

Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland, eds. . New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, viii + 250 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-2533-0. \$130.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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