

## PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL

VOLUME XII / 2023 / ISSN 2392-0963

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Dofinansowano ze środków Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego  
pochodzących z Funduszu Promocji Kultury

# MKİDN

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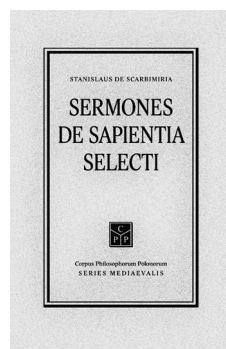
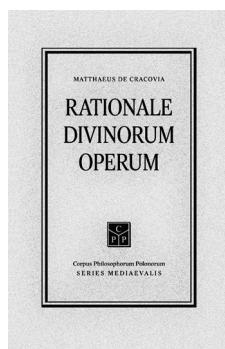
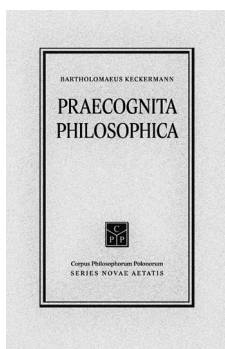
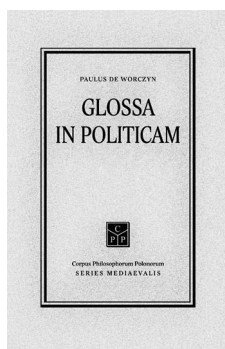
Published by Fundacja Augusta hr. Cieszkowskiego  
ul. Mianowskiego 15/65, 02-044 Warszawa, Poland

ISSN 2392-0963 (print)

ISSN 1899-9484 (online)

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## CORPUS PHILOSOPHORUM POLONORUM



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# EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION



The idea for an international – mostly Polish and American – conference on the relevance of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought came up over wine. The discussion of its possible content with Dr. William Wood filled many subsequent evenings. During one such conversation, the name of a German philosopher came up: Volker Gerhardt. He was one of thousands of academic toilers that this world knows, and he wouldn't be worth mentioning if he hadn't approached Nietzsche in a peculiar, if not altogether impertinent, manner. In a recent essay evaluating Nietzsche's enduring relevance, he writes,

Despite periodic doubts, Friedrich Nietzsche does indeed belong to the great thinkers. Even though his work remained unfinished in nearly every respect, and though many of his thoughts are exhausted in exalted gestures and there is in his writings not one insight which cannot be found somewhere else – despite all this, he has become a classic figure of philosophy.

Gerhardt's claim about Nietzsche's importance is qualified, if not altogether retracted, by the concessions he makes – Nietzsche is a "great thinker," yet his work reaches almost no conclusions, exhausts itself in "exalted gestures," and is wholly unoriginal in substance, albeit not in literary form. This kind of back-handed praise, or reverent ambivalence – William argued – is surprisingly common in the reception of Nietzsche. One might ask: With friends like these, does Nietzsche need enemies? If Nietzsche indeed "belongs among the great thinkers," it is important for us to show why he remains of enduring relevance over a century after his death – as an indispensable source of provocation and insight, not just as a skilled rhetorician and repackager of other people's thoughts. This conference should address the question of the enduring relevance of Nietzsche's thought and the many different but overlapping and interlocking "perspectives" (e.g., psychological, ethical, political, cultural, aesthetic, epistemological, metaphysical) that he brings to bear on his own world and on the world in which we live today. Hearing this, I completely agreed with William and started to think about the Polish endorsement of Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche's philosophy was introduced to Polish thought by women. The first monograph on Nietzsche was written in 1894 by Maria Przewóska, and the second, shortly after, in 1896, by Dr. Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska. This one was evidently better and more systematic. Still, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Nietzsche is discussed in Poland mainly in newspapers and is taken as a kind of anti-democratic scandal, someone who holds a grudge against the rest of mankind and – a bit like Jonathan Swift – stands in defense of horses. But not only daily

newspapers were a source of knowledge about Nietzsche in Poland. Some information about him reached Polish readers through Scandinavian novels, fashionable at that time, which were full of Nietzsche's ideas. Nietzsche was written about by authors such as George Brandes, Olli Hannsen, Knut Hamsun, or August Strindberg – that is, writers whose works got quickly translated into Polish. Especially the last of the abovementioned authors pleased Polish women with his last book, *Tschandala*, where he referred to Nietzsche's idea of an overman.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche was published in Poland mostly in fragments, on an almost aphoristic license. Newspapers fed on bits and pieces, so one could find there some random phrases and sentences out of context. The first large book by Nietzsche in Polish appeared in 1901: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by Maria Cumft and her husband. She would also translate *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* into Polish and publish it a few years later. From then on Nietzsche is taken over by journalists and poets, and within a few years, it was poets who translated into Polish and published all of Nietzsche's works. Today, Nietzsche is known in Poland mainly in these poetic translations.

In communist Poland, Nietzsche's works were prohibited, and if a study on the philosopher appeared at all, it was simply bad, written by some academic troglodyte. Things changed a bit after 1989, but not too much, for universities still keep on teaching Marx and his heirs, gender and postmodernism, as if communism hadn't ended. But that is a story for some other time. It is therefore no surprise that the only text on the Polish reception of Nietzsche in this issue was written – naturally – by a woman.

Piotr Nowak

Allan Bloom

## LECTURE ON NIETZSCHE

All these things which I'm going to talk to you about this year are things that I know much less about than usual. That sounds more vain than I meant it to be. But this is a theme in which I have the greatest interest but which I really have studied less adequately than anything else. The reason I have an interest in Nietzsche is that I do think that Nietzsche is one of the very small number of authors who are most important and certainly the modern author who is most important for us – both because of the profundity of his analysis of our situation and because Nietzsche is *us* – the overwhelming influence of Nietzsche on everything in our life. Nietzsche is the most powerful intellectual influence of our times, in ways that everyone is really unaware of; I mean, the degree to which it has penetrated daily life, so that it has come to seem American common sense. So much carried, for example, by German sociology into the United States, words like “lifestyle,” and so on, which are really new words, or just the use of the word “value.” That's all Nietzsche. And so Nietzsche, in a way, is immediately recognizable, but it's so recognizable that it's alien. It's necessary to think through what the use of this Nietzschean language means and what the consequences of Nietzsche are for our life. Somehow, I think, for our own activity of self-consciousness, the study of Nietzsche is central.

Now, you're going to be teaching this to students. It is particularly difficult to teach Nietzsche, and I'm going to talk to you about Nietzsche in large measure from the teaching aspect. I think we'll spend both sessions today on Nietzsche, tomorrow morning on Dostoyevsky and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and tomorrow afternoon on [*Antony and*] *Cleopatra*. That is the proper organization. The problem with teaching Nietzsche to American students [is] there are two opposites. In one sense, it doesn't mean a thing to them; they will pay no attention to it. In another, certain kinds of students will go wild about it in a quite dangerous way. Nietzsche's rhetoric – and this of course is one

of the problematic aspects of Nietzsche – is such as to make anybody feel significant and hate the world around them, an easy sense of transcendence, significance, and so on. One of the things that was very striking as a teacher during the 60s, when many students had mental breakdowns – it was a very regular aspect of life; now one doesn't see it as much, and I suppose that perhaps the proportion of psychiatric difficulty remains the same; but there was a kind of evidence of it in the 60s – was the number of students for whom Nietzsche was the material. Practically every student who would come into my office having some kind of paranoid or schizophrenic episode would be citing Nietzsche in one way or another, and it was quite striking.

But the greater difficulties than the psychiatric difficulties haven't been taken seriously; the theme is nihilism, which we're going to discuss today from *The Will to Power*. I just think that the nihilistic experience – perhaps not nihilism in its deepest sense – but the nihilistic experience is really alien to Americans. We're an optimistic people. This year I taught a course at Chicago; Saul Bellow and I teach a literature course, and we had to do nihilism in modern literature. One of the books we read was Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*. The students, who of course claimed that they had all the nihilistic experiences after reading the first part of Nietzsche, were just appalled by it and bored by it. It might be valuable to try to stick the Céline book into one of your courses just to see what the reaction is. Sometimes you ought to put books in to test the intellectual temperature of your students. It was a combination of – it seemed intensely boring and also horrible. Of course, the fact that Céline became a Nazi – or if not really a Nazi, certainly some kind of nihilist who could sympathize with the extremes of fascism – that was always a cloud for them, a kind of combination of moralism plus “Why can't you have more loving relations?” If you've read *Journey to the End of the Night*, the hero is a man named Robinson who is willing to die, to let his girlfriend shoot him, because he refuses to say he loves her. He just wouldn't take that. The key was to subject himself to that. Of course, this is an object of admiration for Céline, the narrator, who felt that this man really believed in something that wasn't worth dying for; he would have said that he loved her. I believe that the Céline books are the only, or among the only – I don't know that literature very well – plausible characterizations of the nihilistic mood in literature. When you read somebody like Gide, that's just show-off; he just shows how shocking he can be to *épater le bourgeois*; he's obviously still very excited by life and by fame and so on, and, well, by a few other things. With somebody like T. S. Eliot, it's just an excuse for a certain kind of snobbism. In higher people, it's a kind of despair based upon great longings for old, grand cultures. But in Céline, the experience that it is really all over, which is supposed to be the essence of the nihilist experiences, is there. And the students simply didn't go with it. Whereas in France, young people, I think, understand it, immediately recognize its greatness, and so on.

I attributed this to the real American belief in happiness, in the right to happiness, that things will work out, and that all this high intellectual criticism that comes from Europe is simply a way to make our life better. Woody Allen claims that he saw a book in a bookstore, *The Categorical Imperative and Six Ways to Make It Work for You*. That's an American. It's in some sense nihilism – for the greater fulfillment of your life. Self-help books of that kind. It is extremely alien, but at the same time there is no doubt that the

teaching itself has enormous effects on America, on the one hand, and at the same time, it is descriptive of something that's going on in the souls of Americans, in American young people, but without a *prise de conscience*, without their being fully conscious of it. It is quite extraordinary that the language of Nietzsche – it's always been a wonder to me – has had this enormous success in America, much more so perhaps than any place in the world, or at least we were the first. Here you took America, which was simple common sense, positivistic, and all of that world, beginning with values, lifestyle, charisma – which wasn't Nietzsche's term but which Weber developed around certain Nietzschean ideas – you can't find a janitor in America who doesn't use the word charisma now.

No doubt that really is quite astounding, when you think of all that that word carries with it. It implies that leadership comes from something like divine grace, but which really isn't divine. The undemocratic implications of that! Of course, the whole terminology was developed to say that the democratic rationalistic legitimacy doesn't work and therefore the critical thing to concentrate on is something like charisma, which we, of course, immediately degrade into public relations. But, in a way we get the central idea by turning it into mere public relations, or an act, or something like that. Anybody who yells loud enough is said to be charismatic. In a way, we continue the democratic revolution or the democratic progress, which Nietzsche was trying to stop, but at the same time, we undermine its vital spiritual intellectual core – am I being clear in that? – because the meaning of democracy was that men rationally could subject themselves to laws that they make themselves with rulers who are themselves reasonable, a union of reason. And of course, this whole language denies that.

You see it in the word “lifestyle” – again, a Weberian notion which came from Nietzsche – that the good way of life is not what one seeks because they're working back, and there is no such thing as the good way of life. There is no intellectual intuition of the ends of man. There are artistic makings of life. Now, of course, anybody has a lifestyle. I don't have to go through the different varieties; there are as many as there are quirks and perversions of people. But again, the crucial point is gotten that the philosophical rational quest for the right way to live is not necessary. But what it is, is a kind of expression of the artistic forming of the unconscious drives. I am still so astounded by the degree of success of this dark German side of the soul, which was as alien as anything could be to American directness, and empiricism, common sense – how it captured America. Now, it had to respond to something in our souls, and it's really worth reflecting on. I was with a taxi driver in Atlanta, I was driving in his cab, and he told me that he had just gotten out of prison, and he had gotten in contact with himself – again, that language of the self, which is essentially Nietzschean in character. He got in contact with himself, and he'd done all kinds of therapy. I said, “Well, what kind of therapy did you do?” And he said, “Well, I did depth psychology and transactional analysis, but what I liked best of all was gestalt.” If you think about what that means – the high expressions of German philosophy now in the same way that one has a suppository.

In some sense, you can say, well, it's part of our genius for incorporating everything and making it democratic, and that's kind of nice, you know, personality, creativity, commitment, all these things which were meant to be aristocratic notions. Very few people could really be creative. Very few people could really have personalities, people



who could set their own values – those were the activities of genius. In a way, that's what Nietzsche is trying to restore as over against, on the one hand, democratic mediocrity, but also against rationalism. Those things become available for everybody. That's marvelously American. But at the same time, the degree to which it alienates both from common sense, the simple democratic character of our lives, which was supposed to be work and family, and taking care of the country in ourselves. Somehow the opening up of an enormous dark region of the soul but opening it up without any assurance that there is a great continent there or that the great continent will not do terrible damage. It's that easygoing, happy ... Nihilism for Americans would be connected with the right to happiness, as I suggested. That shatters the whole mood of nihilism. And it is a mood. It's supposed to be a temper of the soul. You can say that there can be no happiness, but what they do is they take the despair and then say, "We'll cure it by a therapy." That mixture, it's very, very odd. It's very central to Americans. In one sense, this is the world described by Nietzsche that was going to come. But it's also a world which has been transformed by Nietzsche and that's the reason why Nietzsche is both important, interesting for us to watch in its effect on us, but also dangerous.

I'm going to begin by reading, just reading over a passage of Nietzsche's that is not from *this* book. I don't know why you chose *The Will to Power* because it's really not a book. You're going to have some considerable problems. You're going to have to go through and just pick out the aphorisms. Nietzsche, from the very beginning, in all his writings, is extremely difficult, elusive, somehow expecting a certain kind of cultivation on the part of his readers, which we no longer have and which he doesn't point to. It's not like the problem of Kant. Kant is difficult to read, but he tells you what his sources are, and he in a way speaks to universal reason. Although perhaps to understand the real meaning of Kant you have to know a whole world – there is a meaning that is simply the universal meaning conveyed by reason. But Nietzsche is so much appealing to a common experience, which at the same time he's trying to preserve. You can say that that experience – and I think that that has to be pointed out to the students – is the experience, on the one hand, of classical antiquity and, on the other, the experience of the biblical religions. Judaism and particularly, of course, Christianity. He implies a deep knowledge of, a deep sympathy with, but also a struggle against those two roots, and both have had a tendency to disappear.

In a way, we've solved the problem of the tension. Nietzsche describes our soul as a kind of bow with two ends which are very difficult to string. But the string has an enormous tautness, and it is out of that bow that one will project the new values that he hopes and expects that man will be able to set for himself. Of course, part of the American educational way has been to unbend the bow again, to use a Nietzschean expression, by just not giving us that information any longer. In a private way, I'd like to hear from some of you about this. I, as a teacher, over the years, always when I began teaching, I said, "Well, Americans don't know anything." I didn't know anything when I was eighteen. When you begin *tabula rasa*, that's a wonderful thing. But I didn't realize how much they had in them just sort of instinctively, from their own religious trainings, certain kinds of family relations. My feeling has been that this has been going down year by year, so that there is almost no bow whatsoever to begin with or that the soil is very thin, that this has been the problem of education, that the past longings ... Let me say in this context: one of

the things that's very striking is that I'm finding that a disproportionate number of good students now are Catholic, or at least of Catholic training, because they seem to carry more of the past. I mean, frequently, just the mere reminder that a bad conscience breaks, it can be a stimulus to serious education.

But *The Will to Power* is a very great problem because of the difficulty of Nietzsche's writing in general, and here it's not a completed book. It's very hard for the teacher himself to figure out; what he can say is really serious, developed, what the real intentions of the book are, and so on. First, there are many wonderful, wonderful things. Wonderful observations. But again, this is a problem because the most wonderful observations of Nietzsche's are psychological observations – psychological in the broadest sense, the possible states of soul. He is marvelous in describing, characterizing, the phenomena that go on. Young people, and particularly our young people, don't tend to be very subtle analysts of their experiences, their moods. They're told what they feel. They have the categories given to them. In large measure, someone has to turn them to it. But I wanted to begin with the famous passage – and it might be useful for you as teachers to do so – the last-man passage from *Zarathustra*, because in some sense it states the beginning point.

Perhaps I should say the following. I had meant to say this in my remarks, that I think part of the success of Nietzsche in the United States has come from his assimilation into Marxism, the great movement. Nietzsche is clearly a right-winger, if you'll forgive that crude formulation, but it is important to recognize that because Nietzsche is so elusive that one has to stick on things that are really clear and which they will understand. We'll come back to this. But he's against democracy, he's against notions of human rights, above all – and perhaps this would be allowed, for some of the best discussion in class, if by the best one means the most heated – he is *absolutely* against the equality of women, feminism. He regards that as *absolutely* essential. I'll try to explain why, and there's going to be much in here that one can refer to. Nietzsche is a figure who said modernity – and modernity means democracy and ultimately socialism – is, on the one hand, the decadence of man, necessarily the decadence of man, and leads to – or not really leads to but is the true expression of – nihilism, the belief in nothing, and that it is the deepest and perhaps fatal misunderstanding of the nature of things and hence particularly of man, and it is one of the great achievements of the left to have incorporated Nietzsche. Because if you hear Nietzschean talk, I think you'll see that it's mostly on the left today. That's been since the Second World War. The whole school of criticism called deconstructionism is nothing but that. Deconstructionism, in the simplest sense, it's a circus act – you cut the woman up into pieces, the magician, and then you put her back together. That's what they do to Nietzsche. They cut him up and put him back together, and he's a leftist, after the circus act.

I think the simplest way in which Nietzsche moved to the left: Nietzsche's description of modern man, which is very impressive, can easily be assimilated to Marx's understanding of the bourgeois. It's much profounder, obviously. We can say, "Well, Nietzsche says this is the last man, this is what we are heading to." Marx says, "No, this is a stage, we're going to get beyond it after the revolution," and this has allowed the left at least to make a plausible case because this is a description of the man of our times and that's the bourgeoisie. That's what we have to get rid of. And that would much more easily allow for the revolution, precisely because Nietzsche is a much profounder describer,

spectator, of man than Marx and takes much more seriously the intimate experiences, which somehow the economic explanation does not. Without the Nietzschean element, I think that Marxism would have died completely. The appeal of contemporary Marxism is the appeal of Nietzsche. You'll find that in the Frankfurt school – Habermas and so on, it began really with Lukács and so on, a long time ago, it's been a continuous thing – that these people were smart enough to recognize where the real intellectual force was and somehow to incorporate it. I'm not saying that it was a propaganda stunt. I think they were convinced – Marxists who didn't want to think it through. But Nietzsche posed great problems, and they somehow took that in. And I think, of course, that has a great deal to do ... The refugees from Hitler, the Frankfurt school, spent a long time in the United States, 20 to 25 years, and they were extremely effective. But, for example, the kind of charm of Marcuse, if there is any charm, is precisely that: a Marxist analysis of the present, a Nietzschean hope for the future after the revolution. Nietzsche somewhat banalized and vulgarized into Freudianism.

Another way of speaking of the power of Nietzsche in the democratic world is that he allows for excitement. A plaything of the democratic world. It would be so boring if there weren't these kinds of expectations, so in a way he becomes the opiate of the democratic man, if one likes. This was in a way Nietzsche's objection to Romanticism. Romanticism was in a way a very splendid thing with very great men who had opposed mediocrity and materialism in the name of art. But very soon, as those of you who know *Madame Bovary* know, a man like Monsieur Homais, who is the bourgeois, quintessentially uses the Bohemians and will have their paintings and read their poetry and so on after dinner. In a way, Nietzsche suffers some of the same fate. He, in a way, gives the needed supplement to a certain lack.

By the way, I would very much appreciate – since my presentation is both very incomplete and halting and because I would like your notions, and I know that there are people here who know Nietzsche much better than I do, for example Ernest – I would appreciate your just interrupting me to ask questions or to state your opinions about this. But the last man is a very good beginning point. The Zarathustra who has come down from his mountain among men finds that he can't attract them by descriptions of the superman, and he says, "Well alright, now I'm going to disgust them." His educational technique in describing the last man is to describe a human being who is absolutely revolting and to arouse their contempt. Now, that human being ultimately is supposed to be a mirror in which they see themselves and have self-contempt. But in some sense, we can repeat that activity in reading this to them:

They have something of which they are proud. What do they call that which makes them proud? Education they call it; it distinguishes them from goatherds. That is why they do not like to hear the word "contempt" applied to them. Let me then address their pride. Let me speak to them of what is most contemptible: but that is the *last man*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 128-29.

Here his beginning point is of course modern education. He doesn't mean to say modern education as criticized by the Reagan administration. But modern education as it was known in Germany, which was very much an admired thing. Modern scholarship. Modern academic philosophy. History, natural science, and so on. *Bildung*. The bourgeois education as it was represented in the high period of the German university.

The time has come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow into it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whirl!<sup>2</sup>

Incidentally, I wonder what students will get from that. Do you think it will mean *anything* to them? I think one must give some kind of explanations in this context. I mean, behind it, of course, lying behind all of this is the simple but powerful Nietzschean formulation "God is dead." God is what caused men to do extraordinary deeds in the past, and therefore without God man will have no goal of aspiration. The purpose of any serious thought according to Nietzsche is to re-establish goals, which means to say, something which men can respect, esteem, value, and that of course is the beginning of the understanding that "good and bad," that formulation, should be replaced by "value," the notion that a value is something that's valuable, something that we esteem.

What has happened is that we have lost the objects of esteem. It's worthwhile asking students what they esteem these days. They all say that they esteem something, and I think in general you'll find that they esteem being open, which means to say, having no esteem. They esteem open people, or they esteem certain kinds of very abstract notions. Nietzsche puts it in *The Will to Power* that morality has become abstract: people who have really nothing to do with their lives. Ghandi would be a perfect example of abstract moralism as opposed to, say, an Athenian's attachment to Pericles or an American's to George Washington at the time of the Revolution or immediately afterward. With the students, I always say these things just to get reactions from them. One can say, "What's wrong with my not having any heroes? As a matter of fact, I do have heroes. What's wrong with Mick Jagger's being my hero?" And he said, "That's not so bad – because you see they are still moralistic – I also have other heroes." And I said, "Well, who?" "Jessie Jackson and Cardinal Bernardin." And I said, "Well, they're all three on the same level." That is no way to denigrate the cardinal – or Jessie Jackson either. But they are largely, like Mick Jagger, media creations. I mean, this kid had never heard of Cardinal Bernardin before the Nuclear Freeze movement three months before, and the Nuclear Freeze movement had that same character of abstract moralism. And why are they for the Nuclear Freeze movement? So we can have peace, and then we can have absolute freedom to do whatever we want. I think that's the inner content.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 129.

Nietzsche says here, “I say unto you: one must still have chaos” (a very important formula) “in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.”<sup>3</sup> Now this formula – of course, as always with Nietzsche, it’s very important – is atheist. His observation of modernity is that men no longer really believe; that’s his assertion, it’s finished. Now, whether that is simply true is another question, but that is the beginning assertion, the beginning observation. Therefore, the difference between Nietzschean atheism, as you know very well, and, say, Marxist atheism is that Nietzschean atheism is characterized by longing for God. You can say religiosity without religion. Or you know the formula, very simply, “God is dead,” meaning to say that once He existed, meaning to say that the belief was compelling enough that men could believe in it, that God was once compelling and that made life possible.

The loss of God is catastrophic from Nietzsche’s point of view – in the characterization here, *chaos*. Of course, what he does is he puts into man what we know from the Bible. If God was to be creative, create the universe out of nothing, it was obviously out of a chaos, otherwise God was not free. Nietzsche argues that for man to be creative, if the word is to mean anything, there must be chaos. And chaos means to say that which is not guided or organized by any rational principles. One can get no light from reason. In some sense, it is this chaos that Nietzsche is trying to cultivate. Now, one has to recognize that the notion of creativity as being a good thing, everybody has accepted; the notion that chaos is a good thing, people have not accepted. But the question is whether the two are not necessarily connected. What chaos means *is* violence, brutality. Chaos means no principle of peace. Reason means the possibility of peace, ordering, at least in principle. Nietzsche argues that creativity and growth means the same – war among men, subordination, enslavement, rebellion, overcoming – that the underlying experience of man, man who really faces his situation and the man who is going to be creative, is in the first place chaos.

He said, “You still have chaos in your soul.” The implication is that the tendency of modernity has been to take away the chaos. Well, why shouldn’t one take away chaos? Well, his argument is that it is not really taking away. It is a superficial covering over of the fundamental situation, a kind of hopefulness, but a low hopefulness. The notion “the will to power” is just another expression for chaos, an active chaos, as opposed to lying flat and doing nothing. The whole notion of the unconscious, which Nietzsche did not invent but to which he gave a new meaning, was the source of the chaos. The unconscious as opposed to the conscious. If your students know Descartes, the rational consciousness of the modern scientific method is merely a little island, or a boat, floating on the unconscious. The whole notion is meant to be a correction of Descartes. Of course, the absurdity of what came immediately after, which again was a democratic understanding: Yes, we do have this chaos, we have the unconscious, everybody agrees that there is such a thing as an unconscious now – when I was a kid, or when some of you were kids, that was a very controversial thing; now it’s absolutely certain – but at the same time we think that science can understand the unconscious. You see how absurd that is. If the unconscious is really chaos, then science cannot possibly grasp it. The difficulty with that is that it is, even from

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

a Nietzschean point of view, much worse than people who don't believe in the unconscious because the unconscious is the source of violent creative experiences, great longings. If it can really be exhausted by reason, then reason itself would take on a ragged and irrational air, but at the same time, that world would be tamed, it could be subject to order.

Nietzsche here is speaking in the name of chaos.

Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.

"What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?" thus asks the last man, and he blinks.<sup>4</sup>

I don't know whether you've noticed this. Students never use the word "love" anymore. I mean they'll use "brotherly love" or something like that. But "love" for what they now call "interpersonal relations." It simply is not used. And it's a striking ... They have a good relationship, but what does love mean? A very dangerous abandon. A particular form of possession, a desire to be possessive. Hence it's connected with the possibilities of jealousy, anger, all of those distorting phenomena which become particularly problematic within feminism or in the relations taking place in the dispensation of feminism. That would not have been a surprise to Nietzsche because Nietzsche would take, with that which is understood to be the struggle and the fullness of, to use the Nietzschean language, commitment. See, commitment is another Nietzschean word. The crucial thing is what you put into it, not so much what it is. The objective content of the answer is gone, but it is the attachment to the thing that counts. Of course, that word has become democratized, too; "I've made a commitment to my girlfriend for at least two years." But the language is there, and commitment means precisely irrational total dedication, idealization, and so on. Nietzsche took the sexual revolution, which he saw very clearly coming, and feminism as a mode, not of serious expression of formerly repressed passions, but as a way of domesticating, taming the erotic passions, which used to be, when you read Plato, connected with madness, all kinds of dangerous activities, and so on. Or if you read romantic novels, the heroes are losing not only all their money but their lives, their reputations, and so on – enormous risk. Sexual liberation makes it possible not to have those risks or, to use contemporary language, when they talk about coming out of the closet with various things, the notion is that they have some kind of enormous tiger or lion roaring in there, sort of swelling the door, and then you open up and a little tiny mouse walks out, fairly easily satisfied. I think anybody who looks at the student generation today – this is certainly not Dionysus. I think they're said to be merely resentful, but they certainly have satisfactions of what was previously denied. The tremendous importance of longing in Nietzsche – love, longing.

Now, Nietzsche begins with a critique of longing. You'll see this in the various remarks he makes about Romanticism. But what was wrong with the Romantics? Not that

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



they preferred longing to any of the satisfactions that were available. It was that ultimately they were too passive; they didn't recognize that man could create the objects of longing. But we will come back to that. The possibility of self-contempt and the experience of longing – those are the two things which are most lacking. This entire description of the last man is a description, a mere factual description. A very impressive one, a very powerful one. But it is against the background of these facts that one recognizes that there must be something wrong with these facts themselves. After Nietzsche, the distinction between facts and values arose. The distinction between facts and values was based in part on Nietzsche's articulation that values are the most important thing. But Nietzsche says (he didn't live to see it) that obviously, even those who made the fact-value distinction recognized that values are what guide life, and if you have made it impossible to have values, if values have become undermined, and the instrument that creates values has been undermined, then you can factually say that man is no longer man, that the ambience in which man lives has been polluted or destroyed.

“What is love?” “What is creation?” “What is longing?” [...] The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest. “We have invented happiness,” say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth.<sup>5</sup>

For example, they moved from Chicago to Santa Fe. “One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth.”<sup>6</sup> He's thinking about the Christian experience. Now, Nietzsche says elsewhere that to love one's neighbor was an incredibly difficult self-discipline in the history of the soul. Because one's neighbor is disgusting and unattractive. That's what it meant, that one's neighbor was a being to despise; not only an enemy, but something to be hated. And now, we have succeeded in so taming the soul that that's no longer a commandment that's necessary. It's what people long for, to have harmless people to be around. I think that was the genius of Woodstock. You remember years ago, that's a great achievement; you didn't need the police or anything, and there was a great burst of love. One is constantly looking for that in group experiences.

“Becoming sick and harboring suspicion are sinful to them: one proceeds carefully.”<sup>7</sup> Have you heard the expression? Again, this is another one of these things my taxi driver out to the airport coming in was saying. “Well, we're all beginning to get paranoid. Yeah.” Now that's *the* thing, “paranoid.” What does Nietzsche say? Paranoia is clearly a disease. You shouldn't be paranoid. Is the opposite of paranoid “laid back”? “Becoming sick and harboring suspicion.” In a way, it's Nietzsche's whole understanding because men do not fit together naturally. Suspicion. But it becomes a disease. “A fool, whoever still stumbles over stones or human beings! A little poison now and then: that

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

makes for agreeable dreams. And much poison in the end, for an agreeable death.”<sup>8</sup> He’s talking about modern medicine. “One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing.”<sup>9</sup> You constantly see that; of course, I have my work, my hobbies. “One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion. No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.”<sup>10</sup> Psychiatry, which is absolutely universal.

“‘Formerly, all the world was mad,’ say the most refined, and they blink.”<sup>11</sup> What does that mean? Who says all the world was mad? Well, I think everybody does say all the world was mad. We’ve all read history, world history. And were all past ages mad? There were slaves. There were kings. And I don’t think there’s a single student who reads the history of England, the history of Greece, who doesn’t say that that was crazy. They say, oh, that’s wonderful. You’ve got to know history, you’ve got to be open to things, and so on. But they’re not open to those things because they know that was crazy. The latest transformation of the way we read history is as a history of the enslavement of women, which means to say that it was all crazy up to now. I talked to a young theologian; he says that that’s what they teach even in Catholic seminaries, that it was a cultural error, the role of women within the church. That means to say our historical knowledge is really a history which ends up praising ourselves, how much wiser we are, how we have seen through the errors of the past. Connected with that self-praise – the whole historical movement has culminated in this awareness – is the most contemptible human being. Hegel already knew this danger of history, of the historical mood, when he said that every German gymnasium professor teaches that Alexander the Great conquered the world because he had a pathological level of power. The proof that the teacher does not have a pathological love of power is that he has not conquered the world.

We have set up standards of normalcy, while speaking of cultural relativism. But there is no question that we think we understand what cultures are and the kind of mistakes they make. We are all in favor of having many different cultures. But all those cultures must *really* do the same things we want. Nietzsche says, of course, you have to have cultures. That’s a Nietzschean contribution, and a tremendous amount of anthropology has been based on Nietzsche, and so on. But he just says, in order to have really different cultures, you have to have in some places slaves, harems; that’s part of it. Everybody was, in a way, in favor of the Ayatollah; not everybody, but a tremendous number of Americans were in favor of the Ayatollah before he came to power; then they’re just furious at what he’s doing to women. But that’s a culture. It’s really different. There was more cultural difference, real cultural difference, in the United States when I was a child than there is in the whole Western world today. When there was segregation in the South, I remember, they were like from a different world, and that wasn’t even slavery. We’ve lost sense of the meaning or the possibility of real differences. It’s either something we’re for in a sentimental way

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 129-30.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



as culture or that we become horrified by. It is really very interesting; the Iran situation is one of those things where our intellectual incoherence ... That intellectual incoherence is the sign, the symptom of nihilism, according to Nietzsche. They were against the Shah for two reasons: one, because he was a tyrant; the other, because he was too universal, too Westernizing; he was trying to impose Western things. Then, some people were for the Ayatollah, and the Ayatollah is culture; that really is a representative of the old Iranian or Muslim culture. But at the same time, he's denying human rights, which means to say the Ayatollah has no right to have a culture because cultural difference –precisely true cultural difference, rather than eating egg foo young or corned beef, [which are] merely residual effects ...

Real culture means difference precisely about what the rights of man are. Nietzsche says here, there are no rights which men have not conquered. Nietzsche is absolutely marvelous, in terms of teaching, for getting students, on the one hand, to recognize that they believe in Nietzsche and, at the same time, to be absolutely shocked by Nietzsche because he's against what they believe in. There's not one who doesn't believe in creativity and in the dullness and the drabness of modern life, who doesn't believe in culture and rootedness, who doesn't think it's important to be committed and have values – and at the same time, they're all universal scientific democrats. It's a profound incoherence, which is to any outside observer something that is a pathology because it means to say that there's nothing really serious in terms of arranging one's priorities, which again would be a Nietzschean formulation, a way of doing things. Arranging one's priorities is absolutely impossible.

All you have to do is look. Nietzsche talks about this, and we see it again expressed in our times: the fantastic tension, although, I think, unrecognized, between ecology and – well, I'm going to say it directly – aspects of feminism. Because if nature is good, we shouldn't touch it, and then we have to produce drugs to control birth, and that's an improvement, a freedom. It's on the one hand a subordination, we assume that nature is good, and on the other, man's freedom from nature. And the two people, the two groups, belong to the same political party. Actually, they tend to go together, feminism and ecology are very frequently linked, but my impression is that in terms of the convictions underlying them they are contradictory.

“One is clever and knows everything that has ever happened: so there's no end of derision. One still quarrels, but one is soon reconciled – else it might spoil the digestion.”<sup>12</sup> There can't be quarrels, at least from our point of view, which lead to serious war. Another, similar incoherence: peace everywhere, and the same people in favor of wars of national liberation. It's not merely that we're in favor of wars so there won't have to be any wars. We also have a deep admiration for people who are committed enough to die for something, but we don't have any reason to do it. “One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night.”<sup>13</sup> Reading and sex. “But one has a regard for health. ‘We have

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink."<sup>14</sup> And the crowd shouts, "Give us this last man, O Zarathustra."<sup>15</sup>

Now, very, very much, the whole of Nietzschean thought can in a way or at least in very large measure be drawn from this passage. But it's the center of it, this idea. I don't want to debase the meaning of this. But somehow the goal of the welfare state is what he meant by last man, not the welfare state as it is, but the goal of the welfare state. It's Sweden improved, which has attracted the admiration of certain kinds of people for a long time. Nietzsche wants to begin with the horror of this. Now you can say this is too low, it's merely political and so on. But for Nietzsche, the world is one, and then what man is, and this is particularly true for Nietzsche more so than for earlier philosophy, in his political situation is a reflection, is the beginning of where we have to begin in order to understand what being is, and our particular problem comes from this particular pathology. In some sense, a political observation is the ground for the new philosophy, and a political transformation is the ground for the health of man and for the preservation of the human, as well as for the enhancement of man's highest activity, which is philosophy.

Nietzsche is on the right. He's not a conservative by any manner of means, that's perfectly clear. He's not a capitalist; he prefers war. You see, when one reads Nietzsche from one particular party, if one is a leftist, one can find things about the distorting character of our society which are very appealing. If one is a rightist, one can find things against democratic egalitarianism which are very appealing. If one is in favor of classical philosophy, one can see that he recognizes the importance of community, order of rank, the aristocracy of the soul, and so on. But he is none of those things. In a way, he touches all the bases. He's not a classic. He's different from the classics in that he is anti-speculative, which was the central aspect of classical philosophy. He's not a rightist, in any sense, or in the ordinary sense of the word, because he's a profound revolutionary. He's obviously not a leftist, because he sees the principles of the left as merely the extension of the principles which some people are trying to conserve in conservatism. It's an attempt at a new beginning, which is a transformation of the soul of man, as well as of his politics, but that requires, follows from, this observation.

In some sense, if you can't get your students to take this observation seriously, you can't get them to take Nietzsche seriously. Otherwise, they'll just be speaking words, if they don't feel somehow that this is an object of contempt and that they are somehow like this. They wouldn't be normal in any way if they weren't somehow like this because this is certainly the elements of our time and what is most valued. Now, one can easily say to Nietzsche, these things are values. And that's, of course, what he says: modern science is really just a value. Modern politics is just another value. But they are values that don't take seriously what it means to be a value, so they aren't values that will work to hold a society together. Another passage from Nietzsche. Perhaps I ought to say simply what nihilism is and then I'll read the passage. Simply that here is nothing to esteem, nothing that compels us. We have seen through it all. Of course, there were a lot of socialists who

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

hoped for a better world; there were people who believed in democracy. What he said is that those were all weak beliefs. He claimed that the scientists themselves – we'll read through some of that later – everything in our life reflected a self-irony. There were some people, he says, who in some sense faced the issue. You found this in philosophers like Schopenhauer. Pessimism. You found it in writers like Baudelaire, Flaubert. That it's all over. Nothing, no human activity, has a support or ground. Everything is necessarily illusion, but illusions which cannot work any longer. They once worked. This was the great expectation of Romanticism. Rousseau's contribution. Of course, there were illusions, artistic, creative illusions. That's what the past was, and we can have new ones. That's what Beethoven, Schiller, that's what Goethe ... But in the generation immediately succeeding – that if those are merely illusions, they will be sucked back into the ugly reality.

Nihilism is that experience of groundlessness expressed in the formula: one can't believe in gods any longer, and once there are no longer gods, there's nothing else, but that the scientists themselves don't really believe in sciences and understanding of the world. On the other hand, there is another sense of nihilism. There are, in a way, three kinds of nihilism. There's Nietzsche's own nihilism, which is a positive life-enhancing response to the other form of nihilism, one can say to the despair of nihilism, but the other sense is an anarchy of values. Not that there are no values, but an anarchy, which means to say that none of them can work in the forming of a life.

By the way, another terminology which comes from Nietzsche is role playing. Modern men are actors. Now this is just taken for granted. Everybody speaks of his roles. It's another terminology and another language of sociology that has succeeded. The greatest, you can say, genealogy, or theogony, of Nietzsche's thought in the United States is that Nietzsche, Max Weber, and a few others are brought to succeeding schools of sociologists and then brought to the United States and spread by sociology departments. And what does it mean to say if you've got a role: role as a woman, role as a man, role as a teacher, role as a citizen? You're an actor, you put on a costume, and you yourself *know* that that's only a role, and roles can be changed. The real man, according to Nietzsche, recognizes that if he has roles, if they're only roles, then they're not worth it. They're not real. And so on. Either the insight that it's nihilistic despair about it or a man who really can be what he is and unify all the aspects of his life, that was what was meant by the notion of personality, which was introduced by Kant and so on fifty years before Nietzsche. Nietzsche concentrated on the artistic character. He claims that all men today have a certain kind of irony, which they try to escape, they try to cover over; the deeper men see it, and the irony is caused by this – I mean, the anarchy of values.

This is a list of opposite values most men hold today. "We call good someone who does his heart's bidding, but also the one who only tends to his duty."<sup>16</sup> There are two kinds of people: those who live their lives freely and self-expressively, and those who always subordinate themselves, the Kantian moralist. "We call good the meek and the reconciled, but also the courageous, unbending, severe."<sup>17</sup> You have to look into yourself in each case.

<sup>16</sup> Bloom is referring to "unpublished material composed during the period of *The Gay Science*, 1881-1882" cited by Heidegger in the English translation by David Farrell Krell of Heidegger's *Nietzsche I-II* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1979 and 1984), 157.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

I think we recognize the charm of both sides. “We call good someone who employs no force against himself, but also the heroes of self-overcoming; we call good the utterly loyal friend of the true, but also the man of piety, one who transfigures things.”<sup>18</sup> I think each of us could find moments when we are on both sides. The scientist who would investigate anything, but then somehow the atmosphere of the true believer. Each has its charm.

We call good those who are obedient to themselves, but also the pious;  
we call good those who are noble and exalted, but also those who do not despise and condescend;  
we call good those of joyful spirit, the peaceable, but also those desirous of battle and victory;  
we call good those who always want to be first, but also those who do not want to take precedence over anyone in any respect.<sup>19</sup>

That’s a fair list, I think, of something that operates today, and if you look at them, you’ll see that they are just Jerusalem and Athens. I mean to say, one is Greek and the other is Christian. We call good someone who does his heart’s bidding, that’s somehow Greek, but also the one who tends to his duty, that’s more Christian. We call good the meek and the reconciled, that’s Christian, but also the courageous, unbending, severe, that’s Greek. We call good someone who employs no force against himself, but also the heroes of self-overcoming. A little more complicated. We call good the loyal friend of the true, but also the man of piety, and so on. I think the second understanding of nihilism is more revealing. Not to say that the two are not obviously connected, but it is more revealing of the way we actually experience nihilism that we have a medley of values and none of them can be said to be the highest.

I just took this out of the Heidegger volume, it’s from some unpublished ...<sup>20</sup>

There is no longer any goal in and through which all the forces of the historical existence of peoples can cohere and in the direction of which they can develop; no goal of such a kind, which means at the same time and above all else no goal of such power that it can by virtue of its power conduct Dasein to its realm in a unified way and bring it to creative evolution. By establishment of the goal Nietzsche understands the metaphysical task of ordering beings as a whole, not merely the announcement of a provisional whither and wherefore.<sup>21</sup>

You see the point, we have lost ... What is the critical thing? Man is the esteeming being. What does he esteem? He esteems values. Now, of all the words in this whole panoply, this whole lexicon of new words, which really dominates American thought and

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> The sentence is left incomplete. He’s referring to the selection of unpublished notes in the Krell translation (see footnote 12 above).

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche I-II*, 157.

which come from Nietzsche, the central one is value. The will to power is a preparation for the establishment of new values.

This I pose as a question: Is there any longer any place in the university where the foundation of values can be studied? We have accepted completely this understanding. Really accepted completely. I think practically everybody uses the word *value*. If we're talking about good and bad. Practically everybody, even those who think they shouldn't. It's an amazing thing, this instinct, because it's an instinct that has come to be in the last forty years. In the 30s in the United States, it was a kind of "in word" among intellectuals. In the 20s not at all. It's only since the Second World War that it has become popular jargon, and I would always think that a change in an important word is connected with a fundamental change in the way we are. Everybody says values are important, you've got to have values. But what do we do about it, what can we do about it, in our education? Anything? Despair about it. There's no science for that. Everybody has to establish his own, so there's a recognition that there's nothing to do about it and there's no ground for them, but the absolute centrality of values ... I don't know if that makes any sense.

There is no doubt that there are very powerfully held values in America today. A very small number. One of them is anti-smoking. But I think they are almost exclusively of the kind, anti-racism, anti-elitism, anti-sexism. By the way, elitism is another word that comes out of the Nietzschean sociology. When you say that people on top are chosen by some almost mysterious religious process – not by hard work, by force, by reason. There's no question that egalitarianism remains an enormously powerful tendency in America, but somehow as taken for granted, as connected with somehow establishing a world in which everybody can have his own values. These values are imposed upon us – it's an extremely strange thing. They are not taught; you don't have to prove that a man, a woman, a human being shouldn't be a sexist, shouldn't be a racist, shouldn't be an elitist. There's no proof of those; that's just our ethos, it seems to me. And beyond that the questions don't belong to the domain of serious study. Somehow we agree about values.

The whole notion of values came from a new philosophical articulation which we don't study any more. That new philosophical articulation leads to a sort of impotence in relation to values. What's characteristic of our times is not immorality. There may be a lot of that, but everybody wants to be moral. Much more so than when I was young. In the 50s the thing was you had to be tough, Machiavellian social science, but now everybody wants to be good, and there is a pervasive soft moralism around. That is one of the greatest impediments to students' learning, in my experience. Unwillingness to accept some of the harder aspects of morality, but at the same time, as I suggested, this sense of groundlessness, and a sense that these are only values, there's nothing we can do about it. How do they go about it in theology school, establishing religious values now? What do they do?

[Interlocutor] "I think there's a remnant ... people who want to defend anti-sexism, anti-racism, isn't there a remnant of some standard of nature that they'd have a recourse to? These people, I don't think they would immediately say there's no way of establishing values. But the ordinary person, and even the ordinary passionate defender of this or that cause, I believe would have recourse to an older standard. They would say, when you look

at the nature of the races, they're essentially alike. Look at men and women, aren't they essentially alike? I think that would be the way in which they would think about this."

I wonder if that's simply true. I mean, there is something of that. There is a sort of simple naturalism in all these things. I think maybe this afternoon it might be desirable to take some of the things on feminism in Nietzsche all together. But I think both things are within feminism. With racism, on the one hand, I think that the standard was traditional Americanism, something like that, all men have certain kinds of natural rights and so on. With feminism, there was that element, but it has moved backward and forward. Because there are a whole series of problems. One is the overwhelming weight of history, which is against feminism. One therefore has to say that history was a mistake. The second thing, of course, is the physical differences in childbearing. So essential to feminist arguments is that in order to preserve the species we had to have this medicine. It's only in the last fifty years that we have medicine that has changed to this degree the survivability of children, that children don't die any more, very rarely die of diseases, whereas 100 years ago, 50 percent still died, or maybe 75. So that meant there had to be many more child bearers if there was going to be preservation. And secondly, the means of preventing conception, which are scientific and obviously somehow a conquest of nature. That movement has greater difficulties to face, so you find both things. One is nature and the other is freedom of choice, which is to say that nature has to be overcome. Both these elements, I think, are there.

We maintain the same goals, but our grounds shift constantly about them. People will be absolute relativists when it comes to questions of international relations, or sexual tastes, and so on, but there'll be relative absolutists, or perhaps absolute absolutists, when it comes to questions of racial, sexual, and general egalitarian rights, and that's what's so curious about our moral condition. I'm not taking a position on any of the particular things. It is the enormous difficulty of coherent grounding. You can say, well, perhaps they were always poorly grounded. But in our time, because there's so much intellectualism around, I do think this has this effect, and I'm very struck by the ease with which people change their positions. That accounts for liberals becoming fascists. I was very struck in my experiences with university students who were always for freedom of speech easily giving in to committed students who wanted to stop freedom of speech. What happened there? They admired the commitment, the strength, whereas they themselves weren't really sure.

I think underlying it – and this is what Nietzsche says, and of course what Nietzsche tries to teach us to live with – is that there is intellectually relativism, but that relativism serves certain kinds of moral needs, which are the egalitarian needs. Nietzsche says these two things were coeval, they happened at the same time. Relativism, which means you couldn't believe in anything, in various forms, and Nietzsche of course accepts that relativism. At the same time, the last man with the goals of the welfare state as a kind of absoluteness, but you can say that in a way that absoluteness can only come from relativism, because nobody would choose that if they have real values. Something of that kind. It's a kind of end of man, comfortableness of man, and that is a very powerful instinct, and relativism which destroys all other values as its instrument, the instrument of relativism. Maybe Nietzsche is wrong about what is the articulation of nature and so on, but I don't really see nature. There's a lot of talk about nature, but what they mean

by nature is not what Nietzsche meant by nature or what Plato meant by nature. What is meant by nature is dead nature without man, and which sends very little, and the very characteristic of the relationship to nature is not only dead but contempt for man. You can see on practically every one of those PBS shows about nature. This was before man came and polluted. Porpoises are nice people, they don't do what man does, they don't have wars, and they don't invent smokestacks; this is [a] continuing rhetoric throughout the entire thing, a denigration of man, a denigration of reason, but on the level of mere feeling because our relation to nature – nature is good because we feel good in nature, it's a kind of end of man. There are many sensible elements in the ecological movement.

Lecture delivered by Allan Bloom at Boston College in 1983 for a series titled "Philosophic Perspectives." The series was intended to help teachers of undergraduates in their teaching of thinkers essential to liberal education and addressed the decline of liberal learning at American universities. The remaining lectures delivered by Bloom were on Socrates, Aristotle, and Machiavelli.



Laurence Lampert

## TAKING NIETZSCHE AT HIS WORD IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

I want to begin by thanking William Wood and Piotr Nowak for their invitation to give this keynote talk for a conference on “Nietzsche in the Twenty-First Century.” I’m very grateful.

Why me? “Nietzsche in the Twenty-First Century” is the title of the conference and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in 2001, I ended my commentary on *Beyond Good and Evil* saying this: “Nietzsche’s future still lies in our future.” My other books say similar things. So the Nietzsche I’ll be talking about, Nietzsche in the twenty-first century, is my Nietzsche, the Nietzsche of all my books. The title of my paper will be my constant theme: Taking Nietzsche at his word. I have five main topics.

### 1. ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The Nietzsche who came to light for me through my textual, exegetical work on his main books is, I believe, faithful to Nietzsche’s own intentions and is therefore not just my own but the genuine Nietzsche. My first real advance in understanding that Nietzsche came in 1977-78, after more than ten years studying him, and it came on the two most basic of all philosophical topics, being and knowing, ontology and epistemology. These first discoveries, like every discovery I later made in Nietzsche, came through *exegesis, taking Nietzsche at his written word*. And these first discoveries came in what seemed the least likely of places: a song, a song and dance actually, “The Dance Song” of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>1</sup> In that song, Life, one of the two characters, is, I finally realized, the stand-in

<sup>1</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); hereafter cited in the text as Z with chapter title.



for being or the being of beings. The other character, Wild Wisdom, is the epistemological skepticism Zarathustra has loved and advocated up till then, the epistemological skepticism of modern philosophy taken to its most sophisticated level by Nietzsche himself – a skepticism whose denial of the possibility of genuine knowledge of reality is based on the recognition that the world we experience is a product of mind-imposed order. But in the song, Life offers herself to Zarathustra as his new beloved, deeper, even more alluring than Wild Wisdom has been. Life *tempts* Zarathustra with the invitation to *fathom* her, she *lures* him with the suggestion that she *can be fathomed* – that the fundamental truth of being can be known, as his Wild Wisdom denied. “The Dance Song” is therefore the pivot-point of the whole of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

That is what the song and dance of “The Dance Song” implies – *implies*, not *says*. Taking Nietzsche at his word in the poetry of the song means taking *these words* as the *suggestive* poetry they are. An art of inference attentive to poetry is the only way to *take Nietzsche at his word* in a song and dance. Life invites Zarathustra to the understanding of the being of beings that he reports to “You wisest” and only to them two sections later in “On Self-Overcoming.” There, he invites the wisest to interpret the being of being and the being of the highest beings, *themselves*, as will to power – *will to power*, though, is only a “weak and limiting metaphor” for the fundamental fact. Nietzsche’s metaphor of will to power asserts that *force* – today we would call it *energy* – is the fundamental reality. Unlike doctrines that assign a purpose to existence, the doctrine of will to power holds that the play of forces has no purpose beyond the perpetuation of its own dynamism. Forces get channeled in various ways, but the fundamental drive of every being is to discharge its power, to overcome resistance, sometimes creating, sometimes destroying, but never with a design or telos other than the expression of its own force. And the philosopher does not stand outside this play of forces but is rather its ultimate masterwork. The philosopher knows the world to be will to power because he knows himself from the inside.

In “The Dance Song,” the poet/philosopher Nietzsche reports the great event of his moving through skepticism to an ontology. But he knew very well the intellectual world he occupied; as he said in his next book: “When a philosopher these days lets it be known that he is not a skeptic everyone is annoyed” (BGE 208).<sup>2</sup> The philosopher Nietzsche moved beyond skepticism to an ontology. How annoying *that* has proven to be for his interpreters.

For me, in 1978, understanding “The Dance Song” changed everything. If *that’s* the way the philosopher Nietzsche chose to present his wisdom, as something to be inferred from a song and dance, reading him became a different kind of challenge and pleasure, engagement with a most serious thinker who entrusted the inferences to us. And my stance toward Nietzsche began to change. I found myself shifting from scholarly neutrality to *advocacy* of the philosopher of our age. I had become “a Nietzsche guy,” as I began saying.

After understanding “The Dance Song,” I came to see that it was not the only occasion on which Nietzsche offered his reader a way to think about these two great issues of skepticism and ontology. I learned that “The Dance Song” put into poetic words what

<sup>2</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); hereafter cited in the text as BGE and the aphorism number.

Nietzsche had already said in the writing that immediately preceded *Zarathustra*, “*Sanctus Januarius*,” the fourth and final chapter of *The Gay Science* of 1882. And Nietzsche repeated that pattern of skepticism and ontology in the book that followed *Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*. On three occasions then, Nietzsche publicly presented the fundamental questions of knowing and being in the *structurally* same way but *so* differently.

I want to look at those two other twinings of skepticism and ontology. First, “*Sanctus Januarius*,” which Nietzsche wrote in Genoa in January 1882.<sup>3</sup> Just after the central section of the chapter, which selects out his proper reader, comes section 309, in which skepticism appears as a temptation, as “the garden of Armida” that – in Tasso’s epic poem and in an opera Nietzsche had seen – *tempts* the intrepid crusader, Rinaldo, to remain in the garden, to lounge in luxury and pleasure instead of pushing on to the hard conquest of the holy city, Jerusalem. In the next section, “Will and Wave” (GS 310), that tempted one *has* pushed on, and he reports his conquest of the sacred city. Here, for the first time, Nietzsche reports, so beautifully, the ontology he had arrived at the previous summer, 1881. Watching the waves crash into the rocks of the Mediterranean shore, penetrate forcefully into the deepest crevice, and fall back white with excitement, the thinker says to the waves: “You and I are of one kind! You and I have *one secret*!” That *thinker*, too, forced his way into the deepest crevice; he too fell back, white with excitement. You and I are of one kind, the thinker says to the waves – *that* is Nietzsche’s first public intimation of the ontology he arrived at that previous summer. To me, Nietzsche’s first intimation of his ontology is simply thrilling. The discovery, yes of course. But his way of *communicating* it! He wants to make it hard, as hard as possible, but not any harder than it is. And there’s *proof* of that: “More I won’t say,” Nietzsche says in “Will and Wave,” cutting off what he is saying to the waves. But more he *had* said because *right there* he deleted five words at the last minute before sending his corrected page proofs back to the printer. The deleted words gave two names to the waves: “*Oh ihr Habsüchtigen, ihr Wissensgierigen*” – Oh you possession-addicts, you knowledge-greedy.” *That* says too much. *That* makes it too easy. And Nietzsche wants to make you earn it.

That *Gay Science* report on the fundamental matters was Nietzsche’s first, published in January 1882. *Zarathustra*’s “Dance Song” was his second, published in September 1883. *Beyond Good and Evil*, published in August 1886, gave his third report, the last of his shortened lifetime. At the very center of the chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil* intended for free minds only, Nietzsche placed an invitation to free, skeptical minds to be skeptical about their skepticism too (BGE 34). And he linked that longish invitation to the next, brief section, mockery of his old hero and *alleged* skeptic Voltaire, who said he sought the true only to do the good. “I bet he finds nothing,” Nietzsche said. What did Nietzsche’s search for the true *independent* of the good find? The next section, 36, reports what he found. It invites free minds to conduct an experiment in reasoning that Nietzsche presents in a highly compressed argument. It begins with the immediately “given” reality of our drives, reads them as various outgrowths of the will to power, and then, guided by the

<sup>3</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); hereafter cited in the text as GS and the aphorism number.

principle of parsimony, offers the hypothesis that *all* efficient force is of the same type, that will to power is the fundamental fact.

Nietzsche linked section 36 on will to power to the brief section, 37, repeating the pattern of 34-35. In the brief section 37, the supposedly free minds express their shock at the ontological conclusion of 36, that to be is to be will to power and nothing besides. So shocked are they that they can express their feelings only in the old language: “God is refuted,” they say, “but the Devil is not.” Nietzsche offers them the simplest rebuttal: “On the contrary, my friends, on the contrary.” That magnificent rebuttal tells Nietzsche’s friends that his ontology vindicates the god – the god we’ll meet at the end of my talk – and refutes the Devil who has served as our God. Check it out: 36 and 37. That’s the most striking and weighty passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

With respect to the *will to power*, the implied conclusion on all three occasions, I want to cite authority, the British analytic philosopher Galen Strawson, a student of Nietzsche who is also a student of contemporary physics. In an article I regard as crucial, his 2015 “Nietzsche’s Metaphysics?”<sup>4</sup> Strawson gives, “a brief exposition of what I take to be the right view – the best description – of the fundamental nature of reality, with special reference to Nietzsche.” Basic to Nietzsche’s view being “the right view” is its full compatibility with what Strawson calls “the intuitive metaphysics of contemporary physics” – *full compatibility* with contemporary physics. That matters. The other part of its being “the right view,” Strawson argues, is that it lies within the tradition of Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Schelling, and others. “It lies there,” Strawson says, “because it’s true, not because it’s a tradition.” Nietzsche’s ontology of will to power is the “right view.”

Back to Nietzsche himself: his writerly brilliance found three utterly different ways of inviting his best readers to think through his most fundamental epistemological and ontological discoveries. But these three *public* presentations came *after* the ontological discovery itself, a discovery that made its first appearance *privately*, in Nietzsche’s workbook of the spring, summer, and fall of 1881. *That* workbook is therefore the most important of all of Nietzsche’s workbooks.

And with that I move to my second topic.

## 2. THE NIETZSCHE ARCHIVE IN WEIMAR

The Nietzsche Archive houses treasures that should be of intense interest to Nietzsche scholars in the twenty-first century. Its greatest treasures are Nietzsche’s workbooks, which are in the Archive because Nietzsche’s wretched sister did us the great favor of collecting and saving all her brother’s workbooks, notebooks, letters, lecture notes, changes written on the printer’s sheets – virtually every scrap of paper on which her beloved brother had written something.

The Archive’s most important treasures *by far* are the workbooks. And to understand just why they’re important, we have to know how Nietzsche worked. During his 1876-77 sabbatical in Sorrento, Nietzsche suffered a disastrous and permanent deterioration of

<sup>4</sup> Galen Strawson, “Nietzsche’s Metaphysics?” in *Nietzsche on Mind and Nature*, ed. Manuel Dries and P. J. E. Kail (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10-36.

his already bad eyesight. What he then devised was his only possible way of thinking and writing after that disaster, a totally remarkable way. Nietzsche described it in a letter to Overbeck on August 28, 1877, from Rosenlaui, high and remote in the Alps. He tells Overbeck that he “has daily about 1½ hours to use my eyes. [...] If I read and write longer than that I have to pay for it with pain on that very day and a few days later with one of the severe old attacks.” Despite this acute eye problem, “my thoughts press me forward[...]. If only I had a cottage somewhere,” he says, dreading his return to Basel, “I would go on daily 6-8 hour walks as I do here and think through what I afterward put down on paper in a flash and in complete assurance – that’s what I did in Sorrento and what I do here, and in a completely disagreeable and desolate year won a *great deal*” (underlined).

What Nietzsche began in Sorrento was the thoroughly remarkable practice of thinking and writing that became his pattern to the end: *six to eight hours*, on his good days, he walked and thought, following the logic of his thoughts and their implications while composing and rehearsing the sentences that would set out those thoughts. The depth and penetration of Nietzsche’s thinking and the beauty, brevity, musicality, and punch of his writing all came together in the hours spent walking, a practice forced on him by the disaster of having only one and a half hours a day to use his eyes to read and write. Back in his room, a spare single rented room, he copied out his thoughts in his workbook. Their orderly handwriting and complete paragraphs bear witness to the mastery with which he could think and compose while striding hour after hour, out of the sun, if possible, with a croupier’s shade shielding his eyes. The philosophy and art of Friedrich Nietzsche are the achievement of a supremely gifted scholar of texts compelled by near blindness to leave his books and his chair and his room and to walk, to think and compose while walking.

To me, that’s heroic.

So the workbook entries are not mere *notes*; they’re the written form of what Nietzsche thought and composed on his six to eight hour walks.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, I’ve spent countless pleasant days in the Archive with Nietzsche’s actual workbooks in my hands or propped on the desk in front of me. One workbook, designated M III 1 in the classification system of the Archive, gradually showed its singular importance to me. That’s the workbook Nietzsche used in the spring, summer, and fall of 1881. It begins carrying forward his burrowing into morality in *Daybreak*, and it displays the process, across months, of Nietzsche’s gradual discovery that summer of a rational ontology. And the workbook shows that, after this months-long process of reasoning, there came, suddenly, as if fallen from the moon, Nietzsche said, his first ever writing on eternal return.

With the connection between these two events in M III 1, I move from *ontology and epistemology* to *ontology and eternal return* – that is, I move to *fact and value*. Modern philosophy since Hume maintained that value could not be linked to fact by entailment. Nietzsche linked them by a particular kind of entailment visible in M III 1.

Marco Bruscott, an important commentator on Nietzsche, speaks of “the inner dialectic of the workbook” M III 1. That dialectic is simply the trajectory of Nietzsche’s thinking in the spring of 1881 as it expanded out from morality to being as such – I want to sketch that trajectory as it displays itself in selected workbook entries. Its first entry speaks of a primary “urge [*Drang*] to acquire,” an “urge for property” at work in both

altruism and selfishness:<sup>5</sup> a single, identifiable urge drives apparently opposite actions. Shortly after comes an entry that says: “perhaps all the moral drives can be traced back to *Haben-wollen* and *Halten-wollen*” – the desire to have and to hold. The primary urge begins to gain specificity. Nietzsche also used the word *Besitz*, *possession*, as the goal of desire, and he views this *desire to possess* as coming to its peak in the desire to *know* the object, to take full possession of it in knowing – the drive to *know* comes to know *itself* as a “*haben-wollen*.” That drive, Nietzsche says in an entry, is deeper even than the drive for self-preservation. Then comes an important *summary* entry titled, “The history of the I-feeling.” It is a history of “wanting to possess [*Besitzenwollen*]. In altruism too.” Nietzsche’s thought then presses beyond the “I possessing something” to a far more general notion: “Perhaps it ends in this: instead of the I, we recognize the relatedness and enmity of things.” A later entry uses for the first time the word *Habsucht* – the *addiction* to having. And *Habsucht* becomes the workbook’s defining word for the process at work in nature. The workbook shows Nietzsche spending *months* of ever-deepening reflection on a fundamental drive, *months* experimenting with appropriate words to describe the process – within a year, in other workbooks, Nietzsche will reach his final word, *Wille zur Macht*, which he will use from then on because it helps express his later, basic advance in his fundamental insight: the *aim* of the fundamental drive is *not possession* but merely the discharge of strength, which is possible only against some resistance or other, itself a discharge of strength.

In the midst of the entries in M III 1, experimenting with different words for the fundamental process, comes an entry that begins “*Herrliche Entdeckung*” “Glorious Discovery.” The glorious discovery is that “it is not all *unberechenbar unbestimmt!*” – not all incalculable, indeterminate. “Glorious Discovery” stands at the top of a page in the workbook, and it follows directly from the words on the last line of the previous page: “pessimism of intellect.” Colli and Montinari, editors of the now standard edition, assign the bottom entry and the top entry separate numbers as if they were separate entries. I don’t think they are: the Glorious Discovery is an event *within* the pessimism of intellect; it is the achievement of the intellect forced into pessimism about itself by its own rigor. That pessimism, continuing its self-examination, makes the glorious discovery. *So*, what all three of Nietzsche’s public accounts of his will to power ontology display is visible in the workbook with its sequence of entries spread chronologically across these weeks in the summer of 1881 in which a pessimism of intellect ultimately arrives at an ontology.

This event, by itself, makes M III 1 the workbook of greatest significance, but a second great event occurs right there, at this point in the workbook. The ontological conclusion was made possible only by a long process of reasoning – it was a *gradual* achievement. But that months-long process is followed by something completely new that appears with *total suddenness*: eternal return. Workbook M III 1 shows on its pages that the long process of ontological deepening and expanding led *suddenly* to eternal return, not at all as the consequence of reasoning. What is eternal return then? It is a *judgment* on the ontological conclusion that says: *Yes*, if *that’s* what the world is, that’s what I *want*, this world, our world, the *calculable* world, just as it is, an infinite number

<sup>5</sup> All translations of M III 1 are mine.

of times. Eternal return is not a cosmological doctrine; it is an expression of the deepest, most comprehensive affirmation of all that is – now that we have an inkling of *what* it is.

So that's in the Archive: M III 1, with the first arrival at the fundamental *fact* and the first expression of the highest *value*. The workbook Nietzsche kept in his room in the Durich house in Sils Maria that summer displays that inner connectedness of fact and value. What happened first in the chronological entries of M III 1 gained public form in Nietzsche's next three writings, the "*Sanctus Januarius*" chapter of *The Gay Science*, the second and third parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and the second and third chapters of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where eternal return appropriately appears in the *religion* chapter.

So I say, Use the Archive in the twenty-first century. Take Nietzsche at his handwritten word in the first versions of his thoughts written out in his workbooks with his eyes a couple of inches from the page.

With that I move to my third topic.

### 3. THE NEW HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY MADE POSSIBLE BY FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The first sentence of my 1993 book *Nietzsche and Modern Times* says, "This book is an installment in the new history of philosophy made possible by Friedrich Nietzsche."<sup>6</sup> That new history of philosophy was my main work for four decades. Nietzsche was always the figure of greatest importance, the standard and standard *giver*. The premise of that new history is a point Nietzsche made imperative: we must distinguish between genuine philosophers and philosophical laborers (BGE 211). *Genuine philosophers*, Nietzsche says in a rare sentence he put in italics, "*are commanders and legislators: they say, 'Thus it shall be! They first determine the Whither and For What of humanity.'*" This distinction in rank is highly untimely; it's hard for us to take Nietzsche at his word here. But we must. His elevation of the genuine philosopher to the pinnacle of the order of rank offends our democratic sensibilities and assigns *us* a rank we may find offensive: *philosophical laborers*. But if there *are* genuine philosophers, great minds who craft the horizons within which the rest of us live and think, then we philosophical laborers have to rethink the whole history of philosophy, learning the proper rank of a Kant or Hegel as philosophical laborers, but also and primarily learning how to think of *Plato*, the genuine philosopher at the fountainhead of our history.

