

# The Agonist

Volume X, Issue I, Fall 2016

Nietzsche and the Dionysian  
Nietzsche and Dance



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## **Editors' Introduction**

In this issue, we are pleased to present talks from our recent events in New York City. The first event, "The Dionysian in Nietzsche," which took place in March 2016, was an exploration of various aspects of the Dionysian in Nietzsche's writings. The second one, "Nietzsche and Dance," gave all participants a unique opportunity to understand Nietzsche's inspiration for modern dance, especially for Isadora Duncan, not only at the level of ideas but also in practice. We are thankful to Ms. Lori Bellilove, the director of Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation, and to Dr. Kimerer LaMothe for creating this event with the Nietzsche Circle. Dr. LaMothe's books, *Nietzsche's Dancers* and *Why We Dance*, guided many of our reflections and discussions. In addition to these two parts, one for each event, we have an essay by Adam T. Kingsmith on Nietzsche's individualism and six book reviews.

We are excited to announce the publication of this issue in the new format of *The Agonist*. I hope that this change will open up new horizons for the journal and make it more interesting for our readers and contributors. We plan to add new sections to every issue when there is material for them such as Interviews, Exegesis, and Criticism in any field of art. I would like to thank Hasan Yildiz for his generous service for the journal and for upgrading it to a better format.

We look forward to working with those who joined the team recently. Krista Johansson joined the Editorial Board; in addition to her editorial duties, she will also be the Managing Editor. Recently *The Agonist* decided to accept submissions in German; we are pleased to be working with Dr. Sabine Roehr and Dr. Michael Steinmann for this section of the journal. Jack Fitzgerald will help us with proofreading. Kaity Creasy is in charge of book reviews.

The next issue is devoted to Nietzsche and Epicureanism; we thank Dr. Keith Ansell-Pearson for being the guest-editor for this issue. Please stay tuned.

**The Editorial Board**  
**November 2016**

## **Part I**

### **Nietzsche and the Dionysian**

# Nietzsche's Genealogy of Intoxication: From the Feeling of Power to the Power of Feeling

By Seth Binsted

Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotica?—It is almost the history of 'culture,' of our so-called higher culture.  
- Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*<sup>1</sup>

He who begets something which is alive must dive down into the primeval depths in which the forces of life dwell. And when he rises to the surface, there is a gleam of madness in his eyes because in those depths death lives cheek by jowl with life  
- Walter Otto, *Dionysus*<sup>2</sup>

The following paper aims to make sense of Nietzsche's typology of intoxication. As I will show in the first section, an adequate interpretation of Nietzsche's understanding must overcome a certain deliberate ambiguity, since it remains unclear whether or not intoxication is ultimately a symptom of health or a symptom of sickness. In the second section of this paper, I will show how one can overcome this ambiguity by recognizing how Nietzsche situates the phenomenon of intoxication as the necessary precondition for any aesthetic activity whatsoever.

## I. Nietzsche's Ambiguity

Why speak of intoxication? For one, any sustained meditation on this theme is absent from the Western philosophical canon, and one has only to reflect on the role that the phenomenon of intoxication plays in human experience – in its ecstasies and addictions, its inspirations and enervations – to see how this absence is in many ways conspicuous. And yet, as is so often the case, Nietzsche is a bold exception. Not only will he level his own critique against the

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<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Arnold Kaufmann. §86. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. New York: Vintage, 1974. 142. Print. (Hereafter cited as GS).

<sup>2</sup> Otto, Walter Friedrich. *Dionysus, Myth and Cult*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965. 136. Print.

alcoholism and opiate addictions of his own time<sup>3</sup>, he will also seek to diagnose these epidemics as symptoms of deeper cultural—historical, aesthetic, physiological, moral, religious and, yes, philosophical—misunderstandings of intoxication and its relation to truth. Indeed, it seems that one can unearth a veritable genealogy of intoxication over the course of Nietzsche’s work, from the aesthetics of intoxication in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to its physiological and philosophical forms in *Dawn* and *The Gay Science*, to its moral manifestations in *The Genealogy of Morality* and *The Will to Power*. At the very least, when one surveys Nietzsche’s work as a whole, it becomes clear that the phenomenon of intoxication is just as integral to his philosophical revaluations as that of suffering, music, and health.

Despite the centrality of intoxication in his life’s work, Nietzsche lived, by our standards, in relative sobriety. As he puts it in *Ecce Homo*: “Alcohol is bad for me: a single glass of wine or beer in one day is quite sufficient to turn my life into a vale of misery”... “*In vino veritas*: it seems that here, too, I am at odds with all the world about the concept of ‘truth’—in my case, the spirit moves over water” (*Ecce Homo*, “Clever”).<sup>4</sup> But sobriety notwithstanding, Nietzsche’s understanding of, and sensitivity to, intoxication and its history is profound. In fact, far from being reducible to the effects of substances (e.g. “drugs and alcohol”), Nietzsche points to the manifestations of intoxication on much more primordial levels of experience. For example, there is:

the intoxication that follows all great cravings, all strong emotions; the intoxication of the festival, of the competition, of daredevilry, of victory, of every extreme commotion; the intoxication of cruelty; the intoxication of destruction; intoxication due to certain meteorological influences, such as the intoxication of

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Brittain Smith. “§50.” *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011. 40. Print. (Hereafter cited as D).

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Arnold Kaufmann. “*Ecce Homo*.” *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. New York: Modern Library, 1968. 694. Print. (Hereafter cited as EH).



spring; or under the influence of narcotics; finally, the intoxication of the will, the intoxication of an overloaded and swollen will.”<sup>5</sup>

But for all that, exactly what does Nietzsche *mean* by intoxication? First, it is important to recognize that his philological sense here is well-attuned to the various senses expressed in the German *Rausch*. This word has the sense of the English “rush,” (as in “I feel a rush”) referring both to the mood of a drugged stasis (*Drogenrausch*), but also to the action of acquiring this rush (*einen Rausch haben*). Interestingly enough, the noun in certain collocations can refer either to the frenzy (*Blutrausch, Mordrausch*) that characterizes the act of “getting drunk” (*sich einen Rausch antrinken*), or to the act of sleeping something off, as in *seinen Rausch ausschlafen*. Of special importance, however, is the pathos of distance one already hears in the English, and which is also expressed in the German *Ekstase* (ecstasy, transport, rapture). Evidently, what Nietzsche wants to express in the German is not the *opposition* but the *tension* between activity and passivity in the *Rausch* of movement. Rush, the feeling of a rush, transport, acceleration: all these phenomena point to a more fundamental tension, namely, between the activity of what moves and the passivity of what does not, between the activity of what accelerates and the world left behind it, between the heightened sensitivity and aesthetic activity of intoxicated reality, in which all forms speak directly to us, and the sobriety of everyday reality. For Nietzsche, any experience of intoxication always points to the manifestation of this tension.

It is by reevaluating this tension and analyzing its inner history that Nietzsche also betrays that familiar repugnance toward the easy distinctions of essentialism, at the simple oppositions between sobriety and drunkenness, dream and reality. As with his other genealogies (e.g. of moral phenomena), the question here always concerns the *use* and *value* of the phenomenon. On this basis, one can even see a dramatic typology of intoxication unfold in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

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<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and R. J. Hollingdale. "Raids of an Untimely Man." *Twilight of the Idols; And, the Anti-Christ*. London, England: Penguin, 1990. N. pag. Print. (Hereafter cited as TI).

Hence, for the pre-Hellenic Greeks, intoxication was valued in terms of Dionysian health, joy, strength, overflowing life, the means of getting in touch with the aesthetic power of nature. From this perspective of intoxication, from the “glowing life” of the Dionysian cult initiates, the epopts, the self-consciousness of philosophical sobriety appears “corpse-like and ghostly.”<sup>6</sup> According to Nietzsche’s narrative, it is this community of epopts whose intoxication by the Eleusinian sacrament is taken up and transfigured in the tragic chorus. Moreover, it is the drunken satyr to whom the oldest and most profound wisdom, tragic wisdom, enters the history of culture. Tragedy—as specific type of use and valuation of intoxication—comes to embrace the highest, i.e. most noble, form of intoxication.

On the other hand, what we see in *The Birth of Tragedy* is that, upon the death of tragedy, this situation is reversed. The once-active power of intoxication becomes reactive and degenerate. It is at this point that intoxication turns against life, no longer corresponding to its heightened sensitivity but rather to a means of gaining distance from life, of numbing pain, a loss of feeling, a symptom of degeneration, sickness and weakness, the corrupting element of culture that undermines the resolve to overcome. What was the “glowing life” of Dionysus becomes the rationality of Socratic culture and, looking ahead, ultimately the masochism of the ascetic priest. What was the enthusiasm of the maenadic initiates in *The Birth of Tragedy* regresses into “that tiny, noble community of intractable, half-mad fantasists, people of genius who cannot control themselves and who take all possible pleasure in themselves only at the point where they have completely lost themselves,” “oppressive and ruinous of earth and air into the farthest future.” (D, §50)

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<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, Raymond Geuss, and Ronald Speirs. “§1.” *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1999. N. pag. Print.

At this point one can ask, rather justifiably: is intoxication a figure of truth or falsity? Life or Death? Health or sickness? Alas, there is indeed the point where one faces yet another example of Kurt Tucholsky's famous claim: "Tell me what you need and I will supply you with a Nietzschean citation...for Germany and against Germany, for peace and against peace, for literature and against literature—whatever you want."<sup>7</sup>

## II. Intoxication as the Feeling of Power

We can work through this confusion by asking what significance intoxication has in the overall context of Nietzsche's work. For instance, in *Dawn* we find a clear answer. Here, Nietzsche says plainly: "Intoxication is the feeling of power." In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims that "what is essential in intoxication is the feeling of increased strength and fullness." (*TI*, "Skirmishes") What, then, does it mean to take intoxication as an increase in strength and the "feeling of power"? What sense can we make of this increase in the "feeling of power"? Intoxication is a feeling, but not reducible to hedonic pleasure, nor to the pleasure associated with the famous "contemplation without interest" central to Kant and Schopenhauer's reflections. For Nietzsche, the feeling of power and strength, in its active sense, is not so much a "metaphysical comfort" as a feeling of the *possession* of power. However, it is of crucial importance to recognize that this feeling of possession is *a precondition for any physiological activity whatsoever, be it aesthetic, scientific, moral or philosophical*. As Nietzsche puts it,

For there to be art, for there to be any aesthetic activity and observation, one psychological prerequisite is indispensable: *intoxication*. Intoxication must have already heightened the sensitivity of the whole machine: otherwise, no art will be forthcoming. All kinds of intoxication, as different as their causes may be, have this power: above all, the intoxication of sexual excitement, that oldest and most primordial form of intoxication. (*TI*, Raids of an Untimely Man, §8)

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<sup>7</sup> Jusit, Eliot (2000). *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency*. Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press.

Why is intoxication a precondition for aesthetic activity and observation? What makes this possible? Because an increase in power and sensitivity is accompanied by an increased capacity for suffering. And conversely, an increased capacity for suffering begets a need to invent, a creative impulse that would allow one to endure and justify that suffering.

### **The Feeling of Power as a Twofold Force of Concealment and Revelation**

In a sense, we might say that intoxication is synonymous with the force of a *muse*: Intoxication literally a-muses, it reveals to us our own artistic powers, or as Nietzsche puts it, it “leads us to donate to things, to *make* them take from us, to force ourselves on them—this process is called *idealizing*...what is decisive is an immense drive to *bring out* the principal traits, so that the others disappear in the process.” (*TI*, Raids of an Untimely man, §8) Intoxication, as the feeling of power, is thus apparently more complex than what initially appears. Intoxication, as a feeling of power, precipitates idealization, i.e. the bringing out of principal traits and the disappearance of others. To be clear, this involves two moments, one concealing (disappearance of traits), one revealing (the bringing out of principal traits). What is concealed or suppressed by intoxication is everyday reality. What is revealed is the truth behind that reality, or rather, the illusory character of everyday reality. For instance, our own experience of sleep and dreaming can attest to this concealment. We know from our own experience how, in sleep, the feeling of power is enjoyed not by “me”, as it is in awakening, but rather by my body, the body that hypnotizes and conquers me each night as I fall asleep. In the intoxication of dreaming, something deeper within me awakens, and waking intoxication only reminds my body of what it had already enjoyed while dreaming.

In waking life, we can understand this process in the sense of *narcosis* (which Nietzsche uses interchangeably with intoxication). Narcosis does not refer to the mere absence of pain as it formulated in hedonism, nor is it the static state of numbness or unconsciousness. Rather, it is the feeling of the suppression of pain, of pain circulating at a distance, the distant stir of pain, the *distancing* of pain, or the feeling of a movement away from pain. More precisely, narcosis enters consciousness as a *release* from pain, a loss of self-consciousness. It is at this point that our body suppresses our self-consciousness and enjoys its own aesthetic freedom.

On the other hand, what is revealed through this concealment/suppression is a deeper truth of power. For example, Nietzsche suggests that what is revealed in the “paroxysms of intoxication” that characterize Dionysian festivals, and later attic tragedy, is “the artistic power of all nature.” (*BT* §1) Here, “something never before experienced struggles for utterance.” (*BT*, §1) All this is another way of expressing the sense in which power reveals itself *to* itself, gives form to itself, appearance to itself – becomes conscious of itself. As Nietzsche puts it, intoxication is that moment whereby “Excess [reveals] itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, [speaks] out from the very heart of nature.” (*BT* §1) It is “as if the veil of *maya* had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity.” (*BT* §1)

Looking back, we clarified the initial ambiguity we faced by taking Nietzsche’s formula: intoxication is the feeling of power. But we saw that intoxication can only be a feeling of power inasmuch as it is also both a narcosis (suppression) as well as a growth in sensitivity (revelation). Together, these movements produce an experience that is quite literally ec-static, which is to say, an experience in which one is transported outside themselves, in which they achieve distance from themselves, the distance necessary for self-revelation. In other words, according to a

Nietzschean register, intoxication is an increase in power insofar as it is an opportunity to survey the feeling of one's *own* power. But the power that is revealed, however, does not belong to something like the "pre-natal" ego state. Rather, as Nietzsche will suggest in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is a revelation of the primordial self that dwells in the invisible world hidden from all vision:

With what astonishment must the Apollinian Greek have beheld him! With an astonishment that was greater the more it was mingled with that shuddering suspicion that all this was actually not so very alien to him after all, in fact, that it was only his Apollinian consciousness which, like a veil, hid his Dionysian world from his vision. (*BT*, Attempt at Self-Criticism)

Put simply, intoxication is for Nietzsche simply a figure for the aisthesis (αἴσθησις) of power: it is not simply the feeling of power, but more specifically a sort of initiation or baptism, one in which we are given over to an opportunity for self-seeing, an opportunity to experience just as much the self-revelation of power as the power of self-revelation. Looking again at *The Birth of Tragedy*, we can see that Nietzsche stages this baptism/initiation in the Greek figure of the Dionysian revelers, the *Epoptoi* (whose meaning comes from the compounding of *epi-* and *optomai*, literally *I see myself*). Again, we saw above that Nietzsche wants to emphasize how intoxication – i.e. as an occasion for self-perception – is the precondition for any artistic creation. But this is precisely why Nietzsche will suggest that the intoxication of the Dionysian reveler is “the presupposition of all dramatic art”: “in this magic transformation the Dionysian reveler sees himself a satyr, *and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god*, which means that in his metamorphosis he beholds another vision outside himself.” (*BT* §8) Thus, the satyr is the reveler's medium for his vision of god, but it is the metempsychosis of the reveler—“to see oneself transformed before one's own eyes and to begin to act as if one had actually entered into another body”—that makes this divine revelation possible. (*BT* §8) The vision of the god Dionysus would not be possible

without intoxication, but only because in the ecstasis of intoxication, the reveler is granted not mere feeling but a *transfiguring vision* of the being that underlies both himself and the satyr:

Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he know anything of the eternal essence of art; for in this state he is, in a marvelous manner, like the weird image of the fairy tale which can turn its eyes at will and behold itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator. (*BT* §5)

Now, of course the movement of intoxication follows a denouement. The distance or tension intoxication creates between everyday reality and intoxicated reality will inevitably collapse. Put simply, we always “sober up.” But at this point the will runs the risk of becoming reactive and degenerate. As Nietzsche puts it in *The Birth of Tragedy*,

the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a *lethargic* element, in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed. This chasm of oblivion separates the worlds of everyday reality and of Dionysian reality. But as soon as this everyday reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced with nausea: an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of these states. (*BT* §7)

It is under the influence of this mood that we see the origin of what Nietzsche refers to as decadent art, art that “tries to intoxicate the audience and force it to the height of a moment of strong and elevated feelings.” (*GS* §86) Here intoxication becomes used in order to suppress pain, i.e. *as* a narcotic. Nietzsche’s prime example here is of course Wagnerian music, which was for Nietzsche “the most un-Greek of all possible art forms—a first-rate poison for the nerves, doubly dangerous among a people who love drink and who honor lack of clarity as a virtue, for it has the double quality of a narcotic that both intoxicates and spreads a *fog*.” (*GS* §86) Ultimately, the danger lies in what Nietzsche will refer to in *Dawn* as the “belief in intoxication,” that is, the belief that intoxication, as the loss of the self, is the *only* path to the true self. (*D* §50)

### **Conclusion: Nietzsche as Epopt**

Is there a Nietzschean alternative to this belief? Ultimately, Nietzsche will suggest that it is the belief in intoxication that lies at the heart of our Socratic culture, and that the entire history of our culture can be understood in light of a genealogy of intoxication. Whether its art's "seductive veil of beauty fluttering before our eyes," the delusion of modern science that it can heal the wound of existence with scientific knowledge and technology, or finally the metaphysical comfort offered by tragedy, each of these functions to serve "those who actually feel profoundly the weight and burden of existence, and must be deluded by exquisite stimulants into forgetfulness of their displeasure." Nietzsche's claim here is precisely "All that we call culture is made up of these stimulants; and, according to the proportion of the ingredients, we have either a dominantly *Socratic* or *artistic* or *tragic* culture." (*BT* §18) Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Nietzsche makes an appeal to intoxication as a locus of truth, and the force of his so-called "science of aesthetics" is grounded in the certainty of vision that befalls one in paroxysms of intoxication. Just as the heightening of sensitivity that occurs in intoxication is the precondition for aesthetic activity and observation, so too would it have to be a precondition for Nietzsche's own genealogy of intoxication, inasmuch as this genealogy is an aesthetic activity.

Finally, the Nietzschean alternative is not a question of choosing sobriety or intoxication, but rather of elevating one's perspective so that intoxication opens onto a new pathos of distance from which one can gain insight into the hidden unities underlying apparently opposed phenomena. What is at stake here is precisely the intoxication of Zarathustra, or rather, that specifically Greek-inspired cheerfulness. Nietzsche describes this experience in the following way:



A rapture whose tremendous tension occasionally discharges itself in a flood of tears—now the pace quickens, now it becomes slow; one is altogether beside oneself...a depth of happiness in which even what is most painful and gloomy does not seem something opposite but rather conditioned, provoked, a necessary color in such a superabundance of light; an instinct for rhythmic relationships that arches over wide spaces of forms...Everything happens involuntarily in the highest degree but as in a gale of a feeling of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity...The involuntariness of image and metaphor is strangest of all, one no longer has any notion of what is an image or a metaphor: everything offers itself as the nearest, most obvious, simplest expression. (*EH*, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra”: §3)

If we were not already convinced of the specificity of this form of experience, it is worth pointing out that Nietzsche claims that this was his own “untimely” experience of intoxication, and that “one has to go back thousands of years in order to find anyone” who could have had the same experience. In various contexts, be it moral, aesthetic, religious, scientific or philosophical, the real force of Nietzsche’s wisdom comes from the depths of this experience. From this perspective, any atom-like structure of identity in these domains—e.g. good, evil, beauty, pain, truth, God, Self—is only a semblance or appearance that suppresses and builds upon more fundamental differences. The case is no different when it comes to intoxication. The example I have focused on here is his analysis in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which illustrates how the aesthetic experience (i.e. intoxication) proper to Greek tragedy is in fact a synthesis (or synesthesia) of two more rudimentary types of intoxication, namely, Apollinian intoxication and Dionysian intoxication. Again, Nietzsche’s aim here is not to reduce intoxication to oppositions but rather undermine the very identities on which they are built, namely, oppositions between intoxication and sobriety, sleep and awakening, enjoyment and suffering, medicine and toxin. Hence, intoxication is somehow both a feeling of power and a feeling of powerlessness, both a revealing and a concealing, both an awakening and a slumber, an enjoyment and a suffering. If this sounds paradoxical, it is because Dionysus is the god of paradox. And by highlighting this paradoxical

structure of intoxication, Nietzsche's aim is to place us in that same state of wonder that overtook the Apollinian man of Doric culture in Nietzsche's dramaturgy:

only the curious blending and duality in the emotions of the Dionysian revelers remind us—as medicines remind us of deadly poisons—of the phenomenon that pain begets joy, that ecstasy may wring sounds of agony from us. At the very climax of joy there sounds a cry of horror or a yearning lamentation for an irretrievable loss. (*BT* §2)

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Otto, Walter Friedrich. *Dionysus, Myth and Cult*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965. Print.

