where is the genii to put them back in order or to re-create them in high style? On the other hand, paradoxical as it may sound, all life has worth, and every singular being has its own worth. Nietzsche's polemic with humanism can then be seen in the light of his critique of metaphysics and the broader implications of the death of God.

Annemarie Pieper's essay, "The Meaning of the Earth – Nietzsche's Transvaluation of Human Dignity" follows that of Düsing in a complimentary way. After discussing the meanings of and the relationship between 'worth' (*Würde*) and 'value' (*Wert*), Pieper shows how Nietzsche deconstructs the concept of human dignity. Human-beings are perspectivally situated vis-a-vis other beings and have no special place in the universe; this was, as she observes, in Nietzsche's early essay "Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense." Pieper then moves on to exploring Nietzsche's transvaluation of the concept of human dignity based on *Zarathustra*. As this issue revolves around Zarathustra's central teaching, namely the overhuman, she makes several noteworthy remarks: first, the overhuman is associated with the meaning of the earth; second, it is based not on a new type of life style, but rather on a human type; third, the role of three transformations—the camel, the lion, and the child—is central to Zarathustra's teachings.

Here Peiper offers her own interpretation of the three phases, as she sees the last one, the child phase, to be the highest and the most difficult to achieve. But what do Zarathustra's teachings have to do with human dignity? Pieper understands human dignity in terms of the three phases and states that the worth (or dignity) is based on the different perspectives of the representations of each level. This view of hers simplifies the complexity of many types and trends, as it reduces them only to three, which has its advantages and disadvantages. Where would a type like the spirit of gravity or the last human fit here? Would they be reduced to or absorbed by the three types? In my view, each type that appears in *Zarathustra* has a relationship to the question of value and therefore tot he concept of human dignity. Human-beings are not equal; this is what Zarathustra declares. This position, however, by no means negates the fact that a) all life has value; b) all human beings have a relation to value and dignity. I cannot agree more with Pieper's observation that *equality* for Nietzsche is achieved through contest (233). On the other hand, I cannot see how the representatives of the camel, the lion, and the child can be in contest with one another. They may be, and are often, in conflict, but not every conflict is worthy of contest. Pieper ends her essay with a note on Camus, as she mistakenly disqualifies Nietzsche from any collective human effort. She says this is another story; indeed it is. She has not yet seen the collective dimension of Nietzsche's thought.

In "Untimely Thoughts on Humanistic Education" Albert von Schirnding reflects on the Greek model of education, specifically the Socratic one by way of *Phaedrus* and *Georgias*. In this model he sees education as the discovery of one's true self and the role of the teacher as someone who helps his disciple to achieve that goal of self-discovery. Deriving ideas from ancient Greeks, Schirnding speaks of gods' affinity to human-beings, having an image of human-being, having limits, community, solidarity, and, above all, order. He invokes the Apollonian dictum "know thyself," but in the same breath criticizes stem cell research or use of stem cells from dead embryos, as he calls it *hubristic*. With due respect to these ideas and warnings, presumably imbued with the spirit of ancient Greece, I do not see how scientific experimentation with embryos and the human body can be *hubristic.* Such technologies did not exist in ancient Greece, and ancient Greeks not only used every technology available to them but invented new

technologies to enhance their lives. Were these inventions also *hubristic*? They even experimented with the human body, though not in the same way and degree we do today. Rather than calling a specific technology *hubristic*, we need to examine in what *spirit* that technology operates and what its *affects* may be. Let it suffice here to say that we all have our own *Greeks*.

In the following essay, "Nietzsche's Conception of New Human from the Perspective of Hermann Hesse and Frederich Dürrenmatt," Peter André Bloch explores Nietzsche's influence on Hesse and Dürrenmatt especially through his new vision of human being. Bloch first traces the development of Nietzsche's life from the very beginning, as he reflects on his life as a son of a Lutheran pastor, a common background he shares with these two writers. Bloch claims that Nietzsche, shaped by his Lutheran upbringing, knew his life's goal from an early age on and created himself and his works accordingly, as he constantly reflected on his life and achievements (we can also include *Ecce Homo* here from the very end of his philosophical life). Even when later on the goal becomes self-overcoming as an overcoming of one's existing goals, there still remains the goal. Bloch then moves on to examining Nietzsche's ideas on the concept of 'worth' (*Würde*), the worth of human being and the worth of work. While he rightly observes the hierarchical ordering of Nietzsche's concept of worth (262), he wrongly plays into the detractors of Nietzsche's works and gives credence to their poor interpreters. This shows Bloch's own insufficient understanding of overhumanly hierarchy, which should not be construed as 'elitism' (whatever this often used term means) or totalitarianism or manipulation of the weak, etc. Bloch ends his essay by showing how Hesse and Dürrenmatt engaged closely with Nietzsche's works and re-created their own, as they were influenced by his teachings, especially those of the overhuman and the will to power, while German ideologues, around the same time, used and misused Nietzsche's works to promote their nationalistic goals. As Bloch states, Hesse was concerned with the protection of individuals from violence and war and the right of free expression; Dürrenmatt, on the other hand, focused on the dissolution of structures, as contextualized by the concept of the overhuman and representations of power (264).