The role of the genuine philosopher entails another main matter, a *hidden* matter that Nietzsche found it necessary to bring into the open, if only once: "The difference between the exoteric and the esoteric, formerly known to philosophers" (BGE 30). Nietzsche spoke openly about this private matter partly in order to correct the misunderstanding that the exoteric and esoteric distinguish between the evident and the hidden, where gaining access to the hidden was simply a matter of having it whispered to you. No, Nietzsche says, the difference is a matter of rank: the esoteric is the view from the highest perspective, gained only by the *rarest* and shared with others by invitation only. Nietzsche's art of writing, the art of the aphorism, continues that tradition, giving only *that* reader access to the view from above who is willing to slow down, to look fore and aft, to draw conclusions only with the greatest care.

<sup>6</sup> L. Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.



With respect to exoteric/esoteric, I can issue a probably unnecessary command: *Study* Leo Strauss! You may already know that Strauss is indispensable. *He*, too, rediscovered the philosophic art of exoteric writing, but *he* made it public by describing it and laying out some of its practices in detail. Strauss himself, of course, practiced exoteric writing, choosing for instance to mask the fact that at the core he's a Nietzschean. There's a direct route into Strauss's rediscovery of the philosophic art of writing, *letters* he wrote to his friend Jacob Klein during the eighteen months in 1938-39 while he was making his discoveries and reporting them to Klein, letters published in volume 3 of Heinrich Meier's edition of Strauss's writings.<sup>7</sup> Strauss never spoke as openly about this practice as he did privately to Klein. Nietzsche-people can learn from Strauss that all the great philosophers practiced exoteric writing. *Plato* of course is the practitioner of exoteric writing who exceeds all others in importance.

I learned to take Nietzsche at his word on Plato. He has lots of words on Plato, but I'll focus on two. First, Plato "had the greatest strength any philosopher so far has had at his disposal [...] since Plato, all theologians and philosophers are on the same track" (BGE 191). Second: "Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism" (GM 3.25).<sup>8</sup>

On Plato, I have to say this about Nietzsche: *Altphilolog* though he was, student of the history of early Greek philosophy though he was, he did not read Plato exoterically enough. He charged Plato with crimes Plato was guilty of only in his exoteric teaching: what Plato *taught* turned out to be criminal; what he *held* was not.

So, on to Plato within a Nietzschean history of philosophy. I want to report briefly on two crucial dialogues – the *Republic* first. As I read that great dialogue, it shows Socrates to be the thinker who came to himself in a time of the greatest crisis, the spiritual crisis of the death of god, Homer's gods. Plato *versus* Homer means Socrates's response to the crisis of the death of Homer's gods. Plato's "great politics" – Nietzsche's term – is a world-historical *replacement* of the Homeric. The *Republic* is the dialogue of that replacement, the construction of what came to be called *Platonism*, a theological-political program – Strauss's term – with post-Homeric just gods, post-Homeric virtues, a post-Homeric moral Hades, plus a non-Homeric teaching of fixity – forms – to give permanence to gods, virtues, and souls – all noble lies of course. This monumental theme ties Socrates to Nietzsche: they are the philosophers of our tradition who directly faced a death of the gods and responded with philosophic greatness.

The second dialogue is the *Symposium*. This is something I got from Strauss and from the greatest Straussian by far, Seth Benardete. The *Symposium* shows that what was most fundamental to Nietzsche was also most fundamental to Plato: philosophy in its primary inquiry into the nature of nature can arrive at a reasoned ontology, a process ontology that Plato named *eros* and Nietzsche named *will to power*, two metaphors for the fundamental and to-some-degree-knowable force or energy present in every event in nature. For Plato and Nietzsche to share *that* is for me the most profound indication of

<sup>7</sup> Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1996-2008).

<sup>8</sup> F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); hereafter cited in the text as GM with essay and section numbers.

what is shared by all genuine philosophers throughout our tradition. And it also means this: In what they *hold*, Plato and *Homer* are kin, not antagonists.

With that, I move from Plato to the two later figures in the history of philosophy who most interested me, Francis Bacon and René Descartes, the two genuine philosophers who seemed to me most responsible for the world we occupy as moderns. Bacon and Descartes, especially Descartes, are widely recognized as pivotal for the founding of modern philosophy. But what came to light for me was that the *teachings* for which they are best known, teachings that became pivotal, are exoteric responses to the civilization-wide crisis they diagnosed as the product of unbridled Christian zealotry. Their answer to the crisis was to redirect human aspiration toward a very different, if still Christian-looking, civilizational project.

Descartes told the story of his own becoming a philosopher in his first book, the anonymous and autobiographical *Discourse on the Method for Rightly Conducting the Mind*. I read the *Discourse* fifty times over my decades of teaching it, and I came to appreciate just how miraculous it is in telling the story of Descartes's becoming the genuine philosopher who said to his age, "We have to go that way," the way to the conquest of nature to improve the human estate, making "ourselves as it were, masters and possessors of nature."<sup>9</sup> Why do we have to go that way *now*, never having gone that way before? – with Plato himself warning against it in his *Timaeus-Critias*? Because we have to *crush* Christianity, the religion that had become a fanaticism whose warring camps were tearing Europe's civilization apart and costing it that most promising of all recent events, the *renaissance* of Greek and Roman wisdom. Descartes conducted his great politics wisely, redeploying such Christian promises as the promise of immortality in heaven but making it a heaven on earth, the product of Cartesian science and technology that may "even perhaps also," Descartes said, be able to machine our bodies immortal.

Gradually understanding *Descartes* to be that figure in the new history of philosophy made possible by Friedrich Nietzsche was greatly aided for me by studying Francis Bacon at the same time. Bacon was Descartes's older contemporary, whose writings gave Descartes indispensable instruction that he was careful *not* to acknowledge openly because he had to seem to be inventing himself. Who is Francis Bacon? He is the genuine philosopher who said to his age, "We have to go" the way of Baconian science and technology, the way taken up and refined by Descartes. Bacon's indispensability became clear to me through the study of two small but crucial works that he wrote in his late maturity and set aside with instructions to publish them only after his death. *New Atlantis* is one of them, and it shows how a scientific-technological culture based on Baconian science can give Europe a new future, the future that is our own past and present. The other writing is *An Advertisement Touching a Holy War*, a completely forgotten masterpiece, a dialogue in which Bacon intimated, masterfully, why it was necessary to *crush* Christianity in its fanatical form, to moderate and temper it into the quiet civil religion it mostly became. Francis Bacon is the genuine philosopher who said we have to go the way we actually went.

<sup>9</sup> R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method for Conducting One's Reason Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2010).



Do I have time for a last word on Descartes? That sober-seeming author is the greatest trickster and jokester I know in the history of philosophy. His tricks and jokes were mostly meant to humiliate the most powerful intellectual force of his age, the Jesuits. *They* knew they had to take him seriously. How seriously? According to a book by the highly respected German historian of philosophy Theodor Ebert, Descartes was murdered – *murdered!* – by clergy working for the French ambassador to the Swedish court where Descartes was teaching the queen of Sweden some philosophy in the mornings. According to Ebert’s persuasive detective work, Descartes was poisoned by the communion wafer he ingested at the mass his conventional Catholic appearance required of him. Now *that’s* taking Descartes seriously.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. ECOLOGY

Ecology came automatically for me. I grew up partly in the Canadian bush where canoe-camping, alone or with my brother, was part of my life. And I read the pioneer ecology writers Aldo Leopold and the Canadian Grey Owl among others, so I could easily see it in Nietzsche, in the life he lived in the Alps and on the Mediterranean, but particularly in his books.

I first used the phrase, “comprehensive ecological philosophy” about Nietzsche’s thought in my 1993 book *Nietzsche and Modern Times* (404).<sup>11</sup> I should have used it in my first book, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, seven years earlier; all the presuppositions were there, beginning with what Zarathustra says early in his first speech in the marketplace: “I beseech you, my brothers, stay true to the earth.” (Z “Zarathustra’s Prologue”).

Ecology is most powerfully present in Zarathustra’s speech “Before Sunrise.” If *ecology* is the human stance toward the whole of nature that loves nature as it is and acts to preserve and advance it, then “Before Sunrise” is an ecological *hymn*. Zarathustra stands on the deck of a ship on the open sea addressing the sky in those minutes before sunrise when the sky is simply light, open and empty of sun, moon, or stars. He celebrates that openness and emptiness as the *absence* of purpose in the world and the *presence* of a permission for him to bless all things under the open sky. His blessing counters the human propensity to anchor purpose in the sky, in *sky-gods* who praise and blame things on earth. The open sky not only allows the earthly things to be the mortal things they are; it invites a Zarathustra to enclose the earth within a sacred canopy of *teachings* that bless earthly things *as* they are.

Celebrant of the open sky, Zarathustra holds an ontology of will to power that naturally harbors an ecological bias. It recognizes that all things and all events are indissolubly knit together; it disallows the idea that we humans are somehow essentially different or separate from the natural world. It sees an unbroken continuity between the physical forces of nature, the metabolism of living beings, the instincts and drives of animals, and the highest reaches of human spirituality. Each ladder-step in this hierarchy is a refinement of will to power as it achieves more and more complex forms.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Ebert, *Der rätselhafte Tod des René Descartes* (Aschaffenburg: Alibri Verlag, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, 404.

Nietzsche's will-to-power view celebrates our fundamental kinship with every other natural being.

Ecology is present as a kind of aside in the *Genealogy of Morality* where Nietzsche speaks critically of "Our whole attitude toward nature [as] *hubris*, the way we violate her with the aid of machines and the heedless inventiveness of our technicians and engineers" (GM 3.9). Nietzschean science is heedful; *its* inventiveness has a different goal, a goal of caring and preserving.

There's a powerful workbook entry – also in M III 1 – that summarizes the whole drift of Nietzsche's thought about nature and human beings. Shortly after the first entries on eternal return comes an entry headed "My mission," *meine Aufgabe* – what is given me to do – is "the dehumanization of nature and the naturalization of the human after it has gained the pure concept of nature." That pure concept of nature Nietzsche had gained earlier in that workbook as *Habsucht*.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* 230, there's a related ecological passage. It begins, "To translate the human back into nature; to become master over the many vain and fanciful interpretations and secondary meanings which have been hitherto scribbled and painted over that eternal basic text *homo natura* [...]" and it ends, "[...] that may be a strange and insane *Aufgabe*, but it is an *Aufgabe* – who would deny that?" It's a long, beautiful ecological passage. Look it up, it's toward the end of the great section 230.

Finally, M III 1 contains a fascinating exercise in ecology in the setting Nietzsche gave to eternal return in its first appearance. That setting emphasizes incorporation, *Einverleibung*, the literal taking into the body of the true view of the world and of humanity that is coming to light through science. Incorporation is necessary to force out the false views already incorporated into our bodies. That very first entry on eternal return is an elaborate plan for a book in which incorporation is the topic of its first three chapters and the last topic of its final, fifth chapter. As for the fourth, the only chapter Nietzsche elaborated in detail in M III 1, its main point is the effort to incorporate "knowledge and the truth." What does that incorporation have to do with ecology? This: incorporating, absorbing into our very bodies, the view that the world and the human and I myself eternally return, means that the ecological love of nature is simply bred into us as the view we involuntarily live out as our own. Ecology would then be not simply a set of opinions to hold but quite literally a way of being in the world. Being who you are, having incorporated the ecological perspective, you live ecologically by nature.

*Living* ecologically brings me close to my final topic, *religion* in Nietzsche – because religion, like ecology, includes a set of practices that became an embodied, incorporated way of being.

## 5. RELIGION

On ecology, it's easy for us to take Nietzsche at his word; on religion it's harder. Still, we must take Nietzsche at his word on religion, although, sadly, even tragically as I think, he was by no means finished with this topic when he fell mad. He gave us modern free minds good advice here: "Listen closely," he said, "for I rarely speak as a theologian" (EH, BGE 2). Not *that* rarely, it turns out, but we really do have to listen closely here because of what he knew about us; we modern free minds, he said, "no longer even know what religions

are good for” (BGE 58). *He* knew: “The philosopher as we understand him [...] the human being of the most comprehensive responsibility [...] will make use of religion for his project of weeding and breeding” (*Züchtungs- und Erziehungsmittel*, BGE 61). So I ask: *What use* did the philosopher Nietzsche *plan to make* of religion for *his* civilizational project?

The most important of all the passages in which Nietzsche spoke as a theologian is the great finale of *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 295. There, he again called his only possible audience to attention: “Among you, my friends,” what he says about religion “comes [...] not at the right moment; for today, as I’ve been told, you no longer like to believe in god or gods” (BGE 295). We modern atheists, burned by the only religion we really know, will have to work especially hard to believe what Nietzsche says on gods and, more than that, to believe in his gods. Before listening closely to what Nietzsche says about his gods in that final section, we should listen closely to what he said in the central section (150): “Around the hero everything turns into a tragedy; around the demi-god into a satyr play; and around god? – ‘what?’ perhaps into a ‘world?’” Yes, into a world. Around a god a world worlds – and only around a god, it seems. But what kind of world would that be? Neither a tragedy nor a satyr-play, 150 implies, but a comedy if we take our guidance from what Nietzsche knew so well, the days of theater at the Athenian Dionysia festival – comedy understood profoundly as the form of theater that chastens and instructs through laughter and pleasure. So Nietzsche’s central section in *Beyond Good and Evil* playfully suggests that everything can turn into a world of deeply experienced comedy around a god. His final section says just who that god is, and it turns out there are two, Dionysos and Ariadne. What kind of world could world around them?

Dionysos and Ariadne are the only gods in Nietzsche’s pantheon because they are the only true gods. “True” in what sense? Dionysos and Ariadne divinize, give divine form to, the fundamental generation of life on earth, reproduction through sexual union, the mating of male and female to reproduce another instance or instances of their kind, from the most complex – human beings and other animals – down to all but the very simplest of living beings. Around Dionysos and Ariadne, a mere “everything” of will to power transforms into a world, a sacred world of sexual union from the lowest forms of life up to the highest. Dionysos and Ariadne exemplify life and celebrate it by being the gods they are. Humans are “the god-making species,” Nietzsche says, and Dionysos and Ariadne are the gods made naturally by humans who love the earth and are true to the earth and long to make it sacred.

But in *Ecce Homo*, at the very start of the chapter that explains why he is a destiny, Nietzsche states emphatically that “There is nothing in me of the founder of a religion.” Who then will *found* the religion of Dionysos and Ariadne? Nietzsche seems to have anticipated that the religion true to the earth would be founded naturally by the religiously gifted, those for whom gods are necessary in order to express the highest states of elevation and ecstasy, of moral decency and responsibility.

In religion, too, then, the philosopher is the commander and legislator, though without being a founder. Here too, Plato is the great model – he put all *theologians* on the same track. Nietzsche’s judgment on Plato’s role in religion is not unique to him. Walter Burkert, the leading contemporary scholar of Greek religion, says to end his great book titled *Greek Religion*: “Since Plato and through him religion has been essentially different

from what it had been before.”<sup>12</sup> That Plato, the Plato who made *religion* essentially different, is Nietzsche’s model, for Nietzsche, too, aims to set all subsequent theologians on *his* track. He can lay out the principles, and what he judges the appropriate names, of the only gods befitting a people true to the earth even though there is nothing in him of the founder of religion. That’s exactly what Plato did: after laying out his new laws for the gods of a post-Homeric religion in the *Republic*, Socrates tells religiously inclined Adeimantus that he leaves to “the god at Delphi” the particular practices and rituals of his post-Homeric religion (*Rep.* 427b-c).

Listening closely and reflecting on the philosopher Nietzsche’s attempts to make use of religion, we have to ask: Can Nietzsche’s thoughts on Dionysos and Ariadne have any purchase in the twenty-first century? There seems to me to be no possibility that those names recover their original power. Still, for me, the widening and deepening recovery of traditional religious expression in indigenous communities carries echoes of Nietzsche’s probes for a religion true to the earth. Nietzsche’s probes and indigenous religions express the same profound human sentiments: love and *gratitude* for the earth and for life on earth.

It’s with that word *gratitude* that I want to end my talk. *Gratitude* was a word of great importance to Nietzsche. And *gratitude* in Nietzsche must be thought with its opposite always near at hand – *revenge*, which Nietzsche analyzed so profoundly as the poisonous disposition toward life on earth active in *our* religion. In the religion chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche took a brief time-out from his attack on Christian religion to speak of its opposite: “What is amazing about the religiosity of the Homeric Greeks is the enormous amount of *gratitude* it exudes: it is a very noble type of human being who confronts nature and life in *this* way” (BGE 49).

You won’t believe me in the last thing I’m going to say about gratitude, but that’s alright. My study of Plato from Nietzsche’s perspective led me to the view that Nietzsche’s and Plato’s Socrates actually *share* the same fundamental philosophical positions, ending up, in both, with a profound gratitude for life on earth whose peak is the philosopher’s life. I tried to express this in the last paragraph of my book-writing career, and I’m going to end now simply reading that.

A Nietzschean history of philosophy understands philosophy to be the highest human gift, the attempt to understand rationally the causes of all things and to generate a social order within which that gift can prosper. It is the gift at work in the Homeric origins of our culture and throughout the history of our culture in the writings of Plato and the great Socratics schooled by Plato. Nietzsche shares with Plato the old teaching that we are not our own, that we owe our being to something infinitely greater than ourselves that we can to some degree understand. Gratitude is philosophy’s fundamental response to the world understood in the only way that it is understandable. In Nietzsche that deep-running gratitude takes public form in the most extreme affirmation of this life that is at all imaginable: the passionate desire that what is eternally return just as it is.

Gratitude. We owe a cock to Asclepius.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 322.

# THE CHAINS OF THE FREE SPIRIT: SEVEN APHORISMS ON NIETZSCHE'S *THE GAY SCIENCE*, BOOK 5

## INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche published a second edition of *The Gay Science* with a new preface and an added fifth book, titled “We Fearless Ones,” in 1887, between *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*.<sup>1</sup> The fifth book appears amid the writings that attempt to elucidate the teachings of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. As Nietzsche writes in *Ecce Homo*, after the Yes-saying of *Zarathustra*, his task was polemical No-saying with a focus on the problems of modernity as part of his slow search for those related to him. These writings resume the earlier aphoristic style of the first four books of *The Gay Science*. The fifth book, although it comes in *Zarathustra*’s wake, develops the central theme of the free spirit in the first four books. (The fourth book, it should be noted, introduces the teaching of the eternal recurrence and the figure of *Zarathustra*.) The free spirit, to simplify much, is dedicated to the search for knowledge and contrasts sharply with the prophetic gift-giver *Zarathustra*, the teacher who leaves his mountain solitude to wander among humans challenging their beliefs and ways of life.

But the fifth book remains closely linked to the concerns of *Zarathustra*. The final aphorism of the fourth book of *The Gay Science* (342), which describes *Zarathustra*’s leaving his mountain cave to become human again among the people, bears the title *Incipit tragoedia*, and in the new preface to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes, referring to that conclusion: “*Incipit tragoedia* we read at the end of this suspiciously innocent book. Beware! Something utterly wicked and mischievous is being announced here. *Incipit parodia* no doubt.” This suggests a grave puzzle: Is *Zarathustra*’s life and teaching a tragedy or a parody – or both? Or does Nietzsche mean that after the tragedy of the great philosophic poem the present work is but a parody? These questions are reflected in the essential ambiguity of the fifth book. Its penultimate aphorism, titled “The Great Health” (382), asks the question “How could we still be satisfied with modern-day man?” and continues, “Another ideal runs before us, [...] the ideal of a spirit that plays naively, i.e.,

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers in parentheses without an indicated source refer to aphorisms in *The Gay Science*, trans. J. Nauckhoff, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). The standard German edition of Nietzsche’s works is edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-77).

deliberately, but from overflowing abundance and power, with everything that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, and divine.” With an inhuman appearance, this spirit stands amid all forms of seriousness and solemnity “as if it were their most incarnate and involuntary parody – and in spite of all this, it is perhaps only with it that *the great seriousness* really emerges; that the real question mark is posed for the first time; that the destiny of the soul changes, the hand of the clock moves forward; the tragedy begins.”

In seven aphorisms, I attempt to convey, as though plotting points on a map that others can connect in their inquiries, how in Book 5 the parodic free spirit is fettered to the tragedy of human destiny, which Nietzsche says is just commencing. Thus, I will bind the free spirit to tragedy by means of a chain having seven links. But for those who are not predisposed to follow the Nietzschean way of aphorism-leaping, I have added a conclusion that may be found helpful, although it betrays Nietzsche's spirit.

### I. “OUR NEW INFINITE” (374, 343)

Aphorism 347, “Believers and Their Need to Believe,” defines “the free spirit par excellence.” In contrast to a person who must believe and have a faith, “one could conceive of a delight and power of self-determination, a freedom of the will, in which the spirit takes leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, practiced as it is in maintaining itself on light ropes and possibilities and dancing even beside abysses.” The weak will of the believer has need of certainty, of something to be firm. “Metaphysics is still needed by some, but so is the impetuous demand for certainty that today discharges itself in scientific-positivistic form among the great masses.” Around all positivistic systems “hover the fumes of a pessimistic gloom, something of weariness, fatalism, disappointment.” Nietzsche includes in this need for “pitiful nooks and crevices” the patriotism of the German and French nationalists, the petty aesthetic creed of naturalism, and Petersburg-style nihilism. Nietzsche summons up the declining vitality of modern, mostly democratic, ideas.

But there is a more radical way of conceiving the free spirit and its implications. It is customary to suppose that the free spirit replaces orthodox human valuations with better human valuations (346). This would say that the free spirit turns his unbelief into another faith – into a goal or martyrdom. The free spirit accepts, contrary to the human venerating tendency, that the world is in no way divine, rational, meaningful, and just. But by affirming a godless world, the free spirit does not endorse human values that surpass the value of the world. This is an aberration of human vanity that finds expression in modern pessimism, which maintains a faith and a goal, if it is only that of negating the world. The true free spirit rejects the “monstrous stupidity” of placing existence on the scale of human values. “We laugh as soon as we encounter the juxtaposition of ‘man and world’ separated by the sublime presumptuousness of the little word ‘and.’” But there lies a danger in this of a greater pessimism, of contempt for the world that we *ourselves* are. No longer at home in the world of our venerations, we cannot venerate ourselves. This is a danger that faces Europe in coming generations: “Either abolish your venerations or – *yourselves!*”

It seems that the free spirit has an answer to this. A new cheerfulness is now possible as new opportunities for inquiry have arisen due to “the greatest recent event – that ‘God is dead’; that the belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable – [which] is already starting to cast its shadow over Europe” (343). The whole of European morality must



collapse if the faith on which it was based is undermined. An era of demolition, destruction, and downfall lies ahead. Yet the free spirits, who are the “firstlings and premature births” of the next century, look forward to the darkening without genuine involvement, without worry and fear for themselves. Only the most immediate consequences are felt now, without sadness and gloom, for one anticipates a new dawn. “Our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation – finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any danger; every daring of the lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an ‘open sea’” (343). Nietzsche suggests that the present time resembles the first epoch of philosophic discovery, the beginning of philosophy when there was no theoretical tradition, no dogma to seduce and obscure the thinker’s vision. The thinker now again feels no obligation to respect the common valuations of the species and does not view the world solely from the human corner of its venerations and certainties. Nietzsche therefore writes of “our new infinite” (374).

The aphorism with that title begins with one of the clearest of Nietzsche’s central assertions about the problem of knowledge:

How far the perspectival character of existence extends, or indeed whether it has any other character, whether an existence without interpretation, without “sense,” doesn’t become “non-sense”; whether, on the other hand, all existence isn’t essentially an *interpreting* existence – that cannot, as would be fair, be decided even by the most industrious and extremely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis, the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these. We cannot look around our corner.

If the perspectival character of existence is the core of the idea of will to power, then the will to power is only a tentative yet unavoidable hypothesis for the human intellect. “It is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be” – for example, whether other beings might be able to experience time differently or have a different conception of cause and effect. “But I think that today we are at least far away from the ridiculous immodesty of decreeing from our angle that perspectives are *permitted* only from that angle.” The advice at first seems contradictory: let us not bother with thinking about non-human perspectives, but all the same let us not suppose that human perspectives are the only possible ones.

As will be clear when we turn to 354, Nietzsche thinks that the human is typically not fair to itself in that its linguistic-conscious interpretations are usually shallow, reflecting the herd’s basic requirements. Within itself, the human has a wealth of hidden thought and perception, the vast preconscious realm that surrounds the tiny island of consciousness. Efforts of critical self-reflection can disclose more of that realm but still only in a human way. The free spirit and the philosopher can thus enlarge the human corner. Nietzsche speaks of the discovery of infinity, admittedly with ironic overtones. “Rather, the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*. Once again the great shudder seizes us” (374). But it

would be wrong to deify this unknown infinite in the old manner, for it contains many ungodly possibilities. In sum, the free spirit is open to exploring an unlimited wealth of possible perceptions and experiences but without moralizing assumptions that the infinite is divine, good, and just. Although this suggests something akin to a classical inquiry about the whole, Nietzsche proposes a novel inverted direction of this inquiry through the exploration of the vast, hidden depths of the unconscious, or the great reason of the body, as he says in *Zarathustra* (see *Zarathustra*, “On the Despisers of the Body”).

## II. “THE HUMAN CORNER” (349)

Only one aphorism in Book 5, 349, mentions the will to power, the second of two on the “The Origin of Scholars.” The only scholars discussed are Spinoza, Darwin, and natural scientists, who share the dogma that self-preservation is the decisive feature of the living.

Scholars fail to see that “to wish to preserve oneself is a sign of distress, of a limitation of the truly basic life-instinct, which aims at the expansion of power and in so doing often enough risks and sacrifices self-preservation.” Nietzsche suggests that the dominance of self-preservation is not just the error of certain thinkers. He writes, “as a natural scientist, however, one should get out of one’s human corner; and in nature, it is not distress which rules, but rather abundance, squandering [*Verschwendung*] – even to the point of absurdity.” The notion of a narrowly human perspective, a human corner, runs through Book 5. The free spirit gains distance on this perspective yet cannot wholly escape it. The human corner is strangely atypical for nature, as characterized by greater distress. “The struggle for survival is only an *exception*, a temporary restriction of the will to life; the great and small struggle revolves everywhere around preponderance, around growth and expansion, around power and in accordance with the will to power; which is simply the will to life.” What is exceptional in the rest of nature is common in the human species.

Standard scholarship and science are rooted in this all-too-human proclivity. This aphorism provides a metaphysical basis for his account in the previous aphorism of the way modern European scholars grow out of peculiar social and class conditions where the democratic ethos reigns (348, 373). The democratic idea and the emphasis on self-preservation go hand-in-hand. Nietzsche observes that the modern natural scientists “belong to the ‘people,’ their ancestors were poor and lowly folks who knew all too intimately the difficulty of scraping by.” And in a passage on Darwin in his late book *Twilight of the Idols* (“Skirmishes,” 14), Nietzsche associates the struggle for life with the dominance of the weak; they are the majority and are cleverer than the exceptional, stronger individuals. “The weak possess more mind.” Thus, they defeat the stronger again and again. For the human species, nothing good is to be expected from evolution based on self-preservation.

## III. “THE MOST ENDANGERED ANIMAL” (354)

The stress on self-preservation in Spinoza, Darwin, and modern science is not a mere prejudice. It reflects a truth about the average human being that is wrongly projected onto the rest of nature. The human is “the most endangered animal” with a typically restricted will to life, according to 354, ironically called “On the ‘Genius of the Species.’” It contains a remarkable speculation about the origins of speech, consciousness, and knowledge. Nietzsche’s genealogy leads him to the ultimate source of the human situation, of which



scholarly narrowness is a superficial symptom. He writes about “the ‘terrible must’ which ruled over the human for a long time: [...] he needed help and protection, he needed his equals, he had to express his neediness and to be able to make himself understood.” As a weaker species, the human had a special need for communication. Nietzsche does not say that this is the origin of thinking and reason. “Man, like every living creature, is constantly thinking but does not know it; the thinking that becomes conscious is only the smallest part of it. Let us say the shallowest, worst part – for only conscious thinking takes place in words, that is, in communicative symbols.” The development of language and the development of consciousness occur in tandem, but language and consciousness are not essential to mental life. “For we could think, feel, will, remember, and also ‘act’ in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to enter our consciousness [...]. All of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror; and still today the predominant part of our lives actually unfolds without this mirroring at all.” Yet because of the neediness of this species, it cannot live without consciousness. The stronger animal species live without it, and exceptional members of the human species rely less on it. “This capacity for consciousness did not have to develop; the solitary and predatory person would not have needed it.”

Why the human has the fatal flaw of greater neediness Nietzsche does not say. (Behind his assumption may be a Rousseauian consideration that the human is naturally less provided with instinctual guidance than other animals.) In any case, Nietzsche praises the “precocious suspicion” of Leibniz that most perception is preconscious, an insight that must now be incorporated in our physiology and natural history. In Nietzsche’s historical speculation, the human species undergoes a kind of inverted development in the case of the exceptional members. Average communication based on need allows over time a versatile, subtle power of expression to develop. “A faculty, so to speak, which has accumulated slowly, waits for an heir to spend of it lavishly.” This appears in the artists, actors, preachers, writers “who come at the end of a long chain,” the “late born” who are “squanderers by nature.” Here is a remarkable outcome. The attainment of powerful capacities for luxuriant conscious expression realizes on the level of speech and consciousness what the rest of living nature, as abundant and squandering, possesses without speech, education, and culture. But the human species as a whole cannot achieve this. Only the exceptional artists of thought and language recover, in a novel way, this primal vitality.

For the majority of humans, language and consciousness permit only the expression of thoughts useful to communicating with the herd. Communal need is, again, the origin of consciousness. “Consciousness actually belongs not to man’s existence as an individual but rather to the community and herd-concept of his nature.” Thus “to know oneself” will for most humans bring to consciousness only what is nonindividual and average in oneself. Although “all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique and boundlessly individual,” they no longer seem to be so as soon as we translate them into consciousness. Nietzsche says that true perspectivism is recognizing that, due to the nature of animal consciousness, the world of which we become conscious is merely a surface-and-sign world, the debased common denominator of the herd. Finding human depth involves running counter to this tendency. Indeed “growing consciousness is a danger, and if one lives among the most conscious Europeans one knows that it is a sickness.” Those who

live their whole lives on this shallow plane dwell in a realm of fiction. What the herd regards as useful is actually harmful to its higher possibilities and constitutes perhaps “that supremely fatal stupidity of which we some day will perish.”

The free spirit as an exceptional human attains distance on the shallow, average estimations and judgments of the majority, which include the whole realm of what passes as morality, for only thereby can the thinker attain a fuller, expanding, powerful, and vital experience of life. This of course recalls in some ways a classical conception of the philosophical life and its critique of opinion. But it is not a classical proposal that language and consciousness are signs of weakness, decadence, and sickness that may lead to the extinction of the species. In an extraordinary account of their perilous situation, Nietzsche declares that free spirits and philosophers must work against a profoundly rooted biological tendency of the species. Whereas classical thought regards speech as imperfectly reflecting the character of the whole, speech does at the same time provide the first access to the being of things from which inquiry ascends. Speech has a continuity with the being of things that Nietzsche denies. In his account of the “great health” (382), the higher humans must turn their thinking backward and inward into the rich uniqueness and multiplicity hidden within their natures as powerful, exceptional individuals. Philosophy has an intensely personal character. “The lack of personality always takes its revenge; a weakened, thin, extinguished personality, one that denies itself and its own existence, is no longer good for anything good – least of all for philosophy” (345).

#### **IV. “IN WHAT WAY WE, TOO, ARE STILL PIOUS” (344)**

Yet all of this leaves us wondering what moves the seeker of knowledge. The account suggests that within certain exceptional humans a tension exists between a growing, expansive demand for more comprehensive interpretations and a sense of restriction by the limits of language and conscious thought. But what is the source of the expansive demand that does not serve self-preservation and seems unrelated to utility? In two aphorisms (355 and 344), Nietzsche appears to offer contradictory accounts of the meaning of the search for truth. In the aphorism “Origin of Our Concept of Knowledge” (355), he presents the common person’s belief that one knows when one is able to trace something unfamiliar back to the familiar. One thinks one knows when one feels at home, when one no longer marvels. Here the acquiring of knowledge responds to the fear of the unusual. This common idea of knowledge has infected philosophy, for in this spirit philosophers have reduced the world to “ideas,” to the familiar elements of conscious thinking and logic, that is, the already known. Similarly, they have assumed that there are immediately knowable “facts of consciousness.” But what they assume is thus knowable abstracts from most of the inner world as they prove unable to gain distance on the most familiar data of consciousness.

A deeper approach to the basis for science is addressed in an aphorism treating the unconditioned will to truth (344), the view that nothing is more necessary than truth and that compared to it all else has secondary value. The concern with truth at any price has arisen in spite of the fact that untruth is as useful as truth and that the will to truth can be dangerous to life. Indeed, life aims at error, deception, semblance and is on the side of the *polytropoi* of Odysseus, who practices the arts of lying. But the rejection of semblance, the maxim “I will not deceive even myself,” has over time destroyed every faith. Utility

cannot explain this; the will to truth has a moral ground, and the human moral drive runs contrary to the character of life, nature, and history, all of them immoral.

But although it endangers every faith, the will to truth rests on a faith, a metaphysical faith that denies the ordinary world.

Now placed together, these two aphorisms bring forward the tension already seen: between the tendency of ordinary life to rest comfortably on the average and easily communicated, and some other drive within at least some humans to push recklessly toward the uncovering of the unfamiliar and difficult. Nietzsche stresses that the latter rests on a faith, and he includes himself in the diagnosis. “Even we knowers of today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by the thousand-year-old faith, the Christian faith which was also Plato’s faith, that God is truth, that truth is divine.” But then the free spirit steps forward and questions this faith. “What if this were to become more and more difficult to believe, if nothing more were to turn out to be divine except error, blindness, lie – if God himself were to turn out to be our largest lie?”

Before this final turn is made, we have the contrast of the utilitarian, democratic approach to knowledge (which has no reason to reject lies if they are useful) with the ascetic, noble, self-sacrificing approach of Platonic-Christian origin. Nietzsche suggests that this ascetic valuation of truth plays a role in his quest for knowledge, even as he confronts the possibility that the divinity of truth is questionable. Is perhaps the element of that ancient faith a necessary part of the soul of the philosopher precisely so that he can question it?

Can the deepest pursuit of truth exist without the tension in the soul between the ancient ascetic ideal and the radical freedom of the free spirit? Perhaps the free spirit needs that ideal just as one needs gravity in order to fly, and one uses chains to train to become the best dancer (see *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, 140)?

## V. “WE WHO ARE HOMELESS” (377, 357)

The debt of the godless anti-metaphysician to Christianity is discussed further in an aphorism that explores the legacy of German philosophy for Nietzsche’s thought (357). It bears the title “On the Old Problem: What Is German?” (I seem to hear in this an echo of the title of Kant’s essay “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” Cosmopolitan enlightenment as project has been replaced by the particular nation as fate – not necessarily a welcome and happy fate.) It is the longest aphorism in Book 5. Nietzsche first asks whether the achievements of the German philosophers can be attributed to qualities of the German soul or whether they are exceptions to the character of this people. He discusses three examples of German philosophy (Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel) and follows them with a longer account of Schopenhauer as a non-German thinker living among his German countrymen. His atheistic pessimism was a pan-European event whose spiritual basis is European Christianity.

In Leibniz Nietzsche respects the “incomparable insight” that consciousness is merely an accident of the power of representation and is not, as Descartes held, essential to it. Consciousness constitutes only one state, and not the whole, of our spiritual and psychic world. Nietzsche claims this is a reversal of appearances alien to the Latin world, an innovation whose “profundity has not been exhausted to this day.” He then praises

Kant's placing of a "colossal question mark" on the concept of causality – not doubting its legitimacy altogether, as Hume did, but cautiously delimiting the realm in which the concept has meaning. Nietzsche says again that we have not yet come to terms with this achievement. Third, he cites "Hegel's astonishing move" of daring to teach that the concepts of species develop out of each other in defiance of old logical habits and of preparing the minds of Europe for Darwinism, as through Hegel the concept of development enters science. How are these insights essentially Germanic? It is German, Nietzsche avers, to think like Leibniz of our hidden inner world as richer than our conscious mind, to demote like Kant the value of the causal mode of knowing, and to attribute like Hegel a deeper meaning to becoming than to being. These so-called German insights relate to the now-familiar claim that it is a monstrous error to suppose that the human perspective is the only possible one or, to put it in other terms, "we are not inclined to concede that our human logic is logic as such, or the only kind of logic." Rather, our logic "is only a special case and perhaps one of the oddest and stupidest."

The aphorism could not make clearer that Nietzsche sees himself as the heir and beneficiary of not only the Greeks. It also shows that through Schopenhauer he has an inheritance of non-German European pessimism, whose victory was only delayed by Hegel's effort to divinize history. That victory had been prepared for over two thousand years. "One can see what it was that triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was taken over more rigorously; the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience." The days of looking for evidence of a moral order in nature and history are over. The conscience of the good European is against it, but therewith Schopenhauer's question comes forward in a terrifying way: "Does existence have any meaning at all? A few centuries will be needed before the question can be heard completely and in full depth." Schopenhauer's own answer was youthful, hasty, and stuck in the old Christian ascetic perspective. In any event, the Germans had no affinity for his pessimism, even if the cases of some academic appropriations and of Wagner might suggest the contrary. Wagner was, after all, "essentially a man of the theatre and an actor" (368). Nietzsche cites the hearty nationalism of the Germans as proof that they are no pessimists.

Nietzsche says that he is "too well provisioned and too richly obligated" as heir of millennia of the European spirit to be at home in contemporary, nationalist Germany. This is a theme of 377, "We Who Are Homeless." He and others like him have a hard time as children of the future and as homeless in today's world. He recommends to his kindred the secret wisdom of *gaya scienza*, which abjures involvement in modern politics. Our time is a broken age of transition, and its realities will not last. There is no sense in being conservative or liberal. Nietzsche's harshest words are saved for the progressives. Universal justice and concord are undesirable as promoting greater levelling. Ideals of humanity and mildness bespeak only weakness and the weariness of old age. Nietzsche reaches out to danger-loving spirits who love war and adventure and who contemplate the necessity for "new orders as well as for a new slavery – since every strengthening and enhancement of the human type also involves a new kind of enslavement" (see also *Beyond Good and Evil*, 188). Is this a metaphor, or does Nietzsche mean slavery in a literal political sense? The adventures of the free spirits are in thinking. Although Nietzsche

expresses disdain for the language of humanity, he also says he is not German enough to advocate nationalism and racial hatred. His feeling is “too uninhibited, too malicious, too well-read, and too well-traveled for that!” His type prefers to live in untimely fashion on mountains apart, “in past or future centuries.”

Strikingly, Nietzsche ascribes his being a good European to his Christian origins. We have outgrown Christianity, he says, “because we have grown *out of* it, because our ancestors were Christians who were mercilessly upright; for their faith they willingly sacrificed possessions, blood, position, and fatherland. We – do the same. But for what? For our unbelief? For every kind of unbelief? No, you know better than that, my friends!” We have within us a hidden Yes that sends us sailing the seas, emigrants to new lands, and “are compelled to this by – a *faith*.” Christianity was an old form of enslaving faith, one could say, whose hard discipline was essential to training in this new form of faith. Presumably this faith also has its chains, although they remain undefined here.

## VI. “CLASSICAL PESSIMISM” (370)

We have seen that as a good European Nietzsche owes something to Schopenhauer’s atheistic pessimism, which in turn is indebted to Christianity. But Nietzsche’s pessimism departs from Schopenhauer’s, and this departure must be evident in whatever new faith the free spirit possesses. We have also seen how Nietzsche frames his thought as personal insights with sources that lie beyond rational justification, as some of his thoughts have Germanic rather than Latin roots, and some are European-Christian rather than Germanic in character. Aphorism 370, “What Is Romanticism?” offers an account of Nietzsche’s personal growth, or genealogy, which bears on the question of his novel pessimism and its alleged faith.

He writes: “It may be recalled, at least among my friends, that initially I approached the modern world with a few crude errors and over-estimations and, in any case, with hope. I understood – on the basis of who knows what personal experiences? – the philosophical pessimism of the nineteenth century as if it were a symptom of a higher force of thought, of more audacious courage” than the sensualist Enlightenment thought of the previous century. As one knows from his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, Nietzsche espied in Schopenhauer and Wagner a new tragic spirit and an expression of Dionysian creative will. But now he sees that in both figures he misunderstood the nature of their thought, missing its true romanticism.

All art and philosophy presuppose suffering and can be seen as cure and aid in the service of growing, struggling life. But suffering is of two kinds: suffering from the impoverishment of life and suffering from abundance. All romanticism is suffering of the first kind, and only suffering from superabundance deserves the name Dionysian. The Dionysian individual can endure the sight of the terrible and affirm destruction and evil as the overflow of creative forces. By contrast, the destructive impulse of impoverished life is moved by outrage at what provokes it, as in the case of anarchists. Or impoverished life simply retreats from destruction into self-protective peace and mildness, as with Epicureans. The opposite of destroying is the act of fixing and immortalizing, and it also has contrasting modes. This can be prompted by gratitude and love, as in the art of apotheosis with its generous spreading of light, in connection with which Nietzsche mentions Rubens, Hafis, Goethe, and Homer. By contrast, the impoverished immortalizer

seeks to stamp a binding law on things that reflects a singular, narrow, vengeful perspective. Nietzsche adduces the romantic pessimists Schopenhauer and Wagner as examples, and he advocates a different pessimism, which he names classical or Dionysian.

This duality relates to the duality in the will that we have already seen. An individual's will is either constricted, narrow, weak, and unable to affirm its existence without reserve, or it is expansive, growing, strong, and wholly self-affirming. The latter Nietzsche associates with affirming the world as it is, and again, we may see a kinship with contemplation in a premodern sense. But Nietzsche's language for it certainly belongs to a different conceptual world. He writes of the generous, expansive creation of more comprehensive horizons or interpretations, embracing ever-greater variety and complexity, which activity entails, as its precondition, the destruction of restrictive and simplifying horizons or interpretations (see *Beyond Good and Evil*, 230). The higher contemplative, affirmative stance for Nietzsche involves overcoming the whole realm of logical thought as in the service of self-preservation. He is aware that as a general project this would be highly disruptive for the vast majority of human beings, a disruption that he seems to regard as a probable development in the future and as raising the question of whether the human species can incorporate its exposure to the truth about its condition (see *The Gay Science*, 110).

There are, of course, exceptional spirits of the past who embody this stance, such as the great artists that Nietzsche mentions. His fuller characterization of Goethe in *Twilight of the Idols* ("Skirmishes," 49) sheds more light on this type.

What he aspired to was totality; he strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will [...]; he disciplined himself as a whole, he created himself. [...] Goethe conceived of a strong, highly cultured human being, skilled in all physical accomplishments, who keeping himself in check, and having reverence for himself, dares to allow himself the whole wealth of naturalness, is strong enough for this freedom; [...] A great spirit thus *emancipated* stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* that only what is separate and individual may be negated [...]. Such a faith is the highest of all faiths. I have baptized it with the name *Dionysos*.

This rich and complex passage tells one much about what Nietzsche opposes in modern thought and about the corrective for it he sees in Goethe: the forms of reason that specialize, dichotomize, and reject actual totality for restricted, regional mastery. Goethe's criticism of Newtonian mathematical science would surely be on Nietzsche's mind. But how does one espy faith in Goethe's affirmation of totality? This is not the kind of Christian (or, in Nietzsche's view, Platonic) faith that demands another world. This faith combines gratitude for the real, however much suffering it brings, and self-reverence. The two go together because the self capable of such grateful affirmation must possess remarkable strength and sureness of itself as strong. This self-certainty is required as the godless classical pessimist pursues knowledge wherever the pursuit will take it. The faith is akin to courage. It is the faith of the fearless one.



## VII. "WE INCOMPREHENSIBLE ONES" (371)

Nietzsche acknowledges that both by necessity and by choice his work will not be understood. "This is precisely our lot – oh, for a long time yet! Let's say until 1901, to be modest – this is also our distinction; we wouldn't honor ourselves enough if we wanted it otherwise" (371). It is the distinction of a knower such as Nietzsche to be ever growing, ever changing, shedding old hides. "We become increasingly younger, [...] more future-oriented, we drive our roots ever more powerfully into the depths – into evil – while at the same time embracing the heavens ever more lovingly and broadly [...]. Like trees we grow – it's hard to understand, like all life!" At the same time, it is a dark fate – to dwell ever closer to the lightning. It is a fate that Nietzsche honors and does not want to share except with knowers like himself. His style of writing, he avows, is not dialogic (367). All thought, writing, painting, composing belongs either to monologic art or art before witnesses. Nietzsche's style, as radically godless, is solitary and has no witnesses. Not written for others' eyes, he claims, his art is "the music of forgetting." As such it accords with what Nietzsche said about the character of all our actions, about how they are almost always misunderstood. They are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual, and the challenge to knowing ourselves is to avoid translating this uniqueness into the common, shallow, distorting language of the herd.

It is crucial to Nietzsche's cheerfulness that his necessary distance from the herd, from fellow humans as a whole, is not darkened by hatred and fear. "The writer of this book is no misanthrope" (379). Hatred and fear force one to give up contempt as they place one on a par with what one hates or fears. "We fearless ones live without fear precisely because we are more spiritual." Philosophers are no longer persecuted in Western Europe. "We will hardly be decapitated, imprisoned, or exiled; not even our books will be banned or burned." Indeed, Nietzsche claims that the age loves and needs his type, even as this type shuns it. As an artist of contempt, Nietzsche does not create human bonds. His art is the escape from man, the mockery of man; indeed, it is the art of self-mockery. For Nietzsche's type there is no other way, and more education and enlightenment of the people will not close the chasm but only make it grow larger. The higher humans have always had to overcome their time in themselves, the overcoming of which entails their overcoming of their aversion for their time and their suffering from it. To suffer from one's time is part of the romanticism that Nietzsche opposes with his gay science (380).

In the end, one does not wish to be understood; one wants not to be understood, except by the very few. "Every noble spirit and taste selects his audience" (381). One erects barriers against others. Aspects of Nietzsche's temperament, he declares, will make him hard to grasp even by his friends. He approaches deep problems quickly, like cold baths. To handle something quickly is not necessarily to comprehend less, since there are truths that are shy and ticklish and cannot be caught except by surprise. And further, Nietzsche says it is a courtesy for him to treat things briefly, since innocent souls will then be less corrupted by his immoral insights. Above all, Nietzsche distances the spirit of his writing from the scholar who weighs down his work with learned baggage. The genuine thinker must have the suppleness and strength of a dancer. The philosopher's ideal is the dance; it is his art, and his only piety, his "service of God" (381, 383). That one cannot be understood might be thought a limitation, a chain, but for the philosopher it is the inevitable cost of his lightness, his higher freedom.



## CONCLUSION

What are the chains that fetter Nietzsche's free spirit? In part they are Nietzsche's debts to the past. Specifically modern, German insights have shown to him the limits of language, of consciousness, of logical and causal thinking. But implicit in Nietzsche's account of these gifts is the fact of his indebtedness to the limits themselves, for without them the great thinkers, including himself, could not have the insights into the prospect of possible nonhuman interpretations – indeed a possible infinity of them. This possibility can occur only to those spirits who have inherited an abundance of communicative powers – the “squanderers” of this ability, for they experience the narrow limits of ordinary communications and world-interpretations. Among Nietzsche's debts to the past are also those to Christian ascetic morality and faith, for these have been crucial for the free spirit's discipline, which is not a new creed or doctrine about the truth, whether divine or not. The new faith or discipline, as an attitude of gratitude toward what the world offers and of reverence toward oneself, replaces the metaphysical and epistemological certainties that hitherto formed the basis of science and philosophy. The new faith has no determinate object but only affirms the experience of the growing, expansive power of interpretation within the thinker. Its growth and expansion are not governed by laws, species, or forms.

The thinker's activity cannot give a final, determinate account of itself or the world. Accordingly, there is no mastery of the world by thought. The thinker's primary experience and insight is about the constant growth that has an undeniable reality for *him* and that *is* the free spirit. His being is this becoming. But there can be no such growth in interpreting without the encounter with existing disciplines, rules, and forms of life. The meaning of life is in the continual questioning of these given restrictions, in a process of destruction and creation. This could be regarded as a kind of contemplation, but it is not of a fixed order of things or principles.<sup>2</sup> This is not nature or φύσις in any earlier sense.<sup>3</sup>

To experience life, the world, and oneself in this way, it is necessary to have been bound by old chains and to become bound by new self-imposed chains. One cannot expect observers to understand this experience apart from the rare individuals who already partake of it to some degree. The experience rests on strength that cannot be taught or granted by others. Its truth is not conveyable in formulae or treatises. It can be witnessed through example – by those who can see. It involves regarding all old forms of solemn goals and duties in the mode of parody. At the same time, a new tragedy begins for the thinker as a “classical pessimist” who affirms with fearless cheerfulness the suffering that this way of being entails. But for the rest of the human species? This is the great question mark, the dark problem of the future of the human as the “death of God” becomes the fully conscious human fate.

<sup>2</sup> A similar account can be found in Leo Strauss's 1959 lectures, *On Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. R. Velkley (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), specifically his discussion of what he terms “creative contemplation” in Nietzsche. For Strauss, this involves a novel fusion of philosophy, poetry, and religion.

<sup>3</sup> In my understanding, two figures come closest to Nietzsche on φύσις: Heraclitus and Goethe.

# NIETZSCHE AND PLATO ON THE JUDGMENT THAT “BEING IS GOOD”

The present remarks distill some observations of mine about Nietzsche and specifically about his relation to Plato and “Platonism.” However, since I am neither a Nietzsche scholar nor even a Nietzschean, the decent thing to do in such a situation is at least to speak with one’s cards on the table.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche’s place among thinkers and spiritual diagnosticians of the first rank is clear to me beyond question. Also clear is this: rich as he is in insights of great variety, Nietzsche perpetually circles around a single, central question, that of the sheer *value* of existence and how it may now be grounded, on the assumption that all previous philosophical and theological grounds have fallen away for the inhabitants of late modernity. Nietzsche saw, in other words, that modernity, through its own internal dynamic, has left us stranded with the question: What is mankind for, anyhow? (*Wozu Mensch überhaupt?*).<sup>2</sup> Finally, it is clear to me that Nietzsche believed himself to have *achieved* such a new grounding, a new way of answering the question and making human life matter, and to have done so, for the first time, free of the taint of “Platonism.” In his view, such a grounding simply *had* to be free of Platonism since modern, intellectual *Redlichkeit* leaves no other option:

Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honor of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one’s own experiences as pious people have long enough interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of the salvation of the soul – that is *all over now*[...].<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The original version of this paper was delivered at a conference on “Nietzsche in the Twenty-First Century” held at the University of Białystok. I have tried to retain the spoken character of these remarks to the extent possible, especially since that character is particularly well-suited to what, even in published form, can be only a compressed treatment of a gigantically complex set of issues.

<sup>2</sup> *Genealogie der Moral*, I, 28; hereafter cited as *GdM*. And cf. *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, II, 141 {222} (hereafter cited as *Z*): “Why? What for? By what? Whither? Where? How? Is it not folly to be alive?” References to Nietzsche’s published works will cite aphorisms or section numbers where these allow easy location of the cited text. Where this is not possible, citation will be by page number in the *Kritische Studienausgabe (KSA)* followed by the page number in {braces} from Kaufmann’s translations. On Nietzsche’s utterly ruthless and “despairing seriousness” in facing the question of “To be or not to be?” see Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 157.

<sup>3</sup> *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, aph. 357; hereafter cited as *FW*.

*Das ist nunmehr vorbei.* Or so Nietzsche asserts, at any rate.

All of the above is clear to me, then. One point remains unclear, however: When all is said and done, just why *does* Nietzsche think existence is praiseworthy? Granted that man would, as he avers, rather will nothingness than not will at all.<sup>4</sup> And granted that to will anything would seem to involve at least a minimal affirmation of it. What remains mysterious, at least for me, is this: If we are somehow compelled to "say Yes" to existence, need we agree that it is for that reason *good* to do so? Or is it good for some other reason? Or is it simply inescapable, while the "Yes" is just the sugar that makes the medicine of necessity go down?

Why, really, ought we praise being rather than damn it? On this question, the thinking person hates the lie in the soul above all else.<sup>5</sup> I propose, therefore, that we think our way as far into the question as is practicable based mostly, but not exclusively, on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's book *sans pareil* in his own estimation.<sup>6</sup> Once that groundwork has been laid, I should like to ask whether Nietzsche has, in fact, found a new way to bless the world without Plato's form of the Good "beyond being." Obviously, any answer to this last question requires a careful look at the role of the Good in Plato's thinking. Only after that can Nietzsche's "new grounding" be assessed in full.

## I.

Zarathustra's intellectual and spiritual journey is portrayed, among other things, as a victory over a very specific philosophical sensibility, one embodied by the so-called "Soothsayer" (*Der Wahrsager*) but also by characters such as the "Dwarf" (in the passage "On the Vision and the Riddle") or by the ominously named "Spirit of Gravity," Zarathustra's "supreme and most powerful devil."<sup>7</sup> These adversaries embody that stance toward the world which judges it to be no good, or at least, no good without some external, transcendent crutch – some "Apart, Beyond, Outside, above," some external being, or law, or purpose.<sup>8</sup> And yet in another, deeper sense, the Soothsayer, Dwarf, and Spirit of Gravity are all aspects

<sup>4</sup> *GdM*, III, §1.

<sup>5</sup> For non-being, that is, literally *ceasing to be*, is also something that we could will. See Nietzsche's astringent critique of Christianity for forbidding what he calls "*the deed of nihilism – suicide*": *KGA*, VIII.3 [Spring 1888], 14 [9]. All references to Nietzsche's *Nachlass* and correspondence come from the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (*KGA*) unless specified otherwise. Rendering of this material into English is my own, though I have on occasion consulted other translations: F. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, trans. L. Löb, ed. R. Guess and A. Nehamas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); F. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, trans. K. Sturge, ed. R. Bittner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> *Ecce Homo*, Preface, § 4 (hereafter cited as *EH*).

<sup>7</sup> *Z*, II, 140 {220}. All future references to *Zarathustra* will appear parenthetically in the text. Unless stated otherwise, Nietzsche citations not preceded by a title abbreviation are from *Zarathustra*.

<sup>8</sup> *FW*, Preface to the Second Edition, 2, and III, 248 {309}. This is the general form of all convention, and it, too, derives from Platonism, which grounds all conventional ways on the assumption that "mankind is ultimately responsible to something outside itself," which serves as the "condition of human dignity and a humane community." See L. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 198. But is that on which Plato seeks to ground human dignity only "outside" us? Is it really inert, as a crutch is? Might "outside" and "crutch" not be examples of runaway metaphors that doom us to misunderstanding Plato ab initio? My disagreement with Lampert, elaborated in section III below, centers on these questions.

of Zarathustra, of his *own* spiritual formation, which he must overcome in order to fulfill his self-imposed mission.

That this Schopenhauerian sensibility is flesh of Zarathustra's flesh is duly emphasized throughout the book. For example, the Soothsayer is said to know something that Zarathustra, too, knows – namely, that “all is the same, all has been,” the long night of nihilism is coming (II, 172 {245}). What is even worse, he also knows that the very worst human types, “the small men,” recur eternally, and he reacts to just this as Zarathustra does, with nearly fatal nausea and world-weariness (II, 172 {245}).<sup>9</sup> Knowledge, the Soothsayer predicts, will *strangle* us, and Zarathustra is not left untouched by this prophecy (II, 173 {246}). He and the Soothsayer are said to “recognize” each other. One might say they recognize themselves *in* each other.<sup>10</sup>

It is perhaps precisely because of this spiritual proximity that Zarathustra denies the Soothsayer – three times, in fact, and with much more decisiveness and dispatch than Peter was able to summon up when denying Christ – for he claims to *know* what the Soothsayer does not know and to do what the Soothsayer could not do. Zarathustra *knows* that some things are worthwhile, that there are still “blessed isles,” that the “heart of the earth,” as he calls it, is golden.<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive knowledge about the world and our place in it will not strangle man. Instead, it can exalt certain men. For in knowing the “true” character of the world, Zarathustra will be able to judge it to be *good* exactly as it is and will be for all eternity – an unbearable thought that kills the nihilistic Spirit of Gravity (III, 199–201 {269–71}). And it is this act of affirmation and not merely the doctrine of a circular recurrence of events at tremendous temporal intervals that Nietzsche identified as his truly revolutionary achievement. He was well aware that the teaching of eternal recurrence as such was not unique to him.<sup>12</sup>

However, this can be considered an achievement only under strict conditions. In his notes, Nietzsche describes his task (*Aufgabe*) as, “the de-humanization [*Entmenschung*] of nature and then the re-naturalization [*Vernatürlichung*] of man, after he has achieved the pure concept ‘Nature’ [*den reinen Begriff ‘Natur’*].”<sup>13</sup> We have already seen what this entails: “Dehumanized” nature means nature understood as neither benevolent nor directed toward any human purposes, as pointing toward nothing transcendent, divine, or ontologically superior. There can be no *Jenseits*, nothing beyond this earth to which Nietzsche is forever exhorting us to remain loyal (I, 99 {188}). Any such transcendent “permanent” is, for Zarathustra, a mere “parable.”<sup>14</sup> And it is a deadly one, since positing any such “unmoved” or “satiated” first principle – any doctrine according to which the

<sup>9</sup> Cf. III, 274 {331}, and II, 125 {209}: “What, does life require even the rabble [*auch das Gesindel*]?”

<sup>10</sup> IV, 300–301 {353}. If I am not mistaken, this is a distinction bestowed on no one else in the book.

<sup>11</sup> Zarathustra silences the fire-hound with “*know this* – the heart of the earth is gold” (II, 170 {244}). And he gives the Soothsayer the same treatment at IV, 302 {355}: “*That I know better: there still are blessed isles. Be quiet about that, you sighing bag of sadness!*”

<sup>12</sup> See *EH*, III (“Why I Write Such Good Books”), 312–13 {729}, and cf. *Will to Power*, n. 1066. Notes from *Wille zur Macht* will be cited from the 1967 translation by Kaufmann and Hollingdale (hereafter *WTP*).

<sup>13</sup> *KGA*, V.2, 11[211]. Cf. with *BGE*, 230, on translating man “back into nature.”

<sup>14</sup> II, 110 {198}: “Evil, I call it, and misanthropic – all this teaching of the One and the Plenum and the Unmoved and the Sated and the Permanent. All the permanent – that is only a parable [*Gleichniss*]. And the poets lie too much.”

divine does not love wisdom because it already *is* wise – leads inexorably to judging that life to be highest which most resembles the posited first principle – namely, the life of passive contemplation.<sup>15</sup> Privileging *Θεωρία* in this way destroys what Nietzsche sees as the very condition for making life livable, the unfettered expression of creative power. Only through the creative act is will liberated to be itself and only thus does man become bearable to himself (II, 111 {199}, and III, 258 {318}), and “what could one create,” Zarathustra asks, “if gods existed?”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Zarathustra’s “world viewed from the inside” emphatically cannot be Greek φύσις: the divinely self-sufficient process of genesis into οὐσίαι – that is, into determinate beings whose striving to become and remain the best example of what they are simply *is* their naturalness.<sup>17</sup>

There is another, crucial condition to note: While Zarathustra’s great, unbounded “Yes Saying” (*Ja Sagen*) to the whole spectacle of life is indeed the act of some particular man at some particular time, it cannot be, with all due regard for Nietzsche’s vigorous endorsements of perspectivalism, only the accidental idiosyncrasy of that one man – of Herr Nietzsche or his Zarathustra.<sup>18</sup> The very act of affirming eternal recurrence is evidence that the one affirming it is a man of “comprehensive responsibility,” “with a conscience for the overall development of mankind,” a “complementary man in whom the rest of existence is justified.”<sup>19</sup> It is an act having *universal* significance, then, since the whole becomes truly whole through the affirming act of this human part. Needless to say, Nietzsche is not Hegel. And yet, in his thinking, too, particularity must pass over into universality. How, exactly, is this supposed to happen?

The answer is that, while the affirmation of eternal return is an act of will peculiar to Zarathustra and not (or at least not primarily) a truth about time and being susceptible of a knock-down demonstration, Nietzsche also believes that it is necessitated by, is an expression of, what he *does* think is a fundamental and non-perspectival fact: will to power – the “very heart of life” (II, 147 {226}). Willing the eternal return is thus the fundamental act of valuation that emerges from the fundamental fact about life, or rather, about being as a whole.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A life, that is, that asks nothing more from beings than “to be allowed to lie prostrate before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes” (II, 157 {234}).

<sup>16</sup> II, 111 {199}. Cf. *EH*, Preface, 2: “The lie of the ideal has, so far, been a curse on reality.”

<sup>17</sup> Nature, for Aristotle, is purposiveness above all, for *τέλος* is the natural expression of *λόγος*. Aristotle, *Physics* 194a28-29: “But nature is an *τέλος* and a ‘that-for-the-sake-of-which.’” This, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, might as well be another poetic fable. The word “nature” appears once in the whole of *Zarathustra*, in “On the Poets” (II, 164 {239-240}), where it is dismissed as a poetic fancy.

<sup>18</sup> See Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, 149 and 279-82 *passim*, and cf. with I, 101 {190}: “You say believe in Zarathustra? But what matters Zarathustra?” and *FW*, Preface to the Second Edition, 2: “But let us leave Herr Nietzsche: what is it to us that Herr Nietzsche has become well again?” But cf. *WTP*, 481: “In so far as the word ‘knowledge’ has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. – ‘Perspectivism.’” Reconciling these two commitments is one of the central challenges facing any attempt to even begin to appraise Nietzsche’s thought.

<sup>19</sup> *BGE*, aph. 61 and 207. Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, 280, notes that the complementary man, the superman, Dionysus, and Zarathustra, while not exactly synonyms, are a family of related types. To this list we can add the “comprehensive philosopher” of *BGE*, 61. Cf. *KGA*, VII, 20 [10], where Nietzsche essentially identifies Zarathustra and the Superman, at least after part 3 of the book.

<sup>20</sup> *KSA*, 11 (August-September 1885), 40 [61]. “Will to Power is the ultimate fact [*letzte Faktum*] we come down to.” This quote appears on p. 661 of vol. 11.

Now, stated this way, it seems rather arbitrary for the fact that “world is will to power and nothing besides” to entail that the world is lovable and affirmable as such, that it is *good* that it be such. As Heidegger notes, Nietzsche’s unpublished notes from the period of the composition of *Zarathustra* reveal a thinker very much aware that eternal return can just as easily enervate as invigorate, that it could not only destroy those unable to think it but sweep away the *best* natures along with the worst.<sup>21</sup> What we require, then, is some articulation of the non-arbitrary connection between will to power as a fundamental fact and the *praiseworthiness* of this fact specifically.

In *Zarathustra*, this connection is made through the concepts of courage, body, and ultimately life. Zarathustra, for example, has “something in him” that he calls courage (*Muth*) (III, 198-99 {269}), that triumphs by finally being able to say what the Dwarf, or the Spirit of Gravity, or the Soothsayer were incapable of saying, “Was that life? Well then! *Noch Ein Mal!*” (IV, 396 {430}).<sup>22</sup> But *Muth* is ultimately an instrument of the living body, as are sense, spirit, and thoughts: “Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage – whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he *is* your body” (I, 39 {146}).<sup>23</sup> And ultimately, of course, what speaks through the body is nothing other than life, which is itself will to power. The willing, the *affirming*, of eternal return, then, is a non-arbitrary mode of the will to power.<sup>24</sup>

The locus classicus for a closer study of how this works is the thirty-sixth aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which treats material found throughout *Zarathustra* but in a non-dithyrambic and somewhat more discursively accessible key. For the sake of convenience, we can put the main points of that aphorism in the form of an argument:

1. Let us suppose, Nietzsche says, that nothing else is given to us as real except our passions and drives;
2. Thinking is no exception to the above since thinking is merely a kind of relation among these same drives (*ein Verhalten dieser Triebe zu einander*);
3. Once this is granted, we are permitted, even commanded, by the conscience of method, with its demand for explanatory parsimony, to test

<sup>21</sup> *KGA*, VII.1 (Fall 1883), 16 [63], and cf. *KSA*, V.2 (Spring-Fall 1881), 11 [338]: “those who do not believe in it [i.e., in the eternal return] must, according to their own nature, finally *die off!*” In general, Nietzsche treats the possibly fatal consequences of his “experiment with humanity” with a jaunty indifference. See, e.g., *KGA*, VII.2 (Spring 1884), 25 [305]: “We are conducting an experiment with the truth. Perhaps mankind will perish as a result of it. Well, then!”

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *EH*, Preface, 3: “every step forward in knowledge, follows from courage.”

<sup>23</sup> Earlier in this same speech “On Despisers of the Body,” Zarathustra delivers the coup de grace to the whole tradition of Platonic privileging of νοῦς or λόγος: “an instrument of your body is also your little reason [...].” Cf. *FW*, Preface, 2: “All bold insanities of metaphysics, especially answers to the question regarding the value of existence, may always be considered first of all as the symptoms of certain bodies.” However, as Strauss notes with his characteristic understatement, the relational chain that is supposed to get us from the body to the “whole sphere of conscious thought” is articulated “very enigmatically.” See L. Strauss, *On Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. and ann. Richard Velkley (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2017), 180.

<sup>24</sup> *KSA*, VIII.1 (Winter 1886-Spring 1887), 7 [54]: “To stamp Becoming with the character of Being – this is the highest will to power.” This appears in Kaufmann’s *WTP*, as no. 617, on p. 330. Cf. *Antichrist*, aph. 57, where *Ja Sagen* is the *instinct* of the most spiritual, elite type.



whether a single causality – that of will, might be sufficient to describe the “world” according to its “intelligible character.”

Putting aside, for now, the (exceedingly questionable) assertion that thinking can be adequately understood just as a *Triebverhältnis*, how does the fact that nothing is given to us except drives and drive relations justify us in expecting that the “world viewed from the inside” would just thereby become accessible by any method whatsoever, parsimonious or not? Here there would seem to be a suppressed premise were it not the case that Nietzsche lays it out quite explicitly in the form of a hypothetical question. Might not the “givenness” of drives be sufficient for understanding the material world, Nietzsche asks, if the material world were thought of as

4. [...] holding the same rank of reality as our affects – as a more primitive form of the world of affects in which everything still lies contained in a powerful unity before it undergoes ramifications and developments in the organic process [...] as a kind of instinctive life in which all organic functions are still synthetically intertwined along with self-regulation, assimilation, nourishment, excretion, and metabolism – as a *pre-form of life*.