## “The Dionysian Artwork: An Image in Three Anecdotes”<sup>8</sup>

By David Kilpatrick

“It is possible to present the image of a man with three anecdotes”

(Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* 25).

Does Nietzsche still suffer from an image problem?<sup>9</sup> What image of Nietzsche should we promote? I don't mean an image in terms of endorsement, branding and commerce. Despite the timeliness, for tonight I'll avoid (at least overtly) the question concerning politics and the will to power and promise to abstain from making any Mein Trumpf jokes.<sup>10</sup>

At the springtime of the Nietzschean corpus we find this provocation: “Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man” (*The Birth of Tragedy* 37). It is this charm of the Dionysian that must be overcome for the metaphysical conception of the human essence, an opposition to the physical (which is feminized), to emerge as a world-historical determinative construct. The result of the success of the Socratic project, the overcoming which is metaphysics, is the estrangement of humanity - of humans from one another and of humanity from nature. The Socratic project, grounded in the Apollonian divine signifier, is an exultation of the *principium individuationis*. In contrast, the Dionysian, as Nietzsche explains, “seeks to destroy the individual and redeem him by a mystic feeling of oneness” (38). This process of a redemptive destruction is the formula for sacrifice, dramatized by the tragedians and mimicked/reconstituted with Socrates, whose individuality is

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<sup>8</sup> For the Nietzsche Circle event, *The Dionysian in Nietzsche*, held on Good Friday, 25 March 2016 in DUMBO, Brooklyn.

<sup>9</sup> Has the damage done to Nietzsche's image when his sister gave his walking stick to Adolf Hitler at the Nietzsche-Archiv in Weimar on 2 November 1933 ever been undone?

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche has been dragged into the present Presidential election crisis. Cf. the claim in *The New York Times* that “Trump embodies a Nietzschean morality” (Wehner).

redeemed (according to the metaphysically-reconstituted myth) despite the destruction of his body. *The Birth of Tragedy* is an attempt to reopen the wound. Perhaps unwittingly, Nietzsche sets the stage for his own destruction with a writing that communicates an ecstatic, tragic consciousness. Nietzsche is therefore (using his own terminology) writing mysticism, but a form of mysticism intimately bound with the sacrificial, for it is with the representation of violence that the subject is brought outside itself.

Nietzsche then turns his attention to the individual who communicates this collapse of individuality, with an attempt to “solve the problem of how the ‘lyrist’ is possible as an artist - he who [. . .] is continually saying ‘I’” (48). Nietzsche’s understanding of the problem of the “lyrist” is crucial to an understanding of the problem of Nietzsche: how is it possible to identify a constellation of texts with one who undermines, repeatedly, formulations and constructions of identity? Nietzsche gives us a hint when he suggests that “as a Dionysian artist he has identified himself with the primal unity . . . the artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process” (49). The poetic self is the self which surrenders, indeed, sacrifices itself. Thus, at the beginning of the corpus of texts which are signified as Nietzsche’s, a critique of subjectivity is announced, dismissing the Socratic project of stabilizing identity as a “fiction” (49). Of course, all that Nietzsche suggests regarding the artist is already exposed in Plato, but as corrupt - as that which must be refused. In his solution to the problem of the lyrist, Nietzsche establishes (a re-establishment of what is acknowledged/ refused in Plato) a poetics that is essentially a theory of the sacrificial author. This poetics is established through a description of the state of (tragic) consciousness that the Dionysian artist enters: “in this state he is, in a marvelous manner, like the image of the fairy tale, which can turn its eyes at will and behold itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator” (52). It is through this

identification of the subject and object, through the poet who performs what he watches, that the thematic motif of the sacrificial becomes the figure for the artistic practice, that the writer of sacrifice writes his own sacrifice.<sup>11</sup>

The next to last section of *Twilight of the Idols* marks a return to, or reaffirmation of, the theory of the Dionysian espoused in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Far from a purgative refusal of suffering, the dramatization of the tragic is an affirmative response to existence: “Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems, the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types – that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I guessed to be the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet” (562). The tragic poet identifies himself with existence, suffering into this identity, through his own sacrifice (for it is his type which is the “highest”), which is re-presented with the tragic work. Through finding this bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet, Nietzsche gains access to the tragic consciousness, and makes this psychology his own.

With his last (complete) work, *Ecce homo*, Nietzsche attempts a bridge to his own psychology, emerging at the end of his literary corpus as (tragic) character. Nietzsche begins by claiming that, “Seeing that before long I must confront humanity with the most difficult demand ever made of it, it seems indispensable to me to say who I am” (673). The first answer he gives is, “I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus” (673). Thus, his identity, his radical singularity which must be understood for humanity to understand the most difficult demand which he will place upon it, is conditioned by its relation to the god that collapses individuality. Dionysus remains the key figure in Nietzsche’s thought. Since the god is understood as a philosopher, as his disciple, Nietzsche claims for himself the title “the first tragic philosopher” during his discussion of *The Birth of Tragedy* (729). He is the first tragic philosopher, for he uncovers,

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<sup>11</sup>Portions from the preceding two paragraphs appear in Kilpatrick, *Writing with Blood*, pp. 60-61.

“The affirmation of passing away and destroying, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; becoming, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of being – all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else to date” (729). He concludes his discussion of this early work with an assertion of its agenda (a challenge to those who dismiss it as immature faulty scholarship, inconsistent with his later philosophical work), reaffirming the “tremendous hope [that] speaks out of this essay” as that which will occur long after his death: “I promise a tragic age: the highest art in saying Yes to life, tragedy, will be reborn when humanity has weathered the consciousness of the hardest but most necessary wars without suffering from it” (730). What he means by “wars” here is ambiguous. Are they military, cultural, or both? What is clear is that tragedy will emerge with the preparation of a form of consciousness that is its condition.

In his discussion of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche relates how his consciousness underwent the ek-stasis of sacrificial dramatization. Suggesting that the late nineteenth century has lost the understanding of what poets call inspiration, considering it may have been thousands of years since anyone else had a similar experience, he describes “A rapture” in which “one is altogether beside oneself” (756). The brilliance of the ecstatic experience of inspiration condemns him to suffering, he claims, for “One pays dearly for immortality: one has to die several times while still alive” (759). Here it is clear that Nietzsche equates the experience of inspiration with sacrifice. In this experience, the “concept of the ‘Dionysian’ [. . .] became a supreme deed” (760). Inspiration, therefore, is experienced as a hieratic event, in which consciousness is sacrificed, allowing for dramatization (manifest in the words of *Zarathustra* received by Nietzsche).

Nietzsche makes clear in *Ecce homo* how he understands himself to be a turning point and vortex in world history, even more pivotal than Socrates, whom he cited as such in *Birth*:

“One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous – a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up against everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man. I am dynamite” (782). Nonetheless, he conveys his apprehension as to how his legacy will be received, that he may be transformed into precisely the kind of religious figure that he despised. Afraid of Nietzscheans to come, he claims: “I want no ‘believers’ [. . .] I have a terrible fear that one day I will be pronounced holy” (782). It may be that the fear he expresses here is that a doctrine may be founded upon him, whereas he sought to abolish doctrines, or that his example may be reconstituted somehow in accordance with those forms of the holy/sacred against which his life was dedicated. Nonetheless, his sacrificial example, enhanced by the “myth” surrounding his collapse into madness, necessarily produces a sacred mystique.<sup>12</sup>

So we see Nietzsche’s conception of the Dionysian. But how might we see the Dionysian in Nietzsche? If the title for tonight’s gathering is a promised proposition, how must we consider the preposition? Not *of* Nietzsche, but *in* Nietzsche. This is a matter of image. If Nietzsche indeed submitted himself to the Dionysian process, how might his figure be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon?

If, as Nietzsche suggests in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, “It is possible to present the image of a man with three anecdotes” (25), what three episodes from his life do we select to depict his tragic figure? They cannot be random, but must contain within them a kernel of necessity. The settings for these three episodes – essential for this drama – are Köln, Roma and Torino.

The first comes to us from his friend Deussen:

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<sup>12</sup> Portions from the preceding four paragraphs appear in Kilpatrick, *Writing with Blood*, pp. 87-89.

Nietzsche traveled alone to Cologne one day, took a guided tour of the sights, and then asked the tour guide to take him to a restaurant. The tour guide took him instead to a house of ill repute. Nietzsche told me the next day, “I suddenly saw myself surrounded by a half dozen apparitions in tinsel gauze, staring at me expectantly. I was speechless at first, but then I went instinctively to a piano, as if it were the only being in the group with a soul, and struck several chords. They broke the spell and I hurried outside...” (qtd. Safranski 20-21).

The second, from his love, if not lover, Lou Salome, who told the story of how they met. Setup as if on a blind date in St. Peter’s Basilica, the near-sighted Nietzsche squinted at her in the Vatican before uttering this pickup line: “From which stars did we fall to meet each other here?” (qtd. Safranski 250-251).

The third anecdote is well known, and of the three perhaps the one episode most urgent and unavoidable. As the myth is told, in Turin’s Piazza Carlo Alberto, on 3 January 1889, he witnessed a horse being beaten, at which he desperately tried to rescue the beast, throwing his arms around it before falling unconscious – his sanity never to return.

This moment rivals the deaths of Socrates and Jesus as world-historical turning points, with the most obvious difference being that their sacrifices both call for an end to sacrifice, and provide its closure, whereas Nietzsche’s tragedy begets further tragedy, a renewal of sacrificial mimesis.

I would like to leave you to consider how the image of Nietzsche that emerges from these three anecdotes might contrast with the popular perception of an immoral Antichrist, how the emergence of character from these three episodes reveals the Dionysian process of the artist becoming the artwork – for with these three events we may discover the destruction of the individual in order to reconcile nature with her lost son, three anecdotes that disclose the Dionysian in Nietzsche.



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# **The Dionysian Revealed Itself As Truth: Have We Understood it? By Yunus Tuncel**

Nietzsche's declaration in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "excess revealed itself as truth," (sec.4) ushered in a new age, and we are yet to "understand" the cultural significance of this declaration. With 'excess' Nietzsche here means the Dionysian, which is one of the two art impulses he uses to approach the spirit of ancient Greek tragedy and theater. The Dionysian stands for many different things: first, it is the absence of the individuated state, as it stands in opposition to the Apollonian; second, it is, through this absence, the union of all beings; third, it is one's losing one's self and being connected to other beings, nature, and the universe. Nietzsche uses a variety of terms to explain this existential state of being: art impulse, intoxication, and ecstasy. We can at least identify three related areas to which the Dionysian directly applies, namely, arts, eroticism, and mortality. These three areas will be my primary focus in this paper, as I bring Bataille's and Heidegger's ideas into discussion in relation to the last two, eroticism and death, tie all of them together, and show the significance of the Dionysian for the life of individuals and culture as a whole.

## **I. The Dionysian in Aesthetics**

Nietzsche's primary application of the term 'Dionysian' seems to be in the aesthetic realm in *The Birth of Tragedy*. After all, the book is an attempt to understand Greek drama and theater, its origin, constituent elements, rise, and death under the hegemony of Socratic rationality. The term 'aesthetic', however, should not be understood only in terms of its

application to works of art, but rather in a broader sense as creative activity in a multitude of forms. As Nietzsche asserts by way of his discussion of lyric poetry, "...it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*..."<sup>13</sup> We are artistic projections of the true author, he says--no god is invoked here; we are small creatures of this existence and we can justify our existence by living up to the fact that we are created and, therefore, must be creative in our small ways. In this way, creation, at the cosmic and cultural levels, carries itself on. Through the Dionysian and ecstatic states, the lyric artist taps into this chain of creation. Therefore, the subject/object dualism no longer holds when it comes to aesthetics; in fact, this division does not hold for anything, thus Nietzsche sees the problem of modern subjectivity in arts for the first time.

What are the Dionysian elements in the aesthetic field? Nietzsche associates the Dionysian with the intangible, the invisible, and therefore with sound and symbol. Therefore, he considers music to be the true Dionysian art form, as opposed to visual arts that are Apollonian. After music comes singing and dancing, all of which were artistic functions in ancient Greek dramatic performances. Nietzsche, however, later detected a problem in this type of dualism. In his 1886 Preface, he acknowledges the shortcomings of the book, without giving up on the idea of the Dionysian or what it stands for in general. One problem regarding the dualism to which the young Nietzsche was not sensitive is such a separation between musical and visual arts. It would have been more consistent for Nietzsche to say that all arts have the Apollonian and the Dionysian, but in different degrees. He could then say that musical arts are more Dionysian than visual arts. In either case, Nietzsche in BT does not dismiss the role of visual arts, but rather confines them to the realm of the Apollonian, as he associates it with image, illusion, and dream.

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<sup>13</sup> BT, 52.

They have the function of bringing joy into the Dionysian suffering, another problematic association which Nietzsche would not subscribe to later.

If the Dionysian is losing one's self, then every act can be said to be Dionysian. Nietzsche's term, however, is not as broad as it seems. He contrasts the Dionysian to everyday forms of living: "The contrast between this real truth of nature [i.e. the Dionysian] and the lie of culture that poses as though it were the only reality..."<sup>14</sup> Based on this contrast, the Dionysian has to be of a different order than what one does or finds in one's everyday reality. It is a magical transformation on stage: it is making present those that are absent through artifacts such as masks, and it is re-creating movement as in dance and so on. These ecstatic states are often described as those of hallucination or madness. In fact, Nietzsche uses 'madness' in his Preface to BT: "And what, then, is the significance, physiologically speaking, of that madness out of which tragic and comic art developed—the Dionysian madness?"<sup>15</sup> It is through madness that the artist loses him or herself in the ocean of images and sounds and recreates them in another, hitherto unseen, unheard of, unity.

## II. Eroticism and the Dionysian

There are a few indications of sexual over- and under-tones of the Dionysian in *The Birth of Tragedy*. We know that Dionysus was a god of orgies, but Dionysus and Nietzsche's Dionysian are not necessarily the same, although Nietzsche likes to convolute them. Regarding the cult of Dionysus, the sexual references are to be found in the figure of the satyr, the satyr-chorus and the satyr-play. Although we do not know much about the satyr-play—there is only one that survived by Euripides—we know something about the satyr figure, the half-goat, half-

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<sup>14</sup> BT, 61.

<sup>15</sup> BT, 21.

human companion of Dionysus. Through his animal nature and his overt sexuality, the Greek audience found yet another medium to be connected to nature, as Nietzsche presents it: “The satyr...is the offspring of a longing for the primitive and for the natural; but how firmly and fearlessly the Greek embraced the man of the woods...”<sup>16</sup> In this part of the book, Nietzsche contrasts the Dionysian sensibility of the tragic Greek to the absence of that sensibility in the modern age. The everyday man of culture can refer to the absence of the Dionysian in any form of everydayness, including that of ancient Greece, but can also refer to even the severe lack of the Dionysian in modern Europe.

Nietzsche does highlight the sexual aspect of satyr in Greek tragedy: “..the satyr was the archetype of man...a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature which the Greeks used to contemplate with reverent wonder.”<sup>17</sup> Apart from the discussion of the satyr and all that is related to him and the Dionysian festivals that were sexually licentious (sec.2), there is no direct reference to any sexual symbols in *The Birth of Tragedy*. On the other hand, ancient Greek culture had sexual symbols associated with other gods and cults such as Eros, Aphrodite, and Hermes, to count only a few. Nietzsche, however, brings up the Dionysian again in one of his last books, *Twilight of the Idols*, and this time sexual symbolism is at the core of his understanding of the Dionysian. In this work he associates the Dionysian with the orgiastic, the eternal life, the mystery of sexuality, the union of joy and suffering, overflowing feeling of life and strength or powerfulness, and finally the joyful affirmation of life in the face of its hardest problems.<sup>18</sup> Going beyond Aristotle and modern pessimists, Nietzsche states: “the psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, where even pain still has the effect of

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<sup>16</sup> BT, sec.8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> TI, 561-563.

a stimulus, gave me the key to the concept of *tragic* feeling...”<sup>19</sup> Although Nietzsche brings all forms of sexuality together in these passages, the focus is on the orgiastic, which was the function of Dionysus and is the compendium of many sexual practices.

If eroticism is the singularly creative experience of sexuality and one’s losing one’s self in the other, then the Dionysian must be in the air—must be the gluing bond so to speak—for the eroticism to be possible. We can then say that eroticism, like the Dionysian, does not belong to the registers of everydayness, that which is “useful” and “preservative,” but rather to another register, to that which is heterogeneous, to use Bataille’s phrase (the everyday order belongs to the homogeneous). Bataille describes eroticism as “assenting to life up to the point of death,” and “is a psychological quest independent of the natural goal.”<sup>20</sup> I will come back to the subject of death later and would like to explore other points on eroticism in Bataille, which is easily relatable to the Dionysian in Nietzsche. The erotic is non-purposeful, that is, non-procreative sexuality; only human beings can be erotic for Bataille. It is a cultural form. Furthermore, it establishes continuum among beings, whereas individuals are discontinuous beings. Through erotic acts and through other members of the erotic community, one becomes conjoined to Being. Bataille’s re-discovery of eroticism is a response not only to Nietzsche’s call for a Dionysian culture but also to his critique of ascetic idealism. Through eroticism one embraces one’s body in a Dionysian communion and in an aesthetic way, because one creates one’s own sexuality in many different ways in and through eroticism. Now how does death come into the picture in Nietzsche and Bataille, and in relation to the Dionysian, in Bataille especially in his book, *Eroticism?*

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<sup>19</sup> TI, 562.

<sup>20</sup> *Eroticism*, p.11.

### III. Death and the Dionysian

The Dionysian is the loss of individuated state and, when applied to the human realm, stands for the death of the individual or for destruction in general. As for the latter, Nietzsche expounds his theory of destruction in his notion of “critical history” where a part of the past must be destroyed for the sake of life.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the cycle of destruction is already integrated into the eternal return, along with the cycle of creation. In fact, in one of his later notes, Nietzsche writes: “*My first solution: Dionysian wisdom. Joy in the destruction of the most noble and at the sight of its progressive ruin: in reality joy in what is coming and lies in the future...*” (WP 417) However antithetical they may seem, Nietzsche sees both life and death in one thought, and it is through the Dionysian wisdom that we are reminded of our mortality. Whether it is the wisdom of Silenus who announces that the next best thing to do is to die or Hamlet’s wisdom of destructibility of all things (BT, sections 4 and 7, respectively), the Dionysian wisdom gives us our sense of mortality, or to use Heidegger’s phrase, our being-toward-death.

For Heidegger, being-toward-death is not some brooding over death or thinking about death, but rather is a disposition that opens Dasein to new possibilities. “Being-toward-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-of-being of *that* being whose kind of being is anticipation itself. In the anticipatory revealing of this potentiality-of-being, Da-sein discloses itself to itself with regard to its most extreme possibility.” (Heidegger 242). It is by projecting itself to new possibilities that Dasein can find its own potential and re-create itself authentically; and every projection is a form of being-toward-death. In every transformation something dies and something is re-born. Heidegger sees “freedom toward death” in one’s quest for finding one’s authentic self; death or facing nothingness opens up the quest. Precisely it is the anxiety of one’s own death, one’s nothingness that does this initiation: “In *Angst*, Da-sein finds itself *faced* with

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<sup>21</sup> UM II, sec.3

the nothingness of the possible impossibility of its existence.” (Heidegger 245). This is why he says that being-toward-death is essentially *Angst*. If we do not feel this anxiety, then we will not have the disposition of being-toward-death. In that case, the inauthentic forms of being weigh heavily upon Da-sein who feels comfortable in its thrownness in the ‘they,’ das Man.

Nietzsche does not specify the feelings that are associated with Dionysian states, but one can surmise that they are *extra-ordinary* feelings, intense, excessive feelings not unlike those that are associated with blood and violence or with euphoria. Bataille, on the other hand, focuses on two areas in human society, regarding ecstatic states: sexuality and death. He associates ecstasy with transgression and identifies the two as the two major areas of transgression. He claims that taboos regarding sex and death are the oldest and most universal taboos in human societies. What ties eroticism to death in the way Bataille treats them is the loss of the self: in eroticism one loses one’s self in the lover(s) and death is the ultimate loss of one’s self. Every society regulates both sex and death so as to create an order, while inviting the transgression of taboos placed on them. While Nietzsche takes more of an aesthetic approach to the Dionysian with implicit and explicit references to sexuality and death, Bataille works through a necro-erotic perspective and Heidegger through ontology.