In Part III of the anthology, "Theological Aspects," four essays address the subject of human dignity from different perspectives. Ulrich Willers' essay, "The

Displaced Worth: Nietzsche's Perspectives – Christian Convictions," surveys several thinkers of recent times such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Foucault, Charles Taylor, and Vattimo, as he raises the questions as to what God and deification could mean and what the death of God and nihilism could signify in our age. While lamenting for the loss and the displacement of dignity, Willers, serving his profession faithfully, relapses into a defence of Christianity and the dead God. The issue of the death of God was not only a personal issue for Nietzsche, but a decisive issue for his epoch. It is not a question of personal hatred for post-Nietzscheans regarding religion either. Nietzsche showed extensively the problems of Christianity – which are also the problems of all Abrahamic religions – and concluded that God is dead and shall remain dead. Instead of reviving a dead, life-negating God and the entire world-order based on Godly values, one needs, in the domain of religion, to look for signs for Nietzsche's new vision of religion, some of which can be found in Greek polytheism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and, as for post-Nietzscheans, in the works of Georges Bataille. None of these are mentioned in Willer's essay; he remains, in his nostalgia for the dead God, to be an apologetic for a dying religion at the end of a world-order. Next essay by Ram Adhar Mall, "The Position of Human-being in the Household of Cosmic Nature: A Cultural Perspective," starts with a discussion of Nietzsche's three central teachings, the will to power, the eternal recurrence, and the overhuman, and asks the cosmological question as to where the human-being is anchored, if not in God, nature, Being, or history. Mall discusses several religions in this essay, including Hinduism and Buddhism, as religions provide an answer to this question, often through transcendence and conception of a supernatural being like god. Clearly, none of them can be found in Nietzsche, not even a historic grounding. What then remains as an option for Mall is to claim that he is *anthropic* in the spirit of Protagoras. This is a radical claim and to attribute the position "human-being is the measure of all things" to Nietzsche would make him *anthropic* and anthropomorphic, which he was not. On the other hand, to replace it with the following may remove the charge of anthropomorphism, however tautological it may be: human-being is the measure of all humanly things but not all things. In any case, this essay raises many interesting questions on Nietzsche's cosmology. In the following essay, "Human Dignity in Different Religions and Cultures," Michael von Brück studies the concept of human

dignity in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism (343), as he retains a broader understanding of the term *Würde* and a manifold conception of human-being (341-2). In a Nietzschean spirit, von Brück ends his essay with a note on arts, aesthetic experience, and *veneration vitae*, veneration of life. The last essay by Kurt Weis, "Limit Experience and Human Dignity: Body Arts of Different Cultures as Worthy Adventures for Body and Soul," presents thirteen questions in the beginning and focuses on bodily functions or those experiences that have direct impact on the body such as fasting, silence, meditation, darkness, desert, and solitude (364). Weis then lists fourteen body techniques. All of these experiences and techniques are supposed to contribute to human dignity and its enhancement. As he sees life to be a gift and the path an adventure in the spirit of Nietzsche – though he refrains from discussing his ideas – his emphasis on experience is well taken and compliments many of the theoretical points of other contributors.

Transvaluation of Human Dignity ends with an epilogue by the editor, Beatrix Vogel, who reflects on the main ideas of all the contributors, and an art intervention by Jörg Amonat and Reinhard Knodt. The book is full of thought-provoking ideas on human dignity and Nietzsche, as well as many related concepts such as 'worth' and 'value' and questions regarding who the human-being is in the aftermath of the death of God, namely the new human, and the place of human-being in relation to other beings. What is the status of non-humans? How can we re-define personhood? What is the role of enhancement technologices? How do recent philosophies and philosophical movements such as transhumanism and posthumanism shed light on these questions? I recommend the book highly for those who are interested in these questions.

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