Now, this is not a dogmatic statement; it is a Nietzschean invitation to thinking. I suggest we accept it. We can do so by noting, first, that this passage is a striking re-appropriation of the idea of a *scala naturae*, not as a scale of natural perfections but rather a scale of expressions of will at different levels of sophistication – from the crudest “external” forms of material, efficient causality, through more integrative organic functions, through drives and passions, right up to thinking and judging. We have here a natural hierarchy on a new basis, then, and without any telic intentionality. At the summit of this hierarchy is its supreme spiritual manifestation, in which willing says to the world, “Be forever exactly what you always are.” But this willing would be another token of the *same kind of causality* operative everywhere. Stated otherwise, however “spiritual” it may be, willing the eternal return is but a tremendous surge of natural force – of will to power – come to conscious reflexivity.

In the speech “On the Spirit of Gravity,” where he presents his own good and evil, his moral and philosophical taste, Zarathustra challenges all comers: “This is my way; where is yours?” – thus I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ For *the* way – that does not exist” (III, 245 {307}). The Eternal Return, therefore, does double duty. It is “my way,” a manifestation of Zarathustra’s unteachable, deep-down spiritual fate. And yet this “my way” is somehow also “the way” since through Zarathustra’s will the character of the world comes to voice. Thus, philosophy can be an “atavism of the highest order,” an expression of this particular body here and yet not, for all that, a mere idiosyncrasy.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> BGE, 20, and cf. Z, III, 232 {296}: “Here words and word-shrines of all being open up before me. Here all being wants to become word, all becoming wishes to learn from me how to speak.” See the perceptive comment at Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, 189-90: “Zarathustra had never before used philosophy’s comprehensive word *being* except to ridicule its use. [...] Now [...] he claims for the first time that all ‘being’ wills to become word in his speech. Not simply being and becoming, but being as becoming comes to word in his speech.”



Through Zarathustra's *will*, we note, not through his reason, or intellect, or logos. Reason, in this picture, remains something decidedly derivative. As Zarathustra says in an absolutely crucial passage: "In everything, one thing is impossible: rationality. A little reason, to be sure, a seed of wisdom [...] this heaven is mixed in with all things [...] but this blessed certainty I found in all things: that they would rather *dance* on the feet of chance" (III, 209 {278}).

Furthermore, the "will" being posited in aphorism 36 would seem to be defined so as to maximize its *distance* from reason. Willing is described here not as rational volition, that is, *wanting* the good precisely because it is the good toward which our nature is tending, but rather as a volitional force open to being used in *any* direction, prior to and without regard to what has been discerned as good.

Leo Strauss describes this "peculiar position" as one in which "He [Nietzsche] starts from history as the guiding concept and tries to restore nature, *bypassing* reason."<sup>26</sup> Strictly speaking, though, what needs restoring here is the link between nature and goodness. Nature by itself is not good. Man must actively will the whole as good in its eternity and do so without drawing on any transcendent credit line beyond permanent character of that whole as will to power. In this view, reason has been bypassed when we can say "good" to the world without any appeal to *the* Good as grounds for this judgment.<sup>27</sup>

Three questions present themselves here: Has Nietzsche understood correctly the role of the Good in Plato? Has reason truly been bypassed in Nietzsche's account of volition? And can he "re-naturalize" mankind without reason and the Good or something very like it? Let us see.

## II.

When one compares the Nietzschean situation just described to famous Platonic texts, it would seem undeniable that we are in completely new, anti-Platonic territory. For surely, in the famous Sun Image of the *Republic* Book VI, the unhypothetical first principle of the whole is the Good, a rational principle which is the source of truth, intelligibility, and even existence.<sup>28</sup> And moreover, it is only in contemplation of the Good and its relationship to the intelligible structure of things that anything else can be considered good and life worth living at all.<sup>29</sup> To borrow Nietzsche's own metaphor, the Platonic Good looks like the ultimate "rational spider" at the heart of things, spinning out an anthropomorphized nature.

It must be confessed that this situation is not substantially altered even in other dialogues. In the very different atmosphere of the *Philebus*, for example, the Good is not a transcendent ἀρχή but only one element within the rational mixture constituting being.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Strauss, *On Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 129, 176, and 180.

<sup>27</sup> See Leo Strauss, "Notes on the Plan of *Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 189: "Instead of explaining why it is necessary to affirm the eternal return, Nietzsche indicates that the highest achievement, as all earlier high achievements, is in the last analysis not the work of reason, but of nature."

<sup>28</sup> *Rep.* 508d10-509a5.

<sup>29</sup> *Rep.* 490b7, and cf. with *Symp.* 211d1-3 on how only in contemplation of the beautiful is life worth living, *if it is worth it for a human being at all*.

<sup>30</sup> In the *Philebus*, the Good seems not only to surrender its splendid ontological isolation but to be visible to us only *through* other ideas, such as beauty, symmetry, and truth. See *Phil.* 65a1-4.

But here, too, being is intelligible because νοῦς and goodness are essential ingredients in it, and living is good because being is intelligible. Socrates lays out this position right at the dialogue's start:

[...] to be thoughtful [φρονεῖν], to think [νοεῖν], to remember [μεμνησθαι]  
[...] prove to be better than and preferable to pleasure, at least for everything  
capable of sharing in them; and to be capable of participation [in thinking  
and thoughtfulness] is for all things [...] the most beneficial.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, the Good need not be an explicitly transcendent first principle in order for the basic Platonic situation to remain in force. In the *Philebus*, too, nature is benevolent in the sense that backstops our natural τέλος: passive contemplation of, or even self-forgetting assimilation into, rational nature.<sup>32</sup>

On second thought, however, matters are not so simple. We can see why by focusing on one glaring (though largely unremarked) oddity in Socrates's celebrated assertion that the relationship of the Good to intelligence and intelligible objects is analogous to that of the sun to vision and visible objects.<sup>33</sup> In vision, the eye does not produce its own light; it depends for its illumination on an external cause. We are thus led to expect that intellectual perception stands in the same unidirectional relation of dependence on *its* source of intellectual illumination and its objects, which really would smack of the very passive receptivity with which Nietzsche tars the whole Platonic tradition.

There is a discrepancy, however. Surely, when our eye looks directly at the sun we are dazed and even blinded. And Socrates does not fail to mention this banally familiar experience, as, for example, in his description of the tragicomic fate awaiting the released prisoner who has been dragged out of the cave and into the sunlight: "Wouldn't he be distressed and annoyed [...] And, when he came into the light, wouldn't he have his eyes full of its beam [αὐγῆς] and be unable to see even one of the things now said to be true?"<sup>34</sup>

Strangely though, throughout the remainder of his description of the education of philosopher-kings in Book VII, Socrates speaks repeatedly of "looking" directly at the sun, as though he does not know what everyone knows – namely, that it is impossible to do this without damaging the eyes.<sup>35</sup> And when one passes over to the intelligible side of the analogy, one realizes he had no choice, for it turns out to be a basic principle of the intelligible realm that the Good must be apprehended directly by the intellect. I have counted no fewer than nine passages in Book VII in which we are told that the intellect must see or grasp the Good, or "look [or contemplate – θεωμεν] at the brightest part of

<sup>31</sup> *Phil.* 11b7-c2. Socrates is prepared to go very far with this claim as evidenced by his boldly stated confession that all the wise agree in making νοῦς "the king of heaven and earth" and thereby effectively divinizing themselves (*Phil.* 28c6-8).

<sup>32</sup> This is what Zarathustra calls, with undisguised contempt, *die unbefleckten Erkenntniss* (II, 156 {233}). Cf. Nietzsche's attack on the absurdity of "*interesselose Anschauung*" and a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject," an "eye turned in no particular direction," *GdM*, III, 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Rep.* 508b12-c2.

<sup>34</sup> *Rep.* 516a2-3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 516b3-5 and 532a5.

that which is,” and so forth.<sup>36</sup> But how can this be possible? If the sun blinds the eyes, why does direct apprehension of the Good not addle our intellect? It seems that Plato has lost control of his material here. Unless, of course, we are wrong, and either the eye or the intellect, or both, are *not* only receptive.

Now, as it happens, the *Timaeus* has a very different, markedly Empedoclean account of vision as not purely receptive. There, vision is produced by two streams of light – daylight sends forth one stream of illumination, but so, too, does the “light-bearing” (φωσφόρα) eye.<sup>37</sup> The human body has within it a source of illumination (a fire, πῦρ) that is “brother” to that gentle, pure illuminating fire of daylight, the only external “fire” that the eye is constructed to let in: “So whenever the light of day is all around the stream of vision, then rushing out as like to like and having compounded with the day-fire, it composes with it one kindred body along the eye’s direct line of sight.”<sup>38</sup> Vision, then, is the collision between two streams of kindred light meeting at the illuminated object – one emerging from the eye toward the object, and the other directed from the object toward the eye – a collision whose “force” travels back along the line of sight into the eye and on into the soul.<sup>39</sup>

In the *Republic*, there is no hint of such a doctrine of vision. But there is such a hint about the intellect. It appears at *Republic* 540a, where Socrates describes the culmination of the philosopher’s education:

[W]hen they are fifty years old, those who have been preserved throughout and are in every way best at everything [...] must at last be led to the end [πρὸς τέλος]. And, lifting up the brilliant beams of their souls [ἀνακλίναντας τὴν ψυχῆς αὐγὴν], they must be compelled to look toward that which provides light for everything. And once they see the good itself, they must be compelled [...] to use it as a pattern for ordering.<sup>40</sup>

It turns out that just as the sun has its beams, its αὐγή, so, too, does the soul, and the culmination of the entire philosophical education is not one in which the “eye of the soul” merely stares. Rather, it is one in which the “soul-beams” of the well-educated philosopher-king are directed toward, and meet, the Good. The Good, then, does not blind us because it doesn’t merely illuminate. Rather, it calls forth something that is already active in us, enabling it to operate most fully. By the same token, Platonic intellectual intuition (νοήσις) is *not* a pure receptivity. It is an active power, which Socrates says is ἀγαθοειδῆ – like, or of the same kind as, the Good.

We are clearly in the realm of visions and riddles here. Nevertheless, some conceptual sense can be made of all this, provided, however, that we reorient our understanding of Plato’s doctrine of thinking. Platonic νοήσις is more properly thought of not as the intellectual openness to the receiving of determinate form (or at least as not

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 511b3, 517b4, 517b9, 517c3, 518c9-d1, 519b5, 519c10, 532a5, 540a4-c2.

<sup>37</sup> *Tim.* 45b3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 45c2-5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 45d1-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Rep.* 540a4-9.

only that) but rather as the innate *impetus* toward the reception of determinate form. That is, it is an impetus always already intentionally directed, within the phenomenal content of experience, toward discriminating the  $\tau\iota\ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$  – the “what-it-is” that makes each being be the thing it is. What, then, can it mean to say that this power is “of the same kind” as the Good? It means, I suggest, that the power of intellectual discrimination is at the same time a power of *evaluation*. The act of intellectually seeing “as” – that is, seeing something, anything at all, *as* what it is – necessarily entails some relation toward what it is to be that thing most fully.

So, for example, our intellect is, all by itself ( $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\ \kappa\alpha\theta'\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron$ ), impelled to seek and find, within the flotsam of inessential, accidental, and transient properties that any particular dog presents to us at any particular time, that which is busy remaining determinately a dog,  $\kappa\alpha\theta'\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron$ . This is why it is the Good, specifically, which serves as  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$  on which all forms are said to “depend.”<sup>41</sup> Each form, each “what-it-is-to-be-something-determinate,” is fully what it is to be just that thing. It is thus one of the ways that the form of perfection, of fully being as such, is given to us. And to be beyond any particular determinate kind of being yet present in all of them as the very form of their perfection, this is the activity of the Good.<sup>42</sup>

We are now prepared for what seems to me the chief consequence of Socrates’s whole sun analogy. Since the source of intelligibility and value is one source and not two, neither are intellection and evaluation two separate activities. They are two, *inseparable* aspects of one and the same activity. And moreover, this activity in us, though it is not the Good itself but only “Good-like,” nevertheless achieves something that the Good itself does not. For note that the Platonic Good makes things be and be knowable, but it does not know. It is not self-conscious.

For Plato too, then, human life at its highest is not mere passivity but activity; and it is an activity that manifests something in nature that can be manifest in no other way, just as the world, for Nietzsche, can affirm itself nowhere but in the volitional acts of a certain kind of being. To be sure, we have already remarked that Nietzschean creative willing is not Platonic intellection and indeed was specifically intended to be understandable in contradistinction to it. But it should be clear by now that this is not the cardinal difference between these two thinkers. The cardinal difference lies, I think, in Nietzsche’s claim that a nature expressive of no inherent rational principle, a “groundless” nature, can, *because it is groundless* (and purposeless and valueless), enable those acts of volition and that highest human life. The mightiest expression of this claim is found in the speech “Before Sunrise” (*Vor Sonnen-Aufgang*), in *Zarathustra* Part III.

### III.

“Before Sunrise” appears after the section titled “On the Vision and the Riddle,” which was Zarathustra’s first, somewhat enigmatic, communication of the eternal return, the doctrine

<sup>41</sup> *Rep.* 511b5-7.

<sup>42</sup> I elaborate this point more fully in a piece titled “The Natural Preconditions of Political Freedom” in the volume of essays titled *Platonic Autonomy: Self-Determination, Unity, and Cooperation*, ed. Olof Pettersson and Pauliina Remes, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

that Zarathustra now recognizes as the “destiny” on which he must make his stand.<sup>43</sup> In the immediately preceding speech, “On Involuntary Bliss,” Zarathustra had spoken to himself (to his “jubilant conscience”) in order to express what he had come to understand. “Before Sunrise” is something else. It is both a public declaration of that reflection – not to mere men, who could not possibly understand it anyway, but rather to the encompassing heaven – and it is simultaneously a song of praise for what made the realization possible. “Before Sunrise” is thus a new kind of *Magnificat*, in which Zarathustra praises both himself, the desirer and eventually the accomplisher of the eternal return’s “unbounded Yes and Amen,” and the newly understood “Heaven,” which Zarathustra names as the great enabler of his achievement (III, 208 {277}). What we need to understand is the precise kind of “enabling” that is involved.

Zarathustra speaks to Heaven as an accomplice. The two are in cahoots, one might say, parties to a wisdom that is deeper than, inexpressible in the categories of, the daylight wisdom of mere conceptual thought that has dominated so much of the (now defunct) philosophical tradition. “You do not speak,” says Zarathustra to Heaven, “thus you proclaim your wisdom to me.” He continues, “We are friends from the beginning; we share grief and ground and gray dread; we even share the sun. We do not speak to each other, because we know too much; [...] we smile our knowledge at each other” (III, 207 {276}).<sup>44</sup>

And what “knowledge” do they smile and share? It is the knowledge of heaven’s complete innocence, its mute silence and emptiness. Zarathustra’s Heaven is “unclouded” by all forms of divinity or purpose, which have until now prevented men from *either* blessing or cursing existence fully. Once these clouds of the philosophical and theological tradition have been dispersed for good, one is left with the following realization:

Over all things stands the heaven Accident, the heaven Innocence, the heaven Chance, the heaven Prankishness. “By chance” [*Von Ohngefähr*] – that is the most ancient nobility of the world, and this I restored to all things: I delivered them from their bondage under Purpose. This freedom and heavenly cheer I have placed over all things like an azure bell when I taught that over them and through them no “eternal will” wills.[...] O heaven over me, pure and high! That is what your purity is to me now, that there is no eternal spider or spider web of reason; that you are to me a dance floor for divine accidents. (III, 209-10, {278})

And only because Heaven is innocent of all gods and purposes, free and clear of all claims to transcendent value, is Zarathustra able to do what he now knows he needs to do:

I am one who can bless and say Yes, if only you are about me [...] you abyss of light; then I carry the blessings of my Yes into all abysses. I have become one who blesses and says Yes; and I fought long for that [...]. But this is my

<sup>43</sup> See “On the Vision and the Riddle” and “On Involuntary Bliss” (III, 196-206 {267-75}).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. with Zarathustra’s question addressed to the heavens earlier in the same chapter: “Are you not the light for my fire? Have you not the sister soul to my insight?”

blessing: to stand over every single thing as its own heaven, as its round roof, its azure bell, and eternal security; and blessed is he who blesses thus. (III, 208-9 {277})

There is no God, no Good, no nature thanks to which beings are always securely what they are, thanks to which we can see and say that it is good that they be so. The goodness of being must be *willed*, created, in a sense; and the empty heaven, by virtue of its perfect absence of all grounds, affords man the freedom, even the responsibility, to do so. Throughout this speech, heaven is repeatedly referred to as an "abyss of light" – a *Licht-Abgrund* literally, a "without ground" – and this lack of ground enables Zarathustra to get his hands free for blessing the Eternal Return. As Laurence Lampert writes, "The heavens ordain nothing and maintain silence about what is ordained, and it is precisely for that reason that they are lovable."<sup>45</sup> "Before Sunrise" is not only a new *Magnificat*, then. For late modern humanity, living long after the death of all gods it is, as it were, a new theodicy.

As it were, but alas – as it is not. For there is *nothing* about the open and groundless heaven that calls for affirmation or blessing any more than cursing, or shrugging our shoulders, or throwing our hands up and walking away. Nor do I think it correct to say that the affirmation of the eternal return of all beings exactly as they are and without imposing upon them any grave divine plan, or inherent teleological purposes, is at least more "appropriate" or "attuned" to the actual emptiness of heaven than the falsehoods by means of which the world has been made to "matter" in the theological and philosophical tradition hitherto.<sup>46</sup> If heaven is truly mute, it says or calls forth nothing at all. And if it says nothing at all, then nothing in particular can be said to be "more" fitting or appropriate to it. It is, in fact, quite unclear why "fit" or "appropriateness" should be a concern or a desideratum at all. *Ja-Sagen*, the affirmative stance embodied in the doctrine of eternal return is, after all, an *instinct*, a force that has come to speech. It is *life* – that is, the will to power – that affirms itself in the eternal return.<sup>47</sup> What difference can it possibly make whether this is or is not attuned to the mute, empty heavens?

We have come, I think, to the basic difficulty – one that arises from the dual character of the affirmation of Eternal Return as *both* a manifestation of the will to power *and* an act of will made in full self-knowledge about what it involves. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes his whole project of revaluation of values as "an act of supreme self-awareness on the part of humanity." And, as Heidegger saw quite clearly, this revaluation of values – which posits the new conditions for life as a whole – just is what the affirmation of eternal return is supposed to accomplish!<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the affirmation of eternal return

<sup>45</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 177.

<sup>46</sup> Lampert occasionally tries to make this case. *Ibid.*, 243, 259.

<sup>47</sup> "Life itself created the thought that is hardest for it to bear; it [life] wants to leap beyond its highest barrier!" *KGA*, VII.2 (Summer-Fall 1883), 15 [46].

<sup>48</sup> On Nietzsche's preparation of a moment of "highest self-examination" (*Selbstbesinnung*) for mankind, see *EH*, "Why I Am a Destiny," 1 (365 {326}), and "Why I Write Such Good Books," "Dawn," 2. Cf. M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2 (Pfullingen: Neske Verlag, 1961), 418 (156-57): "Revaluation of all values means – for life, being as a whole [*das Seiende im Ganzen*] – the positing of a new condition by which life is once again brought to itself [...]. Revaluation is nothing other than what the greatest burden, the thought of eternal return, is to accomplish."



is a philosophical triumph only if it is an expression of “supreme lucidity.”<sup>49</sup> Whatever else it is, then, the thought of eternal return *cannot* be an act of self-delusion about who we are and what this world is. But if so, the entire argument thus assumes that it is good, at least for the highest type of man, to be supremely lucid, to be self-aware on this point, rather than dominated by the false “old gods” or the discredited philosophies and valuations of the past. And it is good not because this happens to be Zarathustra’s taste but because such self-knowledge is the highest manifestation of the power at the heart of life. But this very fact draws the Good and reason right back into the heart of Nietzsche’s account. Either life, knowing, *and* the good are inseparably linked, or there is no basis for saying that knowledge “exalts” rather than chokes us. But in such a case, the Soothsayer will *not* have been overcome, which means, despite bravado declarations to the contrary, that nihilism hasn’t either.

But what about the account of willing as a kind of completely undetermined volitional freedom, a faculty unmoored from any rational value judgments regarding the good? Could we not say that willing, thus understood, is an internally coherent faculty and that this faculty grounds a new Nietzschean *scala naturae* in such a way that would make it immune to any Platonic rejoinder?<sup>50</sup> I do not believe such a project has even the remotest chance of success since I do not believe we have such a faculty of will. And that is to say nothing of the chances of providing a conceptually coherent account of what such a faculty would even be like. On philosophical grounds, which I admittedly cannot elaborate here, the whole idea strikes me as metaphysically bankrupt. But it doesn’t really matter. However willing is to be defined, the *value* of the supreme act of willing eternal return is nonetheless linked, for Nietzsche, to the lucidity with which it is accompanied. Knowledge has come in again through the rear door.

And this raises a further question: how, *by Nietzsche’s own lights*, can the knowing, or self-knowledge, that is expressed in the eternal return be the highest form of living (rather than the imposition of yet another false teleology on the world) unless living and being as a whole are, in some deep sense, already a pre-form of knowing? This, after all, is what is implied by Nietzsche’s remarkable speculations in aphorism 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* and by his project of “re-naturalizing” man: knowing is a form of thinking, and thinking was said to be a relation of drives that manifest the single efficient force of will ramifying itself in different ways. But the process articulated in one direction, from thinking through drives and affects to world-as-will-to-power, can be articulated in the other as well, as world striving to come to know itself. Indeed, it has to be if we are to say that the eternal return is the highest accomplishment of *life*.<sup>51</sup> No matter how one looks at

<sup>49</sup> See Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, 408-9 (147), on this supreme lucidity (*die höchste Schärfe und Entscheidungskraft*).

<sup>50</sup> I gratefully owe this question and the necessity of answering it to my colleague at Ben Gurion University Dr. Jacob Abolafia, who asked whether will understood in this way might not allow Nietzsche to slip the Platonic noose since, as he put it in our correspondence, “Willing the eternal return puts us in a position to see lucidly, but we needn’t see lucidly to will well.”

<sup>51</sup> Note how, in the passage cited in note 47 above, Heidegger places “being-as-a-whole” in apposition to life – correctly, in my view. For, unless this is the case, it is senseless to speak, as Nietzsche does, of a “complementary man” in whom the rest of *existence* (*das übrige Dasein*) is justified (or of a comprehensive man or a “superman” for that matter). Cf., also, Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, 304 (50): “Living, suffering, and circling are not three



it, Heaven, or being, or the "total character of the world" simply refuses to be as mute, as "de-deified" as Nietzsche wishes it to be.<sup>52</sup>

The link between being, knowing and the Good is precisely what Socrates was trying to explain by hypothesizing both that *voûç* is the expression, in us, of the same activity as the first principle of all and that it is good for us to live in knowing this fact. On this point, it appears that Zarathustra, too, must "Platonize" and weave reason and the good back into nature, albeit in a new, profoundly enigmatic fashion.<sup>53</sup>

This might sound like Heidegger's contention that Nietzsche, in trying to invert or escape Platonism instead ended up "re-entrenching" it, thus representing the final position of Western metaphysics, the last possibility that signals the exhaustion of its entire history.<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, however, interprets this closure of one history as creating a new opening, or beginning, for a new history of thinking about Being (to be initiated by him, no doubt) that will look "beyond" Nietzsche and will truly be an overcoming of, or twisting free (*Verwindung*) from, the tradition. Here, too, I must make do with a declaration that will have to be substantiated in another venue: the inability to sever the inner connection between being, reason, and the good is not a failure unique to Nietzsche. In my estimation, it cannot be done, neither by Nietzsche, nor Heidegger, nor anyone else. It cannot be done because the connection is coeval with, constitutive of, thinking as such and hence of the thinking beings we are by nature. While it is undeniable that our understanding of nature has been transformed almost beyond recognition since Plato, it remains the case that we are *alive* and furthermore that we are the kinds of living beings that must seek to know ourselves and want to know whether it really is good to know. Despite our very best efforts, then, we will never be able to fulfill Nietzsche's exhortation to "remain loyal" only to the earth. The very activity of thinking – in this case thinking about why we ought to remain loyal to the earth – already has something treasonous about it.

With his matchless daring and spiritual power, Nietzsche went further than anyone else in trying to loosen the Platonic bond between the character of the world (or being), reason (or knowing), and the Good. If his example demonstrates, in our already very late stage of nihilism, just why this is impossible, why there is no way to "translate man back into nature" while bypassing reason and its goodness, it would not be the least of the services Nietzsche has rendered.

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and distinct. Rather, they belong together and form one: being as a whole [*das Seiende im Ganzen*]." "Circling" refers, of course, to advocacy of the circle of eternal return. The translations here are from Krell, with my minor emendations: M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell, vols. 1 and 2 (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1987).

<sup>52</sup> *FW*, 109: "The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos – in the sense, not of a lack of necessity, but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms [...]. When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to 'naturalize' humanity in terms of a pure newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?"

<sup>53</sup> *BYN*, III.1, 469 (Nietzsche to Overbeck, 22.10.1883): "Lieber alter Freund, beim lesen Teichmüllers bin ich immer mehr starr von Verwunderung, wie wenig ich Plato kenne und wie sehr Zarathustra Πλατωνίζει" (emphasis in the original).

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, 469-70 (205-6).

# LOVE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM AND PHILOSOPHY AS AN EROTIC SOLUTION IN NIETZSCHE'S *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL*

## INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche is not generally regarded as a philosopher of love. In keeping with his notorious orientation toward the darker side of human existence, Nietzsche seems to have been far more interested in sinister and destructive psychological phenomena, such as resentment, cruelty, and the lust for power, than in the phenomenon of love. While Plato and Rousseau evidently regarded love (*eros* or *amour*) as deeply revealing of who we are as human beings and therefore as deserving of serious and focused philosophical attention, Nietzsche seems to have had more in common with Heidegger, who in *Being and Time* had a great deal to say about anxiety, boredom, and fear but precious little to say about love. For both German philosophers, in contrast to the Greek Plato or the French Rousseau, it would seem that love was a relatively superficial phenomenon – in Heidegger's language, a phenomenon of merely "ontic," not truly "ontological," significance.

On closer inspection, however, Nietzsche proves to have had far more to say about love than his reputation would suggest. Indeed, although the concept of love is not in the foreground of his writing, it plays an important role in his philosophical psychology. In this article, I do not attempt an exhaustive analysis of Nietzsche's treatment of love, which would be a book-length project in itself. Rather, I focus on the role of love in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the only one of his books that begins with an erotic image – the famous likening of "the truth" to a "woman" (*Weib*).<sup>1</sup> Not coincidentally, I suggest, *BGE* is also the book in which Nietzsche proposes that "psychology" ought to be recognized as "the

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Research for this essay was funded by the Czech Science Foundation/Grantová agentura České republiky (GAČR), grant number 22-339811, "Nietzschova první filosofie v nové perspektivě." This article was originally published as "Liebe und Wissen in Nietzsches *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*," *Liebe und Freiheit*, ed. Norbert Fischer (Münster: Aschendorff, 2022), 165-92.

<sup>1</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (hereafter cited as *BGE*), trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), Preface. I have occasionally modified the translation for greater accuracy.

queen of the sciences,” a kind of first philosophy, which for this reason is “the path to the fundamental problems” (*Grundprobleme*).<sup>2</sup>

In describing his enterprise in this way, Nietzsche doesn't only mean to reject the traditional identification of metaphysics as queen of the sciences. More interestingly, he also thereby opposes late modern materialist or empiricist *rejections* of the very idea of first philosophy and affirms what he calls the “masterly task” (*Herren-Aufgabe*) of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> As he says later in the book, philosophy had only recently been freed from its servitude to theology, whose “handmaiden” it was in the medieval period, only to find itself enslaved again – this time, to “science,” that is, modern natural science, especially physics.<sup>4</sup> But for Nietzsche, “modern physics” is only an “interpretation” of the world, and it ought to be the servant of philosophy, not the other way around.<sup>5</sup>

What kind of psychology does Nietzsche have in mind? Although he refers once in *BGE* 23 to his philosophical psychology as “a proper physio-psychology,” whatever he means by this, it is clear that he does *not* have in mind experimental neurophysiology or its nineteenth-century precursors, the kind of work carried out by scientists such as Wilhelm Wundt. Not only would this be inconsistent with the general subordination of natural science to philosophy that he proposes, Nietzsche's own procedure in *BGE* and other books obviously has little to do with that field of research. When he praises other writers as “great psychologists,” he mentions moralists and novelists such as Pascal, Stendhal, and Dostoyevsky, not empirical scientists.

In the grand, programmatic statement about psychology in *BGE* 23, Nietzsche says that psychology ought “again” to be recognized as the queen of the sciences. When exactly was psychology so understood before? Robert Pippin suggests that Nietzsche has seventeenth-century French moralists such as La Rochefoucauld in mind,<sup>6</sup> but while he was certainly influenced by these writers, the kind of psychology they practiced was not meant to be a form of first philosophy. Pippin acknowledges this and proposes that Nietzsche's originality consists in taking up “French psychology” and crowning it *as* the queen of the sciences, transforming it in the process,<sup>7</sup> but Nietzsche clearly implies that psychology had *already* (at some unspecified point in the past) been recognized as first philosophy and that he intends to *restore* it to its proper place.

I suggest that it is the Platonic Socrates to whom Nietzsche alludes with this cryptic remark. Socrates is the philosopher famous for disclaiming all metaphysical or cosmological knowledge, claiming knowledge only of his own ignorance – which however makes him the wisest of all human beings.<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, who as a young man described

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 22; see also *BGE* 14.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 7-9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Apology*, 23a-b.

Plato's *Symposium* as one of his favorite books,<sup>9</sup> surely remembered that Socrates qualified his knowledge of ignorance by claiming that he knew nothing *except* "the erotic things" (*ta erotika*), in which he laid claim to a certain expertise.<sup>10</sup> Insofar as he is a philosopher in his own right and not merely a spokesperson for Platonic metaphysical doctrines, Socrates might then be taken as a kind of psychologist of love or desire (*eros*).

The erotic image with which *BGE* begins has clear Socratic-Platonic resonances. Nietzsche claims that, "insofar as they have been dogmatists," philosophers have failed to win the woman "truth" due to their lack of expertise in erotic matters.<sup>11</sup> He thereby alludes to the one philosopher who explicitly claimed to possess such expertise and whom Nietzsche describes later in the book *not* as a dogmatist but rather as a kind of "skeptic."<sup>12</sup> Just like Socrates, Nietzsche suggests that there is a connection between his own extraordinary personal freedom from dogmatic certainties and his expert knowledge of erotic phenomena. At the same time, he suggests that there is an important link of some kind between erotic desire in the primary sense of sexual desire and philosophical *eros* for the truth.

Very early in *BGE*, Nietzsche opposes the "dangerous" hypothesis that higher phenomena (e.g., "the pure sunlike vision of the wise man") emerged from lower phenomena (e.g., "concupiscence," *Begehrlichkeit*) to the "metaphysical" assumption that higher phenomena *must* have "another, separate origin."<sup>13</sup> Despite Nietzsche's rhetoric of novelty, this hypothesis is hardly a new one; it can be found among some of the pre-Socratics, for example. However, in *Twilight of the Idols*, we are surprised to find Nietzsche attributing, not to Empedocles or to Democritus, but to Plato the insight that philosophical *eros* emerges out of its cruder sexual form.<sup>14</sup> If Plato, then, is more Nietzschean than he appears to be, perhaps Nietzsche is more Platonic. Just as Plato may have recognized (at least in *this* case) that the high emerges from the low, Nietzsche may have recognized that our lower erotic desires can only be understood *as what they really are* when they are seen in the light of the highest erotic phenomenon, the fully developed desire for "the truth."

In this article, I argue that careful attention to Nietzsche's treatment of love in *BGE* reveals just such a Platonic train of thought. The problematic character of *eros* in its cruder forms points beyond itself to its higher or more refined forms, such as Christian love, romantic passion ("our European specialty"),<sup>15</sup> and philosophical *eros*. While the higher forms remain bound up with the lower, the latter can only be understood in the context supplied by the former. Philosophy and religion – especially Socratic-Platonic philosophy and the Christian religion, which are linked through the special emphasis they place on the

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Champagne-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 26, 45, and 134n14.

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 177d-e.

<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE*, Preface.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Raids of an Untimely Man," trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 260.

philosophical or theological significance of love – represent man's most ambitious attempts to resolve the problem of *eros*. Nietzsche's obliquely articulated conclusion is that, even as the problematic character of love cannot be made to disappear, the philosophical attempt at a resolution (represented by Socrates and Plato) is decisively superior to the religious or theological answer (represented by Jesus).

### 1. "THE TRUTH" AS A "WOMAN"

Nietzsche begins *BGE* by comparing the truth pursued by philosophers to a woman who refuses to be seduced by clumsy, graceless lovers:

Assuming that the truth is a woman – What? Isn't the suspicion well-grounded that all philosophers, insofar as they have been dogmatists, have been very inexperienced about women? That the gruesome earnestness, the clumsy intrusiveness, with which they have been accustomed to pursue the truth up to now have been awkward and improper methods for winning a woman? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won.<sup>16</sup>

Nietzsche invites us to imagine him addressing a nameless interlocutor, then stopping in his tracks ("What?") and beginning again when he notices the look of confusion or disbelief on his addressee's face.

The reader sympathizes with the addressee's confusion; the full non-metaphorical significance of this claim is not immediately clear. But we can draw some preliminary conclusions. The pursuit of "the truth" sought by philosophers, the truth about "fundamental problems," is a passionately erotic enterprise. One might contrast philosophy as love of *the* truth with the pursuit of those "truths" in the plural that are "recognized best by mediocre minds because they are most congenial to them," as Nietzsche puts it in *BGE* 253.<sup>17</sup> He refers there to "respectable but mediocre Englishmen" such as Darwin and Mill, who are "particularly skillful at determining and collecting many small and common facts and then drawing conclusions from them."<sup>18</sup> Such an enterprise is not a passionately erotic one; it cannot be compared to the pursuit of a woman. In *BGE* 207, Nietzsche has this to say about the scholarly type who prides himself on his "objectivity":

If love and hatred are wanted from him – I mean love and hatred as god, woman, and animal understand them – he will do what he can and give what he can. But one should not be surprised if it is not much – if just here he proves inauthentic, fragile, questionable, and worm-eaten. His love is forced, his hatred artificial and rather *un tour de force*, a little vanity and exaggeration.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Preface.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid..

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 207.

Such a person clearly lacks the *eros* necessary to pursue *the* truth.

Of course, Nietzsche's opening image alludes to Socrates and Plato, and in particular to the *Symposium*. Let us now look more closely at the passage in *Twilight of the Idols* where Nietzsche comments favorably on this dialogue:

[Plato] says, with an innocence for which one has to be a Greek and not a "Christian," that there would be no Platonic philosophy at all if there weren't such beautiful young men in Athens: it was the sight of them that first set the philosopher's soul into an erotic frenzy and allowed it no tranquility until it could plunge the seed of all high things into such beautiful soil. Another amazing saint! – One can't believe one's ears, assuming that one trusts Plato at all in the first place. At least you catch on that in Athens they philosophized *differently*, above all, publicly. Nothing is less Greek than the conceptual web-spinning of a hermit, *amor intellectualis dei* in Spinoza's style. Philosophy in Plato's style should rather be defined as an erotic competition, as a development and internalization of the old competitive gymnastics and of its *presuppositions* ... What finally grew out of this philosophical eroticism of Plato? A new art form of the Greek *agon*: dialectic. –

I will also recall, against Schopenhauer and to Plato's credit, that all the higher culture and literature of *classical* France also grew on the soil of sexual interest. You can search everywhere in this culture for gallantry, sensuality, sexual competition, "woman" – and you will never search in vain ...<sup>20</sup>

At first, this passage sounds like a debunking of Plato. But if we read closely, we see that Nietzsche attributes to Plato an important psychological insight into the origin of philosophy in "sexual interest." The "sight" of "beautiful young men" induces an "erotic frenzy" in the young philosopher, or rather potential philosopher, enflaming him with the desire to possess them sexually. But this "sight" allows the budding philosopher no "tranquility" (*Ruhe*) until he is able to plunge "the seed [*Samen*] of all high things" into their souls. Until then, the budding philosopher remains in a state of frenzied unrest and dissatisfaction.

However, Nietzsche doesn't quite attribute to Plato the insight that the philosopher only finds tranquility when he replaces, or at least supplements, the love of beautiful bodies with love of the Ideas. Rather, he finds rest only when he is able to "plunge," not his bodily seed into another person's body, but "the seed of all high things" into another person's soul. It is not the discovery but the *communication* of "high things" that gives him release from "erotic frenzy," even as the communication of knowledge presumably presupposes its prior acquisition. Now, "the seed of all high things" cannot be the same as the "high things" themselves. This formula implies that "high things" do not exist in an independent metaphysical world (as the Platonic Ideas are supposed to do) but emerge and develop from

<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Raids of an Untimely Man," 23 (translation modified).

lower things, just as Nietzsche proposes in *BGE* 2.<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche implies that “the Ideas” grow and develop in the soul of the philosopher, just as a seed grows into a plant if it is given the proper nourishment.<sup>22</sup> The most plausible candidate, then, for seeds of “all high things” are speeches or *logoi*, which the philosopher “plunges” into the souls of everyone who listens to him or reads his books and which may or may not give rise to knowledge, depending on the quality of the psychic “soil” that receives them (in the preface to *BGE*, Nietzsche describes Plato himself, the student of Socrates, as “the most beautiful growth of antiquity”).<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche thus mentions the “higher culture” and *literature* of classical France as an example that illustrates this Platonic insight.

Nietzsche says that in the city of Athens “they” (not just Plato but the Athenians in general) “philosophized differently,” in a “public” way, than we do in the modern world. When he wanted to philosophize, Socrates had to go where the beautiful people were; he couldn’t be a solitary scholar, spinning conceptual webs in his study, like Spinoza. For this reason, while Spinoza’s “style” (*Art*) of philosophizing can be defined as “the intellectual *love* of God” (also a kind of eroticism), which is a solitary affair, Plato’s “style” should rather be defined as an “erotic competition.” But a difference in one’s style of philosophizing need not amount to a substantive philosophical disagreement, especially if Nietzsche has *literary* style in mind.<sup>24</sup>

Nietzsche’s description of Plato’s style as an erotic competition refers first of all to the *Symposium*, which indeed takes the literary form of a quasi-public “competition” (it’s a set of speeches at a private party for elite Athenians, not a solitary monologue or a scientific treatise) concerning *eros*. Eryximachus proposes that each attendee deliver a speech in praise of Eros, the god of love, because this god hasn’t received the honors due to him, despite the benefits he has conferred on mankind.<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche says that Plato takes up the Greek tradition of the gymnastic “contest” (*agon*) and gives it a novel, philosophical form. In his speech, Socrates concludes that Eros is *not* a god but a “demon,” correcting customary Greek piety in a way that might be taken as sacrilegious.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Spinoza’s notion of “the intellectual love of God” introduces the idea that he who loves God (or Nature) cannot expect God to love him back, an innovation that is heretical from the perspective of traditional Christian theology but that aligns with the Platonic doctrine of impersonal Ideas, which don’t reciprocate human love.<sup>27</sup>

Plato’s “philosophical eroticism” involves the insight that the philosopher is released from “erotic frenzy” only when he is able not just to acquire knowledge of high things but

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 2.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 550: “Two men as fundamentally different as Plato and Aristotle were in agreement as to what constituted *supreme happiness*, not only for them or for mankind but in itself, even for gods of the highest empyrean: they found it in *knowledge*, in the activity of a well-trained and inquisitive *mind* [...]. Descartes and Spinoza came to a similar conclusion: how they all must have *enjoyed* knowledge!”

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 177a-d.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 202d-e.

<sup>27</sup> Spinoza, E5P19. Spinoza also says that, properly speaking, God does not love anyone (E5P17C) and that it is impossible for anyone to hate God (E5P18).



also to impregnate others with its “seed” – perhaps because the objects of his knowledge don’t love him back, so he needs readers or conversation partners who make up for this lack. Plato’s eroticism gave rise to “a new art form,” the Platonic dialogue, which draws on the public style of philosophizing that already existed in Athens. Nietzsche’s reference to “dialectic” is slightly incongruous in an aphorism that refers primarily to the *Symposium*, perhaps the most poetic and least dialectical of Plato’s dialogues. But Nietzsche could be implying that even this dialogue, in which Plato juxtaposes seven speeches (including that of Alcibiades, which praises not *eros* but Socrates himself, who doesn’t love Alcibiades back) and compels the reader to form his own conclusions about how the different views of *eros* these speeches convey relate to each other and reveal Plato’s own thought about *eros*, constitutes a kind of largely implicit dialectical argument.

Nietzsche’s illustration of what *he* takes to be the core lesson of the *Symposium* with the example of “classical France” shows that he takes Plato’s insight into the connection between philosophical *eros* and sexual desire as a trans-historical insight that sheds light on cultures that came into being centuries after Plato’s death. However, while Nietzsche draws attention to Plato’s emphasis on homosexual *eros* (“beautiful young men”), he refers rather to “gallantry” and “woman” in the case of France. Nietzsche thereby draws attention to the difference between Plato’s context (the public world of ancient Athens, which almost entirely excluded women)<sup>28</sup> and the post-Christian context of seventeenth-century France, which was surely still a man’s world in many ways but one in which the status of “woman” had been vastly elevated through Christianity.

One might suppose that Plato’s emphasis on homosexual love doesn’t have any special philosophical significance but merely reflects the tastes and customs prevalent among the elite Athenians of his milieu. However, this dialogue is Plato’s thematic treatment of *eros*; it is more likely that the emphasis on homosexual love is purposeful and meant to tell us something about his approach to *eros* itself. Homosexual love has no inherent connection with natural or political necessity, unlike the love between man and woman, which leads (at least potentially) to procreation, the establishing of a family (the basic unit of political life, as Aristotle emphasizes in the *Politics*),<sup>29</sup> and the rearing of children for the city. Indeed, it is precisely this freedom from necessity that Aristophanes in his speech *celebrates* in erotic love between men (one can imagine the disdain and uproarious laughter that the idea of “gay marriage” would have provoked in him – he would have found it too ridiculous even for one of his comedies), while he suggests cynically that heterosexuals are naturally given to adultery, presumably as the only way to recapture the eroticism that dissipates as erotic love gives way to the cares and concerns of the family.<sup>30</sup> Plato focuses on homosexual love for “phenomenological” reasons – in this dialogue, he wants to study the phenomenon of *eros* in its purity and independence, abstracted as much as possible from its causes, conditions, and effects, so he focuses on homosexual *eros*, which is self-enclosed and self-sustaining. Heterosexual *eros* is “sublated” (*aufgehoben*), as Hegel would say, in the grounding of a family<sup>31</sup> – homosexual *eros* lasts as long as desire sustains *itself*,

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.45.2.

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1252b.

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 191d–192b.

<sup>31</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 163, 177–78.

then ceases to exist, rather than being transformed into something new and different. In this respect, homosexual love resembles philosophy, which appears to have no social or political usefulness and likewise emerges as a desire that rebels against necessity and must justify itself before the tribunal of the city, as Pausanias attempts to do by distinguishing between noble and shameful forms of pederasty,<sup>32</sup> just as Plato invented the distinction between good, socially responsible “philosophers” and dangerous “sophists.” Plato implies that the morally and politically problematic character of homosexual *eros* resembles the morally and politically problematic character of philosophy itself, the love of knowledge.

However, as Nietzsche implies, for Plato the difference between homosexual and heterosexual *eros*, Greek pederasty and French gallantry, is less important than the difference between sexual desire of any kind and *philosophical* desire.

In beginning *BGE* with the image of the truth as a woman, Nietzsche takes up the Platonic theme of philosophy as an erotic quest in a modern, post-Christian context. After this beginning, we might expect erotic love to be a prominent theme in the book. We might expect Nietzsche to elaborate his own “ladder of love.” In particular, we might expect his psychological analysis of the hidden, “instinctual” motivations of the great philosophers in the first chapter, “On the Prejudices of the Philosophers,” to have a profoundly erotic dimension. However, these expectations seem to be disappointed. Erotic love does not seem to be a central theme in *BGE*. We find some scattered remarks on the topic, a few of which are shrewd observations of the kind one might find in a seventeenth-century French *moraliste*. For example, *BGE* 120 runs, “Sensuality hastens the growth of love, so that its root remains weak and is easily pulled out.”<sup>33</sup> But we don’t seem to find any sustained philosophical treatment of the theme.

However, if we look closely at a pair of aphorisms early in the book that concern the psychology of philosophers, *BGE* 5 and 6, we find some playful erotic imagery and a reflection on “the fundamental drives of the human being” (*die Grundtriebe des Menschen*), which together help us unpack the connection between erotic desire and philosophy itself established by the opening image.

Let us begin with *BGE* 6, which concerns the psychological genesis of “every great philosophy.”<sup>34</sup> This is one of the densest and most difficult aphorisms in the book. I want to focus on only one claim that Nietzsche makes in this aphorism:

One who considers the fundamental drives of the human being to see to what extent they may have played their game precisely here as *inspiring* spirits (or demons and kobolds) will find that all of them have done philosophy at some time – and that every one of them would like only too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate *master* of all the other drives. For every drive wants to be master [*ist herrschsüchtig*] – and it attempts to philosophize in *that spirit*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 180c-185c.

<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 120.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

But, in apparent contradiction to his claim in *BGE* 13 that “a living thing” has only *one* “cardinal drive” (although “cardinal” might not be the same as “fundamental”), “the will to power,”<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche proposes, in harmony with his actual practice as a psychologist, that “the human being” has a finite plurality of “fundamental drives.” He doesn’t mention any of them by name, but they must include the sexual drive (*Geschlechtstrieb*) along with the other drives that “the human being” shares with the lower animals. Presumably, they also include uniquely human drives, such as “the will to knowledge” and “the will to ignorance,”<sup>37</sup> even as Nietzsche understands “higher” phenomena such as these as inextricably bound up with our lower, animal nature.<sup>38</sup>

Nietzsche says that *every* one of our fundamental drives has “at some time” tried to represent itself as “the legitimate *master* of all the other drives.” For example, when we are overcome by hunger, all our other drives are in a way subdued by our hunger until we have satisfied it. Using a political metaphor, Nietzsche suggests that our drives exist in a perpetual contest for mastery (rather obscurely, he describes the struggle of each drive for mastery over the others as that drive’s “philosophizing”). The paradox is that whenever a drive achieves its goal and in this sense “wins” the contest, it immediately loses: if we satisfy our hunger, then we also subdue it, at least until it returns. Another drive will take over in the interim. When our lower drives are all satisfied, it becomes possible for one of our higher drives, such as the drive for knowledge, to begin “philosophizing.” But if the philosopher is starving, then his philosophical drive will cease to be dominant and his desire for nourishment will take over. His hunger will start “philosophizing.”

Now, Nietzsche doesn’t quite say that our fundamental drives are “inspiring spirits” (*Genien*) or “demons” or “kobolds.” Rather, he says that someone who examines these drives with the intention of discovering *the extent to which* they have “played their game” as inspiring demons will discover that they have all “philosophized” at some time or other, which might not be the same as playing the role of inspiring demons. Perhaps some drives can play this role, while others cannot. The reference to inspiring “demons” calls to mind Socrates’s famous “demon,” which inspired him to refrain from certain courses of action (especially involvement in politics), as well as Socrates’s claim that *eros*, a word he uses to mean desire in general as well as sexual desire in particular, is not a god but a “demon,” a mythical being more divine than a human being but less divine than a god.<sup>39</sup> The reference to “kobolds,” creatures from Germanic not Greek mythology, implies that this psychological insight – the insight that all our drives have at some time or other “philosophized” – may well be a transcultural one; it may be an insight that the Greek Socrates shares with the German Nietzsche, just as Plato’s “philosophical eroticism” enables us to understand “classical France.”

The fact that “every drive wants to be master” doesn’t mean that every drive *can* be master. In *BGE* 204, Nietzsche speaks of the “masterly task” of philosophy; he never speaks of the masterly task of hunger or, indeed, of the sexual drive. Nietzsche can metaphorically describe the struggle for mastery among our drives as the attempt of each

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 202e.

drive to “philosophize” because it is only the *philosophical* drive, however exactly he understands it, that is fittingly assigned this “task.” Philosophy can achieve an authentic mastery over “all the other drives,” which the other drives *cannot* achieve, even if they can temporarily tyrannize over their competitors. Philosophical desire, then, is the desire (*eros*) that corresponds most perfectly to the form of desire as such. Nietzsche doesn’t explain here why this is the case, but the context gives us a sense of what he has in mind. The desire for food or sex only attempts to “play the master – what am I saying? – the *philosopher*,” to make use of a formula from *BGE* 204, when it is driven by painful frustration.<sup>40</sup> As soon as it achieves its goal, it ceases to overpower the other drives and becomes subdued through satiety. The attempt of the other drives, such as hunger or the sexual drive, to “play the master” consists in a cycle of struggle and defeat, or satiety and “erotic frenzy.” Much like Plato in the *Symposium*, or Aristotle in the *Ethics*, Nietzsche suggests that philosophical *eros* is an exception to this rule.

However, human sexual desire, *eros* in the primary sense, has a special place among our lower animal drives. *BGE* 6 doesn’t refer explicitly to *eros*, but the *Geschlechtstrieb* is surely one of the *Grundtriebe des Menschen*, and Nietzsche alludes obliquely to *eros* through the reference to inspiring “demons.” When Socrates refers to *eros* as a demon, it is in the first place sexual desire, not, say, the desire for food, that he has in mind. *Pace* Knut Hamsun, nobody thinks of hunger as a quasi-divine being who inspires us to produce beautiful speeches and represents the first rung on a “ladder of love” that leads eventually to the philosophical life. Human sexual desire is paradigmatic of the status of the human being as the in-between-being because it tends toward the intermingling of lower (animal) and higher aspects – desire for the body *and* the soul of the beloved.

With these thoughts in mind, let us now turn to the preceding aphorism, *BGE* 5. This aphorism concerns “what provokes one [*was dazu reizt*] to look at all philosophers” with a mixture of mockery and suspicion.<sup>41</sup> In other words, it concerns how philosophers appear to us when we first “look at” them. Since most of us encounter philosophers first through their books, Nietzsche illustrates his point with two literary examples, Kant as he appears in the *Groundwork* and Spinoza as he appears in the *Ethics*:

The equally stiff and decorous Tartuffery of old Kant as he lures us onto the dialectical bypaths that lead to his “categorical imperative” – really lead astray and seduce – this spectacle makes us smile, as we are fastidious and find it quite amusing to watch closely the subtle tricks of old moralists and preachers of morals. Or consider the hocus-pocus of mathematical form with which Spinoza clad his philosophy – really “love of *his* wisdom,” to render that word fairly and squarely – in mail and mask, to strike terror at the very outset into the heart of the assailant who should dare to glance at that invincible virgin and Pallas Athena: how much personal timidity and vulnerability this masquerade of a sick hermit betrays!<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 204.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

Nietzsche's depictions of Kant and Spinoza use erotic imagery, but the upshot is very different in each case. Kant is compared to a dirty old man, like Molière's Tartuffe, who tries to draw young women into his bedchamber so that he can have his way with them, while Spinoza is compared to a virtuous young maiden, who tries to repel assailants and preserve her chastity. Nietzsche's imagery here calls to mind the erotic image with which *BGE* begins, but the sense in which the imagery in this aphorism unpacks or develops that opening image is obscure. For neither Kant nor Spinoza is presented as a (successful or unsuccessful) suitor or seducer of *the truth*. Rather, Kant is presented as a would-be seducer of his *readers*, while Spinoza *himself* is described as a virginal female – and as a Greek goddess. What exactly is Nietzsche getting at with this contrast?

Nietzsche's playful imagery depicts the relationship between Kant or Spinoza and their readers. But his presentation also reveals something about the psychology of these philosophers themselves. Just under the surface of Nietzsche's irreverent depiction of Kant as an old lecher, we find an extremely lewd joke. Nietzsche describes the "stiff" (*steif*) manner with which "old Kant" leads young women down the hidden corridors leading to the place where he intends to show them his "categorical imperative." While the scare quotes refer partly to the dismissive contempt with which Nietzsche views this moral doctrine in the context of the image he is elaborating of Kant as a dirty old man, they also suggest that this phrase here serves as a euphemism for something that cannot with propriety be named – namely, the old lecher's erect phallus, a perfect symbol for the insistent desire that a man totally in the grip of his sex drive experiences as a kind of "categorical imperative" pointing him toward his goal.

This bawdy, Aristophanic joke is not just a dig at Kant's moralism, mockingly implying that his elevated moral rigorism is no more dignified than the sexual desperation of an old lecher. Nietzsche also thereby makes a serious philosophical point. His imagery in *BGE* 5 anticipates his reflection on "the fundamental drives of the human being" in the next aphorism. We saw how in *BGE* 6 Nietzsche suggests that all of us at some time or other are overpowered by our basic drives. When this happens, the dominating drive "plays the master" over our other drives until it is satisfied and thereby subdued. Thus the man who is starving experiences the desire for nourishment as a kind of "categorical imperative," which must be satisfied at all costs, just as the man in the grip of frustrated lust experiences erotic desire as a "categorical imperative."

Nietzsche's comical depiction of Kant as an old lecher isn't seriously meant to suggest that he was a moral hypocrite, like a televangelist with a secret taste for prostitutes. Rather, Nietzsche means to suggest that the dominant desire or master instinct of a philosopher, or rather "moral preacher," like Kant is the desire *to persuade others* of his moral teaching – and that the predominance of such a desire results in a way of life that is inherently dependent on its targets, frustrating and self-defeating in a manner comparable to that of the lecher or libertine. We shouldn't be surprised, then, that while the first sentence of *BGE* 5 refers to "all philosophers," much later in the book, in *BGE* 211, Nietzsche emphatically declares that Kant is *not* a real philosopher in the deepest sense.<sup>43</sup> While Kant is driven by a certain kind of eroticism, *eros* for the relentless propagation of

<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 211.

a moral ideal that he finds beautiful (“the starry heavens above and the moral law within”), he lacks the truly philosophical *eros* that *BGE* 6 implies is the only form of desire that can lead to self-mastery and “joy in oneself,” to cite the formula Nietzsche applies to Socrates in *Human, All Too Human*.<sup>44</sup> Kant, one might say, lives his life in a permanent “moral frenzy” that allows him no lasting “tranquility.”

While Kant was known for his moral rigorism, Spinoza by contrast was known for his immoralism, which caused Nietzsche to praise him in a letter from 1881 as his “precursor”: “In five main points of his doctrine I recognize myself; this most unusual and loneliest thinker is closest to me precisely in these matters: he denies the freedom of the will, teleology, the moral world-order, the unegoistic, and evil.”<sup>45</sup> In *BGE* 5, Nietzsche alludes to the fact that Spinoza was persecuted and censored for his heterodox opinions. He implies that one purpose of Spinoza’s forbidding geometrical presentation of “his philosophy” was to protect himself from hostile readers by concealing the full extent of his heterodoxy with impenetrably abstract metaphysical language. However, Nietzsche describes Spinoza’s philosophy *itself* in erotic terms as “the love of *his* wisdom.” The inner core of Spinoza’s philosophizing is not a metaphysical doctrine but a certain form of *eros*. Spinoza’s godlike self-sufficiency, which permits the comparison with Pallas Athena, contrasts with Kant’s moralistic and thus outward-directed *eros*. While Kant is comparable to an old lecher bent on seducing as many victims as possible but unable to understand why this quest leaves him perpetually unsatisfied, Spinoza is comparable to a virginal goddess who takes self-satisfied pleasure in the beauty of her own chastity. The emphatically personal “love of *his* wisdom,” italicized in the original, suggests that Spinoza possesses the uniquely philosophical *eros* to which Nietzsche refers in *BGE* 6, where he says that “in the philosopher [...] there is nothing whatever that is impersonal.”<sup>46</sup>

Taken together, *BGE* 5 and 6 flesh out more fully what Nietzsche has in mind when he speaks of “the philosophical eroticism of Plato.” The “sight” of beautiful bodies, whether male or female, enflames the budding philosopher with the desire to possess them. However, if he sublimates purely sexual *eros* into moralistic *eros* for the beautiful in the manner of Kant, he will replace his sexual frenzy with a comparably unsatisfying, albeit “higher” and more psychologically complex, form of erotic frenzy – namely, a *moral frenzy*. The parallel is that in each case the object of erotic longing – the beautiful body, or the beautiful moral ideal – cannot really be possessed. In carnal embrace, or in moral proselytizing, we seek to possess the objects of our desire, but they elude our grasp. Only those rare few who are capable of developing a higher form of *eros* than its merely sexual or “merely moral” forms,<sup>47</sup> philosophers such as Spinoza and Nietzsche, find lastingly satisfying objects of desire – the objects of philosophical knowledge, which *BGE* 23 suggests are not Ideas understood as eternal, self-subsistent metaphysical entities but rather consist in “fundamental problems,” including the problem of love.

<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human II and Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II* (Spring 1878–Fall 1879), trans. Gary Handwerk (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 86.

<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche to Franz Overbeck, July 30, 1881.

<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 6.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 34 and 219.



However, there is an important tension between *BGE* 5 and the later aphorism. In *BGE* 5, Spinoza is presented as godlike and erotically self-sufficient, even if “vulnerable” to attack. But in the later aphorism, Nietzsche says that to achieve “tranquility” the philosopher must plunge “the seed of all high things” into the souls of *others*. In other words, he must engage in conversation (like Socrates) or writing (like Plato). But despite his solitary *style* of philosophizing, Spinoza wasn’t purely self-sufficient. The writing of a book, even a book such as the *Ethics*, is an inherently social or public act. Spinoza didn’t simply “love God” (or Nature) “intellectually,” in private, contemplative contentment, wholly indifferent to his effect on others or on posterity. Even if the *Ethics* was designed to ward off hostile or suspicious readers, it wouldn’t have been written at all if he wasn’t *also* trying to “seduce” friendly readers or potential philosophers.

Spinoza’s eroticism, then, doesn’t exhaust itself in what he would call “the intellectual love of God,” but Nietzsche suggests it can be described more prosaically as absorption in the fundamental problems. Rather, eroticism also involves a certain chaste way of relating to others. The later aphorism on Plato’s *Symposium* suggests that this form of relating to others consists in philosophical friendship, which aims neither at the carnal possession of the other person’s body nor at compelling submission to one’s moral ideal but rather at the sharing of philosophical speeches. Xenophon recalls that Socrates once said,

Just as others are pleased by a good horse or dog or bird, I myself am pleased to an even higher degree by good friends. [...] And the treasures of the wise men of old which they left behind by writing them in books, I unfold and go through them together with my friends, and if we see something good, we pick it out and regard it as a great gain if we thus become useful to one another.<sup>48</sup>

Xenophon comments that when he heard him say this, Socrates seemed to him “happy” or “blessed” (*makarios*).<sup>49</sup>

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche disparages erotic love as a frenzied and tyrannical desire to subject the beloved to the lover’s will (“one comes to feel genuine amazement that this wild avarice and injustice of sexual love has been glorified and deified so much in all ages” – this is Nietzsche’s version of the Socratic denial that Eros is a god) and praises friendship as a superior “continuation” (*Fortsetzung*) of *eros*:

Here and there on earth we may encounter a kind of continuation of love in which this possessive craving of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and lust for possession – a shared higher thirst for an ideal above them. But who knows such love? Who has experienced it? Its right name is friendship.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.6.14.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 14.

While this passage is rather vague and leaves the nature of this “ideal” wholly unspecified, we infer that, taken together with the other passages we have examined, it is above all *philosophical* friendship that he has in mind.

In suggesting that philosophy, and not sexual passion or even romantic love, is the most adequate response to the problem of *eros*, Nietzsche doesn't mean that one must remain celibate to be a philosopher. Of course, he doesn't mean that sexual debauchery is sinful or immoral, but he also doesn't mean that the philosopher must altogether extirpate, or “sublimate” without remainder, his sub-philosophical desires (sexual or otherwise), as if he were a “pure spirit.”<sup>51</sup> Rather, his desires must be organized in a hierarchy in which other forms of *eros* serve philosophy and not vice versa. What this amounts to in practical terms will vary from philosopher to philosopher, depending on the *other* aspects of his or her singular nature. As Nietzsche writes in the third treatise of the *Genealogy of Morals*,

It is quite possible that [the philosophers'] dominating intellectuality had first to put a check on an unrestrained and irritable pride or a wanton sensuality, or that it perhaps had a hard job to maintain its will to the “desert” against a love of luxury and refinement or an excessive liberality of heart and hand. But it did it, precisely because it was the dominating instinct whose demands prevailed against those of all the other instincts – it continues to do it; if it did not do it, it would not dominate. There is thus nothing of “virtue” in this.<sup>52</sup>

Nietzsche implies that it is only in the light of philosophical *eros* that other forms of *eros* can be seen as what they really are. Our other drives, and most importantly our sexual drive, that “inspiring demon” *par excellence*, seek to “play the master,” to “philosophize,” but they inevitably fail. As Plato's Aristophanes says in his speech, in embracing one another, lovers couldn't describe what it is that they really want from each other, even if they tried: “It is evident that the soul of each of the two wants something else, which it is not able to say, but it divines and hints at what it wants in riddles.”<sup>53</sup> The answer to the riddle of *eros*, as Aristophanes fails to recognize, is philosophy.

## 2. GREEK *EROS* AND CHRISTIAN *AGAPE*

Nietzsche's psychology in *BGE* is a deeply erotic psychology, then, just as the opening image suggests. The contrast of Kant's moralistic eroticism with Spinoza's truly philosophical eroticism in *BGE* 5 and the account of the struggle for mastery among the drives in *BGE* 6 establish the horizon within which the scattered remarks on love in the rest of the book must be understood.

Many of these remarks concern the influence of Christianity on how we have come to understand and experience love. However, some of Nietzsche's observations seem to be in a certain tension with one another. Thus *BGE* 168 runs: “Christianity gave Eros poison

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Nietzsche, *BGE*, Preface.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), essay 3, sec. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 192c-d.

to drink: – he didn’t die from it, but degenerated – into vice.”<sup>54</sup> But in *BGE* 189, Nietzsche says, “It was precisely during the most Christian period of Europe and altogether only under the pressure of Christian value-judgments that the sex drive [*der Geschlechtstrieb*] sublimated itself into love [*amour-passion*].”<sup>55</sup> The transformation of *eros* into “vice” (*Laster*) would seem to be a precondition of its transformation into “love” (*Liebe*).

In claiming that Christianity sought to kill Eros, the Greek god of love, by poisoning him, Nietzsche, the “old philologist” and erstwhile student of biblical theology, alludes to the fact that the Greek word *eros*, used for example in Plato’s *Symposium*, appears nowhere in the New Testament, which prefers the word *agape*. As Pope Benedict XVI observes, this lexical shift expresses the transformation in the meaning of “love” effected by Christianity:

The Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all: of the three Greek words for love, *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship), and *agape*, New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. [...] The tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love.<sup>56</sup>

*Eros* and *agape* are often contrasted: self-seeking love, taken as characteristic of pre-Christian, pagan culture, especially Greek culture, which takes the paradigmatic form of sexual passion and seeks joy in possession of the other; and renunciatory, self-sacrificial love, which seeks the good of the other, the great innovation of Christianity.<sup>57</sup> In *BGE* 189, Nietzsche intervenes in this controversy, seeming to take the side of Greek *eros* against Christian *agape*. Nietzsche suggests that Christianity tried to extirpate sexual passion in favor of self-denial and asceticism but succeeded only in inculcating a bad conscience about the former. Nietzsche seems to encourage us to free ourselves from the feelings of guilt into which we have been habituated by Christianity and abandon ourselves to sexual passion “without fraud or fear,” as Baudelaire put it in a poem celebrating the supposedly guilt-free eroticism of the pagan Greeks.<sup>58</sup>

However, we already know from *BGE* 5-6 and from Nietzsche’s praise of Plato’s *philosophical* eroticism that he is not simply an advocate of undisciplined “erotic frenzy.” So the lesson of *BGE* 189 must be more complex than this short aphorism taken by itself suggests.

In one sense, which we might call “physiological” (recall that in *BGE* 23 he describes his psychology as “a proper physio-psychology”), Nietzsche certainly takes the side of *eros* against *agape*. For the Christian, he who performs a deed out of love (*agape*)

<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 168.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>56</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 3.

<sup>57</sup> See the classic treatment of the historical and philosophical dimensions of this theme in Anders Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>58</sup> “J’aime le souvenir de ces époques nues,” in Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

does not act selfishly or egoistically but rather for the sake of the other. The theological claim that God *is* love (1 John 4:16) refers to “love” in this sense. God’s love is purely giving and gratuitous, not needy or self-interested. Nietzsche denies that love in this sense exists. In *BGE* 220, he dismisses the claim that “an action done out of love” could possibly be “disinterested” or “unegoistic.”<sup>59</sup> He says that every time someone makes a sacrifice they do so in order to gain *something else* for themselves.<sup>60</sup> Further, the Christian conception of *agape* presupposes that we possess “freedom of the will in the superlative metaphysical sense.”<sup>61</sup> We are made in the image of God, and we must be free to choose *between* good and evil in order to be capable of genuine acts of love that imitate the act of gratuitous love out of which God created the world and the act of self-sacrificial love performed by Jesus when he freely chose to die on the cross for our sins. But *BGE* 153 runs, “That which is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil.”<sup>62</sup> This statement has a clear anti-Christian meaning; it implicitly rejects the Christian teaching that actions performed out of love (*agape*, not *eros*) are “good” in the sense of morally meritorious, the opposite of which is “evil” in the sense of morally blameworthy or sinful. The emphatically passive, impersonal formulation (*was aus Liebe gethan wird*) suggests that “love” is a natural force over which our hypothesized “free will” has no control. Nietzsche implies that *agape* is a particular modality of *eros*, not an alternative to it; insofar as it understands itself as the latter, it is a *misinterpretation* of love, what he would call “bad philology.” Christian love is essentially a moral phenomenon, but in *BGE* 108, Nietzsche says that “there are no moral phenomena at all, there is only a moral interpretation of phenomena.”<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, while Nietzsche surely knew that aphorisms such as *BGE* 153 and 189 would be taken by many readers, especially the excitable young men whom he describes as “horned Siegfrieds,”<sup>64</sup> as invitations or even exhortations to indulge one’s erotic passions without restraint, gleefully abandoning all discipline or self-control, this is not his last word on the matter.