## **Epilogue**

Just to wrap things up, it should be noted that the Dionysian is all the following at the same time: the creative force since it is an art impulse, the binding force through its orgiastic function, and also the force that puts us in our place vis-à-vis other beings that surround us, as it reminds us of our mortality. Despite all, despite its vitality and necessity for the life of every culture, everyday functions of preservation weigh heavily on the Dionysian forces and often



diminish their vitality. This paradox lies at the core of human society; we are bound to preserve ourselves and yet we need the Dionysian to be aesthetic, to be erotic and to understand our mortality. Often the quantity of preservative forces brings down the quality of Dionysian forces. We will always be faced with these human dilemmas, but let it suffice here to say that the Dionysian in Nietzsche brings together three fundamental forces that are needed for the life and health of a culture: the aesthetic-creative impulse, the erotic force, and the sense of mortality. All in all and to invoke the spirit of ancient Greece, the Muses, Dionysus, Eros, Aphrodite, and Hades hold hands and dance together.

In a few years, it will be 150 years since Nietzsche called for a return to a Dionysian culture in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, at least in the Western context. Can we today say that the spirit of our contemporary culture is Dionysian? I would say not, although there are pockets of Dionysian practices in general culture and many Dionysian movements in the domain of the spirit. Modern dance was inspired by Nietzsche's ideas on the Dionysian; Kandinsky appropriated the Dionysian into visual arts and thereby initiated abstract painting; in philosophy Bataille and Heidegger developed ideas on ecstasy and ecstatic disposition; installation and performance art forces human capabilities and operates along limit experiences; the whole drug culture, though fraught with nihilism (and in the US with racism) has Dionysian elements, and finally, psychoanalysis promotes the Dionysian indirectly insofar as it opens up new vistas and experiences for the non-rational in the human. However, these Dionysian movements of the last 100 years or so are divergent and lack coherence to a large extent. To make the Dionysian the spirit of our times will take much effort and also chance. As for the former, we can do our share; as for the latter, we can hope for Dionysus to appear.

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## **Part II**

### **Nietzsche and Dance**

## The Art of Affirmation

By Kimerer LaMothe

I have learned many things from American dancer Isadora Duncan, even though she died decades before I was born. One was how to read the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

In Nietzsche's books, from first to last, the word "dance" appears again and again, most often when he is writing about one of his primary concerns: how to affirm life – how to *love* life, all of it. Easy and hard. In sickness and in health. In joy and in sorrow. Most commentators interpret Nietzsche's allusions to dance as poetic images, or as metaphors referring to internal mental processes.<sup>22</sup> Isadora Duncan did not. She took Nietzsche at his word. Dance meant dance – rhythmic bodily movement.

In 1902, two years after Nietzsche died, when Duncan was 25, she hired a tutor to help her read Nietzsche in German. She read at least two of his books: his first, *Birth of Tragedy*, and the one he considered his finest, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Duncan wrote in her autobiography, "Nietzsche's philosophy ravished my being" (*My Life* 141). She called *Birth of Tragedy* "my Bible"; and she carried around a dog-eared copy of *Zarathustra* until her untimely death in 1928 (*Art of the Dance* 108).

In Nietzsche's writing Duncan not only found inspiration for making dances, she found a philosophy that supported her vision of what dancing is and can be: vital to the process by which humans become human. In her estimation, "The entire *Zarathustra* is filled with phrases about man in his dancing being" (*Art of the Dance* 123). In such phrases, Duncan read a call to action: a charge to discover the bodily movements that would realize the potential of dance to catalyze

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<sup>22</sup> For an analysis of these commentaries, see LaMothe, *Nietzsche's Dancers*, Introduction.

in dancers and viewers alike a radical affirmation of life, all of it. As she discerned: “[Nietzsche] did not mean the execution of pirouettes. He meant the exaltation of life in movement” (*Art of the Dance* 77).

In what follows, I explore this relationship between Nietzsche and Duncan. What did Nietzsche mean by the “affirmation of life”? What role does “dance” play for him in relation to affirmation? And how did Duncan create and teach and perform dances that she intended to effect such affirmation?

### **Walking**

The first point needed in order to understand Nietzsche’s perspective on dance and affirmation is that he walked. Nietzsche walked, daily if he could, for hours at a time, particularly during the decade of his prime writing life.

Nietzsche walked, not because he felt good, but because he didn’t. From youth on and increasingly as he aged, Nietzsche suffered from headaches and nausea that kept him in bed for days at a time. Even though his evident genius was enough to land him a prestigious professorship at age twenty-four – before he had even completed his PhD – he was too ill to keep the job. After 10 years, he retired. So sensitive was he to the weather, that he generally spent his winters at warm seaside spots in France or Italy, and his summers in the cooler heights of Switzerland.

Walking was his salvation. Nietzsche walked to feel a sense of well being. He walked to come alive to himself – to wake up to the present moment of his own experience, so that he could “think through his senses” (Z 2 “On the Blessed Isles,” p. 198).<sup>23</sup> He walked in order to

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<sup>23</sup> *The Portable Nietzsche*, Editor Walter Kaufmann. Penguin, 1954.

think thoughts that he would not and could not discover while sitting with his head and heart buried in book. In his words: “It is our habit to think outdoors--walking, leaping, climbing, dancing” (GS 5 §366, p. 322).<sup>24</sup> He walked to think thoughts that would help him *affirm life* – all of it – including his own sickness (EH “The Birth of Tragedy” §2, p. 272).

For Nietzsche, the act of thinking thoughts that affirm life – thoughts that express full body movement -- was not a luxury. It was a necessity. It was the only way he could sustain his resilience, his enthusiasm for living, in the face of constant pain. As Nietzsche confirms: “The sedentary life is the very sin against the Holy Spirit. Only thoughts reached by walking have value” (TI “Maxims and Arrows” §34)

But why? Why are thoughts born of walking are the only ones capable of affirming life?

### **Creativity**

A second point needed in order to understand Nietzsche’s take on dance and affirmation lies in his notion of the nature of human creativity. According to Nietzsche, human beings are inherently creative. While not everyone trains to be an artist, all people create moment to moment at a sensory level by virtue of the bodily movements that make. People create by virtue of what they notice; where they place their attention; how they orient themselves in space. And as they see, hear, touch, reach, and release they determine what is worth engaging. What is worth loving. What matters. They create *values* (TL p. 186).<sup>25</sup>

For Nietzsche, all values are expressions of human kinetic creativity. Yet not all values adequately honor the bodily selves whose movements they express. Humans can and do move

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<sup>24</sup> *The Gay Science with a prelude in rhymes and an appendix of songs*. Translator Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Press, 1974.

<sup>25</sup> “On Truth and Falsity in their Ultra-moral Sense,” in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Editor Oscar Levy. Volume Two. Macmillan, 1914. For a full exposition of this idea, see LaMothe, *Nietzsche’s Dancers*, chapter 1.

their bodies in ways that find expression in values that disparage their earthly, bodily selves (GM I §10 pp. 36-7).<sup>26</sup> Humans can move in ways that generate ascetic ideals that encourage them to deny their desires; or still their movement. And as Nietzsche sees it, a sedentary life is sure to produce such life-denying values – values that encourage a disregard for our sensory selves – values that privilege mind over body and truth over art.

Walking, then, for Nietzsche, was not just a way to feel better or get some exercise. It was a practice of quickening his kinetic creativity. It was a way to awaken an internal sensory awareness that could help him discern whether or not an ideal or value was one that nurtured his well being. Walking provided Nietzsche with a litmus test for evaluating whether or not a given ideal or value was one that said **yes** to human, bodily life – whether it was one that could *dance*. As Nietzsche wrote: “Our first questions about the value of a book, of a human being, or a musical composition are: Can they walk? Even more, can they dance?” (GS 5 §366, p. 322).

When walking lifted his spirits to the point that he felt happy and free, Nietzsche described himself as dancing – as one able to think thoughts and create values that, in the words of Zarathustra, “remain faithful to the earth” (Z 1 §3) that catalyze an affirmation of life. In short, Nietzsche walked because he wanted to write “*Books that teach us to dance*” (HH §206).

### **The Chorus**

What, however, does Nietzsche mean by “dance”? Isn’t he simply using the word as a metaphor for some mental act, like looking on the bright side or thinking positively? Having a sense of humor or making the best of a bad situation?

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<sup>26</sup> *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Editor & Translator Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Press, 1989.

A third point needed in order to understand Nietzsche's take on dance and affirmation lies in what Duncan understood that Nietzsche had learned from the Greeks. In the book Duncan called her Bible, *Birth of Tragedy*, she found a path to grasping Nietzsche's dance references as a vision for what dancing can be – not an account of what dancing *is* but of what it has the *potential* to be in the present day.

In *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche examines the genre of Attic tragedy, created by the Greeks in the 5<sup>th</sup> C BCE. These dramas featured a narrative acted out by individual actors on stage that was punctuated by the singing, dancing, and truth-telling of a multi-person chorus. Nietzsche found these tragedies remarkable because of their effect: even though the narrative told a tragic tale of human fallibility, audience members would leave paradoxically propelled into a joyous, empowering affirmation of life. Nietzsche described this change as a “magic transformation [*Verzauberung*]” (KSA 1, pp. 61-2; BT §8, p. 64).<sup>27</sup> He wrote the book to discern how it happened.

Nietzsche found the key to the life affirming effects of these Greek tragedies in the dancing and singing of the chorus. The dancing and singing sounded out elemental rhythms that hooked audience members beneath the ribs and invited them to move in response (BT §8, p. 62). They were compelling, contagious. The singing and dancing thus facilitated a visceral identification between audience and players, such that the audience members felt that they too were part of the chorus, part of an eternal movement pulsing through them.

The experience, according to Nietzsche, transformed audience members' sense of their bodily selves. They felt “godlike” – “he feels himself a god [*als Gott fühlt er sich*]” (KSA 1, p. 30; BT §1, p. 37). They knew themselves as part of an endless flux of nature, part of the creative

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<sup>27</sup> *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Editor and Translator Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Press, 1967. See LaMothe, *Nietzsche's Dancers*, chapter 1 for a fuller description of this term.



will of life, endlessly recreating itself (BT §17, p. 104). According to Nietzsche the feelings of pleasure and power brought about by this visceral knowledge of elemental rhythms meant that audience members were able not only to *endure* the tragic tales, but to *greet* these losses and failures as enlivening. As occasions to love life. All of it.

Duncan understood this dynamic as well as any commentator I have read. Here is her account: “At the sublime moment of the tragedy, when sorrow and suffering were most acute, the Chorus would appear. Then the soul of the audience, harrowed to the point of agony, was restored to harmony by the elemental rhythms of song and movement. The Chorus gave to the audience the fortitude to support those moments that otherwise would have been too terrible for human endurance” (*Art of the Dance* 84).

As Duncan points out: the affirmation for which Nietzsche praises Greek tragedies is not a stoic act of mind over matter. Nor does it involve an Aristotelian emotional catharsis. Affirmation is a thoroughly bodily phenomenon in which people’s sensory selves are moved by elemental rhythms. Affirmation represents a shift in visceral experience in which audience members’ inherent kinetic creativity wakes up, such that they know themselves as creators – as godlike – as making the movements that draw the world into being. This realization, according to Nietzsche, releases feelings of power and possibility, of overflowing joy.

In sum, when Nietzsche hymns his intention to write books that teach readers “how to dance,” he is proclaiming his desire to find ways of using words that will do for his readers what Greek tragedy did for its audiences: to catalyze a visceral identification with elemental rhythms – to awaken a sensory awareness of themselves as *movement* – so as to effect a magic transformation to a sense of their own “godlike” participation in the creation of values.

To dance, for Nietzsche, is to feel the overflowing joy, the kinetic power and pleasure, that emboldens people to question inherited values and reject those that do not honor the health and well being of the earth in and around them. Dancing is the means, the medium, and the fruit of affirming life. Dance is, for Nietzsche, not only a symbol of an ideal, nor a metaphor for a mental state; it is the bodily action humans must do in order to ensure that the values they create in all realms of their lives remain faithful to the earth. Any ideal, value, or god, Nietzsche insists, must model and demand such sensory, kinetic awakening. As he confirms: “I would only believe in a god who could dance” (Z “On Reading and Writing” p. 153).

### **Isadora Duncan**

Isadora Duncan, unlike Nietzsche, was not sick. By all counts, she enjoyed a supremely healthy constitution. Even so, her passion for dancing put her at odds, as Nietzsche was, with many of the cultural ideals of her day – especially those concerning women’s bodies.

Duncan, like Nietzsche, was perceived as a rebel for rejecting values that preached hostility towards bodily selves, women’s in particular. She, like Nietzsche, lamented how deeply the values of sedentary life had permeated western culture, separating minds from bodies. She, like Nietzsche, was a nomad, always searching for the most agreeable place to establish her school of life – Germany, the United States, Russia, France.

Thus, when Duncan read Nietzsche’s account of Greek tragedy and the radical affirmation of bodily life, his project resonated deeply. She wanted to be the chorus (*Art of the Dance* 96). She wanted to find movements that would help people identify with the elemental rhythms of the universe, so that they could know that they too are part of what she called the

“divine continuity” of the natural world, overflowing with vibrant sense of their own health, able to affirm life in all its bodily dimensions (*Art of the Dance* 102-3).

Teach people how to move their bodily selves, Duncan averred, and you will be teaching them how to live. As she put it, “To dance is to live. What I want is a *school of life*” (*Art of the Dance* 141).

### **The Power Within**

Who did Duncan teach? Children. Knowing how impactful a sedentary life is, Duncan preferred to teach girls and boys young enough that the actions of reading and writing had not yet conditioned them to think and feel and act as if they were minds living in bodies (*Art of the Dance* 117).

What did Duncan teach? Duncan provided her students with experiences of beauty in nature, art, and music, and encouraged them to respond. Rather than imposing patterns upon young limbs, Duncan offered her students exercises designed to quicken their sensory awareness, and so evoke from them spontaneous movements. As she writes: “[W]hen I have taken children into my schools I have aimed above all else to bring them into a consciousness of this power within themselves, of their relationship to the universal rhythm, to evoke from them the ecstasy, the beauty of this realization” (*Art of the Dance* 52). This “power within themselves” is akin to Nietzsche’s notion of the kinetic creativity awakened by the singing and dancing of the chorus in Attic tragedy. It describes an ability to sense and respond to elemental movements that are coursing through the natural world and through our bodily selves in every moment. Elsewhere Duncan calls this “power within” “soul,” and writes that the first step in learning to dance is to “awaken soul” (*Art of the Dance* 52).

As a child's soul awakens, Duncan introduced movement sequences designed to cultivate this "power within," so that a dancer could more easily sense and receive impulses to move. Duncan believed that humans receive such impulses in the solar plexus – the bodily location where the life-sustaining rhythms of breathing and heart-beating cross. So she guided students to trace the pathways in their bodily self to and through the solar plexus, and thereby strengthen the channels of sensory awareness through which humans may sense and follow through with impulses to move.

What kind of movement sequences were adequate for this task? Duncan created sequences that embodied what she claims to have learned from the Greeks, and what she claims the Greeks learned from nature: that a never-ending wave is the form of all elemental rhythms. From her studies of ancient Greek vases and reliefs, Duncan concluded that the secret to the beauty of their dancing figures lay in wave-forms movements inspired by nature. As she discerned, a wave is the quintessential form of nature. It is the pulse of gravity, and the medium of sound and matter and light. It is the shape a bodily self assumes when it is moving in ways that amplify and unfold its kinetic potential. It is a movement that never dies.

In her teaching, Duncan designed movement sequences modeled on waves. As Duncan insists, "The movements should follow the rhythm of the waves: the rhythm that rises, penetrates, holding in itself the impulse and the after-movement; call and response, bound endlessly in one cadence" (*Art of the Dance* 99). In a signature warm up called "The Universe," students pull their arms strongly up through the center of the body, and then float them down to the sides, creating a vibrant circular flow of energy and awareness around the dancer's head and torso. Through such exercises, Duncan sought to cultivate a dancer's "power within." She aimed to improving her students' ability not only to receive impulses to move, but to receive impulses

that would express and support the health and well being of their own, singular bodily forms, and thus *affirm* bodily life.

### ***Mother***

While teaching was her passion, Duncan also made dances and performed them throughout Europe and in the United States. Touring was a means for her to raise money to fund her Schools of Life and attract students to them. Lectures after the show provided her with opportunities to communicate her philosophy.

In making her dances to perform, Duncan used wave movements as the building blocks to create dances that would hook her audience members under the ribs; establish a visceral connection; quicken their ability to sense and respond and know themselves as movement; and thus rouse in them the sense of joy and health that overflows in an affirmation of life.

Her ability to make such dances is nowhere perhaps more evident than in a brief gem of a work, *Mother* which she choreographed in 1923 to a piano etude by Scriabin.

In this dance, Duncan gazes deep into the void and comes face to face with the tragic death of her two children, Deidre and Patrick, at ages five and two. In 1913, ten years earlier, the children had been riding with their nanny in a car along the Seine. When the chauffeur stepped out to crank the stalled engine, he forgot to engage the parking brake. The car rolled over the embankment into the river. Children and nanny drowned. In the waves.

In *Mother* Duncan becomes the chorus (*Art of the Dance* 196). She becomes the elemental rhythms of song and movement. *She* is the waves of love that lift her children, bring them to life, engulf them, and carry them away. *She* is the One into which we are gathered.

In this dance, Duncan's moving female body—her dancing—appears as the medium in which she is able to perceive and know a divine continuity, to feel its power coursing through her, to participate in it actively, and to transform her greatest suffering into a reason to *dance*.

According to Duncan, such soul-awakening, life affirming dancing has the potential to catalyze a renaissance of religion (*My Life* 85), not only in terms of practices, but in terms of ideas. Such dancing is not mere entertainment. It is not about the steps. Such dancing harbors within it a “complete conception of life” that is, “more free, more harmonious, more natural” (*Art of the Dance* 101). It is a conception of life in which how we move our bodily selves matters to who we are, to what we can think, feel, and do. It is a conception of life in which the sensory awareness awakened by visceral connection with elemental rhythms serves as a test of whether or not an ideal or value is *good*. It is a conception of life that remains faithful to the earth.

### **Conclusion**

In *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche wrote: “it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” (§5, p. 52). In relation to his appeals to dance and Duncan's living interpretation of them, this sentence makes sense.

Here, what matters in life or about life is not what you have or what you earn. It is not who you are or what you have to give. What matters is what you *create* where the paradigm for that creation is *dance*. What matters are the patterns of movement that you make and become. Towards and away. Into and out from. Around and through. Under and over. Including and excluding. Ignoring and engaging. In such sensory and kinetic patterns of movements-made lie the value of life – the value of a life.

*We are inherently creative at a sensory level. With every movement we make, we create ourselves, our relationships, our values, and the world as we know it -- as it has the potential to be. What are we creating? Does it dance?*

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# The Dionysian and Dance in Nietzsche

By Yunus Tuncel

## Introduction

Most of our movements in the world are for a purpose: in order to produce something or to go from one point to another. In other words, we do not create our bodily movements, but rather move according to an already set, regimented motion. We go to work or go to school, and we must do that in the shortest possible way. Most of our movements are of this nature and therefore, limited. On the other hand, there are many possible ways of moving the body, but these other possible ways have gradually fallen aside. I would like to make a distinction within the realm of human bodily movement between everyday, “useful” forms of movement, on the one hand, and free, creative, and ecstatic forms of movement, on the other hand. I do not suggest that these two types of movement are separate in essence. But we can separate them in terms of our own disposition to movement and what these types of movements do to our body. In what follows below I will explore dance as an *ecstatic* movement by way of Nietzsche, Duncan, LaMothe, Belilove, and other *dancing spirits*.

## Regular Movement vs. Dionysian Movement

Dance is an *ek-stasis* of movement and may be, along with music, the oldest art form. Clearly, the term *art* itself is open to interpretation. But we can assume that human beings were dancing before they made music and painted. For the latter, one needs tools, even if they are rudimentary; for dance one does not need any tools. Ek-statis means coming out of oneself and becoming one

with all—seeing oneself in the other and losing oneself in the other. Nietzsche uses the term *Dionysian* to express a specific, human way of being. All other beings may belong to one another, but human beings need to have or be Dionysian in order to belong to one another, or to simply belong. In other words, Nietzsche's Dionysian is a cultural construct, not a "natural" one. Now, we *need* to belong to other beings, because we co-exist with them. One can say that by default we already belong, but this belonging often falls into oblivion or is repressed because of our presumed subjectivity and individuality, which is strong in the West and has become even stronger in the modern age. Nietzsche's conception of the Dionysian stands in polemical contrast to modern subjectivity, understood philosophically and culturally.