In his encyclical *Deus caritas est* (God is love), Pope Benedict XVI cites *BGE* 189 and objects that Christianity didn’t simply reject *eros*; rather, he emphasized that it must be “purified” through self-control and renunciation of immediate gratification if it is to remain true to its *own* nature:

Love promises infinity, eternity – a reality far greater and totally other than our everyday existence. Yet [...] the way to attain this goal is not simply by submitting to instinct. Purification and growth in maturity are called for; and these also pass through the path of renunciation. Far from rejecting or “poisoning” *eros*, they heal it and restore its true grandeur. [...] Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with

<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 220.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 108.

<sup>64</sup> Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 6.

itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature.<sup>65</sup>

However, while Nietzsche would understand such “purification” in a very different way than Benedict, both with respect to its practical implications (no strict rules about fornication, adultery, divorce, homosexual practice, and so forth) and also to its ultimate significance (in contemporary jargon, his “meta-ethical” stance would be completely different), he would be in substantial agreement with Benedict’s general point, which Nietzsche would interpret as a purely *psychological* insight, with no deeper metaphysical or theological implications. Sheer submission to instinct and determined pursuit of one’s own pleasure, with no restraint or concern for the good of the other, will not lead to lasting fulfilment but rather to an “erotic frenzy,” an unsatisfying cycle of frustration and satiety that “impoverishes” *eros* rather than perfecting it.

Thus in *BGE* 189, Nietzsche credits Christianity with teaching the sexual drive “to stoop and submit, but also to *purify* and *sharpen* itself” by imposing “times of constraint and abstinence.”<sup>66</sup> It is for this reason that “the pressure of Christian value-judgments” transformed the sexual drive into “love,” which he identifies here with *amour-passion*, using a French phrase.<sup>67</sup> Greek *eros*, then, was transformed into “vice” by Christianity, which had the unintended consequence of producing *amour-passion* through a strangely Hegelian historical dialectic. The negation of Greek eroticism by Christian asceticism gave rise to a novel, sophisticated, aestheticized form of eroticism, as the negation of the prior negation. In *BGE* 260, he observes that “enthusiastic reverence and devotion are the regular symptom of an aristocratic way of thinking” and proposes that this explains “why love as *passion* [*Passion*, not *Leidenschaft*] – which is our European specialty – simply must be of noble origin: as is well known, its invention must be credited to the Provençal knight-poets, those magnificent and inventive human beings of the ‘*gai saber*’ to whom Europe owes so many things and almost owes itself.”<sup>68</sup> These knight-poets were no longer Christians,<sup>69</sup> but neither were they Greeks, and they could not have “become who they were” without the historical mediation of Christianity.

<sup>65</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 5-7.

<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 189.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>69</sup> Or so Nietzsche implies. In his essay “The Origins of the Romantic Tradition,” the Catholic historian Christopher Dawson argues that the culture of the Provençal troubadours was in fact neo-pagan and expressly anti-Christian: “The ideals of the new culture had nothing to do with religion, and its practice was not immoral because it violated accepted standards, but rather because of the very nature of the standards themselves. [...] Its ideal was a frankly pagan one – the glorification of life, the assertion of the individual personality and the cultivation of the pleasures of the senses. The supreme ends of life were ‘joy and honour,’ and they were embodied in the cult of woman and the ideal of courtly love which were the stock themes of Provençal literature,” *Medieval Essays* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 185-86. Nietzsche says that Europe almost “owes itself” to the troubadours; Dawson argues that “the art of the Troubadours is, in fact, the starting point of modern European literature,” *ibid.*, 187. In *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

However, while Nietzsche regards the highly disciplined, ritualized, and aestheticized form of “enthusiastic devotion” to the beloved practiced by these “knight-poets” as superior to the “erotic frenzy” that results from simply giving in to instinct again and again, it is not the amorous knight-poet but the philosopher to whom he ascribes a “masterly task.” Sexual love in all its forms, from brutal eroticism to chivalrous romanticism, points beyond itself to philosophy, passion for the “fundamental problems.” In this respect, Nietzsche is not so different from Benedict, for whom the promise of happiness inherent in *eros* can be redeemed in full only by divine love, not by romantic love, whether the latter be reciprocal marital love or the asymmetrical, reverential love of the Provençal troubadour for his idealized beloved.<sup>70</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Nietzsche says in *BGE* 60 that the “feeling” that one must “love man *for the sake of God*” is “the noblest and most elevated” (*entlegste*) *error* of which he is aware – it is the theological illusion that most closely imitates what he regards as the deepest psychological truth.<sup>71</sup>

In *BGE* 60, Nietzsche says that the first person to have experienced this feeling, “whoever” he may have been, was “the human being who has flown the highest yet and gone astray the most beautifully.”<sup>72</sup> Much later, in *BGE* 269, Nietzsche is not so coy; he makes the shocking and blasphemous suggestion that Jesus of Nazareth may have been the first human being subject to this beautiful but painful delusion:

It is possible that underneath the holy fable and disguise of Jesus’ life there lies concealed one of the most painful cases of the martyrdom of *knowledge about love*: the martyrdom of the most innocent and desirous [*begehrend*] heart, never sated by any human love; *demanding* love, to be loved and nothing else, with hardness, with insanity, with terrible eruptions against those who denied him love; the story of a poor fellow, unsated and insatiable in love, who had to invent hell in order to send to it those who did not *want* to love him – and who finally, having gained knowledge about human love, had to invent a god who is all love, all *ability* to love – who has mercy on human love because it is so utterly wretched and unknowing. Anyone who feels that way, who *knows* this about love – *seeks* death.<sup>73</sup>

This passage contains by far the greatest density of references to “love” in the whole of *BGE*. I suggest that this passage presents Nietzsche’s understanding of how *eros* itself gives rise to *agape* – that is to say, how it gives rise to the *illusion* that such a phenomenon as “love” in the Christian sense exists. Nietzsche paints a portrait of a man with such an insatiable desire to be loved by others that he finds human love too paltry and wretched to satisfy him. He must “invent a god” who *is* love (cf. 1 John 4:16), that is,

Press, 2013), 2, C. S. Lewis notes that adultery was particularly celebrated by the troubadours, hardly a Christian standpoint.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Nietzsche, *BGE* 102: “Discovering that one is loved in return really ought to disenchant the lover with the beloved.”

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. Cf. Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, 98-99.

<sup>72</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 60.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.



pure *ability* or *power* to love (*der ganz Liebe, ganz Lieben-können ist*), in order to find life on earth tolerable. Note that Nietzsche describes this man as exceptionally “desirous,” “appetitive,” or “covetous” (*begehrnd*). The profound irony here is that the idea of a love that is purely giving, in no way needy, is ascribed to a man described as exceptionally needy and covetous, who for that very reason was driven to invent such a form of love and ascribe it to an imagined deity in order that he might be the *beneficiary* of such love. The illusion of pure selflessness is an invention of the purest selfishness.

Nietzsche ascribes “knowledge about love” (*Wissen um die Liebe*) to Jesus, which seems to align him with Socrates, who claimed knowledge of “the erotic things.” The parallel between Jesus and Socrates is a well-established trope, which Nietzsche plays with in other places, albeit in an unusual way, as he generally emphasizes the *differences* between them and sets Socrates above Jesus,<sup>74</sup> just as in *BGE* 61 and 62 he claims that religion must serve philosophy and not vice versa.<sup>75</sup> The same is true here, even as the contrast is presented obliquely. Nietzsche suggests that Jesus’s knowledge about love consists in the “knowledge” that human love is unable to offer him what he desires. He has an erotic desire to be loved in a way that is more than merely erotic. But human beings cannot love in this way, at least not without divine help – their love is *eros*, not *agape*. Human love is desire and neediness, as Socrates teaches in the *Symposium*, not disinterested generosity capable of making sacrifices while demanding nothing in return. Thus Jesus invents a God who is pure, selfless love (*agape*). This God renders us capable of loving in a way that resembles or imitates divine love, but he also threatens with hell those who refuse this gift: “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement: in this world we are like Jesus. [...] We love because he first loved us.”<sup>76</sup>

Nietzsche suggests that Jesus’s “knowledge” about love isn’t philosophical knowledge of the kind possessed by Socrates but rather a personal acquaintance with the limits of human love, as the somewhat loose, informal choice of expression (*Wissen um die Liebe*, not *über die Liebe*) suggests. This kind of “knowledge” in fact leads to radical delusion about the nature of love as a means of coping with the unsatisfiable love (*eros*) and suffering that such “knowledge” involves. Nietzsche’s portrayal of Jesus in *BGE* 269 to a certain extent resembles Plato’s portrayal of Glaucon in the *Republic*. Glaucon is a deeply erotic man with noble longings, whose insistently erotic nature paradoxically makes him *want* to believe in the existence of a wholly just man who is capable of perfectly controlling or even negating his own *eros*.<sup>77</sup> Glaucon’s erotic longings lead him to “found” (with Socrates’s help) a city in speech in which *eros* itself is disciplined and suppressed.

<sup>74</sup> For example, see Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human II*, 86. See also the contrast between Jesus as “the noblest human being” and Spinoza as “the purest wise man” in *Human, All Too Human*, 475.

<sup>75</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 61–62.

<sup>76</sup> 1 John 4:16–17, 4:19.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 357a–362c. Glaucon’s appetitive nature can be seen at 372c, where he insists that the men in the just city must have “relishes” for their meals, and at 403a, where he speaks enthusiastically of the pleasures of sex as the keenest and “maddest,” while his nobility is on display at 402d–e, where he reminds Socrates that one might overlook physical faults in one’s beloved if their soul is of beautiful character.

Nietzsche's portrait of Jesus is expressly presented as a hypothesis – “it is possible” that “underneath” the embellishments of the Gospels lies the story of a man like this. For Nietzsche, the historical evidence is too patchy and ambiguous to reach any certain conclusions about Jesus himself and his original teaching. Nietzsche implies that, if one approaches the sources with secular, atheistic assumptions, the most one can do is to construct a variety of plausible hypotheses. As if to underscore this point, *BGE* also contains a short aphorism that suggests a very different hypothesis about Jesus: “Jesus said to his Jews: The law was for servants – love God as I love him, as his son! What is morality to us sons of God!”<sup>78</sup> Here Jesus is presented as an egalitarian and antinomian religious figure, not a fearsome teacher who demands obedient love and threatens those who refuse with eternal punishment. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche presents yet another hypothesis about Jesus, as a pacifist and quietist, whose religious teaching is purely this-worldly.<sup>79</sup>

What all of Nietzsche's hypotheses about Jesus have in common is that they portray him as an innovative religious figure of some kind, as opposed to a philosopher. Thus in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche claims that Jesus can be described as a “free spirit” only in a restricted sense, if one allows oneself a certain “tolerance of phraseology.”<sup>80</sup> Elsewhere, Nietzsche says that “free spirit” is a “relative concept.”<sup>81</sup> In the case of Jesus, Nietzsche implies that he was a free spirit relative to the religious orthodoxy of his milieu, but he didn't question religion or metaphysics *as such* (although *BGE* 164, in contrast to 269, proposes that he questioned *morality* in the name of religion).

For Nietzsche, however, more important than the question of just what kind of religious innovations the historical Jesus may have proposed is the opposition between the Christian teaching about love and the “philosophical eroticism” of Socrates, Plato, Spinoza, and Nietzsche himself. Of Nietzsche's various hypotheses about Jesus, *BGE* 269 most closely approximates later Christian teachings and is thus the most relevant for grasping his understanding of the psychology of Christianity. Apropos *The Antichrist*, Leo Strauss observed, “The crucial difference between Nietzsche's and Machiavelli's criticism of Christianity is that Machiavelli regards the notions of guilt and punishment as essential to Jesus' teaching.”<sup>82</sup> But the notions of guilt (for refusing to love God) and punishment (hell) are clearly present in *BGE* 269.

Nietzsche was more concerned with the psychological genesis of Christianity in the believer than with the precise circumstances surrounding its historical genesis in the Roman province of Palestine many centuries ago. Nietzsche presents Christianity and Socratic-Platonic philosophy as the forms of religion and philosophy, respectively, that recognize the crucial importance of the phenomenon of love. The Christian and the Platonic teachings emphasize that erotic love draws us beyond ourselves and seems to promise immortality. Echoing or translating Plato, Zarathustra says, “All desire wants eternity.”<sup>83</sup> But Socratic-Platonic philosophy and the Christian religion resolve the problem of the

<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 164.

<sup>79</sup> Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 28-35 (my translation).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 32 (my translation).

<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human I*, 225.

<sup>82</sup> Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958), 332n52.

<sup>83</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 3, “The Other Dance Song,” 3 (my translation).

limits of *eros* in diametrically opposed ways. Christianity proposes a novel conception of divine love as *agape*, purely gratuitous and unconditional love that is in no way needy or self-interested, whose gifts we receive, enabling us to share in that love and to imitate God in our relations with others, whether fellow Christians or unbelievers. From the perspective of Socrates or Nietzsche, love is essentially needy and erotic – there is no such thing as *agape*. In *BGE* 296, Dionysus the philosopher god says that he loves human beings but only “under certain conditions.”<sup>84</sup> There is no perfect solution to the problem of *eros*, only different ways of ameliorating its problematic character. Love desires eternity but cannot possess her. For Nietzsche, the best response to the human erotic condition is lifelong absorption in the fundamental problems and the sharing of one’s knowledge with one’s friends through philosophical *logoi*, which Leo Strauss, paraphrasing Socrates, described as “written speeches caused by love.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Nietzsche, *BGE* 296.

<sup>85</sup> Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), 36. Strauss alludes to Plato, *Symp.* 210a and 210c.

# “MAN IS A BRIDGE”: MEANS AND ENDS IN NIETZSCHE’S MILLENARIAN POLITICS

From his earliest published writings, Nietzsche is preoccupied, perhaps more than any philosopher before him, with the historical past and even more with the future of humanity. *The Birth of Tragedy* claimed to have uncovered the tension in the Greek spirit that made possible the flowering of Attic tragedy but also that such a spirit and culture were being reborn in his time with the music of Richard Wagner. And while Nietzsche soon grew disillusioned with Wagner, his work never ceased to concern itself with the future of humanity, indeed, with the possibility of shaping that future with his very writing. Thus his adoption, most clearly but by no means exclusively in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, of the prophetic mode of philosophizing and proposal to direct the future of mankind as a conscious historical project whose completion might require thousands of years.<sup>1</sup> It would be nearly impossible (not only because it may be too early) to evaluate whether Nietzsche’s thought has in fact had anything like the historical influence that he hinted at, but it behooves us all the same not to neglect that part of the thought of the thinker who might rightly be called the first philosopher of global humanity. The purpose of the present essay is to explain how exactly Nietzsche understood humanity in light of such a historical project, as somehow both means and end or as that being whose historical task is one of self-overcoming. It examines what I take to be a fundamental tension in Nietzsche’s thought that appears continuously from his earliest writings to his last published work, *Ecce Homo*, and finds perhaps its classic expression in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The tension consists in the interplay between means and ends in Nietzsche’s account of the value of human existence. Baldly stated, Nietzsche repeatedly affirms that human life has meaning or worth only insofar as it is dedicated, subordinated, even sacrificed to some higher end. What is more, we only become truly human when united by this end. This higher end, however, does not exist by nature but must rather be willed or created and so is not a good in itself but only good either as the expression of the creative will to power itself or again as a means or catalyst to the further development of the will to power. The end

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, end of aph. 208 (V.140). All citations of Nietzsche’s work are to the volumes of *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: De Gruyter, 1967-77). In-text references are to volume and page number of this edition. All translations are my own, though I have followed closely the already published English translations, especially those of Walter Kaufmann.

to which we sacrifice ourselves in the act of value creation turns out to be valuable only as the expression of humanity's very power of value creation.

As Nietzsche puts it in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “the value of all valued things is the act of valuation itself” (*Schätzen selber ist aller geschätzten Dinge Schatz*, IV, 75). But if the creation of value is itself the highest value, then Nietzsche's account of value is rendered fundamentally instable, not to say circular. In this essay, I attempt to follow the development of this tension along the course of Nietzsche's thought and his (in my view, ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to overcome it with the doctrine of the eternal return. The affirmation of eternal return amounts to the attempt to overcome this circularity or rather to affirm it through yet another act of creative will. But this is as much as to say that the problem cannot in fact be resolved and that Nietzsche's conception of value creation remains unsatisfactory on its own terms. The teaching of value creation cannot overcome man's disgust at himself.

### MAN'S DIGNITY AND TASK

While this essay will be devoted principally to understanding the tension between means and ends in the account of value found in *Zarathustra*, it is helpful to begin with an examination of the same problem in his early and unpublished essay “On the Greek State.” He begins that essay by stating that we moderns have the dubious advantage over the ancients of possessing two concepts absent in the thought of the Greeks: that of the dignity (*Würde*) of man and of the dignity of work (I, 764). The Greeks, he explains, had no use for these concepts, for they recognized that human “existence has no value in itself” (*das Dasein keinen Werth an sich hat*, I, 765). The only value to be found consisted in the artistic creation of culture, but the Greeks also recognized the horrible necessity of slavery for all culture (I, 767). They understood that the state was a means (*Mittel*) that in turn harnessed the work of the oppressed slaves in the service of the “production of the world of art for a small number of Olympian men” (I, 767, 769). Far from pretending that the work of the slaves or lower classes possessed any inherent dignity, the Greeks recognized it for what it was but also accepted it as the necessary condition of the culture that made existence bearable for the Olympian minority. Nietzsche insists, however, that not even these Olympian men were ends in themselves. Acknowledging the essentially warlike and military character of the Greek state, Nietzsche asserts that warlike man only achieved a certain conditional dignity as a means for the generation (*Erzeugung*) of the singular military genius or political founder (I, 775-76). But he immediately generalizes his point: “Every man, in his entire activity, has only so much dignity insofar as he is, consciously or unconsciously, an instrument [*Werkzeug*] of genius.” The “ethical consequence” of this is that “‘man in himself,’ absolute man, possesses neither dignity, nor rights, nor duties. Only as a fully determined being serving unconscious ends can man excuse his existence” (I, 776, my emphasis). Although Nietzsche does not here make the point explicitly, it would follow that the political founder would have to be superhuman or himself merely another instrument for the development of further genius.

The problematic and unelaborated relation that Nietzsche here establishes between “man in himself” and genius turns out to be one of – and perhaps the central – theme of his mature thought. For if dignity or value is only achieved in the service of the genius of

a political founder or the creator of a new artistic interpretation of existence, the greatness of the founder or artist himself can only be measured, it would seem, by the new world of men he makes possible.<sup>2</sup> Dignity or value is only won in sacrifice to a higher end, but the value of the higher end itself is articulated in terms of making that original sacrifice possible. This circularity, which results from Nietzsche's inability to coherently articulate the concept of an end in itself or highest good that is not simply a means to yet another end, much less to conceive of the human being as embodying this highest end, appears again – in almost the same terms – in his account of the Superman or *Übermensch* in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. An analysis of the gradual development and modifications of Zarathustra's account of the Superman will allow us to understand more clearly Nietzsche's awareness of the tensions within his account of value and attempt to overcome them.

### THE SUPERMAN AND THE MEANING OF THE EARTH

The problem of man as means and end is most profoundly and suggestively treated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and is indeed implied from its very beginning. The book begins, as already *The Gay Science* had ended, with Zarathustra, the first moralist – that is, the first human being to give a fundamentally moral-metaphysical interpretation to the world – wishing to descend from his mountain cave in order to share his wisdom and to “become a man” once more (*Zarathustra will wieder Mensch werden*, IV, 12). But his first act upon descending back down to the world of men is to proclaim the Superman and to warn of the coming of the Last Man. It would seem that Zarathustra can only reclaim his humanity by the proclamation of superhuman ambitions. Indeed, he understands the essence of the human being as consisting precisely in the tension generated by the desire to transcend itself. As early as the “Preface” (IV, 16), he proclaims that “man is a rope tied between animal and Superman – a rope above an abyss.” The unstable nature of man, he explains, is in fact the cause of his greatness. “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end [*dass er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist*]; what can be loved in man is that he is a *going-over* and a *going-under*” (IV, 16-17, emphasis in original).

With this statement, Zarathustra presents a threefold understanding of man. Man, first of all, is animal and may fall into pure animality when he lacks any goal beyond himself. This is what he will call in the following section the condition of the last man. Second, there is the Superman, who has somehow overcome his mere humanity through the creation of new values. But third, there is man precisely as the rope or bridge, as the very tension between the subhuman and superhuman. In which of these senses does Zarathustra wish to become a man again himself? Obviously not as the last man, but does he wish to become a Superman or a man defined by this very aspiration? The answer seems to be somehow both at once, as Zarathustra will later explain, making avowal of his “heart’s double will” (*meines Herzens doppelten Willen*), directed both to man himself and to the Superman (IV, 183). While the unification of Zarathustra’s double will would appear to be more simply achieved by abandoning entirely either man or the Superman,

<sup>2</sup> The same tension is evident in a note from Summer-Fall 1884 on the “Rank Ordering of Spirit” and of “Value-Creators” (XI.217-18, 26 [258]): “the highest mean as ruler of the Earth and creator of the future (finally destroying himself [...]).”



his understanding of man in fact necessitates this double will, for as we shall see, man can only come to light as man in the willing of the Superman. The only solution left is to unify this will sequentially by means of the eternal return.

This understanding of the relation of man and Superman is unfolded only gradually. A good place to start is with Zarathustra's references to self-sacrifice and self-overcoming. In the previous section (IV, 14), where Zarathustra had first proclaimed the Superman to the inhabitants of the town, he had said that the Superman was "the meaning of the Earth [*der Sinn der Erde*]. Let your will say: let the Superman be the meaning of the Earth." The Superman is the goal that makes possible the self-overcoming of man, for "man is something which must be overcome" (*ibid.*). Paradoxically, then, the Superman as goal seems to have the purpose of serving mankind itself. "Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this sea, in him can your great contempt go under" (IV, 15). Here again, just as the military genius or political founder appeared as both the end to which city and citizen are subordinated but also somehow as their servant, the Superman is the goal humanity must set for itself but also a means for man to overcome the "polluted stream" of his self-contempt.<sup>3</sup> Positing the goal of the Superman allows man to become a "bridge" toward his own self-overcoming. Almost immediately following his statement that man is a bridge, Zarathustra states, "I love those who do not first seek beyond the stars a reason [*Grund*] to go under and to be a sacrifice but who rather sacrifice themselves for the Earth that the Earth might one day become the Superman's." Here the Superman is that *Grund* that does not lie beyond the stars, a promise of transcendence or self-overcoming that is entirely this-worldly. The Superman is no less ambitious an ideal than the otherworldly ideals that man has posited so far, but it appears to be more honest, for it does not posit a non-existent beyond but remains attached to the Earth and "creates meaning for the Earth" (IV, 37). For the moment, the superiority of the Superman is not yet clearly explained, but it is telling all the same that Zarathustra expresses his love for those who sacrifice themselves to the ideal of the Superman. Nowhere does he express any love for the Superman himself.<sup>4</sup> Instead, the Superman would be the "gift" he brings to men out of his love for them (IV, 13).

## THE VALUE OF SACRIFICE

In an unpublished note from 1883 (that is, the time of the publication of the first three parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), Nietzsche states in most uncompromising fashion an articulation of his task and, in fact, of his demand of himself. "My demand: to bring forth a nature [*Wesen*] that stands above the entire race 'man': and to sacrifice oneself

<sup>3</sup> Compare *Gay Science*, bk. 5, aph. 351 (III, 587), "In Honor of the Priestly Nature": "filth of the soul also requires sewers with pure and purifying waters in them, it requires rapid streams of love and strong, humble, pure hearts who are willing to perform such a service of non-public hygiene, sacrificing themselves – for this does involve a sacrifice, and a priest is and remains a human sacrifice." For the "popular belief in something," *Uebermenschliches* in the figure of the priest, cf. *ibid.*, aph. 358 (III, 603-4).

<sup>4</sup> He does so in a sketch contained in his notebooks from November 1882 to February 1883 (X.147, 4 [110]): "Ich gieng in die Einsamkeit, weil ich *den* Menschen lieben wollte, aber immer hassen musste. Endlich liebte ich den Übermenschen – seitdem *ertrage* ich die Menschen." Even here, however, his will or desire is to love man as man.

and one's 'neighbors' [*die 'Nächsten'*] to this goal [*Ziel*]."<sup>5</sup> He explains that, while all morality hitherto has taken the species (*Gattung*) as a limit and the survival or permanence (*Halbarkeit*) of the species as its primary aim, this movement results in the leveling of humanity and the last man. Nietzsche's "movement" (*Bewegung*), by contrast, seeks the "intensification of all oppositions and divisions, the abolition of equality, the creation of *Über-mächtiger*," that is, of *Übermenschen*, whose aim (*Ziel*), however, is not to become the masters of the weak but rather to live entirely apart, "*like the Epicurean gods, having no concern for the others*."<sup>6</sup> Here the relation of means and end appears for once to be clear and stable. While previous morality was primarily or exclusively concerned with the mere survival of the species, positing no further end beyond this, Nietzsche aims to reinterpret the human, all too human, not as an end in itself but as a mere beginning, as the foil in opposition to which the new race of Supermen might come into being or, in the published words of the *Zarathustra*, as a "bridge" toward the Superman. The Supermen or "super-powerful" themselves are to live apart, unconcerned with the world, like the Epicurean gods whose nature, in the words of Lucretius, is "abundant in its own power" (*ipsa suis pollens opibus*, ii.650), and so needing nothing beyond itself, being an end in itself.

One must of course be cautious in using Nietzsche's unpublished and unrevised notes, and in the *Zarathustra* itself, Nietzsche does not develop this interpretation of the Superman. The theme of sacrifice, on the other hand, is central to the argument of the book and especially to its elaboration of the idea of value creation.<sup>7</sup> In his speech "On the Way of the Creator," Zarathustra calls upon his friends to become Creators and that the question of their freedom be not merely of what they are free from (*frei wovon?*) but what they are free for (*frei wozu?* IV, 81, emphasis in original). Their freedom is to be not negative but a positive freedom *for* – for self-overcoming or self-subordination to a task. Their freedom allows them to create from out of themselves and so "go to ground" or perish. Zarathustra expresses his love for him "who wills to create over and beyond himself and so perishes" (*der über sich selber hinaus schaffen will und so zu Grunde geht*, IV, 83; cf. 96: *Opfern zu werden*).<sup>8</sup> They are even to choose a free death if it serves their final goal (IV, 94). They are to become sacrifices and gifts (IV, 98). Their gift-giving virtue (*schenkende Tugend*)

<sup>5</sup> X.244, 7 [21]. For the rejection of love of the neighbor or nearest (*Nächstenliebe*) for love of the "farthest" or Superman of the future, cf. Zarathustra's speech "On Love of the Neighbor," (IV, 77-79). For an even more radical expression of the value of self-sacrifice, see his draft of an "Introduction" to a proposed book *The Eternal Return* from Spring 1884 (XI.73, 25 [227]): "I want to teach the thought [sc. of eternal return] that gives many the right to cross themselves out [*sich durchzustreichen*] – the great cultivating thought."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>7</sup> See L. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 78n.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Untimely Meditations*, "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life," sec. 9 (I.319). While it is easy enough to note his praise of "master morality," the will to power, as well as his frequent and sometimes unseemly expressions of self-praise, for Nietzsche it appears to be precisely not in self-assertion but in subordination or sacrifice that humanity, individually and collectively, finds meaning and worth (I've deleted "should" since Nietzsche's claim is descriptive). It must immediately be added, however, that in the highest cases, which are the only ones of any real concern to Nietzsche, this subordination is a self-subordination that takes the form of a self-overcoming, surrendering oneself to a master drive in a way that amounts just as much to self-mastery as self-enslavement. (At *Republic* 430e, Plato had already recognized the paradox involved in self-mastery; see also *Laws* 627b.) It is curious, all the same, that Nietzsche seems to place the accent on self-subordination (if only to a task). As Leo Strauss remarks in *On Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. R. Velkley (Chicago, IL: University of

is a giving away of themselves. But if Zarathustra's disciples are to give themselves away and become a sacrifice, upon which altar shall this sacrifice be made? If their goal is the Superman, what is the meaning of this goal?

### ONE THOUSAND AND ONE GOALS: OR, NIETZSCHE'S GRAND POLITICS

The somewhat exaggerated rhetoric of sacrifice must be understood in light of Zarathustra's earlier speech on "The Thousand and One Goals," the "highest point" of the teaching of part I, where he explains more clearly than anywhere else his paradoxical understanding of man.<sup>9</sup> Man is the animal that gives value to things by creating tables of good and evil. And Zarathustra explains that, having seen many lands and peoples and learned their tables of good and evil, he has found no greater power on Earth than that of good and evil itself (IV, 74). A people (*Volk*) can only live insofar as it evaluates (*schätze*), that is, insofar as it establishes by an act of creation a hierarchy of values. Furthermore, it can only survive as the people it is insofar as its evaluations are not like those of its neighbors. One people must define itself over against another. Any judgment of good is also necessarily a judgment of bad and a rejection of the bad, the foreign, the enemy.<sup>10</sup> Thus the Greeks are defined by the αἰὲν ἀρῖστεύειν, "to always be the first and surpass the others," even at the cost of friendship. The Greeks are defined by their agonism, as Nietzsche had already shown so forcefully in his unpublished essay "Homer's Contest." The Persians, by contrast, value above all truth telling and archery. For the biblical Hebrews, filial piety, to honor one's father and mother, was the highest good. And modern Germans define themselves by loyalty or faithfulness and the "loyal Will" (*treue Wille*) even if it is loyalty to evil (IV, 75).<sup>11</sup> But as Nietzsche had already suggested in the note discussed above, these ideals are not, in fact, valuable in themselves but rather serve to guarantee the survival of the people. Furthermore, in the exercise of this defining human capacity to create value, the human being actually conceals himself in the guise of a people.<sup>12</sup> So long as each people survives by preserving its own good as goal (*Ziel*), there can be no humanity as such. For there is no common goal to unite, and so define, man as man (IV, 76). Moreover, it would appear that Man as such could never set and maintain a single goal for himself, since it is in part by defining oneself against another that a people guarantees its survival. There is no identity without opposition, but the unifying goal of humanity as such would mean the eventual extinction of every individual people but would seem to leave itself alone and so without the necessary resistance against which to define itself.

With this argument, Nietzsche almost certainly had in mind the famous statement of Joseph de Maistre that "there is no such thing as *man* in the world," but only "Frenchman,

Chicago Press, 2017), 139: "[the] interplay of obedience and command is the most fundamental characteristic of the will to power." Cf. also *The Gay Science*, aphs. 118-19 (3.476).

<sup>9</sup> In the words of Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 56, who provides an excellent summary of the speech.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *The Gay Science*, aphs. 115-16 (III.474-75).

<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche only names the Greeks explicitly, and there is no doubt as to the identification of the Persians and Hebrews. While the majority of scholars identify the Germans as the people of the *treue Wille*, Lampert, in *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 62, takes it to refer to Roman *pietas*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Schopenhauer as Educator*, sec. 1 (I.337).

Italians, Russians, etc."<sup>13</sup> And up to this point, Nietzsche's analysis seems to be perfectly in accord with the statement of de Maistre. But what for de Maistre is the end of the question is for Zarathustra only the beginning. Zarathustra explains how his experience of individual peoples and their tables of values brought him to understand that value itself is not a property of things themselves but rather placed on them by man, who as such is the valuing or esteeming animal (*der Schätzende*, IV, 75). Zarathustra does not argue, then, that there can be no such thing as a human being as such, only that *as yet* there has been no Man as such because there has been no common goal or table of values to unify man. "A thousand goals have there been hitherto, for there were a thousand peoples [*Völker*]. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking, the *one* goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal. But tell me, my brothers, if humanity still lacks a goal – is it not lacking itself?" (IV, 76). But Zarathustra had already proclaimed in the "Preface" that the Superman was to be the meaning of the Earth, that is, the meaning of human existence (IV, 7). The Superman, insofar as he is the meaning of human existence, can perhaps for the first time actually unite humanity with a common purpose – the purpose of bringing about the Superman himself.<sup>14</sup>

The non-existence of man as such, then, only points to the task of creating him by means of the creation of new tables of good and evil – a new goal. The solution to the impasse that he puts in the mouth of Zarathustra is even more paradoxical than the statement of de Maistre, for it consists in the division and self-estrangement of Man as Man. Humanity is to be given a unique goal and that goal is the Superman. The species first finds itself when it finds itself on the way to the higher species (*Über-Art*, IV, 98). And the "neighbor" over against whom man as such is to define himself is precisely the Last Man or man who lives not under the yoke of a higher goal but who believes that everything has already been achieved and nothing more is to be sought. Humanity first comes to light as at war with itself and as self-overcoming.

The one and unifying goal of mankind is to be the Superman. Willing the Superman, consequently, will guarantee the creation and continued survival of man as man. Only as directed toward his own self-overcoming does man remain what he really is. The apparent end again becomes a means to preservation of the species. Zarathustra envisions an intermediate phase in the simultaneous self-creation and self-overcoming of man. His disciples, dedicated to his teaching, are to become, so to speak, a People among the other peoples, a chosen people and in fact a self-chosen people (*aus euch, die ihr euch selber auswähltet, soll ein auserwähltes Volk erwachsen*, IV, 100).<sup>15</sup> As the vanguard of Humanity, so to speak, they survive by their opposition to the still-lingering individual Peoples of the Earth. But as the biblical allusion makes clear, they

<sup>13</sup> See Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France* (Lyon: Pélagaud, 1880), 88: "Or, il n'y a point d'homme dans le monde. J'ai vu, dans ma vie, des Français, des Italiens, des Russes, etc.; je sais même, grâce à Montesquieu, qu'on peut être Persan: mais quant à l'homme, je déclare ne l'avoir rencontré de ma vie; s'il existe, c'est bien à mon insu."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Nietzsche's note from Fall 1887 (XII.462-63, 10 [17]), where he speaks of the Superman as the "parable" (*Gleichnis*) for the higher type of man who justifies the subordination of the rest.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. X.645, 24 [4], where Nietzsche presents an outline of a book titled *The Eternal Return*, whose fourth part was to include a section on the "[f]oundation of an oligarchy above peoples and their interests: education to a politics for all humanity [*einer allmenschlichen Politik*]."

are to become, so to speak, a “kingdom of Priests” and so a new “light unto the nations.” Their self-overcoming is also the destructive overcoming of the all-too-human values of the individual peoples (cf. IV, 75: *Immer vernichtet, wer ein Schöpfer sein muss*).<sup>16</sup> They will fight to unite the human race under the banner of the Superman.<sup>17</sup>

The chosen people of creators dedicated to the achievement of the Superman will turn the Earth into a “place of healing” or recovery (*Wahrlich, eine Stätte der Genesung soll noch die Erde werden!*, IV, 101). Even the prospect of such a transformation brings to Zarathustra a “health-bringing scent” and a “new hope” (ibid.). The “good news” (*gute Botschaft*, IV, 100) of the Superman is already enough to begin the healing of mankind – which amounts to the creation of mankind as such. But paradoxically, and as Zarathustra never ceases to insist, the creation of a unified humanity can be achieved only by its self-overcoming. To be fully human is to overcome the “human, all-too-human” within us. The human being is neither the merely real nor the pure ideal but somehow the product of the tension between the two. It is in light of this constitutive tension within the human being that we must understand Zarathustra’s account of value creation as the defining characteristic of man as man.

## CREATION

Almost in the very middle of his speech “On the Thousand and One Goals,” Zarathustra identifies what might be called the species characteristic of man: Man is the estimating or value-creating animal (*der Schätzende*, IV, 75). But “[t]o esteem is to create [*Schätzen ist Schaffen*]: hear this you creators! Esteeming is itself of all estimable things the value and jewel [*Schatz und Kleinod*]. Through esteeming alone is there value [*Werth*]: and without esteeming the nut of existence would be hollow” (ibid.).<sup>18</sup> The highest or ultimate value of all things, Zarathustra claims, is the very act of creating values, that is, of creating new ends or goals. The creation of value is the “jewel” (*Kleinod*) of all things of value.<sup>19</sup> Man, then, possesses the inestimable capacity for value creation but heretofore has used it only to divide himself against himself as one people over against another and to hide himself from himself, attributing to his creation the status of an independent reality.<sup>20</sup> What is more, he does not recognize his creative capacity but projects it onto God, himself but one of man’s creations, as Zarathustra explains in his speech “On the Afterworldly” (IV, 34).<sup>21</sup> In that same speech he had said that “the creator [sc. man] wanted [*wollte*] to look away from himself – so he created the world” (ibid.). Even more importantly, however,

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *The Gay Science*, aph. 58 (III.422), where the inverse is also asserted: “Nur als Schaffende können wir vernichten!”

<sup>17</sup> Lampert (*Nietzsche’s Teaching*, 21) argues that, according to the “provisional” teaching of part I, the Superman is to be the founder of the unified humanity, which would be more consistent with Nietzsche’s discussion of the political founder in the “Greek State,” but it is more consistent with the argument of part I to understand the Superman as the unifying goal toward which humanity must strive. Nonetheless, Lampert’s interpretation points again to the fundamental (and, I suggest, irresolvable) ambiguity of Nietzsche’s rhetoric of the Superman.

<sup>18</sup> Compare IV, 36: “dieses schaffende, wollende, werthende Ich, welches das Maass und der Werth der Dinge ist.”

<sup>19</sup> Compare the even more radical statement from the notebooks of 1887–88 (XIII: 45, 11 [96]): “*Das Sein selbst abschätzen: aber das Abschätzen selbst ist dieses Sein noch.*”

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *The Gay Science*, aph. 3, (II: 375).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. ibid., aph. 143 (III: 490–91).

man heretofore has created values that are inferior and less valuable than his very capacity for value creation, for the true value of things is nothing but the act of *Schätzen* itself as it related to them. With a most audacious act of secularization, Zarathustra reaffirms the theological doctrine that the Creator – and thus also the act of creating – is superior to his creation (itself already the inverse of the Aristotelian doctrine that the maker [ποιητής] is actually inferior to his product).<sup>22</sup> But to say that the highest value is in fact value creation seems to once again involve the idea of Man in paradox or empty circularity. For even if one goal were established to unite the peoples of the Earth, that goal would still be inferior to the human potential (δύναμις) for value creation. Mankind united by a common goal would still seem to be less than Man as creator, “abasing” himself before his inferior creation, (cf. *Erniedrigung*, IV, 36).

But the goal of Mankind is to be the Superman as *Über-Art* or higher species. Here we find a possible resolution to the paradox of the priority of potential (power) over its realization. If the Superman is identified with the highest creators of values,<sup>23</sup> or with the political founders of the “Greek State,” then the unifying goal of Mankind would be precisely to acknowledge and exercise its value-creating nature.<sup>24</sup> From now on, creativity itself will be its own object. Now, in a perhaps not so unwitting double inversion of Aristotle, man would come to light as the Creator creating himself as creator.<sup>25</sup> Zarathustra suggests precisely this when he begins his speech “On the Way of the Creator” with the question, “will you seek the way to yourself?” (IV, 80), with the implication that the ultimate aim of human value creation is man’s discovery of himself as creator. He is even more explicit several pages later: “a creator must you create” (*einen Schaffenden sollst du schaffen*, IV, 90).<sup>26</sup> It is in terms of self-creation that we must understand Nietzsche’s frequent invocation of the Pindaric commandment: “become what you are!”<sup>27</sup>

As attractive and elegant as this solution appears, however, it does not in fact resolve the fundamental tension within Nietzsche’s thought but only postpones it. For shorn of its theological roots, the claim that the act of creation is itself the highest human value is both empty and arbitrary. Or, to adapt yet another theological principle, if the Creator can only be known through his creation, then Man as Creator is nothing in himself and only “becomes what he is” by creatively transforming himself into what he is not, into Greek or Persian, Hebrew or German.<sup>28</sup> Or if he is to become the Superman, then the Superman will not be the pure Creator but rather the by-product of the truly highest goal, the act of

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1050a20-34; also, Plutarch, *Pericles* 2.2.

<sup>23</sup> As he is in Nietzsche’s note from June-July 1883 (X.372, 10[25]): “der Übermensch [...], – der Schaffende, der ohne *Schonung* seinen Marmor schlägt.”

<sup>24</sup> It is presumably in this light that we must understand Nietzsche’s praise of physics in *The Gay Science*, aph. 335 (III, 563): “wir müssen *Physiker* sein, um [...] *Schöpfer* sein zu können.” The study of “physics” is meant to enable us to understand human nature, which in the words of Heraclitus, “loves to hide.” Compare Nietzsche’s note from 1881 (IX, 525, 11 [211]): “Meine Aufgabe: die Entmenschung der Natur und dann die Vernatürlichung des Menschen, nachdem er den reinen Begriff ‘Natur’ gewonnen hat.”

<sup>25</sup> For Aristotle’s understanding of the divine as νόησις νοήσεως, see *Metaphysics* 1074b31-35.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 225 (V, 161): “Im Menschen ist *Geschöpf* und *Schöpfer* vereint.”

<sup>27</sup> See again *The Gay Science*, aph. 335 (III, 563): “Wir aber wollen *Die* werden, die wir sind, [...] die Sich-selber-Schaffenden.”

<sup>28</sup> Compare Stanley Rosen, *The Limits of Analysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 197: “In the new creation *ex nihilo*, man replaces God.”



creation itself, expressing some concrete created value – perhaps even the value of the independent and carefree Epicurean gods.<sup>29</sup> Either way, Zarathustra cannot in the end overcome de Maistre. Man can never create himself simply as man.

## ETERNAL RETURN

Up to this point, the analysis presented here of Nietzsche's account of value creation as the defining characteristic of man has revealed a fundamental tension in that account, which is reflected in another fundamental tension within Zarathustra's conception of his task. Man, as value creator, is nothing in himself but essentially a "bridge" toward some goal. But Zarathustra affirms that, more than any created value, it is the exercise of the creative power itself that is truly valuable. This double account of value creation is expressed in Zarathustra's later avowal of his "double will" and anticipated from the first pages of the book. On the one hand, Zarathustra teaches the self-overcoming of man and his self-contempt by willing the Superman, but on the other, he "loves" man and wishes again to become one. Furthermore, the Superman himself seems to be involved in the same circularity, for, leaving aside the suggestion Nietzsche made in his unpublished note and never elaborated in the *Zarathustra* itself that the Superman would live the independent and self-satisfied existence of an Epicurean god, the value of Superman, like that of the genius political founder in "The Greek State," would lie precisely in his creation of new tables of good and evil.

It needs no special insight to see that these tensions are played out in temporal terms. To will the Superman is to direct one's efforts to the future coming-to-be of the Superman. To experience self-contempt and the desire to overcome it requires an awareness of man's present condition. And it is a knowledge of the past that reveals man's nature as value creator, for it is the study of the past (that is, the study of man's past projects aimed at changing his future) that shows the possibility of the creation (and destruction) of peoples and their tables of values, as well as the fact that "heretofore" man has lacked a common goal and so never lived simply "as man." In light of this, it is natural enough to understand Zarathustra's teaching of the Superman as a rejection of the past – and especially of the nauseating present – in favor of the future. But this would come dangerously close to the rejection of the world for a fictitious beyond that Zarathustra rejects as being the symptom of man's self-disgust instead of its remedy. To reject the present for the future is no different than rejecting the present life for the life to come, motivated by what Zarathustra will call the "spirit of revenge" (IV, 180). In his speech "On Redemption" (whose central image is again that of the bridge),<sup>30</sup> Zarathustra explains that the only true redemption is also a redemption of the past: "To redeem those who are past and recreate every 'it was' into a 'so I willed it' – that alone should I call redemption" (IV, 179). The highest and most liberating act of the creative will is therefore to "re-create" (*umzuschaffen*) the past, obviously not in the literal sense, for "the will cannot will backward," "it cannot break

<sup>29</sup> For this fundamental problem, cf. S. Rosen, "Poetic Reason in Nietzsche," in *The Ancients and the Moderns: Rethinking Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 212.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. S. Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 179.

time," and "time does not run backward" (IV, 180).<sup>31</sup> Out of this "wrath" (*Ingrimm*) is born the spirit of revenge (or what Nietzsche will later call *ressentiment*), which interprets the passage of time in terms of "justice," that is, as punishment: "everything passes away; therefore everything deserves to pass away. And this too is justice, the law of time, that it must devour its own children" (IV, 180). But this interpretation of time (at least as old as Anaximander)<sup>32</sup> is rejected by Zarathustra as a "mad fable" (*Fabellied des Wahnsinns*), which his teaching of the creative will is meant to overcome (IV, 181). The creative will gives meaning to time without imposing any moral interpretation upon it. "Every 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, dreadful accident – until the creative will says to it, 'But so I willed it.' Until the creative says to it, 'But so I will it; so shall I will it'" (ibid.). The creative will unites past, present, and future and so learns to "will backward" (*das Zurückwollen*), not by "breaking" time's arrow but by reflexively willing itself. The "will to power" restores the "innocence of becoming" by recreating not the past itself but its own evaluation of the past. It affirms the past as the necessary precondition to its willing of the future.<sup>33</sup>

This re-creation or creative reinterpretation of the past constitutes the "ethical" dimension of the doctrine of eternal return. In light of the eternal return, the "so I willed it," which might otherwise appear to be merely an act of bravado or even of a concealed spirit of revenge, becomes the necessary consequence of one's willing of the future. For if time is circular, then to will the future is necessarily also to will the past, now understood as a further consequence of the future. To will the Superman, in this understanding, is no longer to reject the past but is rather its highest affirmation, doing away with any interpretation of the passage of time as punitive justice and restoring the so-called "innocence of becoming."<sup>34</sup> As Zarathustra's animals (who as nonhuman are immune to man's moral interpretation of time)<sup>35</sup> will later explain, trying to console him, he must say that "the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs [*kehrt wieder*] and will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of the eternal return" (*Wiederkunft*, IV, 276).<sup>36</sup> Zarathustra must understand himself as one of the causes in the knot of the eternal return, and so must say that "I come back eternally to this very same life [...] that I might teach

<sup>31</sup> Compare *Twilight of the Idols* (VI, 144): "No one is free to be a crab. It does no good: one *must* go forward, that is, step by step farther into *décadence*."

<sup>32</sup> See Nietzsche's unpublished essay on "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks" (I.818-19, 821), where this view of time is also associated with Schopenhauer; also, "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life" (I.269).

<sup>33</sup> For a similar reading, cf. P. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173-79, which also addresses the Heideggerian reading according to which willing the eternal return is not an overcoming but just another expression of the spirit of revenge.

<sup>34</sup> In a note from Summer-Fall 1884 and after the completion of part 3 of *Zarathustra* (XI.224-25, 26 [283]), Nietzsche includes the "heightening of man's consciousness of power as the one who creates the Superman" among the necessary conditions for being able to "bear [*ertragen*] the thought of [eternal] return."

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *The Gay Science*, aph. 224 (III.510).

<sup>36</sup> Lampert argues that while the speeches on eternal return made by Zarathustra's animals are not "false" (*Nietzsche's Teaching*, 213), they reflect a perspective inferior to that of Zarathustra himself, since they do not recognize the need for the will to power to *will* the eternal return (ibid., 220). He argues that the animals reflect the perspective of "the new people, mankind" that is brought into being by Zarathustra's teaching of eternal return (ibid., 223). It would be more correct to identify their perspective with the simply non-human one, which accepts as true what Zarathustra must *will* to be true. The "content" of Zarathustra's will would not, then, differ from his animals' speech. See also Rosen, "Nietzsche's Revolution," in *The Ancients and the Moderns*, 203.

again the eternal return of all things – that I might again speak the word of the great noon of earth and man, that I might again proclaim to men the Superman” (ibid.).<sup>37</sup>

Willing the eternal return, therefore, allows Zarathustra to distinguish his project of value creation – the proclamation of the Superman – from all previous examples of value creation. While all previous tables of value were taken as independent and eternally valid, Zarathustra recognizes that the proclamation (and possible realization) of the Superman can only be one moment in an eternally recurring cycle. Second, *willing* the eternal return frees the will from the so-called spirit of revenge, for it affirms the necessary co-causation of past and future.<sup>38</sup> In retrospect, Zarathustra’s earlier admonition that “the future and the farthest be the cause [*Ursache*] of your today. In your friend must you love the Superman as your cause,” must be understood quite literally (IV, 78). But of equal or perhaps even greater importance is to see how in the affirmation of the eternal return Zarathustra can reconcile his double will and perhaps overcome the tension within his account of value. For if man as creator, the Superman, and even the last man are all connected in a necessary chain of causality such that each one is the cause of the other, then Zarathustra does not have to choose between his love for man and his willing of the Superman, for by willing the one he necessarily also wills the other, both as past and as future.<sup>39</sup> The question of means and ends is solved, or rather avoided, for each is equally an end and also the means to another. And it appears that the more fundamental question of value itself might find a resolution. For even if man cannot literally create himself as pure value creator but always also as the embodiment of some concrete ideal of good and bad, the circularity of the eternal return means that in creating the ideal of the Superman man is also creating the conditions for the return to the very moment of his creation: the creator creates himself or is *causa sui* – though only in terms of the radical temporality of the “knot of causes” of the eternal return. It might be relevant to note that, in German, *Wiederkunft* (return) is used most frequently in religious contexts, especially to denote the Second Coming of Christ. Nietzsche’s teaching of the Superman and eternal return attempts a strange synthesis of the cyclical temporality of the ancients with the biblical millenarianism.

### THE SUPERMAN AND THE ETERNAL RETURN: NIETZSCHEAN ESOTERICISM?

The reading I have advanced here takes Zarathustra’s teachings of the Superman of the eternal return to be fundamentally consistent and, further, argues that the eternal return is necessary for resolving several tensions within Zarathustra’s account of the Superman and of value creation. But the apparent incoherence of the rhetoric of the Superman (as well as its evident unpalatability to democratic good taste) has led some interpreters to question its definitive status within Nietzsche’s teaching. In fact, while most hesitate to ascribe to Nietzsche a “hidden teaching,” in effect almost all of them have recourse

<sup>37</sup> Cf. IX.498, 11 [148].

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Strauss, *On Nietzsche’s* Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 150: “Through liberation from the spirit of revenge, the will becomes properly willed because it is the liberation from that which frustrates will. What we must understand is this: Nietzsche does not abandon the will to the future, he wills the future while willing the past in one act.”

<sup>39</sup> As Rosen, in *The Mask of Enlightenment*, 14, notes, the eternal return can also be understood as confirming the possibility of the Superman as something that has already occurred, rendering the proclamation of the Superman a “retrospective prophesy.”

to this interpretative strategy in order to "save" Nietzsche from dangerous or "vulgar" interpretations based on his rhetorical excesses.<sup>40</sup> Two of the most sophisticated and perceptive interpretations of the *Zarathustra* in terms of an esoteric teaching that ultimately rejects or abandons the Superman are those of Lawrence Lampert and Stanley Rosen. In their different ways, both Lampert and Rosen regard the Superman as belonging in some way to Nietzsche-Zarathustra's provisional, public, or exoteric teaching.<sup>41</sup> And while Rosen argues that Nietzsche's rhetoric remains incoherent even once the Superman is dropped, Lampert, at least, argues that what is, in his reading, the "definitive teaching" of the *Zarathustra* is coherent as it stands, having no need of the Superman.<sup>42</sup> The interpretation that I have presented here, then, might be taken as ignoring the movement or "action" of the book (or what Lampert calls the "education" of Zarathustra himself) and, in general, the exoteric character of Nietzsche's writing. And this would not be an idle criticism, since Nietzsche repeatedly insists on the role of masks in his writing and the importance of the exoteric-esoteric distinction.<sup>43</sup> In this necessarily brief and provisional essay, it is impossible to give a full account of Nietzsche's esotericism. I do not think, however, that the exoteric character of the doctrine of the Superman is inconsistent with the analysis that I have presented here, for if the Superman is the product of the creative will, then it is possible to understand the teaching of the Superman as a kind of "noble lie" intended to produce the spiritual tension that is the highest expression of Man not as goal but as "bridge." Zarathustra even points to this very reading in his speech "On Poets," where he states that he is "tired" of the poets and their edifying parables of "gods and Superman" (IV, 164; for Zarathustra as poet, cf. IV, 371). The Superman would be the artistic creation of men such as Zarathustra – in the final analysis the creation of Nietzsche himself – to cover over the emptiness and chaos of existence. It is a noble lie, but in the final analysis, it is a lie told to oneself.<sup>44</sup>

But an important qualification must immediately be added (and here my reading departs decisively from Lampert's) for the classic understanding of esotericism distinguishes between the noble lie or salutary public teaching and the dangerous truth that can only be safely known by the philosopher. But this dangerous truth is truth all the same and so ultimately of higher value than any noble lie. It is only (or at least primarily) the imperfection and envy of men that makes necessary philosophical esotericism. In Nietzsche, however, philosophical esotericism seems to undergo two radical modifications.<sup>45</sup> First, the exoteric teaching or "noble lie" appears to be at least as radical and dangerous as the esoteric truth.<sup>46</sup> It is meant not to placate but to arouse the indignation of the multitude and goad

<sup>40</sup> For a summary of such approaches, see Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, 204.

<sup>41</sup> See Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 184; Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, 183.

<sup>42</sup> Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, 137-38; Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 258.

<sup>43</sup> Besides the two passages mentioned below, the classic text for the exoteric-esoteric distinction in Nietzsche is *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 30 (V, 48-49).

<sup>44</sup> For the phrase, see Rosen, "Poetic Reason in Nietzsche," 223.

<sup>45</sup> As Lampert recognizes elsewhere: see his *Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Certainly, on Lampert's reading. Lampert (*Nietzsche's Teaching*, 255) seems to commit the basic error of confusing the affirmation, in the eternal return, of the cyclical process of all life, with the affirmation of things as they are now, as "lovable or desirable in themselves." He therefore is led to conclude that the eternal return is

potential disciples or philosophers to self-contempt as the step toward self-overcoming.<sup>47</sup> It is meant to produce not gentlemanly friends but enemies of philosophy – or perhaps it is not meant to be read by the “people” at all.<sup>48</sup> But second and more fundamentally, for Nietzsche it appears that there can be no ultimate distinction between esoteric and exoteric at all.<sup>49</sup> For on the classical understanding, once again, the esoteric teaching presents a challenging truth that only the philosopher can come to accept, but Nietzsche argues that no one, not even the philosopher, can live with the truth; the very conditions of the intelligibility of the world – the conditions of the idea of truth itself – are illusions.<sup>50</sup> The esoteric teaching, in the final analysis, turns out to be no more or less a mask than the exoteric, and the exoteric teaching, just as “valid” as the supposedly more profound esoteric teaching. For the moment, it is irrelevant whether or not Nietzsche can coherently maintain this position of radical perspectivalism – I do not think that he can.<sup>51</sup> What is important to note here is that, even if the Superman were merely exoteric and the eternal return the final teaching, that teaching would still affirm the necessity of the Superman (or at least of Zarathustra’s exoteric proclamation of him) as a necessary part of the cycle of historical becoming (cf. IV, 276). But if the eternal return, in the final analysis, is no less a perspectival creation than the Superman, then there is no reason to prefer the one to the other. But ultimately, not only are the two doctrines perfectly compatible, they both seem to be necessary to Zarathustra’s project – even if only as noble lies.

incompatible with the affirmation of any project for the future, especially that of the Superman, which he thinks presupposes a linear conception of time (ibid., 21). In this argument, he is not only wrong textually (Zarathustra continues to invoke the Superman after his discovery of the “greatest thought” of the eternal return, most clearly in the third section of his speech “On Old and New Tables,” [IV, 248–49]) but also conceptually. For to will the eternal return means also to “will the eternal return of war and peace” (*The Gay Science*, aph. 285 [III, 528]). Only the belief that the achievement of the Superman would be permanent would require linear time, but the recognition that the advent of the Superman is itself no more than one point on the circle of time is enough to secure it from the spirit of revenge. To affirm the eternal return is to affirm the ideal of the superman while also recognizing the “necessity” of nihilism and the last man. The Superman would give meaning to the wheel of time without standing outside its revolutions. For a detailed and persuasive account of the fundamental compatibility of the Superman and eternal return, see Strauss, *On Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 148–57, also 171: “[Man] must be able to combine full dedication to a glorious future with willingness to adopt the destruction of that future.” See also W. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 321.

<sup>47</sup> See Nietzsche’s note from Fall 1885–Spring 1886 (XII.1 [134] 41) on the “temporary” need to “speak and act coarsely” (*grob zu reden und grob zu handeln*). In *The Gay Science*, bk. 5, aph. 381 (III, 364–65), Nietzsche does suggest (with considerable irony) that his writings (including *Zarathustra*) are written with elusive brevity (*Kürze*) so as to protect the “innocence” of the “asses and old maids of both sexes, who have nothing from their life but their innocence,” and even to “inspire, elevate, encourage them to virtue. I know of nothing on earth that would be funnier [*lustiger*] than to see inspired old asses and maids who have been excited by the sweet sentiments of virtue.”

<sup>48</sup> As suggested in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, aph. 71, “Caution’s Manner of Writing” (*Schreibart der Vorsicht*), where Nietzsche suggests that his dangerous opinions are not, in fact, “public” because they are written in a way that is neither “useful nor pleasing” to the “mob, the *populi*, or to parties of any kind” (II, 584).

<sup>49</sup> For this point, cf. Rosen, “Poetic Reason in Nietzsche,” 222 and esp. 225.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *The Gay Science*, aph. 107 (III, 464) and 54 (III, 416–17); Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, 8–9: “In Nietzsche’s teaching, what we discover is chaos or illusion. This discovery justifies us in our productive effort to replace someone else’s illusion with our own.” Or more bluntly in “Nietzsche’s Revolution,” 202: “at bottom, there is no essential difference between the esoteric and the exoteric teaching: the book [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*] implodes into chaos.”

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Rosen, “Poetic Reason in Nietzsche,” 226: “Nietzsche has no ultimate teaching of a theoretical, constructive nature. The riddle to Nietzsche’s consistency cannot be unlocked because it does not exist.”

## THE SUPERMAN, THE STOICS, AND *AMOR FATI*

If the Superman is in some sense a noble or exoteric teaching (and, at the very least, Zarathustra's rhetoric of a "higher species" [*Über-Art*] cannot be taken literally in the biological sense), then it would be a lie told in the service of fostering man's creativity or of that "tension of the spirit" that Nietzsche mentions repeatedly in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The exoteric or public teaching of the Superman is the goal that is necessary for stimulating the will to self-overcoming and so for realizing for the first time an example of man as man – that is, man as a bridge. Again, this is perhaps Nietzsche at his most seductive, both for the "naïve" reader, who believes that he himself will be the creator of new values, and for the "sophisticated" reader, who takes satisfaction in the superior subtlety of his interpretation and his ability to see through the mask. But the Superman cannot in fact be regarded as a mere noble lie or public teaching, for human creativity still needs a goal – it needs to create a goal.<sup>52</sup> The esoteric needs to present itself in an exoteric mask, and the mask is not a mere convenience but rather the joyful expression of creativity – Nietzsche frequently affirms the delight that all higher spirits take in masks.<sup>53</sup> While the dominant tendency of twentieth-century art to give ever more attention to the "creative" artist and his process – to the point of all but abolishing the reality of the work of art itself – is a clear appropriation of Nietzsche's "artist's metaphysics," it is also the incoherent if inevitable radicalization of his doctrine of creativity.<sup>54</sup> The relation of human creation to the Superman is not really that of esoteric to exoteric at all but rather that of power and expression or, to use Aristotle's terms, of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.<sup>55</sup> On the reading advanced here, the Superman is not, strictly speaking, an exoteric teaching but rather an expression of human value creation – an attempt at the most honest expression, since the Superman is a creator himself. Nietzsche's esotericism, on this reading, is to affirm that man's creative δύναμις is itself higher than any of its products or expressions. Man must will the Superman, but what he is really doing is willing himself a creator. To understand the ultimate untenability of this position (which is the cause of Nietzsche's constant vacillation on this point), it is useful to compare it to the surprisingly similar account of art and power found in the Stoics.

While parallels between Nietzsche's thought and isolated Stoic doctrines (*amor fati*, the eternal return) have often been noted, it has perhaps not been recognized with sufficient clarity just how "modern" the Stoics themselves are or how (at least in their more radical expressions) they anticipate certain modern inversions of classical thought. While Aristotle, following both common sense and his own doctrine of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, affirmed the superiority of the realization to the mere potential and so defined εὐδαιμονία as a "being-at-work [ἐνέργεια] according to virtue" (for the mere possession of virtue as

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Rosen, "Nietzsche's Revolution," 198: "art is the illusion by which we are inured, or rather charmed, into living a noble lie."

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 40 (V, 289).

<sup>54</sup> For Nietzsche's anticipation of this exaggeration, see *The Gay Science*, aph. 241 (II, 514).

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of this tendency in modern art and its relation to Aristotle, see Giorgio Agamben, *Creación y anarquía: la obra en la época de la religión capitalista*, trans. Rodrigo Molino-Zavalía and María Teresa D'Meza (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo editora, 2019), 11-19 (in the Spanish edition). This otherwise excellent discussion curiously ignores Nietzsche's decisive contribution to the "unfortunate transposition of the theological vocabulary of creation to artistic activity" (18, my translation).



δύναμις in a man who spent his whole life asleep could hardly be called happiness), the Stoics affirm that virtue itself is sufficient for happiness regardless of the achievement or realization of its end.<sup>56</sup> Arguing that the results of our actions are beyond our control and so morally irrelevant, the Stoics affirm, almost in a Kantian vein, that “right action” (κατόρθωμα) consists only in the virtuous intention and effort we put into the action.<sup>57</sup> Even more radically, Seneca affirms that the effort itself is more pleasant and valuable than the result. It is more pleasant to be making a new friend than to already have a friend, and a painter takes more delight in the act of painting than in “having painted” the finished work, for in the act of painting he enjoys not the product of his art but the artistic power itself. Not the work of art but the act of artistic “creation” is for the Stoics the highest good because it is here that one “enjoys” one’s virtue, power, or “art” in its purity (*iam fructu artis suae fruitur: ipsa fruabatur arte cum pingeret*).<sup>58</sup>

Whether or not Nietzsche was aware of them, then, the close parallels between his thought and Stoicism should already be evident. And the acceptance of fate, or *amor fati*, by the Stoics is intimately tied to this affirmation of the superiority and sufficiency of virtue as power, for the fated results of one’s efforts are irrelevant or indifferent, such that they can be accepted with hesitation. They cannot take away our virtue. The Stoics might even appear to affirm the superiority of creation to the product. But they do not in fact take that final step, for their conception of virtue, at bottom, is not a doctrine of human creativity as the source of value. The Stoic sage is not, like the Nietzschean creator of values, a secularized parody of the biblical creator God<sup>59</sup> but the imitation of the self-sufficiency of cosmic reason, or “Zeus,” who, at the moment of the eternally recurring cosmic conflagration, withdraws into himself and abides in himself (*in se reconditur, secum est*),<sup>60</sup> indifferent to all external things. Nietzsche, of course, cannot accept this solution – nor does he want to, based as it is on metaphysical and especially ethical assumptions that he rejects.<sup>61</sup> But the Stoic solution is more consistent than his. For shorn of any account of intrinsic value, the value of creativity is itself nothing more than an arbitrary expression of the creative will to power.

It appears then that, despite his best efforts, Nietzsche remains caught in a version of what Leo Strauss famously called modernity’s “joyless quest for joy,” an infinite series of means and ends where the ends only have temporary and conditional value as means to ever new ends.<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche, of course, explicitly renounces joy or *Glücke* in favor of his work (IV, 296), but his is a work that seems incapable of bringing any satisfaction because it can never be brought to completion. Such an infinite series of means without end has already been identified as equivalent to the absence of any end in itself by Plato

<sup>56</sup> Compare Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.7, 1098b31-1099a7, with Diogenes Laertius 7.89.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De Fin.* 3.32.

<sup>58</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* 1.9. For the creative dimension of Nietzsche’s *amor fati*, which “makes things beautiful,” cf. *The Gay Science*, aph. 276 (III, 521): “so werde ich Einer von Denen sein, welche die Dinge schön machen. Amor fati.” This aphorism begins book 4, which ends with Nietzsche’s first explicit statement of the eternal return and his introduction of Zarathustra.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Rosen, “Poetic Reason in Nietzsche,” 233.

<sup>60</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* 9.16.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. XIII.375, 14 [188].

<sup>62</sup> L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 251.

and Aristotle, so as amounting to the meaninglessness of all action.<sup>63</sup> It would seem that the eternal return is Nietzsche's attempt to overcome this endless series by bending it back upon itself so as to produce the "good infinity" of the circle, capped by the proclamation of a Stoic *amor fati* in order to affirm the goodness of the whole – or at least one's acceptance of the whole. If this is the case, then it must be admitted that, at most, Nietzsche has achieved the immortality of the heavenly spheres without the stability of entelechy – that is, the possession of oneself as end at every moment of the circular process.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps the fundamental question raised by the challenge of Nietzsche's thought is whether the Platonic-Aristotelian ideal of ἐνέργεια as autotelic activity (be it contemplation or πράξις for its own sake) is possible in the first place. Whether or not one accepts Nietzsche's proposed solution, it cannot be denied that he has provided the most profound analysis of what is at stake in this question.

### BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

The final section of *Zarathustra* is in a way the repetition of the beginning: itself an allusion to the eternal return. Once again Zarathustra comes out from his cave to greet the Sun, whose happiness depends on its gift of illumination to those inferior to it. After his prophetic teaching of the Superman, his winning of disciples, and later retreat into the wilderness of his cave, and even with the coming of the "higher men," Zarathustra realizes that he still lacks the "right men" (*rechten Menschen*, IV, 406). But he nonetheless affirms that his "children are near." His task – and so his hope – still remains. As the higher men come out from the cave later that morning, Zarathustra recognizes that they had been his last temptation and seduction to his last sin – the sin of suffering and pity (*Leiden, Mitleiden*) for the higher men themselves.<sup>65</sup> But he has finally overcome this temptation not only to feel pity but also to have any concern for happiness (Trachte ich denn nach *Glücke*? Ich trachte nach meinem *Werke!*" IV, 408). He rejects both pity and happiness, which are thereby somehow connected. There is a satisfaction in pity and in suffering. Or perhaps more simply, Zarathustra was concerned with his own happiness and his pity caused him unhappiness. His concern to alleviate the suffering of the higher men was as much selfish as it was altruistic. If he is still dedicated to the task of creating the Superman or giving a new meaning to the Earth, it is not for the purpose of comforting the men of the present day or curing them of their self-disgust. Zarathustra is now wholly directed toward the future. His task, or work, still awaits him, and his joy now comes in the contemplation of that task and no other: "Well, then, the lion has come, my children are nigh, Zarathustra has become ripe, my hour has come. – This is *my* morning, *my* day is rising, rise, rise, you great noon!" (ibid.). As Stanley Rosen writes, with these words Zarathustra is "referring to the immediate future as the time in which his work will be fulfilled."<sup>66</sup> It is more accurate to say that he is referring to the first stage of his task: his children are near, but they are

<sup>63</sup> See esp. Aristotle, *EN* 1.2, 1094a18-22.