To sum up Nietzsche's argument against modern subjectivity and its dualistic order, we can say that human beings belong to an everyday realm and a Dionysian realm--this should not be taken as yet another dualistic structure, but rather a heuristic way of explaining our disposition to being. The Dionysian realm, however, often falls into oblivion, or it has fallen into oblivion in the so-called progress of civilization. Nietzsche presents this everydayness as the lie of culture: "The contrast between this real truth of nature and the lie of culture that poses as if it were the only reality..." (BT, sec. 8, 61). Here Nietzsche contrasts not so much the Apollonian to the Dionysian, but rather the everydayness in which we come to believe our reality to be the only one, with the Dionysian where all reality is broken down and re-created. These ideas Nietzsche uses to understand Greek theater can be applied to movement and dance as well. We move in everyday life, one way or another. We moved our bodies to come to this event. Now, from an heuristic standpoint, movement can be said to be useful/purposeful or ecstatic. In the former, we have a specific goal, we need to go from point A to B and there is only one short-cut; this is what we do in our everyday routine. In the latter ecstatic movement, we come out of ourselves, our

typical everyday movements and move our bodies in different way:, freely, spontaneously, and aesthetically. It is no longer “useful” or “routine” but rather “excessive” in the sense that the ecstatic exceeds our ordinary limits. Dance ultimately operates within this type of ecstatic movement. The two types of movements are not ontologically separate. Therefore, to say dance uses many everyday, natural movements does not contradict what I am saying. The difference lies in the disposition, not in the nature of the movement itself.

### **Moving with Others**

How do we relate to other bodies and how do we move in relation to other bodies? What are some relational modalities? We keep space so that we do not bump into each other, but this is true among strangers and the space among strangers varies from culture to culture. In the public sphere, our inter-relational movement is determined by the function that space serves. What about in “framed” settings like in sports and dance where our movements are regulated according to the rules of a particular sport, or dance patterns or the dance genre? In these cases, the way we move in relation to other bodies is governed by the rules or movement patterns observed in that specific setting. Whether it is with strangers or in an “enframed” setting, we always have a sense of our own body in motion and other bodies in motion. Merleau-Ponty calls this “embodiment,” a notion which was foreseen by Nietzsche in his conception of the Dionysian. What follows below is an investigation of these two concepts with the hope of bringing out their differences and thereby helps understand collective movement.

For Nietzsche the Dionysian signifies the capacity and the actuality for a human being to be connected to other beings, more concretely to those beings that are in the immediate environment of that person. We are almost always embedded in our environment. This

connection, for Nietzsche, is not just a rational construct or an expression of conscious thinking, but exists, or must exist, at all primordial levels of the body and the psyche. If we are disconnected in our culture today, that stems from our conception of detached individualism, the philosophical root of which lies in modern subjectivity. LaMothe, a scholar and a dancer, discusses this problem in her book, *Why We Dance*, as she rightly claims that human beings as infants have an impulse to connect—this is happening at primordial, pre-linguistic levels—and dance expresses that primordial need for and actuality of being connected. As she writes, “Within modern culture, this idea of a human being as an individual serves as the basic conceptual unit for nearly all forms of social organization and knowledge. An “individual” is the unit we use not only to chart evolutionary trends. It is also the *one* to whom we accord legal rights, grant political representation, and apply laws...” (“To Dance is to Connect,” 110). Clearly, a specific type of individualism became dominant in modernity, and one major problem that stems from this individualism is its disconnectedness from which stem many of our socio-cultural problems. Nietzsche explains this phenomenon in broader terms as the loss or underestimation of the Dionysian. For Nietzsche, ultimately we are both individual and collective beings. Dance is one cultural formation that bridges the two, as LaMothe observes: “Dancing is an ethical necessity because humans, without it, do not develop the visceral sensibility they need to divine ways to move that are not too individual (and self-absorbed), too social (and self-sacrificing), or insufficiently either.” (*Why We Dance*, 135) She rightly calls dance “an ethical necessity;” I take ‘ethical’ more in the German sense of the word ‘Sitte,’ meaning that dance must be a living reality of culture, a living practice.

Merleau-Ponty, like Nietzsche, looks at the body in an integral way, as the body is always embedded in its environment, and perception is not an isolated act of the mind, as Descartes

perceived it. While coming up with the concept “body-subject,” Merleau-Ponty debunks the misconception of a body as passive receiver and sees the body in an oscillation between an object and subject of perception. For him, the body cannot be seen as a servant of consciousness or as inferior to the mind; in fact, he attempts to move beyond this type of dualism. His conception of ‘embodiment’ is based on the primacy of the body; we are bodily beings before we become linguistic and rational, and, as such, we exist in an environment of other bodies to which we are connected immediately. Then the body too becomes a way of communicating with the world. Dancing is a form of embodiment in action. Bodies *communicate* with one another, as they embrace their immediate environment. Our skills in a specific field, as in dancing, emerge from this embodied movement and this embracing.

Embodiment or the embodied self is an idea that Merleau-Ponty developed, as he took his cue from a unique theory of perception. Merleau-Ponty claims that we are thrown into a body that precedes the making of the self. The body is not just a thing to be studied scientifically, but as a condition of the experience of life. As he writes, the lived body is "a horizon latent in all our experience and itself ever-present and anterior to every determining thought" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1996, p. 92). One’s original self is this experience of the body, or what Merleau-Ponty calls “embodied self.” It is the primary condition of all subsequent experience in human life, whether cognitive or otherwise. This conception of the body must be distinguished from the body as a physical entity. In this regard it will be helpful to use the German distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*, as the former has to do with the experience of the body in the Merleau-Pontian sense. Furthermore, for Merleau-Ponty the body has a life of its own and is already connected to other bodies, whether our consciousness is in tune with the life of the body or not. In conjunction with

this, Merleau-Ponty develops his ideas on inter-subjectivity<sup>28</sup> as he argues for the contemporaneity of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. The moment one starts comparing oneself with others; one has entered the field of inter-subjectivity. This is not, however, to be understood at the level of minds recognizing each other, but rather at the level of embodied selves. It is the first recognition of a baby that perceives that the world does not consist of only him or her. The other is participating in the same embodied experience as he/she is; a primordial recognition of mutual presence in the world between ‘I’ and the ‘other.’

Merleau-Ponty not only breaks down the Cartesian dualism between mind and body and reverses the priority of the classical order, what he calls “intellectualism,” but he also shows how we are connected primordially at the level of the body. This is a thesis that was implicitly and explicitly defended by Nietzsche before him, but not in these terms; Nietzsche uses rather the terminology of instincts and drives. In a way Nietzsche’s unconsciousness-driven paradigm of instincts and drives compliments Merleau-Ponty’s subjectivity-driven paradigm. While Nietzsche emphasizes Dionysian functions in bodily experiences as in singing, dancing and orgiastic rites (BT), Merleau-Ponty focuses on inter-subjective experiences in perception. Moving with others is a Dionysian act; one must be connected to others at primordial levels to be able to move with others, as Merleau-Ponty and Nietzsche propose. One must feel as though one were in one body with others, as in embodied movement, so that the total movement comes out as coherent, as one body, so to speak.

### **Dance vs. Thought and Knowledge**

In the chapter, “Dancing is Knowing,” LaMothe raises many interesting points about the kind of “knowing” dance is. In English we use the term ‘know’ in many different ways. We know

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<sup>28</sup> See his *The Structure of Behaviour*.

scientific principles, we know moral principles, we know facts, we know information, we know and we know. We can also know how to do things, like dancing. The weight of the meaning seems to turn towards an informational, cognitive way of knowing, which falls under the rule of the mind. However, dance is primarily a bodily movement. Therefore, how can we get out of this difficulty in the realm of knowledge? I will do so by discussing this chapter in *Why We Dance*.

The rational paradigm of knowledge is what LaMothe calls a “materialist paradigm,” which takes objectivity, verifiability, stability, and measurability, as its main principles (62). The book served as one of its relays, and its *modus operandi* is logic. Everything that can be called knowledge must conform to principles of logic. Although LaMothe sees this dominant form of knowledge in modernity only, its roots go as far back as classical Greece; for Nietzsche, it starts with Socratic rationality. Now, dance cannot be this type of knowledge since it is primarily a bodily movement. If dance were to be reduced to this type of knowledge, it would be only on paper and not a living reality. Dance, on the other hand, can be a form of “knowledge” insofar as it stands for the living form of dance. I believe it is in this sense that LaMothe says “to dance is to know.” “Dance is applauded as a kind of *technical* knowledge...Dance is heralded as an *embodied* knowledge....So too, dance is lifted up as a kind of *symbolic* knowledge...Finally, dance is embraced and celebrated as a *spiritual* knowledge...” (65). The “knowledge” LaMothe describes is a “knowledge of *how to participate consciously in the rhythms of bodily becoming--* that is, how to create and become patterns of sensing and responding that connect us with sources of sustenance in life-enabling ways.” What needs to be kept in mind here is the many meanings of the word ‘knowledge’ in English, which can be used in different contexts. In aligning Nietzsche with Duncan, LaMothe sees reading and writing, typically considered to be strictly cognitive exercises, “as bodily practices that work by training our sensory selves.” In this

way, she also incorporates Nietzsche's critique of ascetic idealism, while critiquing the logocentric paradigms of knowledge and reduction or subordination of bodily regimes to the rule of the mind. To conclude this part, we can say that dancing is a way of opening up to Dionysian experiences.

### **The "Language" of Dance and Symbolism**

In bodily movements we test the limits of our body, as in dance, sport, sex, or performance art. Yes, not every body can do the same things, because we are all different types of bodies, but every body can do more than what it is accustomed to do. In other words, if there are limits to our movements, these limits can also be overcome. It is often suggested that the body is more flexible when it is young; this may be true, but what is more significant is our disposition to the body, to use Nietzsche's phrase—our will to power and how we see the power of our bodies. Dance, as a field of bodily regime and a symbolic one, opens up those limits and allows our bodies to manifest their power, where, in day-to-day living, they would not be materialized, especially in our age where life is sedimentary and the body becomes sedated as it finds itself in a car or at work or home on a couch.

Dance with its rich repertoire of symbols expands the limits of bodily movement. In contrast to everyday, utilitarian movements of the body, dance does not follow any rigid patterns. Dance is the poetry of body-movement. It forces the expression of bodily movement to its limits; this is another sense of dance as Dionysian, or what Blanchot calls "limit experience." In classical forms of dance, as in ballet, this limit experience is already defined and becomes limited for future choreographers, whereas modern dance leaves the possibility of many movements open. In this sense, I find modern dance to be more Dionysian than classical dance,



although dance in itself is already Dionysian. Therefore, we can say that the “language” of dance is bodily and symbolic, and this is why a dance piece has many meanings and is open to different interpretations. Furthermore, dance is not only a human simulacrum but, as an ecstasy of human presence, functions as a dynamic production of simulacra<sup>29</sup> and can serve as a guiding artistic force to break down the rigid Spectacle vs. spectator divide<sup>30</sup> that has been created since the rationalization of theater and arts in ancient Greece.

### **Epilogue. Why Dance?**

Nietzsche diagnosed “ascetic idealism” as one of the main problems of modern culture and detected it in my different cultural formations, including arts and sciences and not only religion, although religion seems to be the origin of this malady. Ascetic idealism, amply discussed in the Third Essay of Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals*, is simply the denial of the body, all of its functions, and the idealization of this denial. Today we have come a long way, one may think, since Nietzsche, psychoanalysis, and other movements that embrace the body, but yet in overall culture we still suffer from ascetic idealism and its co-phenomena such as mind/body dualism and contempt for the animal and the animal life. As a thinker who accepts Nietzsche’s diagnosis and prognosis, I do my research and philosophical activities on understanding the body without reducing it to thought. All bodily regimes must be cultivated in culture so that we can embrace our bodies, which is an affirmation of life on earth, the only life we have. Dance, and especially modern dance, is such an artistic affirmation.

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<sup>29</sup> I address the question of simulacrum in a paper I presented at the Audiovisual Posthumanism International Conference in Lesbos, Mytilini, in September 2010.

<sup>30</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this problem in spectacle, see my book *Towards a Genealogy of Spectacle*.

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## **Part III**

### **Bizarre Individualism**

# **A Bizarre Individualism: A Cartography of Nietzsche's Existential Rendering of the Individual**

**By Adam T. Kingsmith**

*The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself. —Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Mediations*, but also titled as *Unfashionable Observations*, (1876).*

## **Introduction**

What is Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the individual? This is no simple question. After all, Nietzsche is infamously ambiguous. His work displaces binaries, rejects normativity, is in a constant state of flux. Nietzsche is not concerned with telling us whether specific contemporary indulgences are 'bad,' while certain ascetic states that predate modernity are 'good'—his aim is to open new perspectives, to help us to see theoretical catchalls such as morality, the self, justice, and society in unusual ways. If one thinks in binaries, we might say that Nietzsche tries to expose the sinister underbelly of a pervasive moral, phenomenological, or idealistic phenomenon such as good and evil—ordinarily we see only the foreground, Nietzsche seeks to show us the background. To do so, Nietzsche slashes through the misanthropic exterior of human life under modernity to ask some of the most disquieting and penetrating questions. "Under what conditions did man devise the value judgments good and evil? And what value do they themselves possess? Have they hindered or furthered human possibility? Are they a sign of a distress, of an impoverishment, of the degeneration of a life? Or is there revealed in them, on the contrary, the plenitude of force, and will to life, its courage, certainty, future?" (1887: 17).

‘Will’ is a vital aspect of the Nietzschean oeuvre. For Nietzsche (1901), ‘will,’ or ‘the will to power,’ is the psychological presupposition that people will always attempt to express their desires and drives—every action stems from deeply immanent aspirations to bring a situation under one’s power. In other words, whether someone is giving a gift, falling in love, offering praise, or even doing physical violence, the psychological motive is the same: to exert one’s will. However, this principle does not necessarily mean that the ‘will’ *wants* power or *wishes* to dominate. For as long as Nietzsche’s will to power is interpreted as a ‘desire to dominate,’ it inevitably becomes dependent on established values, and this makes us unable to recognize the nature of the will to power as both an elastic principle of all our evaluations and as a hidden principle for the creation of new values not yet recognized. For Nietzsche (1901), a will to power is not to covet or even to take, but to *create* and to *give*. In the words of Gilles Deleuze: “the will to power is the differential element from which derive the forces at work, as well as their respective quality in a complex whole,” (2005: 73). Thus Nietzsche always represents the will as a mobile, aerial, multiplicitious element—it is by the will to power that a force commands and breaks forth, but it is also by the will to power that a force obeys and is controlled.

Two façades correspond to these two types of power. To command a force is to act, to *affirm*, to embrace difference. To obey a force is to react, to *negate*, to limit the other. Affirmation and negation are thus the qualia of the will to power, just as action and reaction are the qualities of forces. It is between the spaces of affirmation and negation that this paper will situate Nietzsche’s conception of the individual. However, this is not to reduce Nietzsche’s thought down to a simple dualism—while reaction is intrinsically relational and retorted, creation is inherently multiplicitious, pluralistic, hence the titling of this exploration of Nietzsche’s individual subject as ‘bizarre.’ This *Overhuman* seems at times to be existential, at

times liberal, postmodern, even premodern—it does not neatly fit into any unitary classification of political theory.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the Nietzschean individual represents a *transvaluation of all values*—an exaltation of life rather than an exaltation of suffering, an attempt to move beyond the scope of moral condemnation through the acceptance of every instinct or lust as organic and therefore valid. In other words, what we desire would be merely what we desire, rather than either sinful or pious. To further this bizarre transvaluation, this paper precedes in five short sections. *First*, it moves to situate Nietzsche’s piercing critiques of morality. *Second*, it introduces the vital concept of ‘no doer behind the deed.’ *Third*, it discusses ‘the origin of a thing as its utility.’ *Fourth*, it probes the rise of what Nietzsche calls ‘bad conscience.’ *Fifth*, it concludes with closing reflections on bizarre individuals in relation to *process philosophy* and the will to power.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Piercing the Armor of Morality***

Startlingly early in *On The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche asks: “We take moral values as given, as factual, as beyond all question, one has never hesitated in supposing ‘the good man’ to be of greater value than ‘the evil man.’ But what if the reverse were true?” (1887: 20). What if our sense of the ‘good’ is an inherently regressive seduction, a fiercely addictive and furious

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<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche (1901) presents the *Übermensch* or *Overhuman* as the creator of new values. In this way, it is his solution to the problem of the death of God and nihilism. If the Overhuman acts to create new values within the moral vacuum of nihilism, there is nothing that this creative act would not justify. In order to avoid a relapse into asceticism, these new values cannot be motivated by the same instincts that gave birth to previous ones—they must be motivated by a love of this world and of life. Whereas Nietzsche saw Christian value systems as destructive reactions against life, he sees the values of the Overhuman as life affirming and creative.

<sup>32</sup> Following from Deleuze, I trace process philosophy back to Heraclitus’s *Fragments*, in which he posits that the underlying basis of all reality is change. In opposition to the Aristotelian model of change as accidental, an *ontology of process* regards change as the cornerstone of reality.

narcotic through which the present flourishes at the expense of the future? Would morality then be precisely to blame if the highest human brilliance was never in fact attained? If so, would morality then be danger of all dangers? Herein lies one of Nietzsche's central projects: "to traverse with quite novel questions, and as though with new eyes, the enormous, distant, and so well hidden land of morality," (1887: 21). To do so, we need to call into question moral values, as well as the values of these values. For this we need knowledge of both the conditions and the circumstances in which morality has grown and evolved. "Morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison," (1887: 20); both the affirmation and negation of power are required to uncover the values of these values. Only through this Nietzschean confrontation can we face the most violent offence of morality: we, the bizarre individuals, no longer know anything about ourselves—"We have misunderstood ourselves, for us the law 'Each is furthest from himself' applies to all eternity," (1887: 15).

According to Nietzsche, the moral philosophy of *English psychologists*,<sup>33</sup> which has informed much of modernity's morals, mistakenly assumes that 'good' originates in those whom 'goodness' is shown through utilitarian acts. This observation captures one of Nietzsche's (1887) most central problems with morality—we have built a society that assumes 'goodness' to be based upon the habitual action of 'good' individuals. But for Nietzsche it is not the good individual who determines morality. Rather, it is in fact 'the good' themselves, that is to say, "the

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<sup>33</sup> According to Nietzsche scholar Walter Kaufman (1989), by *English psychologists* Nietzsche is referring to classical utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. Nietzsche (1887) tended to target utilitarianism for a number of reasons: **First**, it places far too high a role of happiness—for Nietzsche, great people do things as a means of constant self-overcoming even if it creates lots of unhappiness. **Second**, it is psychologically unrealistic—people do not rationally sit back and pursue happiness as much as they are pushed and pulled by various conflicting drives and later rationalize some story about freely choosing among a set of alternatives. **Third**, it places too important a role on masses—for Nietzsche, it is more important that individuals overcome themselves and live truthfully. **Fourth**, utilitarianism is a totalizing moral theory that states there is some 'objective' moral right and wrong—Nietzsche disagrees and thinks right and wrong are terms humans use to interpret phenomena, and are not part of the phenomena themselves.

noble, rich, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian,” (1887: 26). Thus the ‘moral’ grounding of the ‘good’ rests not upon un-egotistical acts—as the English psychologists would lead us to believe—but upon aristocratic value judgments that determinedly manipulate language as an expression of power—a way of sealing up social values in order to take possession of the means by which people reach normative conclusions such as good or bad. Moreover, forgetting this aristocratic power over what constitutes morality is nearly impossible as the utilization of morality as a normative tool becomes an everyday experience, something constantly re-entrenched: “Consequently, instead of fading from consciousness, instead of becoming easily forgotten, it continues to be impressed on the consciousness more and more clearly,” (Nietzsche, 1887: 27).

### ***There is No Doer Behind the Deed***

In exposing the aristocratic underpinnings of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ Nietzsche is asking: “What does the study of linguistics, and especially the study of etymology, throw on the history of the evolution of our moral concepts?” (1887: 55). After all, most of the etymological designations coined for ‘good’ lead back to the same conceptual transformation—“That everywhere ‘noble,’ in the social sense, from which ‘good,’ in the sense of ‘a soul with a higher order,’ necessarily developed,” (1887: 28). We can see a fundamental turn in the ways in which the individual constructs an identity through language—‘good as power’ becomes ‘truth as power’ as a trustworthy noble juxtaposes themselves with a deceitful commoner. Thus a hierarchy is established that differentiates between the open civility of noble morality—framed as the creative and triumphant affirmation of the individual—and the closed *ressentiment* of slave



morality—represented as a reactive and inversive negation of self.<sup>34</sup> Such a hierarchical apposition gives nobility the power to constitute truth, and by extension, dictate culture—a culture which, for Nietzsche (1887), demands of strength that it expresses itself as weakness, and in the process reduces the beast of prey—this bizarre individual—down to a tame and civilized animal, *a domestic animal*.