<sup>64</sup> Nietzsche was perfectly aware of this problem, as shown from a note from Summer 1887 (XII.213-14, 5 [71]): "Can we remove the idea of a goal from the process and affirm the process in spite of this? – That would be the case if something were achieved at every moment within the process – and always the same thing."

<sup>65</sup> For the danger of pity, see IV, 199.

<sup>66</sup> Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, 244.

not yet the Superman. Once again, the great noon is identified with the time of humanity's peak as stretching out toward the Superman. Noon represents not the accomplishment of his task but its moment of maximum tension and hope. Zarathustra's recognition of the truth of the eternal return has not resulted in any vulgar fatalism or the abandonment of any project for the future. His affirmation of the future is now qualified by the eternal return. He recognizes that the future will return to the past. His willing of the human future is now also a retroactive willing of the past because past and future come to be identified. But this does not amount to a rejection of the Superman or affirmation that *instead* "life is to be lived sub specie aeternitatis, where *aeternitas* is the eternal return of beings as they are," for "beings as they are" will only return after the whole historical cycle is repeated.<sup>67</sup> Only by willing the future can Zarathustra will the past and so a new present.

At his most consistent and seductive, Nietzsche suggests that the highest activity of Man, like the experience *ἔπος* in Plato, is the experience of one's imperfection, not as pure lack but as the passionate desire combined with knowledge of ignorance, which is the highest wisdom and highest good for a human being. This ideal is both affirmed and betrayed by Nietzsche's invocation of Dionysus as the god who philosophizes, for Plato can only maintain this unstable affirmation of the "in-between" (*μεταξύ*) through the recognition (even if only in the mode of a "divination" or "divine madness") that the highest good for a human being is not the highest good simply and that the highest human good is only good because it maintains its orientation toward the highest good simply.<sup>68</sup> Thus, in Nietzsche the pretended unity of creativity and the good is again and again split apart. Man projects himself into the future as goal in order to preserve himself as striving after that goal. But his creativity is nothing before it creates, and the goal is nothing because it is the arbitrary expression of aimless creation. Once more, we are left with *amor fati*, but *amor fati* is itself just another *fiat*, the last and inadequate consolation of the "incomplete" (and so failed) creator.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Cp. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 84. For Nietzsche's understanding of eternity (already evident in the *Zarathustra*), see XIII.43, 11 [94]: "I seek an eternity for everything: ought one to pour the costliest salves and wines into the sea? – My consolation is that all that was is eternal [*Alles was war ewig ist*]: – the sea will cast it out again."

<sup>68</sup> For the intermediate or "daemonic" status of *ἔπος*, see Plato, *Symp.* 220a.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. IV, 35.

# NIETZSCHE'S GREEK STATE AND PLATO'S BEST CITY

## INTRODUCTION

It is a sign of the thoughtful conception of Nietzsche's "Greek State" that its actual theme is fully revealed only in its very last sentence. In it, the author makes it clear that everything that has been said so far, including the familiar themes of the critiques of liberalism and socialism, religion, fallen modern morality, and so forth, is really just an interpretation of Plato, specifically an interpretation of his "*esoteric doctrine of the connection between State and Genius*."<sup>1</sup> This *punchline* is not merely rhetorical but also substantive: At the very end of the writing, it becomes clear that it was a covert interpretation of Plato's doctrine, which is itself esoteric.<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche writes about esoteric literature in such a way that this theme visibly influences the character of his writing. And although it might be a bit hasty to say that Nietzsche, too, is writing esoterically here, in any case this situation invites us to consider the author's own intentions very carefully.

At the same time, the basic focus of the writing is quite clearly signaled by literary means. If we connect the end of the work with its beginning, that is, the aforementioned final statement about the esoteric Plato, with the very first words – ceremonial in their tone and undoubtedly sarcastic in their intention – "We moderns," then the contrast between antiquity and modernity emerges with a clear priority given to the former over the latter.<sup>3</sup> Plato is called here as a witness against modernity. Thus far, Nietzsche could be seen as a forerunner of twentieth-century political thought, which seeks to return to the classics as a refuge from the current spiritual crisis of modernity. Interpreting Nietzsche as a proponent of the neoclassical school *avant la lettre* may be a compelling response to the now widespread interpretation represented, for example, by Bernard Williams, who claims that Nietzsche's thought contains no coherent political philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Nietzsche, "The Greek State" (hereafter cited as GSt.), in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. O. Levy, trans. M. A. Mücke, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche firmly asserts the falsity of Schleiermacher's anti-esoteric interpretation of Plato; see F. Nietzsche, *Vorträge, Schriften und Vorlesungen 1871-1876*, vol. 4 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Munich: Musarion Verlag, 1920), 370.

<sup>3</sup> This interpretation is also confirmed by an important note from "We Philologists" (originally intended for the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*), written at the same time as our text; see F. Nietzsche, "Wir Philologen," in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. 8 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 4, 3 [49].

<sup>4</sup> B. Williams, "Introduction," in F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. B. Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10. Similarly, M. Nussbaum, "Is Nietzsche a Political Thinker?," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 1-13.

However, for this refuge from modernity to be effective, what the nature of these modern and classical alternatives are for Nietzsche must be clarified, that is, in particular, whether they are real alternatives. This requires, on the one hand, that we understand what conception of modernity is presupposed by Nietzsche's critique and, on the other, that we find out whether his understanding of the classics is historically adequate. For if Nietzsche's hermeneutics were flawed, then it could hardly be an alternative to anything. It is worth noting, too, that the current prevailing interpretation of Plato, which is in many ways opposed to Nietzsche's, does not allow for such an alternative, since it sees Plato essentially as a contemporary of our liberal age (I'll come back to this point at the beginning of the second part). We can therefore say that only if the hermeneutical truth is on the side of Nietzsche as an interpreter can the hypothesis of him as a coherent political thinker be confirmed. As in other instances, then, the hermeneutical question here is a fundamental one.

### THE IMAGE(S) OF MODERNITY IN "THE GREEK STATE"

The first critical comment on modernity is found in the very first paragraph, where the author ridicules the notions of the "dignity of labor" and "dignity of man." These are expressions of a miserable effort to maintain one's own existence but at the same time to sanctify it with a deceptive name (GSt. 3).<sup>5</sup> Another strategy to deal with the "greed of the struggle for existence" is to replace and compensate it with a "passion for art." When we speak of modern artistic passion, it is evident that it is intrinsically linked to individuality – for it is the individual who seeks both survival and surrogate artistic enjoyment. Nietzsche contrasts it with the Greek reaction to the same need to sustain one's life, which is *shame*. The scope of this characteristically Greek emotion extends even to art itself: insofar as art is understood as procreating, sustaining life, it is also affected by shame, and as such it is essentially non- or supra-individual. For Greek antiquity, art is not a means of covering up shame but its own field and at the same time – as procreation – something that transcends the individual.

That the main element of modernity to be criticized would be individuality may puzzle anyone who regards Nietzsche as primarily an advocate of the unlimited freedom of the individual. Such an interpretation, however, which relegates Nietzsche to the position of a liberal thinker, as does, for example, A. MacIntyre,<sup>6</sup> finds no support in our text. In fact, its author describes liberals as the "feebler descendants" of communists and socialists and as opponents of the classical antiquity for which he here stands (GSt. 7).<sup>7</sup>

Another critique of modernity focuses on the modern perception of the notion of the state.<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche claims that moderns spread a false gloss around its origin and meaning,

<sup>5</sup> Other central concepts of modern political thought, such as the "fundamental rights of man" or the "equal rights of all" (GSt. 5), play a similar role.

<sup>6</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1980), 107–8.

<sup>7</sup> The initially paradoxical-sounding ideological link between socialism and liberalism can be clarified by Nietzsche's remark that the social question itself rests not in authentic compassion, which, as can be added with reference to Rousseau, can be a strong social feeling and bond, but in the debauchery of modern man. The author contrasts this with the dignity with which a medieval subject submits to the whole and to his superiors (GSt. 9).

<sup>8</sup> The title of the work, "The Greek State," makes clear that Nietzsche uses the term "state" – in accordance with the common usage of the time – in a broad sense to refer to various historical forms of political coexistence, that is, indiscriminately both to the Greek polis and to the modern nation-state.

while the state is truly a mere instrument of violence.<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche speaks about the “horrible origin of the State,” which always consists in violent usurpation. However, this usurpation is only really “horrible” from the point of view of the modern individual; this is exactly why the origin of the state is usually translated into beautiful words.

For the Greeks, on the other hand, the violent character of the state was obvious, and at the same time, their strong political instinct led them to sacrifice everything to it. It is this “naïve barbarism of the Greek State” that is the impetus and source of the development of society. So far, the violent state is legitimized not only by the intuitions of the Greeks themselves but also by the court of eternal justice: “Proud and calm, the State steps before this tribunal and by the hand it leads the flower of blossoming womanhood: Greek society” (GSt. 12).

Society, usually understood as a modern phenomenon, also plays a key role for Greek antiquity, according to Nietzsche. He imagines it as the place of art and education, the birthplace of genius. The state is an instrument and a necessary condition for society: “without the State, in the natural *bellum omnium contra omnes* Society cannot strike root at all on a larger scale and beyond the reach of the family” (GSt. 12); moreover, the State is able to use war for the benefit of society, “to let the shining blossoms of genius sprout forth” (GSt. 13).

We are obviously dealing here with the complete Hegelian triad of state, society, and family.<sup>10</sup> In these passages, Nietzsche, the critic of modernity, seems to lean toward some of its key concepts. The role of the state in relation to the other two, and especially to society, is seen in a quite positive light here: whereas the existence of the family seems to be guaranteed independently of the other two, the state plays a crucial role for society in that it absorbs violence and reserves it for its relation to other states, thus, on the one hand, protecting the existence of society and, on the other hand, allowing its dynamics to develop in a fruitful way. Even if the state is not the ultimate goal here but only functional for the blossoming of society,<sup>11</sup> its role is unambiguously positive, which may be surprising given the author's treatment of the state in his other major works.<sup>12</sup>

It seems that in the absorption of violence by the state and its transfer to the field of international politics, the distinctive legacy of the Hobbesian state is manifested. It is not a Greek concept insofar as the Greeks did not know the mechanism of such a transfer. The temporary Greek conception, represented by the conversation between the Athenians and the Melians and reported by Thucydides,<sup>13</sup> and then conceptually summarized in

<sup>9</sup> It is not immediately clear which proponents of modernity Nietzsche accuses of painting the state pink, but it seems that authors such as Rousseau or Hegel may be meant here rather than proponents of modern contract theory Hobbes and Locke, for whom the instrumental conception of the state is not so alien after all.

<sup>10</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), §§ 142-360.

<sup>11</sup> P. D. Bubbio, “The Sacrifice of the Overman as an Expression of the Will to Power,” in F. Nietzsche, *Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. H. W. Siemens and V. Roodt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 280.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, “Vom neuen Götzen,” chap. 11 in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, pt. 1 (Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1883), 65-68.

<sup>13</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, V, 85-113.



Plato's *Laws*,<sup>14</sup> reveal a somewhat different idea: war is omnipresent, it is the principle of all reality – that is why it cannot be neutralized and transmitted elsewhere. In this respect, Nietzsche adopts a distinctively modern view.

The contrasting image of the Greek violent state, therefore, seems to serve Nietzsche as criticism not of the foundations of the modern conception of politics as such, insofar as it also contains an element of violence, but rather of the decline of this conception due to certain contemporary tendencies. Nietzsche laments that there are people in our times for whom the state is a mere means of economic self-interest. A very concrete policy arises from this mentality aimed at abolishing war, which again implies abolishing the political sphere of the state. Here Nietzsche becomes a commentator on current events: he observes the effort to make war impossible by establishing large state bodies that are in a permanent balance of power, by taking the decision to wage war away from rulers and weakening the monarchist instincts of the peoples, and finally, by extending a liberal-optimistic worldview; it is this type of thinking, rooted in the French Enlightenment, that has made possible the use of revolutionary ideas in the service of “a selfish state-less money-aristocracy” (GSt. 15). All the ills of social conditions, including the decline of art, stem from this mentality. Whoever understands this or, more precisely, whoever understands the contrast between ancient and contemporary reality, especially the excellence of Greek art, must agree that war is the only measure against the deviation from the State to Money.

Thus, Nietzsche's critical stance in relation to modernity needs to be grasped in a nuanced way: it combines the adoption of the tripartite structure of mutually autonomous communities coming from Hegel and an instrumental understanding of the state aimed at managing violence coming from Hobbes. However, while this management of violence is always linked to the rights of the individual in Hobbes,<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche turns against this characteristically modern combination, and he does so precisely with a foothold in Greek conceptions.

## NIETZSCHE'S PLATO'S STATE

At the time Nietzsche wrote his “Greek State”, Plato was not yet considered a proponent of democracy and liberalism. On the contrary, it was quite common to perceive him as an antidemocratic author.<sup>16</sup> It was not the discussion in the classical scholarship itself but the political upheavals of the following century and their consequences in the spiritual life of the West that completely reversed this perception. In light of World War II and its horrors, Plato, with his antidemocratic opinion, became an easy object of criticism. K. Popper, in his famous book of 1945, portrays Plato as a representative of a closed society and therefore as

<sup>14</sup> 625c-626b; cf. VI, 758a; VIII, 829a. It is worth noting that this notion, apparently inspired by the sophistic naturalism of the time, is criticized later in the dialogue (626e ff.).

<sup>15</sup> This holds in a double sense: on the one hand, state violence is primarily aimed at protecting the individual from violent death, but on the other hand, the state itself may not exercise such violence against the individual as would endanger his or her life (which causes notorious problems with respect to the legitimacy of criminal justice and military service); see T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, ed. W. Molesworth, vol. 3, chap. 17 (London: Bohn, 1839), 1.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., G. Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1865), 119, 417; cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Beilagen und Textkritik*, vol. 2 of *Platon* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 101, 206.

a historical ally of the Nazi and Bolshevik regimes.<sup>17</sup> The impact of Popper's critique in its own time can hardly be overstated, and it was only further reinforced by the profile of its proponent – a refugee from Nazism of Jewish origin. It is natural that the defense of Plato had to be undertaken by the victors over Nazism and that it had to concentrate on refuting his antidemocratic orientation. It is probably no coincidence that it was the Americans who in the 1950s and 1960s argued against the Austrian (or Austrian Jew) Popper that Plato was a liberal-democratic thinker.<sup>18</sup> And it was also the American philosopher and classicist Glenn Morrow who was instrumental in definitively pushing the new image of Plato as a proponent of the rule of law.<sup>19</sup> Today this conception is dominant,<sup>20</sup> and all attempts to see Plato's intention as being the opposite, as did Nietzsche, bear the *onus probandi*.

The reader of "The Greek State" might at first wonder whether Nietzsche is interpreting Plato at all here (as asserted in the very last passage of the work), since he is speaking explicitly about the Greeks in general. For example, his description of the essentially political nature of the Greeks (GSt. 11), illustrated by the fierce animosity among the Greek cities, might be rather reminiscent of Homer and Thucydides.<sup>21</sup> But this is only an appearance; in fact, in this text Nietzsche always presents Greek culture in that aspect of it where Plato's position can emerge as its paradigmatic case. Thus, regarding the mutual hostility of the Greek poleis, we have already mentioned Plato's reflection on the universality of violence in the *Laws*. So, also, when Nietzsche asserts that labor was a disgrace for the Greeks (GSt. 4-5), it is not only a general historical characterization of Greek culture; rather, in saying this, Nietzsche might already be heading toward an interpretation of Plato. According to Nietzsche, labor is a realm of necessity, and in necessity "lies the fearful and beast-of-prey-like quality of the Sphinx Nature" (GSt. 6). Natural necessity, however, is not left to itself but is cultivated by *shame*, which again is – as we have already seen – closely connected to art and culture. But these two require, according to Nietzsche, the vast majority of people to be slavishly subjugated to the necessities of life in the service of the minority, who are thus freed from the struggle for survival "in order to create and to satisfy a new world of want" (GSt. 7). Here we are probably already at a description of the emergence of the Platonic city.

According to the Second Book of Plato's *Republic*, the city arises out of natural need and lack of self-sufficiency, but it arises at first as a so-called "city of pigs" that is, a city of basic needs (*Rep.* 372d). The description of the way of life of its inhabitants is remarkable: "[...] they will work in the summer, for the most time *naked* and without shoes, and in the winter, adequately clothed and shod" (*Rep.* 372a-b, my emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> K. R. Popper, *The Spell of Plato*, vol. 1 of *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945), chaps. 6-8.

<sup>18</sup> See *Plato, Popper and Politics*, ed. R. Bamrough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); R. Robinson, "Dr. Popper's Defense of Democracy," in *Essays in Greek Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 74-99.

<sup>19</sup> G. R. Morrow, "Plato and the Rule of Law," *The Philosophical Review* 50, no. 2 (1941): 105-26; G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the Laws* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., G. Klosko, "Knowledge and Law in Plato's *Laws*," *Political Studies* 56, no. 2 (2008): 456-74; E. M. Harris, "The Rule of Law in Athenian Democracy and in Plato's *Laws*," in *The Rule of the People and the Rule of Law in Classical Greek Thought*, ed. J. Jinek, special issue, *Filosofický časopis* 2 (2021): 29-44.

<sup>21</sup> It is Homer, however, who is explicitly mentioned by Nietzsche in this passage, and we may therefore regard it – bearing in mind Nietzsche's final assertion about Plato – as an intended exception.

This detail is important. It means that, in the “city of pigs” clothing, one of the basic necessities for which the city was founded (*Rep.* 369d), is used only for thermoregulation and not for cultural reasons; only after Glaucon’s protest, mere clothing provided in the first city is expanded to include “paintings and embroidery” (*Rep.* 373a), which are apparently a proxy for the cultural function of clothing. Closely related to this cultural function, of course, is the shame of nakedness, which is thus – we can infer – also something that is absent in Socrates’s “city of pigs” and that only arises in Glaucon’s “fevered” city (*Rep.* 372e). In Plato’s *Republic* as well, then, shame is the cultivation of mere need, and even here the aspect of negativity remains part of this cultivation (see “fevered” city). We can therefore proclaim for the *Republic*, together with Nietzsche, the “cruel sounding truth” that “slavery is of the essence of Culture.” This is not an arbitrary thesis on Nietzsche’s part but again an interpretation of Plato: the necessity of rulers arises from the inflammation given by the multiplication of needs, and with rulers come not only education, art, and culture but also social hierarchy. This is precisely where justice emerges, since – as Socrates empathically states – it begins not with mere barter (which is the standard type of interaction in the “city of pigs”) but only with the hierarchical division of the city, in which everybody “does his own.” This “doing one’s own,” however, is to be understood in terms of the distribution of government and subordination. It is not so serious for the city’s justice when a carpenter wants to do the work of a shoemaker, but when a craftsman wants to rule in the place of a guardian, it endangers the whole city (*Rep.* 434a-b; cf. 379e). Justice is intrinsically tied to a hierarchical form of government. It is enough then to call with Nietzsche (but not arbitrarily with respect to Plato)<sup>22</sup> the lowest group of workers slaves, and we can consider Nietzsche’s sentence about the foundation of all culture on slavery as a description of Plato’s position. Nietzsche’s formulations betray a very attentive reader of Plato.

It is also worth noting that Nietzsche’s description of the Greek state does not correspond to Aristotle’s conception, which also confirms that it is Plato who is the paradigm of Greekness in our work. The two classical authors do agree on the natural origin of the city, but whereas in Plato nature is exclusively associated with necessity, in Aristotle’s account it also plays a legitimating role in politics. For the city is not only natural in the sense of mere life (ζῆν) but also in the sense of the good life (εὖ ζῆν). Undoubtedly, there is a different – and more complex – notion of nature in the background here, which always includes the end of the thing in question. Nature is something divine in Aristotle, and Aristotle’s city is also divine, synthesizing mere life, the sphere of needs, and good life, the sphere of justice. In Plato, on the other hand, the atmosphere of shame that abhors neediness and servility is largely preserved – and the shame leads to a transformation of the sphere of needs into the realm of real politics.

How does this Platonic transformation of nature into culture and politics take place? Quite radically: it turns into a politics of knowledge or, as Nietzsche says, a politics of art, which is distinct from the material sphere of needs and servitude, from all necessity,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bloom’s very stimulating interpretation of the opening scene of the dialogue in which Socrates, Polemarchos, and his slave interact as an image of the three classes in the city. A. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 311.

including the necessity of procreation. Its base is a separate class of guardians who are educated but also nourished at the expense of the city and who – and this is a rather more controversial part of the project – are subjected to a law that abolishes private property and private families. This law is not an expression of free love: among the guardians, sexuality will be heavily regulated, and some will live practically celibate lives (*Rep.* 459e-461c). And even outside of celibacy, sexuality will be heavily sanctioned religiously and used purely instrumentally. In both senses – taking sexual life out of its original place in the private family and disciplining it as to its actual performance – it is a law that constrains nature.

Nietzsche continues his implicit interpretation of Plato in his discussion of war. He declares it to be a necessary measure against the modern tendency to substitute economics for politics; the evidence of this function of war lies, according to him, in the “never-equalled Greek art-perfection.” In this sense, the military state is “an image, or even perhaps the *prototype of the State*” (GSt. 16). Our author is undoubtedly referring again to the stratification of the Platonic city after the introduction of the guardian class. The state is a state in the full sense of the word only when this class takes up its function and political interactions become hierarchical. This corresponds to Nietzsche’s claim that the military caste emerges as “an immediate decomposition and division of the chaotic mass” (*ibid.*). Since the ruling class is also the military class, the state, which comes into being precisely at the moment of stratification, emerges together with the military. Only threats from without and within make the political cause serious: Platonic politics in Nietzsche’s interpretation is thus oriented toward an *Ernstfall*.<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche’s description of the genesis of the warrior class, and thus of the city itself, is remarkable: In relation to the members of the city, it is a kind of unconscious movement that subjugates individuals, “a chemical transformation of their qualities until they are brought into affinity with that purpose” (GSt. 16). What this movement is about is shown, according to Nietzsche, in the highest class – it is the creation of the genius.<sup>24</sup> What Nietzsche has in mind here is clear from the last paragraph of the text, which I quote here *in extenso*:

*Plato’s perfect State* is according to these considerations certainly something still greater than even the warm-blooded among his admirers believe, not to mention the smiling mien of superiority with which our “historically” educated refuse such a fruit of antiquity. The proper aim of the State, the Olympian existence and ever-renewed procreation and preparation of the genius – compared with which all other things are only tools, expedients and factors towards realisation – is here discovered with a poetic intuition

<sup>23</sup> Here we see that even the passage discussed above about the general war among the Greeks was not so purely Thucydidean or Homeric but that it also plays a constitutive role in Plato, although it is not explicitly emphasized. Even in the *Laws*, which are famous for their program of Panhellenic reconciliation, the essentially polemical nature of the relationship between the Greek poleis is revealed, if only on an intellectual level.

<sup>24</sup> The military “labour” of this state abolishes the concepts of the “dignity of labour” and the “dignity of man.” The man-warrior is only a means of military genius, and through him – only as a means – he has his dignity. Cf. K. Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 63 and 76.

and painted with firmness. Plato saw through the awfully devastated Herma of the then-existing State-life and perceived even then something divine in its interior. He *believed* that one might be able to take out this divine image and that the grim and barbarically distorted outside and shell did not belong to the essence of the State: the whole fervour and sublimity of his political passion threw itself upon this belief, upon that desire – and in the flames of this fire he perished. That in his perfect State he did not place at the head *the* genius in its general meaning, but only the genius of wisdom and of knowledge, that he altogether excluded the inspired artist from his State, that was a rigid consequence of the Socratic judgment on art, which Plato, struggling against himself, had made his own. This more external, almost incidental gap must not prevent our recognising in the total conception of the Platonic State the wonderfully great hieroglyph of a profound and eternally to be interpreted *esoteric doctrine of the connection between State and Genius*. What we believed we could divine of this cryptograph we have said in this preface. (GSt. 17-18, emphasis in the original)

The central passage of this quotation expresses in a nutshell the essence of the whole Platonic project. That “the proper aim of the State [is] the Olympian existence of the philosopher” is true for Plato both theoretically and politically. Although Plato states that the philosopher-king is a necessary and sufficient condition for the success of the project of the best city (*Rep.* V, 473d-e), it should be seen that this success is coextensive with the success of the philosopher himself (*Rep.* IV, 420b-421c). Kallipolis is the only place where the philosopher need not fear for his life. He lives on the Acropolis, this Olympus of the city, and members of the lower classes, servants or slaves, are mere means to him. But there is more involved philosophically in talk of a sufficient condition than a list of prerequisites to be fulfilled. There is in it the idea of divinity, of daimonism, which is the very reason why the philosopher is to rule. But this is only possible in a city formed hierarchically and at the material expense of the lower class.

The same can be expressed with Nietzsche’s “*esoteric doctrine of the connection between State and Genius*.” What here is kept confidential? The first part of the answer lies in the palm of one’s hand: it is the method of establishing philosophers as rulers, in which the noble lie about their “gold origin” plays a key role (*Rep.* 415a).<sup>25</sup> The second part of the answer is formulated in Plato’s *Laws*, which discusses the same political project as the *Republic* but is more detailed concerning the exercise of power. Philosopher-kings also rule in secret: the Night Assembly, as the highest body of the city, deliberates in secret, at dawn, and its real power and authority is also hidden in its esoteric procedure. While most citizens pay attention to the offices in which they themselves have a stake – that is, the

<sup>25</sup> On the noble lie in Nietzsche’s earlier political thought, see D.-N. N. R. Evans, *Nietzsche and Classical Greek Philosophy: Beautiful and Diseased* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 50-51; and C. Zuckert, “Nietzsche’s Rereading of Plato,” *Political Theory* 13, no. 2 (1985): 221-22, 228, 234. It is worth mentioning that Nietzsche’s attitude toward the “noble lie” is essentially reversed in his later work; see F. Nietzsche, “Der Antichrist: Fluch auf das Christenthum,” in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. 6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 55. I am indebted to Thomas Meredith for this reference.

council and the assembly, and these bodies are elected by a very complex public procedure that gives them, we would say today, a considerable degree of legitimacy – the constitution of Magnesia is silent about the real power of the supreme body. This power is not legal but factual: the day-to-day secret coordination will in fact be the source of utmost power, of which the other citizens of Magnesia know nothing. They do not know that they are ruled by philosopher-kings; they do not know that philosophy is linked to sovereign rule.<sup>26</sup>

## CONCLUSION

“The Greek State” is a work of political philosophy in which its author takes a distinct political position. It can be summarized as a decisive critique of modern political ideologies, both from the position of the modern conception of family, society, and state, adopting a perspective of the serious case orientation of politics, and also underpinned by a proper understanding of Plato’s political theory, which emphasizes the importance of hierarchy and rejects all individualism.

According to Nietzsche, Plato committed an “incidental mistake” in his conception of the perfect state. The mistake allegedly consists in replacing the general genius, who can typically be a genius artist, with the genius of knowledge. But the genius-artist is in fact part of Plato’s perfect state – namely, through its author. Plato himself is an artist, a genius, who can also confuse his readers intentionally. Even Nietzsche’s interpretation thus contains an “incidental mistake.” It consists in the fact that – probably under the influence of contemporary philology – he focuses on only one of the two poetic genres for which Plato himself insisted on complementarity (*Symp.* 223d) – namely, tragedy, while leaving aside comedy. Politics, according to Nietzsche, is clearly reserved for the tragic sphere of Apollo, the sanctifier and purifier of the state. Plato, however, does not share this reduction; according to him, the state and politics are the domain of both the tragic and the comic. It also includes our – often comic – desires and needs, which always and again lead us back to the field of nature. If Nietzsche wanted to make full use of Greek inspiration as a way out of the crises of modernity, he would have to grasp the problem of nature much more seriously; in particular, he would have to deal more closely with the question of natural law.

<sup>26</sup> Finally, the constant repetition suggests that genius also involves education, that is, it is not only the singularity of an exceptional person (Socrates, Plato) but also the transmission of genius, its renewal, within the school.



# **“EVERY PASSION POSSESSES ITS QUANTUM OF REASON”: NIETZSCHE’S AFFIRMATION OF PASSIONS<sup>1</sup>**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Friedrich Nietzsche paid considerable attention to the significance of emotions in our lives. The aim of this paper is to reconstruct Nietzsche’s understanding of emotion from his varied writings and to investigate the relevance of his thought in the light of contemporary mainstream conceptualizations of emotions. It is worth discussing Nietzsche’s approach to emotions for at least two reasons. First, Nietzsche was a great advocate of passionate life and passionate philosophy, which he defined by reference to emotions. Second, he also provided many interesting insights concerning particular emotions, such as pity, envy, fear, resentment, love, joy, and so forth. In my paper I will focus on Nietzsche’s approach to emotion as such, leaving the studies of particular emotions aside since each of these would require a separate study. Reading Nietzsche’s philosophy of emotions through the lenses of contemporary theories of emotion helps to understand Nietzsche’s approach on the one hand and elucidates its uniqueness and not fully recognized influence on the other.

## **I. CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF EMOTION**

### **1. THEORIES OF EMOTION**

Since the “affective turn” of the 1980s and 90s, emotions have attracted considerable attention in cognitive science, the humanities, and the social sciences. Yet there is no agreement between philosophers or psychologists as to how we should understand emotions.<sup>2</sup> There are ongoing disputes about the essential components that constitute emotions, about

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<sup>1</sup> I owe special thanks to Prof. Laurence Lampert for his generous revisions, comments, and suggestions, which helped me to improve the paper. The writing of this paper was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, according to Decision No. 2017/27/B/HSS/01053.

<sup>2</sup> A. Scarantino and R. de Sousa, “Emotion,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 ed.), ed. E. N. Zalta and U. Nodelman, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/emotion/>> (accessed 20 April 2023).

what to qualify as emotions,<sup>3</sup> how to distinguish between emotions and other states such as moods, attitudes, or appetites, and about the main functions and origins of emotions. Following Scarantino and de Sousa, one may distinguish four main ways of conceptualizing emotion: (A) emotions as experiences (feelings); (B) emotions as evaluations; (C) emotions as motivation; and (D) emotions as constructs.<sup>4</sup> Let me briefly explain them.

### A. Emotions as Experiences (Feelings)

In his famous paper titled "What Is an Emotion?" William James claimed that "Our feeling of [bodily] changes as they occur *IS* the emotion."<sup>5</sup> That means that, according to James's theory, emotions are constituted by our awareness of physiological changes in response to external triggers. Building on this theory, our fear, for instance, can be understood as a feeling produced by our perception of bodily changes such as a faster heartbeat and trembling in response to danger. As James summarizes, "We feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful."<sup>6</sup> This theory, also known as the James-Lange theory (Carl Georg Lange developed a similar theory around the same time), emphasizes the pivotal role of physiological aspects in defining emotion.

### B. Emotions as Evaluations

There are also philosophers who emphasize cognitive evaluations as the core defining emotion. Among those philosophers, one may name the neo-stoic approach of Martha Nussbaum, who identifies emotion with judgment (this approach is sometimes called judgmentalism).<sup>7</sup> One may also name Robert Solomon, who understands emotion as cognitive evaluation.<sup>8</sup> According to this approach, fear of something can be understood as a judgment on something that I evaluate as dangerous to me. To be angry would mean a judgment that somebody has wronged me. There are also hybrid evaluative-feeling theories, as Scarantino and de Sousa accurately point out, which combine the cognitive aspect of emotion with the affective one.<sup>9</sup> They distinguish three different versions of the hybrid evaluative-feeling approach: emotions as evaluative perceptions;<sup>10</sup> emotions as evaluative feelings, that is, feelings *toward*;<sup>11</sup> and emotions as patterns of salience.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Most thinkers agree on the obvious candidates, such as fear, joy, anger, and disgust, but there are many less obvious and more complex borderline cases, such as boredom, pride, awe, love, hope, resentment, respect, honor, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Scarantino and de Sousa, "Emotion."

<sup>5</sup> W. James, "What Is an Emotion?" *Mind* 9, no. 2 (1884): 189-90.

<sup>6</sup> James, "What Is an Emotion," 190.

<sup>7</sup> M. C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> R. C. Solomon, *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Scarantino and de Sousa, "Emotion."

<sup>10</sup> M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, trans. M. S. Frings and R. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1985); M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. P. Heath (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); R. C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> P. Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> J. Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); R. de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

### C. Emotions as Motivation

Evolutionary psychologists and cognitive scientists claim that emotions are the products of evolution, emphasizing their crucial adaptive functions in dealing with fundamental life challenges and tasks, such as fighting, reproduction, survival, and so forth. The affective system can be defined as “the primary motivational system.”<sup>13</sup> Studies within this tradition focus on universal aspects of emotion, such as their biological foundations, universal functions, common experience, and universally acknowledged expressions.<sup>14</sup> In this tradition, there are some who assume that emotions are motives, that is, emotions causally determine our actions and the changes we observe in our bodies (such as facial expression or high blood pressure). Some others claim that emotion should be understood as readiness for action.<sup>15</sup>

### D. Emotions as Constructs

Since emotions manifest themselves in a variety of ways and their expressions, intensity, and duration may vary from culture to culture, there are researchers who claim that emotions are either psychological or social constructs and therefore are not universal. Psychological constructionism rejects the idea that emotion can be understood as a built-in causal determinant of the changes in our body or the cause of action. According to this approach, our brain *constructs* the experience of emotions that emerge as a combination of the physical properties of our body, environment, culture, upbringing, and so forth.<sup>16</sup> For instance, “sadness” is a construct resulting from the learned experience that may occur in the situation of terrible loss coinciding with certain bodily feelings and changes such as crying.<sup>17</sup>

Social constructionism assumes that the concepts of person, human identity, and emotions are social constructs. Emotions, in this approach, “are principally strategic evaluational claims associated with local meaning systems, based on cultural cues and precepts.”<sup>18</sup> In this approach, researchers focus on anthropological, sociological, and historical studies of emotion and the cultural, social, and political conditions of the development of emotions.<sup>19</sup> Contemporary mainstream anthropologists and sociologists of emotion do not question the biological aspects of emotion, yet they underline the role of cultural and social constructs, such as language, in shaping emotions and their meaning.<sup>20</sup> Emotions are “embodied culture.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> S. S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (New York: Springer, 2008); P. Ekman, *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (New York: Times Books, 2003); C. E. Izard, *The Face of Emotion* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> P. Ekman, “Universal Facial Expressions of Emotion,” in *Culture and Personality: Contemporary Readings*, ed. R. A. Levine (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1974), 8-15.

<sup>15</sup> N. H. Frijda, *The Laws of Emotion* (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> L. F. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

<sup>18</sup> J. M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23.

<sup>19</sup> C. A. Lutz and L. Abu-Lughod, eds., *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> H. Wulff, ed., *The Emotions: A Cultural Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> S. M. Parish, *Moral Knowing in a Hindu Sacred City: An Exploration of Mind, Emotion, and Self* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Each of these approaches considers different components of emotions as essential. Each of them has been challenged with respect to different issues.<sup>22</sup> I aim in this paper not to defend any of these theories nor to challenge them but rather to attempt to contribute to the ongoing debate by analyzing the understanding of emotion in Nietzsche's philosophy, in such a way as to combine some crucial aspects of these theories. I will elucidate how different aspects of these competing theories were understood and combined within Nietzsche's approach.

## 2. TERMINOLOGICAL ISSUES

Before turning to further considerations, I shall provide a terminological explanation. The English term "emotion" comes from French. It was probably used for the first time by Montaigne in his essays, yet with a different meaning than today.<sup>23</sup> In one of his essays (XXIII: "Various Events from the Same Counsel"), Montaigne describes the situation of a governor who faced the fury of people – in this context, he uses the term "*l'emotion*" translated into English as "commotion," which refers to group emotion.<sup>24</sup> The term "emotion" in another meaning appears in Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*, where the French philosopher writes about "emotions of the soul" (*des émotions de l'âme*) caused by the movements of the spirit like the *motus animae* claimed by Saint Augustine.<sup>25</sup> The English term "emotion" appeared around the seventeenth century with the English translations of Descartes's works. Yet only from the nineteenth century on has it been used in the contemporary meaning as an umbrella notion that covers all or almost all the previously distinguished notions in philosophy such as passions, affects, appetites, desires, drives, sentiments, feelings, upheavals, impulses, and so forth.<sup>26</sup>

With reference to our inner life, Nietzsche used a whole variety of terms, such as instincts (*Instinkte*), drives (*Triebe*), affects (*Affekte*), sensations (*Empfindungen*), emotions (*Emotionen*), feelings (*Gefühle*), moral sentiments (*moralische Gefühle*), passions (*Passionen*, *Leidenschaften*),<sup>27</sup> desires (*Begierden*), and moods (*Stimmungen*). Let me explain these notions briefly.

Instincts and drives are the most frequently used terms by Nietzsche since they play a crucial role in his philosophy.<sup>28</sup> Instincts are inherited or innate. Drives can be both

<sup>22</sup> Scarantino and de Sousa, "Emotion."

<sup>23</sup> K. Wigura, *Wynalazek nowoczesnego serca: Filozoficzne źródła współczesnego myślenia o emocjach* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> M. Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. C. Cotton, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1877; Project Gutenberg, 2021), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm> (accessed 20 April 2023).

<sup>25</sup> R. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings*, trans. M. Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Scarantino and de Sousa, "Emotion." On the history of these concepts, see the magnificent work by Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche uses the word "*Leidenschaft(en)*" (740 times in all his writings and letters) much more often than "*Passion(en)*" (80 times). The latter notion comes from French, while the former one is its German translation, and I assume that they have the same meaning in Nietzsche's works. Both terms are translated into English as "passions."

<sup>28</sup> The term "*Trieb(e)*" appears 961 times in Nietzsche's writings and letters, and the term "*Instinkt(e)*," 933 times. See also P. Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

inherited and acquired. Purposiveness of instinct is ambiguous, yet drives carry with them the idea of direction and an aim – for example, the sex drive is a drive to mate.<sup>29</sup> Drives are a kind of push or inclination, and their aim is usually unconscious.<sup>30</sup> We usually think about our actions and behavior in terms of conscious motivation based on deliberation, calculation, and plans. Yet in fact, we are often unaware of the unconscious drives that move us to action,<sup>31</sup> as Nietzsche claimed, and which inspired Freud to the development of his theory of psychoanalysis.

Affects are inclinations and aversions. They can be learned by imitation. Sensations are the impressions that result from the use of our senses – for instance, an impression of time or space. The term “emotion” appears very rarely in Nietzsche’s writings.<sup>32</sup> It appears in a similar meaning to the one given by Descartes or to pathos in Greek tragedy – having emotion means being deeply moved, usually connected to suffering, as well as to sublime, affective expression. Nietzsche mentions that one can have pleasure in emotion as such,<sup>33</sup> including pleasure in pain.<sup>34</sup> He also writes about group emotion – for example, national emotion.<sup>35</sup> Being emotional is the opposite of being disinterested and is very much required for contemplation, as Nietzsche claims.<sup>36</sup> Feelings are hereditary, and they are drives transformed into pleasant or painful sensations.<sup>37</sup> Drives can also be transformed by moral judgments into moral feelings.<sup>38</sup> Moral feelings involve judgments and evaluations.<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche defines virtues as feelings and consequences of passions and drives; virtues are the results of the “domestication of passions.”<sup>40</sup>

Passions such as love or hatred are strong and conscious manifestations of drives. Passions, according to Nietzsche, were suppressed by the weak by means of morality.<sup>41</sup> Desires are also strong and conscious manifestations of drives, yet their meaning is broader and more basic than passions; they include, for instance, hunger, sexual desire, desire

<sup>29</sup> R. C. Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche: What the Great “Immoralist” Has to Teach Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (la gaya scienza)* (1st ed. 1882; 2nd ed. with new preface 1886), 333 (hereafter cited as FW). All references to Nietzsche’s original writings come from the digital critical edition of the complete works and letters based on the critical text by Colli and Montinari (F. Nietzsche, *Digital Critical Edition of the Complete Works and Letters, Based on the Critical Text*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967], ed. P. D’Iorio [2009], <http://www.nietzschesource.org/texts/eKGWB>). I follow the Colli-Montinari manuscript numeration. When citing English translations of Nietzsche’s works, I add references to the English editions.

<sup>31</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die moralische Vorurtheile* (1st ed. 1881; 2nd ed. with new preface 1886), 179 (hereafter cited as M).

<sup>32</sup> The term “*Emotion(en)*” appears only 35 times in all Nietzsche’s writings and letters.

<sup>33</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister*, Erster Band (1st ed. 1878; 2nd ed. with new preface 1886), 103 (hereafter cited as MA); MA-140.

<sup>34</sup> MA-108.

<sup>35</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*, in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II* (1st ed. 1878; 2nd ed. with new preface 1886), 324 (hereafter cited as MAII-VM); MAII-VM-324.

<sup>36</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (1869-1888), 1880,6[67] (hereafter cited as NF).

<sup>37</sup> MA-32.

<sup>38</sup> M-36

<sup>39</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), 191 (hereafter cited as JGB).

<sup>40</sup> L. Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> FW-294.

for revenge, desire for knowledge, curiosity, pride, greed, and so forth. They are tightly connected with our sensuality and passions. In the words of Zarathustra's "Night Song," Nietzsche writes about his desire for love (*Begierde nach Liebe*), which is in fact desire for desire itself (*Begierde nach Begehren*).<sup>42</sup> According to Nietzsche, one always loves only one's desire and not what is desired.<sup>43</sup> Desires and passions are the manifestations of drives that constitute the only reality given to us and which he considers as the starting point for explaining ourselves, our entire life,<sup>44</sup> and the world itself (since the world is a desire).<sup>45</sup>

Moods such as happiness or sorrow are the result of an inner conflict of feelings that conditions our temper. He calls moods the "current mass of sensations" (*Empfindungen*) that come from our experiences and make us resonate with other feelings.<sup>46</sup> Thus, moods "arise either from inner conflicts or else from external pressure on the inner world."<sup>47</sup> Young Nietzsche devoted a short essay to the subject of moods in which he wrote: "Dear moods, I salute you, marvelous variations of tempestuous soul, as manifold as nature itself, but more magnificent than nature, since you eternally transcend yourselves and strive eternally upwards [...]. Right through the middle of my heart. Storm and rain! Thunder and lightening!"<sup>48</sup> His essay may inspire us to think of a soul by an analogy to a piece of music that may be played with virtuosity by a musician and depict a kind of harmony composed out of opposite tones.

In my considerations, I utilize the notion "emotion" in its contemporary meaning to capture most aspects of our inner life addressed by Nietzsche. Yet when necessary, I will refer to the differences between some of these notions in my further considerations.

## II. NIETZSCHE'S AFFIRMATION OF PASSIONATE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

The affirmation of life is the core message of Nietzsche's philosophy. To affirm life means saying "yes" to life with all it brings. A passionate life – life that burns like a flame<sup>49</sup> – is a life fully engaged with the world, a life that is creative and rich and that gives itself away, and this is possible thanks only to emotions, which are what enable our engagement with others and with the world.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Nietzsche argues for the affirmation of passions, which are not only an integral part of life but foremost, that they are *the root of life*,<sup>51</sup> give color to life,<sup>52</sup> and constitute its very meaning.<sup>53</sup>

Nietzsche points out that people used to fight against their passions, considering them to be enemies. Forbidding oneself to express our passions results in the suppression

<sup>42</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883-85), II-Nachtlied (hereafter cited as ZA).

<sup>43</sup> NF-1882,3[1].

<sup>44</sup> JGB-36.

<sup>45</sup> NF-1880,5[27].

<sup>46</sup> F. Nietzsche, "On Moods," trans. G. Parkes, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 2 (1991): 6.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

<sup>49</sup> ZA-I-Schaffender; FW-Vorspiel-62.

<sup>50</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

<sup>51</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert* (1889), Moral-1 (hereafter cited as GD).

<sup>52</sup> FW-7.

<sup>53</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.



of the passions themselves.<sup>54</sup> According to Nietzsche, combating our own passions means combating what is most alive in us – life itself. He claims that only the weak who are afraid of themselves try to eradicate their drives, while those who are free spirits, that is, noble men, do not need to be afraid of their natural inclinations.<sup>55</sup> Nietzsche expresses his highest admiration for the Ancient Greeks, who were not afraid of their passions and celebrated them on special festive days such as the Dionysia, which were an important part of the civic life of the polis.<sup>56</sup>

We can identify two overlapping sources for the suppression of passions addressed by Nietzsche: rationalism and morality, which are combined in a rationalistic morality. First, Nietzsche rejects the idea of reason as a master over passions, blaming Socrates for making reason into a tyrant.<sup>57</sup> Yet that does not mean that Nietzsche should be considered an advocate of irrationalism in philosophy, as I will elucidate in the next section. Second, Nietzsche rejects the moral evaluation of passions. Passions are manifestations of drives that are neither good nor evil.<sup>58</sup> Considering our natural inclinations as evil is a great injustice toward all nature and a sign of distrust of oneself.<sup>59</sup> This injustice toward our own natures was expressed in a form of morality that he calls “anti-nature.”<sup>60</sup> In the words of Zarathustra, Nietzsche calls out, “Dare for once to believe yourselves – yourselves and your entrails! Whoever cannot believe himself always lies.”<sup>61</sup> He argues for translating humanity back into nature, which should not be confused with coming back to nature. I will explore this issue in the second section below. Nietzsche’s rejection of both rationalistic and moral interpretations of life is crucial for understanding the role and meaning of emotions in his philosophy. This issue also sheds light on Nietzsche’s approach to emotion as compared to the contemporary theories of emotion.

## 1. THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE AND TRAGIC KNOWLEDGE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REASON AND EMOTION

There is a long tradition in philosophy that separates reason from emotion, considering them as opposite to each other. The tradition stems from Plato and considers reason to be superior to emotions. Emotions are identified within this tradition as irrational drives, automatic reactions, and blind passions that may corrupt reasoning. Nietzsche objects to the tyranny of reason, yet he does not side with irrationality. He claims that the separation of reason and emotion is simply false.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche distinguishes two sorts of knowledge: theoretical and tragic. The rise of theoretical knowledge dates back to Socrates, as Nietzsche claims, and it suppressed tragic knowledge, which was known to pre-Socratic Greeks. Theoretical

<sup>54</sup> FW-47.

<sup>55</sup> FW-294.

<sup>56</sup> MAII-VM-220.

<sup>57</sup> GD-Sokrates-10.

<sup>58</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

<sup>59</sup> FW-294.

<sup>60</sup> GD-Moral.

<sup>61</sup> ZA-II-Erkenntnis; F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. A. del Caro, ed. A. del Caro and R. B. Pippin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 97.

knowledge is based on a profound illusion of the limitless capabilities of reasoning.<sup>62</sup> The spirit of science is based on the theoretical knowledge that expresses an optimistic belief in the human ability to understand and correct life through knowledge.<sup>63</sup> Yet the philosophy that stems from this belief also reveals the limits of reason and undermines its claim to universal validity, as Kant showed<sup>64</sup> and that even Socrates was aware of.<sup>65</sup> By criticizing rationalistic "optimism which imagines itself to be limitless,"<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche objects to naïve rationalism, just like Michael Oakeshott, who criticized the Rationalist who stands for independence of mind on all occasions, rejects all other authorities except the authority of "reason," and never doubts the power of his "reason."<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche argues for *passionate* philosophy instead of rationalistic philosophy reduced to epistemology. He criticizes rationalistic philosophy based on the principle of impartiality, arguing that only what is personal matters and that "'selflessness' has no value in heaven or on earth; all great problems demand great love, and only strong, round, secure minds who have a firm grip on themselves are capable of that."<sup>68</sup> Thus, he calls the rationalistic philosophy "a doctrine of abstinence," a futile intellectual effort deprived of creativity and unable to provide inspiration or fulfilment.<sup>69</sup> This does not mean that he argued for subjectivity in philosophy; rather, it means that he argued for the emotional engagement of philosophers in the subject of their studies, for a personal relationship with the philosophical problems<sup>70</sup> – "writing with their blood,"<sup>71</sup> as he certainly did.<sup>72</sup>

Nietzsche contrasts theoretical knowledge with the tragic view of the world that was represented by Greek tragedy. Tragic knowledge aims at wisdom that is focused on the total image of the world.<sup>73</sup> Instead of seeking for the naked truth, the truth at all costs, instead of constant unveiling, tragic knowledge is focused on what remains veiled, what cannot be grasped by intellect only.<sup>74</sup> This does not mean the rejection of science. Quite the contrary, Nietzsche himself was a great admirer of science.<sup>75</sup> It means supplementing science with knowledge, which Ancient Greeks expressed in a form of tragedy. Greek tragedy should not be reduced to its aesthetic level since it played a crucial political and religious role and was "the highest manifestation of a type of humanity for which art, religion, and

<sup>62</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Oder: Griechenthum und Pessimismus* (1872), 15 (hereafter cited as GT).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>65</sup> JGB-191.

<sup>66</sup> GT-18; F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, trans. R. Speirs, ed. R. Geuss and R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 86.

<sup>67</sup> M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1962), 1.

<sup>68</sup> FW-345; F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. H. Nauckhoff, poems trans. A. del Caro, ed. B. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 202.

<sup>69</sup> JGB-204; F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. J. Norman, ed. R-P Horstmann and J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.

<sup>70</sup> L. Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>71</sup> ZA-I-Lesen.

<sup>72</sup> FW-Vorrede-3.

<sup>73</sup> GT-18.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>75</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*.

philosophy still form an indissoluble unity,” as noted by Werner Jaeger.<sup>76</sup> Nietzsche argues that there is an eternal struggle between the theoretical and the tragic views, which together constitute our wisdom.<sup>77</sup> Tragic knowledge is concerned with vitality and creativity, gazing into the depth of existence, the abyss of being, where you can see both life and death, creativity and destruction, the absurdity and terror of existence.<sup>78</sup> The theoretical man praises only what he can understand and make reasonable,<sup>79</sup> while the tragic man praises what he can crave for – “eternal lust and delight of Existence.”<sup>80</sup>

Nietzsche initially believed that, since theoretical knowledge has been carried out to its limits, there would be an opportunity for the rebirth of tragedy, especially in the form of Wagner’s music, as he claimed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Later, however, he was disappointed with Wagner and rejected the idea of the rebirth of tragedy. Yet he did not stop posing the question concerning “a kingdom of wisdom from which the logician is banished.”<sup>81</sup> In his further writings, Nietzsche continues pointing out that human nature is not purely rational and cannot be transformed into such without the loss of its most fundamental aspects:

The illogical is necessary for human beings, and from being illogical arises much that is good. It is so firmly fixed in the passions, in language, in art, in religion, and generally in everything that lends value to life that we cannot remove it without thereby doing irremediable damage to these beautiful things.<sup>82</sup>

This does not mean that passions are opposed to reason. Quite the contrary, Nietzsche argues that the idea of reason as an independent entity is a misunderstanding since it is rather “a system of relations between various passions and desires.”<sup>83</sup> Nietzsche criticizes the whole conception of reason guiding passions where the latter are seen as “abnormal, dangerous, semi-animal,” and aimed at pleasure only.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, he claims that every passion “possesses its quantum of reason,”<sup>85</sup> which I will explore in more detail in my further considerations.

Nietzsche rejects the Cartesian mind-body dualism with its claim of the authority of reason, arguing for the authority of instincts and drives.<sup>86</sup> He argues for the replacement of dualism with a kind of monism, emphasizing that we are embodied, biological creatures.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>76</sup> W. Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. G. Highet, vol. 1 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), 246.

<sup>77</sup> GT-17.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 17; Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 80.

<sup>81</sup> GT-14; Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 71.

<sup>82</sup> MA-31; F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39.

<sup>83</sup> NF-1887,11[310]; F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, div. of Random House, 1968), 208.

<sup>84</sup> NF-1887,11[310]; Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 208.

<sup>85</sup> NF-1887,11[310]; Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 208.

<sup>86</sup> JGB-191.

<sup>87</sup> I revised my view on this matter as presented in M. Soniewicka, *After God: The Normative Power of the Will* (Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2017).

[B]ody am I through and through, and nothing besides [...]  
 The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace [...]  
 There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom.<sup>88</sup>

Nietzsche distinguishes between "small reason" (*Geist* – mind), which can be understood as our intellect, and "great reason" (body), which is constituted by drives and involves both emotion and intellect.<sup>89</sup> Our intellect is not an independent faculty, as many philosophers believed; it is only an instrument of other drives.<sup>90</sup> "Philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*," as Nietzsche points out.<sup>91</sup> By philosophy as interpretation of the body, he means that our drives are the only reality that we can grasp and study.<sup>92</sup> He does not assume any other reality besides the one given to us.<sup>93</sup> With our cognitive abilities, we have no privileged access to the world.<sup>94</sup> The only privileged access that we have is to ourselves, and thus the main goal of cognition is knowledge of oneself, constituting a source of experience for ourselves.<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche identifies our knowledge of the world with the human nervous system.<sup>96</sup> People do not uncover the world in itself but only their own conceptual apparatus,<sup>97</sup> their own "calipers,"<sup>98</sup> and hence knowledge of self is the limit of knowledge of all other things.<sup>99</sup> Yet studying "the inner world of drives and passions" can cause us to understand not only "the inner world but the world simply."<sup>100</sup> Thus, tragic knowledge has been replaced by psychology, which I will explore further in the next section.

By a misunderstanding of the body, Nietzsche means the false separation of body and thought that stems from the fact that we are locked in a delusive "chamber of consciousness" – a product of nature that separated us from our own bodies – from "the convulsions of the intestines, the quick flow of the blood-currents."<sup>101</sup> As Nietzsche claims, there is no opposition between thought and instincts since "the greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity."<sup>102</sup> In other words, conscious thought is a result of the struggle of drives and their impact on one another.<sup>103</sup> Besides,

<sup>88</sup> ZA-I-Veraechter; Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 23.

<sup>89</sup> ZA-I-Veraechter.

<sup>90</sup> M-109; F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. M. Clark and B. Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 64–65; JGB-191.

<sup>91</sup> FW-Vorrede-2; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 5.

<sup>92</sup> JGB-36.

<sup>93</sup> L. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>94</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (1873), 1 (hereafter cited as WL).

<sup>95</sup> MAI-292; FW-324.

<sup>96</sup> NF-1880,10[E95].

<sup>97</sup> M-483.

<sup>98</sup> NF-1880,10[D83].

<sup>99</sup> M-48.

<sup>100</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, 302.

<sup>101</sup> WL-1; F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense," in *Early Greek Philosophy and Other Essays*, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. M. A. Mügge, ed. O. Levy (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 175–76.

<sup>102</sup> JGB-3; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 6–7.

<sup>103</sup> FW-333.

“the greatest part of our mind’s activity [*geistigen Wirkens*] proceeds unconscious and unfelt [...]. Conscious thought, especially that of the philosopher, is the least vigorous and therefore also the relatively mildest and calmest type of thought.”<sup>104</sup> Consciousness was developed for the goal of communication, and therefore we can communicate in language only what is common and general.<sup>105</sup> And what is most individual in us remains beyond verbal communication.<sup>106</sup> Yet the expression of emotion is also a way of communication that covers both conscious and unconscious levels of our experiences and therefore is able to communicate to others, as well as to ourselves, what is both common and uncommon (individual) in us.

## 2. TRANSLATING HUMANITY BACK INTO NATURE: BIOLOGIZATION AND PSYCHOLOGIZATION OF MORALITY

The affirmation of emotions as crucial for our life and self-understanding is strongly related to Nietzsche’s core philosophical idea of translating humanity back into nature.<sup>107</sup> Nietzsche translates humanity back into nature with the use of genealogical interpretation. This method relies on researching the origins of our notions, social practices, and manners of evaluation in order to better understand them and verify their efficacy. Yet it is not a mere historical analysis but rather a critical method, combining aspects of psychology, anthropology, sociology, philology, phenomenology, and history.<sup>108</sup> Nietzsche emphasizes the role of psychology in this approach, claiming that psychology is “the path to the fundamental problems,” and therefore names it “the queen of sciences.”<sup>109</sup> Psychological knowledge is of such significance since it “concerns the human meaning of these fundamental problems (our need for them, their inescapability for us) and their cognitive structure in human consciousness.”<sup>110</sup> This approach, “genealogical psychophysiology,”<sup>111</sup> leads him to discovering emotions as crucial in understanding our moral life.<sup>112</sup> Yet in contrast to traditional philosophy, which frequently considered morality in

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 186. We can find the same approach in contemporary cognitive sciences, see J. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Touchstone, 1998).

<sup>105</sup> FW-354; GD-Streifzuege-26.

<sup>106</sup> Antoni Kępiński, the father of modern Polish psychiatry, claimed that biological and emotional layers of the self are the most individual aspects of each human being, while social-cultural layers to which thinking and reasoning belong are collective and general; see A. Kępiński, *Psychopatie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014). It is an interesting point since quite frequently we search for the proof of our uniqueness in the results of our intellect, considering our biology as something inferior because of its universality.

<sup>107</sup> JGB-123.

<sup>108</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*; B. Williams, “Nietzsche,” in *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy*, ed. M. Burnyeat (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 299-337. A direct inspiration for Nietzsche was the book by his friend Paul Rée titled *Der Ursprung der moralischen Empfindungen*, published in 1877. See more on this in Soniewicka, *After God*.

<sup>109</sup> JGB-23; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 24.

<sup>110</sup> W. Wood, “Three Candidates for First Philosophy in Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*,” *Argument* 12, no. 1 (2022): 164.

<sup>111</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*.

<sup>112</sup> See M. Alfano, *Nietzsche’s Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); M. Riccardi, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

terms of control of emotions<sup>113</sup> or correction of emotions<sup>114</sup> by means of reason, Nietzsche identifies morality with "a sign language of the affects."<sup>115</sup> According to Nietzsche, virtues are feelings that can be hereditary by contrast to thoughts, and he claims that virtues are the consequences of drives.<sup>116</sup> Nietzsche argues for the naturalization (psychologization and biologization) of humanity, which also means treating the human being as part of nature, "continuous with sentient life."<sup>117</sup> This biologization of human nature leads him to investigations and reconsiderations of human behavior and judgments in terms of drives, actual and potential passions – that is it brings him to the naturalization of ethics.

At first glance, it seems that he follows the path of British empiricists such as David Hume or Adam Smith, who advocated the priority of emotions over reason in moral life, claiming that they play a fundamental role in moral valuing. This approach, called sentimentalism and further developed by evolutionary psychology, was refuted by Nietzsche. An important charge that Nietzsche formulated against evolutionary psychology is that the research carried out within it is based on a priori assumptions (he called them superstitions), which narrowed their scope and warped its results.<sup>118</sup> The representatives of the Scottish Enlightenment started their research on morality with an assumption that sympathy (equivalent of empathy in contemporary studies) is something good as such and that it provides the foundations for morality.<sup>119</sup> They assume the altruistic and impartial evaluation as moral valuation itself.<sup>120</sup> Nietzsche mocks research that is based on the theory

<sup>113</sup> Stoics understood passions as false judgments and therefore aimed for indifference to passions (apatheia); see Cicero: *Rozmowy Tuskańskie i inne pisma* (Libri tusculanarum disputationum et al.), trans. J. Śmigaj (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010); L. A. Seneca, *Mysli* (Ad Marciam de concolatione et al.), trans. S. Stabryła (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1987). Nietzsche objects to the Stoic ideal, accusing Stoics of falsifying nature (JGB-9). Plato's metaphor of a chariot, in which reason is a driver and horses represent appetites and desires on the one hand and spiritedness (*thumos*) on the other, suggests that emotions must be mastered and directed, yet they are also necessary since the chariot would never move without them (Plato, *Fajdros*, trans. L. Regner [Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993]). Nietzsche refers to the metaphor, occasionally claiming that we should not be angry at our horses (FW-198) but rather manage to drive them (JGB-284), yet not with the use of our intellect but rather with our will. Kant famously claimed that moral action must be taken out of duty discovered by reason and free of inclination, if not contrary to them (I. Kant, *Uzasadnienie metafizyki moralności* [*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*], trans. M. Wartenberg [Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981]; see M. Soniewicka, "A Command Without a Commander – From the Paradigm of Normativity to the Paradigm of Responsibility," in *The Many Faces of Normativity*, ed. J. Stelmach, B. Brożek, and M. Hohol [Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2013], 257-87). Nietzsche rejects the Kantian idea of the Ought (F. Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christenthum*, 1888, 11, (hereafter cited as AC); AC-11) and criticizes his separation of reason, sensibility, and feeling (GD-Streizuege-49).

<sup>114</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. R. Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Philippa Foot interpreted Aristotle in these terms, claiming that virtues are corrections to emotion – for example, courage as overcoming fear – and vices are excessive emotions; see P. Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Nietzsche criticized "the Aristotelianism of morals," which he identified with the "method of tuning down the affects to a harmless mean" (JGB-198; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 85).

<sup>115</sup> JGB-198; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 77.

<sup>116</sup> FW-21.

<sup>117</sup> Wood, "Three Candidates for First Philosophy," 150.

<sup>118</sup> FW-345.

<sup>119</sup> D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Clarendon Hume Edition Series, ed. D. F. Norton and M. J. Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, ed. K. Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>120</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift* (1887), Vorrede-4.



of natural selection and that leads from the “Darwinian beast” to the contemporary “moral weakling who ‘no longer bites’” but is full of care and empathy, denies the self, and is keen to cooperate.<sup>121</sup> The error committed by these scholars lies in the fact that they assume what they want to prove – that there is a biological conditioning of non-egotistical moral feelings that are socially useful. According to Nietzsche, these assumptions are the result of Christian values being deeply rooted in our culture, which these researchers consider as universal and given values, seeking their empirical confirmation.<sup>122</sup>

Both Platonism and Christianity are based on an assumption that the human soul, including reason and emotion, is directed toward the Good or God.<sup>123</sup> Evolutionary psychology followed that path by replacing the concept of Platonian love (eros) and Christian love (agape) with evolutionary adaptations that enable us to meet the requirements of the utilitarian ethics of universal benevolence.<sup>124</sup> Nietzsche rejects this approach as a homeopathic version of Christianity.<sup>125</sup> In contrast to British empiricists, Nietzsche does not seek justification for existing (i.e., Christian) morality but rather questions morality itself. He is interested in drives that are manifested in our judgements and representations – their chemistry and history:

All that we need, and what can be given to us only now, at the present level of the individual sciences, is a chemistry of the moral, religious, aesthetic representations and sensations, likewise of all those stimuli that we experience within ourselves amid the wholesale and retail transactions of culture and society, indeed even in solitude: what if this chemistry were to reach the conclusion that in this area, too, the most magnificent colors have been extracted from base, even despised materials? Will many people have the desire to pursue such investigations?<sup>126</sup>

Nietzsche claims that all kinds of passions should be studied separately and points out that “so far, all that has given color to existence still lacks a history: where could you find a history of love, of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of piety, of cruelty?”<sup>127</sup> Thus, one may claim that his approach preceded and prepared the ground for the contemporary interdisciplinary studies of emotions.

With his genealogical method, Nietzsche goes further in his study of emotions than sentimentalists who were focused on moral sentiments. Moral sentiments are for Nietzsche drives that have been “baptized.”<sup>128</sup> By “baptized drives” he means drives that have been transformed by moral judgements and evolved into painful or pleasant feelings –

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>122</sup> GD-Streifzuege-5.

<sup>123</sup> JGB-191.

<sup>124</sup> C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); see also M. Soniewicka, “‘Promissory’ Naturalism – Comments on Moral Sources,” *Polish Law Review* 3, no. 1 (2017): 259-75.

<sup>125</sup> NF-188,14[45].

<sup>126</sup> MA-1; Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 15.

<sup>127</sup> FW-7; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 34.

<sup>128</sup> M-38.

that is, a good or a bad conscience.<sup>129</sup> Nietzsche calls morality "anti-nature" when moral judgments were aimed at the suppression of passions.<sup>130</sup> Anti-natural morality "turns its back on the instincts of life," "condemns these instincts," and by negating the desire for life it becomes an enemy of life.<sup>131</sup> "Every naturalism in morality – which is to say: every *healthy* morality – is governed by an instinct of life."<sup>132</sup> Nietzsche advocates evaluating our passions according to the criteria of individual life and individual health – some passions are disastrous and unhealthy while others are healthy and life-enhancing for a particular person – and all sorts of generalizations are unreasonable and unscientific.<sup>133</sup> Passion can be both life-enhancing and self-deceptive; the latter serves the former. Health (growth, power, life) instead of truth is the only criterion for evaluating the passions.<sup>134</sup> In other words, passions as a manifestation of drives should be explained in terms of individual well-being,<sup>135</sup> yet they should not be evaluated in terms of common prosperity, pleasure, security, or comfort that constitutes the idea of happiness, which is the discovery of the "last men."<sup>136</sup> The morality of common prosperity is the morality of the herd, of its average members, who found their strength in their number.

The second important charge Nietzsche formulated against evolutionary psychology is that it is based on an assumption that "the struggle for existence" (self-preservation) is the foundation of morals, which is a principle borrowed from Spinoza.<sup>137</sup> He criticizes the thesis that the "survival of the fittest" and natural selection could lead to the perfection of the species. In his opinion, Darwinism is better suited to explaining the degeneration of a species, since the average, the largest number, always prevail and then eliminate the atypical examples (including the best as well as the worst) thanks to their numerical ascendancy.<sup>138</sup> He replaces the idea of the struggle for survival with the struggle for power<sup>139</sup> as the more adequate interpretation, and thus the idea of the will to power becomes his basic interpretation of the world.<sup>140</sup> The will to power (*Wille zur Macht*) is the will to grow, to seek power; when it disappears, life perishes with it.<sup>141</sup> In contrast to the desire for preserving life or the desire for pleasure, the will to power is the desire to have more power, to overcome oneself – not to be, but to *be more*. Power manifests itself in everything that enhances life – in creativity, mastery, and activity. Will to power is a will of life.<sup>142</sup>

Nietzsche assumes that psychology is "the doctrine of the development of the will to power," "a doctrine of the reciprocal dependence of the 'good' and the 'bad'

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> GD-Moral.

<sup>131</sup> GD-Moral-4; F. Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. J. Norman, ed. A. Ridley and J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> JGB-198.

<sup>134</sup> FW-Vorrede-2.

<sup>135</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

<sup>136</sup> Za-Vorrede-6.

<sup>137</sup> NF-1881,11[193].

<sup>138</sup> GD-Streifzuege-14.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> JGB-13; JGB-36.

<sup>141</sup> See Soniewicka, *After God*.