According to Nietzsche, “a quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect—it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language...which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a ‘subject,’ can it appear otherwise,” (1887: 45). In other words, popular morality as constructed by nobility maintains power by separating strength out from the expressions of strength, by reacting as if there was a neutral substratum running beneath a strong man that was *free* to express its strength or not. In actuality, “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything,” (Nietzsche, 1887: 45). Yet as a result of selective etymological constructions of the ‘good,’ ‘truth,’ and ‘culture,’ the popular mind removes the active will to power from the self. We self-deprecate, and in the process, construct fictional gaps between our actions and ourselves. Scientists do no better when they say force ‘moves’ or ‘causes’ something—such examples are akin to, for Nietzsche, separating lightening from its flash. From atomic theory down to the infamous *Kantian thing-in-itself*,<sup>35</sup> we have yet to dispose of the ‘subject,’ as a result, it should

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<sup>34</sup> For Nietzsche (1887), *ressentiment* is a reassignment of the pain that accompanies a sense of one's own inferiority. Man creates the illusion of an enemy, a cause that can be ‘blamed’ for one's own failure. Thus, one was thwarted not by a failure in oneself, but by an external ‘evil.’

<sup>35</sup> From Kant's (1781) perspective, humans can make sense out of phenomena in various ways, but can never directly know the *noumena*, or “things-in-themselves”—the actual objects and dynamics of the natural world. In other words, by Kant's critique, our minds may attempt to correlate in useful ways, perhaps even closely accurate ways, with the structure and order of the various aspects of the universe, but cannot know these “things-in-themselves” directly. Thus Kant retains the subject as the extent to which thoughts correspond with things-in-themselves is determined entirely by our observations of the manifestations of things that can be sensed.

come as no surprise that for Nietzsche (1887: 45), the nobility and their “submerged, darkly, glowering emotions of vengefulness,” maintain this separation of doer and the deed solely for their own ends.

### ***The Origin of a ‘Thing’ and its Utility***

Building from critiques of morality, truth, culture, and science as substrata of control centered on a system of aristocratic value judgments, Nietzsche turns his gaze to the problem of justice and *the law*—an imperative declaration of what is permitted and what is forbidden. For Nietzsche, “to speak of just or unjust *in itself* is quite senseless; *in itself*, of course, no injury, assault, exploitation, destruction can be ‘unjust,’ since life operates *essentially*,” (1887: 76). In other words, as legal conditions constitute a partial restriction of the will to life that is subordinated to the means of creating power, they are nothing more than *exceptional circumstances*. A legal order thought of as sovereign or universal—not as a means of struggle, but as a means of preventing it—is a reactive principle hostile to life; “an agent of the dissolution and destruction of man, an attempt to assassinate the future of man, a secret path to nothingness,” (Nietzsche, 1887: 76). We have arrived upon a major point in historical methodology. English psychologists search for the origins of justice by seeking out some sort of ‘purpose’ for punishment. However, the ‘purpose of law’ is the last thing to employ when creating a history of the origins of law. To do so would be to conflate an origin of a thing in its utility. For Nietzsche, such a move problematically conflates “the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes lie worlds apart,” (1887: 77).

Whatever exists, having come into *being* somehow, is perpetually reinterpreted and transformed for new ends, taken over, redirected by some superior power; “all events in the

organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involve a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which previous ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’ are necessarily obscured or even obliterated,” (Nietzsche, 1887: 77).<sup>36</sup> Thus we must not equate the origin of a thing and its utility—and however well one understands the utility of a physiological organ, political institution, form of art, or social custom, this means nothing regarding its origin. The human eye was not simply ‘made’ for seeing, the hand for grasping. The entire history of a ‘thing’ is but a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related, but in some cases, simply succeed and alternate each other in a purely chance fashion. Thus purposes and utilities are only signs that a will to power has become the master of something less powerful. Contra Hegel’s (1835) *teleology*,<sup>37</sup> the evolution of a thing or custom is not a move towards an end, rather: “a succession of more or less profound and independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation and the results of successful counteractions,” (1887: 78).

### ***The Rise of a Bad Conscience***

To simply equate origins to things is to rob subjectivity of the concept of activity. It is to overlook the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that enable the affirmation of a will to power. In other words, to equate the origin of a thing and its utility is to embrace negation, and thus (re)act in *bad conscience*—“the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced—that change which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society,”

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<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche’s (1901) concept of *being* is inextricably linked to his notion of *the will to power*, which again describes what Nietzsche believes to be the essential driving force in individuals—namely, achievement, ambition, and the striving to reach the highest possible position in life.

<sup>37</sup> Through his teleological conception of history, Hegel (1835) folds in the origin of a thing and its utility by presuming that an account of a given thing is also an account of that thing’s purpose.

(Nietzsche, 1887: 84). Every growth in the whole changes the meaning of the individual. Thus for Nietzsche, the wielding of a free flowing and nomadic populace into a firm form represents the first instituted act of violence. By its utility, the oldest *state* is a fearful tyranny, a repressive and remorseless machine that goes on working until all the raw materials of activity, process, and potentiality are thoroughly kneaded, pliant and formed.<sup>38</sup> Thus the history of a state is a long narration of man's submissions and the reasons we give for legitimizing them. Instead of linking an active life and affirmative thinking, the consequences of equating origins to things is that thought becomes negative, life deprecates—reduced to its weakest forms it ceases to be active. As a result, living within these static systems has reduced the individuals' regulating, unconscious, and infallible drives down to thinking, inferring, reckoning, and coordinating cause and effect—"these unfortunate creatures reduced to their modesty through a 'consciousness,' their weakest and most fallible organ," (Nietzsche, 1887: 87).

The demands of the old instincts of affirmation, however, do not cease. It has just become considerably more difficult to satisfy them—"all instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward"—this is what Nietzsche (1887: 85) refers to as the *internationalization of man*—a process in which our inner world expands and extends, acquiring depth and height, but also turning those instincts of wild, free, and prowling (hu)man backward against ourselves. Thus bad conscience appropriates the soul of the individual, and as a result, we confront "the gravest illness, from which humanity has not yet recovered, man's suffering of man, of himself—the result of a forcible sundering from his animal past, a leap, plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence, a declaration of war against old instincts upon which his strength, joy, and terribleness had rested," (Nietzsche, 85: 1887). In other words, bad

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<sup>38</sup> Nietzsche (1882) does not mean 'the oldest state' in a modern sense of an organized political community living under one government, rather he is referring to the first institutionalized polity that forcefully centralized and flattened a population by imposing a fixed location and identity.

conscience is the self-alienating deprecation the results from the forcible repression and incarceration of the individual's instinct for freedom. For Nietzsche, however, nothing can really be simply one thing, one perspective, or one interpretation. We must guard against thinking of bad conscience merely on account of its initial painfulness and ugliness. Fundamentally, it is the same active force that places structures on other men directed inwards. Thus the uncanny dreadfulness of an individual's soul involuntarily at odds with itself has also: "brought to light an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation, and perhaps beauty itself—after all, what would be beautiful if the contradiction had first not become conscious of itself, if the ugly had not first said to itself: 'I am ugly?'" (Nietzsche, 1887: 88).

### ***Reflections on the Bizarre Individual***

In his reading of Nietzsche, Deleuze (1962: 40) emphasizes that Nietzsche's ontology is monist, a *monism* of force: "there is no quantity of reality, all reality is already a quantity of force."<sup>39</sup> Since this force expresses itself only to its fullest, such a force is solely a force of affirmation, that is, a force that says 'yes' to itself. This fundamental affirmation—as expressed by Nietzsche in, for example, his discussion of bad conscience as both an uncanny dreadfulness as well as an abundance of strange new beauty—underpins the whole of Nietzsche's critical typology. In other words, all of the Nietzschean negations, reactive forces, sadness, and resentment are merely parts of the process of moving towards creative and affirmative life. There is not one force, but many—the play and interaction of which forms the basis of individual existence. Thus the many

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<sup>39</sup> Both Nietzsche and later Deleuze draw their understandings of monism from Spinoza, whose radical accounts of the nature of reality treat the physical and mental worlds as intertwined, causally related, and deriving from the same. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza (1677) describes how the human mind is affected by both mental and physical factors, directly contesting all Cartesian dualities. For Spinoza, the universal substance emanates both body and mind—while they are different attributes, there is no fundamental difference between these aspects. This formulation is a historically significant solution to the mind-body problem and is called *neutral monism*.

antagonistic metaphors in Nietzsche's writing should be interpreted in light of this pluralistic ontology, and not as an indication of some sort of psychosomatic aggression—"if a temple is to be erected a temple must be destroyed: that is the law—let anyone who can show me a case in which it is not fulfilled!" (1887: 95). Nietzsche's ferocity is not fixated upon human life, rather, upon dogmatic images of thought that imagine a natural harmony between thinker, truth, and the act of contemplation. For Nietzsche, thought does not naturally relate to truth; instead, it is a creative act, an act of affect, a force of other forces. This does not mean truth is merely an abstract generality, rather, following from Deleuze (1968), it means that truths are a part of our regimes of force, they are a matter of value that must not be innately enforced but individually assessed, judged, and affirmed.

"The masters according to Nietzsche are *untimely*, those who create, those who destroy in order to create, not to preserve," (Deleuze, 2004: 130). In order to grasp such a paradox, we must return to our initial question: what does Nietzsche's individual—the so-called master—look like? Enter the bizarre—Nietzsche fervently critiques all notions of morality and utilitarianism, folds in all distinctions between the doer and deed, draws out the origin of a thing and its utility, and both laments and liberates the rise of a bad conscience. In other words, Nietzsche's individual is not so much contradictory, as it is uncanny—an immanent recognition of the self preceded by its own destruction so that it can be created. This self is not a *liberal self*.<sup>40</sup> Throughout his work, Nietzsche's sense of individualism is accompanied by a lively critique of the notions of subject and self—what Deleuze calls (1969) 'life'—this is exemplified when Nietzsche critiques 'the weak,' which, stimulated by their deep obsession with self-preservation, "desire to believe in a neutral, independent subject, self, and soul," (1887: 46). To say that Nietzsche values an

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<sup>40</sup> While liberalism is, of course, a pluralistic a multifaceted field of political theory, Nietzsche's repeated critiques of utilitarianism as a psychologically unrealistic moral totality speak to the fact that while there may be some overlaps, Nietzsche is alluding to a different notion of the self.

individual above all—due to his infamous critiques of mass psychology via ‘the herd’—would be a gross oversimplification. After all, through his challenge to the Kantian ‘thing-in-itself,’ Nietzsche repeatedly criticizes the concept of the subject, of atomism. Instead, Nietzsche views the individual subject as a complex of instincts and wills to power—just as he conceptualizes other organisations from states and organs to arts and customs.

Nietzsche’s bizarre individualism is a kind of dissolution of the self—the reaction against oppressive structures is no longer done in the name of a ‘self’ or an ‘I’—for ‘I’ and ‘self’ are accomplices of those structures—but in the name of an anti-metaphysics, a process philosophy that guards against the snares of contradictory concepts such as ‘pure reason’ and ‘knowledge-in-itself.’ Such concepts demand that we think that which is completely unthinkable—“like an eye that can be turned in no particular direction yet still focus in on a single truth,” (Nietzsche, 1887: 119). Thus this bizarre individualism is a sort of Nietzschean *perspectivism*—there is only a perspective seeing, a perspective ‘knowing,’ the more eyes, different eyes, which can observe a thing, the more complete the concept. By emphasizing a process of self-affirmation as opposed to actualization, Nietzsche inserts his corpus in a dimension that is neither historical, even if understood dialectically, nor eternal—an experimental calling into question the value of truth. What Nietzsche (1895) labels this new dimension, which operates both in time and against time, is, as Deleuze reminds us, *the untimely*—a dimension that is distinct from classical philosophy in its ‘timeless’ enterprise, and dialectical philosophy in its understanding of history as a singular element of upheaval. Thus the Nietzschean ‘individual’ is rendered as bizarre, a different kind of spirit, the redemption of both great love and contempt that is victorious over the ascetic ideal and knee-jerk reactionary of nothingness. Subjectivity holds no single authority here—to interpret is

merely to interpret interpretations—the ultimate authority for such *Overhuman* is creation via destruction: “All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming,” (Nietzsche, 1887: 161).

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## **Book Reviews**

**Daniel Came (ed.) *Nietzsche on Art and Life*. New York:  
Oxford University Press, 2014.**

**Review by Nicholas Birns, Ph.D., New York University**

In the first chapter of this interesting if inconsistent anthology, Bernard Reginster argues that not only did Nietzsche augur a shift in emphasis from the work of art to its creator, but that life for Nietzsche is beautiful “because it essentially involves the confrontation of suffering, and because the outcome of that confrontation is essentially uncertain” (36). Thus, Reginster concludes, “the inestimability of the value of life is a condition of the very possibility of its affirmation” (37). Reginster expresses, with particular pathos and eloquence, one of the most striking properties of Nietzsche: When he stands for something, he is always also in the process of giving something up or undermining the very act of standing for something. Though Reginster writes in a lucid and accessible manner far from the deliberate obscurities of postmodernism, I would nonetheless associate the posture he takes here both with the “New Nietzsche” of Jacques Derrida or Paul de Man in the 1970s and with more specifically dedicated Nietzscheans such as Alexander Nehamas. But, though Nehamas is mentioned several times in this anthology, de Man and Derrida never are. These omissions, combined with the fact that Brian Leiter *is* mentioned, make this anthology seem a bit too committed to Nietzsche taking certain positions. Daniel Came, in his introduction, seeks to distance himself from Leiter’s most nominalistic and analytic tendencies, seeking to combine ethics and aesthetics. But Came states that his anthology’s emphasis is “practical-existential” (5), and though Came is no doubt right that these are the terms

on which Nietzsche himself sought to operate, one still might have some reservations about this. This is not just because we still, after all, might need theory, but because a practical-existential emphasis risks pinning Nietzsche down to a discernible position when it may be, as Reginster suggests, that Nietzsche is simply hard to pin down.

This becomes an issue in the second to last essay in the book by Aaron Ridley. Ridley states that Nietzsche is one of the few philosophers to speak meaningfully about music, but then, quite bluntly, says Nietzsche “got it wrong” (232) about Wagner’s *Parsifal*. This raises several questions. Can we ever get it right about a certain work? Does a work of music have an objective meaning, apart from what the listener hears? Did Nietzsche ever mean to get it right about Wagner? Were both his initial enthusiasm and his later loathing deliberate aesthetic poses? Most importantly, what is the referent of “it” in Ridley’s sentence? Does the use of “it” here assert a work can ever have a determinate meaning? These concerns also apply when Ridley defends Nietzsche, for instance defending the later Nietzsche’s somewhat astounding preference for Bizet over Wagner by saying the way Bizet is “oblivious to the allure” (233) of the beyond is itself a meaningful stance towards the beyond. This is well said, but treats Nietzsche’s late rejection of Germanic profundity for French cerebral amusement as a hyperbolic and deliberately preposterous gesture, not entirely meant to be a serious aesthetic proposition.

Ridley’s essay is followed by one by Roger Scruton, the noted conservative thinker. The very inclusion of Scruton in an anthology with very few Continental or theoretical figures itself is a sort of statement, even if few of the other contributors take Scruton’s anti-Nietzsche line. Scruton condemns Nietzsche’s denunciation of Wagner for decadence, stating that, in today’s era of Lady Gaga, Wagner’s decadence seems tame. One might respond by saying that, in these days of Trump and Brexit, Nietzsche’s anti-progressive tendencies, if he can be reduced to those,

seem tame. Scruton's disdain for rock and roll blinds him to how both his critique of Lady Gaga's spectacle and Nietzsche's critique of Wagner has a fundamental kinship with strands in rock aesthetics, such as punk rock's fundamentally Nietzschean denunciation of 1970s soft rock and art rock. But, even though Nietzsche and much else might be hard to pin down, one thing is for sure: one does not expect a discussion of punk rock from Roger Scruton.

Came's own essay argues that one cannot really deduce an aesthetic morality from Nietzsche's writings, that aesthetic morality indeed necessitates witnessing and attending to certain acts of immortality that, even though one would not wish to emulate them, do sufficiently call us out of our normal state of unwatchfulness as to be in the moment. This suggests that when we read Nietzsche we should have to pay attention, not always following him but always being mindful of what he says, without reducing him to a check-the-boxes thinker: Nietzsche's ontology, Nietzsche's epistemology, Nietzsche's aesthetics, and so on. A dedicated reader of Nietzsche senses, I think, that all the above categories are somewhat gossamer, that Nietzsche as a writer and thinker is continually evading them. Thus I am not convinced, for instance, by Adrian del Caro's assertion that Nietzsche was "bound to condemn" (160) Faust as a Romantic hero, even though del Caro's postulation of a subterranean kinship between Goethe's hero and Nietzsche's Zarathustra is provocative; or by Christopher Raymond's claim that there is such a thing as a "Nietzschean view" (75) of Greek tragedy, as even Raymond admits that Nietzsche substantially changed his mind after he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, and even though few would dissent from Raymond's sense that Nietzsche alone cannot be a normative guide to Greek tragedy; or by A. E. Denham's sense of "Nietzsche's real advance over Schopenhauer's aesthetic psychology" (198), even though Denham interestingly argues that the Nietzsche-Schopenhauer relationship is more complex than it appears. Sabina Lovebond, on the other hand,

is able to entertain a social and anti-social Nietzsche at the same time. This seems to me a more promising direction, to see Nietzsche as offering a series of baffling yet uncannily heuristic inconsistencies. Came's anthology gives us a practical, near-at-hand Nietzsche for the twenty-first century; but I still feel that even though the "new Nietzsche" is now quite old, its conceptual day is not yet done. That Nietzsche never quite knows what he thinks and that we certainly do not either, may be his most valuable asset.

***Friedrich Nietzsche, Anti-Education: On the Future of Our Educational Institutions.* Edited with an introduction and notes by Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon. Translated by Damion Searls. New York: New York Review Books, 2016.**

**Review by Daniel Blue**

New York Review Books has just issued a new translation of Nietzsche’s “On the Future of Our Educational Institutions” (along with two associated texts), using the comprehensive header, *Anti-Education*. Although the overall title is not Nietzsche’s and raises concerns, the book itself is intelligently conceived and executed with flair. This is good news, for of the philosophical works which Nietzsche began in Basel but left unfinished, “On the Future...” is the last to be successfully translated into English.<sup>41</sup> Monolingualists now have a new work by the philosopher to enjoy and with it an opportunity to reconsider his whole oeuvre.

Since this work is probably unfamiliar to many readers, one might explain that “On the Future of Our Educational Institutions” was envisioned as a series of six talks –Nietzsche at one point considered seven – composed in dialogue form and centered on two pairs of speakers: a couple of students and an elderly philosopher and his more youthful follower. The students tend to form a team and support one another, while the philosopher and his companion argue both among themselves and with the students, introducing considerable drama. However, a fifth person is expected and indeed is sighted in the distance at the beginning of Lecture Five, the last Nietzsche actually completed. It appears that in contrast to the quieter, more introspective four

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<sup>41</sup> I qualify “successfully” translated because the work has been rendered into English twice before but not in a fashion that readers are likely to embrace. See Nietzsche 2004 and Nietzsche 1910.

original participants, he will arrive amid the fanfare of a torchlight procession of fraternity brothers, clearly suggesting some sort of climactic resolution. However, Nietzsche's notebooks indicate a more ambiguous ending. According to these, the announced guest would turn out to be, not a triumphant bearer of truth, but a literary figure who had succumbed to the tawdry theories of the times. He and the philosopher would argue as to whether art or philosophy was more important in addressing educational concerns, and the fraternity brothers would participate and build a bonfire. Eventually an oath – the nature of which was left unspecified -- would be sworn over the flames and the series brought to a close.<sup>42</sup> We do not know of course, whether Nietzsche would have carried any of this through. The notes are there, but he often changed his mind.

Meanwhile, as the four principal characters consult and debate, they find that they largely agree on a central thesis: the contemporary educational system is defective and must be changed. Numerous themes are woven around this axis as they try to discern the causes of the calamity and how it might be repaired. They discuss the role of the state, the confusion of education with training, the belief that students should be self-sufficient, the claim that the current educational system is classically inspired, the importance of mastering “the mother tongue” (German), and the relation between scholarship and journalism.

These, of course, are just a few of the topics broached in the lectures, some dropped quickly, others addressed at length. Because the themes are so many and complex and the text so new to most readers, it seems premature to offer any final judgments. However, a few provisional observations might be suggested to guide the newcomer.