<sup>142</sup> JGB-259.

drives.”<sup>143</sup> This kind of psychology is different from the evolutionary psychology utilized by sentimentalists; he calls it an “untouched realm of dangerous knowledge.”<sup>144</sup> He considers this knowledge dangerous because it assumes that all drives have their own value and because “even the affects of hatred, envy, greed, and power-lust” can be considered as “the conditioning affects of life, as elements that fundamentally and essentially need to be present in the total economy of life, and consequently need to be enhanced where life is enhanced.”<sup>145</sup>

### III. NIETZSCHE'S UNDERSTANDING OF EMOTION

Having introduced the most important aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy necessary for understanding emotion, I can now summarize his approach to this issue. I will elucidate the pivotal features of emotion by comparing them to mainstream conceptualizations.

#### 1. PHYSIOLOGY

William James published his famous paper “What Is an Emotion?” in 1884. At the same time, Nietzsche was publishing his main works belonging to the so-called positivist period, such as *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *Daybreak* (1881), and *Gay Science* (1882). In these works, Nietzsche put an emphasis on physiological aspects of emotion by putting drives and instincts in the center of his analysis. Drives and instincts are physiological phenomena that manifest themselves in human passions, desires, affects, and so forth.<sup>146</sup> He never mentioned James in his writings or letters, yet it is no coincidence that he took the physiological stance characteristic of the psychology of his times. Despite differences between James's and Nietzsche's approaches, they both concentrated on bodily functions as a starting point. James, however, understood emotion as conscious mental experience, while Nietzsche went in his analysis beyond consciousness and back to the body itself, grounding ethics in human nature.<sup>147</sup> Human nature was no longer identified with God-given soul but with the body and its physiology.<sup>148</sup> Yet Nietzsche did not give up the concept of human soul, advocating for the redefinition of the concept in terms of drives and affects<sup>149</sup> and for the embodiment of both the mind (*Geist*) and the soul (*Seele*).<sup>150</sup>

In the positivist period of his writing, Nietzsche seems to assume a “hydraulic model of emotions” understood as energy, irrational forces that stream forth, dry up, pressure, flow, and can be channeled and sublimated<sup>151</sup> or compensated in dreams.<sup>152</sup> This part of his approach was later followed by Freud. The theory of drives as blind forces that cannot be eliminated but only channeled or redirected and expressed in a metaphor of mindless

<sup>143</sup> JGB-23; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 23.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> See also Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self*.

<sup>147</sup> See C. Fowles, “The Heart of Flesh: Nietzsche on Affects and the Interpretation of the Body,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 58, no. 1 (2020): 113-39; Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

<sup>148</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*; Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

<sup>149</sup> JGB-12.

<sup>150</sup> FW-Vorrede-3.

<sup>151</sup> MAII-VM-220; NF-1880,6[67].

<sup>152</sup> M-119.

floods and torrents was typical for the nineteenth century.<sup>153</sup> Yet Nietzsche's approach goes beyond a typical hydraulic model since he assumes that biology can be explained in terms of the will to power that constitutes the deep structure of all of nature, and therefore drives are not completely "blind" forces. Drives are pushes that are directed toward something – for example, the sex drive is a drive to mate – yet their aim is usually unconscious.<sup>154</sup> He assumes that emotion, contrary to the theory of blind forces, can be developed, learned, and cultivated. Nietzsche's approach to emotion encompasses cognitive, evolutionary, as well as cultural aspects, which I will discuss in the next sections.

## 2. COGNITION

Among most contemporary thinkers, there is general agreement about the intentionality of emotions. Emotions are intentional, that is, they have an object (e.g., fear of a lion) or have representational qualities, that is, they represent the world as it is (e.g., fear represents the danger of a given situation).<sup>155</sup> Most contemporary thinkers agree that emotions are intelligent or have their own rationality. The rationality of emotions can be understood as (1) cognitive, that is, their ability to represent the world as it is; and (2) strategic, that is, their ability to lead to an action that promotes the agent's interests.<sup>156</sup> Both aspects are important and constitute something that we usually recognize as the intelligence of emotions.<sup>157</sup>

Nietzsche acknowledges the intentionality of emotions, yet he claims that drives that manifest themselves in our passions or feelings are usually directed at other drives. Even the "will to overcome an affect is, in the end, itself only the will of another, or several other, affects."<sup>158</sup> A similar thought was expressed by George Bernard Shaw, who pointed out that nothing is "strong enough to impose thoughts on a passion except a stronger passion still."<sup>159</sup> Behind all our drives one may find the will to power as the fundamental drive.<sup>160</sup> This means that the "aboutness" of our emotions can be understood in terms of power – growing or descending life. Thus, different emotional reactions to an insult can be interpreted as different strategies of the will to power – the will to dominate.

Despite taking a physiological stance on emotion, Nietzsche does not reduce emotions to mere happenings or disturbances but considers them as strategies and ways of engaging with the world.<sup>161</sup> They contain intelligence in both the strategic and the cognitive meaning yet are differently interpreted by Nietzsche than by contemporary mainstream scholars. Both meanings are interpreted by Nietzsche in terms of the will to power. When analyzing human passions or feelings, Nietzsche recognizes them as manifestations of drives that in the end are all about power relations. For instance, such reactive emotions as

<sup>153</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Objectless emotions are treated as moods (e.g., irritation, depression).

<sup>156</sup> Scarantino and de Sousa, "Emotion."

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> JGB-117; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 65

<sup>159</sup> G. B. Shaw, *Man and Superman: A Comedy and a Philosophy* by George Bernard Shaw, A Penn State Electronic Classics Series Publication (Hazleton, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2003), 59.

<sup>160</sup> JGB-36.

<sup>161</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*.

pity or resentment,<sup>162</sup> which gained much of Nietzsche's attention, are defense mechanisms or strategies for the self-protection of those who are too weak to defend themselves actively. Another example could be love for the sake of itself – it is a creative force that engages human beings entirely and therefore has a great transformational power.<sup>163</sup> He defines this kind of love as the highest degree of the will to power since it enables the richest spirits to impose power upon themselves and others.<sup>164</sup>

Regarding representational qualities, Nietzsche would rather say that emotions provide an interpretation of the world – in fact, the only interpretation truly accessible to us. Just like contemporary scholars, Nietzsche claims that emotions involve an appraisal of the significance of a given trigger situation – in a most basic form it appears as attraction or aversion:

For all aversion is connected to an assessment, just as all attraction is. A drive toward something or away from something, without a feeling that we want what is beneficial and are avoiding what is harmful, a drive without a sort of knowing appraisal about the value of the goal, does not exist among human beings.<sup>165</sup>

Nietzsche acknowledges that *all* drives toward something or away from something in a human being are accompanied by a feeling that involves judgment or evaluations, thus one may claim that drives involve “a kind of knowing appraisal about the value.” In other words, all drives involve an evaluative-cognitive component related to human well-being and provide insights concerning the world and other people.

The relationship between judgments/evaluations and emotion requires explanation with reference to the distinction between feelings and drives mentioned in the beginning. Nietzsche identifies feelings (inclinations, aversions) with judgments and evaluations.<sup>166</sup> Our feelings are the inherited judgements of our ancestors; they are the embodied experience of other generations. Feelings are stronger than judgments and make us do things we no longer believe in.<sup>167</sup>

What is more, our drives can be not only redirected, channeled, suppressed, or eradicated, but they can also be reshaped and modified by judgments and evaluations that become their second nature in a form of feelings.<sup>168</sup> Drives can be affected only by other drives, as was mentioned above. Yet there is no contradiction here, since Nietzsche argues that our moral judgments and evaluations “are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us, a kind of acquired language for designating certain nervous stimuli.”<sup>169</sup> Even the highest value judgments are, according to Nietzsche, “symptoms of certain bodies” – their successes or failures, fulness of power or

<sup>162</sup> M. Scheler, *Ressentiment*, ed. A. Tallon (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994); see Soniewicka, *After God*.

<sup>163</sup> NF-1888,14[130].

<sup>164</sup> NF-1887,9[145].

<sup>165</sup> MA-32; Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 40.

<sup>166</sup> JGB-191.

<sup>167</sup> M-99.

<sup>168</sup> M-38.

<sup>169</sup> M-119; Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 76.

impoverishment and decadence.<sup>170</sup> Thus, we cannot say that judgments are the products of our conscious deliberation only. Our unconscious physiological life is also engaged in producing judgments. Our intellect is not an independent entity and cannot be separated from the body, as was mentioned in the previous part, but is only the instrument of drives.<sup>171</sup> Our experiences are invented – they are what we put in them.<sup>172</sup> Nietzsche means the result not of reflective consciousness but of unconscious processes – the totality of drives that is unknown to us: “Our drives [...] do nothing but interpret nervous stimuli and, according to their requirements, posit their ‘causes’ [...] all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text.”<sup>173</sup>

In sum, Nietzsche would agree with judgmentalists that our feelings, especially moral feelings, are identified with judgments. Yet emotion is much more than feeling. Emotion in our contemporary meaning is a very complex and complicated phenomenon united in one word that encompasses a multiplicity of ingredients, such as physiological aspects (what Nietzsche called nerves, we would call neurons today), feelings, thoughts, evaluations, judgments, motions, sensations, and so forth.<sup>174</sup> What is more, Nietzsche claims that judgments are the product of our drives and their “self-interpretation.” Thus, in the end, it is not judgment as an essential part of emotion but rather drive as the essential part of all being.

### 3. MOTIVATION

Despite all the aforementioned differences, it is worth emphasizing those of Nietzsche’s insights that are shared by contemporary evolutionary psychologists. First, Nietzsche pointed out that we are emotional beings who justify their actions with an ex post facto rationalization,<sup>175</sup> which is also the stance of the social intuitionist model.<sup>176</sup> Paradoxically, Nietzsche ascribed this discovery to Socrates – the grandfather of rationalism – who was aware of the limits of his own reasoning. Nietzsche called him a great ironist who claimed that “we have to follow our instincts but persuade reason to come to their aid with good motives.”<sup>177</sup> In other words, Socrates knew that “his own reasoning was in the service of his own instincts.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, he claimed that, in the context of evaluations, our instincts deserve more authority than reason.

Second, Nietzsche claimed that our moral feelings are either inherited judgments, as was mentioned above, or inclinations and aversions transmitted to children through imitation and later on justified, yet this justification:

<sup>170</sup> FW-Vorrede-2; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 5-6.

<sup>171</sup> M-109.

<sup>172</sup> M-119.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.; Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 75.

<sup>174</sup> For an approach that is similar to some extent in contemporary cognitive science, see LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*; R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (London: Vintage, 2006).

<sup>175</sup> JGB-191.

<sup>176</sup> D. Kahneman, “Can We Trust Our Intuitions?,” in *Conversations on Ethics*, ed. A. Voorhoeve (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 67-85; J. Haidt, “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment,” *Psychological Review* 108, no. 4 (2001): 814-34.

<sup>177</sup> JGB-191; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 81.

<sup>178</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Task*, 158.



has nothing to do with either the origin or the degree of intensity of the feeling: all one is doing is complying with the rule that, as a rational being, one has to have reasons for one's For and Against, and that they have to be adducible and acceptable reasons. To this extent the history of moral feelings is quite different from the history of moral concepts. The former are powerful before the action, the latter especially after the action in face of the need to pronounce upon it.<sup>179</sup>

We assume that our deliberate actions are based on a calculation of the consequences of possible outcomes of different actions that we compare. We consider only reflective consciousness and neglect the unconscious processes that are decisive here. Our actions are determined by different species of motives than are our pictures of the consequences – our habits, other people's impact, trivial events, and moods come into play – in part motives that are unknown and impossible to be considered beforehand.<sup>180</sup> Not actual motives of action but belief in this or that motive is crucial for people's happiness and misery, as Nietzsche claimed.<sup>181</sup>

Yet Nietzsche would also reject the simplified idea that emotions are mere reactions to certain situations or that emotions constitute motives that determine action. He claimed that the whole idea of searching for the motives of our behavior was invented to comfort ourselves<sup>182</sup> and is based on four great errors: the error of confusing causes with effects, the error of false causality, the error of imaginary causes, and the error of free will. By refuting the idea of mental causes, Nietzsche rejects Cartesian dualism of mind and body, claiming for biological monism – “a person belongs to the whole,”<sup>183</sup> that is, to nature.<sup>184</sup> Thus, we cannot fully understand and explain human behavior – our explanations are only the illusions that satisfy our instincts, reassure us, and produce a feeling of power.<sup>185</sup> Pondering the phenomena of agency, Nietzsche replaced the concept of free will with the concept of the strong and the weak will.<sup>186</sup> Yet, the will in his interpretation is not a faculty of mind, not a center of command, but rather a complex phenomenon of affective source: “The will is not just a complex of feeling and thinking; rather, it is fundamentally an affect: and specifically the affect of the command.”<sup>187</sup>

Since Nietzsche argued that the human being is different from other animals in degree, not kind,<sup>188</sup> his complex stance on emotion could best be illustrated by Robert Solomon's analogy to the animal kingdom:

<sup>179</sup> M-34; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 36.

<sup>180</sup> M-129.

<sup>181</sup> FW-44.

<sup>182</sup> GD-Irrthümer-5.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>184</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*.

<sup>185</sup> GD-Irrthümer-5.

<sup>186</sup> Soniewicka, *After God*.

<sup>187</sup> JGB-19; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 19.

<sup>188</sup> Wood, “Three Candidates for First Philosophy,” 147-66.

A happy dog does not feel happiness that it *then* expresses by vigorously wagging its tail and jumping around. Its happiness *is* its vigorously wagging its tail and jumping around. Nevertheless, even animals do not just emotionally *react* to circumstances. They *use* their emotions and emotional expressions to manipulate circumstances, especially the emotions and behaviour of their cohorts.<sup>189</sup>

#### 4. CULTURE

By claiming that drives “interpret” nervous stimuli,<sup>190</sup> Nietzsche was closer to psychological constructivism than social constructivism. He would agree that emotions are both embodied and culturally shaped. As was mentioned above, Nietzsche addressed the issue of transforming our drives by judgments and evaluations that become their second nature.<sup>191</sup> Thus, one may talk about “educating emotion” and explain the differences in perceiving and reacting to emotions such as anger, pride, and so forth over centuries.<sup>192</sup>

He claimed that some passions have been “spiritualized” through the symbolism of art, religion, or philosophy in which humans made their animal instincts divine.<sup>193</sup> Spiritualization of passions involves a deep appreciation of their value – they are transformed into “higher culture,” higher values and virtues. Sublime love is an example of passion “married to spirit” (*Geist*); it is the result of the spiritualization of sensuality.<sup>194</sup> The highest spiritualization of the instincts expresses itself in religion and morality.<sup>195</sup> One may transform human sensibility and behavior by changing judgments about human experiences (what religion or metaphysical philosophy did) or by stimulating feelings (what art used to do).<sup>196</sup> Therefore, it is possible to change the way we feel (to learn to feel differently) by learning to think differently.<sup>197</sup> Yet it is a slow and long process that may take generations.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Nietzsche did not develop any theory of emotion. In his opinion, it is not the aim of philosophy to produce abstract theories. Philosophy is rather an exercise, an experiment, or a sort of legislation.<sup>198</sup> Yet, in Nietzsche’s writings there is a magnitude of insights that can be theoretically analyzed and provide an interesting understanding of emotion. This understanding is based on a rejection of Cartesian dualism that is replaced by an assumption of biological monism. In this approach there is no separation between reason and emotion since they both belong to the body, which is our “great reason.” Therefore, Nietzsche overcomes the opposition between physiological and cognitive-evaluative

<sup>189</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*, 80.

<sup>190</sup> M-119.

<sup>191</sup> M-38.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> JGB-229.

<sup>194</sup> GD-Moral-1; GD-Moral-3.

<sup>195</sup> JGB-219; JGB-271.

<sup>196</sup> MA-108; Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 85. Nietzsche names these phenomena “anesthetizing human misfortune.”

<sup>197</sup> M-103.

<sup>198</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*.

stance, grounding cognition in the body itself. According to this approach, drives and instincts are the key phenomena to understand not only our emotional life but life itself. The specificity of Nietzsche's approach is that he explains the idea of drives in terms of the will to power being the prototype of drives and the hidden structure of life. One may summarize Nietzsche's approach with Solomon's words:

We are biological creatures with an inbuilt need to exert and express ourselves. We do not just live in the world but shape it and create it through our emotional engagements. This is our nature, and it is not just *human* nature. [...] Our emotions are our ways of being-in-the-world, or [...] our emotions are our ways of "being tuned" to the world.<sup>199</sup>

Nietzsche's approach is a radical one and gives rise to many objections. One of the main ones is that a theory of drives is self-defeating – multiplication of drives based on biological origins deprives the concept of its force and does not avoid inconsistency.<sup>200</sup> Explaining everything with a single term such as will to power is problematic since either you extend the notion so much that it becomes an empty notion or you reduce all phenomena to the notion and those that cannot be reduced are neglected. Another objection is that this approach brings us to counterintuitive conclusions that are at odds with folk psychology.<sup>201</sup> Building on Nietzsche's approach, we would conclude that we are in love because we love loving that increases our feeling of power; we are sad not because we lost somebody important to us but because we lost power by losing somebody important to us. Yet what matters to most of us when we are truly in love or in grief is the significance of the person we love or have lost, not our feelings as such.

Nevertheless, it is worth discussing Nietzsche's philosophy of emotion and the fundamental questions that the German philosopher posed. Despite the great influence of Nietzsche's philosophy of emotion on such prominent psychologists as Freud or Jung, his account on emotion was never fully recognized in affective science nor broadly discussed in humanities, with some prominent exceptions, such as Max Scheler or contemporarily Robert Solomon.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*, 81.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Nietzsche would dismiss this objection, claiming that our intuitions and concepts are based on superstitions and self-comforting illusions.

<sup>202</sup> More recently, the issue of emotion in Nietzsche gained attention; see, for instance, Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self*; J. Mitchell, "A Nietzschean Theory of Emotional Experience: Affect as Feeling towards Value," *Inquiry* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2020.1850341>; Fowles, "The Heart of Flesh," 113-39; K. Creasy, "Nietzsche on the Sociality of Emotional Experience," *European Journal of Philosophy* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12818>.

# ARISTOTELIAN ΦΡΟΝΗΣΙΣ IN PLUTARCH: THE PARALLEL LIVES AS THE FINAL GENRE OF CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

*The original political experience that ushered in the series of our political experiences,  
the one that continues to inspire them, has become strangely inaccessible.<sup>1</sup>*

*[Pierre Manent, Metamorphoses of the City]*

Rarely is Plutarch categorized as a political philosopher. In most histories of political thought, he is virtually ignored.<sup>2</sup> The main exception hardly goes further than establishing a few basic though valuable starting points: Plutarch combined “the psychological insights of Plato and Aristotle with the political record found in earlier historians” to compose “a kind of encyclopedia of character in politics,” sensitive to the constraints upon political choice dictated by “the different character of different states” and encouraging “thoughtful consideration of how personal character relates to historical achievement and especially to the creation of peace and concord through good government.”<sup>3</sup> By and large, studies devoted specifically to Plutarch’s political thought address his knowledge and invocations

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic*, trans. Marc Lepain (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 18.

<sup>2</sup> There is no chapter on Plutarch in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). There is a single passing reference in both Dick Howard, *The Primacy of the Political: A History of Political Thought from the Greeks to the French and American Revolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) and J. S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 1996), and four scattered mentions of Plutarch as a historical source for ideas in Janet Coleman, *A History of Political Thought: From Ancient Greece to Early Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). While Phillip Mitsis devotes seven pages to Plutarch in the “Hellenistic Political Theory” chapter of *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 129–35, it is only to assess the value of one of his rhetorical showpieces as a source for Stoic political philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> Philip A. Stadter, “Character in Politics,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 465–70.

of Platonic and Aristotelian material but do not treat him as a distinctive political thinker in his own right.<sup>4</sup>

Attempts to more fully articulate Plutarch's political thought generally fall into two camps. A trend shaped primarily by postcolonial studies takes its bearings from Plutarch's historical situation as a member of the Greek elite in the Roman Empire. While raising pertinent questions about Plutarch's reserved manner of writing and response to the loss of the independent Greek polis, such studies consistently force Plutarch's political reflection into an anachronistic set of categories of "power," "resistance," and "cultural identity" that tend to short-circuit any access to the integrity of his own thought.<sup>5</sup> Straussian interpreters, on the other hand, give scrupulous attention to the unfolding and construction of Plutarch's examination of statesmen in the *Lives*, attempting to unearth a largely implicit conversation with the thought of Plato and Aristotle in which Plutarch is a distinctive interlocutor.<sup>6</sup> These studies provide rich illumination of how the *Lives* function as works of political inquiry, but their abstraction of Plutarch as interlocutor from the historical specificity of his political circumstances seems to limit their ability to account for what is most distinctive to Plutarch: his invention and use of the genre of parallel lives itself as a mode of political philosophizing.<sup>7</sup>

The present study attempts to account for the unprecedented genre of the *Parallel Lives* as a distinctive mode of political inquiry responding to the political phenomena of Plutarch's historical moment. The characterization of those phenomena and their requirements will take its bearings from Pierre Manent's *Metamorphoses of the City*, amplifying Manent's analysis of the horizon of political thought of the early Roman Empire and its consequences for political philosophy. The question animating Manent's investigation may be summarized thus: "What becomes of political philosophy when it no longer takes shape within the polis?" The guiding thread for the way this question comes

<sup>4</sup> Such is the case in Gerhard J. D. Aalders, *Plutarch's Political Thought* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1982); Jackson P. Hershbell, "Plutarch's Political Philosophy: Peripatetic and Platonic," in *Plutarch's Statesman and His Aftermath: Political, Philosophical, and Literary Aspects*, vol. 1 of *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the International Plutarch Society*, ed. Lucas de Blois et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 151-62; and Christopher Pelling, "Political Philosophy," in *A Companion to Plutarch*, ed. Mark Beck (Oxford: Blackwell, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> The primary representative of this approach is Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Swain's influence is evident in Timothy Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. chap. 9, and Rebecca Preston, "Roman Questions, Greek Answers: Plutarch and the Construction of Identity," in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic, and the Development of Empire*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86-119. For a critical assessment of this interpretive trend, see Mark Shiffman, "Plutarch Among the Postcolonialists," *Perspectives on Political Science* 37, no. 4 (2008): 223-30.

<sup>6</sup> See Andrew Hertzoff, "Eros and Moderation in Plutarch's *Life of Solon*," *The Review of Politics* 70, no. 3 (2008): 339-69; Joseph Hilliard Lane, *The Political Life and Virtue: A Reconsideration of Plutarch's "Parallel Lives"* (PhD diss., Boston College, 1998); and Matthew Crawford, *Eros Under a New Sky: Antecedents of Modernity in Rome's Subjugation of the Greeks* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2000), esp. chaps. 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> While Hertzoff and Lane both offer analyses of how the second life in a pair leads the reader to reconsider impressions made by the first, neither provides an account of why Plutarch proceeds in this way. The most focused and sophisticated attempt to illuminate parallelism as a feature of Plutarch's practice of political philosophy and the political context that motivates it is Hugh Liebert, *Plutarch's Politics: Between City and Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). While Liebert focuses on the fate of love of honor as a constitutive political passion when the city gives way to empire, we will here focus on the fate of practical wisdom.

to light for Plutarch will be the role played in his writings by the Aristotelian understanding of the virtue of φρόνησις or practical wisdom. If φρόνησις is a human perfection that only finds its full scope in the polis, and if the soundness of political reflection depends upon cultivating this virtue, what is the best remedy for human nature and the proper foundation for political philosophy when the polis has been lost? It is precisely the *Parallel Lives*.

Thus the examination of Plutarch will proceed by three stages: 1) framing considerations drawn from Manent; 2) analysis of Plutarch's explicit treatment of Aristotelian φρόνησις in his *On Moral Virtue*; and 3) an account of the genre-structure of the *Parallel Lives* on the basis of the requirements for cultivating φρόνησις and grounding the questions of political philosophy in a "post-political" age. These would appear to be the necessary prolegomena to the study of the political thought of an author described with admirable precision as a *thesaurus prudentiae* – a treasury of practical wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

## AFTER THE POLIS

What, if anything, is lost with the loss of the polis? The commonplace answer since Hegel is that the human spirit, finding itself no longer free under imperial dominion to build its own practical rationality into an outer social reality, is forced to retreat into itself and its own inwardly free subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> Thus Hellenistic philosophy concerned itself with an ethics of self-possession and freedom from suffering, severed from any serious articulation of political philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

Recently, however, students of the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods have grown dissatisfied with this schematic formulation of the relationship between civic decline and individualistic philosophy. Foucault, for example, remarks:

In actual fact – and on this point one must refer to the work of historians who have gone a long way toward dismantling the great nostalgic figure of the city-state that the nineteenth century took pains to construct – the organization of the Hellenistic monarchies, then that of the Roman Empire, cannot be analyzed simply in the negative terms of a decline of civic life and a confiscation of power by state authorities operating from further and further away. [...] City life, with its institutional rules, its interests at stake, its struggles, did not disappear as a result of the widening of the context in which it was inscribed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Johann Blum, cited in Martha Walling Howard, *The Influence of Plutarch in the Major European Literatures of the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 108.

<sup>9</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1826, Volume II: Greek Philosophy*, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart, ed. R. F. Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 264–65.

<sup>10</sup> Mitsis, "Hellenistic Political Theory," 124, defends from recent critics the Hegelian view, as expressed by Isaiah Berlin, that it appears "as if political philosophy suddenly vanished in the Hellenistic period." Despite drawing upon Plutarch as a source for the philosophy of Zeno, Mitsis does not broach the question of whether Plutarch represents a survival of political philosophy.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, vol. 3 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1988), 81–82.



What city-states lost, according to Foucault, was merely “a portion of their autonomy.”<sup>12</sup> The Hellenistic monarchies and Rome recognized the utility of the cities as “intermediaries and relays for the levy of regular tributes, for the collection of extraordinary taxes, and for supplying what was necessary to the armies”; and the effect of Roman municipal policy was “to stimulate the political life of the cities within the larger framework of the Empire.”<sup>13</sup>

For Foucault, nonetheless, the connection between social order and the philosophical treatment of subjectivity remains as rigorously determined as for Hegel: to different nexuses of power belong different relations to the self. In the classical polis, “young aristocrats whose status determines that one day they will have to run the city-state” must be exhorted to the care of the self so as to be “able to exercise properly, reasonably, and virtuously the power to which one is destined.” In this way the city-state “mediated the relationship of self to self.”<sup>14</sup> In the Roman Empire the city, though still “the standard primary form of social organization,” was now incorporated into “the organization of a complex space [...] in which the centers of power were multiple.”<sup>15</sup>

In this new order, either to participate in power or to insulate oneself from the game required the same deliberate and rigorous disciplines of self-command and self-limitation elaborated by Epicureans and especially Stoics, whose “modeling of political work [...] depended on the relationship [the individual] established with himself in the ethical work of the self on the self.”<sup>16</sup> The dominant philosophical discourse of the period, accordingly, accomplishes a “re-elaboration of an ethics of self-mastery,” which the historian should examine, not in terms of the stifling of political life and an inward turn away from an alien world, but rather “in terms of a crisis of the subject, or rather a crisis of subjectivation – that is, in terms of a difficulty in the manner in which the individual could form himself as the ethical subject of his actions.”<sup>17</sup>

This is precisely the landscape and problematic within which post-colonialist scholars situate Plutarch as a member of the Greek elite under Rome, simultaneously “the ruler and the ruled.”<sup>18</sup> Scrupulously following (up to a point) Foucault’s proposed script, they begin by setting forth the “contradictions of the position of the Greek elite in general” and only thereafter proceed to examine “how Plutarch places himself in relation to Roman and Greek culture and identity” by investigating “the complexities of constructing an identity” manifested in his writings.<sup>19</sup> On this reading, Plutarch’s own depiction of the classical Greek polis is itself a “nostalgic figure,” providing “a protected space, shielded

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Frédéric Gros (New York: Picador, 2005), 82-83.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 82-84.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>19</sup> Preston, “Roman Questions, Greek Answers,” 88, 91, 95. Cf. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 414, and Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 291. Though Swain’s work sets the pattern for postcolonialist studies of Plutarch, Preston’s article is most explicit about the larger scholarly provenance of the shared approach.

from the unpleasant realities of Greek political weakness.”<sup>20</sup> On one important point, this post-colonialist portrait differs markedly from Foucault’s: the consistent emphasis on contents of consciousness and on the construction of a self-image stands further from politics (and arguably closer to Hegel) than does Foucault’s concern with the discipline by which the political actor constitutes himself as “the ethical subject of his actions.”

Foucault himself, however, already stands at a distance from politics, a distance that Manent and Plutarch can help us gauge with some precision. Manent would be quick to point out that the project of constituting oneself the subject of one’s actions (and a fortiori exhorting another to do so via the care of oneself) rests upon an important presupposition: “that we are capable of acting and that our action is capable of transforming our situation or the conditions of our life.”<sup>21</sup> The momentous discovery of this anthropological truth, which amounts to the discovery of the *anthropos* as such, depends upon an epoch-making phenomenon – the polis:

Humans have always acted in some fashion, but they have not always known that they were capable of acting. [...] In the beginning people gather, fish, hunt, even make war, [...] but they act as little as possible. They leave the greatest room for the gods, and they hamper themselves as much as possible by all sorts of prohibitions, rites, and sacred constraints. [...] The city is that ordering of the human world that makes action possible and meaningful [...] the first complete implementation of human action. [...] It is in the city that people discover that they can govern themselves and that they learn to do so. They discover and learn politics, which is the great domain of action.<sup>22</sup>

The self-government made possible in the city opens the great domain of action because it opens the widest scope for rational deliberation and choice regarding how life is to be conducted in the community and to what ends. Manent, following Aristotle, observes that “deliberate choice finds its most proper framework in political life [because] the stakes here are vaster than in any other domain, since they concern the whole, the life and death of the whole.”<sup>23</sup>

This responsibility for the whole has two fundamental aspects. First, it concerns the order of the whole, the regime. The question of the regime is already at work in the very beginning of the polis, which comes into being when the relationship between the few and the many passes from a state of war and domination to a process of adjudicating their incompatible claims to rule.<sup>24</sup> Insofar as this process occurs through argument and persuasion, the adversarial claimants discover the necessity of offering reasons, and such public reasoning “involves a decentering movement toward a point that exists only through it, the point of justice or the common good. Becoming a citizen and becoming a rational

<sup>20</sup> Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 291.

<sup>21</sup> Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

agent in this sense go together.”<sup>25</sup> Deliberative reason discovers the possibility of orienting itself toward the good itself through the requirement placed upon it in principle of ordering itself toward laws that are good for all. Thus, in the most comprehensive or architectonic sense, practical reason concerns the good regime and finds its maximum manifestation in lawgiving.<sup>26</sup>

Second, the concern with the life or death of the whole involves foreign relations: war and peace, alliances and diplomacy. The continued existence of the city as a city, free to govern itself by its own processes of deliberation and choice, requires an art of generalship that responds to the exigencies of war. The best response to exigencies that threaten the city or its citizens with destruction may, however, threaten the integrity of the regime of the city. Thus, the practical reason of the general, when facing its most critical challenges, also finds itself confronted with comprehensive questions about the character of the regime and the hierarchy of human goods.<sup>27</sup>

If we are to consider the relevance of the disappearance of the polis to reflection on human and practical matters, then it is not sufficient to regard the city as a form of “social organization” that can cede some portions of its autonomy but retain others and still remain a city. When the city has lost the full prerogative to adjudicate its regime and to direct its relations with its neighbors, it has lost the fullness of scope for exercising choice and hence also deliberation and practical reason; it has lost the autonomy by virtue of which it is a city rather than a mere municipality. If we are to enter into a genuine philosophical confrontation with the Aristotelian thesis that the *ἄνθρωπος* is the rational and political animal whose natural fulfillment requires the city, we must seriously consider the possibility that “our moral life is necessarily mutilated, for, since the end of the city we no longer achieve the highest possibility inscribed in our nature; we fall short of our potential.”<sup>28</sup>

As Plutarch makes clear in his reflections on the possibilities for the exercise of statesmanship in the Greek cities of his day, these are precisely the dimensions of political life that have been lost: “So far as peace is concerned, the populaces need nothing from statesmen at the present, for all war, both Greek and foreign, has been banished from us and has disappeared; and of liberty the populaces have as great a share as the rulers grant them.”<sup>29</sup> This share of liberty convenient to Roman purposes permits some degree of regime-maintenance, such as “correcting manifestations of bad character that have crept in, to the point of some shame or harm to the city.”<sup>30</sup> The regime to maintain will, however, would be the one that suits Roman administration, and the most important task of the

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141b23-25, trans. and intro. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2002), 109-10.

<sup>27</sup> This dimension of responsibility for the city as a whole receives far more attention in Plutarch than in Plato or Aristotle. See the discussion of Plutarch’s Lysander below.

<sup>28</sup> Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> *Precepts of Statecraft*, 824c. Translations of Plutarch are my own, from the Greek texts of the Loeb collections of Plutarch’s works edited by Babbitt and Perrin: *Moralia*, trans. Frank C. Babbitt et al., Loeb Classical Library, 15 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927); *The Parallel Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, 11 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914-26).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 805b (195).

contemporary Greek statesman is to maintain concord, which means limiting the process of conflict by which a city would otherwise adjudicate its regime, so that the Romans will not see fit to restrict its liberty further.<sup>31</sup>

This fully formed human potential of which the post-political animal falls short, the fulfillment of the rational animal's potential for exercising deliberation, practical reason, and choice, Aristotle calls φρόνησις, or practical wisdom. Aristotle describes φρόνησις as "a truth-disclosing active condition involving reason that governs action, concerned with what is good and bad for a human being."<sup>32</sup> It is acquired through experience and habituation in choosing human goods, which involves it in a circular relationship with moral virtues; through the experience of this "feedback loop," it develops a clear-sighted apprehension of the order of goods, not only in regard to oneself but also in the ordering of the household and the city.<sup>33</sup> What is lost with the city, then, is the fullness of scope of human action and practical reason, the experience of which makes possible the full cultivation of φρόνησις.

Judging by Foucault's own criteria, according to which worlds of discourse are shaped by what they exclude,<sup>34</sup> his own thought and writing is characterized and limited by the exclusion of the theme or question of φρόνησις. Foucault can claim that there is no decisive difference between civic life in classical and in Roman Greece, merely a change in the dynamics of power relations, because he replaces the rational animal, who orients deliberation and choice within a differentiated order of goods, by the human agent as epiphenomenon of a structure described neutrally in terms of the abstraction "power." In this replacement, we can recognize the eclipse of the political horizon in Foucault's thought.

If the loss of civic autonomy under Rome brings in its wake the loss of the fullness of φρόνησις, how should we expect this deficiency to manifest itself in philosophical discourse? According to Manent, one principal result observable in Imperial Roman moral philosophy is a blurring of moral phenomena: "By reason of the indetermination or distension of the political form, by reason of the weakly determining character of the political regime, virtue is largely deprived of the framework in which it finds its meaning and where it is exercised."<sup>35</sup> Manent explicitly invokes this loss of political distinctness to account for the "vagueness or metamorphic indetermination [...] of Stoic doctrine [which] corresponds, dare I say, to the plasticity of Hellenistic civilization detached from cities and to the plasticity of the city of Rome."<sup>36</sup> A blurring of moral phenomena necessarily hampers the ability to judge them accurately and hence impedes the perfection of practical

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 824d-e (293). Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 173-83, contends that Plutarch's primary concern in forestalling Roman intrusion is to preserve power in the Greek cities for the elites like himself. For a criticism of this interpretation, see Shiffman, "Plutarch among the Postcolonialists," 226-28.

<sup>32</sup> 1140b4-5 (106).

<sup>33</sup> 1140b9-11, 1141b14-23 (107, 109).

<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. Rupert Swyer (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 216-19.

<sup>35</sup> Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City*, 147. Manent here characterizes the treatment of virtue in what he calls the "Ciceronian moment," which he sees as a period of "political indeterminacy" stretching from the end of the Republic to the rebirth of civic life in the Renaissance and its new theorization by Machiavelli.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 135.

judgment that constitutes φρόνησις. The need to respond to this blurring, especially at the hands of the Stoics, for the sake of recovering an accurate understanding of φρόνησις helps make sense of the aims and composition of Plutarch's *On Moral Virtue*, a treatise in which he explicitly carries out for his contemporaries a retrieval of the Aristotelian understanding of φρόνησις as an intellectual virtue.

### SAVING THE PHENOMENA

*On Moral Virtue* argues for the superiority of Aristotle's articulation of the relationship between reason and passion in the human soul (and hence also of the character of practical wisdom) over the articulation offered by the Stoics.<sup>37</sup> If Plutarch's retrieval in this text does not extend explicitly to a treatment of φρόνησις as specifically political wisdom, this limitation results in large part from the limitations of the Stoic thought he here engages. Elsewhere, in a text devoted primarily to a critique of Stoic teachings, Plutarch characterizes their discourses as politically inept and their doctrines as incompatible with action.<sup>38</sup> He criticizes Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus for writing on regimes and on ruling and being ruled, even though they never served as generals or lawgivers, nor engaged in any of the lesser forms of political activity, nor even lived in their native cities.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that they wrote on "political" topics, their reasoning is unpolitical because they lack any experience of citizenship or statesmanship in the polis. By the end of *On Moral Virtue*, Plutarch gestures toward the need to press beyond these deficiently political limitations by invoking the insights of political practitioners as a corrective to Stoic doctrine, giving us reason to think that he recognizes the loss of the polis as part of the philosophical problem he is confronting.

The key principle by which Plutarch initially distinguishes Stoic thought from his own Platonic-Aristotelian tradition is the Stoic assertion of the unity of all moral virtues as forms of φρόνησις, differentiated only by the objects of choice to which it is applied.<sup>40</sup> The problem is less this claim in itself (some version of which might be defensible in Platonic or Aristotelian terms) than the basis upon which the Stoics defend it: Zeno's followers say that it is ἐπιστήμη, deductive propositional knowledge, that he refers to as

<sup>37</sup> That the polemical engagement with Stoicism provides the key to the composition of this work was first recognized by Daniel Babut, *Plutarque, De la Vertu Éthique: Introduction, Texte, Traduction et Commentaire* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1969). See his "Introduction," esp. 6-13. One may, however, concede this character to the text without going so far as Babut does to say that Plutarch is less interested in Peripatetic concepts for themselves than in their polemical potential ("Commentaire," 129). A rescue mission necessarily engages the enemy on their own terrain.

<sup>38</sup> *Stoic Self-Contradictions*, 1034B. Cicero, in his *Laws* (III.vi.14), has the character Atticus express surprise when Cicero names Diogenes the Stoic among the philosophers who have treated the topic of magistracies. Cicero assures him that Diogenes, along with Panaetius, is an exception among the Stoics, most of whom, when they do treat of public affairs, do so in ways not suited to political use (Cicero, *De Re Publica, De Legibus*, tr. Clinton W. Keyes [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000], 473-75).

<sup>39</sup> *Stoic Self-Contradictions*, 1033B-C. Compare Plutarch's insistence on remaining in his native city and carrying out administrative duties. Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, grew up in Citium on Cyprus, which during his lifetime passed from Persian rule to Egyptian rule; when he arrived in Athens ca. 300 BCE it had been under Macedonian dominion for decades.

<sup>40</sup> *Moral Virtue*, 441A; cf. *Stoic Self-Contradictions*, 1034 C-D.

φρόνησις.<sup>41</sup> In Aristotelian terms, this amounts to a failure to recognize the distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom. By means of this conflation, the Stoic discourse about virtue – widely influential in the Roman world and, since the time of Antiochus of Ascalon, even within the tradition of the Academy itself – not only renders invisible the distinction Aristotle recognized between theoretical and practical reason but hides that distinction behind the very word Aristotle used to formulate their difference.

The agenda of rescuing Aristotelian φρόνησις from Stoic distortion makes many of Plutarch's choices of diction throughout the text intelligible.<sup>42</sup> For example, he announces at the very outset his intention to clarify the distinction between *moral* and *theoretical* virtue. Taking our bearings from Aristotle, we would expect an opposition first between moral and *intellectual* virtues and then, within the latter, between *practical* and theoretical, but the problem is precisely that the Stoics have interpreted moral virtues as theoretical, obscuring the intermediate distinctions.<sup>43</sup> The process of prying them apart involves recovering the fullness of the phenomena obscured by Stoic discourse.

While Plutarch devotes some of the early portions of *On Moral Virtue*<sup>44</sup> to a critique of what might be called the *doctrinal* aspects of the Stoic position – in particular, the teaching that the directive part of the soul (ἡγεμονικόν) can be equally described as reason (λόγος) or passion (πάθος) depending only on whether the agent is exercising judgment and choice in accord or in discord with the deterministic order of causes – by far the most consistent angle of criticism throughout the text is better described as *phenomenological*. At the heart of the problem is not just an erroneous doctrine but, more fundamentally, a failure to see the phenomena clearly. While the Stoics could hardly fail to discern the more obvious (ἐμφανεστέραν) human twofoldness of body and soul, the twofoldness within the soul of reason and the irrational seems to have escaped their notice (λαθεῖν).<sup>45</sup> This failure to recognize the inner articulation of the phenomena engenders bad doctrine, which leads to the construction of a factitious discourse, which further obstructs apprehension of the phenomena. The correction of Stoic doctrinal error thus requires in the first place better seeing. The phenomenological dimension of Plutarch's critique is, accordingly, marked by the ubiquitous and increasing insistence throughout the text on what is clear (δῆλον), on what shows itself (φαίνεται), on perception (αἴσθησις) of what is occurring in the soul, and on manifestness (ἐναργεία).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Tad Brennan, "Stoic Moral Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 259–60: "Rejecting the model of psychic complexity embraced by Plato in later works and by Aristotle, with its interplay and conflict of rational and irrational psychic forces, the Stoics retained Socrates' insistence that all motivations be analyzed as forms of belief. The characteristic intellectualist stance, that all rationality is theoretical rationality, is felt most explicitly in the demand that practical irrationality be analyzed as a form of theoretical irrationality, and that errant motivations be reduced to erroneous beliefs."

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Babut, *De La Vertue Éthique*, 69

<sup>43</sup> 440D. For the connection between this perspective and the loss of the polis, cf. Manent, *Metamorphoses*, 141–42: "Cato's virtue is exercised according to a political perspective that has become 'theoretical,' in a political framework that has already disappeared[...]. Cato's deed is already an imitation of real civic virtue."

<sup>44</sup> *Moral Virtue*, 441C–D; cf. also 447A.

<sup>45</sup> 441D.

<sup>46</sup> The δῆλον: 440e1, 442e5, 445e13, 448c11, 448f5, 450e12, 451b7, 451b10; φαίνεται / ἐμφανόν: 441d8, 441e10, 447c6, 449d4, 450b6, 450b14; αἴσθησις: 445e1, 447b1–2, 447c7, 448c7, 448d9, 448e3; ἐναργεία: 447a15, 449a3, 449d4–5.



In contrast to the Stoics, Plutarch observes, Plato recognized the complexity of the soul quite clearly (ἐμφανῶς συνείδεν), and he showed it forth (ἀποδεικνύσι) by means of the phenomenon of opposition between the part he called reasoning and thoughtful (λογιζόμενον, φρονοῦν) and the irrational appetitive and spirited parts (ἐπιθυμία, θυμός).<sup>47</sup> What Plato recognized as a central principle of human nature, Aristotle perspicuously articulated in his treatment of virtue. Throughout the text, Plutarch continually returns to this contrast between Platonic and especially Aristotelian language, which answers to and faithfully reveals the phenomena, and Stoic language, which obscures them and thus impedes our self-knowledge. A more perspicuous analysis of the workings of the soul enables Plutarch to clarify the proper understanding of the relationship between reason and passion in the formation and exercise of moral virtue, which is necessary for properly distinguishing the moral operations of reason from its theoretical exercise.

To track this focal goal of the inquiry, it is helpful to attend to the way in which Plutarch progressively reformulates the answer to an implied question: What is the work or task (ἔργον) of reason as regards the soul's attainment of virtue? Relying on Aristotle's terms, Plutarch begins by describing the passionate part of the soul (τό παθητικόν) as a power (δύναμις) that moves the soul, whose motion can be habituated into a disposition (ἔξις); when it is settled into a form in accord with reason, its disposition is a virtue. This gives him his first formulation of reason's task: it does not expunge passion but places a certain limit and order upon it, forming the power of the passionate part into the settled condition of a civilized disposition (ἔξιν ἀστείαν), by means of φρόνησις.<sup>48</sup>

If the task of φρόνησις is shaping passions into mean conditions, the word clearly bears a non-Stoic sense. Specifying the Aristotelian sense in which he uses the word for the first time in the text requires Plutarch to "start from higher up." Drawing deftly upon Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Plutarch succinctly spells out the distinction between σοφία, the perfection of epistemic and contemplative reason, and φρόνησις, the perfection of deliberative and practical reason. His anti-Stoic emphasis again dictates, however, that in order to characterize the distinct domain of φρόνησις he begin his Aristotelian exposition in terms slightly different from Aristotle's.

Plutarch divides things into those that simply are and those that are some way in relation to us.<sup>49</sup> The examples he gives of things that simply are – earth, heavens, stars, sea – belong for the Stoics to physics or cosmology. The things in relation to us – good and bad, chosen and avoided, pleasant and painful – belong to ethics. While Stoic ethics seeks to reconcile judgment and choice to a deterministic cosmology, Plutarch describes the domain of φρόνησις as one separate from cosmological reasoning and in terms faithful to the human phenomena of deliberating and choosing within a welter of contingencies:

Φρόνησις, thrown into dealings [πράγματα] that are full of vagary and confusion, is often compelled to mix itself up with chance events, to rely upon deliberation about very unclear things, and to be active applying

<sup>47</sup> 441E, 442A.

<sup>48</sup> 443C-D.

<sup>49</sup> 443D-E. Aristotle begins, in the corresponding discussion, with the distinction between things that cannot be otherwise and things that can (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139a6-8).

deliberation to what is to be done while the whole time the irrational is co-present and influencing the direction of decisions. For it has need of impetus [ὄρμηξ]; but character crafts impetus (which requires reason's delimitation) out of passion, so that it may turn out measured, neither exceeding nor falling short of the demands of the occasion [καῖρος].<sup>50</sup>

Having characterized the working of φρόνησις in its proper domain, Plutarch restates the task of reason: "This, then, is the work of practical reason according to nature: to eliminate the disproportion and discordance of the passions."

This formulation of reason's task, seemingly limited and simplistic in comparison with the earlier one, could appear to describe a narrowly inward-looking relationship of self to self such as one might associate with Stoic or Epicurean ethics. In its context as a conclusion to the preceding analysis of φρόνησις, however, it summarily describes the ethical work of a relationship of the self to complex contingencies of action and the concrete demands of occasions for decision. Above all, it is phrased in counterpoint to the mistaken conceit of Stoic ethics that what requires elimination is passion as such. Plutarch seems to imply that the Stoic confusion results from the fact that there is indeed something that reason must eliminate: not passion itself but rather the excesses and deficiencies of its motion.

Much of the rest of the text provides the phenomenological critique of this confusion. The Stoics oversimplify the task of reason because they oversimplify the soul. To elucidate the complex and varied relationships between rational judgment and the motions of the passions, as revealed in what humans do and say, Plutarch first draws on Aristotle's descriptions of the virtues as means situated between extremes and even more extensively on his distinctions between temperance/intemperance and continence/incontinence (445a-447c). He then discusses how the disagreements of judgments with one another manifestly differ from the disagreements that involve passion and how over time passion can come to agree with judgments that did not initially involve passion (447d-448f). Third, he examines how Stoic language is formulated so as to evade acknowledging the truth of the phenomena and how nonetheless the true order of things sometimes compels Stoics to depart from strict adherence to their system of terms (449a-450e). Throughout these three movements of the text, Plutarch constantly returns to and amplifies the main points of his critique: the Stoics oversimplify the relationship of reason and passion and therefore mistake the task of modulating the passions for the task of eliminating them, while the complexity of the phenomena of the soul belies this simplification.

In the final movement of the text, Plutarch returns once more to the question of the task of reason. Having explained how practical reason orders and civilizes passions by eliminating the excesses and deficiencies of their motions, he now begins to indicate how

<sup>50</sup> 444A-B. As Babut notes (*De la Vertu Éthique*, 151), the dative of πάθος is difficult to construe here but must have some kind of instrumental sense. I have translated it "out of passion" to emphasize the force of the verb ποίει ("crafts"), which uses materials as a means of making and shaping the form it produces. For a discussion of the importance of the καῖρος for Aristotle's understanding of φρόνησις and moral action and the incompatibility of this emphasis with the Stoic ethics of intentions and abstract rules divorced from the sway of contingencies, see Pierre Aubenque, *La Prudence chez Aristote* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 95-99.

this task of shaping souls forms part of the practical wisdom of statesmen legislating so as to form citizens fit for their regimes.

Plutarch likens the Stoic approach to that of the legendary Thracian king Lycurgus, who in his antipathy to Dionysus uprooted all the grapevines in his kingdom:

It belongs to the human being to share in the irrational, and he has the principle of passion as something connatural, something necessary rather than something that comes and goes, not to be entirely eliminated but needing cultivation [θεραπεία] and training [παιδαγωγία]. Hence the work of reason is not Thracian or Lycurgan, cutting down and eradicating the useful parts of passion along with the harmful, but [...] to clip the wild and remove the unmeasured and then to cultivate the useful and render it fit for service.<sup>51</sup>

While the implicit connection between the Stoic goal of ἀπάθεια and a monarch's interest in truncating passions may seem tenuous here, it gains retrospective reinforcement when Plutarch arrives at his final restatement of this central point:

Passions being altogether eliminated, if that is even possible, in most people reason will be more inactive and blunted, like a pilot when the wind slacks off. Doubtless it is because they recognize these things that lawgivers work into their constitutions [πολιτείας] love of honor and mutual emulation.<sup>52</sup>

This passage calls for three observations.

First, the argument brought to bear on the Stoic position originates not from philosophical reflection per se but rather from the insight of practicing lawgivers actively engaged in shaping the souls of citizens. The work of the political philosopher, performed here by Plutarch, is to articulate the general principle guiding the φρόνησις of good lawgivers and to elucidate its import for a more synthetic reflection on human nature, the human good, and good laws.

Second, by concluding with considerations of the lawgiver's task of exercising φρόνησις to cultivate virtue, Plutarch's text resembles its model the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle's text, however, presents itself as a guide to the prospective lawgiver, on the assumption (or perhaps hope) that the polis remains a live possibility. Plutarch's text appeals retrospectively to the wisdom of lawgivers of the past and the effects of good laws and regimes. If the same endgame marks the two texts as works of political philosophy, it does so in contrary relationships to lawgiving and the polis.

Third, this contrast betokens a difference between the bygone age of the polis and Plutarch's own situation: in the Roman provinces there are no lawgivers with such extensive responsibility for forming citizens' souls. Moreover, as we have seen, in Plutarch's day the activity of emulous love of honor has a self-destructive character, since faction, operating

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch, *Moral Virtue*, 451C1-D1.

<sup>52</sup> 452B.

within an already restricted scope, threatens to restrict the scope of civic liberty even further. In such conditions, we should expect not only the passions but, Plutarch suggests, even reason itself to be sluggish and blunted – at the very least, the practical reason whose exercise makes possible the virtue of φρόνησις. It may be precisely such attenuation of both reason and passion that makes the superficial Stoic view of the identity of passion and judgment convincing.

The final two sentences of the text underscore these points. Adverting to the passions typical of young men – shame, desire, repentance, pleasure, pain, and love of honor – Plutarch remarks:

Taking a salutary and careful hold on these, reason and law effectually set the young man onto the fitting path. Thus it was not badly said by the Laconian tutor that he intended to make his pupil take pleasure in noble things and pain in shameful things, for one cannot pronounce any better or nobler end than this for the education befitting a free man.<sup>53</sup>

Emphasizing the indispensable role of the lawgiver's reason and skill in channeling youthful passions into virtuous shape, Plutarch draws the substance of the last word on the topic not from a philosopher but from an educator in virtue specifically identified as a citizen of Sparta. The lawgiving of the Spartan Lyscurgus was so effective in its engagement with youthful passions that it sharpened the practical reason of the citizens of his polis in their understanding of how to inculcate virtue in the young. The insight that the philosopher Plutarch can pithily articulate and affirm as a principle of civic education derives from the bygone arena of the polis, in which the souls of citizens were shaped by distinct regimes in virtues that were indissolubly moral and political. Reflection on the rationale and efficacy of that soul shaping allows the latter-day political philosopher to clarify for readers the principle at work in the lawgiver's practice of φρόνησις.

Nonetheless, the fact that *On Moral Virtue* only really attains the horizon of political philosophy in its final pages suggests that it struggles against limitations arising not only from the unpolitical reason of the Stoics and the absence of political life but concomitantly from the genre of the text itself. If Plutarch needs to restore their distinctness to the phenomena, an argumentative treatise can hardly do more than lay the groundwork. He has been able to make the case for language and categories that can render the phenomena more visible, but the test of the efficacy of this more perspicuous discourse requires phenomena to apprehend in the light of those categories. The execution of this agenda on the part of Plutarch the author seems to demand a genre that recovers the concrete phenomena in all the complexity that historiography provides; that renders them lucid to philosophical reflection by focusing on character, deliberation, and choice; that sets them forth in the light of the shaping of passions by laws and of the actors' encounters with fundamental political problems in a context in which regimes and warfare are fully operative; and that vicariously invigorates sluggish and blunted passions and practical reasoning.

<sup>53</sup> 452D. Note that in the final sentence of the text Plutarch violates his own ban on claims about order among ends.

The *Parallel Lives* fit these requirements perfectly. Their focus on political actors from the age of the polis and its denouement imaginatively transports the reader to the context in which the domain of φρόνησις attains its full scope. Their dramatic structuring around the aspirations, choices, successes, and failures of these men brings both passion and reason vicariously into play while providing plentiful material for reflecting on the effects of the protagonists' virtues and vices on their actions and deliberations. The analogies between the parallel figures, made more explicit in the formal comparisons, draw the operative general principles into higher relief without sacrificing the concrete particularities of their different political situations, which are indispensable for the exercise and recognition of φρόνησις. Plutarch invents a genre that can render reason political and statesmanlike in a post-political age, thereby preserving and fostering the practice of political philosophy.

### PARALLELISM AND ΦΡΟΝΗΣΙΣ

To illustrate Plutarch's deployment of this new genre for philosophizing politically, let us consider the pair *Lysander-Sulla*, in which questions of generalship and the integrity of the regime – the life and death of the whole – are conjointly at issue. To maintain manageable bounds for the analysis, we will focus on the first figure of the pair, Lysander, examining how the parallel-and-comparison structure leads us to reflect on his possession and failures of practical wisdom and thereby opens onto questions of political philosophy.<sup>54</sup>

About one-third of the way into the *Lysander*, Plutarch highlights the Spartan commander's claim to fame. By means of shrewd generalship, Lysander delivers a crushing defeat to the Athenians in the naval battle of Aegospotami, thereby bringing the Peloponnesian War to an unexpected end.

He accomplished the greatest deed with the least toil, making short work in one hour of a war that was longer, more varied in its sufferings, and more incredible in its turns of fortune than any of those before it [...] [but was] brought to an end by the skilled deliberation [εὐβουλίᾳ] and cleverness [δεινότητις] of one man.<sup>55</sup>

Plutarch gives the credit for the Spartan victory in this most amazing of Greek wars to the practical intelligence of Lysander.

He does not, however, describe that practical intelligence as φρόνησις. Rather, he highlights two of what might be called the five elements of φρόνησις examined in

<sup>54</sup> Studies of Lysander have, reasonably, focused on his love of honor (φιλοτιμία), which, as Christopher Pelling observes, serves as an integrative “linking theme” for the developments of his character (“Aspects of Plutarch's Characterization,” in C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies* [London: Duckworth, 2002], 293-94). As Stadter specifies, while many of the *Lives* thematize φιλοτιμία, the Lysander/Sulla pair focuses particularly on the subjects’ “much more ruthless and unthinking ambition which destroyed the heroes’ own cities” (“Paradoxical Paradigms: Plutarch's *Lysander* and *Sulla*,” in P. Stadter, *Plutarch and His Roman Readers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 267.

<sup>55</sup> Plutarch, *Lysander* XI.6, my translation from the Greek text of the Loeb volume *Plutarch: Lives IV*, ed. and trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 260. Perrin misleadingly translates εὐβουλίᾳ as “prudence” and δεινότητις as “ability” (261).

*Nicomachean Ethics* VI.9-12. According to Aristotle's treatment, εὐβουλίᾳ is reasoning rightly in a brief time about the means that ought to be chosen to attain a good end; δεινότης is the power to recognize and carry out the actions that will attain whatever end one aims at. Φρόνησις also involves astuteness [σύνεσις], the quick recognition in the concrete circumstances of the proper distinctions and logical connections required for good practical reasoning; thoughtfulness [γνώμη], the right judgment in the circumstances of what is decent or seemly; and moral virtue, so that passions and reason cooperate in allowing one to recognize and desire the best ends and the fitting means. Throughout this pair of lives, Plutarch invokes these elements distinctly and juxtaposes them to instances of φρόνησις attributed explicitly to characters other than the protagonists. In the case of Lysander, this characterization of his supreme act of military success implicitly raises the question whether his conduct as a whole exhibits φρόνησις or not.

At the outset of the *Life*, Plutarch highlights three features that enter into interpreting Lysander's character. First, echoing the end of *On Moral Virtue*, Plutarch remarks that Lysander was superior to every pleasure except the one cultivated by Spartan παιδείᾱ: the pleasure of being praised for noble deeds. His love of honor and of contention reflect Spartan παιδείᾱ more than they reveal his own nature. Untypical of Spartan character, however, he is also θεραπευτικός, courteous (or perhaps obsequious) to the powerful, able to put up with pompous authority with good humor if necessary – a trait that “seems to have come to him by nature.” Plutarch observes, without affirming the judgment, that “some people make this out to be no small part of political cleverness [δεινότης].”<sup>56</sup> Lysander's courtliness thus suggests three questions: 1) Is his nature at odds in some important way with the character intended by Lysander's legislated Spartan training? 2) Is his courtesy to kings a matter of serviceable political cleverness? 3) If so, is this “mere cleverness” or an element of a more complete φρόνησις?

A third feature “particular” (ἴδιον) to Lysander gathers into itself these questions of his strategic acumen, his φρόνησις, and his relationship to the Lysander regime. This man, stronger than every pleasure and immune to the corrupting power of wealth, brought into Sparta the immense wealth that decisively corrupted the regime. Why would he do this, and how could the rulers allow it? Plutarch will return to this focal question of the *Life* at the exact center of the narrative.

Early episodes of the *Life* show that Lysander understands the strategic value of both the desire for wealth and the good will of kings. After the recall of Alcibiades makes the Athenians formidable again, the Spartans see the need for a shrewd (δεῖνος) commander and appoint Lysander admiral (III.1-2). His courtliness pays dividends as he cultivates the friendship of the Persian prince Cyrus, who grants him money to increase the pay of his sailors, giving him a valuable advantage over Athens in the naval labor market (IV.2-4).

<sup>56</sup> As Plutarch elsewhere remarks, such courtliness is essential in his day for success and survival in high imperial political functions, so that this common opinion he reports would be an especially compelling one in his context (Plutarch, “Precepts of Statecraft,” chap. 18, 814C-E, in *Moralia*, vol. 10 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960], 240-43). For a helpful description of the effects of the concentration of power in the imperial court on the pursuit of honor and office, see Liebert, *Plutarch's Politics*, 22-28.



Plutarch highlights how un-Spartan Lysander's diplomacy is by sketching the character of his successor as admiral. Kallikratidas, a virtuous man of Doric simplicity and forthrightness, disdains barbarians who have much wealth but nothing of nobility and is thus too free and high-minded in his nature to court the favor of Cyrus (V.5, VI.4). He presents a laughable and rustic figure at court and comes away empty-handed, with the sworn intention of uniting the Greeks to free themselves from dependence on the rich and insolent barbarians (VI.7). Plutarch calls this resolution "worthy of Lacedaemon" (VII.1), implicitly raising the question whether Kallikratidas understands how differently disposed the souls of Greeks formed by other regimes are toward wealth and honor.

Plutarch goes on to say that Kallikratidas could vie equally with the top men of Greece for justice, magnanimity, and courage. This list, seen in the light of Aristotle, has a conspicuous omission. Aristotle identifies three virtues as comprehensive, involving the rest of moral virtue: justice, magnanimity, and φρόνησις. Like a true Spartan, Kallikratidas allows courage to play the role of φρόνησις in establishing the order of goods. Thus the last thing we learn about him in this same passage is that the Spartans' admiral is soon afterward lost overboard in a sea battle (VII.1).<sup>57</sup>

In the midst of this portrait, Plutarch describes sentiments of Kallikratidas toward barbarian entanglements that raise starkly the question of the un-Spartan wisdom of Lysander's diplomacy. Kallikratidas "believed any loss of Greeks to Greeks more seemly than hanging about the doors of barbarians" (VI.4). Removed from the rhetoric of spiritedness, this amounts to a belief that it would be better for Sparta to lose the war to Athens than to win with Persian help procured by un-Spartan courtliness: living according to the character formed by the regime dictates permitting the extinction of the regime. No wonder Plutarch describes Kallikratidas as suffering from ἀπορία (VI.3); it is impossible to form a strategy for military success on the basis of this conundrum.<sup>58</sup>

According to Aristotle, astuteness (σύνεσις) concerns "things about which one might be in ἀπορία and might deliberate."<sup>59</sup> Φρόνησις and σύνεσις are about the same things but are not the same thing: "Φρόνησις gives commands, since what is to be done or not is its end, while σύνεσις only judges."<sup>60</sup> Σύνεσις requires the kind of detachment that arises from conversing about ends; it would seem more at home in Athens than in Sparta. Lysander, as the most able man in Sparta but a scion of the wrong Heraclid family branch to inherit kingly rule, seems to have the detachment from the regime required for recognizing the conundrum. Perhaps this enables him to see how the scope and threat of this war, as a question of "the life and death of the whole," demand a departure from pure

<sup>57</sup> As Duff notes (*Plutarch's Lives*, 170n40), a verbal echo in Plutarch's diction here suggests that he is following Xenophon's version of the death of Kallikratidas, in which the admiral falls overboard while ramming another ship and "disappears" (*Hellenica* 1.6.33). In the Diodorus Siculus version (*Library of History*, 13.97-99), Kallikratidas, having been told by the seers that he would die but the Spartans would be victorious, manages the battle gloriously and dies on his deck overwhelmed by the superior numbers of an Athenian boarding party.

<sup>58</sup> As Liebert notes (*Plutarch's Politics*, 126-28), the Spartans prior to this time were able to recognize the incompatibility between extensive rule over their neighbors and maintaining the character of their Lycurgan regime and to prioritize the latter. The Peloponnesian War, however, threatens their independence and the regime itself.

<sup>59</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1143a6.

<sup>60</sup> 1143a8-10.

Spartan principle – and also explains why, compared to Kallikratidas, he seems capable of anything (πανούργος) and sophistic (VII.3).

Exercising σύνεσις to infer Lysander's appreciation of the Spartan conundrum helps the reader better comprehend Plutarch's treatment of the ἀπορία he initially raised about Lysander's corruption of the regime. Lysander foresees, one may conjecture, that Sparta, in order to fight wars on the scale to which they have risen, will need wealth but that its citizens and rulers will generally continue to resemble Kallikratidas more than himself. Thus the city will need reserves of its own. On the other hand, he does not appear to realize that it is his own atypical capacity for calculated adherence to strategic priorities that enables him to regard money purely instrumentally.<sup>61</sup> The attempted embezzlement by Gylippus, the eminent citizen and commander into whose hands Lysander entrusts the riches to be delivered to Sparta, shows how vulnerable the Spartan soul is to the allure of wealth.<sup>62</sup> Lysander's soul is altogether that of the general; it lacks the φρόνησις of the lawgiver who must know the souls of the citizens with a view to the health of the regime.

The most prudent (φρονιμώτατοι) of the Spartans, taking alarm from the corruption of Gylippus, enjoin the ephors to rid the city of the newly arrived gold and silver. The ephors set forth the judgment (γνώμη) that the city should continue to use only the ancestral iron coinage.<sup>63</sup> Since Lysander's friends are vehement about keeping the money in the city, however, they compromise and reserve the coinage to the public treasury, while punishing with death any who hold it privately. At this central point of the narrative, Plutarch most explicitly sets forth an argument of political philosophy.

As in *On Moral Virtue*, he again begins by rendering more lucid the φρόνησις of the lawgiver. The Spartans who made this compromise failed to understand what Lycurgus recognized: the public honoring of what is privately forbidden introduces incompatible loves that put the soul in conflict with itself. If the law tries to keep money out of the citizens' homes by means of fear but allows respect for wealth to enter their souls, Lycurgus's intention to write the laws onto the souls of the citizens is undermined; what is honored by the regime will be honored in the citizens' souls. The common practices

<sup>61</sup> The explanation Liebert gives for Lysander's distinct superiority to corruption by wealth, "that Lysander was at bottom ambitious rather than avaricious" (*Plutarch's Politics*, 129-30), does not seem to supply a complete account, since the two can easily coexist; Lysander is not refraining from embezzlement out of considerations as to how it might impede his ambitions; and a love of honor directed toward non-Spartans as his was might be well served by wealth. The strategic cast of mind and practical cleverness that make him a great general seem to play a role in his immunity to avarice and his view of money as purely instrumental.

<sup>62</sup> As José María Candau Morón points out ("Plutarch's Lysander and Sulla: Integrated Characters in Roman Historical Perspective," *The American Journal of Philology* 121, no. 3 [Autumn 2000]: 471), secretive covetousness forms part of Socrates's characterization in Plato's *Republic* of the weakness of the timocratic regime, which manifests itself especially in the period of its corruption toward oligarchy (*Republic* VIII, 548 A-B). Liebert, however, argues that Plutarch follows Xenophon more closely than Plato and Aristotle in his account of the corruption of the Spartan regime, blaming it not on any defect in the original design but on the failure of the Spartans to maintain the Lycurgan mores (*Plutarch's Politics*, 125-26).

<sup>63</sup> Plutarch, *Lysander*, XVII.1-2. It is worth noting the implication of Plutarch's grammar here. The ephors set forth (ἐπιτιθέναι) a single thought (γνώμη) – and historians disagree about which ephor gave it voice. When Thucydides uses the same expression for the discussion of an issue in the Athenian context, the discussants are said to set forth their thoughts to one another (γνώμας σφισιν ἀντοῖς προὔτιθεσαν, *History* I.139.3). If we are to hear overtones of Aristotle in Plutarch's diction, it appears that the Spartan ephors are of one mind about the decent course on the basis of their formation by the ancestral laws of Lycurgus.

constitute the city as one whole, and the corruption of the whole will spread to all the parts, whereas discordant parts can be restored to health if the whole remains sound.<sup>64</sup>

In this philosophical moment of the text, then, Plutarch broadens the question in two stages. The particular case of Gylippus turns the thoughts of prudent Spartans to a general principle of the regime. When the deliberative operation of the regime fails to render the *φρόνησις* of the lawgiver explicit and effective, Plutarch must articulate more generally the principle of city-soul dynamics implicit in Lycurgus's wisdom. Thus, from out of the particular circumstances and the dramatic conflict of priorities, Plutarch reproduces the movement from concrete choice to political prudence and then the supervening refinement of that prudence to philosophical articulation.

In the second half of Lysander's *Life*, the discordance between the successful general and the regime he is supposed to serve intensifies – a problem upon which Plutarch will invite reflection in the other explicitly philosophical moment of the pairing, early in the formal comparison. Given godlike honors by the Greek cities, Lysander seems unable to return to Sparta to be ruled as a citizen (XVIII.3-4, XX.6). Having installed in all the cities the oligarchies he had surreptitiously cultivated during the war, he becomes more powerful than any Greek had ever been, but the bold strife-loving men he admits to these oligarchies become oppressive instruments responsive only to the increasingly oppressive character of the universally courted Lysander (V.3-4, XIV.1, XVIII.2, XIX.1-3). Upon the death of the Spartan king Agis, Lysander secures the throne for Agis's brother Agesilaus, hoping thereby to become the power behind the throne, but Agesilaus uses the prerogative of his position to uphold its dignity (XXII.3-XXIII). Lysander's excessive humbling under Agesilaus thoroughly embitters him against the Spartan regime, and he plots to convert the monarchy from hereditary to elective, committing to memory for the purpose a speech composed for him by a Halicarnassian rhetor (XXIV.2-XXV.2). He dies in a war against the Thebans before he can carry out this plan (XXVIII.5).

As an able general, Lysander has built up a system of dependent regimes designed to provide Sparta a measure of control in Greek affairs that would forestall another comparable war. This system requires his prestige, influence, cleverness, and discretion to work, and this appears to convince Lysander that he needs kingly authority. In truth, it would require more extensive authority than the Spartan regime allows its kings, and even this would not compensate for the fact that the dependent regimes seem untenable in their cities.<sup>65</sup> Neither in his ill-constructed puppet oligarchies nor in his insufficiently radical proposals for reform at home does Lysander show a lawgiver's *φρόνησις* or even regime-informed cleverness sufficient to his ends. The cleverness he does possess is what the Spartans needed for the demands of the times; after Sparta's victory, his genius for generalship no longer serves the circumstances.

The concluding section of the *Life* brings forward the one man identified by name as *φρόνιμος*. After Lysander's death, the discovery of his poverty makes his virtue manifest, restoring him to high esteem among the Spartans. Agesilaus, however, discovers the text of his speech in favor of reforming the monarchic office. Feeling perhaps more than ever

<sup>64</sup> Plutarch, *Lysander*, XVII.4-6.

<sup>65</sup> On the effect of this situation on the development of Lysander's *φιλοτιμία*, see Liebert, *Plutarch's Politics*, 130-31.

the need for self-justification in his rivalry with Lysander, Agesilaus is eager to publicize his surreptitious bad citizenship. The prudent Lakratidas, principal ephor, recognizes the persuasive mischief of the speech and restrains him.

Plutarch does not make the grounds of this act of φρόνησις explicit. Relevant considerations might include the high regard for Lysander, which would dispose citizens to a favorable hearing; continuing anxiety about Spartan security that could take him as an attractive precedent; the inconveniences of the hereditary principle, which are more evident than its constitutional advantages; and the inherent reasonableness in principle of selecting the best men to rule. Plutarch does seem to imply that the φρόνησις of the ephor, like that of the Spartans wary of the gold and silver coinage, is informed by regard for the integrity of the regime, loyalty to its hereditary principles, and resistance to measures made speciously attractive by the affairs of the moment. He leaves it to the reader to reflect upon the contrast between the action of the prudent ephor and the deficiencies of Lysander, using the narrative to spur the exercise of political judgment, thereby preparing the ground for his refinement of the question of Lysander's proposed reform to the level of political philosophy in the formal comparison.

With an eye to the comparison, let us briefly consider the contribution of two relevant thematic echoes in the *Sulla*. Like *Lysander*, *Sulla* highlights at the outset the corruption of the regime by wealth. In Sulla's day, decades after the final defeat of Carthage, the Roman regime is far along the path on which Lysander started Sparta, fully given over to zeal for extravagance, whereas earlier laws had limited private luxuries (I.1, I.3). In the course of the narrative, Plutarch explores the connection to this regime-decadence of two themes familiar already from *Lysander*: the necessity for *θεραπεία*, and the contrast between the protagonist and other statesmen more paradigmatic of the sound regime.

Sulla's conduct toward barbarian monarchs contrasts sharply with Lysander's, reflecting the different situation of the Roman polis: now that Rome is arbiter of Mediterranean affairs, kings court the Romans for support, and Sulla treats the Parthian king's overtures with the haughtiness the times permit (V.4-VI.1). Sulla is, however, willing to court those he needs, and the times, he discovers, reward a consul's courtship of his soldiers (VI.7, 9). The intense verbal echo in Plutarch's triple use of *θεραπεύειν* suggests a new perspective on a small episode in the first *Life*. Lysander, composing Greek affairs after defeating Athens, takes the city of Sestos back from the Athenians, but instead of resettling the Sestians, he offers the city to men who had served him as naval officers – the first act in which the Spartans curb the universally courted Lysander (XIV.2). While less dangerous than the consuls' courting of personal loyalty in their legions, this act shows a similar inclination to establish a personal base of power but one that the Spartan regime is still robust enough to nullify. Sulla's character generally casts Lysander's in a more favorable light; but Lysander might have been a worse character if the regime had not proven able to limit him.

This necessity of military courtship for political success betokens a sea change in Roman affairs, one that Plutarch underscores when he introduces the comparison internal to *Sulla* that corresponds to the Lysander-Kallikratidas comparison. Sulla with his consular army takes over from Bruttius Sura (lieutenant of the praetor of Achaia) the conduct of war in Greece against the forces of Mithridates. Plutarch describes Bruttius as "a man

excelling in boldness and φρόνησις” (XI.4). Although his campaigns were “succeeding beyond hope, and Greece was well-disposed toward a change of allegiance due to his noble excellence [καλοκάγαθία],” he immediately obeys the command to give place to Sulla (XI.5). Bruttius’s φρόνησις appears, in good Roman fashion, to be premised upon a strict regard for legal authority. This contrasts sharply with Sulla, whose refusal to give up his army to Marius when the latter is appointed to the Mithridatic war (though by obviously nefarious electoral manipulation) leads directly to the civil war between their two factions (VIII.1-IX.1). After his honorable deferral to Sulla, Bruttius accomplishes no further noteworthy deeds (XI.5), disappearing from the narrative as precipitously as Kallikratidas.

Plutarch expands the significance of Sulla’s displacement of Bruttius in the next chapter, when Sulla’s rapacious depredations in support of his hastily conducted siege of Athens make the Greeks wistfully recall such Roman generals as Flamininus, Acilius, and Aemilius Paulus (XII.6). These men “exercised command according to law over temperate men trained to render service to their rulers without grumbling, being themselves kingly in soul and modest in expenditure” (XII.7). Plutarch contrasts the generals of Sulla’s time who, needing the loyalty of their armies in opposition to one another rather than against foreign enemies, are compelled to engage in demagoguery as generals, corrupting their soldiers and making force their claim to rule rather than virtue (XII.8).

Sulla can thrive politically in these novel conditions in large part because he recognizes the opportunities and demands of the moment and has the boldness to act precipitously, which serves him in the place of deliberation and judgment (VI.5). Bruttius’s boldness ought to suit him for success as well, but his lawful φρόνησις seems to prevent his full and spontaneous exploitation of open opportunities for power. Bruttius thus appears as one of the last of a dying breed of kingly statesmen that the Roman regime produced with some regularity but seems no longer to elevate reliably to high office. His φρόνησις, lawfulness, and καλοκάγαθία ought to secure a path to the consulship, but don’t. Perhaps he provides a glimpse of the Roman conundrum that will become glaringly evident in Cato the Younger: the respect for law and virtue that forms the best Roman statesmen ceases for the most part to fit them for effective political action when the republican process of regime adjudication increasingly fails and polis dissolves into empire. As the regime unravels, the novel conditions of political success defeat the calculations of practical wisdom, and φρόνησις becomes less politically operational.

These themes of the health and efficacy of the regime and the place of kingly men in it, suggested by parallel particulars in the narratives, become explicit straightaway in the comparison. Both men had in themselves the beginning (or first principle, ἀρχή) of the greatness they attained, but the corruption of Roman political affairs prevents Sulla’s success from arguing his excellence, whereas Lysander was repeatedly elevated to rule by fellow citizens in accord with Spartan laws in their best condition, while virtue still remained the title to office (I.1-4). Thus Lysander seems to have been judged the first of the first by competent judges, which could serve as some apology for his attempted constitutional change: “It seemed, perhaps, a just thing by nature that, in a city commanding Greece, the best of the best rule on account of virtue and not birth” (II.1). This subtly crafted observation, read in context, provides an exemplary instance of Plutarch’s mode of political philosophizing.

The rule of the virtuous in accord with natural justice is a characteristic theme of classical political philosophy. Given the proposed constitutional change, the context evokes Book Three of Aristotle's *Politics*, with its reflections on the identity of the good man and good ruler, on the varieties of kingship and whether any of them qualifies as a political regime, and on the justice of monarchy when one man surpasses the rest in virtue. Aristotle seems to presuppose familiarity with relevant phenomena in his mostly abstract discussions. Plutarch provides us with phenomena that already point toward these questions, such as the ability of the Roman regime to cultivate and accommodate kingly men – who seem, indeed, kingly than Lysander, not least of all for possessing φρόνησις.

Not only does Plutarch lead the reader to the question through the particulars, but he also keeps the question firmly embedded in the particulars. His use of the imperfect tense (“It seemed” [ἔδόκει]) puts the purportedly natural principle into play in the historical context in which it suggested itself as a principle of deliberation. Plutarch does not specify to whom it seemed just. We must presume it did to Lysander, who hoped to gain by it and whose resentments encouraged affirming it.<sup>66</sup> Did the principle seem true and applicable in the eyes of anyone else, and does that make a difference to the justice of it? What is the relevance of Sparta's Greek hegemony to the question? Is there a scale of dominion below which hereditary and limited office serves well and above which an elective and perhaps more truly monarchical rule is better? Or is Spartan command, and Lysander's significant responsibility for it, relevant only in some way to the *seeming* desirability of the reform? Did Lysander truly possess such virtue as would justify his rule?

Is the principle valid in the abstract but dangerous when applied in abstraction from the working of the regime? Plutarch seems to imply so. He affirms the rightness of inquiring who the ruler is rather than who his parents are but then shows that the Spartan regime already allowed for the operation of this principle: “Indeed the Spartans themselves deprived several of their kings of office, as being not kingly but worthless non-entities” (II.2). The regime as constituted seems to combine strict regard for ancestral law with the flexibility to honor and employ the virtuous and able and also to contain them. After all, when Lysander defeated Athens, he was only admiral *de facto*, not *de jure*: though he was ineligible for a second term, the Spartans honored the letter of the law by sending him out under another admiral with the understanding that Lysander would call the shots. When he tried to stretch his prerogatives too far, he could be reined in by the deliberative institutions and by the hereditary prestige of the king (a hereditary prestige that may itself help to establish a standard of kingliness against which to measure and reject heirs). Perhaps the φρόνησις of the ephor Lakratidas in suppressing Lysander's speech is best explained by his simultaneous recognition of the natural justice of the rule of the best and of the robust capacity of the regime to honor it within stable conventional limits.

Perhaps. This qualifier (“It seemed, perhaps [που], a just thing by nature”) belongs essentially to Plutarch's approach to the recovery of political reasoning. He acts as guide in the attempt to interpret the deliberations governing the choices and actions of statesmen,

<sup>66</sup> Liebert (*Plutarch's Politics*, 133-34) helpfully articulates how, by “opening the monarchy to merit, Lysander could claim to complete Lycurgus's revolution,” as well as how, on the contrary, Lysander's failed scheme serves to “highlight Lycurgan wisdom” in retaining the hereditary monarchy and safeguarding “the office most prone to abuse from the φιλότιμος citizen.”



using the particulars as signs and as contexts of what is possible and desirable. This inquiry is less historical than ethical: it cultivates the virtue of φρόνησις – or at least its components of σύνεσις and γνώμη, the vicarious exercise of good deliberation about possibilities viewed in the light of moral virtue. To that end, it is less important to determine what the actor's intention and judgment was (which is hardly possible to achieve with any certainty) than to consider and assess the possibilities of what it may have been. In the process the reader's practical reflection learns to stretch out over the natural terrain of φρόνησις and to discover the footpaths that lead to questions of political philosophy.

That terrain is illuminated by the light of the human good in the form of the standard of virtue, both that by which Plutarch enjoins the reader to judge his protagonists and that which healthy regimes within the narrative uphold as a standard for their statesmen. Without the light of what is virtuous by nature, refracted by its exercise in the particular regimes whose health and survival it is called upon to serve, practical reason devolves from φρόνησις to δεινότης, whose concern is power for whatever ends. Perhaps when, at the beginning of *Lysander*, Plutarch notes that many regard the θεραπευτικός ability to bear up good-humoredly under heavy authority as no small part of political δεινότης, he has in mind his own contemporaries, whom the attainment of political power eventually brings to the environs and attention of Roman governors or the emperor. If the world of the polis Plutarch recreates for the reader's imagination provides a protected space, it is less from the reality of Greek weakness than from a deficiently political field of complex relations whose horizon is confined to concern for power. By recovering the light of political experience in which virtue is maximally operative and its phenomena most evident, Plutarch helps to preserve at least virtually that dimension of human nature and reflection most endangered with loss in his time. According to Aristotle, φρόνησις is a virtue of part of the soul and so is choiceworthy in itself regardless of whether it produces anything.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a1.

# **BASILIDES OF ALEXANDRIA AS AN ARISTOTELIAN Gnostic II: BASILIDES'S DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD SEED<sup>1</sup>**

## **TRANSITION FROM THE DOXOGRAPHY OF ARISTOTLE TO A DISCUSSION OF THE DOCTRINES OF BASILIDES (19, 9)**

In his *Refutation of All Heresies* VII 19, 9, Hippolytus passes from the doxography of Aristotle to the doctrines of Basilides and Isidorus. It has been observed of Basilides, he claims there, that “not only as regards import but also as regards arguments [λόγοι] and terms, he transforms the views of Aristotle into the evangelical doctrine [λόγος] that is our salvation.” In what follows, we are given an example of Aristotelian theory that the author claims was adopted by Basilides – namely, his doctrine of homonyms (20, 5). But it is explicitly said to be “the ‘first’ larceny and theft from the Peripatos.” So, according to the author, there are other borrowings as well. He is probably referring to theology here. He states that the God whom Basilides called the “non-Being One” was called “the thinking on thinking” by Aristotle (21, 1). Presumably he means that Basilides’s theological theory (apart from the name of God) was Aristotelian. The same goes for 24, 1, where Aristotle’s reference to the “σῶμα φυσικὸν ὄργανον” and the entelechy is equated with Basilides’s reference to the “Great Archon” and his Son (the author again refers to a “λόγος” of Aristotle used by Basilides).

As regards terminology, we should perhaps mainly think of the terms “heap” (σωρός) and “totality of seeds” (πανσπερμία), which Basilides seems to have used repeatedly for “World Seed.”

In 19, 9, the *Elenchos* refers to “giving back what was taken from others.” This is in line with the basic idea of the *Refutation*. But there is an interesting ambivalence in this “giving back.” The author can refer to giving back to the lawful owners what belongs to them (τὰ ἴδια) but also about giving back to the lawful owners what was stolen by others.<sup>2</sup> In his introduction, he says that his intention in the *Refutation* is to give

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this study, titled “Aristotle’s Philosophy according to *Refutation of All Heresies*,” was published in *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 11 (2022): 100-36.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Haer.* I Proem. 11; IV 18, 2; 46, 1; VII 38, 5.

back to each of the Greek natural philosophers “their own doctrines and so to make the founders of the heresies look naked and unseemly.”<sup>3</sup> The same idea is present in 19, 9, but the author puts it differently: “by giving back what was taken from others” by Basilides and others, he will make it clear that pupils of Basilides are pagans and therefore draw no benefit from Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The expression “what was taken from others” refers to the basic idea of the *Elenchos*, that the founders of the heresies had stolen their theories from the Greek philosophers.

From 20, 2, the author goes on to explain what the doctrine of Basilides and his son Isidorus was, and how they attributed it to Matthias/Matthew and via him traced it back to a special instruction from the Savior.<sup>5</sup>

## **CHAPTER 4. BASILIDES’S DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD SEED ACCORDING TO *REFUTATION* VII 20, 1-27, 13, AND X 14**

### **4.1. The Basic Doctrines of the Theological-Cosmogonic-Theogonic System of Basilides**

Because the system of Basilides in the *Elenchos*’s account displays many problematic trains of thought and contains doctrines that cannot be easily found elsewhere, the commentary on the text will be extensive. I will first therefore give a broad outline of what will later be discussed in more detail.

The origin of all things for Basilides is an absolutely transcendent God “exalted above all name,” who is the Cause of everything that is knowable via the senses or the intellect or thanks to enlightenment. Basilides even refers to this God as “non-Being.” This God was unknown throughout the ages and beyond the comprehension of all the beings living in the cosmos, including the cosmic Rulers. Knowledge of this God was not present in the pagan philosophies and religions, nor in the religion of the Jewish people. It was only revealed through the proclamation of the Gospel in the cosmos downward from hypercosmic reality. This revelation of the Gospel completes the process of the world’s development planned by the supreme God.

Basilides’s reference to the unknown highest God as non-Being, about a threefold Sonship, his language theology, his presentation of his doctrine as a “mystery,” his negative assessment of Judaism and Greek philosophy, and his emphasis on the necessity of “Enlightenment” for obtaining true knowledge of God are closely connected.

This transcendent God initiated a process of generation by means of a World Seed because he “willed to make a cosmos.” This process of generation occurs without his active intervention but does take place according to his plan. In Basilides’s view, world history is

<sup>3</sup> *Haer.* I Prooem. 11; cf. IV 46, 1.

<sup>4</sup> The author quotes Gal. 5.2, where Paul warns the Galatians that if they return to the Jewish precepts including circumcision, “Christ will be of no advantage to you.”

<sup>5</sup> *Haer.* X 14 offers a succinct summary of this lengthy discussion, often allowing corrections of the text in Book VII. This passage is also translated in *Zeugnisse der Kirchenväter*, vol. 1 of *Die Gnosis*, intro., trans., and annot. W. Foerster (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1969), 86-99; R. Haardt, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Zeugnisse* (Salzburg: Müller, 1967), 43-52; C. Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hippolytus of Rome and the Presocratics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 283-309; *Des heiligen Hippolytus von Rom Widerlegung aller häresien*, ed. and trans. K. Preysing, *Bibliothek der kirchenväter*, vol. 40 (Munich: Kösel and Pustet, 1922), 198-211; M. Simonetti, *Testi gnostici cristiani* (Bari: Laterza, 1970), 102-18.

a goal-orientated process without external direction (comparable with the growth process of a human germ cell from the moment of conception).

This World Seed turns out to be the principle of the entire cosmos, but, more importantly, it also contains God's own essence, his "Sonship." As a result, the World Seed is not just the principle of the cosmos but also the principle of theogony because it ultimately produces truly divine beings.

Basilides represented the visible cosmos as flowing from the principles of (a) the non-being World Seed and (b) the Sonship, in which Basilides distinguished three levels: the subtle or ethereal, the (less subtle) level of air, and the earthly level of the beings with gross-material, perishable bodies. On each of these levels, we find the production of living beings and the birth of Sons. The generation of these "Sons" should be understood as the development of independent, spiritual, and inner principles.

Under the influence of Light, deriving from the Sonship (first present in the World Seed but ascended from it) that acts on these Sons via the Πνεῦμα (which forms the boundary between the cosmos and the hypercosmic divine sphere), a decisive contact is achieved between the divine Sonship and those cosmic beings who possess the ability to unite with the Sonship. That is to say, the Sons of the cosmic living beings are "spiritually (re)born" to "the Sonship of God" by being acted on "from above."

Basilides interpreted the non-being God according to his real Self as a pure Intellect. As Intellect, he is regarded by Basilides as the male Principle of Genesis (Ἀρχὴ γενέσεως) of everything.<sup>6</sup> God's Will must have been viewed by him, as it was by Philo of Alexandria and the author of the *Poimandres*, as the female Principle of becoming. He identified the non-being World Seed with the ἀρχή (principle) in the prologue to the Gospel according to John,<sup>7</sup> and he explained this text in the sense that the vital principles and the Light they contain proceeded as the Λόγος of God and became active in the Darkness of nondivine reality and that this Light "enlightens every Ἄνθρωπος [Man]" (John 1:9).

The divine Λόγος or the World Seed contains the principles of all forms of life and brings about the gradual development of these forms of life from their earliest stage to their completion. As Λόγος of God, however, it also contains the Sonship. As pure spiritual reality, this cannot remain connected with the Darkness and the Formlessness of material reality but aims purposefully at union with the Origin, the non-being God. The first phase of genesis is therefore the ascent of the First Sonship, which is related to the subtle, ethereal sphere, to the Origin.

The second phase is centered on the vicissitudes of the Sonship, which is related to the less subtle sphere of the Air and which can only ascend thanks to the help of the holy Πνεῦμα, which functions as a vehicle. This holy Πνεῦμα, after the Second Sonship has separated from it, forms the Firmament, the boundary between transcendent reality and cosmic reality, which is mixed with Darkness.

<sup>6</sup> See on this A. P. Bos, "Aristotle on God as Principle of Genesis," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2010): 363-77, and "Philo on God as 'archê geneseôs,'" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 60, no. 1 (2009): 32-70.

<sup>7</sup> For this theme, cf. G. P. Luttikhuizen, "Johannine Vocabulary and the Thought Structure of Gnostic Mythological Texts," in *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift für K. Rudolph*, ed. H. Preissler (Marburg: diagonal-Verlag, 1994), 175-81.

The third phase is the complicated process of the ascent of the third Sonship, which “needs purification.” This requires a process that takes place in all three parts of the cosmos.

The sphere directly bordering on the holy Πνεῦμα is the domain of the Great Archon, the highest cosmic ruler, characterized by rational productive activity. A characteristic feature of this World-ruler is that he has no awareness of a hypercosmic reality. His condition is one of ignorance (ἄγνοια), a condition that will descend on the entire cosmos when, at the end of world history, the third Sonship has also ascended to transcendent reality. Very remarkably, however, he produces and begets a Son. The Son is of a different quality from his Father. He seems of “another kind,” “another seed.” The fact that the Son is of higher quality than the Archon himself must have to do with the fact that he issued from “the underlying,” in which the third Sonship had stayed behind, for it had been explicitly said in 23, 4, that this third Sonship was alone in being wiser and more powerful and more excellent than the Great Archon. Unlike the Archon himself, therefore, the Son potentially participates in the metacosmic Sonship. In this way, the Great Archon unwittingly carries out the supreme God’s counsel, in which world history develops to increasingly higher levels of life. This Son is given a place of honor “sitting at his right hand,” like a kind of Melchizedek figure, a leading and ruling principle for the Great Archon.

The sphere under the Ether contains the domain of the Lower Archon, the ruler of the Air. He is characterized by mimetic activity and is designated as the God who spoke to Moses. He, too, produces a Son who is of higher quality than he is himself.

The final sphere is that of transient living creatures, burdened with metabolism and earthly bodies of different sexes. They include those who are “πνευματικοί,” that is to say, potential bearers of the third Sonship.

Once the development of the cosmos has progressed far enough, the moment dawns that all the ages of world history have awaited, the moment of the great Enlightenment. Basilides represented this as the process that reveals the Gospel, the γνῶσις concerning the Unknown God and the Sonship that is of the same essence. At that point, first, the Son of the Great Archon becomes enlightened through mediation by the holy Πνεῦμα so that he can reveal himself as the Son of God and can also be called “the Χριστός” (Anointed). Thanks to him, the Great Archon is brought to repentance (μετάνοια) through awareness of his limitations and, thanks to him, so is the entire ethereal sphere of the cosmos.

Second, the Son of the Lower Archon becomes enlightened and, thanks to him, so does the entire sphere of the air. And finally, Jesus of Nazareth becomes enlightened and, thanks to him, so do all the people who potentially participate in the third Sonship and have opened themselves up to the effect of the Πνεῦμα. Thus “the inner man” with his spiritual body is “awakened.”

The Son of the Great Archon thus unites with the hypercosmic Sonship (and separates from the ethereal sphere); second, the Son of the Lower Archon unites with the hypercosmic Sonship (and separates from the sphere of the air); and third, the Sons of God in the sublunary sphere, as the result of Jesus of Nazareth’s preaching, unite with the Sonship (and separate from gross-material and fine-material reality). The cosmos

ultimately remains in utter Ignorance, and world history has been completed because the divine has united with itself.

#### 4.1.1. Preliminary Remarks on the *Elenchos*'s Description of Basilides's Doctrine

The author of the *Elenchos* presents Basilides as being influenced by the Greek philosopher Aristotle and not by Jesus of Nazareth. J. Frickel's thesis that the author himself made the link between Basilides's doctrine and Aristotle's pagan philosophy and that Basilides did not explicitly base himself on Aristotle merits serious consideration.

This is not to say that Aristotle's thought had no influence on Basilides. On the contrary, some crucial features of Basilides's doctrine can only be explained satisfactorily against the background of Aristotle's doctrine of God, of the soul, and of the intellect.<sup>8</sup> This means that we cannot dismiss the account of Basilides by the author of the *Elenchos* as fanciful. He, or somebody else, must have had a fine intuition for the import of Basilides's theology.

The following are examples of crucial parts of Basilides's doctrine that show the influence of Aristotle's philosophy:

1. His theology – Basilides's highest, nonexistent God is completely transcendent, "exalted above every name." The γνῶσις of this God is therefore not discursive but intuitive according to the distinction that Aristotle introduced as a result of his insight that all discursive activity is based on a prior intuitive type of knowledge. This God does not in any way form part of the cosmos. He is pure final goal; he is, however, the entity who contrives and controls all things; all other reality, in a way appropriate to it, has a desire (ὄρεξις) for this highest God; this God is not an efficient cause in the sense that Plato's Demiurge seems to be; he is, however, the Begetter of all things through the production of a World Seed; he does not make a cosmos "most like" (ὅμοιος) himself<sup>9</sup> but begets a Sonship that is "of the same essence" (ὁμοούσιος).

This God is the source of Life and Power and of the Light that eventually severs the bonds of cosmic existence.

2. His psychology – The soul is understood to be cosmic and bound up with materiality. As such, it is the principle of motion and production. On the cosmic level, the Archons stand for psychic beings, the efficient causes of all generation. They do not possess the all-embracing Knowledge regarding the highest God but a limited knowledge, although, without knowing it, they do carry out the counsel of the highest God. The threefold Sonship, which is of the same essence as the highest God, is, as part of the World Soul, emphatically intellect-in-potentiality and as such psychically characterized.

On the microcosmic level, the soul is the principle of vegetative, animal, and rational life.

An essential element here is that man possesses a capacity for higher knowledge as a potentiality of this soul. But actualization of this potentiality, as in Aristotle's theory of

<sup>8</sup> This position was already argued by F. C. Baur in "Das System des Gnostikers Basilides und die neuesten Auffassungen desselben," *Theologische Jahrbücher* 15 (1856): 121-62, 146ff.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 29e3



the soul's capacity for intellectuality, leads to a separation of this spiritual principle from the soul of which the spiritual principle was a potentiality!

Basilides's theory on how the second Sonship leaves behind the "holy Πνεῦμα" is entirely parallel with Aristotle's theory on how the intellect that has achieved actualization separates from the soul and the soul-body of which it was a potentiality.

3. His notion of the threefold Sonship, which is of the same essence as the highest God and finally breaks away from cosmic reality and unites with hypercosmic reality, should be understood against the background of Aristotle's doctrine of the intellect-in-act, which has no connection with material reality.

4. His notion of the holy Πνεῦμα as the fine-material vehicle of the "second Sonship," a doctrine that cannot be seen separately from Aristotle's doctrine of a special, pneumatic body of the soul, which according to Aristotle "has something of another and more divine body than the so-called elements" (*Gener. Anim.* II 3, 736b29-31); and the connected notion that the Sonship itself is transcendent in relation to Πνεῦμα but that the effect of the Sonship is still present in the Πνεῦμα, just as the smell of myrrh remains behind in a jar in which the myrrh is no longer present;

5. His notion of the Great Archon and his Son, whom the Anonymous interprets as the instrumental body of the World Soul and the World Soul as entelechy;

6. The concept of world history as a process in which increasingly higher and more perfect potentialities develop from a first principle regarded as the World Seed;

7. His tripartition of reality into a transcendent, intelligible sphere, an ethereal sphere, and the sublunary sphere of generation and decay;

8. The theme of the "torture" undergone by the third Sonship during its cosmic condition, which goes back to the story about the torture suffered by the prisoners of the Etruscan pirates in Aristotle's *Eudemus*;

9. His notion of a completion of the cosmic evolution in a process of cosmic "enlightenment," comparable with man's achieving knowledge of the Transcendent and γνῶσις because his potential intellect makes contact with the Transcendent;

10. The theme of the Great Ignorance (ἄγνοια) as the final condition of all cosmic reality and the total separation of hypercosmic reality from cosmic reality, a theme deriving from Aristotle's dialogue the *Eudemus*;

11. His view that supralunary reality is governed and ordered with providence and that sublunary reality is not.

#### 4.1.2. The Structure of the *Elenchos* as a Whole

Before discussing the *Elenchos*'s description of the doctrine held by the Gnostic Basilides, we need to look more closely at the structure of the *Elenchos* as a whole. Previous investigators have devoted much research to the relationship of the various parts.

Book I (often referred to by the title "Φιλοσοφούμενα")<sup>10</sup> forms a self-contained survey of Greek philosophy. This book also has its own peculiar history of transmission, based on more (five) manuscripts than the rest of the work.

<sup>10</sup> This title derives from *Haer.* IX 8, 2: ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πρότερον ἔκκεται ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐν τοῖς Φιλοσοφούμενοις ἡ δόξα Ἡρακλείτου. J. Mansfeld (*Heresiography in Context: Hippolytus' Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy*)

Book X also requires special attention. It contains several brief summaries of the doctrines of Greek philosophers and of heretical pupils but ends in an exposition of orthodox, Christian doctrine in the view of the author of the *Elenchos*. In his 1968 dissertation, J. Frickel dealt at length with the relation between the material in the *Epitome* (Book X) and the previous discussions in Books II through IX.<sup>11</sup> Frickel makes it clear that the brief summary of the doctrines of the Greek philosophers in Book X 6-7 is not, as we would expect, a brief account of the Greek philosophies described in Books I-IV. The section on the Greek philosophers in Book X is an entirely new text that has been literally copied from Sextus Empiricus.<sup>12</sup>

Something similar can be observed for the summaries of heretical doctrines that follow in X 8-29. Not only is the order in which the heretics are discussed different from that in the extensive description of Books V-IX, but the *Epitome* also lacks figures that the earlier discussion did cover and deals with persons absent in the previous books.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, apart from the introduction, the *Epitome* shows no trace of the connection between the Gnostics and the Greek philosophers that the author of the *Elenchos* had so painstakingly elaborated in Books V-IX.<sup>14</sup> There is not a single reference to Greek philosophers. According to Frickel, this allows us to conclude that the author described the doctrines of the Gnostics in the *Epitome* of Book X using the original documents relating to the Gnostics, which he had also used for his more extensive discussion in Books V-IX.<sup>15</sup> But in Frickel's view, it also warrants the conclusion that it was the author himself who in Books V through IX supplied the argumentation for deriving the Gnostic conceptions from earlier Greek philosophies.<sup>16</sup> In particular for the discussion of Basilides's doctrine, Frickel considers this patently obvious.

Finally, Frickel demonstrates that the author's use of Irenaeus is rigid and often verbatim. He abridges but does not make his own new text.<sup>17</sup>

In the following section, we will comment on Basilides's system that we find in the *Elenchos*.<sup>18</sup>

[Leiden: Brill, 1992], 1) assumed that "*Philosophoumena*" could also be regarded as the subtitle of the entire *Refutation*. C. Scholten ("Der Titel von Hippolyts *Refutatio*," in *Studia Patristica* 31 [Leuven: Peeters, 1997], 343-48) disagrees and argues that the word in *Haer.* IX 8, 2, should not be read as a title but as a reference to the account of philosophical views (as given in Book I but also in Books I through IV).

<sup>11</sup> J. Frickel, *Die 'Apophasis Megale' in Hippolyt's Refutatio (VI 9-18): Eine Paraphrase zur Apophasis Simons* (Rome: Pont. Institutum orientalium studiorum, 1968), 30-87.

<sup>12</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. physicos* II 310-8. Cf. Frickel, *Apophasis Megale*, 51, 74.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-63.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 66, 71.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. Cf. K. Koschorke, *Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker: Eine kritische Untersuchung seiner "Refutatio omnium haeresium"* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 102-4, and M. Marcovich, ed., *Hippolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986), 34, who reject Frickel's theory that the *Epitome* was written by the author of the *Elenchos* as an independent, earlier study against the Gnostics.

<sup>16</sup> Frickel, *Apophasis Megale*, 67. See also M. J. Edwards, "Hippolytus of Rome on Aristotle," *Eranos* 88 (1990): 25-29. H. Staehelin, *Die gnostische Quellen Hippolyts in seiner Hauptschrift gegen die Haeretiker* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1890), 64, and Marcovich, *Hippolytus*, assumed that not Hippolytus himself but his source constructed the connection with Greek philosophy.

<sup>17</sup> Frickel, *Apophasis Megale*, 82-83.

<sup>18</sup> For a new Dutch translation of the text of [Hippolytus], *Elenchos* VII 20, 1-27, 13; and X 14, see A. P. Bos, "De Gnosticus Basilides en Zijn Theologie over de Levensfasen van de Kosmos," *Philosophia Reformata* 70, no. 1 (2005): 49-62.

### 4.1.3. Secret Doctrines (20, 1)

The basis for the teaching activities of Basilides and Isidorus was, in their own words, a complex of “secret doctrines”<sup>19</sup> about which Matthias/Matthew had told them<sup>20</sup> and that Matthias/Matthew had heard when alone with Jesus. This notion of “secret doctrines” was surprisingly popular in Hellenism. But it is also highly ambiguous.<sup>21</sup> The New Testament repeatedly talks about instruction by Jesus to his intimate circle.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, only three of the twelve disciples are present at the “glorification on the mount.”<sup>23</sup> The apostle Paul, who did not accompany Jesus as a disciple, also claimed to have received direct instruction from the Savior.<sup>24</sup> The Gospel of Thomas presents itself in the introduction as “secret words that the living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas recorded.”<sup>25</sup>

(a) The “secrecy” may have a didactic motive: the teacher is constantly weighing and testing which pupil can grasp and profit from his teaching and up to which level. In the Greek tradition, Plato had perhaps therefore emphasized the great drawback of a written text: it does not allow for the pupil’s level of learning. Hence Plato strongly preferred a long and close association between teacher and pupil.<sup>26</sup> In such a view, “secrecy” is not a goal in itself but the result of didactic considerations and in principle temporary.

(b) However, according to many later authors, the Pythagorean tradition had presented its own doctrine as a group possession that was not to be shared with persons

<sup>19</sup> *Haer.* VII 20, 1: φασὶν εἰρηκέναι Ματθαῖον αὐτοῖς λόγους ἀποκρύφους; and in 20, 5.

<sup>20</sup> W. A. Löhr (*Basilides und seine Schule: eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1996], 26-29) is suspicious about this introduction by Basilides. According to Löhr, Basilides cannot have had any personal contact with Matthias. But see our discussion in chapter 1.2-3 (*Kronos Philosophical Journal* 11 [2022]) on the names “Matthias” and “Matthew.” Note, too, that Basilides is just as unlikely to have had direct contact with Matthias as with Matthew. We therefore proposed above that the author’s remark is meant sarcastically: Matthew (the evangelist) had imparted secret doctrines to *them* (though the text of the Gospel of Matthew was freely available to all).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the contributions by G. Theissen, K. Rudolph, and G. A. G. Stroumsa in *Secrecy and Concealment*, ed. H. G. Kippenberg and G. A. G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1995); F. J. Crosson, “Esoteric Versus Latent Teaching,” *Review of Metaphysics* 59, no. 1 (2005): 73-93.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the teaching about the last days in Mark 13:3; also 4:11; 4:34; 6:31-32; 7:33; 9:2 and 28; cf. 4:10-12; Matt. 13:11; Luke 8:10. The expression κατ’ ἰδίαν used by Hippolytus is also found in Matt. 17:1; 17:19; 20:17; 24:3; Luke 10:23; Mark 9:2. On this problem, cf. R. Roukema, “Had Jezus een geheim onderricht?,” in *Jezus, de gnosis en het dogma* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2007), 178-93.

<sup>23</sup> The Gospel of Philip :26 talks about this event: “But when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount, he was not small. He became great, but he (also) made his disciples great, so that they would be able to see him in his greatness.” For this, see L. K. van Os, *Baptism in the Bridal Chamber: The Gospel of Philip as a Valentinian Baptismal Instruction* (PhD diss., Groningen, 2007), with English translation.

<sup>24</sup> Gal. 1:12. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:23 (?); Eph. 3:3: κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον and ff. (This text plays a role in *Haer.* VII 26, 7.)

<sup>25</sup> On this, cf. G. P. Luttikhuisen, “Vroege tradities over Jezus in een niet-canonieke bron: het evangelie van Thomas,” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 38 (1998): 120-43. In the Gospel of Thomas logion 13, Simon Peter compares Jesus to “a righteous angel,” Matthew compares him to a “wise philosopher,” but Thomas cannot find words. Jesus then says three words to Thomas separately! B. Gärtner (*The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas* [London: Collins, 1961], 123) suggested that these three words were: ‘I-am who I-am.’ Cf. Roukema, *Jezus, de gnosis en het dogma*, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Plato, *Epist.* VII 341a-d. Cf. R. Ferber, *Warum hat Platon die “ungeschriebene Lehre” nicht geschrieben?* (Munich: Beck, 2007).

outside the circle.<sup>27</sup> The Gnostics were also keen to emphasize the high value of their tradition in this way.<sup>28</sup>

(c) But “secret doctrines” may also mean that they reveal what had so far remained hidden and unknown but has now been disclosed for the salvation of all those who can and want to understand them. In the same sense, the apostle Paul presents the heart of the Christian doctrine as a “mystery,”<sup>29</sup> and these Pauline texts were of vital importance to Basilides as the *Elenchos* describes him.

(d) It may also be that a writer/teacher raises matters that are of a higher order than that of ordinary human experience. The central theme of the Gospel of Philip, the mystery of the bridal chamber, is such a subject, one that would presumably suffer profanation by being revealed in everyday language. Perhaps the author of this Gospel therefore chose to talk about it in a “veiled,” “concealed” manner (Philip:82, 122). Basilides also says that he is concerned with wisdom that cannot be communicated in words but “in a mystery” (1 Cor. 2:7, cited in VII 26, 3).

(e) Finally, “secret doctrines” can also be interpreted as doctrines whose content and meaning remain hidden when viewed “superficially.” For a proper understanding, such texts require a “key,” a “code” that can only be provided by γνώσις.<sup>30</sup> Such “secret doctrines” almost take on the character of a cryptogram. In its present form, the Gospel of Thomas has this character to a strong degree, which makes the image of Jesus presented there hard to reconcile with the image presented by the canonic synoptic gospels.

Yet there is another, interesting aspect to the notion of secret doctrines. The pretension is that these matters cannot be understood by people without help from outside. According to Basilides, Matthias/Matthew had received special instruction from Jesus. Though Basilides does not present Jesus as the Word of God incarnate, or as God, but as son of Mary (26, 8), he does designate him as the Teacher *par excellence* because he is the first earthly man to have been “enlightened” by the Light that passed from the “hypercosmic Sonship” through all the celestial regions, as far as the sublunary sphere. To this extent, Jesus’s teachings are divine Wisdom, which had remained hidden throughout previous centuries.<sup>31</sup> The God who had remained unknown during the entire genesis of the cosmos

<sup>27</sup> *Haer.* I 2, 4, states that Pythagoras divided his pupils into an “esoteric” and an “exoteric” group and reserved his complete doctrine for the former.

<sup>28</sup> *Haer.* I Prooemium 3 pretends that all Gnostic teachers make their pupils swear an oath of secrecy. Agrippa Castor, in *Eus. Hist. eccles.* IV 7, 5-8 (= *Basil. Test.* 1, Löhr) states that Basilides, like Pythagoras, imposed a period of five years’ silence on his pupils.

<sup>29</sup> Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:1; 2:7; 15:51; Eph. 1:9. See also 1 Pet. 1:20: Χριστοῦ, προεγνωσμένου μὲν πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, φανερωθέντος δὲ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων. Thus the *Apocryphon of John* also pretends to be the definitive but secret doctrine of Jesus Christ, taught to John the son of Zebedee, after Jesus’s ascension. Witness the opening words: “the teaching of the savior and [the revelation] of the mysteries [and the] things hidden in silence even these things which he taught John, [his] disciple” (*The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J. M. Robinson, 3rd ed. [Leiden: Brill, 1988], 105). D. Harting, in “Basilides als getuige voor de echtheid van het vierde evangelie,” *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie der Wetenschappen*, Department of Literature 12 (1869): 29-57, wrongly assumed that the term “apocryphal” could only have been used by Hippolytus in the disqualifying sense of “not recognized by the church.”

<sup>30</sup> Cf. J.-É. Ménard, *L’Évangile selon Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 77ff.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Haer.* VII 25, 3: in the time when the Great Archon ruled, all things were “kept hidden in silence” (ἀποκρύφου σιωπῇ). Cf. the beginning of the *Apocryphon of John* quoted above.

and mankind was only revealed in the fullness of time and was then made known to people through the mission of Jesus. But again, we should take into consideration here that Jesus drew a distinction between his public teaching and his “higher instruction” to spiritually receptive people.

The author of the *Elenchos* wants to deflate Basilides’s pretension that he communicated hidden wisdom that had only become available since the appearance of Jesus by showing that essential points of this “new and divine wisdom” were not new but old and not divine but a product of human philosophers who belonged to the generations for whom, according to Basilides, the mystery was still hidden.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.2. The Non-Being God (20, 2)

At the very beginning of his discussion of Basilides’s doctrine,<sup>33</sup> the author of the *Elenchos* places his exposition of the doctrine of the First Principle, or his doctrine of the highest God who remained unknown for centuries. He refers to him in a Greek sentence that has been passed down in a highly problematical form: “There was, he says, then there was nothing.”<sup>34</sup> Marcovich reads a text that can be translated as “‘There was a time when there was Nothing.’”<sup>35</sup> But the argument then goes on to talk about “the Nothing” that is “above every name.” And in 21, 1, the author uses the term “<the> non-being God.”<sup>36</sup> In his second discussion of Aristotle, we already saw how he presented Aristotle’s doctrine of beings in such a way that he could suggest that according to Aristotle, too, all things that come into being owe their existence to non-beings or to matters that do not themselves belong to the sphere of generation and decay (the genus and the species).

But Basilides only pretended to be the exegete of Matthias/Matthew and Jesus. His special theology can be understood to follow from words of Jesus such as in John 17:3: “And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” We have no direct indication that Basilides himself cited Aristotle as an authority. So is there another likely source of inspiration for Basilides’s theology of the non-being God than Greek philosophers?

At the very least, we should consider the possibility that this aspect of Basilides’s doctrine of principles could derive from the prologue to the Gospel of John. This starts by talking about the λόγος and then says in 1:3: “All things have become through him, and without him nothing has become.”<sup>37</sup> It is true that the next words, “what has become,” have often been connected with the passage quoted. But this is not absolutely necessary.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy*, 16-17.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of this, see P. J. G. A. Hendrix, *De Alexandrijnsche haeresiarch Basilides. Een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de gnosis* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1926); G. Quispel, “L’homme gnostique: la doctrine de Basilide,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 16 (1948): 89ff.; W. Foerster, “Das System des Basilides,” *New Testament Studies* 9 (1962/63): 233-55; H. J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1967), 234-38.

<sup>34</sup> *Haer.* VII 20, 2: “Hv, φησίν, ὅτε ἦν οὐδέν. E. Miller, in *Origenis Philosophumena sive Omnium haeresium refutatio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1851), already proposed replacing ὅτε by ποτέ. Marcovich (*Hippolytus*) has ποτέ <ὅτε>.

<sup>35</sup> Marcovich, *Hippolytus*, 286.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Baur, “Das System des Gnostikers Basilides,” 123.

<sup>37</sup> John 1:3: πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. The Codex Bezae has οὐδέν instead of οὐδὲ ἓν. Tatian, *Or.* 19 (22, 5) has: πάντα ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ <γένονεν> καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γέγονεν οὐδὲ ἓν (*Tatiani Oratio ad*

Quite a few interpreters have connected these words with what follows. This means that John 1:3 can be read as “All things became through him, and without him nothing became that has become,” but also as “All things became through him, and without him Nothing became.”<sup>38</sup> Of course it is strange to say on the one hand that all things became through the Logos and on the other hand that Nothing became without the Logos. But we will have to consider the possibility that Basilides read a hidden doctrine of principles in John 1:3 in the sense that he designated all things as “become through the Logos” and set against it a principle that is of a different order and is designated as “Nothing” and as independent of the Λόγος.

If we could consider such an exegesis of the prologue of John as the background to Basilides's doctrine of the non-being God, then it becomes easier to understand that, starting from the basic conflict with traditional Judaism, people from a pagan culture explained the writings that circulated in Christian circles as the proclamation of a hitherto “Unknown God” who was also God “of a different category” from that of the Jewish and pagan religions.

#### 4.2.1. The Highest God as “Unnameable” (20, 2-4)

A typical feature in Basilides's description of the “highest God” is that he is exalted “above every name that is named.”<sup>39</sup> It is remarkable that this theme also occupies an important place at the beginning of the Gospel of Philip (Philip:11-13). We should probably not infer from this that God does not have a name. The Gospel of John does talk about the name of God, which he also gave to Jesus (17:6, 12, 26). But this name cannot be put on a par with a name from the generated cosmos (cf. Gospel of Philip:12). However, after affirming that no name used by people for things in the world of experience applies to God, Basilides seems to continue with the remark that many things in human reality do not have an appropriate name or formulation either. For a truly appropriate specific name could only be one that belongs exclusively to a certain thing in a perfect way and to nothing else. Basilides thus expresses an awareness that human language is totally inadequate for talking about God.<sup>40</sup>

*Graecos*, ed. M. Marcovich [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995]). In the account of Aristotle's philosophy in 16, 2, and 17, 1, the threefold οὐδὲ ἔν is remarkable to say the least.

<sup>38</sup> This is also the reading that seems to be followed in *Haer.* V 9, 2, and very explicitly in V 8, 5. There we find a very different exegesis: τὸ δὲ «οὐδέν», ὁ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γέγονεν, ὁ κόσμος ἐστὶν ἰδικός· γέγονε <μ> ἐν γὰρ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ, ὑπὸ τρίτου καὶ τετάρτου <θεοῦ>. Cf. also V 16, 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Haer.* VII 20, 2-4, especially 3: ἔστι, φησὶν, «ὑπεράνω παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου». Basilides's words here correspond to Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 1:20-21, as in VII 22, 13, and, more fully, in 25, 5. The author speaks there about “the working of God's great might, which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and above every name that is named” (with a clear reference to Psalm 110/109 LXX). See also Phil. 2:9: ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, where it is said that God gave Jesus Christ “a name above every name.” (There is certainly no reason to read a language-philosophical intention in the letter. Rather, the author's concern is with the elevation of Jesus Christ to the highest authority and to Lord over everything and everybody.) “The name above every name” is often taken to mean that Jesus receives the name of “Lord” (κύριος) and LORD (Yahweh). This is entirely inappropriate in the context of Basilides's philosophy since he considers the name “Yahweh” (“I am he-who-is”) typical of the cosmic Archon of the Air – VII 25, 4 – and not of the “non-being God.”

<sup>40</sup> We often find this idea in the Hellenistic period. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 4, 1, also calls true Being/God οὐτὲ ῥήτὸν οὐτὲ ἀγορευτὸν. Tatian, *Or.* 4 (5, 13) calls God ἀνονόμαστον. In the fragmentarily transmitted *De Deo* 4, Philo, too, talks



In particular, the insight that “being” in a predicative sense always implies discursiveness and therefore differentiation of reality led to an awareness that the Origin of all beings must be raised above “being.” Plato was the first to introduce meta-transcendent principles. In his *Republic* VI 509b8-10, he referred to the Idea of the Good as “beyond being” (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας), that is to say, transcendent even in relation to the world of the intelligible, always self-identical beings. In his dialogue the *Parmenides*, he seems to have referred to a similar position of the “One” and distinguished it from “the One Being.”<sup>41</sup> There are good reasons for taking seriously the tradition, common since Aristotle, that Plato regarded “the One” and “the indefinite Dyad” as the (meta-transcendent) Principles of the Ideas.<sup>42</sup> Such principles cannot be classified among “the beings.” This has led since Plato to the insight that gaining knowledge of the Origin must therefore be something that cannot be conveyed in discursive language but can only be obtained in an epiphany or a moment of Enlightenment.

It is likely that Basilides’s own reflection on the meaning of the text in the Letter to the Ephesians 1:21, like his thinking through of the Gospel of John, led to this language-theological position and that Basilides did not base himself on Aristotle for this.

Basilides’s language theology doubtless had consequences for his explanation of the story in Genesis 1:5 and 1:8, where the Creator gives names, and in 2:19-20, where it is said that the Lord God brought all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air to man, “to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every creature, that was its name. The man gave names.” For Gnostic authors such as Basilides, here lies one of the roots of the “confusion and error” caused by homonymy (VII 20, 4).<sup>43</sup> As a product of cosmic beings, language is not suitable for describing hypercosmic reality. Thus, it also seems likely that Basilides explained the biblical story in Genesis 11 about the Babylonian confusion of tongues as a (superficial) designation of a much more serious language problem, which can only become clear to those who have obtained γνῶσις of hypercosmic reality. In his *De confusione linguarum*, Philo had also talked about the “σύγχυσις” of all human discourse.

#### 4.2.2. Aristotle’s Doctrine of Homonyms

According to the *Elenchos*, Basilides also emphasizes here that language is inadequate for the “signification” of things in our reality. Its author is aware that Basilides’s claim that Jesus’s message brought something new that was completely unknown throughout previous centuries could throw many Christians into confusion. He wants to deflate this claim of total newness and for this purpose links up with Aristotelian themes. His polemical approach here makes it likely that he himself establishes the link between

about God as ἀκατονόμαστος and ἄρρητος. Cf. also J. Whittaker, “Ἄρρητος καὶ ἀκατονόμαστος,” in *Platonismus und Christentum. Festschrift für H. Dörrie*, ed. H. Blume and F. Mann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1983), 303-6.

<sup>41</sup> See R. Mortley (*The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek*, vol. 2 of *From Word to Silence* [Bonn: Hanstein, 1986], 28-32), who emphasizes Basilides’s originality. Also T. Böhm, “Unsagbarkeit und Unbegreiflichkeit des Prinzips in Gnosis und Neuplatonismus,” in *Gnosis oder die Frage nach Herkunft und Ziel des Menschen*, ed. A. Franz and T. Rentsch (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), 81-95.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* A 6, 987b18-22; 9, 992a10-24.

<sup>43</sup> Clement, *Str.* II 112, 1 (Löhr fr. 5) talks about “some original disturbance and confusion.”

Basilides and Aristotle. Basilides could expect his talk about a non-being God to draw attention as something unknown and new. But this claim would be weakened if he himself had connected it with Aristotle's theory of language. So although these Aristotelian notions do not perhaps, from a historical point of view, form the basis of Basilides's theology (Aristotle considered God to be transcendent but also referred to him as "being as being"), the Anonymous can certainly find starting points in Aristotle's metaphysics. He makes the critical remark here that Basilides merely dresses up Aristotle's doctrine of homonyms in his *Categories* (20, 5),<sup>44</sup> even though Aristotle, like all Greek philosophers, lived in the "times of ignorance."<sup>45</sup>

The first word of the very first treatise in the Aristotelian Corpus is in fact "homonyms." Aristotle says there: "Homonyms we call those things which have only a name in common while the definition of being which corresponds to the name is different."<sup>46</sup> As an example, he gives the term "living being," which is common to a human being and a portrait of a human being. In one case the appropriate definition is "an ensouled and rational being" (cf. VII 18, 4); in the other case the substance will be described as "a painting (a dead thing) with the representation of a human being."

In *De anima*, Aristotle says that if an eye does not possess power of sight (anymore), it is only an eye in homonymous fashion: just like an eye of stone or a painted eye.<sup>47</sup> In a different context, Aristotle refers explicitly to "the eye of a dead person" as an example of a homonymous use of the word "eye" (*Gener. Anim.* II 1, 735a8). It becomes clear in this context that a name can belong to something "in a proper sense"<sup>48</sup> and in an improper sense. An eye of stone or of a dead person is an eye only "in name." We should also consider this in connection with Aristotle's *Categories*, where it is said that the "indivisible substance" is the substance "in the most proper sense."<sup>49</sup>

It seems as if Basilides's doctrine of hidden γνῶσις is partly intended to raise awareness that theo-logy is impossible and that his own "theo-sophy" regarding the γνῶσις of the ineffable God is very different from all theologies up till then. At most they talked

<sup>44</sup> The *Elenchos* calls Aristotle πολλαῖς γὰρ γενεαῖς [...] πρότ<ερ>ος than Basilides. This may have been chosen on account of Eph. 3:4-5: μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃ ἐτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη, a passage quoted in VII 25, 3. I. Mueller ("Hippolytus, Aristotle, Basilides," in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. P. Schrenk [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994], 144) also sees no reason to assume that Basilides was truly dependent on Aristotle in this matter.

<sup>45</sup> Basilides's doctrine of the development of world history makes it likely that he saw Plato, like Aristotle, as someone who was ignorant of "the mystery" and had not penetrated the "depths" of γνῶσις!

<sup>46</sup> Arist. *Cat.* I, 1a1-2. Cf. J. P. Anton, "The Aristotelian Doctrine of Homonymy in the *Categories* and Its Platonic Antecedents," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6, no. 4 (1968): 315-26; J. P. Anton, "Ancient Interpretations of Aristotle's Doctrine of Homonymy," in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy I*, ed. J. P. Anton and G. L. Kustas (Albany: State University of New York, 1971; repr. 1972), 569-92; C. Shields, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); J. K. Ward, *Aristotle on Homonymy: Dialectic and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Arist. *Anim.* II 1, 412b18-22; cf. *Metaph.* Z 10, 1035b24-25; *Part. anim.* I 1, 640b36-641a6. Cf. *Gener. anim.* II 1, 734b24-27, which refers to the situation after death.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Haer.* VII 20, 4: εὐρεῖν κυρίως ὀνόματα.

<sup>49</sup> Arist. *Categ.* 5, 2a11. Cf. *Haer.* VII 18, 2, and 18, 6. But for Basilides precisely this identification of the concrete, visible entity as "being *par excellence*" is a compelling reason not to characterize God, the Origin, as "being."

about divine powers that formed part of generated reality.<sup>50</sup> And to make clear the unreality of this generated world, he names the founding reality of this generated unreality by negating the terms current for generated reality.<sup>51</sup> Gnosticism wants man to leave behind all practicing religion and theo-logy and to raise himself to a level of spiritual concentration in which the truly divine in man can make contact with the divine Origin.

H. A. Wolfson devoted an important article to Basilides's position on this matter.<sup>52</sup> He observes that a tradition in negative theology was developed by Philo, Albinus, and Plotinus, who considered the statement "God *is not* nameable" equivalent to the positive statement "God *is* ineffable." Basilides radicalizes this tradition, also rejecting the possibility of positively attributing negations to the highest Principle. This radicalization cannot have been developed by Basilides in debate with Albinus or Plotinus. We must therefore assume that Basilides is criticizing positions such as that of Philo of Alexandria.<sup>53</sup> Basilides intimates here that the God who in Exodus 3:14 announced his name as "He-who-is" cannot have been the truly transcendent and highest God.<sup>54</sup> These cosmic gods stand to the non-Being God as "the eye of a dead person" stands to a real eye (of a living person). Such gods are "god" only in homonymous fashion.

It is certainly possible that this beginning of Basilides's exposition is a way of indicating that standard approaches such as "God is one," "God is good," "God is Being" talk about God with the help of terms ("one," "good," "Being"), which can be used for gods who belong to the sphere of "beings" and are differentiated by the Λόγος but which

<sup>50</sup> The Gospel of Philip, 53, 23-54, 16 (:11-13), deals at length with the misleading character of names for things in the world. It also states that the name of the Father is raised "above all others." The naïve use of names is then associated with the cosmos and the rule of the Archons. Cf. *Das Philippus-Evangelium (Nag Hammadi-Codex II 3)*, newly ed., trans., and expl. H.-M. Schenke (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 19 and 182-88.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Foerster, "Das System des Basilides," 236: "Das System des Hippolyt bietet den äussersten Ausdruck, der überhaupt möglich ist, dafür dass Gott nicht mit irgendwelchen menschlichen Begriffen zu fassen ist." Cf. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 307n83.

<sup>52</sup> H. A. Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," *Harvard Theological Review* 50, no. 2 (1957): 145-56, repr. in H. A. Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. I. Twersky and G. H. Williams, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 131-42. Cf. J. Zandee, *The Terminology of Plotinus and of Some Gnostic Writings, Mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut, 1961), 7-13.

<sup>53</sup> Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers," 156. This theme is also central to M. Jufresa, "Basilides: A Path to Plotinus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35, no. 1 (1981): 1-15. See also L. Thomas, "L'absolu dans deux pensées apophatiques: Basilide et le Taoïsme," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 67, no. 2 (1987): 181-91, who sees Basilides's negative theology as building on a discursive tradition and Taoism as belonging to an intuitive and mystical tradition.

<sup>54</sup> See *Haer.* VII 25, 4, where the God who spoke to Moses is identified with the Lower Archon, the ruler of the Hebdomad. Above him Basilides assumes the Great Archon or ruler of the Ogdoad. Philo of Alexandria had accepted the name of God "He-who-is" as the name of God in his absolute self-sufficiency, as distinct from the name "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," the name with which God established a relationship with the reality dependent on him. Cf. D. T. Runia, "God of the Philosophers, God of the Patriarchs: Exegetical Backgrounds in Philo of Alexandria," in *Philo and the Church Fathers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 206-18. Cf. also B. A. Pearson, in "Philo and Gnosticism," in *ANRW* II 21, 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 304, gives an account of H. Jonas's study, which claims that "God's essence [...] is not accessible to man, but his existence, 'that he is,' can be known." See also F. Siegert, who observes in *Philon von Alexandrien, Über die Gottesbezeichnung "wohlthätig verzehrendes Feuer" (De Deo). Rückübersetzung des Fragments aus dem Armenischen, deutsche Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988), and in "The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*: First English Translation," *Studia Philonica Annual* 10 (1998): 3, that in the *De Deo* text Philo perhaps even denied the applicability of the name "Being."

can only be used for the Origin of all things in homonymous fashion and are therefore best omitted. The γνῶσις of the highest God is the result of “enlightenment,” not a matter of intellect. The time of Basilides sees a beginning of awareness that God as Origin can only be discussed in terms of ideas and in the language of religious belief, not in terms of concepts and in analytical, discursive language.

In its summary of X 14, 5, the *Elenchos* underlines the importance of the distinction between the cosmos and hypercosmic reality in Basilides's system: “There is something called the cosmos and something hypercosmic. For he [Basilides] divides into these primary divisions.”

Likewise, the significance of the arrival of the Gospel in the cosmos is emphatically described as the acquisition of “Knowledge of hypercosmic things” (VII 27, 7). So this is knowledge of a different order from that which people possess on the basis of their sensory perception and experience. In the Anonymous's exposition of Basilides, this knowledge can only be acquired by “pneumatic beings” after they have “been enlightened.” It is the “wisdom spoken of in a mystery” (26, 3; cf. 1 Cor. 2:7).

Though 26, 2, talks about a process in which the Great Archon is “instructed” about “who was the non-existent One, what the Sonship [...],” it goes on at once to draw a fundamental contrast with teaching “in words taught by human wisdom.” For the teaching Basilides has in mind is teaching “taught by the holy Πνεῦμα,”<sup>55</sup> or, in a quotation from another passage in the apostle Paul, “things that cannot be told, which man cannot utter” (26, 7, quoting 2 Cor. 12:4). For Paul, too, this required “revelation” (Eph. 3:3 and 3:5, quoted in 26, 7). None of the “rulers [Archons] of this century” knew about this hidden wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6 to 2:8), until the time of the “Enlightenment” through the Gospel. But “the spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.”<sup>56</sup> True γνῶσις breaks the “veiling silence”<sup>57</sup> in which everything had been preserved during many generations (25, 3), not really with words but with an experience of “enlightenment” that goes beyond all language. Perhaps this is also referred to in 20, 4, which says that “the properties of the things named should be silently understood with the mind.”

It can thus be made evident that this tradition of γνῶσις pretended to have left behind all previous philosophy and all previous religion.<sup>58</sup>

We can assume that Basilides saw a close connection between the “mysterious silence” in which all things were wrapped from the beginning of the cosmos, the “secret teachings” of Jesus that Matthias/Matthew had passed on, and the desire for the “revelation” of the Sons of God as springing from the deposition of the World Seed by the non-being God. Because the Origin was presented as the Origin of the Λόγος, that is to say, the Origin

<sup>55</sup> *Haer.* VII 26, 3, with reference to 1 Cor. 2:13.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Cor. 2:10: τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>57</sup> *Haer.* VII 25, 3: πάντα γάρ, <φησίν> ἣν φυλασσόμενα ἀποκρύφω σιωπῇ. Cf. Rom. 16:25. *Haer.* VI 18, 2, says of Simon Magus that he awards to Σιγή, Silence, the rank of Origin; he says that Valentinus awards this place to the All-Father and Σιγή together (VI 22, 2).

<sup>58</sup> This is also one of Plotinus's great objections to the “Gnostics,” that they dare to claim that Plato had not truly penetrated the “depth” (βάθος); cf. Plot. *Enn.* II 9 (33) 6 and 10 and Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 16: [...] ὥς δὲ τοῦ Πλάτωνος εἰς τὸ βάθος τῆς νοητῆς οὐσίας οὐ πελάσαντος. We can infer from this remark by Porphyry that some Gnostics criticized Greek philosophy as a “limited,” non-ultimate wisdom. Cf. M. J. Edwards, “Neglected Texts in the Study of Gnosticism,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 41, no. 1 (1990): 26-50.

that goes beyond all language and thought, all the above features of Basilides's system (and that of other Gnostics) are interrelated.<sup>59</sup>

Significantly, a text in Clement also clearly shows that the term "hyperc cosmic" was a key notion for Basilides.<sup>60</sup>

### 4.2.3. Cosmic and Metacosmic Theology in Aristotle

In the Aristotelian tradition, we find a clear impulse toward a negative theology in *On the Cosmos* 7, 401a12ff. that declares that the many names (ὀνόματα) attributed to God by human beings say only something about the effects of God's power active in the cosmos. This theme is closely linked to the distinction in chapter 6 between the transcendence of God and the immanence of his Power in the cosmos. In turn, this is connected with the double definition of "cosmos" in 2, 391b9-12. The cosmos is first defined there as the totality of all perceptible phenomena but then as the world system that exists thanks to and for the sake of God, who is exalted above the cosmos. In this way, the perspective of physics is effectively subordinated to the theological perspective. The author had already indicated this distinction in 1, 391b3-4, when he formulated his program as follows: "Let us therefore speak and, so far as possible, speak from a divine perspective [θεολογεῖν] about the nature and position and movement of each of them."

This division of the philosophical disciplines is also structural in Aristotle's lecture treatises. In actual fact, these are mainly concerned with the cosmos around us, but the constant assumption is that there exists an ultimate, supreme, "first philosophy" that must supply the highest form of knowledge. In *Metaphysics* A 2, 983a2-11, Aristotle calls this true Sophia, since it is knowledge about God and the knowledge that God himself possesses. "Philo-sophy" or "love of wisdom" is of a much lower order compared with this "Sophia." In the words of Basilides (*Elenchos* VII 27, 2), it is as if a fish should desire to feed with the sheep on the hills! This could suggest that acquisition of this knowledge is not within man's scope. For the nature of man is in many respects "unfree."<sup>61</sup> But by nature man does aspire to knowledge that actually goes beyond his nature (just as a fish that tries to fly, Basilides would say). Man must first cast off his bat-like condition so that his intellect is able to comprehend the brilliance of what is by nature most clear.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Cf. R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence* (1986). For Aristotle's contribution to this development, see V. Kal, *On intuition and discursive reasoning in Aristotle* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

<sup>60</sup> Clem. *Strom.* IV 165, 3 = Basil. fr. 12 (Löhr): ξένην τὴν ἐκλογὴν τοῦ κόσμου ὁ Βασιλείδης εἴληφε λέγειν, ...ὥς ἂν ὑπερκόσμιον φύσει οὖσαν. The expression "the elect" may well be interpreted as relating to the (threefold) Sonship, which is "of the same essence" as the hypercosmic God. This Sonship is in "exile" as long as it is present in the World Seed.

<sup>61</sup> Arist. *Metaph.* A 2, 982b28-30: πολλαχῇ γὰρ ἡ φύσις δοῦλη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐστίν. The word δοῦλη here stands for "lack of freedom," "bondage." It should be taken to refer to the oppressive bond of the visible body with all its necessities but also to the soul's bond with its instrumental body as the seat of perception, emotions, and passions. Only when liberated from these (oppressive) bonds can man (= his divine core, his intellect) be truly free. In this regard Aristotle's view of the condition of earthly man agrees with Basilides's view of the third Sonship, which is "in need of purification." We will see below that Gnostics may have connected this text with "the form of a servant" spoken of in Phil. 2:7.