We already knew, for example, that Nietzsche was fascinated by education – far more than most philosophers. The topic surfaces repeatedly in his books, and particularly in *The*

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<sup>42</sup> KSA 7, 8[64], 246; 8[69], 249; 8[86], 254; 8[103], 262; and particularly 8[89], 255-256.



*Twilight of the Idols*, one of his most mature, where the four of seven sections in “What the Germans Lack” turn on discussions of schools and their effects.<sup>43</sup> Yet, as the ambiguity of the word *gebildet* suggests – it can mean either “educated” or “cultivated” in German – Nietzsche believed that education should not be limited to training toward specific professional ends. True education was superior to the practical.

This belief was not peculiar to Nietzsche. It was widespread in Germany at the time and was symbolized by the distinction between the gymnasium, a middle and high school which centered on Latin and Greek, and the *Realschulen*, secondary schools which were more science- or trade-oriented. This is not the place to discuss the complex ideology behind the gymnasium. It is enough to say that its very existence pointed toward a belief that humanity’s purpose involved more than making money.<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche accepts this belief but argues that the gymnasium and other educational institutions have failed to instill it. Yet he never states what this higher learning might be.<sup>45</sup> His characters may pontificate on “education,” but none define what it is. Thus, the philosopher repeatedly asserts that it cannot be crassly practical and must not be confused with training (48-49, 54-55, 57).<sup>46</sup> He also names a few ancillary functions.<sup>47</sup> But he never defines it positively. He simply assumes that all participants know what he means without the need to be more specific. Readers, of course, will rush to fill the blanks by hypothesizing some vague humanism, and this is probably correct so far as it goes. Yet Nietzsche does not say this, and it is difficult to believe that anyone so demanding and imperious could be satisfied with so amorphous and vaguely pious an ideal.

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<sup>43</sup> “What the Germans Lack,” sections 3, 5, 7. Section 6 also deals with schooling, although it is unclear if Nietzsche conceives this as taking place in institutions. See Niemeyer 2005, 51.

<sup>44</sup> For a brief account of the gymnasium’s intended function during the reorganization of 1809 see Blue 2016, 103-104.

<sup>45</sup> This discussion of Nietzsche’s inability to define *Bildung* owes a large debt to Thompson/Weiss 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Page numbers in parentheses refer to the translation under review.

<sup>47</sup> For places where the philosopher gestures toward the nature of education, see 23-24, 27-31. For the failure of the gymnasium to instill education, see especially 35-36.

The philosopher, a character in the dialogue not to be confused with Nietzsche himself, seems on firmer ground when he acknowledges that the schools once provided a better version of education (33). At least once in history education (in the more austere and demanding Nietzschean sense) was more clearly defined and more effectively inculcated. Unfortunately, the philosopher does not say what made it better at this time. Instead, he contents himself with observing that this superior system failed to take root, mostly because it was not reconceived on a specifically German basis (33-34). But if real education, conceived on a German basis, did not occur then and had never been implemented before or since, then it has never yet existed. It would appear that for the philosopher only the Greeks so far really had education, and nobody since has quite unlocked the secrets of its nature (37-38). This allows him to lay about with a broad stick – by definition nothing in contemporary life measures up – yet it also leaves a wistful deposit of nostalgia and longing. The philosopher and his student often sigh and lament that the current schools are deficient. A deeper void may underwrite their despair. They don't themselves know what education is, not at least in this "higher," more admirable sense.

It may be that Nietzsche is undeceived and that the philosopher's apparent dogmatism hides a wiliier, more subtle recognition. Nietzsche does have a solution in view, but it can only arrive through historical processes and these haven't occurred yet. He is no doubt hoping that illumination will arrive from the same source as that which is implicit at the close of *The Birth of Tragedy*: "The German Spirit" in communion with the ancient Greeks will guide its people to find a restoration of the Tragic Age and with it a spiritual rebirth and relief from present incertitude (34-35; Compare 50-51). This is surely the "future" mentioned in the lectures' title but never addressed with any specificity in the talks themselves. And with that future, education will have a meaning drawn from a radically new order of society.

Unfortunately, Nietzsche cannot offer this solution because this revelatory new order hasn't arrived yet. As one student laments, "Clearly, we have lived and pursued education in entirely the wrong way until now – but what should we do to cross the chasm that separates today from tomorrow?" (60). The Tragic Age has yet to be reborn. So Nietzsche waits, sad but hopeful, aware that a lacuna dwells at the heart of his lecture series, but sure that this absence will eventually be compensated with Dionysian plenitude. This may explain the melancholy which pervades the dialogue. It also indicates why we should probably not expect too much enlightenment from the much-awaited fifth party.

Meanwhile, as stated, "On the Future of Our Educational Institutions" was left incomplete. This was not due to lack of enthusiasm on Nietzsche's part. On the contrary, at the time he was delivering them, he believed them a great success, and between the fourth and fifth lectures (with a third of the series still unwritten) he made arrangements to have the whole published. He also passed along the manuscript of the extant talks to various friends and received gratifying applause. (A coterie in Florence read them with interest; a friend made a copy.) We must accordingly ask, why didn't he give the sixth (and potentially seventh) lectures in April 1872, when his audiences would reasonably expect them? Failing that, why did he not write them at all?

It bears saying that late March and all of April were painful months for Nietzsche. Wilamowitz had not yet issued his public challenge, but it became impossible to overlook the judgment conveyed by the academic silence surrounding *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche's reputation as a scholar was ruined. Since he had thought that some philologists would welcome his text, he was disappointed and probably humiliated. Worse, Richard Wagner (and then his wife Cosima and the children) vacated their nearby home that April, depriving him of nearly

indispensable personal and intellectual companionship. This was the very month in which the final installment was to appear. He was likely too depressed to write.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche did not give up easily, and he certainly did not abandon plans to complete his lectures. Having failed in April, he tried to finish them again in August, then October, November, and December, each time recognizing a little more clearly that they were fundamentally flawed and beyond correction. In November he acknowledged that the project was unsuited to his audience in Basel. Also, “it [the lecture project] doesn’t go into the depths enough and is clothed in a farce which is too little thought out.”<sup>48</sup> Just before Christmas he abandoned the lectures decisively on the grounds that he had spent too much time on them and the entire field had become stale. Also, he found the dialogue’s setting (a forest overlooking the Rhine) and the purportedly autobiographical passages “horribly false” [*erlogen*].<sup>49</sup> He decided instead to write a severely curtailed summary as part of a Christmas present for Cosima Wagner, a version of which is included in this volume (93-95).<sup>50</sup> He did return to some of the themes when he composed “On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life,” and as already mentioned, he delivered his final thoughts on education in a section eventually included in *Twilight of the Idols*. Nonetheless, his quixotic attempt to diagnose and to resolve the basic problems of the German education system at the age of twenty-seven had failed. In the following April he would find some of his views revisited in an essay by Paul Lagarde. Although the project had already been abandoned, scholars believe that this administered the *coup de grâce* (Niemeyer 2005, 35).<sup>51</sup> When his thoughts on this subject

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<sup>48</sup> KSAB 4, Letter 270, 83.

<sup>49</sup> KSAB 4, Letter 282, 104.

<sup>50</sup> The editors indicate that the version given here is the same as that presented in Nietzsche’s “Six Prefaces to Six Unwritten Books.” This is not quite true. The versions are identical in meaning and largely so in language. However, Nietzsche made numerous small alterations when making the final copy. Compare KSA 1, 648-650, 761-763.

<sup>51</sup> Niemeyer disputes this, arguing correctly that Nietzsche had already abandoned the project before reading Lagarde. However, he also acknowledges that the Lagarde publication had an effect (48).

reemerged in 1874 with his history essay, he would approach the field from a different perspective, and the term “education” would hardly figure at all.

## 2. Apparatus and translation

As the above discussions suggest, Nietzsche’s approach to education assumes easy familiarity with its contemporary German manifestations. He was right at the time to presuppose such knowledge because most of his audience were raised in that system and knew its structures intimately. However, the world of nineteenth-century German pedagogy has been subject to change, even in Germany, and is utterly beyond the ken of most Anglophones today. Whole theories of education and practical applications would have to be explained if the reader is to understand the arguments in the lectures. Yet few readers want to wade through such arcane history just to read what they might understandably regard as a minor book.

Accordingly, the editors of this volume have to offer information but do so tactfully, doling it out without burdening readers. Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon have approached this difficulty in two ways. First, they offer a comprehensive introduction which presents nineteenth-century German educational customs and Nietzsche’s responses in a systematic and panoramic fashion. They then annotate his text with notes in which they elaborate on specific problems or provide the particulars necessary to explain what he means. This double-barreled approach allows readers maximal freedom: They can return to the introduction when they need a refresher course, or they can turn to the notes when they want to know specific details such as what “newspaper German” (109) or “popular education” (114) might be. The editors have an exceptionally rich grasp of the German educational system, and their presentation is both knowledgeable and helpful.

If the editors have done an excellent job, the new translation by Damion Searls is a worthy complement – vivid, idiomatic, and accurate. As an example of his racy command of language, here is a sarcastic remark made by the philosopher when he finds the two students offensively vain: “Yes, my good friends, you are prepared, you are mature, you are complete – Nature broke the mold after she made you, and your teachers have every right to rejoice in your existence” (74). Earlier, when the educated interlopers threaten to sow disruptive knowledge among the spiritually complete peasants, the philosopher imagines the university types as saying, “Wake up! Become conscious! Be smart!” (42).

It must be allowed that Searls is sometimes vivid at the cost of perfect faithfulness to the original. In a sentence describing the simultaneous freedom and terror of a student, he writes, “He may seem to be the only free man in a world of bureaucrats and slaves, but he pays for this splendid illusion of freedom with constant and ever-growing doubts and torments.” This is excellent, except that “slave” somewhat overdoes the term Nietzsche uses (*Bedienstete*), which merely means “civil servant.” (In Searls’ defense, “slave” is probably what Nietzsche meant to convey.) Such occasions are rare, however, and are insignificant in light of his successes. Searls manages the rare feat of being both generally accurate and of making Nietzsche sound as though he wrote in English from the start. With its helpful apparatus and excellent translation, this edition of “On the Future of Our Educational Institutions” should inspire English-speaking readers to give that work a read at last.

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**Élodie Boubilil and Christine Daigle (eds.), *Nietzsche and Phenomenology: Power, Life, Subjectivity*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.**

**Review by James Walter Bodington, M.A.**

*Nietzsche and Phenomenology: Power, Life, Subjectivity* is a collection of wide-ranging and thought-provoking literature on the nature of the relationship between Nietzsche and the phenomenological tradition. While more attention is devoted to Husserl than any other figure in phenomenology, there is a considerable amount of material on Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger as well as occasional forays into the thought of other figures variously located throughout the phenomenological tradition, including Sartre, Levinas, Nishitani, and Fink. As a whole and in its constituent elements, this volume draws meaningful and important conceptual and historical connections and actualizes the rich potential for a taking-together of Nietzsche and phenomenology. This potential is made especially clear in those essays in which the proposed relationship between Nietzsche and phenomenology is extended and applied beyond the scope of the original texts, as is the case in, for example, the contributions by Saulius Geniusas, Françoise Bonardel, Babette Babich, Bettina Bergo, and Galen Johnson. In what follows, I will attempt an overview of the collection, ask after certain of the claims made in the editors' introduction, briefly comment on the essays in the collection, and highlight what I see as several of the most important and interesting threads running through the essays collected therein. My critical comments are in most cases intended as questions, as this is a rich collection of well-argued and impeccably researched essays with which I found my own disagreements to be productive and challenging.



The collection far exceeds the stated goal of the editors' introduction, which is as follows:

[Asking] the question of 'Nietzsche and phenomenology' is an opening of the inquiry. We hope to settle a number of issues and indeed demonstrate that this undertaking is valid and fruitful both historically and philosophically. Readers will be convinced, as we are, that our question(s), rather than being *Holzwege*, in fact open(s) up rich pathways that must be explored. The following questions take us on some of these (5)

This collection does more than introduce questions, though it certainly does do this. In addition to being an “opening of inquiry” it provides several promising directions for this inquiry, is in many places an exemplar of thoughtful and critical philosophical research, and offers compelling, if necessarily tentative answers, to many of the questions raised. Further, I think we might rightly say that the burden of proof lies on the side of those who would deny the validity and fruitfulness of taking together such powerful and influential thought as that of Nietzsche and the phenomenologists. Thankfully, the essays that follow the introduction seemingly unanimously take for granted the interest and import of their conjunctive subject. The editors are right to mention the dearth of literature on Nietzsche on phenomenology, and this collection warrants being taken not only as opening questions, but as positing interpretations and applications which justify consideration on their own terms. It is thus in many ways an ideal early entry into what I hope will be a growing field of literature on Nietzsche and phenomenology insofar as it provides concrete and compelling entries into the question of this complicated and challenging relationship.

I will now turn to several of the essays individually, briefly recapping certain of them, raising occasional critical questions and concerns, and bringing to the fore certain recurring themes. The collection is split into three sections: “Life and Intentionality,” “Power and Expression,” and “Subjectivity in the World.” These demarcations are far from rigid, as the themes of many of the essays cross these boundaries and touch upon many of the themes named. The collection is book-ended by translated essays by Rudolf Boehm (“Husserl and Nietzsche”) and Didier Franck (“The Object of Phenomenology” and “Beyond Phenomenology”). Franck’s work has been influential on the study of Husserl and Nietzsche, particularly in France, but his pieces here (both taken from his *Dramatique des phénomènes* and translated by Bettina Bergo) feel somewhat elliptical, particularly given the paucity of references to Nietzsche in both essays compared to the other essays in the collection. Nonetheless, Nietzschean concerns clearly permeate the essays and Franck interestingly and compellingly analyzes flesh and drive in phenomenology, keeping clearly in mind the tension between Husserl and Nietzsche on rationalism. Boehm’s “Husserl and Nietzsche” is a suitable choice of first essay in the collection, since, as the editors state, Boehm’s essay “constituted the first attempt to draw a comparison between Husserl’s phenomenology and Nietzsche’s thought” (2). Boehm similarly treats the tension between Nietzsche and Husserl as regards rationalism and irrationalism, throwing into relief the apparent opposition between the principles of “life” (as fundamental in Nietzsche’s thought) and “Reason” (as fundamental in Husserl’s). In attempting to “intercept the path that links the two viewpoints” (13), Boehm argues that the characterization of Husserl as rationalist and Nietzsche as irrationalist is more wrought than we might first think. Given the influence of Boehm’s essay, it is unsurprising that several of the subsequent essays likewise proceed from an analysis of this, or a similar, tension. Boehm’s compelling likening of Nietzsche’s project of

“transvaluation of the truth-value of the 'apparent world” (16) and Husserl's project of transcendental phenomenology as first philosophy is likewise occasionally taken up throughout the collection. Christine Daigle's “The Intentional Encounter with 'the World”” similarly takes up Nietzsche's criticisms of rationalism as a locus of comparison with Husserl's phenomenology. Daigle begins by claiming that “Nietzsche's critique of Kant goes hand in hand with his rejection of earlier rationalistic accounts of the self” (29), adding that Nietzsche's relationship with Kant is far more complicated than it is usually taken to be, and proceeds to argue that Nietzsche's rich engagement with Kant in *Human, All Too Human*, can be understood as phenomenological. Daigle's reference point for phenomenology here is Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. It is worth noting that while the essays in the collection largely focus on and argue for a particular interpretation of the nature of the relationship between Nietzsche and phenomenology, numerous figures and works serve as the reference point for phenomenology. Besides Keith Ansell-Pearson's essay, which explicitly takes Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* as emblematic of phenomenology writ large, most limit the scope of their claims to those particular works with which they are explicitly concerned. Similarly, we encounter many different Nietzsches across the body of this anthology, owing both to the diversity of interpretations as well as the diversity of Nietzsche's thought across his corpus. There is, of course, some difficulty inherent in comparing, or putting into dialogue, a single thinker with a broad philosophical movement. Even though Nietzsche's thought is diverse, it is unified in a way that phenomenology is not. This is not entirely problematic, as the plurality of understandings of phenomenology, the lack of agreement regarding what count as its necessary and sufficient conditions, contribute to the diversity of the volume. (Still, one might object to taking any

particular work as metonymic for “phenomenology,” just as one would with positing a particular work as emblematic of “Nietzsche's thought”.)

A concern with the respective methodologies of Nietzsche and various phenomenologists, particularly Husserl, as well as Nietzsche's status as a phenomenologist (as Babette Babich points out, Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* classifies Nietzsche as a phenomenologist) guides several of the essays. Daigle's essay argues for an interpretation of Nietzsche as a phenomenologist or proto-phenomenologist. A similar position is taken by Babich, according to whom Nietzsche “poses a radical critique of the knowing subject qua knowing, which epistemological critique is phenomenologically, if also hermeneutically articulated” (118), and Frank Chouraqui, who inquires not only whether Nietzsche practices or anticipates phenomenology, but what *sort* of phenomenology that might be. Saulius Geniusas and Kristen Brown Golden take Nietzsche's thought and phenomenology as sharing important similarities. For Geniusas, phenomenology and genealogy can be complementary; for Golden, Husserl's genealogy as articulated in the *Crisis* shares important similarities with Nietzsche's perspectivism. Lawrence Hatab reads Nietzsche as furnishing resources for phenomenology, specifically a Nietzschean phenomenology of values, which enterprise may illuminate the way in which our lives are guided by the *appearance* of value. Élodie Boubilil argues that Nietzsche anticipates phenomenology, as is particularly evident in the tension between “the vision and the riddle” that, Boubilil argues, structures Nietzsche's thought. Like Johnson and Babich, Boubilil considers the tools furnished by Nietzsche's thought for understanding and evaluating phenomenology. Specifically, Boubilil argues that a going back to Nietzsche by phenomenologists, besides being interesting because of the anticipation, can reveal the nature and metaphysical presuppositions of the fundamental pervasive, yet maybe evasive, concept of

intentionality. These three contributions (those by Johnson, Babich, and Boublil) are, along with Saulius Geniusas' essay, standout elements in a very strong collection.

Geniusas' "On Nietzsche's Genealogy and Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology: The Case of Suffering" juxtaposes the phenomenological investigation of the experience of suffering with the Nietzschean emphasis on the interpretation of suffering and does so in a way that meaningfully contributes to the philosophical understanding of pain and suffering and reveals certain shortcomings in the dominant contemporary philosophical treatments of suffering. In addition to putting these strands of thought into productive contrast, the essay is an exemplar of the sort of comparative work undertaken in this volume for the adroitness with which it puts Nietzsche and phenomenology into productive dialogue in both their moments of unity and divergence. Johnson's essay likewise considers the potential relevance of Nietzsche's thought for phenomenology. His "Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty: Art, Sacred Life, and Phenomenology" puts Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty into productive dialogue on questions of art, flesh, and the sacred and presents a unique articulation and extension of their thought.

Babich's "Nietzsche's Performative Phenomenology: Philology and Music" is likewise notable for its focused reading and compelling extension of aspects of Nietzschean and phenomenological thought. According to Babich, the bodily response to "a thought, an idea, a style of music" Nietzsche describes may be understood, with recourse to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenologically. Further, Nietzsche is engaged in a phenomenological project in his critique of the subject and in his particular "'science' of ancient philology" (119). Babich covers, in a focused and purposive way, diverse elements of Nietzsche's thought, including his self-understanding, his attitude towards Wagner, and his thinking of the body.

While Babich's essay draws wide-ranging implications from a focused reading of particular elements of the thought of Nietzsche, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, other essays are considerably broader in subject and scope. Keith Ansell-Pearson's essay, for example, puts Nietzsche into dialogue with phenomenology very broadly understood. Ansell-Pearson employs, for example, especially broad understandings of nuanced and complicated phenomenological terminology including "wonder" and "the natural attitude". Where Ansell-Pearson's contribution is most interesting is in its highlighting of the shared commitment between Husserl and Nietzsche to the manner in which experimental philosophy can "afford us insights into existence that are simply not available to us in our normal, everyday, and habitual comportment" (231), which calls to mind the conversion experience and perpetual beginning that, for Husserl, are characteristic of the phenomenological undertaking.

The rare stumbles in the collection occur when significant differences between Nietzsche and the phenomenological tradition are ignored or elided. Occasionally, seemingly significant differences, for instance as regards Nietzsche and Husserl's understandings of truth or the particulars of their attitude towards the idea of a fundamental science or the Kantian thing-in-itself, are mentioned only in passing. The diversity of the collection, in this regard, is a blessing, as a number of the contributions devote considerable attention to the prominent and profound differences between their objects of study. For instance, while Daigle makes mention of the possible tension between Nietzsche and Husserl arising from the latter's goal of grounding a general science absolutely and the former's rejection of the Kantian attempt to ground a science of appearances in the existence of the thing itself (31-32), Golden both sharpens and leaves intact this contrast.

A particularly thoughtful distinction between Nietzsche and Husserl is found in Bettina Bergo's essay, which takes Nietzsche's account of the force of bodies and Husserl's foregrounding of biology as fruitful points of similarity, difference, and potential application. Bergo draws connections to contemporary research in neurophenomenology, a novel application rooted in a concise and thoughtful exposition of the aforementioned aspects of Husserl and Nietzsche's thought. It is worth noting, though, that neurophenomenology, and particularly its relationship to Merleau-Ponty, is not monolithic and likewise requires a degree of taxonomy and/or conceptual demarcation. Frank Chouraqui goes perhaps the farthest in considering the apparent tensions between Husserl and Nietzsche, arguing that "Nietzsche believes that a consistent opposition to the thing-in-itself necessarily entails a rejection of the bipolar distinction between the subjective and the objective, a distinction that Husserl maintains" (178) and presenting this disagreement as a real obstacle in thinking Husserl and Nietzsche together.

While the aforementioned essays can be thought of as considering the methodological similarities and dissimilarities between Nietzsche and phenomenology, two of the essays in the collection are occupied with what one might deem existential concerns. Bonardel examines and problematizes Heidegger's engagement with Nietzsche as thinker of nihilism. Bonardel treats Nishitani and Heidegger, in their respective dealings with Nietzsche's treatment of nihilism, as Nietzsche's "heirs" (90), unifying them in both their concerns and their lineage of influence. However, the essay raises, both implicitly and explicitly, questions that require answering in any comparative (East-West) account of nihilism in the Nietzschean sense. Specifically, are the shared struggles referred to in Nishitani and Heidegger really best understood as the same nihilism? In order to answer this question I think it is necessary to inquire after the role that Christianity plays in the history of nihilism. In particular, one must ask whether an essential role

for Christianity is a necessary condition for the nihilism with which Nietzsche is concerned, and whether there are distinctions to be drawn between the manner in which Japan and Europe “lost [their] traditional and spiritual bearings” (90).

In a similar vein, Dastur tackles the question of whether Nietzsche is best thought, as he is by Heidegger, engaging Fink's claim that Nietzsche instead “'heralds' a new 'ontological experience'” (104) and capitalizing on the similarities that Fink finds between Nietzsche and Husserl. Dastur adroitly juxtaposes Fink's reading of Nietzsche, which understands the latter's theory of being and becoming as play as opening up post-metaphysical possibilities, which possibilities remained unheard by Heidegger. Dastur, though, questions Fink's reading as well in an unsettling that seems to be in keeping with the play of Nietzsche's thought as Dastur understands it.

Again, this diversity of subjects, attitudes, and approaches to the question of the nature of the relationship between Nietzsche and phenomenology is a strength of this collection. Further, the essays that constitute this collection are thought-provoking and furnish a more than adequate early step in examining this fertile philosophical intersection.



**Paul Katsafanas. *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).**

**Review by Richard J. Elliott**

The recent publication of Paul Katsafanas's *The Nietzschean Self* establishes a benchmark for conducting systematic studies of Nietzsche. By treating Nietzsche's sporadic and often *prima facie* contradictory remarks on human agency in this well-considered study, Katsafanas successfully posits Nietzsche as an important contributor to philosophical issues surrounding the questions of human agency.

Katsafanas claims that accounting for human nature is the prerequisite to understanding the human good. Instead of morality leading psychology by the nose and dictating its limits, Nietzsche's claim is that psychology should be treated as "queen of the sciences" (BGE 23). In this respect, the book wishes to make a Nietzschean contribution to the field of moral psychology by explicating and assessing Nietzsche's account of human nature (4). Katsafanas characterizes the book's argumentative structure into six interrelated topics: the reflective or unreflective character of action, the difference between action and mere behavior, values and evaluative judgements, the dynamics or structure of human motivation, Nietzsche's account of freedom, and questions of responsibility and social determination.

Although he acknowledges that Nietzsche's claims on a great number of topics appear as either undercooked or contradictory, Katsafanas believes that one can excavate a comprehensive account of the human self from amidst the aphorisms. This account deals with drives, motivational states, the perplexities of the connection between the conscious and the unconscious, claims regarding the self's bearing towards history and society, and more. While

Nietzsche's rejects the cobweb-spinning of metaphysical systematizers, he does not reject sustained inquiry, Katsafanas argues (7).

A considerable merit of Katsafanas's account is how well it sets a distinctly Nietzschean moral psychology against the dominant Kantian, Humean, and Aristotelian accounts, not least because the Nietzschean account is the only one which can satisfactorily deal with the nature of unconscious mental states and their function. Katsafanas also boldly claims that the Nietzschean account of the self he outlines is "consonant with our best empirical and philosophical views" (9) and offers a more realistic picture of human psychology, one less constrained by the moralistic enterprise that underpins the dominant attempts at constructing models of agency.

Another merit of the book is its rich dialogue with rival contemporary interpretations of the themes which Katsafanas highlights within Nietzsche's work. Nearly every chapter gives exegetical space and critical commentary to other interpretations, setting them out clearly in their positions and comparing them to Katsafanas's own positions. Katsafanas helpfully sets aside dozens of pages for both summary and critical remarks on each aspect of Nietzsche's thought.

In chapters two through four, Katsafanas treats the nature of the unconscious, its bearing on conscious mental states, causal efficacy, and the motivational power of drives for Nietzsche. Katsafanas attempts to square up Nietzsche's claims that consciousness is both superficial and falsifying (14) with a coherent, distinctly Nietzschean model of agency. With the aim of identifying what exactly Nietzsche means by an unconscious mental state and how it relates or bears upon consciousness, Katsafanas leads us through a terse but interesting history of how unconscious mental states have been conceived, as well as the manner in which they have been understood as either underlying conscious states, or as in competition with conscious states.

With nods to the historical contributions on this matter from Leibniz, Fechner, von Helmholtz, Lange, Afrikan Spir, Freud, Schelling, Hartmann, Herder, and Schopenhauer, Katsafanas shows how Nietzsche's rejection of the causal efficacy of the 'Ego' has been mistakenly understood as a rejection of the causal efficacy of consciousness, understood as the sum totality of conscious mental states (22-23). Although Nietzsche casts aside a central Cartesian tenet of human agency, he does not discount the role of conscious thinking completely. Rather, Katsafanas argues, consciousness is essential for the communicability between humans. In this sense, consciousness is inherently tied to language, which Nietzsche identifies as having a falsifying influence.

When Katsafanas claims that the difference between conscious mental states and their unconscious counterparts lies in the former possessing conceptual content and the latter possessing non-conceptual content, we see how Nietzsche ties this in with his claim at BGE 268 that words function as "acoustical signs for concepts." When Schopenhauer writes that language allows for "the summarizing into one concept of what is common" (WWR I, 37), we see a distinct echo of this in Nietzsche, who claims that this capacity is one which limits or dulls the richness of mental life, something which previous accounts of moral psychology have not acknowledged. Yet as Katsafanas persuasively argues, Nietzsche distinguishes himself from Schopenhauer by offering two types of perception: perceptions with conceptual content, and perceptions with non-conceptual content (31). Katsafanas's excursus on the differences between conceptual content and non-conceptual content in perceptions, and justification for aligning the conscious/unconscious distinction with the conceptual/non-conceptual distinction (30 – 46), are well worth the labour of reading, not least for his impressive and largely convincing responses to contemporary secondary literature on these topics. Unlike many contemporary philosophical discussions about the unconscious which set a rigid divide between conscious and unconscious

states, Katsafanas argues that Nietzsche sees their relation as “more continuous” (46), on a spectrum of degree of awareness.

Katsafanas ties his claim that conceptual content structures conscious experience to Nietzsche’s much-debated perspectivism (52–54). Although Nietzsche accepts a qualified version of the Kantian conceptual scheme, Katsafanas argues that he distinguishes himself from Kant with his notion that the conceptual structuring of conscious experience is social or historically fluid. According to Katsafanas, this is what Nietzsche’s perspectivism amounts to (53). The perspective of the human effects the transmission of unconscious mental states into conscious ones. Here, Katsafanas gives the illuminating example of bad conscience from the second essay of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*, wherein the unconscious state of bad conscience is manifest in the form of conscious states as guilt (57-63). And while Katsafanas does not outline a positive claim regarding the structural relations of the unconscious “because any expression of these relations would press them into a conceptual structure, thereby falsifying them” (65), he does nod in the direction of Freud in arguing that like him, Nietzsche thinks that the regulation of unconscious mental states must be different from conscious ones. While unconscious processes represent causal relations in themselves, conscious processes represent only “familiar” or commonly “intelligible” causal relations (67). Yet Nietzsche’s understanding that unconscious desires cannot be articulated by linguistic means distinguishes him from Freud (70). This seems right to me, so much the worse for psychoanalytic appropriations of Nietzsche.

With regards to Nietzsche’s drive psychology, Katsafanas distances himself from reductionist accounts of drives as mere physiological states, but likewise rejects interpretations that would remain open to homunculus fallacies. Katsafanas qualifies that Nietzsche’s agential language about the nature of drives shouldn’t be taken literally so as to identify drives

themselves as agentially conscious, and normatively sensitive (78-82), but rather should be considered to be agentially significant as “embodied drives” (97-98). While also detaching himself from identifying drives as “mere” urges or dispositions (84), Katsafanas offers a qualified reading that understands Nietzsche’s drives as dispositions that “induce affective [evaluative] orientations in the agent” (86).

By drawing on Schopenhauer’s discussion of the reproductive drive’s capacity to produce desires and so to influence the agent’s response to phenomena and other agents, Katsafanas argues that we should make sense of the drive-affect discourse at work in the agent in such a way for Nietzsche’s account of all drives: Drives make particular phenomena salient and others peripheral, which shapes both our attitudes and even influences the content of experience itself (94). There is much to find agreeable in Katsafanas’s treatment of these topic. There is also much to gain from his exposition of the dynamics of drives, especially the characteristic distinction he draws between a drive’s aim and its object (101-102).

The fifth chapter builds upon this analysis, in the service of understanding why drives possess evaluative significance for Nietzsche. According to Katsafanas, drives “generate thoughts about justification,” thus providing strong inclinations to consider the drive’s end as valuable for the agent (108). Crucially for Katsafanas, Nietzsche does not equate values with the aims of drives in themselves, since drives can be merely “cravings” (111), in the manner that the religious ascetic still possesses a sex drive, but doesn’t value sexual activity more than as a mere “responsive disposition” (113). Once again, Katsafanas’s engagement with the contemporary literature is commendable in this chapter, particularly in relation to Nietzsche’s understanding of the affects and the requisite justification the agent must bestow on them for it to be constituted as a “value,” properly understood (120).

The sixth chapter deals specifically with Nietzsche's account of agency. For Nietzsche, motives are not causally indeterminate as in the traditional (Kantian) account. Weighing in on the reasons versus causes debate on behalf of Nietzsche, Katsafanas claims, I think correctly, that reasons are incapable of quelling motives as possessing causal salience in dispositions to act (136). At the same time, Katsafanas does not rule out conscious deliberation as possessing a causally efficacious role as well (148), citing Nietzsche's claim that conscious thought can alter or redirect the motivational dispositions of the affects. As well as offering a detailed account of the development of Nietzsche's thoughts on willing, Katsafanas offers the helpful comparison with Kant's account of agency. Katsafanas posits what he calls a "vector" account of willing as true to Nietzsche's, one which doesn't generate *causa sui*-type forces, but rather modifies forces or drives that are perpetually at work (160).

It is the power to consciously make decisions that marks the distinction between "strong" and "weak" wills, Katsafanas argues. In the seventh chapter, Katsafanas discusses this in terms of Nietzsche's conception of unity and responsibility, by addressing the difference for Nietzsche between actions and mere behavior (164-165). Eschewing the common equation of freedom with unity in Nietzsche, Katsafanas argues that unity is best understood as a particular kind of harmonious relation between one's drives and one's conscious thought (193): Katsafanas argues that an agent counts as unified in Nietzsche's sense if "further knowledge of the drives and affects that figure in [his] etiology would not undermine this affirmation of [his particular constitutive relation of drives and affects]" (192).

Building upon the arguments of the antecedent chapters, chapters 8 and 9 make several arguments regarding Nietzsche's understanding of selfhood, the relation between society and the agent, and freedom. Katsafanas argues that we should understand the term "self" "to refer to

those who bear an appropriate relation to their culture” (198). Katsafanas describes the great individual as one who “not only embodies this new ideal, but also plays a transformative role, shifting groups of entire societies toward new hierarchies of value” (ibid.).

Katsafanas also critiques John Richardson’s claim that “social selection instills behavioral dispositions that are contrary to an individual’s own interest” (211); according to Katsafanas’s Nietzsche, there are no pre-social drives, and human nature is malleable. Katsafanas argues that Nietzsche does not endorse the Romantic claim that genuine selfhood is achieved by freeing ourselves from the dominant social norms and values of one’s time, place, and culture. But this is questionable. The textual evidence that Katsafanas employs here in support of his position is some of the most stretched in the book, especially given Nietzsche’s discussions elsewhere of the differences between “lambs” and “birds of prey” (GM I: 13) and his explicit endorsements of amorality in the higher, exemplary types of individual. What if the critical assessments of one’s values, that Katsafanas identifies as being the qualificatory standard of genuine selfhood, meant abandoning the dominant social moral norms of the day? Following Katsafanas’s argumentation in chapter 8, this question doesn’t seem to receive an adequate response. Katsafanas argues that Nietzsche adopts his own brand of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, but this interpretation does not leave room for Nietzsche’s imperative to initiate a truly radical critique of dominant values amongst exemplary individuals or the prospect of their rejection that must remain a possibility for the option for true flourishing.

Further, Katsafanas draws upon Nietzsche’s discussions of the conflict between social customs and the drives, but if no drives exist pre-socially, how can such a conflict arise? How could Nietzsche conceivably describe Judeo-Christian societies as possessing an “unnatural” morality that “runs counter to sense, instinct, nature, animal” (GM II. 24) if the true nature of

drives was constructed by their social circumstance? Katsafanas attempts to answer this problem by saying that “the fact that there are many conflicts between particular customs and particular drives does not entail that we should accept a custom/drive dichotomy, or that we should see the drives as things that can be understood as having pre-social aims” (214). But even the fact that conflicts are possible between customs and drives even in particular contexts demonstrates that there exists a categorical distinction between the two. There must be a “natural” state of the drives that allows for them to come into conflict once posited at the level of the social. To employ Katsafanas’s own aim/object distinction from Chapter Four, the constitutive aspects of human drives bear a relation to societal customs, rather than being the same thing as them.

These claims about the drives also appear to sit uneasily with Katsafanas’s claim in chapter 9 that the free individual can set goals liberated from morality, and that “he can regulate his behavior without reliance on external factors” (229). Katsafanas understands the higher individual’s drives as intrinsically socially bound, but he also describes the “sovereign individual” as being detached from external influences (229-231). Katsafanas attacks so-called “radical subjectivist” readings of Nietzsche for being “empty” (233-4), but his own position seems inescapably committed to a quasi-Hegelian view of Nietzsche, according to which exemplars accept their relations to institutions and social practices. Even as he emphasizes how “radical” Nietzsche’s critique of moral and social norms is in comparison to Hegel’s, one must ask: how radical can Katsafanas’s Nietzsche really be? The ninth chapter ends with a notion of Nietzschean “immoralism” which commits the immoralist to the contradictory task of “reassess[ing] even [his] most basic values” (253) even as he recognizes that his drives could not be otherwise than how they are manifested in the realm of the social.



The final sentence in Katsafanas's book outlines his hope for what his book might have accomplished: that "there is a philosophically fruitful alternative" to dominant philosophical discussions about agency in the form of a Nietzschean model (279). In this respect, I think Katsafanas is successful: His contribution here to both Nietzsche studies and to contemporary moral psychology is original, fruitful and innovative. As should be expected of a book that so thoroughly gives treatment to many of the core topics and questions arising from within Nietzsche's work, there are questions to be raised as to the accuracy of certain aspects of Katsafanas's reading of Nietzsche, but the originality in the treatment of the topics covered in Katsafanas's book is a great service to Nietzsche studies.

**Nicholas D. More. *Nietzsche's Last Laugh: Ecce Homo as Satire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.**

**Review by Dirk R. Johnson**

Nicholas More's study of *Ecce Homo* is one of only a handful of monographs devoted to this often-overlooked text. No doubt Nietzsche's controversial autobiography, if such a conventional term can be used to designate such an idiosyncratic work, does not receive the level of attention as his two contemporaneous writings, *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*. More gives compelling reasons for this scholarly disregard. *Ecce Homo*, for one, reveals the author at his most immodest and self-celebratory. A scholar interested in burnishing Nietzsche's philosophical credibility will have to defend pronouncements that border on the delusional or megalomaniacal. Further, the work lists banal concerns—weather, nutrition, the author's reading list—seemingly unworthy of philosophical reflection. Finally, *Ecce Homo* is difficult to classify—is it meant as philosophy? Is it a new form of autobiography? Or is it literary satire (4-5)? And these questions raise perhaps the most far-reaching objection: Should one take it seriously at all, even if it includes many valuable passages that give important insights into his earlier works and his overall philosophical self-assessment? More sets out to address, and rebut, these objections, and in the process gives one of the most cogent arguments for why Nietzsche's text should not only be taken seriously but, beyond that, why we should recognize its value *as* philosophy. More not only wishes to rethink *Ecce Homo* on its own terms and to appreciate its many merits; on a more ambitious level, he believes that we can better understand his overall philosophical aims by taking into account the literary strategies he employs to such brilliant effect in *Ecce Homo*.

*Ecce Homo* is a slim volume, and a significant part of the text deals with Nietzsche's retroactive assessment of his prior writings and his attempt to press upon them an inner

coherence and sense of necessity. It might seem, then, that this particular work does not demand the kind of close, at times page-by-page reading that More presents. And yet, his careful, incisive analysis as well as his patient devotion to detail and nuances of the text will ensure that this study remains one of the most thorough readings of *Ecce Homo* for quite some time. In addition, his elegant study is free of academic jargon, is extremely readable and succinct, and is attuned to, and appreciative of, the literary value of Nietzsche's late work. In the barrage of studies on Nietzsche and single works in his corpus, this analysis stands out for its combination of intelligence, precision and rigor.

More starts by assessing the relevant previous studies of the text. "*Ecce Homo*," he writes, "is the *enfant perdu* of Nietzsche books, and the secondary literature partially reflects this unfortunate state of affairs" (8). He breaks down reception into five main groups—analytical, deconstructive, psychological, biographical and reconstructive—and argues that the analytic school of Nietzsche has shown the least interest in this text, as it "does not appear to introduce any new doctrines or theories", while the deconstructionists have focused more on it, "perhaps due to its marginalized status" (9). Of the deconstructionists, he examines both Derrida and Kofman, with particular attention to the latter. Employing psychology's methods and offering a highly subjective take, Kofman's ideas are promising, More argues, but her work almost "defies discussion because it prefers pronouncements to discourse" (12). Conventional psychologist interpretations of the text, on the other hand, are the most devastating: one such reading claims that *Ecce Homo* illustrates "the fact that [Nietzsche] had lost his grasp on reality and become completely immersed in himself"; another suggests that it is "such a strident book as to be almost unreadable" (12-13). Prominent biographers of Nietzsche (Hollingdale, Safranski, and Young) also take "suspicious views of *Ecce Homo*," judging the author as mentally unhinged at the time

of its composition (13), and More looks at several other critical readings, including by Nehamas (in a chapter of *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*), Conway and Ridley. More shows greatest sympathy for Conway, though the latter focuses on the role of “self-parody” rather than recognize the numerous other targets Nietzsche singles out for explicit parody (16-17).

More then moves on to interpretation, starting with the important “question of genre” (Chapter 2). More’s argument: Nietzsche’s text belongs to the genre of literary satire. After discussing various theories, in particular the writings by Frye and Bakhtin on the subject, More examines the wide range of stylistic devices that would place this text within the confines of literary satire. According to More, Nietzsche fulfills eleven of the fourteen satiric characteristics as defined by Bakhtin. “In *Ecce Homo*, we encounter a militant and ironic experience toward painful experience, the free play of intellectual fancy, violent dislocations in the so-called autobiographical narrative, a fantasy of fame, and persistent attacks on universalizing moralists on a carnival ride of hyperbolic language and allusion. The work also transcends and mixes the genres of philosophy, autobiography, book review, polemic and panegyric” (32).