<sup>62</sup> Arist. *Metaph.* A 1, 993b9-11. For Greek readers of Aristotle, the image of the "bat" would have immediately suggested the "dead souls" of Penelope's suitors, who are compared to bats in a cave in Hom. *Odyssey* 24.1-14. This text plays an important role in *Refutation* V 7, 30-41.



This ability means that man rises above recognition of the divinity of the stars and planets to insight into and knowledge of the principle responsible for order in the world of the cosmic gods. Aristotle was the founder of the double theology of a supreme transcendent God and a lower level of subordinate, cosmic gods.<sup>63</sup> This double theology also seems to be the purport of the text in which Cicero relates how Aristotle talked about people who have always lived in a luxurious subterranean dwelling and suddenly see the brilliance of the celestial canopy and the entire cosmic order.<sup>64</sup> The idea is to indicate how a human being can suddenly achieve awareness of a Cause that holds everything together.<sup>65</sup>

For Aristotle, Plato is the founder of this awareness of a hypercosmic reality.<sup>66</sup> Unlike Plato, however, Aristotle sees not the world of Ideas but the divine transcendent Intellect as the first Cause of the entire cosmic order. But insofar as this hypercosmic reality falls outside the scope of human perception, it is also easy to understand why Aristotle did not leave behind any lectures on “first philosophy.”<sup>67</sup> He referred to knowledge of this highest reality as knowledge of “being as being.” This gives it a status that raises it even above the status and knowability of the being that is said in various ways (homonymous being). Knowledge of this was also called theology by Aristotle. Appropriate to this status are reports that Aristotle described the acquisition of this knowledge as “being touched” and as “being initiated” and as “contemplation” (of a higher order than visual perception).<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps we should assume that Aristotle followed Plato's example and concluded that our human condition prevents us from obtaining direct knowledge of God. Perhaps, like Plato, he therefore talked about this higher knowledge only in images and mythical stories. The fact that this seems especially to have happened in his lost works, which are sometimes referred to as “ἐξωτερικοί λόγοι,” may suggest that the real meaning of the term “ἐξωτερικός” was: concerned with hypercosmic reality.

Basilides's language theology can be understood as an indication of the total “reversal of perspective” that occurs when γνῶσις is obtained, the awareness that all forms of cosmic “life” are actually forms of “death” or “sleep,” measured by the yardstick of the “spiritual life” of the Intellect/the Sonship in the hypercosmos. It is the same “reversal of perspective” that was cultivated in Plato's *Phaedo*, in Aristotle's *Eudemus*, and in the myth at the end of Plutarch's *On the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*.

#### 4.2.4. The Crucial Importance of Basilides's Theology of the Non-Being God

Basilides's theology is the pivot of his entire conception. In the proclamation of Jesus, he saw a proclamation of a secret, a mystery that was unknown to all previous generations because it was preserved in a mysterious silence (25, 3). He concluded from this that

<sup>63</sup> Cf. A. P. Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology in Aristotle's Lost Dialogues* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

<sup>64</sup> Cic. *N.D.* II 37, 95-96 = Arist. *Philos.* fr. 13 Ross; 838 Gigon.

<sup>65</sup> This is the theme that Philo of Alexandria, *Abr.* 69-70, describes as the “migration” of Abraham from the cosmic theology of the Chaldeans to knowledge of the truly transcendent God.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Arist. *Philos.* fr. 8b Ross. But as a fragment of a lost text by Aristotle, this text is controversial. See W. Haase, “Ein vermeintliches Aristotelisches Fragment bei Joh. Philoponos,” in *Synousia. Festgabe für W. Schadewaldt*, ed. H. Flashar and K. Gaiser (Pfullingen: Neske, 1965), 323-54. O. Gigon did not include this text in his collection.

<sup>67</sup> See also Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 307n83.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Plu. *Isid. et Osir.* 382d-e = Arist. *Eudem.* fr. 10 Ross; 1012 Gigon. Cf. *Philos.* fr. 15 a and b Ross; 963 Gigon; fr. 14 a and b Ross; 943 and 905 Gigon. See also Clem. *Strom.* I 176, 2-3.



“the God and Father” proclaimed by Jesus could not be identical with the God of any earlier religion, so not with the God of the Jewish religion or any religion of the Greeks either. He therefore tells the followers of these religions or theologies to “convert” and radically reorient themselves to a hitherto unknown form of worship (through γνῶσις) of a hitherto Unknown God.<sup>69</sup> As such, this attitude of Basilides is not anti-Jewish,<sup>70</sup> no more than it is anti-Greek. In effect, Basilides did nothing but link up with passages in Paul’s letters and highlight an aspect of Christian belief – namely, the awareness that the fullness of time had arrived with the mission of Jesus and that this mission acquainted people with a doctrine that was at odds with everything they knew.<sup>71</sup>

But this theology of a non-being God is hard to explain to someone who is totally unprepared for it. This accounts for the fact that we do not find any reference to this aspect of Basilides’s theology in Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Acts 17:23: εὖρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο, ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. ὁ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.

<sup>70</sup> Even though J. Daniélou (“Le mauvais gouvernement du monde d’après le gnosticisme,” in *Le origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. U. Bianchi [Leiden: Brill, 1967], 448-59) claims on page 454: “cette conception gnosticienne apparaît comme le plus radicalement anti-juive qui puisse être.” One can of course say that the consequences of the new theology had to seem anti-Jewish, in the context of a religion that was deeply and intimately connected with the Jewish religion. And this Gnostic conception may well have been viewed and presented as anti-Jewish by Christians of Jewish origin and Jews outside of the Christian church too.

<sup>71</sup> This does not mean that I would agree with B. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 105: “So it can be concluded that the Gnostic theology of the unknown God is based on biblical and Jewish traditions.”

# COUNTERING KANT, OR CONDITIONS OF PERPETUAL ANXIETY

## THE GRAVEYARD OF THE HUMAN RACE

Surprising though it may be, in this paper I would like to focus mainly on the problem of Kant's political realism rather than his utopianism. Kant's ironic and at the same time bitter and accusatory words in the text *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* describing the political status of the philosopher prove the realism of the thinker from Königsberg. Kant says explicitly, "One cannot expect that kings philosophize or that philosophers become kings. Nor is this desirable [...]"<sup>1</sup> It is just that the world should take time to "listen to the philosopher." Kant realizes that "philosophers who dream the sweet dream of perpetual peace" cannot do anything concrete for this world. Dreamy, empty appeals to rulers ("heads of state"), the goodwill of people, conscience, and so forth cannot obtain anything. Hence, referring to the questions from the *Critique of Pure Reason* – (1) What can I know? (2) What should I do? (3) What may I hope? What is man? – I ask a key question: What kind of peace can we hope for today?

The open aim of my paper is to lead Kant out of the "idealistic threat" and to bring his considerations to the material ground. I argue that only a "materialistic" reading of Kant does not result in "daydreaming." This materialistic interpretation of Kant results in a certain re-evaluation. After that, we no longer ask about the conditions of perpetual peace but about the conditions of constant anxiety in the world. However, I will maintain Kant's main impulse – the elimination of the threat of a "war of extermination, in which both parties and, moreover, all right can be eradicated simultaneously, could bring about perpetual peace only over the great graveyard of humanity."<sup>2</sup> In this sense, I will remain faithful to what I would call, in the spirit of Ernst Bloch, the conditions of a concrete and material utopia.<sup>3</sup>

To carry out such an interpretation, I will try to rethink the complex relationship between war and peace, a war that is an "expression of antagonism" between nations

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure, ed. Pauline Kleingeld (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Bloch, "Widerstand und Friede," in *Materialien zu Kants Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Z. Batscha (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976); Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

and a war that is an “expression of economic dependence” but also a peace that is only a temporary suspension of fighting (“mere cease-fire,” a “postponement of hostilities”) and a “perpetual peace” that is the final abolition of the conditions of war and the establishment of conditions for a friendly coexistence of a federation of nations in the republican system.

In Kant’s text, we see a tension between the declared legal framework of perpetual peace – regarding the form of state, escalation of hostility, the policy of incurring debts, and the postulate of the abolition of an army that is ready to fight – and the material guarantees of establishing a policy of friendship between states. Reading *Zum ewigen Frieden*, we see a disproportion between what Kant calls “Preliminary Articles for Peace” and the entire content of the supplements that ensure the feasibility but above all the durability of the formulated legal framework.

In a nutshell, the first supplement deals with economics and universal history (i.e., establishing the goals of history), and the second deals with the relationship between morality and politics. In this second supplement, Kant expresses the belief that there is essentially concordance between morality and politics, a concordance guaranteed by the “transcendental concept of public right.”

## GLOBAL TRADE STATE

The material or economic guarantee of perpetual peace is the most problematic. In this first supplement, Kant outlines the natural history of humankind inhabiting the entire surface of the earth, even in the most unfavorable areas. How did it come about? Well, it happened as a result of human antagonism and hostility between nations – that is, simply as a result of wars. The people scattered around the world populated various areas of the earth, forming the seeds of their sovereignty.

This brings us to the central paradox. The frequency of wars forces the creation of international law and order. Kant claims that “through war, [nature] has compelled [nations] to enter into more or less legal relations with one another.”<sup>4</sup> Kant also adds that “nature has used war as the means to populate all of the regions of the earth.”<sup>5</sup> This history of dispersion, population, and formalization of relations between nations is strictly a biopolitical history, which could not have escaped the attention of Michel Foucault, the founder of the conceptual apparatus of contemporary biopolitical theory. What are the conclusions to be drawn from this story? Commenting on Kant’s text in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault reflects on how nature guarantees perpetual peace. Foucault replies:

It is very simple, Kant says. [...] Nature intended the entire world, the whole of its surface, to be given over to the economic activity of production and exchange. [...] Perpetual peace is guaranteed by nature and this guarantee is manifested in the population of the entire world and in the commercial relationships stretching across the whole world. The guarantee of perpetual peace is therefore actually commercial globalization.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” 146.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 57.

This raises a very serious question: How does the “spirit of war” relate to the “spirit of economic exchange”?

In trying to answer this critical question about the relationship between economy, peace, and war, let us note, first, that for Kant law is a response (a kind of defense mechanism) to the global antagonism between nations created by armed conflicts. This antagonism played a positive role, stimulating the earth’s population. Once this task has been completed, however, the “spirit of trade” enters the stage of history and establishes economic relations between nations. These relationships require further regulation. Therefore, peace appears to respond to “the prospect of” the emergence of a global market, a federation of states bound by economic relations.

Let us ask, naïvely, what do we need peace for? Of course, to live in safety, respect, and autonomy and to further develop trade relations. The international treaties are to guarantee the free exchange of goods. The question arises: Is there room for conflict, antagonism, and war in this world of economic idyll and universal prosperity? Kant would have to be blind not to notice that this antagonism persisted precisely where it was to be eliminated, that is, in trade relations where nations compete to provide their citizens with economic indicators of success and happiness. Therefore, the issue of state debts, the right to incur further debts, and the issue of trade with existing states as goods is so crucial for Kant already in the “Preliminary Articles for Peace,” where, in the second section, we read, “No independently existing state (irrespective of whether it is large or small) shall be able to be acquired by another state through inheritance, exchange, purchase, or gift.”<sup>7</sup>

### CONDITIONS OF PERPETUAL ANXIETY

The main issue, therefore, is the relationship between the “political state” and the state as an entity (and guarantor) of trade exchanges. What else would be tempting to treat the other state as an object of exchange, commodity, or object of trade if not that “spirit of commerce” praised by Kant that results in the commodity of everything, including the states themselves? Kant does not see this threat of commodification; he does not see the political consequences of the generalized spirit of trade, of liberating the demon of trade from the magic bottle of capitalism. We will have to wait for Karl Marx to diagnose this threat and understand the connection between capitalism and war, the spirit of trade, and the spirit of competition. The history of societies will be the history of the wars between the classes and not only nations. Understanding the conditions of peace will prove to be understanding the conditions of perpetual anxiety.

What is the condition of perpetual anxiety? Well, an economy subordinated to war will become the most important condition. But not even in the sense that this economy produces everything for a future war and all technical devices and innovations result from Cold War rivalry. But that perpetual peace would essentially spell the end of history as we know it. The Kantian vision of perpetual peace is closely related to the vision of the end of history. History comes full circle, starting with a state of war that produces populations and ends with a state of peace that inactivates nations (populations) by directing their activity toward trade and only trade.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” 68.

Of course, Thomas Hobbes's "demons" are returning here. We see elements of *Leviathan* in Kant's *Perpetual Peace*. Kant's peace seems to be a reversal of Hobbes's famous formula of the state of nature in which the "war of all against all" (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) reigns. Perpetual peace is opposed to "perpetual war" but also to the extension and sharpening of the idea of a "social contract" understood as leaving the "kingdom of darkness" (the state of devils) and entering the "enlightenment kingdom" (commonwealth, state of angels). In this first kingdom, in Hobbes's phrase, the life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>8</sup> Only in the "kingdom of peace" does human life become socialized, long, rich, and happy. I also recall that in Hobbes's morality the first and fundamental law is a general rule of reason: that "every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of War."<sup>9</sup>

Theodor W. Adorno, in his lectures on history and freedom devoted primarily to Kant and Hegel, reminds us that: "[...] in Kant the relation of the realm of freedom to history is mediated by conflict (*Antagonismus*)."<sup>10</sup> Moreover:

In Kant's philosophy of history, the essence of which is distilled in the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* [*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*], the realm of freedom into which individuals might hope to enter is brought together with history. [...] This resembles Hobbes's earlier view of a war of all against all, the savage conflicts in which mankind has nothing to gain and that result in the famous contracts founding the states.<sup>11</sup>

In sum and a nutshell: "Kant's kingdom of freedom is confronted by the kingdom of necessity."<sup>12</sup> Kant's fundamental problem remains whether this element of conflict and antagonism can ever be eliminated or whether antagonism in *human nature* is an inevitable, difficult-to-eliminate extension of politics.

It seems that Kant's key problem is the problem of freedom, which is not limited and is not exhausted by the concept of individual autonomy. The problem with freedom is, first, the problem of its antinomies, which are the antinomies of bourgeois freedom. The bourgeois is free in his moral activity and economic initiative, and he is not free at the same time in his position in the world as an organism that is part of the causal structure of the world.

## THE UNSOCIAL SOCIABILITY

The problem of freedom is closely related to the economic initiative, its legal conditions, and the process of human socialization – that is, the production of mutually predictable

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1651/2012), 84.

<sup>9</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 67.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964-1965*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

beings in one network, as Nietzsche would mention in the future. I argue that this antagonism in Kant's doctrine is so difficult to eliminate, not because there is some "death drive" or "will to power" that complicates man's peaceful dispositions, but because our humanity is characterized by what Kant calls the "unsocial sociability." This concept, originally expressed as *die ungesellige Geselligkeit der Menschen*, comes from the treatise already mentioned above, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, written in 1784.

In the Fourth Proposition of this text, the author notes that "The means which nature employs to bring about the development of innate capacities is that of antagonism within society, in so far as this antagonism becomes, in the long run, the cause of a law-governed social order."<sup>13</sup> At the same time, writes Kant, "By antagonism, I mean here the unsociable sociability of people [*die ungesellige Geselligkeit der Menschen*], that is, their tendency to come together in society, coupled, however, with a continual resistance which constantly threatens to break this society up."<sup>14</sup> According to Kant, man tends to unite with the community but not to such an extent that his individuality or self-interest is threatened. On the other hand, the same person tends to isolate himself in his individuality but not so much as to leave society.

Of course, the concept of "unsociable sociability" should not be interpreted in a strictly naturalistic way and deprived of its cultural, social, and economic context. This unsociable sociability is always revealed under a certain impulse, although the economic impulse is probably the key here. Hence, insisting not so much on a society of free exchange as on a society free of the necessity of exchange and the curse of possession may prove crucial.

Let us note, then, that the first difficulty hindering the establishment of perpetual peace is the ambivalence discovered by Kant and the social nature of man. But that's not all. The second problem is the very notion of war. Does the notion of war exhaust itself within the "extended duel" or "extended antagonism"? Of course not. Let us ask: Does Kant have a unitary concept of war? Well, it doesn't seem so. In Kant's paper, several terms describe the state of war. Kant writes, *inter alia*, "For war is only the regrettable expedient in the state of nature (where there exists no court that could adjudicate the matter with legal authority) to assert one's rights by means of violence." Kant also adds, "A punitive war (*bellum punitive*) between states is inconceivable."<sup>15</sup> Finally, Kant claims, "The state of nature (*status naturalis*) is not a state of peace among human beings [...]. Hence the state of peace must be *established*."<sup>16</sup> It seems that for Kant many meanings of war and peace are necessary for better reflecting on the complex relationship between the state and the war. In Deleuze's language, we say: between the "war machine" and the "state apparatus."

Is it any wonder then that we should assume and discover a primal and permanent war when Foucault returns once more to Clausewitz's famous formula that "war is the continuation of politics by other means" and tries to turn this formula upside down,

<sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, in Kant, ed. H. S. Reiss, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 64.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," 71.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



claiming that there is constant war under the shell of peace, order, and wealth, the authority of power under the guise of a peaceful order, the apparatuses, and laws. Is all this Foucault's accusation that dialectics is only a pacification of this bitter discourse of fundamental war sweeping through the philosophical and political order?

The dialectic may, at first sight, seem to be the discourse of the universal and historical movement of contradiction and war, but I think that it does not, in fact, validate this discourse in philosophical terms. On the contrary, it seems that it had the effect of taking it over and displacing it into the old form of philosophico-juridical discourse.<sup>17</sup>

In the same context today, Andrew Culp clearly declares, "As long as the dialectic of recognition remains, the sovereign view of power persists, even after we have cut the head off the king." He also writes:

The failure of previous revolutions is not that they have insufficiently wielded power, parties, and the state, but that they have proven incapable of breaking with them (hence the failure of state socialism ever bringing about communism or withering away of the state and private property, and neoliberalism's ostensibly minimal state larding up agrobusiness subsidies and police budgets).<sup>18</sup>

It is not even about war itself and its theories in the form of strategy or the idea of "absolute war" as the embodiment of "absolute conflict"; it is rather about the return to the famous inversion of Clausewitz's formula, about politics as a continuation of war by other means. It is, therefore, about rethinking war and the model of war that is at the heart of politics, which never finds a day of peace or reconciliation. It is, therefore, about treating peace as another instrument of war and law as a more sophisticated weapon.

We return here to certain of Nietzsche's and Foucault's intuitions from the series of lectures *Society Must Be Defended* in which Foucault seems to insist most intensely on rejecting the *Leviathan* model and economic and juridical thinking about power. Power comes neither from the "state of possession" nor from the "authority of the state" but from the relationship of forces. Peace is not the "transcendence of war"; war is the "immanence of peace." But do we know what war is today? Do we know what guerrilla warfare is? Are we clearly differentiating between strong "strategic intelligence" and weak "tactical intelligence"? What is the power of a pre-emptive attack? What is force regrouping? And finally, what is a withdrawal maneuver or even escape from an overwhelming enemy? Is war the limit of our political imagination if we still have one?

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, trans. David Macey, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 58.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Culp, *A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), 6-7.

## PEACEFUL TERROR

Let us make a somewhat risky juxtaposition of Kant and Deleuze. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari knew the state was tempted to transform into a war machine. In the well-known fragment “1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine,” the authors of *A Thousand Plateaus* write about three possible connections between state and war.<sup>19</sup> Of course, all three constellations are based on the premise-declaration that “the war machine is always exterior to the State, even when the State uses it, appropriates it.”<sup>20</sup>

The first constellation, almost mythical, is a “nomadic constellation,” in which the war machine remains independent of the state and effectively defends itself against its interventions. In the second constellation, the state controls the war machine and uses it instrumentally as its equipped arm. Finally, we have the third constellation (the most cruel and disturbing), in which the war machine and the state unexpectedly fuse. This is how a form of peace, understood as “Peaceful Terror,” is born, as a total nameless control over the Earth. In this variant, the war machine achieves a new goal: establishing a World Order. Deleuze warned that it was a peace more terrifying than death itself, more cruel than the most cruel war. Deleuze cautioned that, in this “terrible eternal peace,” states hand over the war machine to a Global Reason that sets its own goals and defines its enemies. Deleuze warned that a new constellation is coming.

The world became a smooth space again (sea, air, atmosphere), over which reigned a single war machine, even when it opposed its own parts. Wars had become a part of peace. More than that, the States no longer appropriated the war machine; they reconstituted a war machine of which they themselves were only the parts.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps only under the protection of this “terrifying peace” can a new idea of war arise that is not simply a war between states but a war aimed at destroying the enemy army or state and the entire population. Paul Virilio, a great theorist of war and monuments left behind after the war (bunkers), thirty years ago wrote that traditional war was dead; it had been replaced by terror, the terror of states that aim to destroy entire populations.<sup>22</sup> Is what we are seeing in Ukraine anything other than “pure terror” aimed at the destruction of the population? A population that – it should be added – has already experienced the threat of annihilation through provoked hunger, that is, experienced extermination by starving it to death. The great starvation in Ukraine, Holodomor (Ukrainian: Golodomor), caused by the communist authorities of the USSR in 1932-33 was an attempt to eradicate the population, not just to win the war.

<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 351-420.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*, trans. Mark Polizzotti and Brian O’Keeffe (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2008), 106-16.

Cambodia is an alternative example of the deregulation of the classical concept of war. Cambodia, of Pol Pot's time, was a model of a "suicide state" that is not the result of biopolitics understood as care for supporting the life of the population. On the contrary, biopolitics in Cambodia tended to dissolve the population. If the Pol Pot regime and today Vladimir Putin in Russia were allowed to pursue their goals, they would surely lead to a complete destruction of collective life. Certainly, we are entering a dangerous era of "heads of state," that is, unlimited terror, in a caricatured way resembling a painting from 1793 in which we see the end of the Reign of Terror in France in the form of an image of an executioner who guillotined himself.

## LOGISTICS, OR THE DEATH OF CLAUSEWITZ

Paul Virilio, a great theorist of war and monuments left after the war, an archaeologist of bunkers, says quite explicitly: War is dead; it has been replaced by terror. The future is guerrilla warfare and street warfare in a new form. A strictly political war concerned the territory and the state defending its borders.<sup>23</sup> Currently, in the global situation of the Tower of Babel, we are observing a new phenomenon – a kind of mutation, a mixture of terrorist and civil war. Two wars, previously considered separately, have been condensed and mixed to such an extent that we are observing the beginning of what Virilio calls an "international civil war." The fundamental shift in strategy is to combine hyper-terrorist civil war with war between states.

According to Virilio, there are reasons to talk about three historical phases of thinking about war. The first phase is the dominance of tactical thinking. This is a phase monopolized by hunting rituals. Tactics is the art of hunting and tracking the prey animal. Strategy, however, appears along with the policy related to the polis, that is, the Greek city and city management, a spatial organization with defensive walls and a system of internal violence maintaining order. Of course, tactics within cities are always a useful modality of action; however, in the "city logic," we experience the superiority of strategy over tactics, which explains, inter alia, the development of military elites, a specialized "war machine," an army at the service of states. Over time, logistics takes control of the strategy. Logistics becomes the new God of War. Modern logistics means industrial production that is perfectly consistent with military production. However, such coherence means nothing else than identifying production with destruction.

Logistics must combine the problems of food, weapons, and transportation. General Dwight Eisenhower, back in the 1940s, issued a statement that still seems relevant today, in which we read, "Logistics is the set of procedures by which, in times of peace and war, the potential of a nation is transformed into its actual armed forces." Translating this into Aristotle's language, we would say that logistics is a set of principles for transforming the sphere of potentiality (δύναμις) into the sphere of actuality (ἐνεργεία). What does this mean in practice? The logistics revolution means that the border between civilian and soldier is becoming fluid. After the "logistical turn," we no longer know where military production ends and civilian technology begins.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7-9 and 116.

The problem is that logistics has become an absolute weapon in our times. If the army is no longer a separate caste or class today, the entire economy is closely linked to war production, and the greatest inventions of our time are linked to intellectual work for the army; this means that we are all already civilian soldiers, even without knowing it or admitting it. We citizens do not recognize the militarized part of our identity. We citizens of the twenty-first century constantly forget that we are the result of Cold War inventions.

### INTELLECT IN WAR AND WAR WITHOUT INTELLECT

Deleuze and Guattari were, of course, aware that the state was transforming into a war machine. It seems that the authors of *A Thousand Plateaus* present us with an important alternative – either the state uses violence, on which it has a monopoly and which is expressed through war, or it is devoid of weapons and works through a direct magical trick, that is, it catches and binds other powers, preventing any fighting. However, if a state can acquire an army, it must assume a minimum legal order and organization of its military function. Hence, the temptation to define the state as an institution that has a monopoly on the execution of violence.

Deleuze and Guattari want to maintain the belief that the war machine remains irreducible to the state apparatus; that is, it is external to its sovereignty prior to its law. Deleuze and Guattari want to believe that between the “despotic-magical” state and the “legal state,” which includes a military institution, there is a disclosure of a war machine residing from an undefined outside. The state apparatus merely appropriates the war machine and uses it for political purposes. Our times may force us to rethink this categorical distinction between the war machine and the state apparatus. We should not look for a pure war machine and its intelligence outside the state, and we should not think of a state as a sterile state without the intelligence and energy of the war machine. The state of pacifistic naïveté of thought is no longer denied to us. We are all warriors in the service of various powers.

The constant distrust of the state and philosophy toward the army would require separate consideration. Clausewitz guessed its sources, pointing to absolute war as a pure Idea. Clausewitz believed that war was a continuation of political relations carried out by other means. What does this mean? This means that, first, there is the concept of absolute war, that is, the pure concept of war understood as the final “overthrow of the enemy”; second, that actual wars lead to a final war and therefore the apocalypse is inevitable; third, that historically known wars have always oscillated between the idea of a war of attrition (total) and the idea of a limited war (armed surveillance). Clausewitz’s hesitation concerns whether the state’s political goals condition total war or whether the state seeks to realize the idea of unconditional war. Clausewitz, like Freud, was uncertain whether the death drive should be sought in the state or its “supercharger” in the form of a destructive army.

It is René Girard, who reads simultaneously the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the treatise *On War*, who draws attention to the fact that Clausewitz and Hegel brought two absolutes to life. Clausewitz imagined the catastrophic compatibility of war and its concept. The war is nothing more than an “extended duel.” However, the duel tends to reach extremes. As a result, war is an act of escalating violence that has no limits.

In war, the “escalation to extremes” destroys the sense of reality.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Hegel imagined the abolition (*Aufhebung*) of time when thought grasps its own concept. Dialectics is only a duel, a fight for recognition, not reconciliation. However, Girard is wrong when he wonders how to reconcile Hegel with Clausewitz, hastily assuming that Hegel does not know what an army is and that Clausewitz does not know what a subject as a concept is. The problem is not how to reconcile extremes but how to avoid them. The problem is that Hegel knows what an army is, and Clausewitz knows what a concept is.

Today, not only is total war a war of annihilation of states, but it occurs when the annihilation targets not only the enemy army or state but the entire population. What does this mean? This means that the relationship between the war machine and the state apparatus is reversed – states strive to rebuild the war machine and seek a war with unlimited momentum of destruction. On the other hand, a form of peace is born as Peaceful Terror, as total control over the Earth. The war machine takes on a new goal: establishing a world order. Deleuze already wrote that it is “a room more terrifying than death itself.” “States hand over the war machine to the global Logos of the war machine, which chooses its own goals and defines its enemies.”<sup>25</sup> The automatism of the cybernetic machine ensuring – that is, calculating – the conditions of peace should worry us.

## BRUTALISM OR NECROPOLITICS

Is there any escape from this pendulum link between the war machine and the state? Deleuze still believed that there are two poles of the war machine – war defining the limit of destruction and the lines of escape, that is, the potential machine that sets in motion other movements, such as the artistic, scientific, and political movements, constituting a smooth space of freedom. Deleuze still believed in a simple alternative – either lines of destruction or of escape. He believed that we build war machines in opposition to state apparatuses that choose destruction as their main object.

I am afraid that our faith in radicalism and the purity of this distinction has been taken away. Intelligence has no being and, therefore, cannot belong to anyone. Catherine Malabou convincingly shows that metamorphoses of intelligence replace its existence.<sup>26</sup> Intelligence is ultimately only about its transformations. The Greeks, who recognized the primacy of change over being, called intelligence *μητις* before calling it *λόγος*, thus giving primacy to deceit over “reason.”

Perhaps the great rediscovery of our times is discovering the lack of sophistication in every sphere of life, including war. The new wars did not turn out to be intelligent,

<sup>24</sup> René Girard, *Battling to the End: Discussions with Benoît Chantre*, trans. M. Baker (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2010), 31.

<sup>25</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 340. Expanding the last quote from Deleuze: “this war machine is terrifying not as a function of a possible war that it promises us, as by blackmail, but, on the contrary, as a function of the real, very special kind of peace it promotes and has already installed; that this war machine no longer needs a qualified enemy but, in conformity with the requirements of an axiomatic, operates against the ‘unspecified enemy,’ domestic or foreign (an individual, group, class, people, event, world); that there arose from this a new conception of security as materialized war, as organized insecurity or molecularized, distributed, programmed catastrophe,” 467.

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Malabou, *Morphing Intelligence: From IQ Measurement to Artificial Brains*, trans. Carolyn Shread (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

purely cybernetic, precise, specialized, based on specialized units cutting out unnecessary tissue like a precise movement of a surgical scalpel. On the contrary, wars have become strictly biopolitical, affecting entire populations and their futures. It is the militarization of the police and the politicization of war that results not so much in the “politics [...] of pure means” but in the “politics of final resort.”<sup>27</sup> Brutalism no longer hides anything, and it does not hide the fact that entire populations are part of and at stake in armed conflicts. It is not that “populations are allowed to die and ordered to live” (Foucault), nor that a line of demarcation is drawn between ζωή and βίος (Agamben), but that new configurations of racism are drawn: some are murdered populations so that others can continue to live.

Achille Mbembe, in “The Universal Right to Breathe,” argues that, apart from referring to the architectural trend of the mid-twentieth century, we can define brutality as a contemporary process “within which power, understood as a geomorphological force, constitutes, expresses, reconfigures, reveals and reproduces itself.”<sup>28</sup> In one way or another, by “breaking and splitting,” by “drying” and “removing organic substances,” in short: by what we may call “disappearing or destroying the condition of life of some population.” In this sense, brutality would be a new incarnation of necropolitics or thanatopolitics.

Brutalism is not an architectural style or a leading aesthetic but the essence of politics. In the past, the only justification for violence was the legal use of violence necessary by individuals to defend their own lives and the state to maintain public order. The police and the institution of the police were the site of the connection between violence, the state, and social groups. The problem is that today, in the era of brutality, we have completely lost the “measure” and orientation regarding the necessary use of violence, especially the institution of detention and arrest. The question is how to react to this brutality of the state and its organs – the police and the army. Is the only reaction the brutality of tactical combat, constant biting, disturbing, underground, and disguised undermining of the enemy? Is guerrilla warfare the only answer? If pacifism is a dead option, then the only response is more or less disguised terrorism. Has the invention of the bomb turned into the last argument?

## GIFTS OF THE HEART

What conclusion should I draw from this materialistic reading of Kant and setting *Perpetual Peace* in the surroundings of Hobbes, Deleuze, and Virilio? Should Kant’s *Perpetual Peace* be treated as a philosophical episode between Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and contemporary biopolitical theories? What kind of peace can we hope for? And should perpetual peace be the object of our desire at all? What should we insist on? What should the intellectual insist on today? Should they only demand to be listened to? The problem is that one should not claim peace only at the service of economics or security. It is not enough. Perpetual peace, another name for the end of history and a protective umbrella or immunological apparatus to conduct further global economy, is not an especially attractive idea. What are we left with after reading Kant? Does the perpetual peace only remain in

<sup>27</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 59.

<sup>28</sup> Achille Mbembe, “The Universal Right to Breathe,” trans. Carolyn Shread, *Critical Inquiry* 47, no. 52 (2021): 59–61.



the “politics of friendship,” the “politics of hospitality,”<sup>29</sup> that is, the readiness to honor a stranger, a stranger in our home, like an equal citizen of the city in which we live? Is all we can hope for merely reducing hostility or what Kant has called “unsocial sociability”?

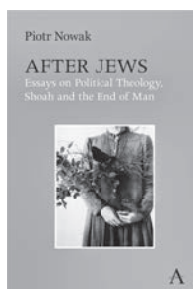
At the end of the second volume of *Roots of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt wrote about “gifts of the heart,” impulses of love that find no economic, political, or even moral justification but are simply impulses of charity.

This mere existence, that is, all that which is mysteriously given us by birth and which includes the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds, can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine, “*Volo ut sis* (I want you to be),” without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps this would be the one disposition for eternal peace. Perpetual Peace certainly wouldn’t be an architectural project, an attempt to design the world and world order. Perpetual Peace can only be an impulse, the spontaneity of action in accordance with the will – “I want you to be.”

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Arendt Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: A Harvest Book, 1976), 316.



## ABOUT THE NEW POSSIBILITIES OF ANOTHER MASSACRE: BARBARA SCHABOWSKA TALKS WITH PIOTR NOWAK<sup>1</sup>

[Piotr Nowak, *After Jews. Essays on Political Theology, Shoah and the End of Man*, Anthem Press, New York–London 2022.]

**Barbara Schabowska:** You readily draw on the ancients, Shakespeare, Arendt, Strauss, Nietzsche, or Kojève. It is as if you were talking to ghosts. Aren't the living more interesting?

**Piotr Nowak:** Living creatures are curious, no doubt. But we are used to neglecting dead people, we don't pay attention to them, we ignore what they are saying to us. I can't handle this.

But let's first talk about the living.

In 2006, I published *The War of Generations*, a book that probably had more reviews than any of my other published works. I just indulged myself with being obsessed about one topic: passing time, the war between young people and the old. I claimed that all differences in society – whether of a political or an economic nature – have at the end of the day a generational background. Using the language of Shakespeare as an illustration, I tried to describe this phenomenon. The language of intergenerational quarrel is, after

<sup>1</sup> This conversation took place at the 2023 Taipei International Book Exhibition, Taiwan.

all, the language of conflict. The category of time, which is so fundamental to human existence, is understood differently by different generations. The young have a lot of time and get bored to death from its excess, while old people suffer from a lack of it.

The war of generations led me to the political dimension of philosophical texts and pushed me to reflect on politics from a completely different angle than my peers, who were one hundred times more mature and more intelligent than I. They read nineteenth- and twentieth-century conservative writers, they organized themselves into clubs, they debated, they advised important politicians. In contrast to them, I saw nothing apart from Shakespeare, Heidegger, Arendt. The world had not reached me yet. I was obsessed mostly with continental philosophy and literature. I knew nothing about politics.

In the same year as *The War of Generations*, I published an intellectual biography on Alexandre Kojève, a French, or rather Russian, Hegelian, a great intellectual hypnotist, who in the 1930s seduced French intellectuals in Paris. Inevitably, I also came to count him among my first spiritual guides.

That's how I started my philosophical life.

**BS:** Leszek Kołakowski, the great Polish philosopher of the twentieth century, could give a mini-lecture on big issues. He also pondered on "Questions from Great Philosophers," answering them in a series of once-popular TV programs in Poland. You too, like Kołakowski, insist on the presence of philosophy in the public space. What for? The world today is very complicated; it seems that we need experts in various fields to be able to understand the processes going on around us. Why do we need philosophy for this?

**PN:** To be happy. Kołakowski, when asked why he studied philosophy, replied that it was for the money. Well, if they allow you to think and still pay you for it, then this is a dream come true. But is it happiness? Even if we assume that each person experiences happiness differently, what makes people happy is still completely unknown. It is not known why some people are satisfied with food, television, and a full wallet, while others have to read Arendt or Plato to become satisfied, to become happy. It seems to me that we call too many things at once happiness. My happiness is entirely fulfilled when I can work for Plato, for Shakespeare, for Rozanov.

In 2008, when I got the Andrew Mellon Scholarship at the Institute of Human Sciences in Vienna, Wawrzyniec Rymkiewicz called me and asked if I could help him a little with organizing the philosophical quarterly *Kronos*. That's how our cooperation began, then grew. We've also been able to release really great stuff in the *Kronos* library. I will show you the covers. We were discussing things that were completely unknown, at least in Poland.

Look at them, the covers are really interesting, as is what's inside: look at the *Left Hegelianism* issue.

**BS:** Is there a book of which you are particularly proud?

**PN:** I'm going to mention just one book that seems to me increasingly important – Jacob Taubes's *Apocalypse and Politics*. I first learned about Taubes from my German friends. They urged me to read it. As they told me, he wants to be saved, too.

Taubes's favorite literary form was the essay. Apart from his dissertation (which we translated and published in 2015), Taubes did not publish any books during his lifetime. So I collected his texts, written in four languages, into a more or less coherent product and published them through KRONOS Publishing House in 2012. In 2017, the Germans did the same – under the same title and with more or less the same selection. Of course, they did not even mention the earlier Polish edition.

**BS:** And what are your questions? What does Piotr Nowak the philosopher ask us?

**PN:** Well, today, everyone asks about Russia, everyone wants to know something about it.

I want to confess that Russian writers have a prominent place in my work. Why them? Because in their works you can meet God. Russians – I found this out reading their literature and spending a lot of time in Russia – really have nothing to say about politics. They don't know anything about politics. They are like children in that respect. Even when I read Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, I realized that they seemed to be more interested in making a revolution than in analyzing it as an infernal phenomenon.

A revolution is an instrument of world destruction. But destroying the world obviously can't be politics. Destruction is the domain of infernal forces; politics, on the contrary, is a human activity.

So yes: the Russians satisfy my religious hunger. Dostoevsky is not just another writer for me. He's the fifth evangelist. When I don't know what to do, what to think about life, about salvation, about love, I read Dostoevsky. I have not found a cleaner message anywhere. Maybe Mickiewicz. But that's a slightly different kettle of fish.

**BS:** But today, I don't think Russia can be considered a source of religious inspiration or literary rapture. There is war. Have you not noticed? How do you perceive Russia today – after the Bucza massacre and the complete destruction of Mariupol?

**PN:** Today we Poles, Ukrainians, and the whole civilized world have a common goal – to defeat Russia without destroying it. However, we must also do everything to be sure that Russia will not threaten us ever again, or at least not for a long time. But what does that actually mean?

There are voices calling for a freeze in cultural relations with Russia. Although I understand this perspective from the standpoint of current political practice, a decision to boycott Russian cultural goods seems to me wrong and counterproductive. Culture – any culture – needs to be known because ignorance is a sign of weakness. Russian culture, on the other hand, should be taken away from the Russians themselves, who have proven en masse that they do not understand it. They do not understand Pushkin, the freethinker, somehow the meaning of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* escapes them, and they don't realize that Shostakovich is not only the author of the powerful Leningrad Symphony but also of the Fourteenth Symphony, full of thinking about death and passing, built on a dialogue with the greatest European poets, such as Rilke, Apollinaire, Lorca.

Russians do not remember that they killed and tortured their own, their most outstanding: Gumilev, Mandelstam, Shpet, Akhmatova; that the great Tsvetaeva took her life not in Czechia, not in France, but in the Soviet Union; that KGB officers went abroad

to murder Alexander Galich; that the exiled Nabokov, Bunin, Brodsky never returned to their homeland. It is necessary to explain to Russians that the music, painting, and literature created by them is also directly connected with everyday life, that the limits of their language, resulting from insufficient knowledge, are also limits of the world they live in.

I have heard so many times, even from educated Russians, that Gulag prose is nothing but fiction!

By the way, we published a very exiting issue about the Russian-Soviet philosopher Gustav Shpet in collaboration with our Russian – I can say this from this historical moment – ex-friends.

**BS:** In your book published by Anthem Press, *After Jews: Essays on Political Theology, Shoah and the End of Man*, you use the language of political theology to talk about the Holocaust. Is this an attempt to reckon with Polish guilt?

**PN:** How do you understand the concept of Polish guilt in relation to the Shoah? Did we build the concentration camps on our land or did the Germans? Did we organize the crime industry?

In Poland, helping Jews was punished – and the one who helped them and was caught was killed together with his family.

You could say that in Western Europe Jews had more chances to survive because their neighbors were more friendly and open toward them than here in Poland. First, not always and not everywhere. France is a good or rather a bad example. Second, assimilated Jews, who often looked just like you and me, were helped. The Jews in Poland were 90 percent unassimilated and dressed in a very bizarre way, could barely speak Polish; they simply could not ask for help in Polish. There were towns, shtetls, and villages that were 100 percent occupied by Jews. How can 3 million human beings of a completely different culture be hidden? These were the Ostjuden, and even Western Jews wanted nothing to do with them.

Jews had lived with us for a thousand years. Then they were killed. Why? I claim that the Shoah could only happen under the conditions of late capitalism rather than in the atmosphere of primitive, violent pogroms of Jews in their Anatevkas. An important point of reference for me was the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. They were the first who drew attention to the criminal character of instrumental reason. But they looked for the causes of the Shoah in the wrong places: either in the “authoritarian personality” or in the so-called unresolved “social question.” However, in order to understand what happened to the Jews in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1940s, one must resort to a completely different language from that of psychological, social, economic, or political discourse. We must get back to the forgotten language of theology, especially political theology. It is there that the right interpretative tools can be found; it does not belong to the realm of superstition but is our last chance to understand what happened to the world yesterday and what is happening today.

“It was the devil!” writes Alain Besançon, a witness to those times.

The devil, Antichrist, is not just a metaphor or a creature with a limp in the left leg and charred wings; it is rather the atmosphere we live in, manifesting itself in turning

traditional values inside out, in replacing respect with tolerance, charity with dubious philanthropy, love with sex, family with any social organization, religion with science, freedom with safety, and so on. Examples abound.

**BS:** Is it fair to say that these are essays on the apocalypse?

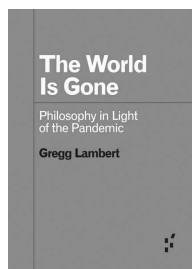
**PN:** In order to better understand the condition of the contemporary world, I propose renewing the sense of such theological concepts as eternity, salvation, the idea of chosenness, apocalypse, radical hope, and others. I also want to understand the increasingly aggressive attitude toward people of strong faith, which appears to fill us with anxiety and make us think of the recurrence of the Shoah.

Yes, this is what I want to say. Jews had to die because they were religious, and there is no room for religious people in this world.

There are no more Jews in Poland. They were murdered by the German Nazis, and those who survived were expelled by the Polish communists after the war. We live in a world “after Jews.” Now we must tell ourselves what this means to us. I would say the answer is important for them as well as for us.



# SEVEN DAYS WITHOUT A WORLD



[Gregg Lambert, *The World Is Gone: Philosophy in Light of the Pandemic*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021.]

Writing a “philosophy diary” is not a new intellectual strategy. This is undoubtedly part of the hermeneutics of the self, working on oneself, a strategy perfectly described by Michel Foucault.<sup>1</sup> For the latter, philosophy begins not with the Delphic formula “γνῶθι σαυτόν” (know yourself) but rather with a particular therapeutic call, with “care for yourself” contained in the postulate “ἐπιμελεία ἑαυτοῦ, cura sui” (heal yourself). Philosophical work is not only about diagnosing the state of ignorance but about a technique, the ability to cope with all adversities, activating a certain mechanism to protect against the world and not only knowledge related to a specific technical type of action. “Techniques of the self” allow, not only the “knowing of the self” as if the subject were a “thing to know,” but rather the “constitution of the self.” And so, Seneca’s spiritual exercises aim to establish a “mastered subject”; these exercises climb to the “peak of sovereignty” from which one looks at the world with indifference. However, the spiritual exercises of Marcus Aurelius aim instead at “dissolving the subject” – that is, entering the core of things and getting closer to matter itself.

We often forget that the Latin concept of *meditatio* is a translation of the Greek μελέτη, which means “practicing the art of living.” Meditation is not about freely letting go of thoughts but rather about the acquisition of thoughts; it is not exegesis but rather a laborious repetition of certain exercises. Meditation is an attempt to engrave a sentence in your mind so that you can recall it freely when necessary. Meditation is not thinking about the thing itself but practicing the thing you are thinking about. For example, a meditation on death is not a game of the subject with images of death but a game with thoughts that allow one to master death. This meaning of meditation is still present in Descartes’s *Meditations*, where he does not reflect at all – as we often mistakenly think – on everything that could be doubted and what is undoubted (a skeptical exercise) but instead puts himself in the role of a “doubting subject,” that is, someone who sets out in search of what is certain. I repeat once again: meditation is not about an exercise

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutic of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Frédéric Gros (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

performed with thought and its content but about an exercise in which the subject puts himself in a particular situation to practice it.

Gregg Lambert's book *The World Is Gone: Philosophy in Light of the Pandemic* is just such a meditation on the end of the world. These are exercises in the experience of the end of the world and in exploring the existential implications of the COVID-19 crisis through meditations. "The world is gone," but what does that mean? "The world is gone," but for whom has it left? "The world is gone," but I still exist? So, for whom do I exist? Who are the beings surrounding me? Do I exist only in a barren land, in a desert, driven by some undefined mechanical drive for self-preservation?

Gregg Lambert interestingly intertwines individual experience with being "anyone," that is, being Robinson Crusoe. It is, above all, a book about the experience of loneliness. A book about how little we are "Greek" and how much contemporary biopolitics immunizes us in "being apart." For Lambert, politics today is not about creating places for being together but about designing cold spaces for being apart. We are all, therefore, in some sense burdened with the experience of Robinson Crusoe, and Lambert's experience is also our experience. The book is dedicated to "everybody" (*tout le monde*). However, this is not a book for everyone and no one; it is a book for a very sensitive reader. One should say a lot about the merits of this extraordinary book, which uses the Robinson Crusoe fable to launch an existential investigation of the effects of extreme isolation, profound boredom, nightly insomnia, and the fear of madness associated with the loss of a world populated by others. Lambert reminds us that the sentence "The world is gone" is originally from the poetic statement that appears in the final line of a poem written by the Jewish poet Paul Celan that reads, "The world is gone. I must carry you" (*Die Welt ist fort. Ich muß dich tragen*). As a result, there is a very "risky meeting" in Lambert's book between the victim of Shoah, Paul Celan, and the victim of "false interpellation," Martin Heidegger. It is also a meeting of a philosopher who connects our life with the world using the category "*in-der-Welt-Sein*" and solves our attachment to the world using the formula "*Die Welt ist fort*."

A solution to this dilemma is the "active reading" of the book *Worldlessness after Heidegger* by Roland Végső.<sup>2</sup> Opening with a reconsideration of the Heideggerian critique of worldlessness, Végső goes on to trace the overlooked history of this argument. Instead of saying that we are the first generation without a world and, in this sense, are condemned to the work of mourning "for the loss of the world," maybe it is better to say, as Végső does, that we are called to create affirmative definitions of worldlessness. Of course, the question remains: How many times has the world had to disappear or be destroyed for us to reach "today" when we think that the world does not exist, although capitalism still exists?

Lambert experiences seven days (or nights) of the world's withdrawal from life. The author describes seven ecstasies and spiritual exercises against new threats arising during the pandemic. Lambert simulates (but does not pretend to be Robinson Crusoe) living on a lonely island with a collection of books of his choosing. Every day, he makes a specific discovery related to a particular reading. On the first day, Lambert explores the

<sup>2</sup> Roland Végső, *Worldlessness after Heidegger: Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

space of night and the darkening of the world by reading Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and *Die Frage nach der Technik*. On the second day, Lambert tries to confront "existence without existents," that is, the "anonymity of existence," by reading Emmanuel Lévinas. On day three, Lambert tries to confront the two ecstasies of extreme solitude, Heidegger's *Dasein* and "*Il y a*" by Lévinas. If we make things and people disappear in our imagination, what remains is not "*nichts*" but "*l'exister*." *Dasein* must confront the anonymous being from which things and people arise as hypostasis. Lévinas refers to this nameless being with the term "*il y a*." Lambert analyzes "*il y a*" through the phenomenon of night and insomnia. In the darkness of night, the forms of things disappear, and the night itself, neither an object nor a quality of an object, takes everything under its control. On the fourth day, Lambert tries to reflect on the experience of "a world without Others" by reading Michel Tournier and his novel *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*. "Friday" becomes the prototype of the Other here. On day five, Lambert confronts the "schizoid" and the "depressive" by reading *The Logic of Sense* by Gilles Deleuze. On day six, Lambert tests "the worst-case, i.e., lullaby scenario" by listening to "Melody X" by the artist Bonaparte. The words of the song bring "apparent comfort" and encourage: "Something's gotta change. [...] Hold on to something good." Finally, on the seventh day, Lambert discovers the Robinson within him, saying to himself in French, "*Robinson – C'est Moi!*" but simultaneously asking the question in English: What does it mean to be a Robinson today?

I could list the advantages of this extraordinary book for a long time, but instead, in a polemical manner, I will tell you about my surprises. The main question I ask is infinitely trivial: Who is the author of this book? This book is not a book written by a materialist or an atheist and certainly not a book written by a communist. There are no traces of anti-humanism or post-humanism in the book. This book is a declaration of love for man, a revelation of Lambert's deep humanism, that is, concern for man's future fate. As a result, I will say more about what this book is not about rather than what it is about.

First, it is a book written by a phenomenologist who believes in light as the source of vision and the appearance of all phenomena. There is no world without light. This book is written by a man who believes in the visible and sensual world. Seeing is everything for Lambert. Whatever he wrote about Heidegger is always about the "game" of the disappearance and appearance of things and consciousness (*Dasein*). This is important. There are only two philosophies regarding the issue of day and night. Deleuze in "Spinoza and the Three 'Ethics'" noticed that Spinoza differs from the Baroque and Leibniz, who sees in the Darkness a matrix and a premise from which light is isolated.<sup>3</sup> In Spinoza, on the contrary, everything is light, and Darkness is shadow, the effect of light, the limit of light and its reflection. Lambert tests a third option: living between light (day) and darkness (night). It is interesting. Heidegger and Lévinas build an intriguing opposition: "handy *Dasein*" and "anonymous existence." For Lambert, "Darkness is a kind of light too." For Lévinas, "night is the experience of impersonal being in general." Night is the space of real existence. The encounter of these two perspectives gives rise to interesting consequences for the living and the dead.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Spinoza and the Three 'Ethics,'" in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso Books, 1998).

Second, Lambert emphasizes that he is not a “religious man” and ostentatiously does not take a Bible to his island. However, Lambert constantly uses a theological scheme, writing not so much “seven days of the creation of the world” but rather seven days of a certain experiment – that is, an experiment in life after the “cancellation of the work of creation,” seven days without others and the world that has passed away. Seven days, not so much in darkness as in partial shade, between light and dark. Hence, three key questions for Lambert: (1) What was the world? (2) What is existence without the world? (3) Where are the others? Lambert answers all questions clearly. The world that is gone will not return, but there is no other world. Existing without others is a psychotic horror that only results in disorders. Others disappeared or became “tiny lights” in the desert or graveyard. Cemeteries, at least in Poland, turn into such worlds of glowing torches once a year, around All Souls’ Day.

Third, Lambert is not a communist. Lambert does not wonder, as does Andrew Culp, for example, about communism after the end of the world.<sup>4</sup> For Lambert, communism or bio-communism (community of the living) is not the “horizon of the world” to come. Lambert talks about the individual and his fate in a world where planes no longer fly and universities no longer invite physical co-presence. Everyone is atomized, isolated, located in their private apartments – prisons, boxes – and communicates only via optical fibers. Sometimes, what makes them stand out is the collections of books they have gathered in their “island house” to survive the time of loneliness. In this sense, the pandemic does nothing extraordinary; it only reveals the honest and sad truth of bourgeois life. We are a “society of individuals,” not a “collective of bodies.” This is why Lambert refers to Deleuze’s most Lacanian book, *The Logic of Sense*, not to *A Thousand Plateaus*. Lambert tells us once again about the difference between a person with schizophrenia and a neurotic. “We people” have schizophrenia at night, only to return to our neurotic constitution during the day. But those who are neither conscious nor asleep, those who experience “sleepless nights” and “sleepy days,” are probably “perverts.” A pervert is a subject that does not, like a psychotic, exclude the Big Other, or, like a neurotic, the pervert internalizes it. Still, it is a subject that constantly stages a certain game, fun, in the existence of the Other; he/she forces the existence of the Other and says, every day, let the Other appear. Lambert does not talk about “becoming invisible or imperceptible” but speaks about the “necessity of the Other,” not only for the constitution of the subject of law or the subject of language but even of eroticism and all possible ethics. Without the Other, we fall into dangerous “secondary autoeroticism” and “secondary Narcissism.” Perhaps Robinson Crusoe, not Daniel Defoe’s but Michel Tournier’s, is just such a Narcissus.

The lack of materialism makes Lambert ask again about technology, not animate or inanimate nature. Lambert states, “Power from technology has crashed into the limit and revealed the power from life itself.” The lack of atheism results in Lambert’s talking about seven days of “the collapse” (or even disappearance) of “the world as we knew it.” The lack of communism results in Lambert’s constantly speaking in liberal categories, where there is no world but only lonely islands.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Culp, *A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022).

Is it wrong that Lambert made these choices? No, it only works to the advantage of this book, which is a beautiful lament of a suffering body that realizes, following Foucault's example from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*,<sup>5</sup> that he has always been lonely, and this loneliness did not result from choice but from the biopolitical organization of the world. No wonder that this book is headlined by two sentences, one of which was borrowed from Jacques Derrida: "There is no world, there are only the islands"; the second, from Paul Celan: "The world is gone. And I must carry you." However, the entire project is constantly under the patronage of Heidegger and his ghosts. Lambert rightly risks a "robinsonade on philosophy" by reminding us that Island is now fact, not fiction. However, Lambert forgets that islands are disappearing due to the climate crisis, and new refugees from the disappearing islands are arriving on the island called Europe or America.

Gregg Lambert is a great expert on and lover of Foucault's philosophy; he is also the author of the book *The Elements of Foucault*, so in the end, he returns to Foucault.<sup>6</sup> In the final fragments of *The Hermeneutic of the Subject*, Foucault claims that the West knew three great practices and three great forms of reflexivity. The first is a form of memory, that is, mnemonics. Thanks to it, we gain access to the truth, which is "recognition" or "reminder." Second is meditation, that is, testing your thoughts. Meditation is a test of yourself as a subject who thinks as he acts. The third form of reflection is "method," a guarantee of certainty, a criterion of all possible truth and systematization of the entire edifice of thought and objective knowledge. As a result – memory, meditation, method – there are three ways of practicing philosophy or life as philosophy.

In the book *The World Is Gone: Philosophy in Light of the Pandemic*, Gregg Lambert returns to meditation. What does this mean? I would say that the World ceases to be "something thought" for him and becomes something known through τέχνη, and βίος ceases to be an object of τέχνη and becomes a correlate of tests and exercises. The key question is: How can the world simultaneously be an "object of cognition" and a space of tests for the subject? How can there be, at the same time, a subject of cognition that considers the world as a correlate of τέχνη and a matter of self-experience, for whom the world is a place of trial?

Quentin Meillassoux analyzes the novel *Ravage* (Devastation) by René Barjavel, a kind of fiction showing Paris in 2052 when electricity ceases to exist or at least to manifest itself.<sup>7</sup> Barjavel's book does not show the causes of this state of affairs but only describes its disastrous consequences for Paris, which is degrading due to spreading fires, falling planes, panic, and robberies. What is important in this fiction is that the abolition of electricity (blackout) is not presented as a disaster but as an opportunity for rebirth. Meillassoux encourages the exploration of new forms of life centered around anomalies. According to the author of *After Finitude*, "eidetic variation" carried to infinity is constantly possible. It is still possible to experience oneself in a world that does not exist; what is possible is an impermanent intensity, immersed in a world of pure solitude, surrounded by nothing but

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Gregg Lambert, *The Elements of Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Quentin Meillassoux, *Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction*, trans. Alyosha Edlebi (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2015).

rumble. For Meillassoux, exploring the truth about oneself without the world is constantly possible, but I will allow myself to disagree with Meillassoux's thesis. It seems that the knowledge we develop from the pandemic is that further exploration of our sovereignty or independence from the world and our apparent depth is absurd. We belong to the world and others so much that it is impossible to live any other life besides connecting with the world and others. I would like to believe that Gregg Lambert emerged from the pandemic with a similar conviction.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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# SUMMARY

Laurence Lampert

## **TAKING NIETZSCHE AT HIS WORD IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

The author attempts a reading of Nietzsche for the twenty-first century, focusing on five crucial topics: (1) ontology and epistemology; (2) the Nietzsche archive in Weimar; (3) the new history of philosophy; (4) ecology; and (5) religion. The first part focuses on the ontological and epistemological content of "The Dance Song" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, according to which the fundamental truth of being can be known, concluding that in sections 36 and 37 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche's ontology vindicates God and refutes the Devil who has served as our God. The second part shows the significance of workbook M III 1, which Nietzsche used in the spring, summer, and fall of 1881, the most important of all of Nietzsche's workbooks, containing the move to ontology and eternal return. The third part claims that a new history of philosophy is necessitated by Nietzsche due to his distinction between genuine philosophers and philosophical laborers. The fourth part formulates a comprehensive ecological philosophy upon the basis of Zarathustra's ecological imperative: "stay true to the earth." Finally, the fifth part summarizes what Nietzsche says as a theologian, concluding that Dionysos and Ariadne are the only gods in Nietzsche's pantheon because they are the only true gods.

Richard Velkley

## **THE CHAINS OF THE FREE SPIRIT: SEVEN APHORISMS ON NIETZSCHE'S *THE GAY SCIENCE*, BOOK 5**

In Book 5 of *The Gay Science* ("We Fearless Ones"), the free spirit is at once parodic and tragic: playing with all that is solemn and divine as the "tragedy begins" and the death of God casts a shadow over Europe. The thinker has a new freedom to explore "open seas": a "new infinite" of possible perspectives beyond the "human corner." Whereas language and consciousness currently express the weak, endangered ethos of the human herd dominated by self-preservation, a powerful preconscious will to life flourishes in the squandering of communicative powers by artists and thinkers. From this source emerges a new breed of "godless anti-metaphysicians" whose activity requires its own form of discipline and faith. As it affirms the higher life of a few, the new faith overturns metaphysical beliefs in the veracity of logic, causality, and consciousness. But what are the consequences for the human species as a whole?

Andy German

## **NIETZSCHE AND PLATO ON THE JUDGMENT THAT "BEING IS GOOD"**

"Why, exactly, is it better to be than not to be?" Nietzsche saw with great clarity that the "death of God" – that is, the collapse of all previous theological and philosophical groundings for the sheer value of existence – had made the question of that value inescapable for modern man. Through his doctrine of the eternal return of the same, Nietzsche believed himself to have given a definitively modern grounding to the value of existence, free of any taint of "Platonism." My paper investigates whether this is true – whether Nietzsche did, in fact, find a new way to say "Yes" to being or whether he, like everyone else, must ultimately "Platonize" to some degree as soon as we ask why it is good to be and to think.

William Wood

## **LOVE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM AND PHILOSOPHY AS AN EROTIC SOLUTION IN NIETZSCHE'S *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL***

In this article I compare and contrast Nietzsche's view of love, which I argue he also ascribes, in its broadest outlines, to Plato and Spinoza, with the Christian view of love, regarded by Nietzsche, I contend here, as his major target. I focus primarily on Nietzsche's treatment of love in *Beyond Good and Evil* and also engage in a detailed reading of an important passage in *Twilight of the Idols* that contrasts Plato with Spinoza and ancient Greece with modern France with respect to the issues of love and philosophy.

Brian Marrin

## **"MAN IS A BRIDGE": MEANS AND ENDS IN NIETZSCHE'S MILLENARIAN POLITICS**

This essay seeks to come to an understanding of Nietzsche's dictum that "man is something that must be overcome." From some of his earliest unpublished writings but especially in his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents an account of the value of man and of human life in terms of the willingness to sacrifice himself to a higher end, understood as a higher form of human life to be realized in the future. In *Zarathustra*, the ideal posited is that of the Superman (*Übermensch*), but tensions immediately emerge within Nietzsche's account of the value of the Superman, for in the same work he also argues that man's dignity or value resides precisely in his capacity to create new values, including the ideal of the Superman. Instead of being an end-in-itself, then, the Superman becomes valuable only as an expression of man's potential for radically creative evaluation. This conflicting account of human value involves Nietzsche in a vicious circle – of which he was perfectly conscious and which he tried to resolve by appropriating the Stoic doctrines of *amor fati* and especially of eternal return. But stripped of the classical conception of the good or end-in-itself, these doctrines cannot rescue Nietzsche from the ultimate emptiness of his conception of human value.

Jakub Jinek

## **NIETZSCHE'S GREEK STATE AND PLATO'S BEST CITY**

The paper examines Nietzsche's early essay "The Greek State" in terms of whether it contains a distinctive political theory. The question can be answered positively in the sense that the author presents a nuanced critique of contemporary politics that on the one hand accepts certain key concepts of modern political theory but on the other hand interprets them through the prism of Plato's radical anti-individualism and political esotericism.

Marta Soniewicka

## **"EVERY PASSION POSSESSES ITS QUANTUM OF REASON": NIETZSCHE'S AFFIRMATION OF PASSIONS**

Despite the great influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of emotion on such prominent psychologists as Sigmund Freud or Carl Gustav Jung, his account on emotion was never fully recognized in affective science nor broadly discussed in humanities. This paper aims at filling this gap by reconstructing Nietzsche's understanding of emotion and highlighting the relevance of his thought in the light of contemporary mainstream conceptualizations of emotions. Nietzsche's understanding of emotions is based on a rejection of Cartesian dualism, which is replaced by an assumption of biological monism. Nietzsche overcomes the opposition between a physiological and a cognitive-evaluative stance, grounding cognition in the body itself. According to this approach, drives and instincts are the key phenomena to understanding not only our emotional life but life itself.

Mark Shiffman

## **ARISTOTELIAN ΦΡΟΝΗΣΙΣ IN PLUTARCH: THE PARALLEL LIVES AS THE FINAL GENRE OF CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

The parallel-lives genre invented by Plutarch is best understood as a genre of political philosophy suited to a post-political condition. The guiding thread that best illuminates the constrictions of this condition is not Hegelian alienated consciousness or Foucauldian subjectivity-formation but Pierre Manent's account of the loss of distinctness of moral phenomena due to the indetermination of political life after the loss of the polis. The project of recovery served by the *Parallel Lives* comes to light most distinctly by attending to Plutarch's treatment of Aristotelian φρονήσις. In *On Moral Virtue*, he recovers the Aristotelian understanding of this intellectual excellence from the distortion of the term by the Stoics, both through theoretical clarification and by means of more accurate

phenomenological description of the interiority of virtue. A more complete recovery of φρονήσις requires a genre conveying the historiographic complexity of the concrete phenomena as well as lucid dramatic reflection on character, deliberation, and choice in the light of the actors' encounters with fundamental political problems within fully political regimes. By recovering the light of political experience in which virtue is maximally operative and its phenomena most evident, Plutarch helps to preserve at least virtually that dimension of human nature and reflection most endangered with loss in his time.

Abraham P. Bos

## **BASILIDES OF ALEXANDRIA AS AN ARISTOTELIAN Gnostic II: BASILIDES'S DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD SEED**

Basilides of Alexandria, an early Christian Gnostic, developed a theology that was described as strongly influenced by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Hippolytus, in his *Refutation of All Heresies*, Book VII, provides an interesting picture of it. Basilides regards πνεῦμα as the "ensouled substance" in all living beings and talks about God as the "begetter" of all things through the Power (Δύναμις) that originates in Him. Aristotle defended a philosophical theology in this line in his polemic with his teacher Plato's *Timaeus*. He rejected the notion that life and living beings were the product of a divine Craftsman or Demiurge. It is my strong conviction that there is something fundamentally wrong with the traditional interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy because it has been misunderstood through the fault of Alexander of Aphrodisias and restricted to the surviving works of the Corpus Aristotelicum. The author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* had good reasons for discovering fundamental Aristotelian features in the system of Basilides the Gnostic. Starting from a corrected interpretation of Aristotle's theory of soul, we need to comb through the Patristic and Gnostic traditions to see where it was not Plato but Aristotle who exercised the greatest influence. The present article is a continuation of "Basilides of Alexandria as an Aristotelian Gnostic I," published in *Kronos* 11 (2022): 100-36. It surveys the basic doctrines of the theological-cosmogonic-theogonic system of Basilides, focusing on the doctrine of the Non-Being God, a transcendent God completely beyond human comprehension, the source of all things, albeit not directly intervening in the cosmos. Instead, a "World Seed" is generated as the principle of the cosmos, containing the potential for all things, which is gradually realized through the process of cosmic evolution.

Szymon Wróbel

## **COUNTERING KANT, OR CONDITIONS OF PERPETUAL ANXIETY**

The author of this paper focuses mainly on the problem of Kant's political realism. Kant's ironic and at the same time bitter and accusatory words in the text *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* describing the political status of the philosopher prove the realism of the thinker from Königsberg. The text reviews Kant's concept of eternal peace from the point of view of the philosophy preceding Kant (T. Hobbes), as well as from the point of view of the contemporary philosophy of G. Deleuze, P. Virilio, M. Foucault, and H. Arendt. The key question is: what peace can we hope for in a world torn apart by endless wars, constant unrest. The author, in opposition to Kant, asks about conditions of perpetual anxiety. The author sees these conditions of eternal anxiety not so much in the nature of man, including what Kant called "the unsocial sociability of man," but rather in the temptation of the establishment, the ultimate legal and military framework creating peaceful terror on a planetary scale.

The philosophical quarterly *Kronos* was established in 2007 by scholars connected with the University of Warsaw and the University of Białystok. Metaphysics, the philosophy of politics, the philosophy of literature and religion, history of psychoanalysis comprise the thematic scope of the journal. The editors of the quarterly strive to familiarize the Polish reader with new translations and commentaries of classic works (Plato, Joachim of Fiore, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, Heidegger, and many others), as well as the work of contemporary philosophers.

The annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English) was established in 2012 as a companion edition to the quarterly, to supplement it, yet without repeating the content of the Polish edition. The papers presented in the annual might be of interest to the readers from outside Poland, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the dynamic thought of contemporary Polish authors, as well as entirely new topics, rarely discussed by English-speaking authors. One of the issues published so far contained passages from previously unknown lectures by Leo Strauss on Aristotle; another issue was dedicated to the Russian phenomenologist Gustav Shpet.

ISSN 2392-0963



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