Above all, More attempts to render explicable Nietzsche’s numerous egocentric statements that make it difficult to appreciate this text as *philosophy*. More suggests these dismissive verdicts are due to an erroneous, though entrenched conception of what constitutes philosophy and the true focus of philosophical reflection. *Ecce Homo* in some ways represents a watershed in the history of the tradition in that it gestures toward a new modus of philosophical representation. Of course, the novelty of it remains disturbing for those readers who continue to think within the categories of (academic) philosophy and thus judge the pronouncements of *Ecce Homo* as beyond the pale. With More’s approach, however, the text can be newly assessed as *performance*: Nietzsche as literary provocateur, who self-consciously plays with, ridicules and

parodies all that philosophy, and the Western tradition, has held sacrosanct so far: “If Nietzsche parodies philosophy through closed-cleaved imitation, he would further several of his intellectual goals. He would undercut philosophy’s pretensions to absolute truth by sounding cocksure of himself while exposing grounds for doubt; would protect his own positions from charges of dogmatism by subverting the authority of all philosophers (himself included); and would stake a claim as one of the most ingenious stylists and original thinkers in Western history: a person who seriously pursued philosophy while he mocked it” (28). The work’s hyperbolic, over-the-top statements, to that end, achieve a specific meaning and purpose: as conventional forms of satiric self-representation.

The remainder of the study is devoted to a close reading of each section of the text, starting with its title and subtitle. More gives critical background to the work and its multiple meanings, and explores the range of sources that Nietzsche drew from, without foisting a single interpretation on his findings. Although committed to the case that Nietzsche’s book was satiric in intent, More presents a wide-ranging and nuanced examination. Even a scholar not convinced by his argument will gain from this approach, since it brings both new aspects of the text to light and presents rich readings that will stimulate further critical reflection. After parsing the preliminary autobiographical sections (the “Why I ... ?” chapters), More contrasts each of the retrospective accounts of his prior writings in *Ecce Homo* with the new prefaces he composed for many of his works two years earlier. Throughout these contrasting sections, More emphasizes the parodic aspect of Nietzsche’s efforts and pays particular attention to the literary qualities of his “autobiography.” This focus on style does not prevent us from appreciating the philosophical dimension of his positions. On the contrary: it reinforces the obvious point that Nietzsche never

separated out the question of style from his overall philosophical agenda but rather regarded style as an integral component of the new form of philosophy he sought to promote.

Although I agree with many of More's points, I would question a central feature of his position. I do not think that this needs to discredit the case he presents, but I would suggest it as a possible alternative reading, one that should enhance his argument, while distancing itself from his almost exclusive focus on the role of satire. In his evaluation of the secondary literature, More refers to Nehamas's influential reading, which he praises, though with considerable reservations (14-15). In some ways, this is surprising, since it seems that his study owes much to Nehamas's central premise: namely, that Nietzsche, immersed in the literary tradition, treated "life as literature" and the world as a form of text, on which he made his mark with great flair and panache. More's study, in turn, presents a Nietzsche imbued with a deep awareness of the literary and the classical traditions and the ambition to innovate philosophy by drawing from, and enriching, the stylistic legacies of those traditions. By self-consciously entering into the discourse with parodic intent, Nietzsche was treating "life as satire," reducing all the "greats" to "idols" he could topple on his self-appointed stage. (There are echoes, here, of another postmodern reading of Nietzsche, Peter Sloterdijk's provocative *Thinker on Stage* (Germany, 1986), though More does not refer to him in his bibliography.)

As appealing and compelling as such readings are, they fail to consider the following questions: Why is it that Nietzsche has to see "life as literature" at all, and could it be that Nietzsche instead had fought himself through to a *higher* position, one that sees "life as *life*"—in all its tragedy, terror, randomness and complexity? Rather, postmodern readings diminish his deeper awareness of reality, informed by his ten-year science-based explorations into man and nature, and relegate Nietzsche into a forlorn figure whose only "stage" is his literary imagination

and main motive his literary ambition. Not only does this reinforce the unchallenged supremacy of the scientific ethos in our age, i.e., that the only domain of “truth” can be scientific truth and the rest can only be literary fictions, but it fails to fathom the radical nature of his insights and to do justice to his final position, which was not only a literary triumph, but a spiritual one as well. Of course, this means we will need to take Nietzsche’s pronouncements (even at their most extreme and unsettling) seriously; but it *doesn’t* mean that the latter can’t *also* be parodic, hyperbolic, self-deprecating and satiric, as More suggests. For that, in fact, is Nietzsche’s Dionysian stance, post-*Zarathustra*: a person who—with newly-attained, affirmative wisdom—can *play* with great matters: “I do not know any other way of handling great tasks than as *play*: as a sign of greatness this is an essential presupposition” (EH *Clever* 10). This does not mean that those matters are reduced to literary contrivances; no, it means that they are real, existent, and truly of this world—but that Nietzsche’s deeper awareness of them allows him to treat them with a superior, *übermenschlich* form of humanity that acknowledges their historical power but not their power over him: “[H]ow Zarathustra descends and says the most gracious things [*das Gütigste*] to everybody! How gently he handles even his adversaries, the priests, and suffers with them and from them! At every moment here, humanity has been overcome, the idea of ‘overman’ *has become the highest reality*” (EH *Zarathustra* 6) (emphasis mine). Surely, the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo* might be disturbing, frightening, and, for some, in need of explanation or justification; but it is a Nietzsche that has entered *history*, not only literature, with consequences not yet foreseen.

My qualification should not detract from More’s excellent monograph. I have already indicated its numerous merits. As an incisive study of a difficult and often misunderstood late text, it is a work that should be read, and it will greatly enhance our understanding of Nietzsche’s

literary ambitions and his rich arsenal of stylistic devices. But we should be willing to take Nietzsche at his word in *Ecce Homo*; he should remain an uncomfortable “read” if we are to plumb to the depths of his provocative insights. This study will be a good first step in that direction.

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**Anthony K. Jensen and Helmut Heit (eds.), *Nietzsche as a Scholar of Antiquity*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.**

**Review by Adam Lecznar**

How to reconcile Nietzsche the philologist with Nietzsche the philosopher? In one of his first letters to Nietzsche from November 1887, the Danish critic Georg Brandes expressed his surprise at his discovery of Nietzsche's philological past: "I know nothing about you. I see with astonishment that you are a professor and a doctor. I congratulate you in any case on being intellectually so little of a professor." Brandes' declaration presupposes a thick division between the different roles that constituted Nietzsche's life, something that corresponds to the two halves of Nietzsche's mature life: the decade or so he spent employed by the University of Basel as a Professor of Classical Philology between 1868 and 1879, and the decade or so he then spent traveling around Europe and writing the philosophical works for which he is so esteemed today. But it also presupposes that there is a clear division between Nietzsche's writing and thinking at these different points of his life, and that consequently there is no continuous spectrum of authentically and unproblematically "Nietzschean" ideas that span both eras. The book under review follows in this vein by arguing that Nietzsche the philologist ought to be considered separately from Nietzsche the philosopher, and that Nietzsche's philology is valuable in and of itself: "our primary aim," the editors Jensen and Heit declare in their brief introduction, "is to show not how Nietzsche's earlier works on antiquity help us to understand Nietzsche, but how they may improve our understanding of antiquity" (xviii). Jensen and Heit also declare their desire that their collection might appeal to classicists as well as Nietzscheans, and that it "will

hopefully go some way towards dispelling the long-held image of Nietzsche as a scholarly dilettante” (xviii). Whether or not this hope bears fruit, the volume gathers together an impressive array of insights into Nietzsche’s philological career and gives a vivid account of Nietzsche’s stellar career as a young philologist.

The thirteen essays in this volume are divided into five sections (I have included the table of contents at the end of the review for reference). Though the volume has one official introduction, in practice it has two: the second is the opening essay proper of the volume, in which Joachim Latacz sets the scene for Nietzsche’s philological career by giving an overview of the social, historical and biographical that provided the backdrop to Nietzsche’s rise to prominence at Basel. The other essay of the first section is by James Porter, which focuses less on the way that Nietzsche’s philological practice grew out of contemporary scholarly norms, and more on how it subverted them. As he has done extensively elsewhere, particularly in *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* and *The Invention of Dionysus* (both 2000), Porter argues convincingly that Nietzsche was never a normal classicist, and was always deeply concerned with pointing up the ironies and difficulties of the discipline in his writings, and especially in his teaching (Porter focuses on his lecture notes, particularly for three courses on Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi*, Greek meter and the “Encyclopedia of Philology”). The focus in this essay on Nietzsche’s lecture style in the classroom (28-32) offers a particularly exciting insight into the reality of Nietzsche’s philological career.

The second section continues the focus on Nietzsche’s philological process. After Glenn Most and Thomas Fries offer a detailed account of how Nietzsche used the scholarly sources available to him while writing his lecture notes on Greek and Roman rhetoric, Douglas Burnham’s essay directly tackles the relationship between Nietzsche’s philological writing and

*The Birth of Tragedy* (BT). Burnham points out that the significance of the Greek god Apollo, who would come to play an integral role in the final form of *BT*, developed only late in the writing process of that book. Indeed, Burnham demonstrates that the god featured only very briefly in some of the writings that preceded *BT* and which contained drafts of the work it would come to contain (including the public lectures “Greek Musical Drama” and “Socrates and Tragedy” from January 1870, as well as other unpublished essays). Following this, Burnham argues that the prominence of Apollo came in response to Nietzsche’s desire that his account of Greek culture be of a unified culture, and also to place the idea of the “agon,” or “contest,” at the heart of his ideas about Greek culture.

In the third section the focus shifts to Nietzsche’s published philological writings on ancient literature. Anthony K. Jensen examines the work on Theognis of Megara, a lyric poet active in the sixth century BC. Jensen explains the scholarly problems posed by Theognis in a very lucid way (103-6), and also cites Nietzsche’s following comment in a letter to Carl von Gersdorff in April 1867 that sheds some light on Nietzsche’s stylistic reasons for leaving behind the strictures of classical philology: “I never again want to write in so wooden and dry a manner, so logically straitjacketed, as I did for example in my essay on Theognis: along this path no grace is seated.” (KSB 2, 209, cited on p. 103).

Jonathan Barnes, in a reprint of his 1986 article in *Nietzsche-Studien*, explores Nietzsche’s interest in the ancient biographer Diogenes Laertius and tests Nietzsche’s philological claim that the main source for Diogenes’ *Lives of the Philosophers* was a lost work by Diocles of Magnesia. The final article of this section is by Alexey Zhavoronkov, which focuses on Nietzsche’s writings about Homer and especially his inaugural lecture “On the Personality of Homer,” later published as “Homer and Classical Philology.” Zhavoronkov

suggests that Nietzsche “belongs to the few thinkers of his time who take the Homeric gods seriously,” and that his insights on Homer are striking because he assesses Homer from “a philosophical and psychological viewpoint” rather than a philological one (141). Zhavoronkov concludes with a particularly insightful exploration of the influence of Nietzsche’s differentiation between shame and guilt culture on the work of later scholars, both inside and outside of classics, including Ruth Benedict, E. R. Dodds, Arthur Adkins and Bernard Williams (146-8).

The penultimate section, “Literature, Language, Culture,” takes a more thematic approach to Nietzsche’s interest in the classical world. Carlotta Santini’s essay approaches Nietzsche’s understanding of the concept of literary history, and his particular approach to philology as “a reflective and creative interpreter of antiquity” (161); Matthew Meyer explores Nietzsche’s relationship with Plato through the modern writer’s portrayal of the “music-making Socrates” in *BT*. Vivetta Vivarelli’s brief essay explores Nietzsche’s recurring interest in the idea of the ancient Greek audience, and is particularly interesting for its evocative exploration (186-8) of Nietzsche’s indebtedness to Anselm Feuerbach’s *Der vaticanische Apollo* (1833). The final section carries on this focus on the general contours of Nietzsche’s appeal to antiquity: here, Helmut Heit explores Nietzsche’s fascination with the Presocratic thinkers as prototypes for modern philosophy, and Hubert Cancik and Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier conclude the volume with a rich examination of Nietzsche’s unfinished work “We, Philologists,” taking in its sources, its inspirations (including Leopardi and Burckhardt), and its thematic focus on archaic Greek religion. Babette Babich then explores some of the self-reflexive and reflective elements of Nietzsche’s approach to classical antiquity and ancient science in particular, in a suggestive essay that complements Porter’s earlier essay well. Babich focuses particularly on Nietzsche’s comment in *Antichrist* that the influence of Christianity has made the achievement of Graeco-

Roman antiquity “in vain,” and has obscured the fact that, already in ancient Greece, “all the scientific *methods* were already available” (A 59; KSA 6: 247, cited on p. 240), but that science did not develop along the same lines as it has done in modernity. This leads the essay to consider the way in which modern science relies for much of its self-definition on the antagonism of an anti-empiricist tradition (as in the emblematic story of Galileo) that simply did not exist in antiquity. Babich thus suggests that we can use Nietzsche’s account of the history of science to inspire fresh approaches to the ancient world that do not simply treat it as an earlier version of the modern world, but which take it seriously on its own conceptual terms and try to do justice to the inventiveness and creativity of ancient thinkers.

The essays included in this volume are wide-ranging, informative and engaging, and offer an excellent orientation to those looking to understand Nietzsche’s philology and its relationship to contemporary scholarly contexts. On reading it, I felt that two future paths of inquiry suggested themselves that would complement these studies and shed further light on the complex relationship between Nietzsche and his academic career. The first would be to explore more explicitly the way that the role of Nietzsche as an exceptional classicist remains of great importance to those who work on him and his relationship to the ancient world. This is the impression given in this volume most clearly by the essays of Porter and Babich (as well as those by Santini and Zhavoronkov), and this position sits uneasily with the broader desire of the volume to rehabilitate Nietzsche as a solid philologist whose sensible scholarship has been sadly ignored by those seeking out the fireworks that characterize his philosophy. The second, related to the first, would be to focus on the lines of influence that have issued forth from Nietzsche’s work within classics that took his unorthodox classicism as an inspiration and not a difficulty. One example of this would be the Cambridge Ritualists (there are no references to Jane Harrison

in the volume, though a handful to Francis Cornford): a focus on these scholars would give a broader sense of what a “Nietzschean” style of philology might look like. Similarly, a figure that could have been more discussed was Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf. It seems somehow emblematic of Nietzsche’s subterranean and unpredictable influence on the discipline that the young man who took the greatest umbrage at *BT* should go on to become perhaps the archetypal “scholar of antiquity” of all time, and more insight into their antagonistic relationship would perhaps go some way to understanding Nietzsche’s orientation toward this role. Obviously a volume that tries to recuperate and rehabilitate Nietzsche’s status as a philologist would have a hard time finding a place for Wilamowitz’s anti-Nietzscheanism, but some sense of the ways in which Nietzsche did not match up to the philological standards of his day is surely important for appreciating the other ways in which he did.

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Introduction – Anthony K. Jensen and Helmut Heit.

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3. The Sources of Nietzsche’s Lectures on Rhetoric – Glenn W. Most and Thomas Fries
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11. Nietzsche's Genealogy of Early Greek Philosophy – Helmut Heit

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13. The Religion of the "Older Greeks" in Nietzsche's "Notes to We Philologists" – Hubert Cancik and Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier

## Contributors' Bios

**Seth Binsted** studied Philosophy in the graduate department at Stony Brook University. His academic work has focused on both Nietzsche and phenomenological philosophy. Under these headings, his research interests include aesthetics and architecture, pain, technology, and poetics. He is primarily interested in the variegated intersections between philosophy and the imagination.

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**Daniel Blue** is the author of *The Making of Friedrich Nietzsche: The Quest for Identity, 1844-1869*, recently published by Cambridge University Press. Articles and reviews by him have



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**Dirk R. Johnson** received his BA from Bowdoin College in 1985 and his Magister in political science, philosophy and German from the University of Bonn. He received his Ph.D. in German Studies from Indiana University in 2000. His monograph *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2010. His articles on Nietzsche, Darwin and science have appeared in numerous journals, including *Nietzsche Studien*, *Rivista di filosofia* and *Tijdschrift voor filosofie*. Johnson is Elliott Professor of German at Hampden-Sydney College.

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**Kimerer L. LaMothe** is a dancer, philosopher, scholar of religion, and award-winning author of five books. Her second book, *Nietzsche's Dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and the Revaluation of Christian Values* (2006), offers the only comprehensive analysis of both Nietzsche's dance imagery, and its influence on two American modern dancers. LaMothe earned a doctorate in religious studies from Harvard University before teaching for six years at Brown and then Harvard, where she also directed the undergraduate program in the Comparative Study of Religion. She has received fellowships for her work in religion and dance from the Radcliffe Center for Advanced Study and the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions. She has choreographed and performed three full length concerts, *Genesis* (2001, 2009), *On Fire* (2004), and *The Ever Unfolding Present* (2016) as well as many other dance pieces. Since 2005, she has lived with her musician partner and their five children, ages 7 through 20, on a farm in upstate New York. As a family, they regularly perform cabaret concerts of music and dance. When not writing or dancing, LaMothe is helping her children take care of two horses, two oxen, three cows, four cats, nine hens, thirteen chicks, and a large vegetable garden.

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**Yunus Tuncel** is a co-founder of the Nietzsche Circle and serves on the Editorial Board of *The Agonist*. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the New School for Social Research. He is the author of *Towards a Genealogy of Spectacle* (Eye Corner Press, 2011) and *Agon in Nietzsche* (Marquette University Press, 2013). His areas of research include art, competition, culture, myth, power, and spectacle. He is interested in the fusion of art and philosophy in various cultural formations.

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3. The paragraphs must be separated from each other; indent 5 spaces in the beginning of each

paragraph.

4. Quotations that exceed three lines must be indented and separated from the body of the text into its own paragraph. The lengthy citations are also single-spaced, as are the footnotes.
5. Please note that page numbers go into the upper right hand corner with your last name.
6. Italics are to be used for author's *emphases*, book and journal titles, and foreign terms.
7. Quotations from Nietzsche's works should be followed in the main text by parenthetical references to the work in abbreviation followed by section or note numbers: e.g., (BT §7), (GS §124), (GM III §7), (TI "Ancients" §3). For a complete list of standard abbreviations, see below. The translation being cited should be indicated in a footnote to the first quotation from the work. If the author is rendering Nietzsche's German into English, each quotation should be footnoted with a reference to a standard critical German edition of Nietzsche's works, preferably the KSA. All other scholarly references should be given in the footnotes.
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As noted above, references to Nietzsche's writings are to be included in the body of the essay using the standard English title abbreviations indicated below. With reference to translations, Roman numerals denote a standard subdivision within a single work in which the sections are not numbered consecutively (e.g., *On the Genealogy of Morals*), Arabic numerals denote the section number rather than the page number, and "P" denotes Nietzsche's Prefaces.

Unless the author is translating, the published translation used should be indicated with a

footnote to the initial citation reference.

References to the editions by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari take the following forms:

*Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967—) is cited by division number (Roman), followed by volume number (Arabic), followed by the fragment number.

*Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980) is cited by volume number (Arabic) followed by the fragment number.

*Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGB) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975—) is cited by division number (Roman), followed by volume number (Arabic), followed by page number.

*Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSB) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986) is cited by volume number (Arabic) followed by page number.

References to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* list the part number and chapter title, e.g., (Z: 4 “On Science”).

References to *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo* list abbreviated chapter title and section number, e.g., (TI “Ancients” §3) or (EH “Books” BGE §2).

References to works in which sections are too long to be cited helpfully by section number should cite section number then page number, e.g., (SE §3, p. 142), with the translation/edition footnoted.

A = *The Antichrist*

AOM = *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*

BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil*

BT = *The Birth of Tragedy*

CW = *The Case of Wagner*

D = *Daybreak / Dawn*

DS = *David Strauss, the Writer and the Confessor*

EH = *Ecce Homo* [“Wise,” “Clever,” “Books,” “Destiny”]

FEI = “On the Future of our Educational Institutions”

GM = *On the Genealogy of Morals*

GOA = *Nietzsches Werke* (Grossoktavausgabe)

GS = *The Gay Science / Joyful Wisdom*

HS = “Homer’s Contest”

HCP = “Homer and Classical Philology”

HH = *Human, All Too Human*

HL = *On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life*

KGB = *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*

KGW = *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*

KSA = *Kritische Studienausgabe*

KSB = *Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*

LR = “Lectures on Rhetoric”

MA = *Nietzsches Gesammelte Werke* (Musarionausgabe)

NCW = *Nietzsche contra Wagner*

PPP = *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*

PTA = *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*

RWB = *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*

SE = *Schopenhauer as Educator*

TI = *Twilight of the Idols* ["Maxims," "Socrates," "Reason," "World," "Morality," "Errors," "Improvers," "Germans," "Skirmishes," "Ancients," "Hammer"] TL = "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense"

UM = *Untimely Meditations / Thoughts Out of Season*

WDB = *Werke in drei Bänden* (Ed. Karl Schlechta)

WP = *The Will to Power*

WPh = "We Philologists"

WS = *The Wanderer and his Shadow*

WLN = *Writings from the Late Notebooks*

Z = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*